SIXTEEN STARS

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Sixteen Stars
Creating Places of Perilous Adventure

Contents

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INTO THE BLACK

It's not easy being a game master. Session after session, your creativity and diligence are taxed to create interesting situations, lively sandboxes, or engaging story lines to propel your players' entertainment. Even if the first few sessions come readily enough, it's all too easy to find your creative juices running dry after the fifth or sixth night's play. How do you keep things fresh for your players without exhausting yourself?

Sixteen Stars is a short supplement meant to ease that burden. Inside this book, you'll find sixteen different types of adventurous locales, with tables for generating adventure outlines and advice on how to turn these outlines into a functional evening's adventure. While this book was written for the *Stars Without Number* role-playing game, all of the contents of this book are system-neutral and can easily be used with your own game or sci-fi setting of choice.

This book focuses on *adventure sites*. These aren't specific places, but are instead tropes and general categories of locations that crop up regularly in sci-fi gaming. When you need an adventure, you pick one or more of these tropes, mix them together, and then use the tables in each section to generate suitable furnishings for an evening's sci-fi gaming entertainment.

This book is meant as a tool for inspiration and outlining. With the tables in each section, you should have the resources to put together an adventure outline on short notice, something coherent and inter-esting that should keep the players engaged for an evening's play. It's up to you to provide the details and integration with the rest of your campaign that will be needed, but each adventure outline should be sturdy enough to leave your share of the work relatively straightforward.

Each adventure site discusses some of the special considerations you'll need to keep in mind when developing particular locations. If you choose to use a Merciless Desert as a backdrop for your adventure, the kind of set-up and adventure integration you'll need to do will be different than the kind of work that an Asteroid Base or Barbarian Court might demand.

While each type of adventure site is presented as a coherent whole, there's nothing stopping you from picking multiple sites and mixing them into a single adventure. Perhaps an Ancient Temple figures into your campaign, but why not put it in the middle of a Merciless Desert or Savage Jungle, or make it part of an abandoned Derelict Outpost? The individual components of each site can be mixed-and-matched among each other, so that an Asteroid Base Antagonist can be slotted in next to an Ancient Temple Friend in the same adventure seed.

Everything in this book was written for the sake of the GM. You should use it in that spirit, picking up the pieces that help you and changing or ignoring the parts that don't serve your purposes. *Sixteen Stars* is a tool, and now it's *your* tool to use as you see fit.
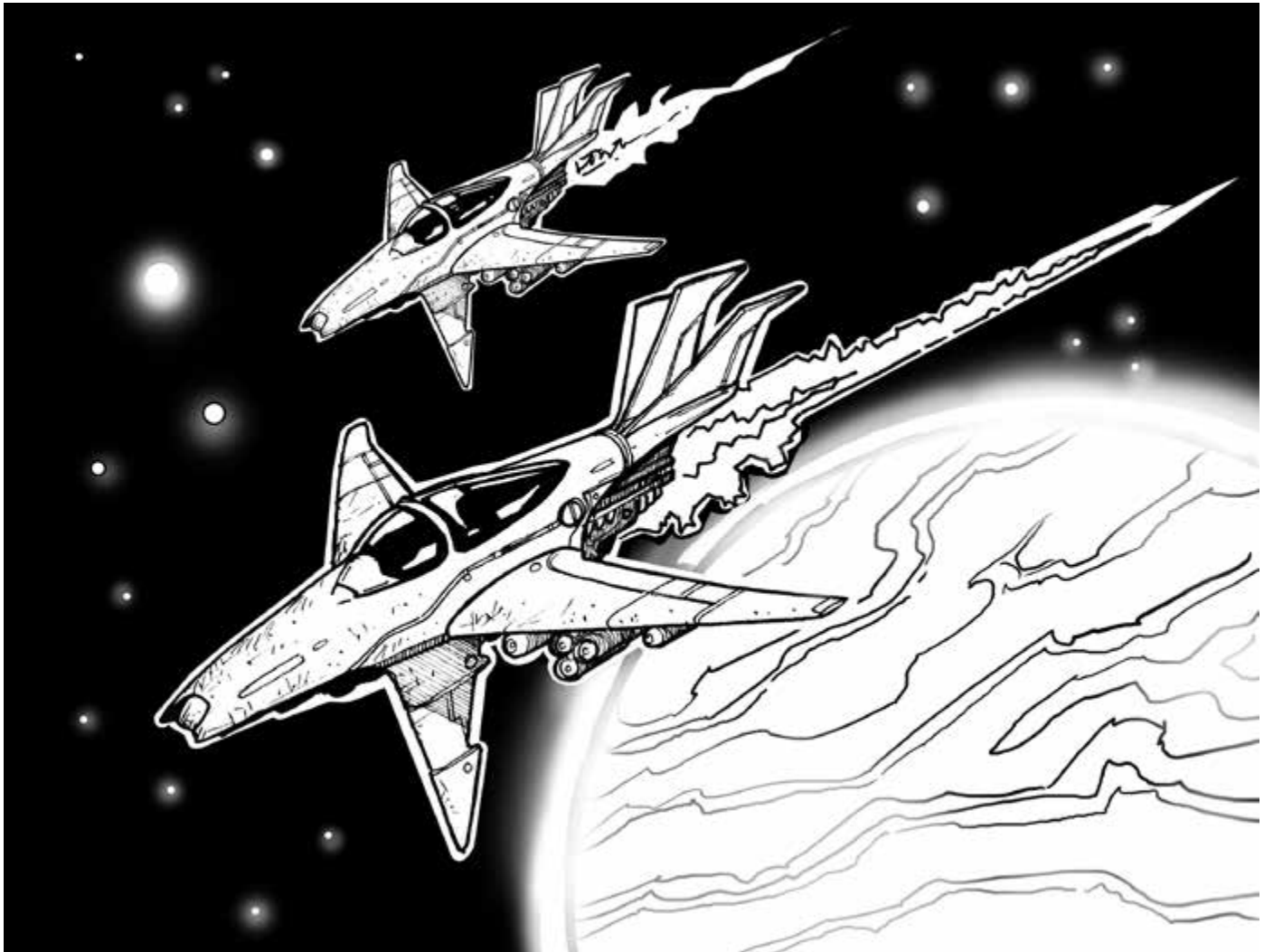
USING THIS BOOK

Sixteen Stars is divided into sixteen separate types of adventure sites. Each site begins with a general discussion of what kind of adventurous place it represents. It goes on to explain special considerations or preparation you'll need to make in order to use it, and closes with a step-by-step set of instructions for preparing such a site for adventures.

Opposite this advice is a page of tables specific to the adventure site. Each one includes Antagonists, Friends, Things, Places, Complications, adventure seeds, and a random table important to that specific type of site.

The first thing you'll need to do for a given site is to roll on its *Adventure Seeds* table. This will give you a basic outline of a conflict appropriate for that kind of site. It will also note particular Antagonists, Friends, Things, Places, or Complications you'll need to generate from the other tables on the page or create whole-cloth.

Antagonists are usually hostile NPCs, or at least ones who are acting in a way contrary to the PCs. You can generate them as straight-up villains to be defeated or complicate things by making them fundamentally justifiable people who just happen to have opposing goals.

Friends are NPCs likely to appeal to the players, ones who can reasonably hook them into an adventure and provide a rationale for engaging with it. Not all Friends are actually allies, but they're motivated to seek out the PCs and offer them something enticing in exchange for their aid or involvement.

Places are particular locations characteristic of the site. They're spots that fit with the overall theme of the adventure site, and ones you can use as strongholds to be defeated, places to be explored, or lairs to be braced. *Things* are the sort of macguffins and treasures that would motivate adventurers or excite the locals at the site. *Complications* are additional twists you can throw into the site to make life harder for the players or muddy the waters of an excessively-simple problem.

Once you've rolled or created the requisite components, you can fit them into the adventure seed and end up with a serviceable conflict to engage your players. For extra play value, you can choose multiple outlines or multiple sites and then share members of the NPC cast among them all. The same NPC might be involved in two entirely different conflicts, ones which can bleed over in play.

Each of the sites are designed to create problems. Whichever you choose, there's something wrong going on at that site, and the PCs are needed to deal with it. A sharply-defined conflict is one of the best tools a GM has for creating quick, playable gaming content.

In all cases, your own best judgment should be the guide. The tables and advice are good starting points for your creativity but you should never be reluctant to alter a result or simply pick something appropriate if you have an idea in mind. The tools in this book are meant to ease your burden as a GM and save your creative effort for those parts of the game that are most exciting or interesting for you.

AN EXAMPLE ADVENTURE SITE CREATION

In the last session, the PCs managed to infuriate the planetary rulers of Mercia. While the heroes are currently ahead of the law and making a bold play to reach their hidden starship, there's a very good chance that they're going to end up captured. Rather than grope about in such circumstances, the GM decides to prep a prison colony adventure he can run the players through if they end up getting taken by the law.

He starts by turning to the Prison Colony section and reading through the instructions. The first step is easy; if the PCs get to the colony, it's going to be as prisoners. What does the colony produce? The GM ponders a while, and decides that the Mercian government uses the colony as a factory for producing mildly-toxic industrial chemicals. Why can't the prisoners just walk away? On consideration, the GM decides to plant the prison on a rocky island off the coast, one coincidentally not far from the hidden starship that the PCs are trying to reach.

The next step is to roll an adventure seed, and the GM comes up with "An Antagonist is on their best behavior as some outside oversight is examining the prison. A Friend needs to get proof of the wrongdoing here either into the prison to show the inspector or out of it to deliver to the media. The Antagonist does nothing overt to PC prisoners he suspects of being involved with the matter, but has tacitly farmed out enforcement to coerced convicts." From the look of it, he needs to generate an Antagonist and a Friend. On a whim, he decides to throw in a Complication as well.

Rolling on the Antagonist table, he gets a "coldly self-interested politician", one he'll name Ectheow Jones and make an important thegn in Mercia's Ministry of Justice. Ectheow has been diverting much of the prison's output to his own interests, and he's arrived with the inspector to "oversee" the investigation.

As a corollary, the GM decides to sketch up the inspector. She's Morgengifu Smythe-Barrington, and while the public facade is that the

investigation is being led by Ectheow, Morgengifu actually has the whip hand, one which she maintains with utmost civility.

To muddy the situation, the GM rolls a Complication, finding out that the prisoners include children born here as well; it looks like the prison includes both male and female prisoners, and that they're allowed to form families. The GM decides that any children born to such families are technically thralls of the state for life.

And who makes a more appealing Friend that an innocent child? The GM skips rolling for a Friend and simply decides that said Friend is Hildy Ott, a lively young gamine recently orphaned in a factory accident and under the desultory oversight of indifferent prison staff.

Now that the NPC cast is arranged, the GM follows the rest of the steps given in the section. He downloads a map of a minimum-security prison, making the fence into the borders of the island, and glues on a factory floor plan to represent the refinery. He makes up a simple schedule indicating when the PCs will be in their cells, eating, bathing, working, or allowed free time in the yard. He places Ectheow and Morgengifu's quarters, locates Hilde's cell, and decides that the prison perimeter is monitored through computer-controlled motion and video sensors around the perimeter of the island; he marks out the computer control center where they can be turned off or subverted.

Finally, he then drops the adventure outline into the situation. Ectheow and Morgengifu arrive shortly after the players. Hilde has proof of Ectheow's ships taking off chemicals at night, but she's convinced that her parents were killed in an "accident" when the staff suspected they'd show the proof to the inspector. She'll seek out the players because they're too new to realize the danger of taking the proof to Morgengifu, but as newly-taken prisoners, they're under close scrutiny. If they get the proof to Morgengifu, they're likely to be paroled—or they could try to coerce Ectheow's cooperation with the information.

Ancient Temple

Humans and aliens alike cherish their holy places, but time and bitter circumstances sometimes conspire to grind these sacred sanctuaries away. This ancient temple is either an empty monument to a now-dead faith, or a near-deserted husk occupied only by the last desperate remnants of the original priesthood. In either case, the PCs will have significant obstacles to overcome if they're to pry out whatever treasure or secret they've come to take.

Inhabited or Empty Temples

The first thing to decide is whether or not the temple has any living inhabitants, and whether or not they're the sort who might be amenable to negotiating with the PCs. For this purpose, "living" includes any intelligent occupants, whether AI survivors, alien squatters, or heirs to the original priesthood.

Choose an empty temple if you want to focus purely on environmental dangers and rival exploration parties. If the challenge of the temple revolves around dodging the traps, overcoming wild beasts, figuring out the puzzles, and identifying the object the PCs came for, then an empty temple is easier to manage in play. The fewer intelligent occupants a place has, the fewer moving parts a GM has to track.

You still usually have an Antagonist to provide intelligent opposition in a dead temple, but a single Antagonist and their retinue is usually easier to manage than a three-sided conflict between PCs, inhabitants, and Antagonists.

Conversely, choose a living temple if you want to discourage head-on violence from the PCs. Unless the occupants are just scattered clumps of easily-dodged relics, the PCs are probably too few and too fragile to survive a direct confrontation with the temple occupants. They'll need to use guile, reconnaissance, and speed in order to breach the temple, recover their objective, and escape.

If the temple has intelligent occupants, decide whether or not they're willing to negotiate with PCs. It can simplify things if they're all so blood-crazed or fanatical that the only plausible outcome is violence, but it also robs you of one of the main benefits of having an inhabited temple. Many PCs are as much made for talking past a problem as others are for shooting through it, and depriving these PCs of a chance to shine can leave their players frustrated and bored. Make sure you have a real need to foreclose on negotiations if you decide to do so.

Dressing the Set

You'll only need a map and detailed keying if infiltration or brute violence are likely to arise at the table. If overcoming the situation at the temple is clearly a matter for diplomacy or intrigue, then you can get by without these details, but if exploring the site or physically overcoming its danger is expected to be the fun of the evening, you'll want a map.

First, search online for a monastery floor plan. Monasteries usually have enough nooks and crannies to make them reasonably interesting to explore, and are big enough that a ruckus in one location won't necessarily be audible throughout the structure.

Pick three applicable adjectives like those from the table below and note them down. If you need to describe some fitting or location in the temple, use those adjectives for inspiration.

Plant any important Antagonists, Friends, Places, and Things somewhere in the monastery. This is where they'll be when the PCs come onto the stage, or where they usually lair or are lodged.

If negotiations seem unlikely, place a trap, physical obstacle, guardian entity, or other challenge between the PCs and their likely goals. Tie it into the Complication if the adventure has one.

If negotiations seem probable, sketch the most likely interlocutor for the PCs. Identify what they want and what they're willing to give the PCs. Decide how they're going to interact with the Antagonist.

Lastly, choose three places on the map and put something there: an interesting NPC, a trap, a characteristic relic, a fight, or the like. These should provide some interest for PCs who are exploring the site.

Applicable Adjectives

Cyclopean	Dust-covered	Echoing
Incense-reeking	Rusted	Crumbling
Weathered	Worn down by use	Defaced
Ornate flaking paint	Cracked by age	Defiled
Gloomy	Soot-blackened	Graffitied
Towering	Tarnished	Cryptic
Intricately carved	Dimly-glowing	Slumped
Silent	Brilliantly lit	Austere

d10	Adventure Seeds
1-2	A Friend struggles to overcome an Antagonist as they mutually search for a Thing reported to be located somewhere within the temple. If it's still held by living priests, a Complication is keeping the priests from actively stopping them, but they're furious at the profanation of their home. If the temple is long-abandoned, then a Complication threatens to bring down calamity soon.
3-4	An Antagonist has seized a Thing and hidden it away in a Place. A Friend has learned of the acquisition, and seeks to draw in help from outside to recover the Thing for their own purposes. A Complication is preventing them from making a personal effort at reclaiming the Thing.
5-6	Two Antagonists are clashing over a Friend, both of them wishing to use them for some detestable end, but a Complication is preventing either of them from concluding their feud just yet. The Friend is being imprisoned in a Place, while at the same time the PCs learn of a precious Thing at a different Place. After the Friend or Thing are recovered, a Complication will kick in, making the second object very difficult or dangerous to retrieve.
7-8	A Friend knows the location of a Thing in a particular Place within the temple, but dares not confront the Antagonist who is dangerously close to the object, and who could seize it easily if they were aware of it. The Friend's last attempt at recovering the Thing was the genesis of a fresh Complication, and they believe they need outside help if they're not to make things even worse.
9-10	A Friend is a guardian of a Thing that has been stolen or suborned by an Antagonist, who will soon carry it off for their own sinister purposes. A Complication is preventing them from doing so just yet, but as soon as they calm the situation, they'll be able to carry it off beyond reach. The Friend appeals to the PCs for aid, offering another Thing at a Place known only to them.

d8	Antagonists
1	Leader of the last degenerate clerics
2	Cryo-awakened temple guardian
3	Ruthless local taboo-keeper
4	Amoral relic-plunderer
5	Rival sect's zealous inquisitor-purgatist
6	Local determined to unearth the temple's "true faith"
7	Immortal AI-powered techno-priest
8	Politician seeking to plunder relics of legitimacy

d8	Friends
1	Surviving priest eager to make converts
2	Avidly curious archaeologist
3	A local related to the priests, surviving or long-extinct
4	Priest desiring to escape the shrine
5	Heretic looking for outside help to advance their cause
6	Priest convinced the PCs are god-sent
7	Local wanting to "burn out" the danger in the temple
8	Erratic AI temple manager who's mistaken the PCs

d8	Places
1	Place of a potentially lethal divine trial
2	Sacred relic-vault
3	Altar circled by decayed splendor
4	Dangerously decrepit priest cells
5	Pen for a monstrous holy beast
6	Huge collapsed idol
7	Library filled with enigmatic holy texts
8	Ornate baths for ritual purifications

d8	Complications
1	The temple collapses if the last priests die
2	The temple is surrounded by very unfriendly locals
3	Lethal traps kill those not versed in holy writ
4	The priests splintered into two or more angry sects
5	Locals think anyone who goes to the temple is a cultist
6	Temple relics and furnishings are technologically "cursed"
7	The real temple is hidden behind a false facade
8	The reality of the faith is nothing like what is said of it

d8	Things
1	Wondrous alien tech-relic
2	Original scripture of enormous cultural importance
3	Culturally-priceless item of priestly regalia
4	Rare product of dead priest-artisans
5	Prize a living or dead convert brought with him
6	Precious gift from a powerful believer
7	Charter proving a surviving heritor-faith's legal rights
8	Madness-inducing artifact that teaches holy paradoxes

d8	What's Wrong with the Faith?
1	It is dangerously violent toward itself or outsiders
2	Initiation into the priesthood involves parasitic aliens
3	Intruders can leave only after years of catechism
4	A major precept is directly opposed to current PC goals
5	The believers are slavishly loyal to an unworthy pontiff
6	It advocates a practice that is repugnant to the PCs
7	It's unwillingly allied with enemies of the PCs
8	It's a bitter enemy of a close ally of the PCs

Asteroid Base

The cold remoteness of distant space has many attractions for a certain type of man or woman. Aside from the soothing solitude of an AU-wide front yard, many asteroids are valuable repositories of useful construction materials, water ice, and industrial chemicals. With sufficiently powerful fusion reactors or a good set of solar panels, an asteroid base can provide an almost self-sufficient refuge for a isolationist community or industrial operation.

