Suns of Gold

Merchant Campaigns for Stars Without Number

By Kevin Crawford

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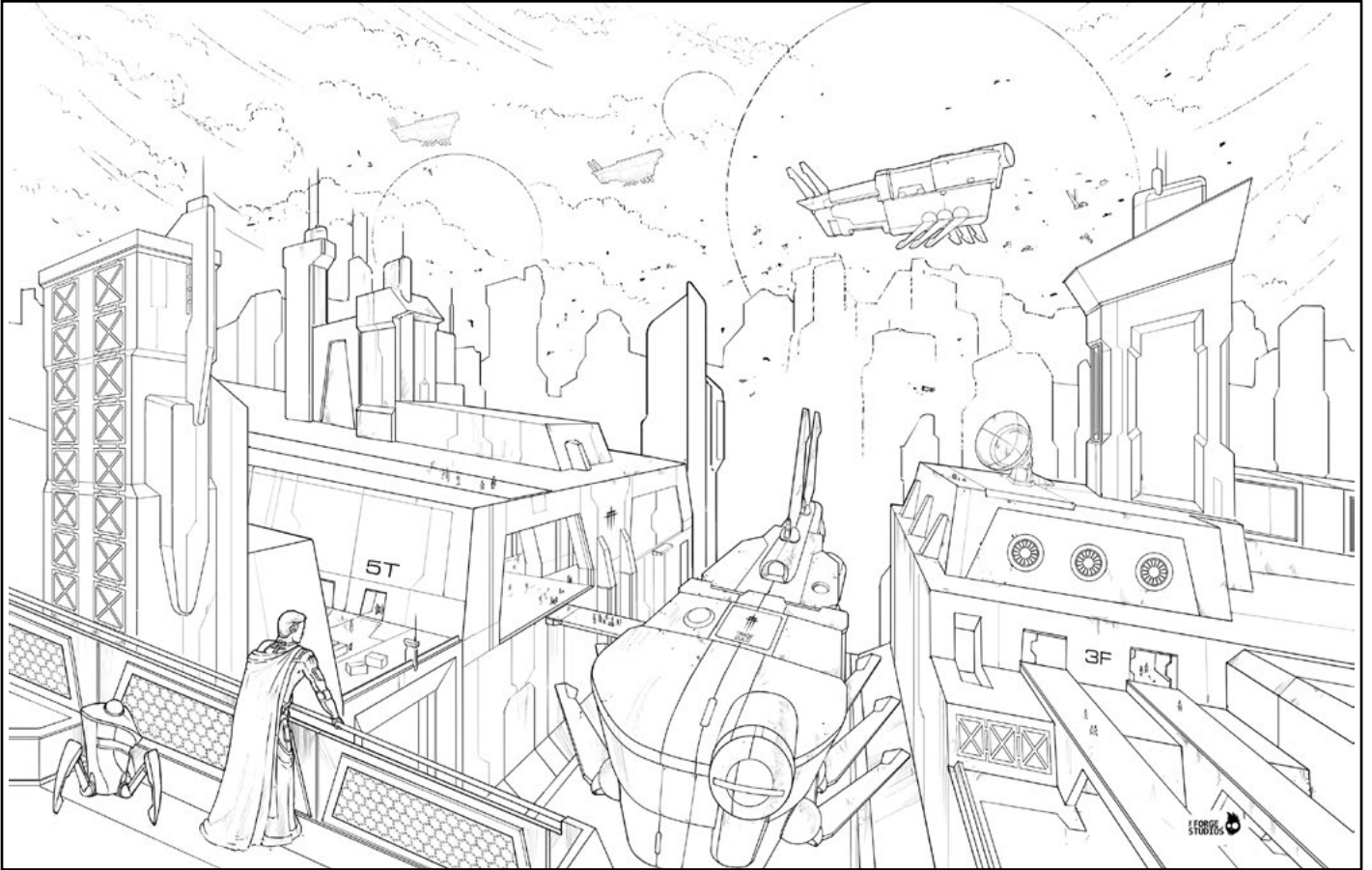
by **Kevin Crawford**

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"My factor tells me that you have terms for me, O prime minister...."

"That I am to render over my manufactories, my fields, my storehouses and my possessions. You say that I have robbed you, that I have cheated you, that I have taken from you what you deserved and kept it for my pleasure. That I am a dirty foreign thief with damnable ways who came to your world to beggar you."

"I protest your words. Your officials lived in huts of timber and mud when I first landed, and the sons of cabinet ministers died in their cradles from fever. I brought you a second fire and treasures from above the sky. I brought you medicines and tools and books for your scholars. I brought you the skies that your fathers had forgotten, and all that I demanded in payment was the yellow earth."

"It is true that I did these things only so you would dig the yellow earth, and not for any love of your stinking people. Yes, it is perfectly true that I sold that earth for a hundredfold profit and kept nine parts in ten for myself. My factor's house is finer than your palace of state, and I am the richest man in the world. You tell me that my riches are undeserved."

"Then give back the children my medicines saved. Give back your sons and daughters who work with tools of steel in sturdy houses, safe from the razor-rain and the black autumn hail. Give back the foreign metawheat that grants you five crops where one once grew. Give me back these things and I swear to you by the beard of the Prophet that I will give you back every pound of yellow earth my ships took from your world, and you may daub the cracks in your walls with it as you did before I came. But you will not do this. You cannot do this."

"Instead, you say you will tolerate this theft no more. You tell me that my possessions are now for the people, and that the wealth I have brought this world shall be fairly apportioned among the deserving multitudes, my riches divided by the wise officials you have appointed. For am I not a foreigner and a thief? Must not the starving be given bread, though it beggar every merchant in the world?"

"You send this message on the commgrid that I built for you. This grid I built despite your grafting, your thieving, your ten thousand officials who demanded their share of the sky's treasure before they would permit me to keep my bargain. And when I would not make every one of them a prince over his brothers, they damned me for a miserly jackal."

"Your soldiers are legion, and my people are few. I cannot compel your peace, nor can I force your obedience. You and your henchmen are rulers on this world, and I am but a trader. Merchants can do nothing but sell their goods at the people's pleasure and bow their heads beneath the people's reproof. It is the lot of merchants that it should be so, that they should merely sell and be silent."

"It is the lot of merchants to sell, O prime minister, and also to refrain from selling, just as I have refrained. There is one thing especially which I have not sold you, which I have withheld from my markets and kept from your grasping officials. Had I sold it to you, you would have complained at its uselessness and cursed me for a thief to sell you such worthless trash."

"It is called a 'nuclear damper', this thing I would not sell, and I swear by my name before God that if you rob me of my possessions I will burn them to ashes in your hands. For I may have brought you a second fire from the skies, you thieving son of mangy dog, but I have a third and greater fire still, and by God it will warm you yet!"

- Sent by the far trader Saif ibn Barakah to Prime Minister Ivor Czarny of Koszalin, 3298

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The Jewels of Foreign Suns

Trade Among The Fallen Worlds

The Silence is fading and the skies are opening once more to strangers from foreign suns. Spaceports once lost beneath centuries of decay are feeling the fires of new engines and the landing of silver ships. The old isolation is ending.

The far traders are the ones who are ending it. Men and women of wild courage and reckless avarice, they dare the perils of uncharted space and feral worlds to trade the wealth of distant spheres. They bring with them diplomats, adventurers, tradesmen, and all the disruptive chaos of their long-lost neighboring worlds. They are the bringers of a new light and catalysts of a new age.

And like all catalysts, they produce heat. Worlds that endured a peaceful poverty for uncounted generations are now faced with the prospect of wealth beyond their wildest dreams, with devices that raise the dying from their beds and cleanse the angry biospheres of unfriendly worlds. Tools for the fields, machines for the factories, resources inaccessible since before the Silence... all are brought by these strangers. The struggle for control of these gifts is inevitable.

Actually bringing the goods is the easy part for the far trader. Making it past the pirates, aliens reavers, stellar obstacles and the chaos of drillspace is the simpler portion of their task. For most of them, the real danger comes from their customers.

Ships From Forgotten Ports

The first interstellar trade was the product of the early First Wave of interplanetary colonization. These supply shipments hardly qualified as "trade" as they were almost all backed and financed by Terran governments interested in supplying their interstellar colonies. The limited cargo space available to spike drive starships ensured that only the most vital supplies were carried out, with "vital" determined by the colony's masters on Earth.

Not every colony was satisfied by the choices of their patrons. A lively trade in nonessentials and overlooked necessities was soon facilitated by private freighters commissioned by Terran corporations or other colony worlds. Not every Terran government was happy about such commerce, fearing outside infiltrators and "theft" of a

colony world's production in illegal trade, but these new-formed colony worlds were just too fragile to turn away any outside help for their survival. Several such worlds were saved by the efforts of private traders, while others died when a tightly-enforced trade monopoly resulted in some mortal shortage. By the close of the First Wave, these "far traders" were a fact of colonial life.

Trade volume was never high. Spike drive ships simply could not haul enough cargo to provide necessities to entire worlds. They could support small colonies on the contents of their hulls, but after the first wave of colonists the great cargo freighters of the Second Wave simply could not bring everything that a colony needed.

Instead, the far traders brought the tools and vital components that a world needed to produce its own necessities. They brought seeds instead of treated foodstuffs, machine tools instead of whole engines, and exotic materials rather than bars of iron or barrels of sulfuric acid. They also brought those things that couldn't be acquired at all from that world: foreign passengers, offworld art and entertainment, and news of far-flung worlds.

A loose mail protocol that most ships adopted resulted in a slow, unpredictable, but cheap means of communication for people of different worlds. Even if a man or woman could never hope to leave their native world, they could see the sights of distant stars and talk with friends or relatives long since departed for other worlds. The far traders had no interest in censorship or information control, unlike the Terran Mandate, and so they provided a valuable back channel of communication between worlds that might otherwise have been isolated by Mandate bureaucracy.

The far traders of these days were reckless souls, the most daring and adventurous of Old Terra's merchants. By peak of the Second Wave a spike drive ship was cheap enough for even a small business to own, and innumerable small freighters skipped from world to world to trade their wares and news. Some built mercantile empires out in the darkness, conducting the trade of dozens of worlds and providing the vital ingredients to countless planetary enterprises. Others were content to wander, exchanging small but easy profits for the excitement of unknown worlds and virgin markets.

INTRODUCTION
A Need For Unity

The First Wave of human colonization was largely backed by Terran governments and major corporations, organizations large enough to provide for their colonies out of their local production and purchases. Inter-colonial trade was minor and limited to the far traders at first. This situation changed as time went on and smaller and smaller groups found the stars open to their members.

By the start of the Second Wave the limitations of this arrangement had become plain. Many of the newer colonies were founded by secessionist groups and splinter organizations that had no Mandate backing at all, while other worlds found their parent governments or corporations uninterested in their continuing survival. If they were to live, they needed far traders to supply them with vital components, but such trade was hampered by problems of currency exchange and contract enforcement. Without some larger organization to guarantee trade, every far trader risked his life every time he landed on a world perfectly capable of killing him and stealing his ship.

With the earlier colonies, ones backed by governments and policed by Terran Mandate norms, this kind of frontier piracy was limited. The new colonies were often populated by Terran convicts, malcontents, and extremists, and they were not always so reliable in their good treatment of far traders. Even when a trader was robbed or murdered his colleagues often failed to hear about it until after it was too late to avoid the same fate.

The Mandate could not be expected to guarantee the safety of far traders. The Fleet considered them barely a cut above pirates and the bureaucrats on Terra viewed them as just one more disruptive and dangerous element on the frontier. Even those frontier worlds that were friendly and trustworthy couldn't be expected to fight on behalf of foreign traders. Those who dared the trade of distant worlds were obliged to look to their own security.

An answer was formed by an obscure Prosperity Buddhist sect known as "the Exchange of Light", an organization born in the wake of an interplanetary tragedy. Their reasoned philosophy became the pattern for new customs of trade among the outer worlds, and their example touched even those systems that knew them only by rumors and the tales of far traders.

The Exchange of Light

Anderson's Star was one of the rare stellar bodies that had two fully habitable planets orbiting its primary. One world, Pangaea, was settled by a pan-national sect of environmentalists who aspired to a spiritual relationship with their new homeworld. The neighboring planet of Irn was occupied by Prosperity Buddhist laborers shipped in to exploit the valuable crystals formed on its stormy surface.

Misunderstandings between the two colonies blossomed into quarrels, and quarrels into skirmishes. The exact timeline of events remains unclear, but within ten years, Pangaea was racked with a storm of mass-driver impelled orbital strikes and Irn was nearly depopulated by a virulent bioengineered plague. The mutual devastation horrified the survivors, and those who hadn't been killed in the fighting joined together in a pledge to spare other worlds from the kind of conflict that had devoured their homes.

The Society for Harmonious Exchange was founded on the ruins of the two worlds. The two populations gradually blended together as they sent emissaries to other worlds, carefully studying their host societies and learning about the fissures of tension that ran through them all. In time, the organization known as "the Exchange of Light" became a major cultural movement on the frontier.

Their services as translators, local experts, guides, and arbiters were not greatly remunerative, but the Exchange needed little for its mission beyond ships and souls to observe. Over the centuries, the Exchange obtained a reputation for scrupulous neutrality and careful observation. Some worlds resented their passivity in the face of some obvious injustice, but the Exchange preferred to find points of mutual cooperation between hostile parties rather than seek some abstract justice. It was an iron principle of the Exchange that a bad peace was better than a good war.

The Exchange became the backbone of the far trader banking and communication network. Only the most brutal or xenophobic planets forbade the presence of Exchange members, and these members could act as monitoring agents and local guides for the far traders. Political tensions or cultural taboos could be learned before they were accidentally provoked, and far traders could get accurate representations of the native laws and contract reliability.

The impartiality of the Exchange ensured that the natives got equally accurate information about the far trader, and were able to treat with the less reliable sorts on a strict no-credit basis.

Breaking a contract guaranteed by the Exchange was never a cheap prospect. The consequences in restricted trade were swift enough to dissuade most backwater tyrants and Dear Leaders from cheating the traders, and the knowledge that their activities would be carefully reported to other worlds encouraged the traders to maintain a modicum of trustworthiness.

Such was the trust in the Exchange that it even acted as an interstellar banking consortium, backing trades on distant worlds with the guarantee of its own resources. Numerous deep-space vaults were constructed to hold goods kept in escrow and guard the profit of the Exchange's many business concerns. With the chaos of the Silence, the locations and access codes for many of these vaults were lost, and now those who mean to loot them must somehow get past the cutting-edge security systems installed by their vanished builders.

The Exchange itself promoted diplomatic harmony and economic development as an article of faith, and were involved in all manner of projects to improve the wealth of its consular worlds. The Exchange's regional headquarters were located in important frontier sectors, while individual planets were largely independent in their governance. A Sector Consul had limited influence over his planetary "subordinates", but his ability to coordinate more cooperative Exchange consulates ensured that rebellion was a costly prospect.