Such remoteness also comes with its own set of complications. A standard drive-1 starship needs forty-eight hours to reach most asteroids in a system, and the fastest TL4 drives in common currency are unlikely to get there in any fewer than sixteen hours. Any help is invariably going to be far from the asteroid, and that assumes that there's any planetary power that would care enough to send assistance. If an asteroid community has problems, it's generally obliged to deal with them on its own.

Rules To Live By

Asteroid bases are generally not havens of laissez-faire individuality. Even with TL4 automation technology, maintaining a base requires constant effort and oversight from its inhabitants. A tunnel crack, rubble slide, roidquake, or micrometeorite might cause havoc at any moment, and there is no "outside" that the inhabitants can escape to. Most asteroid inhabitants have duties that cannot be neglected, and inhabitants who are lazy or careless are apt to find themselves preemptively jettisoned before they get good spacers killed.

Aside from the harsh demands of astrophysics, the close personal quarters of most asteroid bases force a degree of rigid personal control and interpersonal etiquette that would dizzy most dirtsiders. The precise details vary from rock to rock, but they tend to revolve around preserving some personal privacy in the tight confines of a base and negotiating otherwise-explosive personal disagreements that arise when it becomes impossible to separate people.

You can use these customs and duties to play up the oddness of the base and add further complications to a situation. An Antagonist might be keeping some critical macguffin in a privacy closet that the natives absolutely refuse to enter, for example, or might have committed some act that the locals are unable to reference to investigating PCs.

Possible Asteroid Customs

When a person's eyes are covered, they are to be strictly ignored.

Sexual activity cannot be acknowledged or referenced by anyone but those who directly participated in it.

Personal privacy closets cannot be entered by anyone, including law enforcement officials.

Causing disruptive noise or stenches in hab quarters is a felony.

Luxury consumables such as fine food or recreational drugs cannot ever be held privately, but must be kept in official stores.

Discussion of religion is absolutely forbidden outside of chapels.

Gender segregation is absolute outside of family quarters.

Serious personal disputes are settled by ritualized "work accidents" where victory tends to go to the most technically proficient.
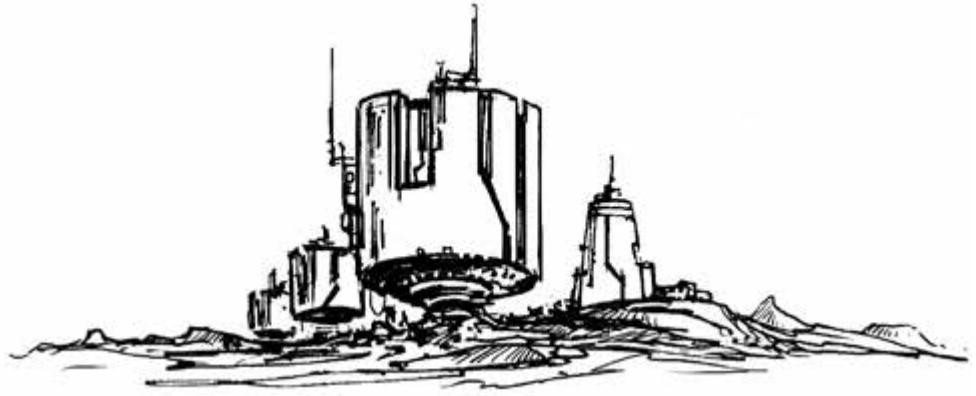
Dressing the Set

Unless you're expecting the adventure to be resolved exclusively by diplomacy, you're likely going to need some sort of map for the asteroid. Unless the asteroid is abandoned or the PCs are going into some long-sealed subzone they're not likely to be doing much exploring, but you'll need to have a fairly clear picture of the physical layout in order to identify ways to get at Antagonists or reach important Things.

First, go online and download a one-page dungeon map or salvage one from the fantasy game of your choice. The twisty passages of a classic dungeon can easily be reskinned as repurposed asteroid mining tunnels. Keep the room descriptions the same, but shift them into a sci-fi idiom: guard barracks become hab quarters, kitchens become galleys, wizard laboratories become science labs, and so forth. Print out a second copy of this map, since it's very likely the PCs will be able to get their hands on the base schematics one way or another.

Next, plant the important Antagonists, Friends, Things, and Places from your adventure in appropriate locations on the map. If you need to add environmental hazards such as those mentioned in the Places, mark out their location now and note down the damage or negative effects they inflict and how they might be avoided or overcome.

Next, sketch out the docking experience for the PCs. Where will they land the ship, and who are they going to meet when they come down the gangway? Make sure you have a name and some character hooks for this person, because they're going to be the PCs' initial contact with the site's situation. If the map you've picked doesn't have a convenient place to put a docking bay, sketch it off-screen somewhere and connect its exit to the entrance of the map.

Now take a moment to assign combat statistics to anyone who seems terribly likely to catch a laser beam. Remember that most men and women aren't going to be particularly impressive combatants, and even trained security personnel shouldn't have more than one or two hit dice. In the same vein, even security personnel aren't going to be walking around in heavy armor unless the asteroid is a prison colony or set in an active war zone.

The last critical step is taking a moment to mentally run through the adventure, from the point at which the PCs dock at the base to the point at which the adventure's main challenge is complete. Think about your players and the kind of solutions they tend to prefer; have you taken those habits into account in your preparations? If they act the way they usually act, can you see how the adventure will play out? It's not necessary that it play out *successfully* for the PCs, but you should be comfortable with the directions you foresee things going and have the necessary information and prepwork done to handle those actions that the PCs are most likely to take.

D10	ADVENTURE SEEDS
1-2	An Antagonist wants a Thing and is threatening to destroy the asteroid if they don't get it. A Friend knows of the dangerous Place where the Thing is hidden, but has a powerful reason not to cooperate with the Antagonist. If they can get the PCs to visibly carry the Thing away or nullify the Antagonist, their home may yet survive.
3-4	An Antagonist is taking advantage of a Complication to acquire a Thing, with only a Friend currently in the way of their plans. The Friend is hiding in a Place, and is willing to offer the Thing to the PCs in exchange for extraction from the asteroid or the neutralization of the Antagonist.
5-6	Two Antagonists are locked in a conflict that threatens to destroy the asteroid. Their struggles have already caused a Complication that is scourging the locals. A Friend seeks aid from the PCs, offering information on the two Places where these rival Antagonists are based. The victory of one Antagonist over the other would be tolerable, but a sub-optimal outcome for the locals.
7-8	A Friend has secret information about a Thing located in a dangerous Place. Due to the asteroid's operations cycle, that Place is about to become critically dangerous, but there seems to be time to get in and out of the Place. Unfortunately, a Complication throws the cycle off and induces the extra peril just as the PCs enter the Place.
9-10	The asteroid's ruling power is reluctantly negotiating to hand over a Thing to an Antagonist, fearing the consequences of resistance. An upset Friend seeks to sabotage the handover and is trying to set up a heist with the PCs as the active agents. A Complication provides a hindrance to both the Antagonists and the PCs, but also offers opportunities to steal the Thing before it's turned over, or provides a distraction should it be stolen during the transfer.

D8	ANTAGONISTS
1	Hostile alien awoken from its asteroid slumber
2	Crazed space hermit
3	Invidious pirate chieftain
4	Cold-blooded corporate mining boss
5	Leader of a degenerate isolationist sect
6	Rapacious space-scavenger chief
7	Alien intruder from a hostile species
8	Government official seeking to seize the rock

D8	FRIENDS
1	Grizzled old space miner
2	Xenophilic young spacer
3	Hard-working far trader captain
4	Peaceful isolationist group leader
5	Stranded offworlder traveler
6	Fugitive from an unjust law
7	Space-hermit devoted to an odd creed
8	Friendly alien who requires the asteroid's environment

D8	PLACES
1	Radiation-blasted asteroid surface
2	Warren-like mining tunnel maze
3	Cramped spacer barracks with contraband stashes
4	Vacuum-vulnerable docking bay
5	Dangerous refinery zone with vast smelters
6	Active mining area full of huge machines
7	Fissure zone of cracked and dangerous rock
8	Glacier pocket of carved ice tunnels

D8	COMPLICATIONS
1	The asteroid is tumbling into danger
2	The asteroid is starting to break up
3	A hostile government is seizing control
4	The locals have a delusional belief about outsiders
5	Only a local can cope with the environment
6	The locals mistake the PCs for illicit contractors
7	Pirates are about to invade the asteroid
8	The asteroid's basic infrastructure is failing

D8	THINGS
1	Critical chemical for mining
2	Vital life support component
3	Bomb sufficient to crack the asteroid
4	Cure for a lethal space plague
5	Luxury the locals would kill to have
6	Pay for vital merchants or workers
7	Stash of highly addictive but very useful drug
8	Stolen government prototype stashed somewhere here

D8	WHAT ARE THEY USING IT FOR?
1	Mines a very valuable, widely-illegal substance
2	Actually a secret military signal-monitoring site
3	A sealed lab asteroid for illegal research
4	A pirate base with amoral merchants
5	Stubbornly-held hab for an odd sect
6	Prison asteroid for very dangerous types
7	Near-abandoned launchpoint for a failed space colony
8	Vice den for unspeakable indulgences

Barbarian Court

Venturing into the savage courts of primitive lostworlder monarchs is a staple of space-operatic adventure. It's not unlikely that your own campaign will find the heroes forced to deal with low-tech "savages" on their own terms, surrounded by the might of a primitive world's nobility and a degree of pragmatic cunning that would do credit to any planetary executive's conference room.

Conflict and Intrigue

To get the most playable content out of a barbarian court, however, you're going to need a conflict. The monarch has to want something, or not want something, that some other important power disputes. This rival power may be a block of important nobles, another barbarian state, an Antagonist with broad backing, or any other actor with the influence to seriously impair the monarch's commands.

This conflict forms the central point around which the adventure revolves. Whether or not the PCs have any interest in it, it's what drives the monarch and the other intriguers at the court, and *they*, at least, are passionately interested in the outcome. Their willingness to cooperate with PCs or give the outworlders what they desire will be entirely contingent on how useful the PCs are to their side of the conflict.

It's only really necessary to detail the conflict if you foresee the players wanting to resolve it personally. It's much more important to detail where the important NPCs in the adventure stand on the conflict, what they want to get out of it and what use they intend to be to their allies in the cause. Each will attempt to enlist the PCs to provide help to their allies, or move to neutralize the heroes if it looks like they might be serving as useful catspaws for their rivals.

Barbarian courtiers may be primitive, but they are not stupid. They will not expose themselves to disgrace or danger unless they're certain of success or driven to desperate measures. Each of them will be much more eager to send the PCs on such fatal errands and then reap the rewards of their success… or comment sadly on their ignorance of the doings of that batch of offworlder criminals.

Dressing the Set

It is very rarely necessary to make up any kind of map for an adventure revolving around a barbarian court. The excitement and interest of such games revolves around intrigue and skulduggery rather than site exploration. If the PCs decide to undertake some breaking and entering on a noble estate or decide to fire up their plasma guns in the throne room, you can just sketch a few lines and plant whatever guards or obstacles seem reasonable in their way.

First, list out the relevant NPCs for the adventure. You'll need the monarch, Antagonists, Friends, and two or three other important NPCs who each have a stake in the situation and some personal power-base to make their opinion consequential. You might also spare a name and a few lines of description for two or three minor NPCs you can use as footmen, maidservants, or other bit-part characters that you need on short notice.

Next, divide up these NPCs on the various sides of the conflict. They should be fairly well-matched, or else the conflict would have been resolved by now.

Next, for each important NPC, identify one thing they plan to do to advance their cause, and one thing they want that the PCs could conceivably give them or do for them. Ideally, you want to make sure that their intentions clash with each other, so that one NPC's success would inevitably mean another NPC's failure.

Then take the adventure seed you've chosen and lay it down over this conflict. Connect each of the NPCs into the adventure somehow; maybe what they want is related to the events of the adventure, and maybe what they plan to do is something that will impinge on the Antagonist's plans or the Friend's interests. The key thing at this point is to make each important NPC a part of the adventure situation.

Finally, take a moment to draw up combat statistics for any particularly likely targets in the adventure, whether it be the Antagonist, the royal guardsmen, the monstrous alien beast in the Place the PCs are interested in, or the heavily-armed offworlder adventurer rival of the PC group. If you think it's likely they'll be exploring or infiltrating a particular Place or site of interest, you can also take a moment to pull down a map suitable for it from the net.

Weapons Hot

In any primitive context like this, there will be an enormous incentive for the PCs to use their own tech to their own advantage. The locals may or may not understand the capabilities of offworlder weapons and equipment, but the PCs are likely to be quick to give them a demonstration when the situation seems to recommend it.

Don't try to stymie this, but keep any natural consequences in mind. It may be physically possible for the PCs to overcome the palace guard with their high-tech weaponry and armor, but an entire native city full of furious locals will eventually bury them in bodies if they don't rapidly decamp. Even weapons of mass destruction are unlikely to collapse a civilization too primitive to have centralized itself around easily-nuked population nodes.

Judicious, carefully-chosen applications of high tech might be more fruitful, allowing the PCs to sidestep certain challenges without trying to brute-force the entire situation. Brute force might well be an option for certain groups, but pushing over an entire barbarian nation's ruling hierarchy is going to create waves that might swamp a reckless party.

1-2	An Antagonist is privately scheming against the monarch due to the conflict, and has arranged for a Thing to be kept at a Place in order to strengthen his eventual bid to overthrow the ruler. A Friend knows the details, but has unintentionally been involved in the coup plot and would certainly be executed if their entanglement was revealed.
3-4	The conflict pits two sympathetic Friends against each other, and an Antagonist is taking advantage of their quarrel to stir up a helpful Complication, in order to obtain control of a Thing. Both Friends are stubbornly convinced that giving way to the other would be a worse outcome than letting the Antagonist control the Thing. They are both very wrong.
5-6	A Friend smooths the PCs' path to the monarch, when a sudden eruption of the conflict causes a Complication which makes the PCs' cooperation with the monarch requisite to their continuing good health. An Antagonist then seeks to make sure they disappoint the ruler in order to seize their belongings, while a Thing is held out as a reward for successful service.
7-8	An Antagonist is profiting from the conflict and has every reason to goad it on, even though it's already started one Complication and threatens the stability of the entire regime. A Friend loyal to the monarch is desperate to find outside aid, and offers a Thing to the PCs as payment for success. Unfortunately, the monarch considers the Antagonist their best chance to win the conflict.
9-10	After meeting the PCs and forming friendly ties, the Friend finds himself forced to go to a dangerous Place by the needs of the conflict, where an Antagonist seeks to make sure the Friend dies there. The Antagonist has ignited a Complication in order to seal the Friend's fate, though that disorder has brought to light a Thing at the same Place. The Antagonist's focus is now split between killing the Friend and claiming the Thing.

D8	Antagonists
1	Degenerate offworlder advisor
2	Badly delusional monarch
3	Scheming consort or queen
4	Suspicious warband leader
5	Zealous high priest
6	Paranoid heir to the throne
7	Ambassador from a rival barbarian power
8	Offworlder "aid worker" jealous of rival influences

D8	Friends
1	Reformer in search of allies
2	Offworlder far trader
3	Figurehead ruler seeking real power
4	Local scholar wanting knowledge
5	Secret leader of a rebellion
6	Loser in a game of court intrigue
7	Leader of a socially-untouchable caste seeking allies
8	Religious leader convinced the PCs are divinely-sent

D8	Places
1	Barbarously splendid throne room
2	Private quarters lacking in amenities
3	Grand public spectacle
4	Site of savage ritual to the gods
5	Crudely primitive servant quarters
6	Massive tomb of a dead king
7	Repurposed structure of a more civilized age
8	Taboo site of extremely dangerous pretech ruins

D8	Complications
1	They've got a rational reason for shunning tech
2	Use of tech trips lethal pretech suppression
3	The monarch is incompetent yet irreplaceable
4	New tech is causing riotous disruptions
5	The locals have badly misunderstood a new idea
6	An offworlder is trying to violently conquer them
7	The last offworlder here caused a terrible problem
8	It's impossible to blend casually into the local populace

D8	Things
1	Precious substance the locals produce
2	Ancient pretech relic of power
3	Regalia of the legitimate ruler
4	Treasure taken from dead foreigner
5	Treaty rights to a vital good or location
6	Cache of dangerously disruptive tech
7	Precious resource the natives don't realize is valuable
8	Microfactory with tech-bootstrap programming

D8	What is the Crux of the Conflict?
1	Lust. Someone wants someone they shouldn't.
2	Rule. Heirs duel over who is to have the throne.
3	Money. The ruler is trying to loot someone important.
4	Revenge. Someone wants to repay an old slight.
5	Ideals. A dangerous new idea has relentless adherents
6	Fear. The rulers think their rule is at risk.
7	Hate. The ruling class bitterly hates a major subgroup.
8	Vanity. The ruler wants a ruinously expensive folly.

Bureaucratic Agency

It can be particularly difficult for a GM to make an interesting situation out of a bureaucratic conflict. In many cases, it seems the sort of thing to be best resolved by a quick skill check, and even then, players can sometimes resent the existence of the situation at all. If you mean to make a bureaucratic conflict part of your adventure, there are a few basic tricks you can use to help ensure that the players can find some practical way to involve themselves in the situation.

Dressing the Set

It's almost always unnecessary to worry about maps or combat statistics for a situation revolving around a bureaucratic agency. Instead, you should spend your time detailing the points that are likely to be most important to the players and devising the information you'll need to turn a bureaucratic snafu into a real evening's entertainment.

First, cut down the situation to a single point of conflict. The problem is that the PCs can't get a Lift Certification Permit to allow their ship to take off from the local starport, or that they've been selected for a tax audit which will keep them stuck in the city for the next six months, or that they've been nominated for Social Cohesion Service and are generously permitted to work for the state for the next three years. If you give them a single immediate problem or a single specific goal they want to achieve, the players will be able to focus on it. If you just handwave some "paperwork problems" or the like, the players won't have anything they can grip and react to.

Second, personify the solution to the problem. Whatever they need, there is a specific Antagonist who can give it to them. The problem, of course, is that the Antagonist doesn't want to give it to them, and there's no conveniently simple way of making him want to give it to them. If an ordinary bribe or a simple skill check were sufficient to change his mind, it wouldn't be much of a situation. Instead, there is either a concrete problem that is facing this person or a specific need they have that must be satisfied if they're going to cooperate. It may be that nothing the PCs can plausibly do can persuade them, in which case they're going to have to be eliminated or replaced in a way that doesn't draw immediate criminal blowback.

Third, give them a friendly face who can lay out the situation for them. This friend may need to be purchased through bribery, skill checks, or personal favors, but the PCs need an interlocutor who can explain what's going on and point them toward potential solutions. It's then up to the PCs to decide how best to deal with the Antagonist, either through satisfying their needs or eliminating them from the situation. Particularly capable PCs might be able to sort out the reality of the situation without this kind of help, but you'll want to have the friend ready just in case they need a little more orientation.

One common trait of a bureaucratic situation is that violence is not a practical solution to the problem. In many cases, simply shooting the troublesome bureaucrat will not only invite the full wrath of an outraged government, it'll just ensure his replacement by a virtually identical faceless paper-pusher who will be no more help to the PCs than the first one was. Only by turning this Antagonist into a cooperative ally or levering them out of place in favor of a more tractable associate can the PCs overcome whatever bureaucratic snafu is plaguing them. Thus, you can use a bureaucratic agency in your adventure as an opportunity to let the less combat-oriented PCs shine.

D10	Adventure Seeds
1-2	The Antagonist knows that a Thing is at a Place, but is under surveillance and can't get it. He'll hand over the permit if the PCs go to retrieve the Thing, but to do so would bring ruinous consequences to a Friend. To "encourage" the PCs, the Antagonist initiates a negative Complication that will only end when the PCs bring him the Thing or somehow nullify him.
3-4	A Friend is outraged by the corruption exhibited when the Antagonist refuses to issue the PCs the permit. The Friend asks to meet at a Place to give them a solution; once there, the watchful Antagonist triggers some kind of physical or legal hazard appropriate to the Place, accidentally exposing a Thing to the PCs. The Friend can solve the problem if they survive unjailed.
5-6	Two Antagonists are fighting over control of the agency, and both dangle the permit in front of the PCs as inducement to help them win the dispute, which is currently centered at a Place. The confusion of their fighting is causing a Complication to befall the PCs, and only a Friend can clear it up, but the Friend doesn't want either of the Antagonists to win.
7-8	No sooner does the Antagonist deny the permit than one or more Complications befall the PCs as they wage a bureaucratic war on the heroes. The Antagonist is convinced the PCs are agents of a Friend who opposes the Antagonist, for the Friend knows about an illicit Thing the Antagonist is keeping at a well-guarded Place.
9-10	The Antagonist mistakes the PC permit request as a coded message from another corrupt Antagonist he's working with. He does not issue the permit, but instead has a courier hand over a Thing which he assumes the PCs will take to the expectant second Antagonist. When that doesn't happen, the second Antagonist will move against the first and the first will try to get the Thing back, inflicting Complications on the PCs until the Thing is delivered or both Antagonists are neutralized.

D8	Antagonists
1	Mob-owned mole in the agency
2	Profoundly xenophobic manager
3	Rapaciously corrupt official
4	Incompetent who blames the PCs for his trouble
5	Rival of the party in business or personal affairs
6	Political hack useful only to their party
7	Relentlessly upright official with unhelpful regulations
8	Bureaucratic dragoman with insatiable cupidity

D8	Friends
1	Affable lobbyist looking to make a PC ally
2	Ex-employee of the agency
3	Former victim of the antagonist
4	Member of rival political group
5	Deeply frustrated local
6	Predecessor they forced out
7	Vexed bureaucratic reformer
8	Co-ethnic or co-religionist in the office

D8	Places
1	Department of Motor Vehicles, but in space
2	Tower full of featureless offices
3	Warehouse stuffed with old records
4	Private club for senior bureaucrats
5	Sleazy den for off-the-record meetings
6	Ultra-secure agency headquarters
7	Armory full of completely inappropriate agency weapons
8	Data processing depot crammed with computers

D8	Complications
1	The agency really does have dirt on the PCs
2	It's a set-up to pressure PC cooperation
3	The PCs have been mistaken for someone else
4	The antagonist has been set up as a PC target
5	The PCs are accidentally given an ultra-restricted permit
6	Granting the PC permit will produce a horrible event
7	There's some kind of time limit on getting the permit
8	A criminal gang wants to suborn the PCs for the permit

D8	Things
1	Ruinous blackmail material
2	An already-signed permit to act
3	The secret department handbook with vital info
4	Addictive or vile substance craved by a bureaucrat
5	The ID of the person who can fix this
6	Backups of now-erased incriminating agency files
7	Account passcodes to get at the agency's slush fund
8	Root encryption code for all the agency's files

D8	Why Won't They Cooperate?
1	Quota overdrawn; an existing permitee must relinquish
2	The permit was issued, but to identity thieves
3	Issuing the permit requires tremendous work
4	Issuing the permit would reveal agency malfeasance
5	The PC's permit was actually sold off for a bribe
6	The ruling party hates people like the PCs
7	Too many clerks all want outrageous bribes from PCs
8	The agency is being audited and they don't dare move

Colonial Outpost

Far-faring space heroes are eventually going to end up on the edge of human civilization, and there they'll find the bold men and women who are colonizing new worlds. These colonial outposts are defined by being remote locations with limited resources and a fundamentally unknown world around them. They're the small seeds of a greater polity, and PCs being who they are, it's quite possible that the heroes will be the cause of either their ultimate success or gruesome failure.

Using a Colonial Outpost

When putting together an adventure that involves a colonial outpost, there are a few basic themes you can emphasize. Not every colony has these things in equal measure, but most of them have enough of them to shape the kind of play you'll have there.

Colonies are isolated. Even if it's a colony placed on a moon or newly-opened planet in an inhabited star system, it's too far away from its parent power to get immediate help. For a virgin world being opened in a new star system, the nearest helping hand might be weeks away, counting the time needed to send a courier ship.

If something goes wrong in a colony, they have to deal with it on their own, using only those resources at hand. Player characters are ideal for that purpose, for the pragmatic reason that if they get killed the colony isn't out any of its own members. Particularly powerful PC groups or hostile outsiders might be able to coerce a colony, threatening the use of force that the locals simply can't answer.

Colonies are strange. Even a perfectly staid government-sponsored colony for the expansion of some existing polity is going to attract the most daredevil souls in the nation. A colony founded by religious fundamentalists, ideological zealots, or ethnic separatists might have an even stronger reason for strangeness. Aside from this, the basic physical qualities of the new world are going to force their own changes on how the population lives and acts.

You can play up this strangeness at the table. It can be helpful to pick one or two odd habits or peculiar local customs and have them show up early in the session. These might just be decorative quirks, or the weirdness might be crucial to the adventure. Some colonies might be so inured to their new ways that they forget to tell the PCs about it.

Colonies are clueless. By definition, these men and women have planted themselves on an unknown world. They may have orbital surveys and scouting reports, but they just don't know this world's secrets the way a mature culture would. Most of the time, they're going to have to learn them the hard way.

Because of this, almost anything can happen to a colony. Alien warbots can wake up under the rec center, a cyclical alien plant bloom can threaten to crush the colony, an unanticipated weather cycle can hurl killing storms at the locals, or any one of a host of other unpleasantries. In these crisis situations, it may be that the PCs are the only ones present who have the tools and personal skills necessary to deal with this sudden and calamitous event.

Dressing the Set

Decorating a colonial outpost adventure doesn't require much extra effort, but the extent to which you'll want to do it will depend on how much of the adventure is set within the colony itself and how much involves the mysterious alien world outside.

First, go online and grab a map of a small Roman town. It will be walled, well-organized, and have major public buildings marked, all of which are appropriate to a sci-fi colony on a potentially hostile world. You can put the colony administration center where the forum is, and put the fusion plant and infrastructure at the baths. Other buildings can simply be reskinned in sci-fi idioms, with temples becoming churches, insulae becoming hab blocks, and so forth.

Next, answer some basic questions about the colony. What happens if a fight breaks out? How do the colonists feel about the colony and its leadership? Where do outsiders stay, and how are they treated by the locals? What's the first strange thing that the party is likely to see or experience there? What's the overall goal of the colony's ruling authority, and what might they want from the PCs? Where do the PCs go to buy or sell things, and what general types of goods are available?

Next, locate the important NPCs in the colony and dress them up with whatever names, descriptions, quirks, and combat statistics that seem necessary.

Next, if some part of this adventure is expected to happen outside the colony, grab a survey map off the net. Any map will do, though you might want to pick one that has the same general terrain type as the planet. It doesn't need to be a large-scale map, just one big enough to cover the vicinity of any important Places. Sketch any structures in, but don't worry about interior maps of these places unless you expect it to be important during play.

Lastly, tack the adventure outline snugly onto the colony. Adjust it to fit the details you've determined and smooth out the rough spots where necessary. You may need to invent a few more NPCs to serve as signposts or interaction opportunities for the PCs, and you might need to plant a few more novelties or weird planetary events to give more flavor to the session. Once that's complete, you have your adventure.

D10	Adventure Seeds
1-2	A completely unexpected peril has erupted, and an Antagonist is using the opportunity to stampede the frightened locals into compliance, using their control of a Thing to do so. A Friend is trying to overcome the peril and put down the Antagonist, in that order, and is convinced the key to one or both ends can be found in a Place. The Antagonist knows this, and tries to stop them.
3-4	An Antagonist is taking advantage of a Complication in order to progress their plans to seize a Thing being kept at a Place. A local Friend is aware of their scheme, but is unable to intervene directly. Instead, they try to induce the PCs to steal the Thing first and get it offworld before the Antagonist can grab it.
5-6	A Friend has been imprisoned in a Place by the machinations of an Antagonist. The Friend has some key or knows some fact critical to obtaining a missing Thing that the Antagonist requires, but is too fragile or important to torture into compliance. Meanwhile, a Complication is growing steadily worse and will do so until the Friend is freed and able to stop or mitigate it.
7-8	Two highly unsympathetic Antagonists both feel that they should have possession of a Thing and are fomenting an effective civil war over who is to have it. Two separate Complications have already arisen due to their struggles, and a Friend's life or livelihood is facing destruction if the war between the Antagonists is not brought to a rapid conclusion.
9-10	An Antagonist is hunting relentlessly for a Friend who is currently hiding out in a dangerous-to-reach Place. The Friend is willing to trade their knowledge of the location of a valuable Thing in exchange for rescue from the Place; their cooperation and continued life is necessary if the Thing is to be extracted from its current hiding place. Meanwhile, the Antagonist is using a current Complication to try to find and force out the hiding Friend.

D8	Antagonists
1	Saboteur from a rival power
2	Crazed martinet administrator
3	Religious zealot seeking autonomy
4	Profit-obsessed colony manager
5	Ruthless, popular demagogue
6	Hostile native alien leader
7	Government viceroy with delusional expectations
8	Agent from a rebel front against the parent government

D8	Friends
1	Sympathetic refugee seeking a new life
2	Friendly native alien
3	Harried sponsor representative
4	Far trader who deals with them
5	Peaceful isolationist sectarian
6	Unwilling exile stuck here
7	Bright-eyed explorer of a new world
8	Rich and friendly adventure tourist

D8	Places
1	Storehouse of irreplaceable goods
2	Rough-hewn defensive outpost
3	Prefab colony structure
4	Repurposed abandoned alien structure
5	Landing site for colony drop pod
6	Cramped comm and control nexus
7	Hidden zone outside colony government oversight
8	Concealed area for illicit meetings

D8	Complications
1	The colony is totally illegal
2	Pirates regularly raid the colony for supplies and slaves
3	The colonists are disposable slave labor
4	They recently lost survival-critical outside backing
5	Their colonization plan is failing terribly
6	They've been suborned by another planetary power
7	Their leadership is lying to them to keep up morale
8	Old-world ethnic or religious strife has reignited here

D8	Things
1	Vital equipment for survival
2	Cache of alien treasure
3	Critical communications tech
4	Pretech terraforming engine parts
5	Precious substance the colony harvests
6	Large stock of illicit small arms and ammo
7	Cherished relic of a now-vanished cultural past
8	Pretech colony tools and insta-building kits

D8	Why Was This Colony Founded?
1	It was intended as a forward military base.
2	The site has a rare, hard-to-mine resource
3	An ultra-wealthy lunatic's "fun" preserve
4	Merchant prince wanted to found a private world
5	Isolationists of political or religious bent came here
6	Refuge for a lost cause or fleeing castaways
7	Idealists wanted a new, totally unworkable society
8	The homeworld wanted a not-prison dumping ground

Derelict Orbital

Whether floating in the void of deep space or spinning just above the upper wisps of a planet's atmosphere, orbitals serve numerous purposes to their makers. Every purpose has its end, however, and many of these orbitals later become abandoned, ruined, or degraded into uselessness. Depending on the nature of their end, the final occupants may not have had time to extract everything of value from the station.

Orbitals are useful adventure sites when you want to play up themes of isolation, dangerous decay, and perilous exploration. You can also place them as needed, from the deep void to high above a major city.

Orbitals In Your Adventures

When you devise an orbital, take a moment to decide its original purpose. The end it was meant to fulfill is often the key to its eventual ruin; an asteroid smelter might have run out of economically-viable rocks, a research station might have had a catastrophic experimental failure, a military base might have been smashed in combat, and so forth. Understanding what the orbital was originally meant to do will also help you flesh out points of interest inside it and suggest the kind of people who'd now be interested in looting or reclaiming it.

Once you know what it was meant for, you'll have a better idea of where to locate it in the solar system. Orbitals that would have required regular contact with population centers should be in orbit over an inhabited world or planted on the transit lines of some high-traffic trade route or passenger line. Orbitals that were conducting some kind of extraction industry, dangerous research, or military basing are probably placed deeper out into the black, or dropped into orbit around an uninhabited but resource-rich rock.

You'll also need to decide why the orbital hasn't already been stripped down to the frame. The two most likely reasons boil down to danger and obscurity. Either the derelict is so dangerous that reasonable scavengers prefer to hunt elsewhere or it's so well-hidden that nobody can find it to plunder. Naturally, you'll need to make sure that the PCs either have a reasonable confidence in challenging the first or inside knowledge to overcome the second.

Will your orbital have resident occupants, and if so, are they organic? An AI core or an autonomous expert system requires little more than power and maintenance tools to survive in the void of deep space, but organic life forms are a little more fragile, and will require that the orbital still has functional life support. A small population might still be eating from the derelict's food stores, but a large one is going to need some sort of hydroponic system or high-tech food synthesizer.

The choice of whether or not to put occupants on the derelict revolves chiefly around whether or not you want the PCs to be faced with diplomatic situations. It's perfectly possible to stock the orbital with blood-crazed mutant stowaways who want nothing but blood from intruders, but a purely combat-oriented threat can be supplied just as well by defense bots and attack drones. Making the occupants utterly inimical but human is apt to frustrate players who like to at least entertain the possibility of negotiated dealings.

These occupants need not be long-term residents, however. The Antagonist in the adventure is unlikely to have come alone to the derelict if they're some outside looter, and their crew and minions will be present on the orbital. Evildoers are notorious for their lack of competence in hiring lieutenants, and it's quite possible that some of these minions might be amenable to cutting their own deals with PCs, particularly if the heroes have the upper hand.
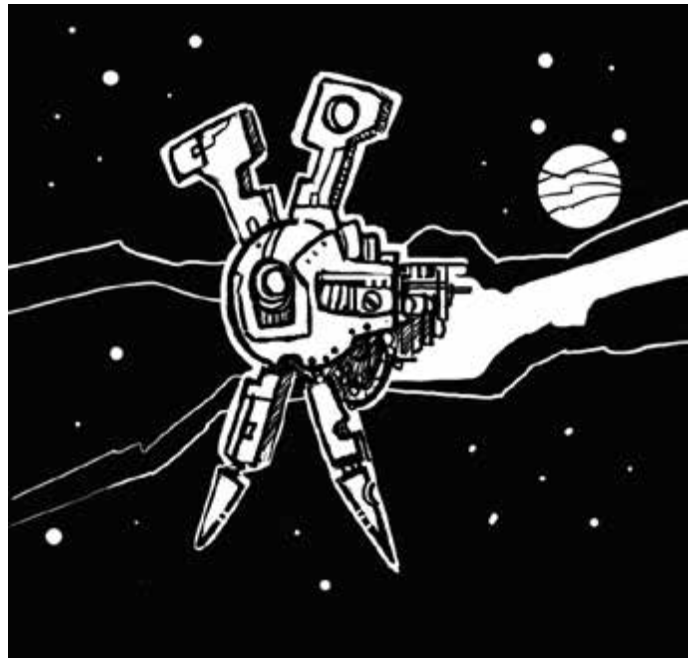
Dressing the Set

To prepare your orbital for an evening's adventure, you'll need to start with a map. You can pull down a random one-page dungeon from the net to use as a basic framework; where the map shows solid rock or exterior spaces, treat it as hard vacuum, storage tanks, or tightly-packed machinery. You can reskin the individual rooms or locations in the dungeon according to the original purpose of the derelict. Magical whimseys and dungeon oddities can often be imported almost whole-cloth by reflavoring them as technological artifacts, and their strangeness a product of malfunctioning hardware or some esoteric original purpose.

Next, identify where the PCs are going to enter the orbital. The original docking bay may or may not be functional still, and the PCs might have to make the last leg of the ingress in vacc suits or cut open the hull plating to get inside the structure.

Next, place the Antagonists, Friends, and other important NPCs in the orbital. Many dungeons will already come with inhabitants, which you might retain and reskin, or replace with occupants of your own. Take a moment to make sure that the PCs won't be inevitably confronted by combat if they enter the orbital; there should at least be a theoretical way to avoid gunfire, even if it's by stealth and reconnaissance rather than diplomacy.