Planetary Consulates operated under the control of a Prime Consul, chosen democratically by the Consulate's membership. He or she set Consulate policy and assigned lesser-ranking members to individual tasks. A member who objected to their assignment could withdraw from it, but they could expect no aid from the Consulate until the Prime Consul saw fit to forgive their desertion.

The rank and file of the Consulate were known as Liaisons, men and women expert in the analysis of human cultures and their manipulation for presumably worthy ends. Liaisons were trained to identify the crucial parts of a society, sifting through the obfuscation of tradition and expectation to see the real sources of power and authority. Many were experts on local law and custom, and could blend effortlessly into a society after even the most cursory research.

The Silence grievously wounded the Exchange. Each planetary Consulate was cut off from its brethren on other worlds, left to the resources of the local Exchange members. Where once they solved the disputes of worlds, now they found themselves trying to make peace in the chaos of collapsing societies and desperate locals. Many failed, their Consulates ground under by the forces around them. Still, some managed to maintain peace in the face of this desperation, often becoming the de facto judicial and diplomatic corps of a world.

The neutrality of the surviving members of the Exchange has been tested by the Silence. The disputing factions of the present day are no longer arguing dogma or ideology, but are instead fighting over desperately-needed resources or pretech artifacts. The savagery of many worlds is of a kind never imagined in the peaceful days before the Silence, and some Exchange members say that it is

time for the society started to pick sides between barbarians and those who aspire to civilization. Most Prime Consuls won't hear of such heresy, but not every Liaison discusses their plans openly.

Surviving members of the Exchange have a reputation for pacifism at almost all costs, but certain rumors swirl about them all the same. It is proverbial that harming a Liaison is very bad luck. Events seem to turn against the culprit with surprising regularity; friends shut their doors on them and enemies seem to know their every plan. Even when the Consulate doesn't form the judicial body of a society, violence against them rarely goes unpunished.

The most lurid rumors revolve around the dreaded "context assassins" of the Exchange; men and women trained to use a society's customs and laws against a target. Most of their victims were said to never even know the assassin was there- they simply found themselves placed in situations where they have no choice but to break mortal taboos or commit capital crimes. Events were manipulated to leave them at the mercy of their outraged brethren, guilty of unspeakable sins that they had no choice but to commit.

The worlds on which the Exchange is active remain few, however, and it is no longer an organization capable of drawing the scattered frontier into its web. In the absence of the Exchange or a similar organization, far traders are cast back upon the ancient condition of their trade- that of mortal danger and mystery every time a new world is sighted.

The Silence and the Fall

When the Scream finally shattered humanity's golden age, the far traders were all but wiped out. Suddenly, the spike drive ships that had been obsolete castoffs became the most valuable things in the galaxy. Planetary governments seized every ship that could leave the atmosphere, panicked elites fleeing for more temperate worlds while others desperately sought for help from equally-condemned neighbors.

In the core, there were few far traders left at all. The Jump Gates had moved the weight of commerce to massive slowboats and government-controlled transit. This reliance on titanic imports of food and other essentials ensured the death of the core worlds, and those few spike drive ships still in circulation were stolen by the local elites in vain attempts to outrun their doom.

On the frontier, the ships were seized for the sake of "vital planetary interests", whether by "lawful nationalization" or simple and largely indistinguishable theft. Unsurprisingly, most of these ships soon became inoperable without the expertise of their rightful owners and spare parts unavailable in local markets. Far trade was halted in a matter of weeks, as the few traders that still had a ship knew they would lose it the moment they touched down on a world.

After a few incandescent decades of war and societal collapse, the battered remnants of humanity began the slow march back toward interstellar contact. For some worlds, this journey was doomed from the start as they lacked the vital minerals and elements necessary to build a starship. Other planets could at least theoretically construct such ships, but lacked the population necessary to support the armies of technicians and skilled laborers needed to build the infrastructure necessary for shipyards.

A bare handful of planets had the necessary population, resources, and social focus necessary to restore their astronautic industry. Even for these fortunate worlds it was a matter of centuries before they were able to adapt their local resources to the demands of the ancient schematics.

These worlds formed the nuclei of gradually-expanding spheres of contact as their ships returned long-lost neighbors into contact with the greater cosmos. Ancient mail protocols, surviving Exchange consulates, and the inherited expertise of far trader families gradually fueled the technological revival that is now breaking the Silence.

With the revival of trade comes the revival of all the old challenges. The Exchange is broken, its consulates destroyed or stifled by centuries of isolation. Not even the dubious legal protection of the Mandate remains for traders. Every time they venture beyond the skies of their home world, they entrust themselves and their crews to the questionable law of foreign princes and alien powers. They have no friends save those they make and no shelter save what their own cunning can devise. The foreign world that celebrated them as saviors in the morning can mob them as imperialist plunderers by nightfall. There is no more law between worlds.

The far traders of this new age are of a breed not seen for eight hundred years. They are ferociously tough, cunning, and ruthless men and women with void-hardened nerves and an unfailing eye for the main chance. They deal with planets and powers that would as soon kill them as trade with them and they do so with no more backing than their own silver tongue and the laser at their hip.

Many die with their ships stolen, their cargo expropriated, and their bodies cast aside as foreign filth. Yet each one who perseveres weaves another thread of connection between worlds and brings another chance to restore the prosperity of a civilization long vanished. They do it for the glory, for the excitement, and for the wealth of far suns clenched in their fists. And who is to say that they have not earned every credit that they take?

SLAVES TO THE CREDIT

THE BUSINESS OF FAR TRADING

Many adventurers aspire to become far traders. After all, how hard could it be? All they need to do is buy a ton of something valuable, load it into their ship's cargo bay, and offload it half a sector away where it's scarcer. Easy profit, easy credits, and they can take care of it in a half-hour before getting on with their real business on the world.

Real far traders know better. They sneer at "tourist trade" and look on in bleak amusement as the innocents are devoured alive by port taxes, mercantile authorities, thieving dockhands, local authorities, and obscure native customs. Interstellar trade is not something to be accomplished on a mere whim. The personal goods that adventurers bring in with their luggage and a few discreet crates are one thing, but trade at any real commercial level bring with it a host of trading perils and physical dangers to navigate.

This chapter discusses the dynamics of interstellar trade on the frontier, and the kind of concerns and dangers that motivate far traders. Understanding these principles is important to both GMs and players, because their challenges make for excellent adventure grist. The simple exercise of selling a hold full of mineral supplements can turn into a full evening's adventure as PCs are forced to outwit the local dockhand's union, do favors for the customs office, and pass the goods to a buyer who fears his jealous local supplier might find out about his offworld purchases.

A far trader can rarely just land on a foreign world and sell his cargo. He needs preparation and a plan if he is to escape beggary at the hands of a hundred grasping strangers. When he touches down on a new world he comes face to face with an entire planet of people eager to peel him for every credit they can take. The forces arrayed against an interstellar merchant's profit come under three main headings- the government, the natives, and the competition.

THEY'RE HERE TO HELP THEMSELVES

For most far traders, the single most infuriating enemy of their bottom line is the planetary government itself. The natives usually only care if a far trade cuts into their own business and the competitors can only bring so much force to bear, but a government can make far trade impossible- and they have a great deal of incentive to do so.

The primary interest of most planetary governments is to remain in power. Prosperity is good, freedom is laudable, military might is necessary on many occasions, but the one indispensable necessity is that they remain in control of their world. Very little threatens that control like the presence of foreign traders bringing in alien technology of unknown capacity and commodities that threaten to upset cozy monopolies. Even those governments not entirely corrupt and self-serving find it easy to take counsel of their fears of "terrorist appropriation" or "social inequality" or "environmental damage" and ban the disruptive activity of far trade.

Many worlds merely ban *private* far trade. Any sales must be to the planetary government and that government will decide what a "reasonable" profit is. In the absence of any larger law or the protective oversight of the Exchange, many of these worlds have few compunctions about simply taking a merchant's cargo if the trader cavils at the price offered. In the worst case the merchant will never come back, which is a prospect most governments can face with great equanimity.

On other worlds where the government is more susceptible to the public interest, sales of offworld goods to private citizens are allowed for known, "safe" varieties of technology. The government taxes these exchanges accordingly, of course, and they strive to peel as much profit as possible from the merchant without actually killing the trade. These deals usually provide a minimal profit that often calibrated by the state to barely pay for the maintenance and crew costs of the far trader. Anything more is considered price gouging, of course.

A few worlds, particularly those established as trade hubs, have few or no limits on what goods can be sold there. These worlds rely on the sheer volume of traffic to make their profit, taking merely a large bite from each sale rather than a near-prohibitive sum. This tactic only works when there is a large volume of trade in the first place, however, and most worlds simply don't see enough merchant ships to make it worth such temperate restraint.

Other worlds have no planetary government, or are so primitive that the local rulers don't even know that a foreign ship has landed until the native runners arrive three days later. These worlds may not have the active cupidity of a government to deal with but

they almost invariably have a swarm of strongmen, local thugs, and self-appointed caudillos with even less concern for long-term profit than a more formal government. Even where such legal robbers are absent, the limited organization and coordination of the locals makes it very difficult to find buyers for precious offworld goods or collect the local cargo that would justify the trip. The same government that establishes prohibitive tariffs is also the government that makes a straightforward sale possible.

Overcoming the hostile apathy of a local government almost always hinges on making friends with the native officials. The far trader needs to make it clear to them that the trade profits the right people in a personal way, and that suitably vigorous exertions on the far trader's behalf will be rewarded accordingly. Offworld medical tech, weaponry, surveillance gear, and other implements valuable to individual authorities can often bring special exemptions from trade tariffs or permission to conduct private commerce. The loss of these friends can turn a thriving colonial industry into a state-expropriated disaster overnight, so far traders often find themselves forced to defend their patrons from less biddable rivals.

The bigger the trade, the bigger the friends are needed. The personal belongings of a band of adventurers can usually pass without more than a few credits slipped to the customs official. Moving ten tons of radioactives requires the cooperation of the port master and a friend in the mayor's office. An industrial concern that imports shiploads of postech electronic components into a steam-powered civilization will require cooperation from the highest levels of government if it's not to be stifled with regulations or shut down outright.

Some traders bypass the entire problem by becoming smugglers. They bring in a cargo of seemingly low-value goods, meekly pay the tariff on their trade, and then break open the crates to unload the five tons of mag rifles they're selling to a local crime boss. This tactic completely bypasses the prohibitive interest of the government in exchange for the risk of potential execution by outraged customs officials or treacherous buyers.

The Natives Are Restless

Even in the miraculous circumstance where the planetary government is not an active threat to a far trader's profit margin, the natives are usually a problem. Even as they form the far trader's market, they also produce their own crop of difficulties- ones that can be harder to route around than the simple matter of bribing a few officials.

The biggest threat from the natives is the pushback a far trader gets from the local merchants. A trader who brings in a hull full of self-sharpening hand tools can erase the local blacksmith's business in the course of a day. Ten tons of postech medical stims given to the local nobility can wipe out the entire high-end medical market for years, enraging the upper crust's physicians. Any good that is vastly superior to the local product is going to infuriate the local producers of that product, and those producers have friends.

These natives can bring to bear a focused, often violent response to the far trader's business. It doesn't require official government hostility to made trade all but impossible in a location- if the local carters won't carry the trader's crates, the local retailers won't deal with them, and

the local priest is thundering against them from the pulpit, it still amounts to a *de facto* ban on their goods. Such angered locals are unlikely to care about the good the trader's wares bring to the rest of the population if it means the destruction of their business or way of life.

As with government heat, the larger the sales volume of the far trader, the more disruption and resistance will be caused in the local markets. A few tons of automated mining equipment might only upset the miners of a particular city, while an entire locally-sourced factory for the engines might provoke a planetary strike by job-fearful laborers. It is a simple matter for a person to find a disinterested reason to hate an innovation when it threatens to ruin them, and these souls will act with righteous zeal for the good of the community in defending their own profits.

The more stubborn far traders will often try to bypass these objections with well-placed bribes, cultivated friendships, and great discretion in the sale of their wares. So long as they are moving relatively limited amounts of cargo, they can almost always find enough renegades or progressives willing to dare the anger of native institutions for the sake of an enormous advantage over their peers. The market made up by these innovators is limited, however.

Many far traders find themselves forced to co-opt the angry locals. They need to cut them into the trade, either making them exclusive retailers of the foreign goods or somehow involving them in the resultant industry. This usually comes at a significant initial cost to the bottom line, though a canny trader can end up expanding his market and leveraging the connections of the now-allied locals to produce even more valuable results.

This sort of co-option requires trust, however, and the conviction on the natives' part that the new life the trader is offering them will actually be enough to support their families and maintain their social standing. A guildmaster of weavers is not going to consent to become a mere minder of mechanical looms at a tenth of his old income, and a village blacksmith is not going to be satisfied with his long-term prospects in selling tools that will never break or need sharpening. If the natives and their leaders don't trust the far trader, no such co-option will be possible.

The alternative is to break them. They must be destroyed as a force capable of interfering with the merchant's business. Their wealth must be depleted, their allies overthrown, and their traditional sources of authority discredited. Such work is brutal and usually illegal in its particulars. Criminal groups and puppet governments are often needed to do the dirty work that the trader himself can't conduct, and offworld technology is employed to create the disasters and tragic accidents necessary to crush the resistance.