Next, take the important Things and Places in the adventure and locate them on the map. Trace the path from them to the entrance point and check what sort of things the PCs are likely to encounter on the way. If all the paths lead through particular places or mean dealing with particular threats or NPCs, make sure you have a plan to deal with that when it comes up. For instance, if you know that the PCs are almost certain to run into a space hermit, you're going to need a few lines describing that hermit and some idea of how he's going to interact with the PCs.

Lastly, think past the adventure to the larger consequences to the orbital. Is there any outside power that's going to notice a ruckus on the station? Is anyone going to care or react if the PCs decide to claim the orbital for their own base or salvaging? If the PCs do clear out all the perils inside, what sort of contacts will they need in order to make a profit off salvaging it or to successfully repair it? There's a great deal of value in a derelict station, and a great deal of adventure content too.

D10	ADVENTURE SEEDS
1-2	A Friend alerts the PCs about a critical Thing aboard the derelict shortly after they board, but an Antagonist is ahead of them in obtaining it. The Friend knows a shortcut to the Thing, but it requires passing through a dangerous Place, and a Complication underway is making the job even harder.
3-4	Two Antagonists both think the derelict and its salvage belong to them, and a Friend is caught in the crossfire. The Friend's stashed a precious Thing and is willing to lead the PCs to it in exchange for a lift off the orbital. A Complication is making the process more difficult, but there's data or a key at a Place that can neutralize the difficulty at least temporarily.
5-6	A Friend is convinced they rightly own the orbital, but an Antagonist plans to take it from their rapidly-cooling corpse. The Friend's hidden with a precious Thing in a well-defended Place, and offers the treasure to the PCs in return for getting rid of the Antagonist. The Antagonist, however, is already halfway into the Place and the Friend can't shut off the defenses selectively.
7-8	A seemingly undefended orbital offers up a Thing from a characteristic Place as soon as the PCs start investigating. Actually taking the Thing will set off local defenses, causing a Complication to become apparent and awakening or beckoning an Antagonist who will almost certainly arrive before the PCs can readily abscond with their loot.
9-10	A Friend needs the PCs to help find out the fate of another Friend they suspect is on the orbital, and holds out the prospect of a Thing that the second Friend was searching for when communications were lost. Unbeknownst to the patron, an Antagonist has kidnapped the second Friend and is currently squeezing them for information about the Thing, which sadly is not within the second Friend's knowledge. A lieutenant of the Antagonist actually found it, and is looking for a chance to escape with it.

D8	ANTAGONISTS		D8	FRIENDS
1	Amoral ship-scavenger and their crew		1	Curious asteroid prospector
2	Still-active internal defense bot with lethal programming		2	Desperate cryo-awakened survivor
3	Degenerate chieftain of the heirs to the original crew		3	Struggling repair AI craving usable materials
4	Malevolent control AI operating the infrastructure		4	Castaway trapped on the orbital
5	Reawakened alien abomination		5	Survivor from the last salvagers
6	Crazed survivor of the disaster that killed the orbital		6	Treasure-hunter in need of help
7	Vicious hermit who considers the orbital theirs		7	Exile hiding out on the orbital
8	Brain-in-a-bot "ghost" of a long-dead resident		8	Baffled legal inheritor of the orbital

D8	PLACES		D8	COMPLICATIONS
1	Crackling, radioactive engine core		1	The orbital will inevitably destruct very soon
2	Hab area full of corpses		2	The orbital somehow changes those trapped there
3	Command center with active defenses		3	It's far harder to leave it than enter it
4	Sealed-off docking bay		4	The orbital's loot is extravagantly illegal
5	Heavily-protected data core		5	Getting the orbital's best loot will destroy it rapidly
6	Dangerously functional work zone		6	The orbital's real purpose is disguised
7	Gunnery magazine full of unstable explosives		7	A government inspection team arrives soon after the PCs
8	Emergency safe zone that failed catastrophically		8	The orbital is full of a space plague or dangerous miasma

D8	THINGS		D8	WHAT KIND OF RUINED IS IT?
1	Data showing what happened here		1	Overrun by dangerous biological perils
2	Keys to deactivate orbital anti-ship weapons		2	On the losing end of a space attack
3	Internal security control keycode		3	Torn up by lethal internal strife
4	Comm tech needed to call for help		4	Devastated by an experiment gone wrong
5	Priceless loot gathered by those now dead		5	Ruined by an alien specimen or alien tech
6	Tech to prevent the orbital from collapsing		6	Wrecked by an unknown cyclical space peril
7	Bearer deed granting legal title to the orbital		7	Hit by a corporate or government cleaning squad
8	Vital core component to ultra-illegal prototype weapon		8	Were driven insane by something they worked on

Disaster Area

Something horrible has happened here in the recent past. The locals haven't had time to muster an effective response to the disaster, though they might be taking the first steps toward dealing with it, and most of the victims are still struggling to cope with the calamity. The scale of the disaster is too large to be answered by conventional relief measures, and the PCs are certain to have to deal with the chaos of the aftermath.

This situation presumes that the disaster has already happened. While it's both possible and traditional to run adventures that revolve around *preventing* a disaster from happening, entering into a circumstance where the worst has already happened gives the PCs the chance to cope with challenges that don't often crop up in a normal sci-fi society.

An Ocean of Suffering

When framing out your disaster, it's going to need to be a big one unless the local government is substantially weaker or less competent than is usual for a sci-fi setting. A small colonial outpost might be swamped by a relatively limited calamity, but a large, high-tech nation is going to need a really big disaster to completely overwhelm its relief mechanisms, particularly if this kind of disaster has been handled before.

The government might actually be able to handle the situation in time, but it's going to take longer than the adventure situation allows and a lot of people are going to suffer and die in the meanwhile. The PCs might be able to alleviate the suffering for specific people in the disaster zone, or pull them out to a safer location, but the sheer volume of ruin is going to overwhelm their personal resources unless they happen to be playing in a campaign of interstellar merchant princes.

At this point, the real horror of the disaster area isn't so much the disaster itself, but what it's done to people and what people are doing because of it. In a community with very strong social ties the locals might be able to maintain civilizational order even when children are starving or people are dying for lack of supplies. In most atomized urban centers, the distance from Saturday night clubbing to killing people for their shoes is apt to be much shorter.

Some of this suffering is background flavor to the adventure, but other societal breakdowns can be made into significant elements of the session. People doing things they'd never do under ordinary circumstances can be used as Antagonists, Friends, or simple NPC actors in the adventure, and their desperation can be used to surprise players with the lengths they'll go to in order to survive and save their loved ones.

Things Done During Disasters

Someone betrays a family member or loved one in exchange for safety or precious supplies.

Mob violence breaks out against an unpopular group that can somehow be blamed for the disaster.

Government relief is delivered to the completely wrong location.

Local officials give incorrect information to route relief supplies into the hands of their associates or favored groups.

Children, the elderly, and those who are sick or weak are abandoned so that the rest of a family might survive.

Pit graves are dug and left open until they're completely full.

Refugees clog the roads as they seek salvation elsewhere.

Criminals and warlords loot the victims or rally them to rebel against a seemingly-uncaring government.

Dressing the Set

Most disaster areas don't require much in the way of a map. If the action of the adventure takes place inside a city, just grab a city map from the net and scribble in the parts that are ruined by the disaster. Rural calamities can be oriented with a random survey map.

First, tack the adventure outline onto the map. Figure out where the participants are, decide how the Things, Places, and Complications relate to this particular disaster, and thread them together as the seed describes. You can assign combat stats to NPCs that are likely to get into a fight, and pull generic stat blocks for looters, rioters, overtaxed law enforcement, or the occasional military vehicle.

Next, flavor the adventure with your chosen disaster. The terrible things that are going on around the adventure may directly impinge on the adventure outline, or they might just add further difficulty. You can plant rioters in an inopportune place, put some heart-rending tragedy in an awkward location that the PCs will need to either ignore or help at the cost of their main mission, and possibly throw in a small sub-situation that has nothing to do with the main adventure but is likely to attract the attention of the heroes.

Next, take a moment to think about your players. How are they most likely to react to the disaster? Some groups will cheerfully corduroy a road with the corpses of the dead on their way to accomplishing their mission goal, while others will be constitutionally incapable of dealing with the adventure until they've done everything humanly possible to ease the lot of the victims. If the players get satisfaction in spending the game session doing disaster relief, that's an entirely legitimate use of their time, but you'll want to anticipate that before you suddenly have to abandon your entire session prep in order to handle their sudden mission shift. So long as the players are having a good time then the session will be a success, but foresight here is your friend.
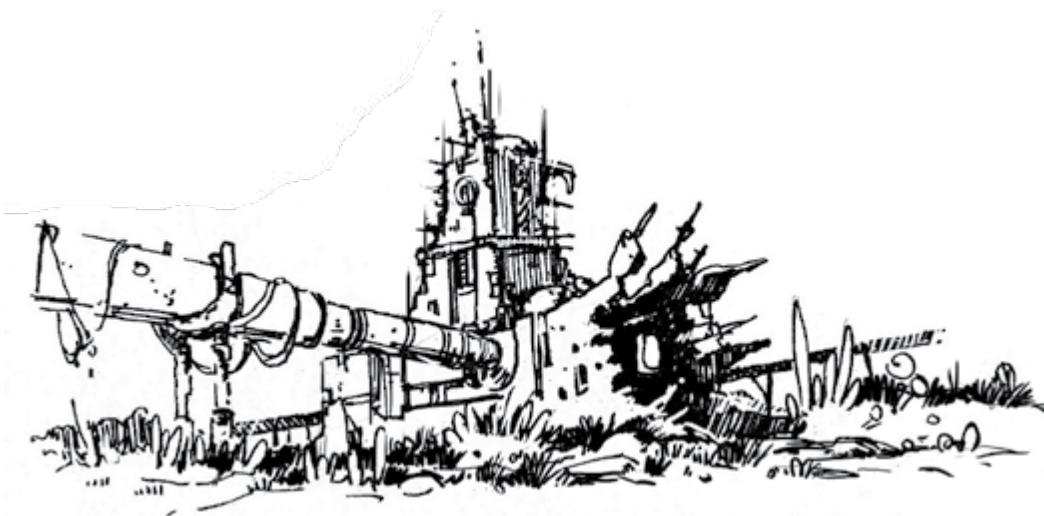
D10	ADVENTURE SEEDS
1-2	An Antagonist is the only one maintaining a functional refugee camp in the area, but is taking brutal advantage of the victims as slaves or subjects to be mulcted. A victimized Friend wants a Thing which will be able to block the Antagonist or force the government to take notice, but it's kept at a Place, and the Antagonist will react savagely if they discover it exists.
3-4	An Antagonist is organizing refugees into bandit groups or looter swarms, potentially under the cover of governmentally-approved "citizen militias". A Friend and their kindred are in the way of one such swarm, but if they can get to a Place they think they can defend it sufficiently to force the swarm to bypass them. A Complication is making that harder, however.
5-6	The disaster was sufficiently recent that the government hasn't had time to act effectively and an Antagonist is taking advantage of the lull to loot and pillage. A Place is being set up as a governmental staging area, but in the confusion, the government actually thinks a Friend is responsible for the attacks, and a Complication is making it hard to refute that assumption.
7-8	A Friend has family or loved ones within the disaster zone, and is offering the location of a cached Thing to the PCs if they help them get in and get their kindred out. Unfortunately, those kindred are hidden in a Place dangerously close to an Antagonist, who is digging in that same Place in order to get at the same Thing that the Friend has promised to the PCs.
9-10	Two different Complications are making relief work almost impossible in the disaster zone, and an Antagonist is actively working to keep those Complications in effect, the better to enjoy the freedom the absence of effective government allows. A Friend who has badly suffered from one of the Complications is offering the PCs knowledge of a Place which will provide a route past the Antagonist's usual swarm of minions, and give a chance at both the Antagonist's life and a Thing they've just plundered.

D8	ANTAGONISTS
1	Far trader plundering the locale amid the chaos
2	Aspiring local warlord taking advantage
3	Demented prophet of doom
4	Agent of an opportunistic enemy power
5	Ethnic or religious gang boss
6	Revolutionary seizing their chance
7	Government official taking the chance for extortion
8	Oligarch who cares only for his own property

D8	FRIENDS
1	Desperate local with endangered kin
2	Hard-pressed local official
3	Grizzled survivalist Cassandra
4	Waif who lost everything in the disaster
5	Determined religious leader
6	Exhausted civil engineer
7	Hard-pressed government relief coordinator
8	Refugee driven out by the disaster

D8	PLACES
1	Habitation smashed by the disaster
2	Refugee camp with inadequate supplies
3	Site of a bloody massacre over vital stores
4	Temple full of desperate prayers
5	Ruins of a wrecked "safe place"
6	Zone where the disaster is still in full effect
7	Extremely unfriendly military forward base
8	Hospital overcrowded with the sick and wounded

D8	COMPLICATIONS
1	Only the most societally-disposable are suffering
2	The disaster is very advantageous to a major power
3	Victims are blaming an unpopular group for it
4	Rival powers are moving on the weakened group
5	The disaster has revealed a priceless treasure
6	The victims include very unsympathetic types
7	Rebels are blaming the suffering on the government
8	A fanatical group is preaching to the dispossessed

D8	THINGS
1	Supplies critical to surviving the disaster
2	Data showing where the second wave will hit
3	Arms cache to oppress or defend survivors
4	Tech needed to repair vital infrastructure
5	Proof of official malfeasance in the disaster
6	Medical supplies needed for survivors
7	Cache of wealth hidden by a now-dead victim
8	Keys to open up a sealed pretech refuge structure

D8	WHAT'S THE DISASTER?
1	An exotic eruption of alien biology
2	Gigantic weather patterns of killing force
3	Floods which may include lethal liquids
4	Volcanic instability and lava flows
5	Hideous alien plague ravaging the locals
6	Remorselessly far-reaching famine
7	Tremendous wildfire marching unstoppably onward
8	Tsunami waves inundating the land

Doomed Habitat

Not every corner of the cosmos is friendly to human habitation. Sometimes a domed city, warren-hab, floating metropolis, or other fragile bubble of habitable existence is surrounded by an implacable sea of peril. Toxic atmospheres, landless world-oceans, lethal radiation, unstoppably violent alien ecologies, and a host of other unfortunate circumstances can compel a world to live within a sealed habitat.

Naturally, sometimes these habitats die. With this adventure situation, the PCs find themselves in a hab that is currently doomed. It may be that there's a way to avert the impending destruction, or the PCs may just need to complete their business and get away before the clock runs out on the inhabitants.

Arranging An Apocalypse

As the GM, you need to be careful about timing the inevitable doomsday. If the PCs arrive when the end is immediately at hand, they're going to be too busy fighting off swarms of crazed natives desperate to get aboard anything that can fly. If the ruin is too far in the future or too well-hidden, however, it's not going to have any meaningful impact on the adventure.

Usually, the best time to schedule the apocalypse is far enough in the future that people can still believe it won't happen, yet close enough that some locals are certain it's on its way. The government might still be publicly calling for peace and order, even if the elite are making arrangements to survive in case this really is the end. The players can land their ship without having it mobbed in the starport, but there are NPCs and signs that speak of things being ill-omened around the habitat.

You'll also need to decide whether or not the apocalypse is something the PCs can stop. You need to be careful about this stage, because a lot of players have been trained by experience to see any world-ending peril to be an automatic cue for PC involvement in a desperate yet ultimately successful attempt to avoid the catastrophe.

That's not really how *Stars Without Number* works. Some problems really *are* too big to be plausibly resolved by the PCs, and sometimes the game world is going to grind forward without regard for the narrative exertions of the player characters. If the world of Seleucis IV is about to be particle-blasted by a solar eruption, there won't necessarily be a convenient pretech stellar pacifier located in a nearby villain's lair. Sometimes the only thing that's going to happen is a cataclysm.

If this is the case, and if there really isn't any plausible way for the PCs to avert the disaster, you need to be very up-front with that fact. The players may need the inevitability of the catastrophe to be underlined very heavily before they understand that the evening's play is not designed around giving them the chance to save the habitat. It may be that they come up with a brilliant solution you hadn't imagined, and if so, that's great. Their remarkable cunning and unforeseen resources have pulled off a world-saving coup, and they deserve the fruits of that mighty deed. But they shouldn't feel like they're *supposed* to do that, and you need to make sure they understand that.

As can be imagined, adventures set against the backdrop of a doomed habitat can make for a very bleak evening's gaming. Some groups will pause to feel a moment's noble sympathy for those who are about to die before getting back to the business at hand, but other PCs will feel an obligation to rescue NPCs who've been important to them. This sort of private relief operation can form the seed of an entire additional round of adventure sessions. As with most cases of player attachment to your world, you should take advantage of it whenever it happens.

Dressing the Set

You generally don't need to worry about acquiring a map for the entire habitat. Instead, check the relevant Places in your adventure and determine which ones are likely to see exploration or combat. For those, pull generic floor plans or diagrams off the net and reskin them to fit the particular idiom of the habitat.

First, determine the relationship of the impending apocalypse with the adventure you've outlined. How is it apparent to the PCs, and how is it going to affect what's happening in the adventure? If the PCs don't know about it it's not going to be much of a presence in the session, and if it never affects the way things play out, it's apt to be forgotten as a bit of pointless decoration. Decide one or two ways in which the impending disaster is going to make life difficult for the PCs or propel a situation in the adventure.

Next, plant your NPCs in the adventure. Assign any necessary combat stats, flesh them out with a few lines of description, and hook them into the basic outline of the adventure seed. Figure out what they're doing when the PCs enter the stage and determine how they're going to connect with the starfaring heroes to drag them into the local troubles.

Next, flesh out the Places and conflict situations with any necessary set dressing. If you expect the PCs to spend time exploring an unknown Place, for example, you'll want to sprinkle a few interesting objects or people in it so they have something to interact with. If you know they're likely to go into a particular Place with guns blazing, then take the extra time to set up the local opposition and sketch a few notes on what they're likely to do if some heavily-armed offworlders show up with blood in their eyes. If you can see a tense social negotiation cropping up, then take a moment to figure out what each NPC wants from the PCs, and what kind of compromises they'll make if the PCs are smooth with their diplomacy.

Finally, think past the adventure to the impending calamity. If the PCs want to help the habitat or save certain NPCs, how is that going to happen? Is it something they can just do at the end of the adventure and mark it settled between sessions, or do you want to turn it into a full-fledged game session with its own challenges and rewards?

D10	Adventure Seeds
1-2	An Antagonist is moving to take advantage of the chaos to deal with a troublesome Friend before the Antagonist makes their planned escape from the dome. The Friend has a Thing that would hinder that escape, and the PCs know it. Unfortunately, the Friend's secret location can only be learned at a Place, where a Complication makes investigation hazardous.
3-4	An Antagonist disbelieves in the doom, and is making a play to take control of the habitat. Naturally, they're trying to halt the outflow of locals, as they don't want to rule an empty hab. A Friend's family is stuck here because of that, and they're offering a Thing if the PCs can somehow get their family out from their hidey-hole in a Place, despite the Antagonist's personal interest.
5-6	A Friend's attempt to organize a coherent exodus is being stymied by an Antagonist, who doesn't want to let the people go until they've been stripped of their wealth and belongings. The Antagonist draws their strength from a Thing they possess, kept at a well-defended Place, but a Complication is opening a hole in their defenses that the PCs might be able to exploit.
7-8	Two Antagonists are struggling for control of transport out of the hab, and currently the only ones getting away are the nearest and dearest of these Antagonists. A Complication is causing further chaos. A Thing exists that could end the struggle, but it's kept at a dangerous Place, and both Antagonists are sending people to try to seize it.
9-10	An Antagonist is seriously hindered by a Complication, and they're trying to tamp it down with the authority or utility of a Thing they possess. A Friend is being actively aided by the consequences of a Complication, and so wants to incite it yet further in order to stop the Antagonist from taking control of the hab. A particular Place contains a person or situation that could be used to either neutralize the Complication or aggravate it to a state that would destroy the Antagonist.

D8	Antagonists
1	Blandly deceitful government executive
2	Wildly hedonistic crime boss
3	Delusional security chief
4	Demagogue blaming an unpopular group
5	Agent of an enemy power
6	Ideologue who hates their own home
7	Corp exec who plans to profit by the doom
8	Obsessive scientist who helped catalyze the doom

D8	Friends
1	Engineer struggling against doom
2	Far trader trying to extract friends
3	Civil defense officer keeping order
4	Scientist experimenting with solutions
5	Relief worker trying to help
6	Offworlder diplomat attempting to aid
7	Local religious leader trying to organize people
8	Wild-eyed but correct survivalist

D8	Places
1	Locus of the most recent doom activity
2	Plaza full of panicked locals
3	Bloody site where "the guilty" were lynched
4	Starport overrun by the desperate
5	Survivalist bunker for the elite
6	Civil engineering site overtaxed by the doom
7	Remote nook where frightened people are hiding
8	Infrastructure substation collapsing under the doom

D8	Complications
1	The locals refuse to believe the doom is coming
2	Stopping the doom would depose the ruling group
3	People are using the doom to justify attacks on rivals
4	The initial stages of the doom are very helpful
5	Outsider rivals are encouraging the doom
6	Stopping the doom would cost a sub-group everything
7	The doom's certain conquest has been widely prophesied
8	The PCs are among a handful to know the doom exists

D8	Things
1	Evidence of who or what caused the doom
2	Tech that would fix the impending doom
3	Bribe sufficient to buy space transport for the populace
4	Key to refuge intended for the hab's rulers
5	Precious byproduct of the doom
6	Mothballed AI core that could solve the problem
7	Abandoned armory full of milspec hardware
8	Cold-sleep pod with a VIP occupant in it

D8	What's the Nature of the Doom?
1	Uncontrollable biological by-product of life support
2	Tectonic instability provoked by recent construction
3	Irreplaceable pretech life support is breaking down
4	Solar flares herald a life-scouring eruption
5	Self-replicating warbots are running amok
6	An innovative tech is catalyzing unexpected ruin
7	Blood-crazed and suicidal ideological sect
8	Unplanned activation of a military doomsday weapon

Hellworld Settlement

Sealed habitats are necessary on some worlds. This particular planet might benefit from such hermetic protection, but it's just semi-habitable enough or its colonizers are just cheap enough not to go to that extent. The locals are forced to deal with a quasi-habitable world that hates them, and a lot of the inhabitants can expect very short, unpleasant lives because of that pitiless world.

Welcome to Hades

The basic characteristic of a hellworld settlement is that the planet wants to kill the human inhabitants. It may not be a conscious, sentient sort of malice, but something fundamental about the world is hostile to human habitation, and any locals are in a constant state of struggle against the remorseless violence of their new home.

Naturally, there must be something incredibly enticing on this world in order to attract that kind of attention when survival is such a dubious prospect here. Someone has gone to the enormous expense of establishing a settlement over interstellar distances and recruiting capable colonists to face that grim peril. There are a few basic directions you can take for justifying this.

In the first option, there's some resource on this world that's precious enough to justify a human workforce. The extraction is too difficult or the environment is too hostile for expert-system robots, so some number of human inhabitants are needed to pull out the resource. Enigmatic crystals, alien tech, ancient pretech salvage, plants that can only grow with painstaking care under this malignant sun, or some resource that responds to human psychic energy might all make for treasures to be plundered by the hands of daring laborers.

In the second option, there's nothing but death on this world. The only reason it was founded was as a prison or torment-world for some more powerful polity. It might've initially been a treasure-hunting base that was repurposed into a Devil's Island after it proved worthless, or it might be designed as an open-air prison where the wardens need only monitor the prisoner's access to space travel.

The third option is that the settlement is actually a very old colony, one founded when the world was different or when pretech equipment was able to mitigate the dangers of the planet. Over the centuries, pre-cious pretech defenses have broken down or new planetary perils have arisen, and the inhabitants now must fight desperately for their survival. These relic-populations may still have fragments of their former tech to entice the PCs, but they lack the critical industry necessary to rebuild or maintain the old protective measures.

Understanding the basic justification for the settlement is important if you're going to dress it properly. A wretched prison camp surrounded by a carnivorous jungle is going to be a very different place than an ancient pleasure resort community that lost its protective pretech fencing four hundred years ago.

Dressing the Set

Some cursory map of the settlement is often useful, as the PCs are unlikely to be venturing out into the hellworld itself until after they've spent some time in the protected zone. You can download an appropriate map off the net, but it's useful to dirty it up a bit with some places where the hellworld has left its mark or caused some considerable damage. Putting such a place near the PCs' initial landing spot or entry point helps clue them in that the world beyond the walls is not a friendly place to be.

First, you'll want to integrate the hellworld's particular misery with the adventure seed you've chosen. As with a doomed habitat, you want to make the hellworld's awful environment an active presence in the adventure. Something about this world makes a particular problem in the adventure, or drives a particular choice by the NPCs. The players need to be able to see the influence that the environment has on the evening's gaming, or else the awfulness of the world becomes something more imputed than proven.

Next, locate the NPCs in the adventure. Give them their initial motivations, write down any probable combat stats that will be needed, and figure out how the PCs are going to get the hook that will lead them into the adventure you're preparing.

Next, take a little time to figure out how the PCs are going to deal with the hazards of the world. Do vacc suits help? Have they got any technology that the natives don't have, or psychic powers that might mitigate local circumstances? It may be that the awfulness of the world is of a kind that the PCs just have no particular way to dampen, but you can expect the players to try to figure out some way to deal with the environmental hazards.

Next, think about whether or not the locals are going to want to get off this miserable rock. If they're prisoners or jaded colonists, it's very likely that they will be willing to do all kinds of favors to anyone with a starship who can get them off the planet. For heritors of a long-standing colony, however, they might be reluctant to leave even this miserable place. Their friends and loved ones are here, all the familiar horrible things they know are here, and any foreign world is so much talk and holo-pictures from a suspicious offworlder adventurer. PCs who try to bribe such locals with escape might find them less than receptive to the idea.
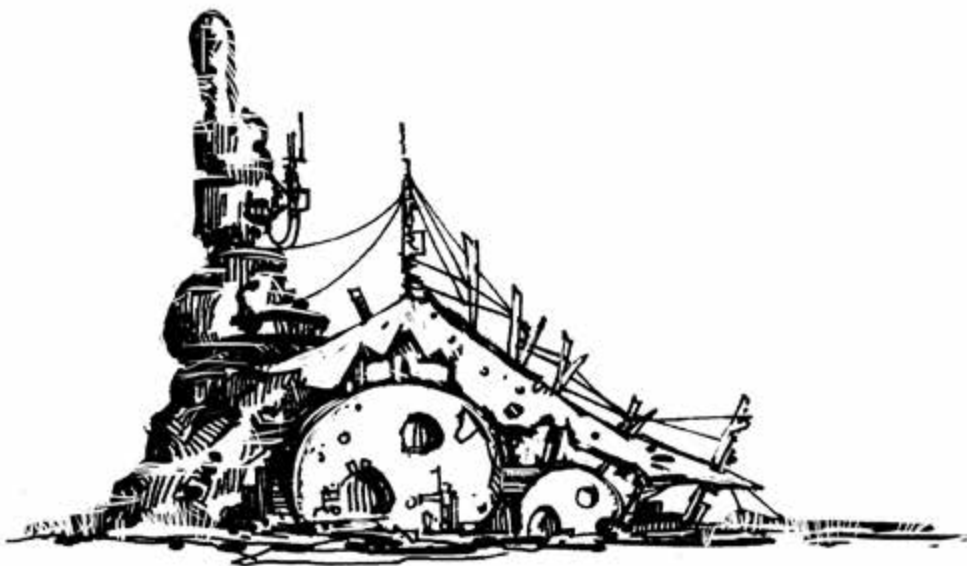
D10	Adventure Seeds
1-2	A Friend has come to where the PCs are in order to rescue a relative or loved one from an Antagonist, who is keeping them at a Place. At that same place, a Thing is being kept, and the Friend offers to tell the PCs where to get the Thing if they can successfully extract the Friend's associate. A Complication is involved with the rescue.
3-4	An Antagonist is providing safety or survival needs to the locals in exchange for their slavish obedience. They've successfully extracted a Thing from their serfs, and enjoy it in the well-defended Place that is their lair. A Friend has been tormented by the Antagonist, and wants revenge; they have a key or other access to the Place and knowledge of the Thing.
5-6	Anguished locals are being tormented by the Antagonist to benefit their own followers and serfs. A Friend has ignited a conflict between this Antagonist and a second Antagonist by playing up the consequences of a Complication. The fighting has revealed or knocked loose a Thing at a Place, and now both combatants want to seize it in order to crush their opponent.
7-8	A Friend has been dragged into a hopeless effort to overcome the peril of the world by a heartless Antagonist, but in the course of their work, they discovered a Thing in a hidden Place. They want to get it out, but don't dare do it alone lest their find be discovered by the Antagonist. A Complication threatens to reveal their find to all if it's not abstracted quickly.
9-10	An Antagonist is doing something that is very profitable for them but that amplifies the hellish qualities of the world nearby, thus causing calamities for a Friend. The focus of the Antagonist's activities are at a nearby Place, and only by disrupting them will the world's miserable qualities subside in the area. The Antagonist has used some of their ill-gotten gains to acquire a Thing, which they're going to use to make things even worse if their plans aren't stopped soon.

D8	Antagonists
1	Cannibal survivor chieftain
2	Utterly amoral group leader
3	Brutal local seeking escape offworld
4	Cult leader of a world-worshiping sect
5	Heartless corporate exploiter
6	Monstrous product of this world
7	Government warden-viceroy with a sadistic bent
8	Survival-obsessed xenophobe leader

D8	Friends
1	Relative innocent seeking escape
2	Thrill-seeking offworlder tourist
3	Curious scientist exploring the world
4	Grim but upright local leader
5	Outworlder trying to rescue a friend
6	Engineer building an escape or refuge
7	Stoic religious leader
8	Zealous environmentalist seeking a *modus vivendi*

D8	Places
1	Locus of the world's horrible traits
2	Wretched habitat of locals
3	Work site for holding back the danger
4	Cemetery for the myriad unfortunates
5	Heavily-defended corp sponsor base
6	Shrine to a red-handed god of survival
7	Harshly summary courtroom and gallows
8	Cyst of hidden danger spawned by the world

D8	Complications
1	The world's only hellish because of the local industry
2	The natives can't readily survive offworld any more
3	The natives think they're morally obliged to stay
4	Its sponsor uses it as a prison or dumping ground
5	The sponsor lies about the real nature of the world
6	The hellish trait of the world is going to get much worse
7	The hellish conditions spawn some precious substance
8	The locals live under prison-like police-state conditions

D8	Things
1	Vital supplies to survive the danger
2	Terraforming plans to pacify the world
3	The precious substance the locals extract
4	Weapons to overthrow overseers
5	Cure for a plague of this world
6	Tech necessary to escape the planet
7	Proof of the viceroy's malversations
8	Cache of precious luxury the locals desire desperately

D8	What's so Hellish About It?
1	Savage temperature extremes that overpower life support
2	Brutal radiation that induces many dire mutations
3	Frantic biosphere that throws off countless plagues
4	Murderous local fauna that infiltrate habitats
5	Near-intolerable high gravity that cripples natives
6	Psychic miasma that drives people insane
7	Maddening sonics throb through the atmosphere
8	Constant winds or rains hammer the surface

Merciless Desert

An alien sun scorches this pitiless place, league on league of stones and sand to surround the hapless heroes. The ridiculously-hostile desert has an honored place in sci-fi history, and there are times when you might plant the PCs in some spicy situation amid the dunes. While it might seem a little difficult to make an endless wasteland of lifeless sand all that interesting, there are a few tricks you can use to worm some excitement out of the setting.

Its Name Is a Killing Word

The traditional sci-fi desert is nothing if not extreme. It is incredibly dry and hot, to the extent that the natives might need some form of technology simply to survive the surface conditions. Native life is rare and usually dangerous in some way, with even the plants possessing violent self-defense mechanisms that only a desert-dwelling local would know how to evade. Unprepared outsiders can expect only death among its barren dunes.

You should make the desert itself an NPC in your game. Wind-shifted dunes, crumbling stone outcrops, merciless sun-stroke, savage beasts, rapacious nomad raiders, and the bitter elusiveness of water can all combine to make the desert's perils an active element of your adventure. Something about the situation should hinge on the lethal accidents of the sandy wastes, either in forcing the NPCs to do something or in presenting the PCs with a sudden complication to the adventure. Bad things happen in the desert, and they happen often enough that the locals are accustomed to dealing with them.

You'll also need to decide whether or not the desert covers the entire planet. If it's simply the dominant feature of the adventuring area, then the PCs might encounter NPCs from more clement areas, or have an adventure that revolves around the inevitable tension between impoverished desert-dwellers and the rich natives of more generous regions. The "wetlander" natives might fear or hate the desert-dwellers for their raiding ways, while the desert-dwellers may resent their neighbors for having monopolized the only arable land on the world.

A world-spanning desert is a different matter. Everyone on the planet has been forced to come to some kind of terms with the sands, possibly thanks to the benefits of ancient technology. Such precious tech has an unfortunate habit of breaking down when adventure calls.

Dressing the Set

Maps aren't generally relevant for a sci-fi desert, though if you expect combat or exploration in a particular Place you'll want to pick out a map for it. Plucking up plans of ancient Egyptian structures from the net is a good course for this, as the architecture is built to deal with a harshly arid climate.

First, tack down your adventure outline on top of the desert. Define your Places, name and locate your Antagonists and Friends, and customize any Things or Complications to fit the details of the particular world you're planting this desert on. Don't flesh out these details very deeply, just get a general idea of how all the components are to relate.

Next, insert the desert. Make it matter to events. Add a natural hazard, or motivate one of the NPCs with a particular motivation related to the environment. Maybe they're lost in a sandstorm, maybe they're being harried by raiders from another desert tribe, maybe they desperately need a water chip… whatever it is, make the desert significant to the adventure. Also spare some thought for how the PCs might deal with it. It's okay if they have some tech or cunning idea for easily overcoming the complication. You don't have to force them to be inconvenienced by the desert's involvement, but if it never shows up at all they might as well be adventuring in a generic alien wilderness.

Next, tighten your adventure. Assign combat statistics to NPCs who might be getting into a brawl, and review your Places. Is the Place simply meant to be a backdrop for negotiation or social interaction? Make sure you know what the NPCs want and what they might expect from the PCs. Is it meant to be a location that the PCs explore? Make sure it's got at least two or three interesting people, objects, or discoveries to make that exploration worthwhile. Such gubbins are a good opportunity to stick in material related to the planet's back story or hooks to other adventures to be found on the planet.

Is the Place likely to become a battlefield? Take a moment to think about the tactics the inhabitants will use, and the consequences should the PCs be identified by survivors. It may be that the biggest hazard of such an engagement isn't the combatants themselves, but the merciless feud that their deaths would ignite with a powerful local group. Unwary PCs might overcome them easily, only to discover their real peril later.

1-2	An Antagonist has marshaled forces to overwhelm a Friend's allies in order to obtain a Thing they recently found. The Friend has their associates forted up at a Place, but a recent Complication has cut off any easy escape. The Friend needs the PCs to get to the Place and fend off the Antagonist's minions long enough for their allies to escape to safety.
3-4	An Antagonist has control of an important Place that gives them tremendous spiritual or political legitimacy among the desert-dwellers. So long as they hold the Place, a Friend can't hope to assemble resistance to their rule. A Complication has opened up a route into the Place that is poorly-defended, and the Friend offers a Thing in payment if the PCs can depose the Antagonist.
5-6	Two Antagonists are locked in a struggle over control of a holy or economically valuable Place. One of them has just come into control of a Thing and is going to use it to crush their opponent, allowing them to exert their tyranny unhindered. A Friend has come into information on how to steal the Thing, and will give it to PCs who are willing to intervene.
7-8	A Complication has intensified lately, whipping the locals into a frenzy that an Antagonist is channeling into violence against a rival group. A Friend belonging to that group thinks that there is a way to negate or mitigate the Complication, but it's located in a dangerous Place, one that the Antagonist knows about and has dispatched minions to guard.
9-10	A Friend is trying to use their control of a Thing to weld a fractious group into a coherent whole, the better to stand against a hostile Antagonist. Unfortunately for the Friend, agents of the Antagonist recently stole the Thing and have it stashed at a Place until the Antagonist can take possession of it. If its theft became proven, the Friend's backing would collapse, so they need the PCs to steal the Thing back before the Antagonist can display it as a trophy of their inevitable victory.