Sometimes this works perfectly, and the survivors are beaten down into dull submission. Other times the conflict breaks out into the open, and something amounting to a war of expulsion is fired by the enraged locals. In such cases, the merchant is almost certain to lose. No amount of foreign tech is going to hold off an entire world, and even if it could the market for that merchant's wares is gone. For the more amoral far traders, the risk of this popular uprising against them is all that keeps them from employing this option more often.
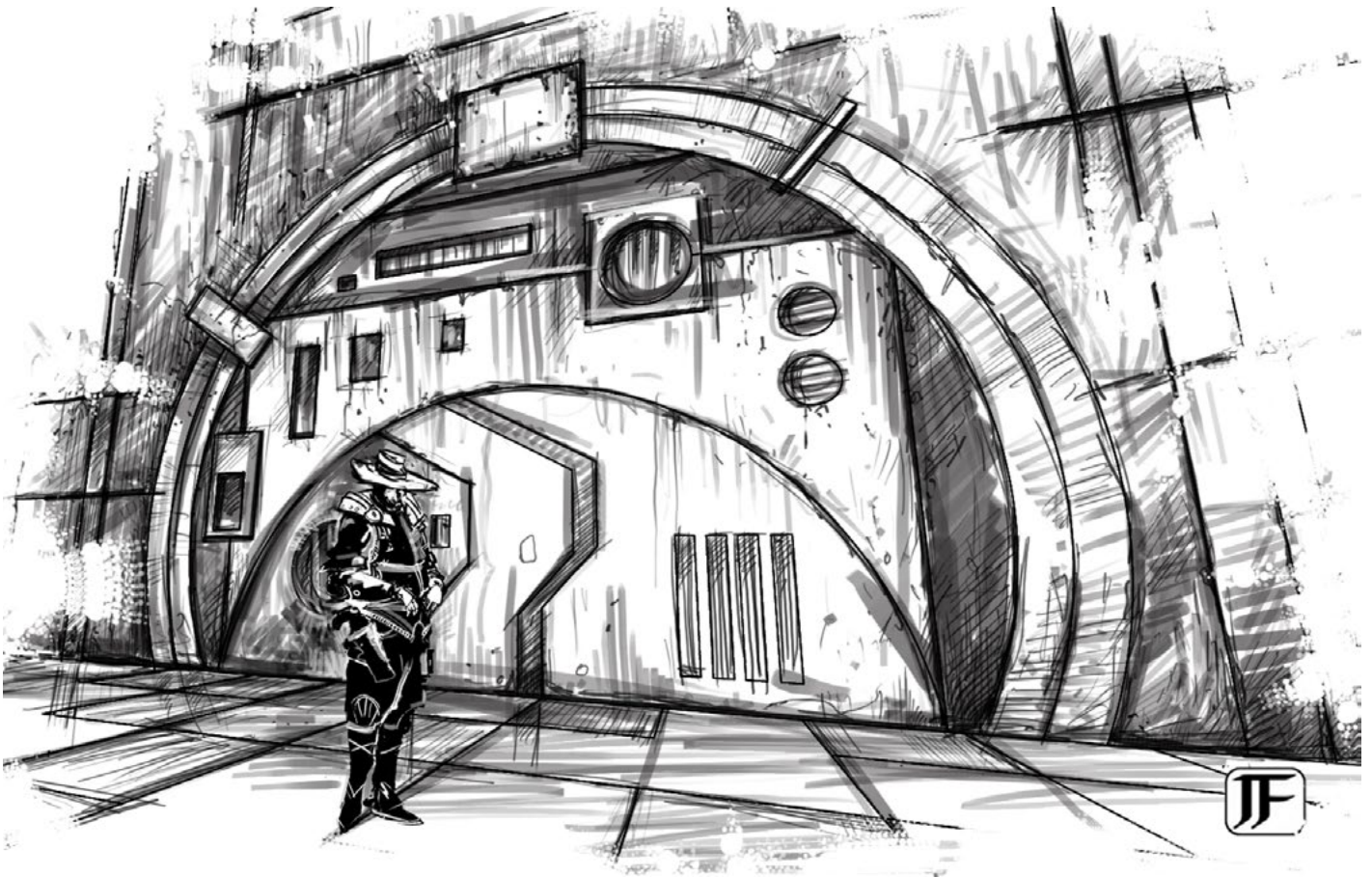
Friendly Competition

The third cause of trouble for far traders are their own colleagues in the business. The value of having a *de facto* monopoly on a world's interstellar trade is enormous. Even with the grasping exactions of a government and the native unrest of worried local merchants, a far trader can still make a fat profit on his cargo if he's the only one selling something universally desired by the locals.

On some worlds the presence of rival merchants is simply an accepted fact. Sector trade hubs get so many different far traders in that attempts to squeeze out rivals are pointless. Even if a fellow dealer in the local specialties is driven out of business, the mercantile openness of the world means that another will just come along to take his place. These worlds tend to have a tense peace among the far traders there, with a grudging acceptance of each other as inevitable burdens to be endured. The occasional bit of creative sabotage or underhanded dealing might turn up as a matter of course, but focused attempts to drive out rivals are unusual.

On isolated frontier worlds or corrupt, insular planets, the picture is different. These worlds get relatively few traders, and on worlds with uneasy governments the only way to profit is through personal relationships with the commerce officials. The right moves and the right change of government can shut out a rival or turn his business into a hopeless profit sink under the weight of new regulations or freshly-enforced taxes.

For those worlds with a less intrusive government, more direct action is necessary. Sabotage, labor violence, "tragic accidents", provoked mobs, and all manner of other cutthroat dealings are employed to make sure the other merchant seeks less dangerous grounds for profit. On some anarchic planets, open warfare exists between hostile mercantile consortia, wars that often involve native proxies and local troops.

A fellow far trader is likely to possess technology and resources substantially in advance of anything the local government or natives can muster. Space combat in the outer system of a pre-spaceflight world might not even be noticed by the locals, though only the most confident and reckless competitors will risk their own ship in open combat.

Some of these competitors are motivated by cold considerations of profit. If their target makes the campaign too expensive for them, they'll drop their efforts and live with the competition. Other competitors are more emotional about their feuds, and will pursue a rival's ruin past all rational economic return.

Such grudges are most often sparked by some ruinous setback, or by a rival's outrageous feat of mercantile accomplishment that leaves their own planetary business in tatters. For such far traders, the point of wealth is not its enjoyment, but the way it can be used to avenge the myriad wrongs they have suffered. Their plans for vengeance often involve horrific collateral damage for those innocent bystanders too close to their chosen nemesis.

The Selling Kind

With all these challenges arrayed against them, what kind of person becomes a far trader? The business mixes the kind of constant danger experienced by interstellar freebooters with the poisonous political machinations of a dictator's courtiers. The rewards are rich beyond the avaricious dreams of ordinary adventurers, but it takes far more than simple pluck and good luck to survive as a far trader.

Knowing the Score

Most far traders begin as crewmen for an established trader. It's in every merchant's interest to cultivate these skills in their subordinates, because the health of any interstellar combine hinges on the talents and expertise of its personnel. Sooner or later a successful trader is going to need a captain for the new freighter they purchased or a factor for some untamed world. If they can't deploy one of their own people they might be unable to find a trustworthy soul with the unique qualifications required for such work.

Not every subordinate moves up to such an established position. A trader's life is hazardous, and many enterprises collapse when a far trader dies on some desolate world or is ruined by the hazards of the trade. Other apprentices leave to go their own way, either out of personal ambition or dissatisfaction with the way they've been treated. These castoff crewmen eventually form the next generation of interstellar traders, and train their own replacements in turn.

Free adventurers often aspire to add a mercantile coup to their roster of illustrious deeds. Those that survive their first attempts usually have the wit to study the skills needed in the trade, and those who succeed in their efforts often make the most successful far traders. They usually have the right mix of cold-blooded indifference to morality and zestful contempt for danger that makes a fine far trader, and enough experience with situations of mortal peril to survive experiences that might kill a less space-hardened merchant.

Trader Skills

As a general rule, any PC that wants to qualify as a far trader will need at least Business-1, Culture/Spacer-0, and Culture/Traveller-0 skills. Characters without these basic skills are unlikely to know enough about the practical day-to-day needs of running an interstellar business to keep it operational. If the character is working with a group, however, different PCs can provide different skills to the enterprise. An adventuring party that lacks any single member sufficient for the work might well provide ample expertise as a whole.

Experienced traders are usually found with some expertise in one or more of the skills of Persuade, Leadership, Navigation, Vehicle/Space, Tech, and specific Culture skills for worlds important to their business. Accomplished merchants are also aware that there are limits to any one person's talents, and are quick to enlist gifted subordinates to cover those duties which are beyond their personal gifts.

Wanderers are sometimes found among the ranks of far traders, though they tend to barter only for the sake of continuing their journeys. They trade enough to keep their ship flying and their crew fed, but what they really love is the pleasure of discovery and exploration. They'll pick an unknown world over a safe milk run any day, just for the thrill of finding out what lies on the other side of the drill route. These wanderers are often found out at the very edge of known space, going places that profit alone would never take them and taking risks that more prudent traders would never contemplate.

Exiles, rebels, and zealots make up another group of traders. These souls have had their place taken or denied, their just cause scorned by outrageous usurpers or blind heretics. If they cannot get justice on their world, they will seek it elsewhere, and build up such a power base and fund of influence that their hated enemies will have no choice but to accept their righteous cause. These misfits are often lacking in more practical business skills, but they often have the advantage of a network of extremely motivated supporters who can make up in zeal what they lack in accountancy.

The last major group of free traders are those that pose as one of the other kinds while working for a planetary government. The nature of interstellar finance usually requires that they actually conduct trade to fund their mission- the Gateway Intelligence Agency can't exactly wire funds to Polychrome- but they have the support of their planetary government in pursuit of their appointed mission. On the downside, they also *have* an appointed mission, and while a government's ability to influence a ship six drills away is very limited, sooner or later the trader is going to have to answer to their handler if they don't intend to abandon their cause entirely. Given the expense of a ship and the importance of these operatives to a planetary government, such termination of employment is not accepted passively by their former patrons.

Have Ship, Will Travel

Granted a suitable education to equip them for the trade, the indispensable ingredient for a far trader is the possession of a starship. Even a ten-ton cargo hold can be enough to start an empire if a trader can get it from one world to another. Still, even the cheapest merchant frigate is worth almost eight hundred thousand credits, and a skilled technician does well to earn twenty-five credits a day on most worlds. Most far traders need a special degree of talent or good fortune to acquire that first vital trapping for their career.

In some cases, a novice far trader will own their ship outright. In most, however, they will either be flying it on behalf of a patron or owing substantial amounts of money on the loan. Any trader flying a ship owned by another organization can expect that organization to have at least one minder aboard with the captain, along with easily-claimed collateral back home. The first priority of most far traders is to own their ship free and clear, and this ambition drives many of them to make some very large gambles in pursuit of a big score. Those who fail in this aim often find that the condition of their ship is the very least of their eventual worries.

forbidden commodities, must usually be surrendered to the care of government officials until the ship is ready to leave. During this impoundment it is not at all uncommon for portions of the cargo to go missing, or occasionally be confiscated outright on the grounds of some obscure import/export regulation.

Some traders prefer to leave "hot" cargo floating in deep space somewhere and pick it up later on their way out. Others simply adopt smugglers' ruses and refit their ships with hidden cargo holds and crates that appear full of some less problematic product.

Once the ship and its occupants have cleared customs, the trader needs to find a buyer. Until that buyer is found, the cargo almost always remains securely aboard the trader's ship. Port warehouses might exist on sophisticated trade-hub worlds that can be trusted to keep their hands off a far trader's goods, but most backwater worlds lack that kind of secure assurance.

Far traders do not normally deal in bulk commodities, where sales are simply a matter of finding the local spot price and unloading

A Typical Trade Run

Under most circumstances, the first thing a far trader does on drilling into a system is to stop and listen. Civilian communication bands, poorly-encrypted military bursts, comm beacons left by prior traders, and whatever other information sources are available are interrogated for recent news. Planetary politics can be volatile, and most far traders are willing to spend a day doing post-drill maintenance and listening for trouble before they announce their presence.

Almost all far traders have ships equipped with fuel bunkers capable of supporting multiple consecutive drills. These fuel reserves allow them to drill out at the first sign of danger, before all but the fastest or closest enemy starships can close with them. As soon as they start heading deeper into the system's gravity well, however, this advantage is lost. Once a trader starts moving in from the rim, they're moving farther away from safety. The middle distance is the one favored by pirates and hostile space powers, a zone where the trader too far from the rim to drill out and too far from its destination to be sheltered by planetary defenses. As a consequence, far traders don't start moving in-system unless they're reasonably sure it's safe.

Once the relative safety of a system is assured, the trader usually beams notice of their arrival to the intended landing site. These messages give the ship's name, her homeworld, and the nature of her cargo. The extra day or two necessary to reach most inner-system planets gives time for local buyers to line up for the far trader's wares and gives notice to the trader's local factor to get things in order for the landing.

Customs on most worlds usually takes two or three hours, involving an inspection of the ship and its cargo by local officials. Cargo that is not intended for trade on this world, including locally-

It's a Dirty Job

As you might guess from this chapter, a scrupulously honest and aboveboard far trader is not long for the business. Trying to play by every law, regulation, tariff, and fee piled on top of a far trader's business is a recipe for bankruptcy. To most worlds, far traders are the quintessential dangerous outsiders, the sinister figures of temptation and dark bargaining. The individual good they do for people and the benefit their trade brings to a planet are easy to overlook because the benefits are spread widely, while the threat they pose to existing power structures is very specific.

As a consequence, most far traders respect no planetary law. The dirtside powers are their implicit enemies, the natural opponents of their essential right to trade. They will do whatever they can do to evade the snares and blockades of their business, tell whatever lies are necessary to get their trade through and corrupt, suborn, and befriend every possible official to open the way to their business. If they're not smuggling, it's because the numbers don't add up for it. Those unwilling to do these things rarely last out their first trading trip.

Still, many traders maintain a stubborn core of moral principle, a few basic beliefs that they won't compromise for any earthly price. An honest deal, a true word of honor, a cargo haul made even in the teeth of an empire's blockade- these traders are true to themselves because they're the only ones they can trust. The dirtgrubbers might deserve all manner of deception to ensure the natural right to trade, but these merchants won't sell out their own principles.

And others, of course, are just unmitigated bastards.

the goods. They deal in high-value, exotic products that are usually completely unavailable from any other vendor at that moment. Even when a world is supplied by numerous traders, there's an excellent chance that no one else on-planet at the time is carrying the same sort of cargo. This temporary monopoly on hopefully highly-desired products is the source of the far trader's fabulous profit margins.

It is also the cause of the profound headaches they suffer in finding suitable buyers. The far trader has to be able to sift out the inevitable wave of grifters, extortionists, thieves, officials, and dreamers who will seek to liberate their goods. The trader needs to identify those buyers who can actually pay the price they're offering and conduct the exchange in such a way as to avoid undue government gouging or sticky-fingered locals. This is one of the two stages where problems most often crop up for the trader. Those who can't resolve such difficulties in their financial favor don't last long in the business.

After selling their goods, the trader then needs to buy local products. The local credits they earned for their recent sale are nothing more than a temporary medium of exchange, to be converted into salable goods as quickly and efficiently as possible. Finding a good source of local specialties can be a challenge for any trader, and keeping that source once other traders start to bid up prices can be a further difficulty. This is the second stage where a trader most often comes to grief, their money spent on nonexistent products or their goods confiscated by some avaricious local official waving a newly-printed export tax schedule.

Once their cargo is loaded and their ship ready for liftoff, the trader is quick to make for the open void. A little rest and relaxation are the due fruits of industry, but the longer they stick around, the more likely they are to fall prey to the entrepreneurial local criminals, whether such figures come as extortionate dockworker bosses or slick-haired governmental agents.

A Faithful Friend

Much of the difficulty in a far trader's life comes from the basic problem of adapting to complex alien markets on short notice. It doesn't matter how miraculous your wares might be if you don't understand the local culture, can't get access to buyers and sellers, and are constantly at risk of having your entire cargo confiscated for violations of laws you can't even read, let alone understand. The far trader's usual response to these challenges is to hire a factor.

A factor is the effective CEO of the far trader's business on a particular world or station. The factor is in charge of keeping the local outpost running, maintaining good relations with the locals, and doing the extended research and investigation that the far trader doesn't have time to manage. The factor provides a presence and a voice for the far trader, and as such is almost indispensable for any long-term enterprise. If the far trader expects to do regular business on a world, he's almost always going to need a factor.

Factors can be hired straight from the trade markets, but most far traders prefer to put a trusted lieutenant or proven native ally into the position. For PC far traders, local factors are often natives that owe their lives or wealth to the aid the offworlders have given, with their loyalty the reward of some successful adventure.

With a native candidate, the factor is guaranteed to have the kind of intimate cultural awareness that comes from local origins. Likely candidates usually have superb social connections and family ties, ones that can mean the difference between profit and bankruptcy when it comes time to dodge the next wave of taxes. On many frontier worlds, the viability of a business hinges on having the right friends, and the native factor has them.

On the other hand, the native factor is also much less beholden to the trader. A factor holds a position of enormous trust. With enough chicanery, they might well be able to steal everything a trader owns on a planet and keep it with the help of their friends and relatives there. Most traders who go with native factors select locals that have reason to owe the merchant, those who have received some great favor or who have interests on other worlds that the merchant can tacitly hold hostage. Still, simple gratitude is a dubious bond. Mutual interest is a much more durable tie.

A factor from the merchant's home world is much easier to tie to the trader. If the world is little-served by other ships, the trader might be the only way the factor will ever get home to enjoy his pay. The merchant can select relatives, long-term clients, or other trustworthy souls that they understand much more perfectly than they ever could a citizen of a foreign world. There's also far less risk of cultural clashes or a catastrophe rising from unspoken social assumptions.

But despite this easier handling for the far trader, a factor from his homeworld is going to lack the local ties and expertise possessed by a native. It may take the factor months or years to master the local political landscape and identify the dangerous or unpredictable elements of a society. A factor from home is less likely to prove dangerous to a far trader, but he's also far less likely to make the trader vast sums of money.

Credits and Wealth

In most campaigns, a credit is a credit. Money earned on Polychrome will spend perfectly well on Gansu, and a character's full bank account is accessible from anywhere in the galaxy. For most games, this is all the attention that needs to be given to the topic.

For far traders, life isn't so simple. The relatively small amounts of money that most freebooters spend can be covered by interplanetary exchanges and local banks, but when the planet-shaking sums of wealth that far traders move are involved the calculus changes. No planetary bank is going to credit half its reserves against property that exists in a star system completely beyond the control of the local authorities. Credits are currency, but far traders deal in *wealth*. The distinction is important if GMs and players are to understand the motivations of interstellar traders.

Every planet's currency is backed by something. In many cases, this something is actual wealth, some resource that is universally valuable or needed by the populace. One credit represents so much gold, salt, iron, medicine, air, or other vital substance. Particularly on very primitive or disorganized worlds, this money may actually be pieces of this substance weighed out as coins or formal measures. Control of this currency is based on production of the necessary good.

On more developed worlds, this currency is often backed by governmental confidence and is controlled by the governments themselves. A credit is worth a credit because the authorities say it is and because their populace is willing to agree. A sudden reconsideration of that assessment can result in drastic currency crashes and other economic maladies, as can overproduction of money by the government. Given the usual tense relationship between far traders and planetary governments, only the most foolhardy traders are willing to put their trust in fiat currency.

Far traders use their local profits to acquire actual wealth. This wealth takes the form of tangible products and the assured service of skilled labor. Foodstuffs, local stores, high-quality manufactures, rare raw materials, defensible holdings, and all the other physical things that people want to have merit consideration in a far trader's portfolio. Governmental promises, stacks of local paper currency and other intangibles are less favored. Their actual exposure to local currency markets is kept as limited as possible due to their vulnerability to currency crises and governmental monetary intervention- and not least because the far traders themselves are often the cause of such crises.

Offering a far trader twenty million local credits might interest him, but offering him a half-million tons of this year's neo-krill harvest is sure to catch his attention. Government bonds might be shunned by the merchants, but salvage rights to a pretech ruin might bring a king's ransom in offworld products. A far trader likes things he can touch and carry away far better than he likes a currency that is fundamentally under the control of people who might well consider him an existential threat to their survival.

1d12	Possible Currency Backing
1	Salt or other human-needed minerals
2	Gold or other traditional precious metal
3	Dietary supplement to digest native food
4	Food on a barren world
5	Medicine for a recurring disease
6	Water on a parched world
7	Combustibles on a frozen world
8	Power on a world reliant on tech
9	Iron on a metal-poor world
10	Oxygen on a world without atmosphere
11	Slaves, on a labor-reliant world
12	Munitions, on a war-torn world

The Midas Touch

So why not simply fill a freighter with pig iron bars and ship it to a ferro-impoverished world? In a stroke, the merchant would become fabulously wealthy and could buy up all the valuable local products for the interstellar equivalent of beads and a song. Many spacers make a point of filling their shore sacks with such local valuables before hitting the town, and the natives are glad to accommodate their spending.

This toleration vanishes as soon as some offworlder merchant launches a kamikaze attack on their monetary system. Any volume of commodity big enough to matter to a far trader is big enough to cause a serious disruption in the local economy, and that sort of chaos is certain to infuriate the native ruling class. It risks enriching and empowering large numbers of people outside the existing power structure, provokes rampant inflation and produces a direct threat to the local elite's control of the planet's economy. The merchant who triggers that kind of disruption will be lucky to escape with his life. His largesse will cause enormous destruction as inflation makes savings near-worthless and the society is thrown into turmoil by the monetary collapse. While such generosity is a brutal tool to punish a world, trading opportunities tend to be unpredictable in its wake.

Experienced far traders instead work to bring a balanced cargo in, selling those goods that not only satisfy immediate demands but also set up the planet to provide more abundant or sophisticated goods in the future. Disruptive technology is introduced carefully and quietly, with profits taken before the local rulers realize the long-term consequences of the wealth now accruing to the lower classes. A world may come to abandon certain stores of wealth over the course of this development, but it will be a gradual process much more amenable to peaceful social change and the adaptation of the ruling elites. Or it might end in an apocalyptic revolution as centuries of unresolved tensions explode in an inferno of offworld tech. Many far traders are comfortable with either outcome, so long as the profit opportunities remain.

Setting Up And Running A Basic Merchant Campaign

The first step in setting up a merchant campaign is to make sure your players are on board with the idea. Many groups like adding a little cargo hauling to their interstellar wanderings, and the rules in the next chapter cover this process, but they aren't so interested in a full-fledged campaign revolving around their commercial exploits. Before you start to flesh out your sector in full mercantile glory, you should be certain that your players are actually interested in that sort of play.

The next step is to decide on the initial context for their trading. They're going to need a ship to begin their journey, so the first session of the game should either start with one of the PCs holding title to such a craft or end with the PCs in possession of a newly-acquired starship.

Far traders, by definition, pass beyond the easy reach of planetary laws. As a natural consequence, no bank or organization with an ounce of sense would ever consider loaning money for a ship purchase without lodging several of their own staffers as permanent crewmembers. If the PCs owe money to someone for their ship they almost certainly have two or three minders on board who may or may not have any use beyond keeping an eye on their loan payments.

Such payments must be tendered in appropriate currency at a world with some branch of the organization. Failing to submit the resultant confirmation codes often triggers lockdowns on the ship, leaving it dead in space and beaming distress codes to the nearest listener.

Starting the PCs in debt for their ship can be a convenient impetus for trading, but in a full-fledged merchant campaign it's not strictly necessary. Presumably the players want to trade in the first place, so there's no need to chivvy them in that direction. Instead, you can encumber the ship with other complications, such as it being property stolen from a powerful organization, prone to dangerous equipment failures, or equipped with some special equipment that is integral to the ship's hull.

The PCs themselves could be any of the usual run of interstellar freebooters and misfit wanderers that make up the typical ranks of player characters. Taken together, they should have at least some skill in Business, Culture/Spacer, and Culture/Traveller. Specific culture skills in the worlds they intend to deal on can also be useful.

It may be that a single PC is the sole professional far trader of the group, and the others are their friends, allies, or outright employees. In other cases, the entire group is a "board of directors" for their enterprise, with each of them having an equal responsibility in the business. In the face of the inevitable casualties of the trade, new PCs can be cycled in as replacements from whatever backwater world the PCs happen to be exploring. If the ship they fly has a sufficiently large crew, new PCs can be conjured up from the faceless ranks of the deck apes or engine snipes.

Once you have decided on a context for your budding merchant princes, you need to flesh out your sector's commercial possibilities with the tools given in the World Creation chapter. At their most minimal, this simply means assigning a trade table to each world and a tag to sum up its general commercial character. If you want to elaborate a specific world further, you can use the templates in the Adventure Creation chapter to sketch out a few outlines for quick use and detail the individual NPCs and trade tables of the world.

Once your sector is fit for mercantile exploits, you can pick one of the planets to use as a campaign starting location. The PCs may or may not have enough credits to buy a cargo on the open market. If not, you can use the world's tag information and a Recover Plunder adventure template to quickly gin up an intro adventure that will get them the cargo they need to start their trading career. If the fallout just happens to make that world too hot to hold them, there's still a sky full of stars to receive them.

As you play out your campaign, you can mix mercantile dealings with more traditional adventures. The adventure templates demonstrate a way to turn a trade tag into a direct evening's entertainment, but there's no reason that the PCs can't get caught in more conventional space adventures. If you need to provide a worthwhile hook for the crew, just tie the adventure into the Friction described in the next chapter or entangle it with the fate of their latest cargo sale.

It's likely that you'll soon find the PCs formulating their own large-scale goals and ambitions. In a standard *Stars Without Number* campaign, the PCs may become quite wealthy and influential, but such a fate is an uncertain byproduct of conventional adventuring. In a mercantile campaign, acquiring incredible amounts of wealth and power is the whole point of the exercise.

Wealth and power are meant to be used, and you can expect your players to use them. With enough good trades, suborned officials, and secret maneuvers, they can end up as glittering princes of the spacelanes, lords over legions of faithful minions and fabulous stores of riches. A merchant prince might command entire fleets of warships and have near-unquestioned power over entire subjected worlds.

As a long-term ambition for the most successful far traders, the party might even go so far as to found their own colony world. A group capable of shepherding such a world through the agonies of its early years might eventually find itself the rulers of an entire planet of loyal and handpicked colonists. Conversely, failure might leave them beggared amid the ruins of their tragic hubris.

Whatever the precise nature of their ambitions and their failures, you can expect far traders to wield wealth and power on a level unknown to ordinary adventurers. They earn hundreds of thousands of credits on a single landfall, and lose just as much in an eyeblink when some native lord betrays them. They build vast enterprises and watch them crumble to dirtsider greed. Every group can expect enormous wins and crushing losses, but as long as they have their ship and their unquenched ambition the game will go on. As the GM, it's your pleasure to watch what your players make of it.

An Honest Day's Trade

Cargo Sales and Business Holdings

This section provides the mechanical guts of a merchant campaign, giving the tables and tools for the buying and selling of goods between worlds. If all you're interested in having is a fast system for resolving small-scale cargo exchanges, the tables here are all you'll need to reference. If your players simply want to load up a few tons of a local specialty for sale on the next world they happen to pass, then hand them the quick reference sheet and roll on.

Before taking in these mechanics, however, it's important to emphasize the fact that they are simply tools for the quick resolution of complicated situations. If your PCs happen to come up with a different plan or engage in some cleverness that brings them better results than the cold dice would recommend then their deeds should take precedence over the mechanics.

Basic Concepts

All cargo is measured in metric tons. The limited hold sizes of spike drive spacecraft make every square meter of cargo space a precious commodity not to be wasted on bulk goods, but even shipments of small and precious goods usually require substantial overhead in packaging and security measures. As such, even the smallest meaningful shipment of goods usually amounts to at least one metric ton.

A merchant's *expertise* is simply the total of his or her Business skill, relevant Culture skill, and the better of their Intelligence or Charisma modifiers. If they have absolutely no planetary Culture skill, they suffer a penalty of -1. A group can pool their talents to use the best numbers available to them, but this requires close cooperation and trust. Any member of such a group can easily cheat the others in ways almost impossible to prosecute under ordinary commercial codes.

Cargo is characterized by its *types*, a set of descriptors attached to the specific load of goods. Types describe the most salient characteristics of the cargo- the fact that it is Postech, or Medical, or Agricultural, or Mineral, or Maltech, or Luxury, or so forth. A load of metawheat might be both Common and Agricultural, for example, while a shipment of spike drive cores might be Rare and Postech. A cargo's types influence its salability on a world. An industrial planet will be eager to buy Agricultural and Mineral inputs, for example, while a primitive farming backwater might pay dearly for Postech, or a decadent space station for Luxuries.

Every world has some measure of *Friction*, a score indicating how much of a far trader's profit is going to be eaten up in taxes, extortion, payoffs, bribes, protest insurance, and obscure yet costly local customs. The higher the Friction, the harder it is to turn a profit as the locals siphon off more of the take. Friction usually ranges from 2 to 5 depending on the commercial friendliness of the world. *Friction can never go below 1 without some mercantile adventure to justify it.* There is a certain minimum commercial drag that no holding can overcome.

Every world has a *trade table*, a list of ten types of cargo that are often worth exporting. Other goods might be available at the GM's discretion, but these ten goods are the ones most significant to interstellar traders. When a far trader looks for something to sell, he rolls twice on the trade table. The results indicates the two commodities with the best prices at the moment.

If he doesn't like either, he can push for more marginal deals, and reroll both dice. The Friction for that sale goes up by 1, however. He can repeat this process as often as he wishes, but each reroll bumps the Friction 1 point higher for that particular sale, as he starts cutting worse deals to get what he wants. A trader does not need to roll on the trade table when he is selling goods; only when he seeks to buy the local products. The trade table can either be customized by the GM, or one of the default tables in this section can be chosen.

There is a *trouble table* for each world, listing a half-dozen of the most common mercantile mishaps that might befall a trader For every deal that a merchant seeks to complete, 1d10 is rolled. If it is equal or less than the trouble chance, then something unfortunate happens in the course of the bargain. Portions of the goods may be lost, Friction might spike for this particular deal, or the business might be delayed by some weeks. The troubles can be diced out with no great investment of time, but if the merchant cannot stand to endure the loss a suitable adventure might reverse the charges. Several sample trouble tables are provided in this section for GMs who don't have time to brew up their own.

BASIC TRADE

FINDING GOODS

Even without any headquarters or factor on a world, a far trader can usually scare up some sort of salable cargo. His rolls on the trade table will give two different types of goods that are currently the best deals on the market. He might decide to wait for different products to become available, but each pair of rolls after the first adds 1 Friction to the bargain as he seeks out more marginal deals. A special order for a good not on the table but theoretically available on the world can be done for an additional 4 Friction.

Planets cannot supply an infinite amount of goods to a merchant. Without the benefit of local factors and special contacts with producers and trade bureaucrats, a far trader can usually buy no more than 1 ton of any particular cargo each month for every 5,000 inhabitants of the world. The trader can sell unlimited amounts to a world, granted that the GM finds it reasonable.

MAKING BARGAINS

To find out how much it costs to buy a load of goods the far trader rolls 3d6 against the Sales Chart to find a multiplier, and then applies that to the base price of the goods he's buying. This roll is modified by Friction and the merchant's own expertise. Friction always makes things worse; when the trader wants a high price for selling his goods, it's subtracted from the roll, and when he wants a low price for buying fresh cargo, it's added to the roll. Expertise, conversely, always makes things better- added when a high selling price is wanted and subtracted when buying goods.