D8	ANTAGONISTS
1	Ruthless raider chieftain
2	Deceitful desert guide
3	Ancient pretech guard bot
4	Desert-dwelling alien warlord
5	Avaricious slave trader
6	Crazed religious demagogue
7	Amoral offworlder mining boss
8	Foreign rebel leader using the desert as a base

D8	FRIENDS
1	Grimly-honorable tribal guide
2	Offworld engineer trying to dig wells
3	Far-seeing tribal sage or priest
4	Friendly if slightly-deranged desert hermit
5	Curious alien native
6	Avid offworld planetologist
7	Wealthy tourist in search of thrills
8	Anthropologist studying the local people

D8	PLACES
1	Plane of hard-fused, glassy sand
2	Perilous zone of shifting dunes
3	Ancient preserved pretech ruin
4	Hidden well within the rocks
5	Bustling oasis-village
6	Camp of desert nomads
7	Ancient dry river bed prone to flash floods
8	Structure long since buried beneath the sand

D8	COMPLICATIONS
1	The desert's creation was relatively recent
2	Tremendous sandstorms make travel almost impossible
3	The desert becomes lethal at times; radiation, heat, etc.
4	The desert changes those who dwell in it very long
5	The desert's harshness is profitable to a powerful group
6	All the desert's inhabitants are bitter refugees or exiles
7	The desert inhabitants survive by raiding outsiders
8	The desert gets killing rainstorms at random times

D8	THINGS
1	Water-finding or water-extracting tech
2	Cache of raider-stolen treasures
3	Key to unlock a pretech ruin in the sands
4	Offworld crop strain that requires almost no water
5	Religiously-important relic of the nomads
6	Weapons to crush a rival group
7	Plunder from an unfortunate caravan or cargo shuttle
8	Control codes to a forgotten pretech defense grid

D8	WHAT'S SO HARSH?
1	The sand is mildly caustic; all habitats are underground
2	The desert sands cause mild hallucinations or mental tics
3	Local organisms actively destroy open water
4	Pretech effects confuse all tech navigation in the desert
5	The desert is mildly radioactive
6	Giant sandchinchillas or similar lethal abominations
7	The terrain often gives way into pits or toxic sumps
8	Ancient guardian bots attack "intruders" relentlessly

Planetary Starport

There's hardly a sci-fi campaign in existence that hasn't passed through a standard-issue planetary starport. Sometimes it's referenced only long enough to confirm that the PC's ship has landed, while other times it's a fully-developed hive of intrigue. If you plan to make a starport the centerpiece of an evening's adventure, there are a few things you can do to make the most of its possibilities.

Far Traders and Merchant Princes

Starports tend to come in two main flavors, depending on the style of the campaign and the sophistication of the world in question. One kind of starport is the classic sci-fi melting-pot, a bustling hub of trade and activity. The locals are casual about offworlders, the laws are unremarkable and predictably enforced, and the actual culture and quirks of the planet itself are kept largely offscreen. This kind of starport is appropriate for campaigns involving fairly advanced sectors with active interstellar trade and common interaction between worlds.

The other kind of starport is a much cruder edifice erected by suspicious locals and avaricious native rulers. Offworlders are not loved or trusted, and a far trader can find themselves arrested at any moment that the current government thinks it is profitable or advantageous. Local customs prevail at the starport, and it can be extremely hazardous to draw the ire of the natives with some accidental sacrilege. These starports fit best in poorly-connected frontier sectors, where the worlds may not have much experience interacting with each other and a starship's arrival is a noteworthy event. These starports also need some exceptionally valuable trade good or compelling draw in order to attract visitors, or else they'd never get enough traffic to need a starport in the first place.

Whichever type you choose to use, make sure your players understand the situation. Give them reports from an NPC merchant, tips based on their own skills, or news broadcasts picked up on their way in-system. If they know that the local dictator has a habit of imprisoning offworlders who fail to prove their utility, they'll react in a different way to his "polite suggestions" than they would if they thought they were in some haven of interstellar free trade. Of course, blithe ignorance can be a useful adventure hook if the PCs have no reason to know the score.

Dressing the Set

For sessions in which it's likely to matter, you can get a decent starport map by selecting an appropriately-sized commercial airport layout and cutting the runways down to landing pads. Such airports will usually have the necessary warehouses and hangars marked for potential skulduggery. Interior maps of these places can be pulled off the net in turn.

First, drop your adventure seed elements into place. Locate the NPCs, plant the Things and Complications, and give some detail to the Places. You don't need to make things too carefully-plotted at this point, but you'll need to know the basic gist of the conflict going on at the starport and the problem that the PCs will encounter there.

Next, figure out why the PCs can't just ignore it and continue on their way. Why can't the PCs simply lift off and fly away? What threat is being held over their head, or what appeal of loyalty or profit is strongly encouraging their involvement? It's not mandatory to have this entanglement, of course, and you might honestly choose to set up an adventure situation that has no particularly compelling hook to it, but if the adventure focuses on the starport there usually needs to be some reason to keep the PCs *at* the starport.

Next, figure out what will happen if things go completely off the rails. What if the PCs just start killing locals, or blow something up, or utterly alienate a critical NPC? You'll want to figure out what kind of law enforcement response the starport can muster, and how fast they can react to disasters or sabotage. Some idea of how long a body might remain hidden or a hacked console remain unnoticed is also useful to have. You can assume that the PCs are going to try to get away in their ship, so figure out what kind of obstacles might get in the way of that rapid retreat. You may never need this information, but having it close to hand will make life easier if some PC gives in to their incendiary urges.

Lastly, take some time to map out the goals and immediate desires of the important NPCs. In a "civilized" setting like a starport, the PCs are much more likely to be forced to deal peaceably with enemies and rivals, and understanding what these people want and what they think the PCs can do on their behalf will smooth these scenes. Conflict drives adventure; make sure that some NPC wants are contradictory.
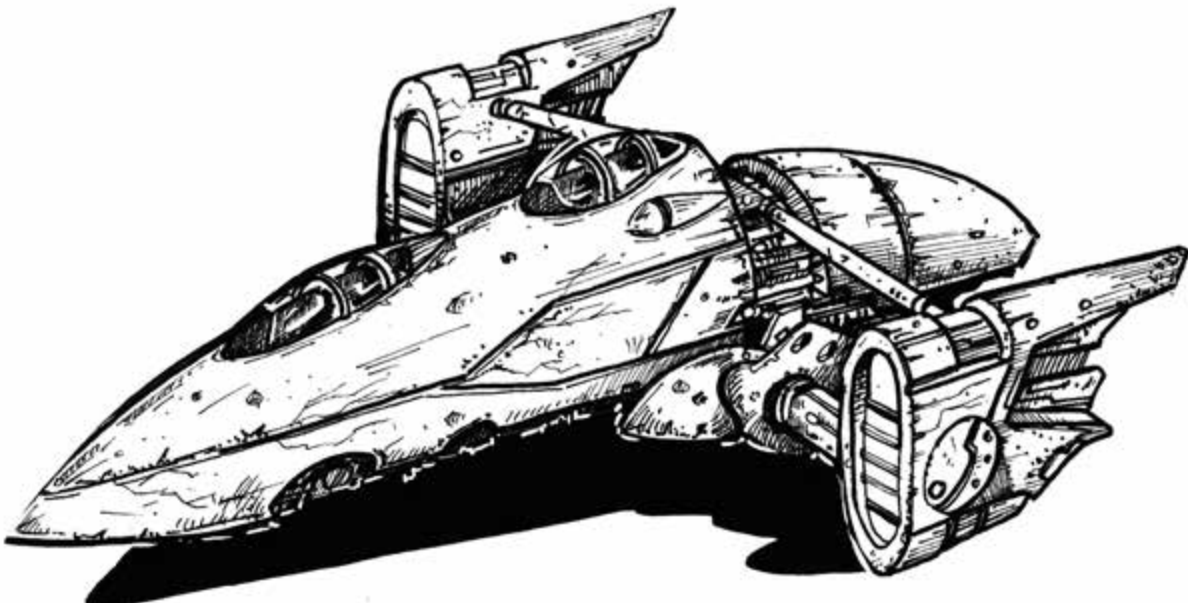
d10	Adventure Seeds
1-2	An Antagonist has engineered an accident or shutdown that threatens the PCs' ship or interests if they don't pay the Antagonist off or agree to perform an onerous favor. A Friend has evidence of the Antagonist's malfeasance, and is willing to give it if the PCs recover a Thing that the Antagonist took from them and stored in a well-guarded Place.
3-4	An Antagonist is masquerading as a friendly face who's willing to help the PCs bypass onerous regulations if they just go deliver a seemingly-innocent package to a Friend. In reality, it's a trap to get incriminating evidence on the PCs and coerce them into getting a Thing from the Friend that the Antagonist knows they possess.
5-6	A Complication has interfered with an Antagonist's attempt to put the squeeze on the PCs. As soon as they sort it out, they'll cause trouble for the PCs, but a Friend tips the players off that the distraction has made a Thing the Antagonist holds vulnerable to judicious extraction. The Antagonist won't dare move against them as long as the Thing is in the PCs' possession.
7-8	One Antagonist is trying to muscle in to the operation being run by another Antagonist, and a Complication is getting much worse because of it. A Friend looking for the main chance, and thinks that a recent Thing they've been fighting over could be stolen by the PCs. If they agree to split the take with the Friend, they'll get information on the Place where it's being kept.
9-10	A Complication impinges on the PCs as soon as they arrive, with a Friend offering to help them out of the difficulty. Once it's resolved at least temporarily, they point out an Antagonist who's causing trouble at the starport, albeit not to the PCs at the moment. If the PCs agree to plant an illicit Thing in a Place controlled by the Antagonist, the Friend will make it worth their while. The Friend may or may not be an actual Friend or simply a rival Antagonist.

d8	Antagonists
1	Hopelessly corrupt portmaster
2	Thieving local customs inspector
3	"Accident-prone" longshoreman boss
4	Chiseling ship maintenance tech chief
5	Xenophobic local official
6	Competition-averse offworlder far trader
7	Local religious leader who despises infidels
8	Crime boss who enjoys looting offworlders

d8	Friends
1	Local innocent seeking offworld adventure
2	Native needing to get offworld fast
3	New hire with stubborn integrity
4	Local law enforcement looking for evidence
5	Stranded far trader seeking help
6	Tourist in trouble with the locals
7	Missionary trying to enlighten the natives
8	Offworlder engineer disappointed in local culture

d8	Places
1	Reeking starport bar
2	Shabby brothel for the spacers
3	Tense customs office
4	Isolated ship maintenance bay
5	Heavily-guarded starport gate
6	Warehouse full of bonded cargo
7	Cramped utility corridors around starport machines
8	Discreet military monitoring bunker

d8	Complications
1	The locals have recently come to hate offworlders
2	The starport locks down just after the PCs arrive
3	Most locals won't publicly interact with the PCs
4	The repairs made here are extremely failure-prone
5	All dangerous or hard work is done by slave labor
6	The PCs are mistaken for a crime boss' partners
7	Nothing gets done without extortionate bribes
8	Offworld credits aren't legal tender here at the moment

d8	Things
1	Crates full of smuggled goods
2	Proof of starport corruption
3	Treasure confiscated from a dead offworlder
4	Codes to safely unlock a confiscated ship
5	Cache of incredibly illegal goods
6	Forbidden starship weapon or fitting
7	Info on secret stashes made by a dead far trader
8	Ship with ultra-concealed pretech smuggler hold

d8	What Goes Wrong Here?
1	Locals are incompetent and have reasons not to improve
2	An outworlder agent foments rebellion here
3	Goods are regularly stolen by the starport personnel
4	Officials use legal threats to coerce services from PCs
5	An impending civil war has the locals coercing "allies"
6	A xenophobic local group tries hard to make trouble
7	A foreign space navy interferes with port operation
8	Everything takes ridiculously long amounts of time

Prison Colony

This adventure site is a prison colony, a settlement surrounded by so much wilderness or bubbled in such a hostile planetary environment that the terrain itself is more effective than any wall. Aside from the physical isolation of the site, it is also cut off from the conventional protections of law and civilization; the inhabitants are convicts, exiles, and outcasts, people due no more legal consideration than their jailors see fit to give them. Bad things happen in a prison colony, and the PCs are going to get an up-close view of these events.

Doing Your Time

The first thing you'll need to decide about the adventure is whether the PCs will be approaching it as inmates, as prison contractors, or as infiltrators. Each angle has its own advantages in running an evening's gaming, but a given adventure is apt to play out very differently depending on how the PCs relate to the prison itself.

If the PCs are actual prisoners there, you're going to need to imprison them somehow. You might brew up a prison colony adventure just to keep it in your back pocket in case the PCs ever get thrown in prison, or the PCs might find it necessary to get themselves imprisoned for some reason, or you could just railroad the group into the cells. The latter course is not recommended unless the players are all on board with such a direct adventure hook and are willing to have their PCs separated from their belongings for a potentially-indefinite time. If the PCs are prisoners, you can expect the actual goal of the adventure to be "escape the prison and get our stuff back", regardless of what adventure seed you rolled.

If the PCs are contractors, they've been hired by the prison or by the government that runs the prison to go in and deal with a problem that the existing staff can't handle. Maybe the government suspects the warden is dangerously corrupt, or the warden wants to solve a problem without involving his superiors. The PCs might end up getting inserted as "convicts" to better investigate the place from the inside.

As intruders, the PCs need to get into the prison for some reason, most likely to rescue an NPC or retrieve a confiscated item. These adventures are most likely to play out as heists, requiring detailed maps of a facility and careful preparatory planning. In many cases, you don't even need to roll up an adventure seed for a set-up like this; the PCs will provide the adventure with their attempt to crack the prison and the consequences of their success or failure.

As a prison colony, you can assume that the facility produces something worthwhile, even if it's just subsistence agriculture. The disposition of this production might well be influenced by corruption or prisoner trading, and might be an informal currency inside the prison. Work crews in mines, fields, timber-cutting parties, or refinery plants make convenient frameworks for PC skulduggery and the acquiring of useful tools.

Of course, something is keeping the prisoners inside the prison. An island in the middle of an ocean is always a good pick, as is a patch of buildings amid a relentlessly hostile alien jungle. Trackless deserts, radioactive badlands, or the fact that the prison is planted on the airless surface of the primary world's moon can all serve as convenient fences for the facility. In some cultures, the prison walls may be less tangible. Particularly honor-obsessed societies might keep people there by choice, while others might hold hostages for a prisoner's behavior.
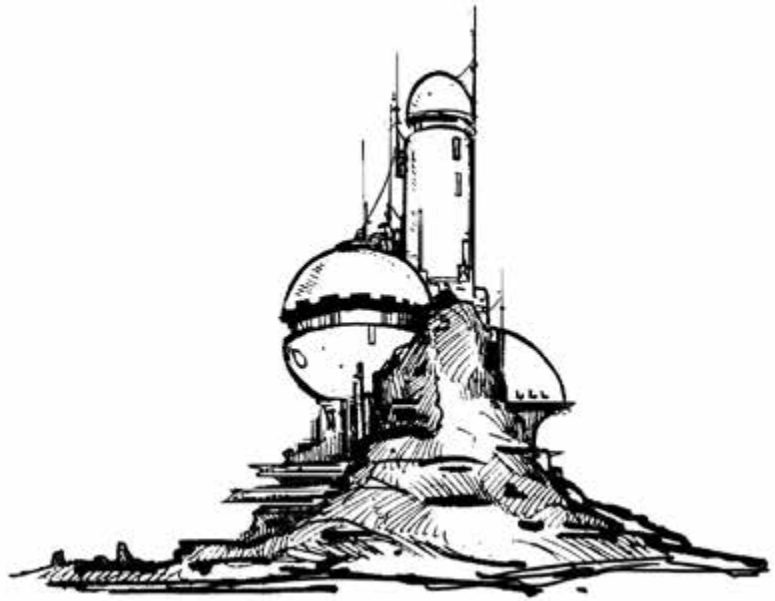
Dressing the Set

You're almost certainly going to need a map for the prison, and you can usually get away with pulling down a map of some minimum-security installation from the net. You can assume that the real fencing around the facility is the wilderness or hostile planetary environment around the colony, and that runaway convicts are a self-solving problem in the wilds.

First, you're going to need a rough schedule for the prison. Whether as convicts or intruders, the PCs need to be able to tell when the staff and convicts are going to be moving through the corridors or busy with tasks. Inhabitants need to eat, work, bathe, and have free time. Locate important NPCs in the prison and decide where they are at particular hours.

Next, fit the adventure seed into the prison you've created. Figure out where important Places and Things are and relate them to the conflict of the seed.

Next, determine the defenses and surveillance tools available to prison staff. There can be a temptation to create a high-tech panopticon with every prisoner tracked with implants and every square meter of space constantly under video surveillance. Resist this; if there aren't holes or weaknesses that a reasonable party can exploit, you run the risk of frustrating the PCs into using brute force rather than engaging with the site. While it can be entertaining to plow a gravtank into the north curtain wall and vaporize the warden's office in a thunder of plasma fire, it's generally inadvisable to put up impractically difficult barriers to experiencing the content you create for a session.

Lastly, figure out how you're going to insert the PCs into the situation. Whether as convicts, contractors, or intruders, figure out what kind of resources they're likely to have at their disposal and try to trace at least one path they can take to success. If you've created a facility so impervious to disruption that there's no visible way for the PCs to overcome it, you'll end up creating an exercise in frustration rather than an evening's gaming.

In the aftermath of the session, have some idea of how local law enforcement is going to react to the PCs. Some prisons might be so secret that any intrusion can't be legally acknowledged, while other jailbreaks might require a rapid departure from that world.

D10	Adventure Seeds
1-2	An Antagonist offers to get the PCs into or out of the prison in exchange for killing an annoying Friend, painting up a suitably plausible story about why they need to die. Once they've met the Friend, whether or not they kill them, the Antagonist leverages a Complication in an attempt to kill the PCs and the Friend as "intruders" or "escapees".
3-4	A Friend desperately needs to get a Thing into or out of a prison, and the only way to do so is through a dangerous Place during a flare-up of a local Complication. The Antagonist finds out about the transfer just as it's starting, and the PCs need to move rapidly to deliver or extract the Thing before the Antagonist can stop them.
5-6	An Antagonist is on their best behavior as some outside oversight is examining the prison. A Friend needs to get proof of the wrongdoing here either into the prison to show the inspector or out of it to deliver to the media. The Antagonist does nothing overt to PC prisoners he suspects of being involved with the matter, but has tacitly farmed out enforcement to coerced convicts.
7-8	Angry prisoners are forming up around Antagonist leaders in two different Places, their rivalry sparked by a local Complication. A Friend desperately wants to calm down the situation without a massive bloodbath, and is willing to offer the secret location of a stashed Thing if the PCs can neutralize the rival leaders without hurting too many of their followers.
9-10	A luckless Friend is being kept in a Place, and is certainly doomed to an unfortunate fate at an Antagonist's hands within a relatively short period of time. Another Friend outside the prison reaches out to the PCs in hopes that they can extract the victim through an egress in a Place, one where the PCs will find a precious Thing that is too bulky or cumbersome to easily extract without risking the failure of the rescue mission.