Finally, the roll is modified by any special supply and demand consideration for the type of goods being sold. Primitive worlds will sell raw industrial inputs cheaply, but they won't pay much for them either. Such basic commodities would bring far less than they would claim at the forges of a busy industrial planet. Finding large amounts of high-tech goods on backward planets may not be possible at any price, while a load of cookware may not be worth the price it takes to store it on some pretech world. Planets may thus have modifiers, such as an industrial planet offering +2 for Mineral and Agricultural inputs, or -1 for the Postech products of its factories.

The price modifier obtained by the roll is the best price the trader can find under current market conditions. If he wants to make a better deal, he's going to need to wait at least a month or else conduct some less orthodox marketing maneuvers in order to find a buyer with deeper pockets or a seller with less onerous demands. Such activity will usually constitute an adventure, one which can be constructed using the tools in the Adventure Creation chapter.

If the far trader does decide to take the deal, the GM then rolls 1d10 to determine whether or not some trouble has struck the bargain. Different worlds have different trouble thresholds; peaceful and trade-experienced planets might give trouble only on a 1 in 10, while a battlefield world ruled by rapacious warlords might have a 5 in 10 chance of difficulties. If trouble is indicated, a roll on the world's trouble table will give its particular form.

As with market difficulties, sufficiently clever PCs can often come up with a plan to mitigate the worst of the problem, making an adventure out of their troubles. If their efforts are successful the trouble is nullified and the deal closes without hindrance.

Sales Chart	
Modified 3d6 Roll	**Price Modifier**
2 or less	-90%
3	-70%
4	-60%
5	-50%
6	-40%
7	-30%
8	-20%
9	-10%
10 - 11	Base Price
12	+10%
13	+20%
14	+40%
15	+60%
16	+80%
17	+100%
18	+150%
19 or more	+200%

PAYING UPKEEP

A ship has costs. Docking fees, refueling, supplies, and other relatively small expenditures can be assumed to be part of the Friction of a local deal, but maintenance and repair fees must be paid in local credits. Crew usually sign terms that require that they be paid in acceptable currency and returned to their homeworld at the end of their service, or else supplied with enough funds to get home on their own. Most crews average a hundred credits per day per crewman, so far traders often run their ships as short-handed as possible.

MERCHANT DILETTANTES AND NOVICES

For those campaigns that simply want to throw a little trade into the typical adventuring mix, this page is all that is needed. The PCs buy their goods, carry them elsewhere, and sell them for local credits. If the GM is running a particularly light campaign, they might even say that all credits are the same on all worlds, sparing the group from worrying about multiple bank accounts on different worlds. There's no need to carry things further.

Novice far traders may have a hard time turning a profit. They probably don't muster more than 2 points of expertise bonus, and most worlds have Friction around 3. As they gain levels and invest in better business skills they'll soon muster enough expertise to make a credit even on the least appealing deals.

In the meanwhile, they should focus on buying goods where they're cheap and carrying them where they are dear. A load of cattle from a primitive world might have a -3 price modifier at the source and a +1 bonus on a hungry industrial planet. For those occasions when a desired cargo is not available, a quick side adventure can often get the young traders the opportunities they need for profit.
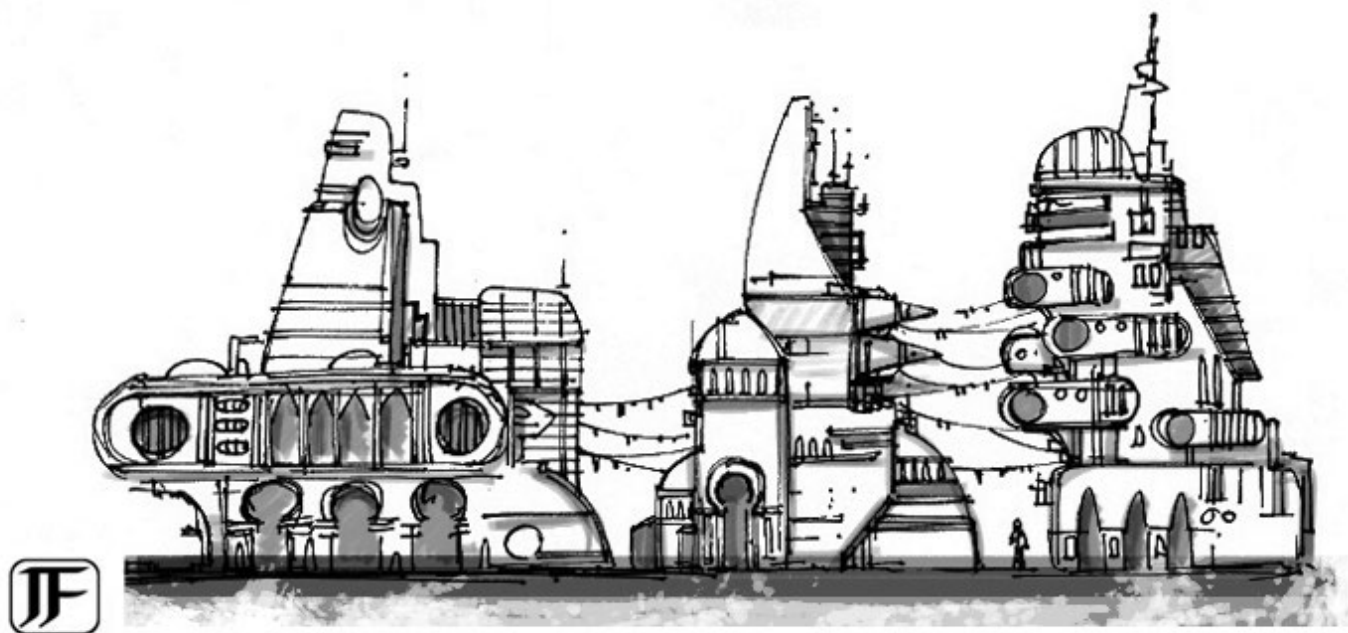
A Trader At Work

Saif ibn Barakah is on Tellurium, a planet retaining significant industrial facilities. He's spent a little time looking for the best deal on the market, and rolls 1d10 twice to find out what the best bargains are. The results indicate that they are Industrial Tools, with the types of Tool and Postech, and Postech Housewares with the Consumer and Postech types. He could try again to see if he could find some different deals to cut, but each reroll of the two dice would bump the deal's Friction up by one point as he pursued increasingly tenuous leads. He decides these two cargos are good enough for his hold, and as he's heading to a low-tech world next, he decides to buy industrial tools that would sell well on a less developed planet.

Tellurium's price modifiers are -1 for Postech and -1 for Tool- as an industrial world, these types of goods are in fairly common supply and can be gotten more cheaply than usual. The Friction on Tellurium is 3; not bad, but no haven of free enterprise. To find out the cost for each ton of industrial tools, Saif rolls 3d6, subtracts 2 for the type modifiers, and adds 3 for Friction, and subtracts 4 for his own substantial expertise, with a final result of 9. Checking the price table, he sees that it amounts to a 10% discount to the base price. Since the base price for industrial tools is 10,000 credits per ton, each ton will cost him 9,000 Tellurian credits. He could decide the bargain is a bad one and kill the deal, but it will take him another month at the least to find another prospect worth investigating. Saif decides that his buyers will pay well enough to support his investment, and buys 20 tons of tools with local currency. Luckily, his trouble check for the deal provides no impediments.

Several weeks later, Saif touches down on Henderson's World, a scrubby low-tech agricultural planet. The central government is too weak to extort much from far traders, but the need to pay off local strongmen for "security" cuts deeply into the profit margin- the local Friction is 4. Still, they pay very well for industrial equipment and Postech manufactures- the modifier for Tools is +1 and Postech is another +1. To find the price they're willing to pay, Saif rolls 3d6 again, this time adding his expertise and the type modifiers and subtracting Friction. The net result is 13, which means a 10% premium on the base price. Saif can unload his goods for 11,000 local credits per ton. Again, his trouble check is made without issue- a riskier thing on a wild world.

Being a red-blooded far trader, however, Saif decides he'd rather skip the whole "tax" part of the arrangement, and performs certain favors for the local warlord that play out in the course of an evening's adventure. As a consequence, the GM decides that the Friction is ignored for this particular deal, giving Saif an effective roll of 17- and a 100% premium on his goods. Saif much prefers getting 20,000 Henderson's World credits for each ton of his goods. After all, the jewelfruit harvest is coming in, and they will pay well for such luxuries on Vantage....

COMMON GOODS AND CREATING NEW ONES

The list below provides examples of some of the more and less common goods for sale on various worlds. A GM can use this list to make up trade tables for new planets and PCs can usually buy anything on this list that is tech-appropriate to the world, albeit special orders add a penalty of 4 Friction to the deal. The tables on the facing page can be used to create new cargos, either by picking appropriate types and totaling up the final base price per unit, or by randomly rolling once or twice on the cargo type table and taking some inspiration from the lists below. GMs should note that the more types that are added to a good, the more expensive it is likely to be.

STANDARD COMMODITIES			
Cargo	Cost per Unit	Min. Tech Level	Types
Clothing	1,000	0	Common, Low Tech, Cultural
Colonial Materials	2,000	4	Survival, Postech, Common
Colonial Supplies	1,000	4	Agricultural, Survival
Drugs, Raw Materials	2,000	0	Agriculture, Biotech, Bulky
Drugs, Recreational	50,000	3	Luxury, Biotech, Compact
Exotic Jewels	25,000	0	Rare, Mineral, Luxury, Compact
Fine Liquor	10,000	0	Luxury, Low Tech, Compact
Fusion Plants	10,000	4	Postech, Tool, Bulky
Ghoul Immortality Tech	400,000	5	Medical, Maltech, Compact
Housewares, Basic	2,000	1	Low Tech, Consumer
Housewares, Postech	5,000	4	Consumer, Postech
Housewares, Pretech	50,000	5	Consumer, Pretech
Livestock, Common	2,000	0	Common, Livestock
Livestock, Gengineered	10,000	0	Livestock, Biotech
Livestock, Luxury Pets	25,000	0	Livestock, Luxury
Medical Supplies, Postech	25,000	4	Medical, Postech, Compact
Medical Supplies, Pretech	200,000	5	Medical, Pretech, Compact
Metal Ingots, Common	1,000	1	Common, Mineral, Bulky
Metal Ingots, Rare Alloys	5,000	3	Mineral, Bulky, Rare
Metawheat	500	0	Common, Agricultural, Bulky
Native Artwork	10,000	0	Cultural, Luxury
Parts, Basic Industry	5,000	2	Low Tech, Tool
Parts, Pretech Industry	100,000	4	Pretech, Tool
Parts, Starship Maintenance	25,000	4	Postech, Astronautic, Rare
Postech Building Material	10,000	2	Tools, Postech, Bulky
Pretech Junk	50,000	0 salvaged / 5 to make	Pretech
Slaves	25,000	0	Sapient
Small Arms, Energy	10,000	4	Military, Postech
Small Arms, Pretech	100,000	5	Military, Pretech
Small Arms, Projectile	5,000	3	Military, Low Tech
Tools, Astronautic	25,000	4	Tool, Postech, Astronautic
Tools, Basic Hand Tools	5,000	1	Low Tech, Tool
Tools, Industrial	10,000	4	Tool, Postech
Tools, Medical Equipment	50,000	4	Tools, Postech, Medical

1d20	Cargo Type	Price Mod.
1	Agricultural	-2
2	Alien	+2
3	Astronautic	+1
4	Biotech	+1
5	Consumer	0
6	Cultural	0
7	Livestock	0
8	Low Tech	-1
9	Luxury	+2
10	Maltech	+4
11	Medical	+2
12	Military	+1
13	Mineral	-1
14	Postech	0
15	Pretech	+3
16	Religious	0
17	Sapient	+2
18	Survival	0
19	Tool	+1
20	Vehicle	+1

Base Price for a New Commodity

Mod Total	Price / Unit	Mod Total	Price / Unit
-5	100	1	10,000
-4	250	2	25,000
-3	500	3	50,000
-2	1,000	4	100,000
-1	2,000	5	200,000
0	5,000	6+	Doubled

1d20	Cargo Bulk per Unit	Price Mod.
1	Compact: .1 ton per unit	0
2-18	Normal: 1 ton per unit	0
19-20	Bulky: 10 tons per unit	0

1d20	Cargo Rarity	Price Mod.
1-2	Common elsewhere	-1
3-19	Normal rarity for a product	0
20	Rare and widely desired	+1

What's So Useful About....

1d20	This Plant?	This Mineral?	This Product?
1	Extremely high harvest yield	Absorbs industrial toxins	Subtly addictive components
2	Extremely nutritious	Actually edible and nutrient-rich	Much cheaper to make here
3	Grows where little else can	Beautiful craft component	Exquisitely precise craft
4	Has mind-influencing fragrance	Boosts agricultural output	Beautiful construction
5	Heirloom with cultural importance	Creates unique alloy	Has cultural or religious meaning
6	Immune to most plant pests	Extremely durable	Renowned brand name
7	Makes fabulous booze	Extremely easy to craft	Incredibly durable
8	Makes great construction material	Focuses light or other energy	Cheap to operate
9	Makes immiscible proteins edible	Has unique medical properties	Easy to repair
10	Naturally extracts rare minerals	Important to comm grids	Very lightweight
11	Potent drug ingredient	Reflects heat	Extremely fashionable
12	Provides resistance to chronic plague	Reflects radioactivity	Induces positive emotions
13	Provides something vital to life here	Strong and transparent	Very compact
14	Remarkably strong fibers	Superb explosive	Fits many users or machines
15	Requires little to no tending	Unique optical properties	Very reliable under harsh conditions
16	Supports valuable insect life	Used in postech industry	Minimal power usage
17	Tastes delicious	Used in spike drive cores	Easily customized for a world
18	Used in an industrial process	Very lightweight	Has multiple functions
19	Used in religious rites	Very useful chemical component	Favored by the elite
20	Utterly bizarre physical property	Vital for life support tech	Fits the most common user/machine

Type Descriptions

Commodity types are meant to describe the most important elements of a particular good. While a valuable pharmaceutical may be derived from an alien plant, the important thing about it is that it is a Medical supply rather than an Agricultural one. As the GM, you should restrict yourself to picking the two or three most salient descriptors for a good when determining its base price.

Agricultural goods are usually edible substances or raw building materials for those worlds too poor or primitive to use ceraplast or other advanced construction tech. Other worlds have a cultural or aesthetic preference for natural materials for their buildings.

Alien goods are those defined by their xenological origin. They have some qualities or function unknown to ordinary human goods and are clearly some fascinating product of alien artifice.

Astronautic commodities have to do with spaceflight. It requires a large and sophisticated industrial base to construct astronautic components, and many worlds lack the rare minerals necessary for building spike drives or interstellar starships of any kind.

Biotech wares are the product of advanced gengineering and sophisticated eugenic therapies. In the case of living organisms, even very primitive worlds might have a functional breeding stock of this good, but most worlds require at least postech expertise to offer this type of commodity.

Consumer goods cover the innumerable cosmetics, appliances, labor-saving devices and fashion accessories produced by the ingenuity of countless worlds. Their sheer novelty can often excite buyers on distant worlds, along with the cachet that exists in using costly offworld products.

Cultural products are intimately tied with the history, traditions, and cultural values of a particular world. They may take the form of clothing, artwork, music, entertainment holos, or almost anything else that is vividly and clearly a product of their society.

Livestock are valuable even in the relatively small numbers that can be traded across interstellar distances. Even a few breeding pairs can add important genetic diversity to a world's stock pool, and some strains are gengineered for superb growth and yields.

Low Tech goods are those defined by their simplicity of manufacture. Any society with access to even the most primitive tools can create such a product- clothing, booze, hand tools, and other products that require no sophistication in their production.

Luxury wares offer some exotic pleasure or alien delight to the buyer. While poor worlds rarely have the surplus to afford these rarities, wealthier and more decadent worlds might want nothing more than a constant stream of these new pleasures.

Maltech is universally reviled, hated, and feared. Slave-things gengineered from human stock, lunatic unbraked AI cores, cannibalistic ghoul immortality tech, crust-cracking doomsday devices... if the tech provokes automatic revulsion, it's probably maltech. Still, maltech is always has its uses for some cold few.

Medical tech is widely valued, particularly since most worlds have a wide selection of native sicknesses and syndromes unknown on other worlds. Most colony worlds have only a minimal fit with human biology, and the consequences can be bitter to the natives.

Military goods range from weaponry to vehicles to drop pods to quantum ECM projectors. Ordinary rations and uniforms may not qualify, but ultra-concentrated food substitutes and armored battle harness certainly would.

Mineral wares are metal ingots, refined ore extracts, and other concentrated mineral products. Raw ore is almost never shipped offworld due to its bulk, but most worlds can manage even complex mineral extraction processes with enough offworlder oversight- and enough contempt for safety and pollution controls.

Postech goods are those products that could only be produced by postech-capable planets. Just because a product was built on a postech world does not mean it qualifies for this type. The type only applies if its qualities hinge on its technological development.

Pretech commodities are extremely rare. They do something miraculous or impossible to ordinary tech, though this thing may be so specific to pretech industry or so reliant on psitech support that it has no practical use in the modern day. Even semifunctional pretech junk remains precious in the hands of sufficiently inventive engineers, however.

Religious goods are those integral to the function of a local faith. Sanctified vestments, holy foods, sacred oils, or anything else that might be required by the creed could qualify for this type.

Sapient "goods" are intelligent beings. This type is usually applied to slaves, though remarkably advanced robots might also qualify. Most developed worlds do not deal kindly with slavers, though many tyrannical and primitive planets deal freely in people.

Survival goods are uncommon, built specifically to nurture colonies and outposts on remote worlds. Few worlds offer them as a common trade good, though most advanced worlds can build them to suit a special order.

Tool cargoes can range from simple hammers and knives to crates of metatools and still more exotic pretech implements. Tools of any kind tend to be precious on primitive worlds, though such planets often get more use out of simple, macro-scale tools rather than nanotech chip impurity filters and the like.

Vehicle types apply to everything from riding beasts to gravtanks. Many such cargos are actually consist only of the engines and vital components of the vehicle, with the rest to be constructed out of local materials. Fully-assembled vehicles are almost never shipped, though a few far traders have made a killing in bringing fully-operational gravtanks into the teeth of a primitive world's battlefields, launching the tanks right out of the cargo holds.

TRADE AND TROUBLE TABLES

The following pages include sample trade and trouble tables for eight different types of worlds. If a GM doesn't have much time or interest in personalizing their planets, they can simply apply the most suitable selections to each of their worlds and call it good. The examples are all that are needed to furnish trade information for a full sector of worlds.

Other GMs will prefer to spend more time with the process and add a little more individual flavor to each world. The notes that follow should help to put together bargains and afflictions that best suit the details of each world.

CREATING TRADE TABLES

The first step is to pick out five characteristic trade goods from the world. You can use the random tables given in this chapter to get some inspiration, or you could draw ideas from the tags given in the World Creation chapter.

Is there a thing the locals need to make in order to survive? Worlds with hostile atmospheres or dangerous conditions can be expected to be very proficient at dealing with these challenges. Filter systems, tectonic tech, pressure-dome construction, radiation shielding, and other tech designed to make an unfriendly world livable can all easily be turned to use on other worlds. Even primitive societies may show surprising ingenuity or have discovered mineral or plant life capable of dealing with the need.

Is there a skill the locals have inherited? The society creation chapter in the full *Stars Without Number* core book gives possible reasons for a world's founding. This initial purpose might have been passed down, with ancient techniques and still-functioning tech allowing for the creation of some rare and valuable product.

Are there many caches of a particular type of good? On tomb worlds and other planets ravaged by recent desolation, there may yet remain many undiscovered caches of valuable goods. Some product or extract may have been crucial to the former industrial base, but now is valuable only to the starfarers that visit that world. Other planets may have the ruins of some former and more advanced civilization that the locals scavenge for precious artifacts. Even a very primitive world might be a source of pretech relics if they pull them from the graves of their dead ancestors.

Is there a subculture that produces a unique good? Some worlds have particular minorities or alien enclaves that create goods unknown elsewhere on the world. Primitive worlds may yet have isolated communities that retain their old technological expertise, or subgroups may be dedicated to their craft for religious or cultural reasons. Other cultures make use of slave labor on a grand scale, and use it all the harder when far traders make it so much more profitable for them.

Once you've generated these five characteristic goods, you can fill the other five slots on the table with more ordinary wares. Use this opportunity to give the table some monetary balance- if your trademark goods are all very costly, then add five cheap cargos, or vice-versa. A world that offers nothing but trinkets will be ignored once the PCs gain measurable wealth and one that sells only fabulous treasures is of no interest to those PCs without a large stake of local credits.

MAKING A TROUBLE TABLE

First, pick a trouble threshold for the world. Extremely cosmopolitan, law-abiding worlds might have only a 1 in 10 chance of troubles. Most worlds with modest far trade will have a 3 in 10 chance, while a tyrannical planet risks it at 4 in 10 and a howling anarchy might have a 5 in 10 chance. The more unaccustomed the locals are to offworlders and the less given they are to strong property rights, the more likely the PCs are to find themselves in trouble with a bargain.

Once you've chosen the trouble threshold, you can fill out the table. Two of the troubles should just delay the PCs from 1d4 to 1d8 weeks. This trouble will only annoy most groups, but the payroll drain of a large crew or some time pressure elsewhere can make this result a serious peril.

Two of the troubles should cost them some percentage of their goods, usually 1d4 to 1d6 x 10% of the total. Truly tyrannical or corrupt planets might cost the far trader the entire cargo.

The final two troubles should be Friction increases from 1 to 1d6 points. If the result pushes a price so high that the PCs can't pay it, then they'll find themselves in debt, and unlikely to be treated gently by their new creditors.

Agricultural Worlds   -2 Agricultural, -1 Livestock, +1 Biotech, +2 Tool

Ag worlds range from vast robotic farmworlds to those planets that have little to recommend them beyond a serviceable metawheat harvest. This ability to feed their own people is nothing to slight, however- a peaceful ag world can support populations far in excess of their more inclement neighbors and form the backbone of a polity strong enough to build the industrial base necessary for a starfaring civilization. In the meanwhile, most agworlders can sleep with full bellies, which is more than many of their more "advanced" peers can say.

Far traders rarely find very valuable commodities for trade on an ag world, but the sheer ubiquity of the goods makes it difficult for governments and other local powers to squeeze the trade too hard. One hull full of bleating silksheep is much the same as any other, and a bureaucrat who tries to make too much trouble just drives the trade to a neighboring district. As such, the odds of serious trade trouble are substantially lower on ag worlds than on many more sophisticated planets, even if the locals are unaccustomed to far traders.

1d10	Trade Good	Types	Cost
1	Clothing	Common, Low Tech, Cultural	1,000
2	Drugs, Raw Materials	Agriculture, Biotech, Bulky	2,000
3	Fine Liquor	Luxury, Low Tech, Compact	10,000
4	Housewares, Basic	Low Tech, Consumer	2,000
5	Livestock, Common	Common, Livestock	2,000
6	Livestock, Gengineered	Livestock, Biotech	10,000
7	Livestock, Luxury Pets	Livestock, Luxury	25,000
8	Metawheat	Common, Agricultural, Bulky	500
9	Native Artwork	Cultural, Luxury, Low Tech	10,000
10	Tools, Basic Hand Tools	Low Tech, Tool	5,000

1d6	Troubles (2 in 10 chance)
1	Cargo infested with mold, 1d4 x 10% of goods sold are ruined
2	Farmer's union forces a discount; add 1d4 Friction to this deal
3	Harvest going on and labor is scarce; stuck 1d4 weeks before deal is completed
4	Local grower's customs make this deal harder- stuck for one week and add 1 Friction
5	Natives have allergic reaction to goods, add 2 Friction to this deal
6	Ship quarantine for plant disease check; stuck there for 1d6+1 weeks.

Alien Worlds   -2 Alien, -1 Medical, +1 Biotech, +2 Cultural

Alien planets include both those dominated by alien species and those worlds so far from the standard human baseline that the denizens can no longer be considered wholly human. The natives may be drastically gengineered variant strains, practitioners of ideologies so strange as to defy ordinary reason, or people modified by the legacy of a eugenics cult or unbraked AI. Traders are unlikely to be able to deal with uniformly hostile locals, but even "friendly" natives might require effort to form the ties needed for more sophisticated trade.

Even assuming a friendly populace, the sheer difference of cultures tends to produce a higher risk of trouble than on more placid human worlds. On worlds populated by actual aliens, the local atmosphere and temperature are often less than optimal by human standards, and it can be difficult to conduct trade in the face of local conditions. More significantly, the sheer exoticism of the natives often makes it difficult to recognize valuable trade goods and spot the kind of resources that would be prized on other, more comprehensible worlds.

1d10	Trade Good	Types	Cost
1	Clothing	Common, Low Tech, Cultural	1,000
2	Drugs, Raw Materials	Agriculture, Biotech, Bulky	2,000
3	Housewares, Postech	Consumer, Postech	5,000
4	Livestock, Common	Common, Livestock	2,000
5	Livestock, Gengineered	Livestock, Biotech	10,000
6	Metawheat	Common, Agricultural, Bulky	500
7	Native Artwork	Cultural, Luxury	10,000
8	Pretech Junk	Pretech	50,000
9	Small Arms, Energy	Military, Postech	10,000
10	Tools, Industrial	Tool, Postech	10,000

1d6	Troubles (4 in 10 chance)
1	Ignorant handling or use wrecks 1d4 x 10% of the goods
2	Local pest ruins 1d4 x 10% of the goods
3	Local rituals add 2 weeks to finishing the deal
4	Product has unwanted side-effects on alien biology, add 1d4+1 Friction
5	Product is mistrusted or hard to get from local retailers, add 1d6+1 weeks until trade
6	Unexpected alien custom adds 1d4 Friction

BASIC TRADE

Cosmopolitan Worlds
-2 Cultural, -1 Military, +1 Luxury, +2 Pretech

Rare and bustling havens of interstellar trade, cosmopolitan worlds have firmly-established ties with their neighboring stars, and are no strangers to far traders. Their local populace is relatively jaded to the loot of foreign worlds, and while traders may not get the kind of awed curiosity they get on more backward worlds, they also have far better facilities for buying and selling goods. Such ease is a double-edged sword, however, as the same simplicity that makes it easy to trade for them makes it easy for their competitors as well.

Cosmopolitan worlds most often produce a melange of trade goods harvested from their neighbors and hauled in by the hulls of far traders. Most of the supplies necessary for uplifting a primitive world can be found in the markets of such a trade hub, along with the occasional exotic local specialty worth the effort of prying it loose from some half-barbaric world. Most goods can be found on a cosmopolitan world if the buyer is inclined to look hard enough, has sufficient wealth, or proves able to make the right friends.

1d10	Trade Good	Types	Cost
1	Clothing	Common, Low Tech, Cultural	1,000
2	Colonial Survival Supplies	Survival, Postech	5,000
3	Drugs, Recreational	Luxury, Biotech, Compact	50,000
4	Exotic Jewels	Rare, Mineral, Luxury, Compact	25,000
5	Housewares, Postech	Consumer, Postech	5,000
6	Medical Supplies, Postech	Medical, Postech, Compact	25,000
7	Parts, Basic Industry	Low Tech, Tool	5,000
8	Small Arms, Energy	Military, Postech	10,000
9	Small Arms, Projectile	Military, Low Tech,	5,000
10	Fine Liquor	Luxury, Low Tech, Compact	10,000

1d6	Troubles (1 in 10 chance)
1	A functionary finds a number of unpaid tariffs; add 1d4 Friction to the deal
2	A local bureaucrat has been annoyed by the PCs; add 1 Friction to the deal
3	Administrative confusion locks the deal down for 1d4 weeks
4	Another merchant just flooded/emptied the market for the goods; add 2 Friction
5	Another merchant takes 1d4 x 10% of the goods through fraud
6	The goods or payment are only partially the genuine article; add 1d4 Friction

Decadent Worlds
-2 Sapient, -1 Biotech, +1 Maltech, +2 Luxury

Cosmopolitan worlds are sophisticated and refined. Decadent worlds have sailed right past that point and become immured in vices, obsessions, and goals far divorced from healthier cultures. Most decadent worlds have retained a fairly high level of technology, or else they would have long ago degraded into a far more primitive savagery. Even so, the results of mixing advanced tech with utterly debased morals can often make for worse evils than any atrocities a hide-wearing barbarian could commit.

It is a brave- or amoral- far trader who dares to barter with the denizens of a decadent world. The goods in their markets are often remarkably refined and exquisite, but such worlds are overripe with evil and no outsider is every truly safe from its jaded appetites. The novelty provided by an offworlder can often prove an overwhelming temptation, and the locals have been known to use all manner of creative "inducements" to win a trader's cooperation- some unendurably delightful, and others simply unendurable.

1d10	Trade Good	Types	Cost
1	Clothing	Common, Low Tech, Cultural	1,000
2	Drugs, Raw Materials	Agriculture, Biotech, Bulky	2,000
3	Drugs, Recreational	Luxury, Biotech, Compact	50,000
4	Exotic Jewels	Rare, Mineral, Luxury, Compact	25,000
5	Fine Liquor	Luxury, Low Tech, Compact	10,000
6	Livestock, Gengineered	Livestock, Biotech	10,000
7	Livestock, Luxury Pets	Livestock, Luxury	25,000
8	Medical Supplies, Postech	Medical, Postech, Compact	25,000
9	Slaves	Sapient	25,000
10	Tools, Medical Equipment	Tools, Postech, Medical	50,000

1d6	Troubles (4 in 10 chance)
1	An addict official skims for his habit; add 2 Friction
2	Local merchants can't be bothered to finish the deal; add 1d4+1 weeks
3	Local potentate casually takes half the goods because he can
4	Local workers are drugged or indolent, add 1d6+1 weeks to finish deal
5	Strange local customs coincidentally add 1d4 Friction
6	Thrill-seeking thieves steal 1d4 x 10% of the goods

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INDUSTRIAL WORLDS -2 CONSUMER, -1 TOOL, +1 AGRICULTURAL, +2 MINERAL

Whether worlds of smoke and steel or humming acres of robotic armatures, industrial worlds have retained or rebuilt enough of their former technological base to mass-produce large amounts of sophisticated goods. A few industrial worlds are relatively primitive, relying on large populations and efficient agriculture to support vast clacking factories, but most are at a postech level of development, able to make whatever their natural resources allow. Most such factories are hungry for raw materials that cannot be acquired on their native world, and pay well for the produce of more primitive planets that far traders can bring

Far traders often make industrial worlds the lynch pin of a trade route through more primitive stars, ferrying the produce of their forges and chip foundries to worlds in desperate need of more advanced tech. The less sophisticated worlds may have little but strong backs to offer for their trade, but they can mine the rare minerals and harvest the raw materials that the industrial world requires for its produce.