D8	Antagonists
1	Sadistic prison warden
2	Scientist conducting vile experiments
3	Psychotic prison gang boss
4	Obsessed vigilante seeking revenge on prisoners
5	Monstrous criminal with inhuman genius
6	Coldly self-interested politician
7	Secret feral psychic prisoner with inhuman powers
8	Callous government official signing mass death warrants

D8	Friends
1	Unjustly imprisoned innocent
2	Reforming local official
3	Redemption-seeking lifer
4	Relative of a prisoner
5	Political prisoner of an unjust polity
6	Amoral convict who sees profit in helping the PCs
7	Relative or old friend stuck in the prison
8	Investigative reporter

D8	Places
1	Convict-farmed crop fields
2	Dangerous convict-labor workshop
3	Grim solitary confinement block
4	Lethal wilderness that surrounds the colony
5	Hidden tunnels dug by convicts
6	Heavily-guarded staff complex
7	Infrastructure tunnels around dangerous power plants
8	Informal arena for prisoner fights

D8	Complications
1	The convict population is almost entirely loathsome
2	Dangerous aliens are among the population
3	The prison is the safest place in society for some here
4	The prisoners are kept here by non-physical inducements
5	It's a black prison full of "unpersoned" prisoners
6	The prisoners are needed for vital work here
7	The prisoners include children born here
8	"Thought correction" tech is used to "help" prisoners

D8	Things
1	A pardon concealed by staff from its subject
2	Cache of convict-made weapons
3	Proof of the warden's malfeasance
4	Tech that allows escape from the prison
5	Bomb big enough to ruin the prison
6	Vast stash of illicit drugs
7	Object containing a concealed stasis-drugged prisoner
8	Written list of snitches or secret political revolutionaries

D8	How are the Prisoners Organized?
1	They are kept radically isolated from each other
2	Prison gangs run the population
3	Religious or ethnic sects divide the population
4	Castes of staff favorites stand above general cons
5	The population mimics the external society's divisions
6	Castes based on the crime that got them imprisoned
7	Military organization, with staff as officers
8	Ever-shifting patterns based on silly reformatory fads

Savage Jungle

The merciless alien jungle is a well-loved trope that's been applied to everything from Venus to the interior spaces of long-forgotten generation ships. Jungles offer the environmental peril of bogs, poisonous plants, beast-infested undergrowth, rivers full of carnivorous fish, and extremely unsociable natives combined with the exploration prospects of forgotten cities and the remains of unfortunate explorers.

Welcome to the Jungle

Whenever you put together an alien jungle, one of the first things you need to do is to explain why the tech available to the PCs doesn't trivialize its hazards. This is not to say that no jungle should be easily overcome by PC technology, but if you're going to the trouble of making up a special adventure site, this particular patch of green Hell should be a special challenge to the heroes.

The conventional hazards of a jungle boil down to a few basic types: terrain, flora, and fauna. Jungles do not encourage travel in a straight line. Impassable clumps of flora, dangerously boggy soil, winding river paths, and the occasional cliff can make it extremely difficult to reach a specific point in the jungle. Rather than confuse the PCs' inertial locators, just make it very hard to go directly from one Place to another. They need to circle around obstacles, ford rivers, and make it past quicksand-soft ground. The key point here is to prevent the easy use of a starship or aircraft. Perhaps aircraft attract dangerously thick swarms of native flyers, or automated anti-air lasers left over from a long-vanished war will potshot intruders, or the local government doesn't want anybody flying over the jungle. Maybe the vegetation is too thick to get a gravtruck through. So long as the PCs have to walk, they'll have to deal with the jungle.

The flora of an alien jungle can be as active a hazard as any xeno-jaguar. Plants can behave like stationary predators, attacking with vines or projectiles, or they can be poisonous via contact or clouds of pollen or spores. More insidious plants might be hallucinogenic, causing the party to see things that aren't there or altering their perceptions of events around them.

Wild jungle beasts are a mainstay of adventure, and an alien jungle gives you an excuse to plant all kinds of monstrous creatures in front of the heroes. Dinosaur-like beasts are a staple of jungle adventures, as are unstoppable carpets of tiny, murderous vermin that can't be effectively fought. More dangerous still are hostile inhabitants of the jungle, whether they are furious natives or paranoid colonists who fear being prosecuted for their illegal resource extraction. It might be possible for the heroes to simply shoot an animal, but mass murder of intelligent beings could land them in worse legal peril than anything a storm of native spears could inflict.

Dressing the Set

For a jungle, you're going to need a map. Downloading a survey map of a suitable chunk of Amazonia is usually sufficient. You'll also need to decide how you're going to handle travel on this map, whether it's going to be a hex-by-hex venture across the landscape or a pointcrawl that only focuses on important events that occur between Places of interest.

First, plant the important Places on the map and stock the empty spaces between them. If you're doing a hexcrawl, lay a hex map over the downloaded map and make up a half-dozen interesting encounters. Every time the PCs enter a new hex, roll 1d6; on a 6, one of the encounters will happen in that hex. If you're doing a more point-to-point map, assume that at least one of the encounters will happen when PCs travel between points and randomly pick one when it becomes relevant. The rest of the journey can be glossed over briefly.

Next, once you have the jungle experience properly fleshed, work on the individual Places. Stock them with the relevant Antagonists, Friends, or other important NPCs. Add in any villages or colonial outposts you might need if the adventure seed doesn't suggest enough applicable Places to keep all the participants.

Next, drop the adventure seed outline over the situation and connect it up with the details specific to the setting you've chosen. Give the NPCs names, personal details, and any combat stats you might require. If you expect negotiation to happen, make sure you know what the NPC wants and have some ideas about what the PCs could offer them for their cooperation.

Lastly, make sure you've got a hook in place for the PCs and have taken into account any tech you know they have available to them. Take a moment to think past the adventure as well, and consider what kind of consequences are likely to happen in the area. Once you know how to get them the players involved, what might happen during their involvement, and what's apt to happen after, you're ready to play.

D10	Adventure Seeds
1-2	The jungle is spreading at an alarmingly unnatural rate, and an Antagonist operating from within it is taking advantage of it to attack the friends and family of a Friend. A Complication is making government intervention difficult, and the desperate Friend is offering a Thing to the PCs if they do something about Antagonist and their sudden extension of influence.
3-4	An Antagonist has kidnapped a Friend and carried them to a Place within the jungle. Relations of the Friend are trying to persuade the PCs to rescue the victim; evidently, the Antagonist thinks the Friend knows the location of a stolen Thing. In truth, a minion of the Antagonist stole it, and will try to use it to get the PCs to kill the Antagonist if they get a chance to negotiate.
5-6	A Place is the locus of a Complication that is causing severe problems for a Friend. The Complication appears to be resting in large part on a Thing somewhere in that Place, and if the Thing were recovered, the Complication would be negated or lessened. An Antagonist profits by the Complication, and can be expected to respond unkindly to attempts to alleviate it.
7-8	A completely unexpected Antagonist has appeared in the jungle, causing great trouble for a pre-existing Antagonist and igniting a struggle between the two. A Friend wants to take advantage of the chaos to kill them both, and a Thing hidden in a particular Place will make that a much easier feat for the PCs if they agree to help.
9-10	An Antagonist has somehow acquired governmental power, obtaining law enforcement rights or similar legal authority. They are taking every advantage of their new status, using it on flimsy but not completely implausible grounds, making it difficult for a Friend to resist their impositions. The Friend knows that the Antagonist has an illicit Thing in a Place that would get them disqualified, but the Place is now guarded with the full panoply of a government-authorized facility.

D8	Antagonists
1	Jungle-mad hermit
2	Ruthless industrial exploiter
3	Savage tribal chieftain
4	Violent fugitive from justice
5	Monstrous alien creature
6	Murderous isolationist sect chief
7	Jungle bandit leader
8	Corrupt government official

D8	Friends
1	Friendly jungle tribal
2	Grizzled wilderness guide
3	Foolhardy tourist thrillseeker
4	Hard-bitten scientific researcher
5	Weathered jungle colonist
6	Determined government surveyor
7	Over-optimistic land developer
8	Gone-native anthropologist

D8	Places
1	Quicksand-infested riverside
2	River full of lethal creatures
3	Primitive jungle settlement
4	Ruins of a failed colony
5	Scarred industrial extraction zone
6	Paranoid colonist outpost
7	Hidden bandit encampment
8	Sinister shrine to a forbidden deity

D8	Complications
1	The jungle is of inorganic but growing substance
2	The jungle covers a formerly-urban area
3	The natives have extremely high-tech resources
4	The jungle is holy to a violent sect
5	Humans can't survive the jungle atmosphere for too long
6	Multiple groups are fighting for control of the jungle
7	High-tech weapons are dangerous to use in the jungle
8	The jungle is semi-sentient and malevolent

D8	Things
1	Cure for a jungle poison or plague
2	Tech to survive a jungle peril
3	Deed to valuable jungle land
4	Priceless relic lost by a victim of the jungle
5	Treasure of the native inhabitants
6	Map to a hidden treasure cache
7	Key to unlock an ancient pretech jungle vault
8	Evidence of government malfeasance

D8	What Makes it Dangerous?
1	The locals are murderously violent
2	A valuable substance here is ultra-toxic
3	The local flora and fauna are lethal
4	A hostile military is active in the jungle
5	It's full of plagues and poisons
6	The terrain erupts and shifts with regularity
7	It's full of dangerous exiles and rebels
8	The fauna is psychic and hostile

Tomb City

Nobody lives here any more… at least, nobody that matters. Something killed this city, whether it was hostile action, a collapse of supply lines during the Scream, internal warfare, or sheer cosmic misfortune. Enough of the ruin remains to still be explored, and there may yet be a few maddened survivors in the wreckage, but this city is dead as a real home of civilization.

Ashes of the Departed

The tone of a tomb city is one of melancholy, decay, and subtle threat. Something horrible happened in this place, and it may not be entirely gone. When building your tomb city, there are three general factors you'll want to address.

Initially, you'll need to decide if the tomb city has any inhabitants, and whether or not those inhabitants are amenable to diplomacy. There might be a remnant-tribe of desperate survivors, or legions of autonomous guardbots, or exiles who've sought shelter under the roofs of the dead, or dangerous natural animals that now dwell in the empty city.

For many groups, it might be a given to include dangerous inhabitants. Swarms of strange, hostile beings add excitement to any ruin, and can encourage the players to engage with the location and plot out intelligent ways to avoid or ambush the natives. Inhabitant groups that permit negotiation can add a further layer of interesting complications, particularly for groups that have diplomacy-focused members.

The problem with inhabitants, however, is that they tend to distract from the sepulchral emptiness of a tomb city. If the focus of the players is on a place's living inhabitants, it's all the harder to play up the desolation and emptiness of an adventure site.

The second factor to consider is that of environmental hazards. There is some reason that this tomb city has neither been re-occupied nor looted down to the walls. Something is dangerous about this place,

and if it's not in the form of hostile inhabitants it's coming from some environmental peril. Radiation, treacherous architecture, unexploded munitions left over from some ancient battle, or automated alien interdiction drones might all explain its continuing isolation. If a tomb city has neither inhabitants nor environmental hazards, a GM will have to explain why nobody's stripped it down yet.

The third factor to keep in mind is the tenor and style of the city itself. Much as with a desert or jungle, something about the city should obtrude into the adventure. Some quality of its design or quirk of its environment should be an important factor in events. A bubble-enclosed tomb city might have sprung an inopportune leak, while a beautiful city of glass might be casting baffling reflections and beams of light in the absence of proper maintenance for a century. Make sure the players have a sense of place about the location and don't let them easily forget the crypt that rises around them.

Dressing the Set

A map for a tomb city is simple to make; just pull down an urban map of some second-tier global city, change the orientation, and pick a few adjectives and architectural motifs to characterize the buildings. If the PCs go randomly wandering into places, translate their current-day function into suitably sci-fi future equivalents.

First, plant the important Places from the adventure seed onto the city map. Flavor them with the adjectives and motifs you've chosen for the rest of the city, preferably doing something to make those motifs relevant to the adventure. Even something as simple as collapsing one of the city's ubiquitous giant animal statues into the middle of a Place can help remind the players that the city is full of giant animal statues, in addition to providing a physical obstacle to their investigations deeper into the Place.

Next, locate your relevant NPCs around the city, either at Places you've rolled as part of the adventure seed or at other locations appropriate to their backgrounds. Assign combat stats and negotiating motivations to these NPCs as is necessary.

Next, fit your adventure seed outline around the Places and NPCs you've laid down. This is a good time to insert whatever element of the tomb city you've chosen to emphasize, the better to give a sense of place to the players. Work the details of the city into a Complication, or add some hazard emblematic of the tomb city's current state.

Next, make sure the adventure hook is where the PCs can pick it up. Exploring a tomb city can be somewhat overwhelming to a player, as there are so many potentially interesting buildings to examine. If you haven't got a clear hook arranged to direct the players toward the adventure, they might spend the whole session delving through the ruins. While that can be excellent fun, it's not something you need to generate an adventure to support.

Lastly, create a half-dozen interesting encounters, odd things found in buildings, or dangerous accidents to sprinkle about for the players. Whenever they go someplace you haven't already laid out, roll 1d6; on a 6, something from this selection of encounters happens or is found there. These gubbins might have nothing to do with the rest of the adventure, but they'll provide some entertainment on the way.
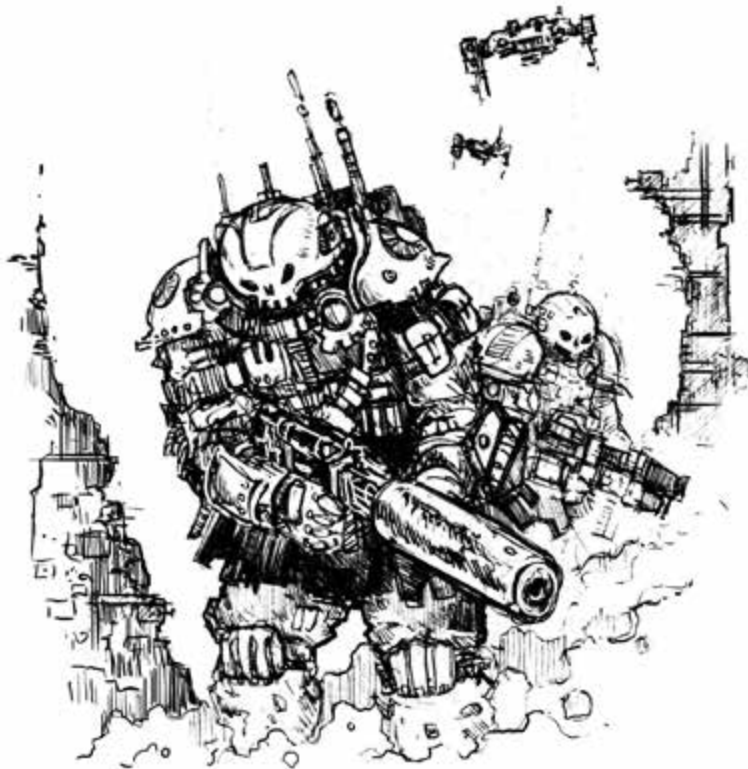
1-2	A Friend is racing to obtain a Thing from a Place in the city before an Antagonist can seize it. Unfortunately, a Complication is providing problems for both of them, and the Friend appeals to the PCs to help get it before the nefarious Antagonist makes away with it.
3-4	A Friend desperately needs to retrieve a Thing from the tomb city in order to prevent a disaster back home. An Antagonist got there first and has the Thing, and is willing to exchange it for a different Thing kept in a Place in the city. The Antagonist may or may not keep their word if their desired plunder is offered.
5-6	A government expedition was recently annihilated in the tomb city, and the chance to plunder their remains has brought the Antagonist out. A Friend associated with the expedition is still alive, and the Antagonist wants them dead so as to avoid troublesome witnesses, as the PCs would be as well. A Complication is hindering the hunt right now.
7-8	A Friend has made a refuge of sorts in a Place in the city, one sheltered from a serious Complication that makes less protected havens unwise. An Antagonist has done something horrible to avoid the dangers of the Complication, and is getting dangerously close to the hiding location of a Thing that's important to the Friend.
9-10	An Antagonist native to the city is fighting an Antagonist from outside the city, and a Friend has escaped from captivity in the chaos. They had to leave behind a Thing, however, and while the Thing is well-disguised and its true value unapparent to the Antagonist who has it, it's only a matter of time before its worth is recognized. The Thing is being kept in the middle of a war zone between the Antagonists, in a Place currently under fire. Either Antagonist might be interested in enlisting PC help.

D8	ANTAGONISTS
1	Grief-stricken defensive AI
2	Leader of the degenerate city survivors
3	Piratical boss of a looter crew
4	Foreign military mission officer
5	Amoral research scientist
6	Half-mad paranoid hermit-exile
7	"Zombie" expert system defense bot
8	Transhuman abomination made from a survivor

D8	FRIENDS
1	Friendly survivor youth
2	Avid treasure-hunter
3	Cooperative remnant AI
4	Recolonization effort leader
5	Carelessly curious scholar
6	Non-sentient expert-system guide
7	Last survivor of the most recent looter group
8	Extremely foolish artist seeking inspiration

D8	PLACES
1	Empty plaza littered with relics of the dead
2	Hab complex bearing signs of the end
3	Incompletely-finished mass grave
4	Transit hub choked with dead refugees
5	Ruined governmental building
6	Overrun supply depot
7	Automated factory creating and destroying endlessly
8	Starport with ships wrecked by dead rioters

D8	COMPLICATIONS
1	The city has been recolonized by dangerous things
2	The city's defense grid is capriciously functional
3	Some group maintains the city as a taboo zone
4	The city is full of a lethal toxin or radiation
5	The city's plunder is somehow dangerous to use
6	Some power waits to rob those who come out
7	Broken medical nanites animate corpses to attack others
8	Travel through the city streets is extremely dangerous

D8	THINGS
1	Record of what exactly happened
2	Semi-mythical treasure said to be here
3	Cache of well-preserved ancient tech
4	Key to shut down anti-ship defenses
5	Fix for the thing that killed the city
6	Remains of an important victim here
7	Pretech disaster-rescue nanites that can heal amazingly
8	Code to open a survival bunker for the elite

D8	HOW DID IT DIE?
1	Cut off from vital supplies by the Scream
2	Internal strife that led to city-ruining sabotage
3	Slaughter by some invading power that then left
4	Religious or ideological mania killed everyone here
5	Random cosmic mischance, radiation, or solar flares
6	Forced relocation by a great and indifferent power
7	Nanite malfunction or other tech failure
8	Exterminated by out-of-control machines or AIs

Vicious Slum

Whether it's a towering tenement-arcology packed with writhing human life or a wide and wretched favela on some backwater planet, a vicious slum is a staple of sci-fi urban adventures. The vast crush of people and the general disinterest of law enforcement combine to create a very suitable environment for desperate adventure.

Taking It To the Streets

Vicious slums happen for reasons, albeit not always by intent. It's important to deduce why the slum has happened if you're going to identify its inhabitants and know what kind of buildings and other set dressing to use in play.

The simplest reason for creating is a slum is a massive population influx from the countryside that cannot be supported by existing housing stocks. The men and women in these slums have pieced together shacks and constructed makeshift buildings on the least desirable land around the city, and they are too many or too necessary for the city's law enforcement to disperse. Most of the residents are new arrivals in the city or first-generation inhabitants, and they've kept most of their rural habits. Neighborhoods are organized much like the villages of home, with potential friction between groups from different parts of the countryside.

Another reason that appears in sci-fi stories is the reclamation of abandoned megastructures by those too poor or too unwanted to live elsewhere. Giant habitant-towers on city-crusted planets might be seized by society's outcasts, their lives sustained by vice, salvage, and occasional employment in the worst jobs that society has to offer them. Ancient sewer systems, treacherous alien ruins, plague-emptied city quarters, and other such unfriendly environments are common slums for these people.

One universal reason for a slum is the religious or ethnic isolation of a population. These people are unwanted by the larger society, and so they're jugged in narrow geographic bounds and allowed out only to perform degrading or dangerous labor. In most such ghettos the architectural keyword is "dense"; with space at a premium, people crammed into every habitable corner, and tensions easily overflowing into desperate, frantic conflict.

In all these cases, law enforcement is minimal to nonexistent. Only when the chaos of the slum threatens to overflow into "decent" parts of the city will the force of the law be applied, and then with a summary unconcern for anything but quelling the disruption.

Dressing the Set

The simplest way to get a map for a slum is to lift an online map of a dense urban area and then reskin it in the style required. If you're making a map of a hab tower or multileveled sewer, find a map with relatively same-sized city blocks and then treat each block as a level up or down, with the ground floor at the top left, reading left-to-right and top-to-bottom until you reach the deepest or highest floor. Identify access points into the rest of the city. These will inevitably be guarded.
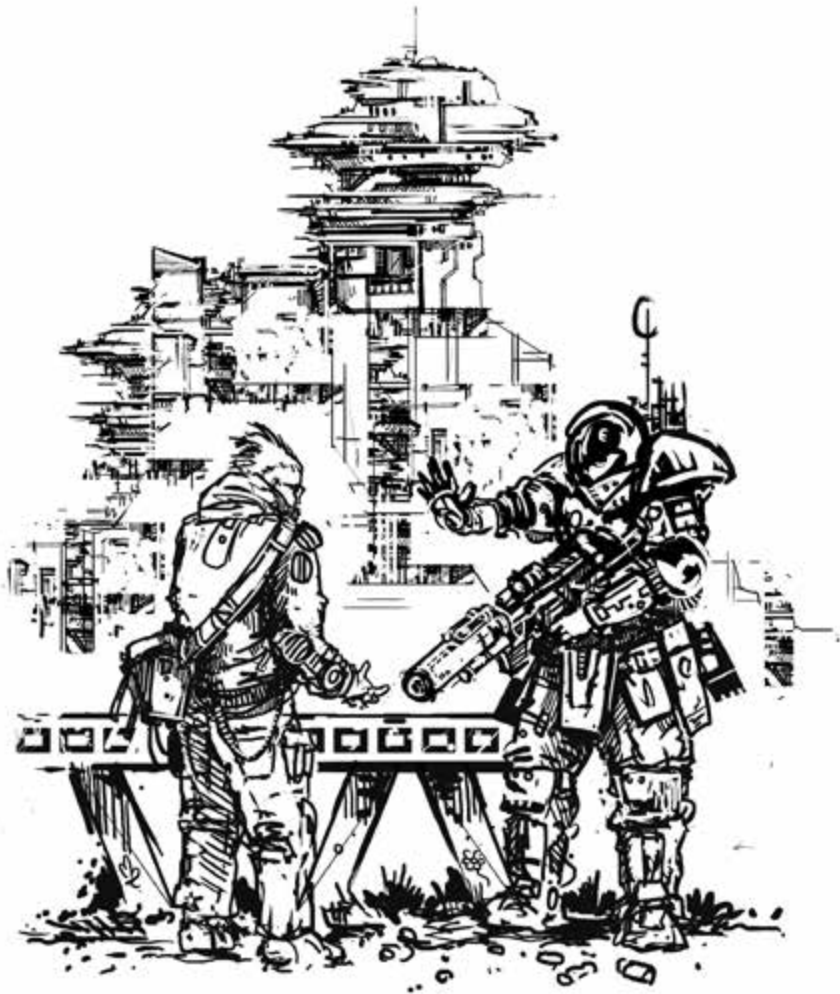
First, with the map in hand, locate your Places and your NPCs. In such a densely-packed setting as the typical slum, you can expect these NPCs to be surrounded by other people, who may or may not take kindly to violence or disruption near by. The initial reaction by bystanders will be to scatter and seek cover, but those who view the area as "their" turf will likely respond rapidly with violence to perceived troublemakers. The PCs may drastically outgun individuals in the slum, but they can be threatened by sheer numbers.

Next, tie the adventure seed outline into the slum you've created, attaching it to the NPCs and Places you've generated and identifying how it's likely to flow at the table. Make sure there's a clear hook for the players, as they're not likely to just bump into the problem with an entire slum full of people between them and the NPCs.

Next, create a half-dozen encounters and street scenes appropriate to the slum. It's by no means necessary that these be combat encounters, even if they might turn violent, but they should point up the nature of the slum, its inhabitants, and their relationship with outsiders. You can drop one of these encounters on the PCs as soon as they enter the slum in order to get them clued into the nature of the place, and use the rest whenever the PCs are traveling through the streets.

Lastly, take some time to think about the city outside the slum, and how it might respond to PC shenanigans. Having the stats of a police rapid response team close to hand would be wise, as well as deciding on the kind of disruptions that will actually earn their attention.

D10	Adventure Seeds
1-2	An Antagonist is starring in a upcoming reality show, and an amoral producer is posing as a Friend to encourage the PCs to get into conflict with the Antagonist, playing up their wickedness and offering evidence of a Thing they own that could use "liberating". The Friend will arrange a mutual surprise at the Place it's located in so as to ensure telegenic conflict.
3-4	A Friend is in desperate circumstances that can't be fixed with feasible amounts of money. An Antagonist's influence is needed to solve the problem, but they want the Friend to recover a Thing from another Antagonist, and the Friend doesn't think they can do it without PC help. Unfortunately, a Complication makes the Place where it is held all the more dangerous.
5-6	A Friend's hopeful efforts have been crushed in desultory fashion by an Antagonist so often that it's become an amusement for the latter. Seething with rage, the Friend wants to arrange a murderous surprise at a Place the next time this is due to happen, and tells the PCs what Place to go to in order to get a Thing critical to their plans.
7-8	An Antagonist has set himself up as the only possible source of justice for the oppressed natives, using his control of a Thing to enforce his leadership on the resentful multitudes. A Friend is convinced that the Antagonist's plans will only lead to ruin, and has aggravated a Complication to try to depose the Antagonist. Unfortunately, it's backfiring, only making him stronger.
9-10	The government actually does have a positive plan for the slum, and an Antagonist isn't willing to let it happen, as it would threaten his influence. He's fomenting a Complication to discourage the plan, and a Friend is trying to prevent the Antagonist from ruining the opportunity given to the rest of the slum's inhabitants. The Antagonist's latest provocation is in the theft of a Thing, currently being held at a Place. If the government discovers it there it will utterly discredit the plan with the public.

D8	Antagonists
1	Corrupt police chief
2	"Social activist" gang leader
3	Amoral mob boss
4	Religious or ethnic demagogue
5	Oligarchic boss who effectively owns serfs
6	Monstrous brute who commits atrocities for fun
7	Celebrity-crazed criminal seeking fame
8	Malevolent slumlord with thug minions

D8	Friends
1	Charmingly ebullient waif
2	Local desperately determined to get out
3	Reformed gang member
4	Naively idealistic social worker
5	World-weary police officer
6	Uncorrupted local leader
7	Prostitute with a heart of German silver
8	Crusading reporter

D8	Places
1	Riotous street market
2	Desolate industrial shell
3	Atrociously polluted riverbank
4	Hive-like hab complex
5	Gaudy gang headquarters
6	Time-worn religious structure
7	Secret sewer hideout
8	Burnt-out zone of recent law enforcement response

D8	Complications
1	The locals are unjustly oppressed but unsympathetic
2	Local leadership has completely sold out their people
3	The slum's misery is under colorably legal justification
4	While miserable, the slum is somehow critical to the city
5	Locals can't leave the slum without papers
6	The slum somehow causes sinister changes in its inmates
7	Oligarchs go on sordid rampages through the slum
8	Slum structures tend to collapse without notice

D8	Things
1	Hidden cache of criminal spoils
2	Proof of official malfeasance
3	Stash of extremely illegal goods
4	Relic of prime importance to the locals
5	Money intended for local improvements
6	Armory of guns for an uprising
7	List of secret government collaborators
8	Bomb big enough to blow up the slum

D8	Who Runs It?
1	A corrupt cabal of supposed community leaders
2	A coldly-indifferent official on the city payroll
3	A brutal gang warlord with an iron fist
4	An entrepreneurial mob boss indifferent to suffering
5	A half-delirious AI or expert system
6	A grasping religious leader who torments the unfaithful
7	A military official with a brutally heavy hand
8	A rotation of equally corrupt and useless elected officials

War Zone

War is Hell, and the PCs have somehow gotten involved in one. They may be mercenaries for one of the sides, free agents hired to deal with a problem in a hot zone, or simply unlucky bystanders who were in the wrong place when diplomatic negotiations broke down. The PCs need to accomplish some task while bombs are going off around them, and it's up to you to give them an interesting battlefield to navigate.

War Never Changes

A typical war zone is not a constant inferno of explosions and gunfire. It's very possible for unwary PCs to wander directly into a conflict area without realizing what's going on until they hit their first land mine. What characterizes a war zone is not the constant fighting, but the constant threat of it. At any moment an artillery shell could land, or an unfriendly platoon come over the hill, or an automated drone could unleash a missile.

While struggling armies will impose a crude order on land within their control, this order usually extends no further than is necessary to secure supply lines and maintain the productivity of the local population. Smaller crimes and individual murders are either ignored or handled with brutally summary "justice". In a contested area, civil order is almost certainly nonexistent. The only law in this no man's land is the gun and the armed band, and if you have neither to support you then you are so much meat for those who do have them.

Armies are not enthusiastic about letting people cross their lines. Any such traveler could be a spy or an enemy agent, and crossing the lines always requires a pass that is almost certainly unavailable to suspicious PC outsiders. You can use the front lines of a conflict to constrain the adventure space, forcing the PCs to operate within the zone that's still being fought over. Slipping past the high-tech perimeter monitors of a TL4 army isn't impossible, but it's a significant challenge.

Within the war zone, the locals are likely to be desperate for supplies. Unable to work, farm or otherwise produce with the fighting going on, most surviving locals will have retreated to isolated areas or bunkered down inside gutted cities. They will not announce their presence; concealment and stealth are their only chances of survival against hostile military forces, and most forces inside the combat zone are extremely hostile to anyone not provably aligned with their side.

Scavenging and looting are vital to the survival of civilians trapped inside the zone. Some also manage to get sustenance by cooperating with one of the military forces or receiving aid from a relief organization. Others exist as purely predatory groups, attacking other enclaves and taking their goods. A few might even serve as traders, exchanging now-worthless valuables inside the zone for supplies from corrupt quartermasters or interested soldiers.

If there's a significant population left within the war zone, you'll need to explain why they haven't fled yet. In some situations, it might be because they simply have nowhere better to go; the situation isn't terrible enough to make them give up their homes yet. In other situations, the ways in and out of the zone may be negotiable for crack PC adventurers but much too rigorous to bring a family through.

Sometimes it's useful to identify what it is that the armies are fighting over. If it's over control of a particular place, or to back a specific NPC rebel, then killing or protecting that rebel, or seizing that place might be something the PCs can influence. In many cases, however, the root of the conflict will be some geopolitical dispute far beyond the scope of PC intervention. Their only interest then is survival and success.

Dressing the Set

For a map, it's often best to choose a survey map of some small town and its surrounding terrain, preferably terrain with some constraining physical feature like a river or mountain. Such natural features provide convenient demarcations for the battlefield and help keep the adventure's setting to a manageable scope.

First, plant your Places and NPCs on the map. You'll want to put a little distance between them and keep in mind the terrain between the various points. Ensuring that the PCs have to sneak through a bombed-out town or pass through a shattered farmstead can help emphasize the horror of the situation and give flavor to the framing.

Next, drape the adventure seed outline over the points you've established. You may need to take a moment to characterize the warring forces, perhaps assigning a name and traits to a representative officer of these forces in case the PCs need to negotiate. NPC soldiers are unlikely to trust or like PCs, but they may be willing to extend cooperation if offered a suitably enticing prize.

Next, make up a half-dozen war zone encounters. It can be tempting to use run-ins with hostile soldiers or bandits as a main course here, but be leery of creating encounters that are almost certain to end in violence. The PCs don't need to be shooting every five yards to be convinced they're in a war zone. If you use sudden nearby artillery strikes, desperate families, burnt-out homes, wandering livestock, and massacre scenes to flavor the setting you can get the same involvement without risking a total party kill against a tank platoon.

Lastly, make sure you have both a hook to involve the players in the situation and a clear idea of how they're going to get out. A sealed battlefield can make for an awkward denouement after an adventure.

d10	Adventure Seeds
1-2	An Antagonist is using a Friend's allies or kinsmen as living shields against a military force that will soon stop worrying about the consequences of opening fire. The Antagonist is searching the Place for a Thing believed to be hidden there, and using the prisoners as temporary buffers to buy time for the search.
3-4	A Friend has survived a confrontation with an Antagonist at a Place, with the fight at least partly inspired by a Complication. In the chaos, a Thing was left behind there that the Antagonist is likely to discover soon. The Friend asks the PCs to go recover it, despite the dangerous ubiquity of the Antagonist's allies there.
5-6	An Antagonist has signed up with one of the military sides in order to help them "police" the local populace. They're using military authority to commit assorted depredations at a Place, and survivors are escaping to warn a Friend of what's coming. A Thing that might be useful against them is being kept hidden at a second Place, but it's the next destination for the Antagonist.
7-8	A Complication has imperiled a Friend at a Place dangerously close to the front lines. An Antagonist is making trouble along the most otherwise-secure way into the Place, but avoiding the Antagonist means running almost directly into the fighting. The Friend will be able to offer a Thing they salvaged to the PCs if they can successfully extract them.
9-10	An Antagonist has positioned himself as a protector for a Friend and their associates, but the Friend has reason to believe that the Antagonist is just waiting for a convenient opportunity to frame them for partisan activity or use them as some other bargaining chip with a local military. In particular, the Antagonist is keeping the civilians penned in a Place "for their safety", while his men search another Place for a Thing that was lost in the fighting.

d8	Antagonists
1	Cold-blooded special ops leader
2	Deserter bandit chief
3	Bloodthirsty partisan organizer
4	Native looter boss
5	Indifferent infantry commander
6	Local crime boss making good
7	Agent of a hostile outside power
8	Ruthless war profiteer

d8	Friends
1	Frightened war orphan
2	Idealistic young trooper
3	Agent of a cooperative power
4	Well-meaning military officer
5	Stubborn local cleric
6	Cynically cooperative survivor
7	Aid agency physician
8	Hard-bitten war reporter

d8	Places
1	Bombed-out apartment hab
2	Shell-cratered no man's land
3	Half-depleted minefield
4	Ruined bunker strongpoint
5	Urban avenue covered by snipers
6	Wilderness partisan base
7	Blasted military forward base
8	Plain littered with burning vehicles

d8	Complications
1	The armies are treating all civilians as partisans
2	The whole battlefield will be nuked shortly
3	The civilians want to fight a hopeless battle
4	Partisans are convinced the PCs are enemies
5	A basic fact the PCs have is actually totally wrong
6	Artillery strikes hit randomly with only brief warnings
7	The battle fronts aren't where they're said to be
8	A particular critical supply is totally unavailable

d8	Things
1	Important fake military credentials
2	Large cache of military weaponry
3	Recon info about an army
4	Vital plans stolen by a spy
5	Supplies needed by desperate locals
6	Proof of a gruesome atrocity
7	Secret military prototype weapon
8	Loot seized by an unscrupulous officer

d8	What Combatants are Nearest?
1	A major military base and staging ground
2	An active partisan band
3	A special forces commando
4	Tanks on the move
5	A pack of deserters and bandit looters
6	An artillery detachment
7	Combat engineers laying mines
8	A fast-moving recon group

Smooth Your Path to Adventure

Sixteen Stars gives a game master all the tools they need to generate adventure outlines and thrilling perils fit for sixteen different classic sci-fi locations. Whether delving into ancient alien temples or plunging into the human wilds of a savage hive-planet slum, *Sixteen Stars* provides you with the tables and techniques you need to generate a playable night's fun for you and your party of daring stellar heroes.

While *Sixteen Stars* was written for the *Stars Without Number* role-playing game, the tools in this book are conveniently system-neutral, and usable with your own favorite gaming system or sci-fi setting of choice.