1d10	Trade Good	Types	Cost
1	Colonial Survival Supplies	Survival, Postech	5,000
2	Fusion Plants	Postech, Tool, Bulky	10,000
3	Housewares, Postech	Consumer, Postech	5,000
4	Native Artwork	Cultural, Luxury	10,000
5	Parts, Basic Industry	Low Tech, Tool	5000
6	Postech Building Material	Tools, Postech, Bulky	10,000
7	Small Arms, Energy	Military, Postech	10,000
8	Small Arms, Projectile	Military, Low Tech,	5,000
9	Tools, Basic Hand Tools	Low Tech, Tool	5,000
10	Tools, Industrial	Tool, Postech	10,000

1d6	Troubles (3 in 10 chance)
1	An unfriendly oligopolist arranges for "accidents" that destroy 1d6 x 10% of the goods
2	Industrial accident destroys 1d4 x 10% of the goods in this deal.
3	Labor unrest adds 1d4 Friction to the deal
4	Monopolists push back on this intrusion, adding 1d6 Friction to the deal
5	The factories are backlogged; the deal is stalled for 1d4 weeks
6	The supplier or buyer is retooling, delaying the deal by 1d6+1 weeks

PRIMITIVE WORLDS -2 AGRICULTURAL, -1 LIVESTOCK, +1 TOOLS, +2 POSTECH

Not every low-tech world is a howling wasteland of raiders and relic-wielding barbarian warlords. Some planets are simply backward, either due to strong cultural influences or a lack of certain raw materials vital for industrialization. These worlds have fallen back into a tentative equilibrium with their surroundings, picking out the best life they can manage amid the hardships of a world far from the cradle of humanity. Many of them have great potential if foreign ships can bring them the missing components they require to bootstrap their own society.

Far traders often have difficulty finding useful trade goods on a primitive world, as the locals make so little of compelling interest to other planets. Still, there are enough rare minerals, exotic life forms, and useful native plants to make such trips worthwhile. Other, more brutal traders find the low tech to be an advantage, and use their guns and offworlder science to cow a local community into their service. Such "Kurtzes" rarely end up profiting by the deal, as nukes only help so much when you are outnumbered a million to one.

1d10	Trade Good	Types	Cost
1	Clothing	Common, Low Tech, Cultural	1,000
2	Drugs, Raw Materials	Agriculture, Biotech, Bulky	2,000
3	Housewares, Basic	Low Tech, Consumer	2,000
4	Livestock, Common	Common, Livestock	2,000
5	Metal Ingots, Common	Common, Mineral, Bulky	1,000
6	Metal Ingots, Rare Alloys	Mineral, Bulky, Rare	5,000
7	Metawheat	Common, Agricultural, Bulky	500
8	Native Artwork	Cultural, Luxury	10,000
9	Slaves	Sapient	25,000
10	Tools, Basic Hand Tools	Low Tech, Tool	5,000

1d6	Troubles (3 in 10 chance)
1	Local rulers argue over who gets to collect the tariffs for 1d6+1 weeks
2	Locals have been upset or frightened by the traders; add 1d4 Friction to the deal
3	Priests require 1d4 Friction worth of inducements to bless the deal
4	Sickness has struck down many workers, delaying the deal by 1d4 weeks
5	Vicious beasts or raiders have ruined/stolen 1d4 x 10% of the goods
6	Weather bogs all transport; add 1d4 weeks to the deal

Savage Worlds

-2 Agricultural, -1 Sapient, +1 Tools, +2 Military

Radioactive badlands, war-torn planets, savage heirs of a fallen global hegemony, and other planets where orderly civilization has long since given way to chaos are often characterized simply as "savage worlds". Their barbarity is not always the consequence of limited technological resources, but is more often the result of massive social collapse or catastrophic infighting. Such bloody customs can become enshrined by time and habit, until the world is locked in a seemingly indefinite era of murder, plunder, and mutual destruction.

The only good thing about a savage world's trade infrastructure is that they're usually too disorganized to efficiently steal everything that lands on the planetary surface. Sufficiently canny and brass-nerved far traders can make deals with local warlords or regional autarchs to conduct business with the few remaining commercial concerns on the planet. These sellers might be the last few entrepreneurs of a dying civilized age, or they might be the wretched serfs who gather valuable salvage for some brutal overlord. Few rulers on a savage world have much to do with commerce personally, as the qualities

1d10	Trade Good	Types	Cost
1	Drugs, Raw Materials	Agriculture, Biotech, Bulky	2,000
2	Housewares, Basic	Low Tech, Consumer	2,000
3	Livestock, Common	Common, Livestock	2,000
4	Metawheat	Common, Agricultural, Bulky	500
5	Native Artwork	Cultural, Luxury	10,000
6	Pretech Junk	Pretech	50,000
7	Slaves	Sapient	25,000
8	Small Arms, Projectile	Military, Low Tech,	5,000
9	Tools, Basic Hand Tools	Low Tech, Tool	5,000
10	Fine Liquor	Luxury, Low Tech, Compact	10,000

1d6	Troubles (4 in 10 chance)
1	An aspiring local warlord wants recognition and "taxes"; add 1d6 Friction to the deal
2	Arson or collateral combat damage ruins 1d6 x 10% of the good
3	Bandit attacks prevent the goods from moving for 1d4 weeks
4	Desperate locals steal 1d4 x 10% of the goods for survival's sake
5	Local strongman wants a bigger taste, adding 2 points of Friction to the deal
6	Looters plunder 1d4 x 10% of the goods

Tyrannical Worlds

-2 Mineral, -1 Sapient, +1 Military, +2 Medical

Where a savage world is a tyranny of chaos, these words are tyrannies of the more classical form. Some autarch or Glorious Leader rules the world with a hard hand, crushing any hint of resistance. Self-supporting space stations and bubble habitats are particularly vulnerable to this situation, as survival is only possible within a small, easily-monitored area. Every tyranny needs enforcers, however, and these words often have a caste of apparatchiks who make their wealth out of arranging opportunities that are technically impermissible. When problems arise, their "friends" are often left to take the full blame for these perfidious crimes against the State.

Few far traders enjoy working with tyrannical worlds. While petty theft and disorder is often well-contained, there is very little to stop some minor official from simply confiscating an entire ship's cargo except the prospect of future gain or an immediate bit of baksheesh. Business on tyrannical worlds is much more about friendship and favors to the ruling class than it is about technical legalities.

1d10	Trade Good	Types	Cost
1	Drugs, Raw Materials	Agriculture, Biotech, Bulky	2,000
2	Housewares, Basic	Low Tech, Consumer	2,000
3	Metal Ingots, Common	Common, Mineral, Bulky	1,000
4	Metal Ingots, Rare Alloys	Mineral, Bulky, Rare	5,000
5	Parts, Basic Industry	Low Tech, Tool	5,000
6	Postech Building Material	Tools, Postech, Bulky	10,000
7	Slaves	Sapient	25,000
8	Small Arms, Energy	Military, Postech	10,000
9	Small Arms, Projectile	Military, Low Tech,	5,000
10	Tools, Industrial	Tool, Postech	10,000

1d6	Troubles (4 in 10 chance)
1	A bureaucrat squeezes the PCs for 1d4+1 Friction on the deal
2	A security official confiscates 1d6 x 10% of the goods "for the State"
3	Local rebels and/or common thieves stole 1d4 x 10% of the goods
4	Secret police suspect the PCs of wrongdoing; add 1d6 Friction to the deal
5	The local ruler levies a fresh tariff for 1d6 more Friction on the deal
6	The PCs are suspected as spies or rebels; add 1d4+1 Friction

CORPORATE HEADQUARTERS AND LOCAL HOLDINGS

Far traders often find it useful to put down roots on a planet, establishing a local business front and developing the kind of resources, connections, and expertise that make for higher profits. Even if their ships only touch down once every few months, their employees can keep making money and maintaining their influence.

Every far trader needs a **headquarters** in order to operate holdings on a planet. Without some central office to coordinate efforts the merchant's operations would inevitably spiral into confusion and unprofitable disarray. These headquarters might be as modest as a storefront office in a shady part of the capital or they might be some gleaming orbital citadel gazing down upon a subjugated world. The table on this page provides usual prices in local credits for establishing a headquarters facility on a world.

A far trader's headquarters on a planet are operated by a **factor**, usually an NPC CEO in charge of all operations on the world. The factor may be assisted by subordinates or responsible to a planetary board of directors, but the final decisions belong to the factor. Factor pay is usually included in the overall cost of the HQ, and need not be arranged as a separate fee.

Headquarters have **levels**. A level 1 headquarters is a small office that might employ a secretary and an accountant or two along with the factor, while a level 10 headquarters might be a towering commercial spire populated by thousands of staffers. The more elaborate the holdings on a world, the larger the headquarters. Headquarters provide **holding points**, representing their ability to support and maintain a certain number of planetary assets.

Holdings are those business, special relationships, or unique assets the far trader possesses on a world. A mine might be a holding, as might a shipyard, or the possession of special diplomatic privileges. Holdings do not usually involve portable property or vehicles smaller than spaceships, but instead apply to larger enterprises or special perks the far trader might have acquired on the world.

A holding costs a certain number of local credits, requires a certain size of planetary population to support it, takes up a certain number of holding points, and requires an appropriate planetary tech level. Holding points serve as an abstracted way to measure the monthly upkeep, political dealmaking, and personnel management necessary to keep an enterprise operational, rather than obliging the far trader to calculate these costs on a monthly basis.

Some holdings can be acquired simply by paying the price in local credits. On a reasonably free-market world with no uniquely corrupt government, all that is needed to open a mine or build a medical clinic is the right amount of cash and enough free holding points at the local headquarters. There may be a few issues with local regulators or native competitors, but the factor is assumed to be able to handle it.

This is not the case with other holdings. Attempting to establish private death squads, military warships, personal extraterritoriality, or the complete subversion of the local government is not the sort of thing that can pass without remark. On some particularly corrupt or dangerous worlds, even the simplest holding might be a trial to build. In these cases, some sort of favor or special consideration must be performed for the local rulers, with guidelines drawn from the adventure templates given in this book. For truly spectacular feats, like the construction of a capital-class warship or the subordination of a world's ruling class, it may require numerous harrowing feats of intrigue and daring to win the right to spend the necessary money. It is always the GM's discretion as to whether a particular holding requires special favors to establish.

Headquarters are also improved in the same way. On most worlds without drastic disorder, a headquarters can be expanded up to level 5 without special effort. Corrupt or chaotic worlds might start demanding considerations around level 3, while trade hubs and worlds with vigorous mercantile cultures might allow upgrades up to level 7. Beyond that point, the far trader's enterprise has grown so large that hesitant locals must be persuaded to allow further expansion.

As a general rule, one holding or headquarters can be established or improved each month on any given planet. If a minor version of a holding already exists, it can be upgraded to the major version by paying the difference in cost. Most holdings can only be built once on any given world, though a few such as Production Centers can be constructed multiple times. PCs need not actually be in contact with a planet to commence construction on a holding, as it's assumed the planetary factor is aware of their general goals for the world.

Holdings can also degrade. If the far trader manages to infuriate the locals sufficiently or botch a job badly enough, a holding might collapse or lessen in magnitude at the GM's discretion. Particularly loud failures or public outrages often result in nationalization, regulatory suffocation, or simple arson by angry peasants. If a headquarters is degraded and cannot provide the holding points to maintain everything on the world, the GM may destroy holdings until the far trader's possessions are again within the cap.

CORPORATE HEADQUARTERS			
LEVEL	COST	MAX. HOLDING POINTS	EXAMPLE HQ SIZES
1	10k	3	*A simple storefront outfit*
2	25k	6	*Single floor in an office*
3	100k	12	*A full office building*
4	200k	18	*Several buildings together*
5	500k	27	*Plus satellite offices*
6	1m	36	*A large business campus*
7	4m	48	*Self-contained community*
8	8m	60	*Plus offices in every city*
9	16m	75	*Plus reps in every town*
10	40m	90	*Private city or space hab*

Planetary Holdings					
HOLDING	BASE COST	POINTS USED	MIN. POP	TL	BENEFIT
Bribery Ring/Major	250k	5	None	0	As minor, but Friction is -2 for that deal
Bribery Ring/Minor	100k	2	None	0	Roll Factor's Int/Culture/Criminal vs. 8; on success, Friction is -1
Carte Blanche	25m	15	None	0	The merchant and his handpicked elite are effectively above the law.
Colony Housing	250k	0	None	Special	Infrastructure sufficient to house 10,000 colonists
Commercial Bank/Major	500k	5	1m	3	Transfer up to 1 million credits per month from world to world
Commercial Bank/Minor	100k	1	100k	2	Transfer up to 100,000 credits per month from another world
Corp Security/Major	250k	6	10k	0	Milspec equipment and corporate stormtroopers
Corp Security/Minor	50k	3	1k	0	Well-armed guards and a healthy armory.
Disavowed Ops/Major	200k	5	None	0	You do atrocities for bad people. -2 Friction on deals
Disavowed Ops/Minor	100k	2	None	0	You do horrible things for bad people. -1 Friction on deals
Extraterritoriality	5m	10	None	0	The traders can only be tried by the local consul of their planet.
Fleet Command/Major	25m	15	1m	4	Coordinates and crews even capital-class military ships
Fleet Command/Minor	5m	10	100k	4	Needed to coordinate military ships
Friendship Society/Major	500k	5	None	0	As minor, but Friction is -2 for that deal.
Friendship Society/Minor	250k	1	None	0	Roll Factor's Cha/Culture/Local vs. 9. On success, Friction is -1.
Import/Export Line	250k	1	10k	2	Pumps resources to a less developed area, like a colony world
Local Supply	500k	0	10k	Special	Takes the place of 200 tons of Supply each month
Market Access/Major	500k	5	100k	2	Quadruples maximum cargo tonnage purchase on a world
Market Access/Minor	250k	2	10k	2	Doubles maximum cargo tonnage purchase on a world
Medical Service/Major	1m	5	10k	4	As minor, but -1 Friction too, or gain two Morale on colony
Medical Service/Minor	500k	2	1k	4	Win major fealty from primitive locals, gain one Morale on colony
Production Center/Major	1.5m	5	100k	2	Produces hundreds of tons of goods for 50% base price
Production Center/Minor	200k	2	1k	1	Produces tens of tons of goods for 50% base price
Prometheus Project/TL2	250k	1	None	0	Lifts 10 thousand locals up to TL2 without cultural disaster
Prometheus Project/TL3	1m	2	None	2	As above, from TL2 to TL3
Prometheus Project/TL4	5m	4	None	3	As above, from TL3 to TL4
Propaganda	100k	0	None	1	Holding that tries to boost Morale until it succeeds
Shadow Government	250m	25	None	0	The corp is the government. If you can do it, Friction is 1.
Ship Service Depot	500k	3	10k	3	Fuel, maintenance, and minor repairs on pre-spaceflight world
Ship, Battleship	Special	15	10m	4	The ship's cost is as per its normal construction cost.
Ship, Carrier	Special	15	10m	4	The ship's cost is as per its normal construction cost.
Ship, Cruiser	Special	7	1m	4	The ship's cost is as per its normal construction cost.
Ship, Exodus Ship	Special	10	10m	4	The ship's cost is as per its normal construction cost.
Ship, Freighter	Special	5	1m	4	The ship's cost is as per its normal construction cost.
Ship, Military Frigate	Special	3	100k	4	The ship's cost is as per its normal construction cost.
Ship, System Ship	Special	1	100k	3	The ship's cost is as per its normal construction cost.
Ship, Trade Frigate	Special	2	100k	4	The ship's cost is as per its normal construction cost.
Shipyard/Major	50m	20	1m	4	Can build any ships
Shipyard/Minor	5m	10	100k	4	Can build frigate or smaller ships worth 20 mil or less
Social support	500k	0	None	2	Can spend Supplies and Materials to avert Morale loss
Sovereignty	1m	5	None	0	The traders are recognized as a sovereign interstellar power
Space Defenses/Major	10m	10	100k	4	Enough hardpoints to protect an entire planet
Space Defenses/Minor	1m	5	10k	4	Braker guns and enough beam weapons to protect a nation
Special Services/Major	350k	5	1m	0	As minor, but more so -2 Friction
Special Services/Minor	100k	2	100k	0	Provides illicit solutions for local power brokers. -1 Friction
Trade Legion/Major	100m	20	5m	2	A huge private army
Trade Legion/Minor	10m	10	100k	1	A private army

HOLDING DESCRIPTIONS AND HEADQUARTER COSTS

The following pages provide quick summaries of the special benefits provided to the far merchant who manages to establish particular holdings on a world. New holdings can be introduced as the GM desires to represent special assets the PCs might have earned by their adventures or judicious friendships. When determining the final price of a holding on a world, use the worst modifier on the list to the right, assuming nothing mitigates the situation. Remember that no Holding can drop the Friction of a deal below 1.

Situation	Cost Modifier
The world has fewer than 1 million people	x 1/2
The world has more than 9 million people	x 2
Survival gear is needed to live on the surface	x 2
Deep-space construction or ultra-hostile world	x 4

Bribery Rings

A set of quiet arrangements with local officials, with the correct people getting the correct payments to limit problems for the far trader. Almost all are arranged with multiple expendable cutouts to protect the far trader from direct association. A minor ring allows the factor to roll his Int/Culture/Criminal skill against a difficulty of 8; on a success, the Friction on a deal is lowered by 1. Major rings lower Friction by 2 on a success. If a natural 2 is rolled on any skill check, however, the ring is discovered and destroyed by the local law enforcement or jealous rivals and local Friction rises by 1.

Carte Blanche

This understanding amounts to effective legal immunity for the far trader and his personal associates. They can commit any crime or perform any perfidy without fear of arrest, once the local law enforcement is made aware of their status. Extravagantly public acts may threaten the privilege, but the local government honestly doesn't care what the far trader does so long as he does not threaten the planetary ruling class or provoke the locals into rioting.

Colony Housing

Usually necessary only on colony worlds or in the construction of deep-space habitats, this holding provides shelter and workspaces for the colony's residents. Almost all colonists will expect the proprietor to bear the cost of housing them on their arrival, and even those who don't will be too busy hammering together shelter to do anything else until it is provided. One such holding must be built for every ten thousand colonists or fraction thereof. Costs are double on particularly hostile or inclement worlds, and are quadrupled when building deep-space stations.

Commercial Banks

These banks link worlds through data transfers carried by local starships, and allow the trader to shift money from one world to another through a complex web of reciprocity agreements, collateral, and legal forms. Such transfers turn the credits of one world into the wealth of another. Both worlds must have banks owned by the trader in order to handle the exchange. Minor banks can receive up to a hundred thousand credits per month, while a major bank can receive up to a million. Commercial banks are impractical on worlds without some kind of stable government.

Corp Security

Not every world is excessively law-abiding, and this holding allows for sophisticated internal security measures and practical muscle to guard warehouses and holdings. While unnecessary on orderly planets, most of the more "exciting" locations will require such security if the far trader's enterprise is to grow much beyond the starport.

Minor Corp Security provides as many as several dozen guards for a major facility, all of them trained and equipped with the best weaponry available to the trader. Major corp security provides for milspec equipment, fast response SWAT teams and advanced internal security measures. Aside from guarding against unruly locals, corp security can also be expected to alert the far trader if his local factor starts nursing schemes of expropriation or independence.

Disavowed Ops

This holding consists of all the ugly, bloody, inadmissible favors that far traders can do for local authorities who do not want their names on particular operations. Killing dissidents, assassinating rivals, sabotaging enemies, crushing unrest, and other unsavory things are expected by those who make these deals.

Minor disavowed ops lessen the local Friction by 1, and major ops lower it by 2 as the far trader's partners smooth the path for his mercantile efforts. Every time a trade deal is cut, however, the GM rolls 2d6. On a 2, the far trader's connection with these atrocities comes to light, the deal collapses, local Friction rises by as much as it was formerly lessened, and the holding itself self-destructs as the far trader's partners try to escape being drawn into the investigation. The far trader himself can usually escape direct incrimination if he's willing to make sure his minions aren't around to talk.

Extraterritoriality

This valuable right allows the far trader and his associates to demand that any criminal trial be conducted by the local ambassador of their enterprise's homeworld. Assuming that good terms are kept with the local representative, this means that the far trader and his friends are effectively immune to prosecution for minor crimes and property malfeasance. Too great a crime or too regular a use of this privilege is likely to result in harsh punishment all the same, however, and the ambassador will certainly not allow the far trader to escape unpunished if the merchant provokes an interstellar incident.

Fleet Commands

These institutions are needed only by the most powerful colony worlds or by enterprises on planets without even a pretense of formal government. No conventional government would ever dream of allowing a private citizen to establish the spacer schools, military academies, secure maintenance facilities and other components of an effective fleet command. While any world can throw together a hasty handful of lightly-armed merchant freighters, a fleet command

allows for the commission and operation of genuine warships. The advanced military training and organizational infrastructure of such a command allows for efficient and effective performance.

Minor fleet commands can manage a fleet with no ship larger than frigate-class, while a major fleet command can oversee a fleet of cruisers or capital warships. Militarized space stations, common to any starfaring society, can be operated by any fleet command.

Friendship Societies

These cultural groups are a combination of public relations offices, semi-licit spy rings, and charitable donation clearinghouses. Their effectiveness largely hinges on the factor and his ability to sway the locals. When a deal is struck on a planet with a minor Friendship Society, the Factor can check their Cha/Culture skill for that world against difficulty 9. On a success, the deal's Friction is lessened by 1. A major Friendship Society lessens the Friction by 2 on a success. Unlike with bribery rings and disavowed ops, there are no negative consequences for rolling a natural 2 on the check.

Import/Export Lines

These business arrangements exist to shunt goods from one world to another, with some of them operating company-owned starships while others simply form spot contracts with any available freighters in the area. Import/Export Lines may be built more than once on a world, and each line allows for as many as 100 tons of goods to be shipped or received each month. An Import/Export Line must exist on both ends of the exchange. Their range is effectively unlimited so long as there is a feasible path between the worlds that merchant ships can travel and no significant interstellar blockade is in place.

Local Supply

Needed only on colony worlds and deep-space habitats, this holding reflects the community gardens, recycling facilities, and private work of the colonists to supply their own needs. Local Supply may be constructed more than once, and each construction provides all necessary consumables for 10,000 people, saving 200 tons of Supply each month. Once a colony becomes self-sufficient, this holding is no longer needed and is automatically removed.

Market Access

This improves the locals' ability to trade wares, either through investment in local commercial banks, beating down restrictive regulations, or simply improving the roads between the rural villages and the town spaceport. The maximum goods the trader can buy each month are doubled for minor market access and quadrupled for major market access. On colony worlds, this increases the amount of goods the trader can sell as well.

Medical Services

Medical help is a common tool for winning over suspicious locals and worried colonists. On low-tech worlds, the advantages of postech medicine make for cures that seem miraculous to the natives, and even more advanced worlds are rarely so wealthy as to provide access to all the medical care their citizens might desire.

The clinics and rural physicians of a minor holding grant a +1 bonus to any reaction check from a local denizen, while they increase the Morale of a colony by one point. The hospitals and cutting-edge medical technology of a major holding decreases planetary Friction by 1 point or add 2 points of colony Morale.

Production Centers

These are farms, factories, mines, harvest camps, businesses, ranches, or anything else that creates valuable products for sale. Some of the center's goods are assumed to be sold on the local market to help finance its operations, but a surplus is created each month that the far trader may buy cheaply and take elsewhere to exchange.

Each month, a minor production center creates 1d6 x 10 x the factor's Steward skill in tons of goods, while a major production center creates ten times as much. The trader must pay for these goods to reflect the cost of production, but the cost is always only 50% of the base cost, less 10% more for every point of type modifier for that world. Thus, minerals on a Tyrannical world would cost only 30% of the base price. The factory has already sold much of its production locally to subsidize its operation, however, and so any attempt to sell the goods on the same world suffers a 4 point Friction penalty.

Production Centers can only be established for resources and goods that can actually be extracted or fabricated on that world. It is worth noting that conventional postech agricultural science is not sophisticated enough to put farm-sized Colony Supplies production centers on orbital stations or deep-space colonies. Such places must rely on smaller, more labor-intensive Local Supply holdings if they wish to be self-sustaining. Multiple production centers can be built on a single world, but the population required is additive; if there are 3,000 people on an outpost world, no more than 3 minor production centers can be established.

Prometheus Projects

The colloquial name for a host of tech initiatives, social engineer projects, and political reconfigurations necessary to bring the baseline tech level of a population up from more primitive beginnings. Such projects are only partially about the tech- simply providing the raw materials and training is no way to guarantee that the tech will be adopted. Even if it is, the social and political trauma that comes of the drastic change in productive relationships and relative power might leave a society locked in struggle for generations.

Prometheus Projects try to avoid this disaster by careful study of the existing social structures and precise insertions of new tech such that the old social order will hold together long enough to make for a smooth transition. These projects are costly, all the more so for their need to learn how to use limited local resources to reforge an interstellar technological base.

A TL2 Prometheus Project is meant to lift the most primitive societies up to steam power, basic medical technology, firearms, and machine tools. TL3 projects lift those at TL2 into a stage of fission power, electronics, primitive astronautics, and more advanced biotech. The most sophisticated projects aim to lift TL3 societies into TL4, giving them fusion power, spaceflight, cybernetic prostheses, and other trappings of modern interstellar society. Once a society has successfully assimilated a project, it can begin producing goods and tech of the appropriate level out of native resources.

Basic Trade

The cost of this holding depends on how many people are to be uplifted. The base price is enough to elevate 10,000 people in one year, with additional numbers requiring additional multiplication of the cost. It generally takes one year to raise this number of people to the next tech level. For each year afterwards, this number doubles- so the next year, 20,000 are advanced, then 40,000, and so forth until the entire planet is operating at the new tech level. In the meanwhile, the planet may have a split tech level, with some regions more advanced than the others. So long as a sufficient number of trained citizens are available, holdings requiring the higher tech levels may be constructed.

There are persistent rumors of advanced Mandate socioeconomic simulators and speed-training facilities that could lift tens of thousands of primitive locals out of their ignorance in a matter of months. The value of such things to the more backward rulers would be incalculable, though the side effects might be devastating.

Propaganda

This ranges from sincere efforts at rational persuasion to bald-faced government-sponsored lies. In all cases, however, it is meant to improve the Morale of a colony and convince the colonists that their government is wise, their patron is capable, and their future will be glorious. Once the propaganda holding has been constructed, the patron rolls 2d6 every month. On an 10, 11 or 12, the colony's Morale rises by one. Even so, propaganda dulls on repetition, so the holding self-destructs after successfully raising Morale.

Shadow Governments

These conspiracies are sometimes established by those far traders with sufficient wealth and cunning to take over the government of an entire planet. By buying out most of the potential resistance and killing the ones who decline their gold they become the effective rulers of the planet. A puppet government still exists to keep the populace unaware of the true state of affairs, but the far trader and his allies can use the full force of the state to accomplish their aims. Discretion is necessary, as if the offworlder's influence was truly clear to the natives, they would almost certainly drive the far trader out. So long as this rule lasts, effective Friction on this world is 1.

Ship Service Depots

Depots are special holdings necessary only on those worlds that lack TL4 starports. They provide fuel, maintenance, and repairs for interstellar craft, allowing the merchant to perform annual maintenance and repair up to 10 hit points of hull damage per ship per day without extra expenditures. Ground-bound facilities can provide this assistance to any atmosphere-capable craft. Repairs to larger ships or those without atmospheric configurations require orbital facilities, which cost four times as much.

Ships

Starships can be purchased on any world with an active astronautics program. Most worlds with at least several hundred citizens and TL4 technology can construct ships on a frigate or fighter hull plan, while those with millions of people can build cruisers if they have the necessary raw materials. Governments will under no circumstances permit a private citizen to build anything that is capable of threatening their own military forces. Armed merchantmen are one thing, but siege cruisers built for cracking defense orbitals won't get past any government capable of stopping the merchant.

Construction of a ship usually requires one month, plus one more month for every two million credits or fraction thereof of the ship's cost. This time can be cut in half by doubling the cost of the ship.

The holding points associated with the ship relate to its maintenance, fueling, and the finding and payment of crew equal to a quarter of the maximum crew numbers, down to a minimum of 3 crewmen for any interstellar ship. A far trader who wants to pay such fees directly out of the local credit balance can do so, reducing the holding point cost of the ship to zero. If keeping a running tally of such expenses is more paperwork than the GM and player want to deal with, just figure out crew payroll and running costs for one month and multiply that total by fifty; the far trader can pay that up front and consider the ship maintained indefinitely. Colony worlds must pay fees- they cannot use holding points to maintain the ship.

Shipyards

Corporate-owned shipyards can be constructed on those worlds otherwise too poor, or lacking in raw materials to maintain an astronautics program A far trader might also elect to build their own shipyard on a world too fractious to stop them from doing so, if the local tech level allows. Governments with a firm control over their world may require some persuasion before they allow the merchant to fit up their own yard, and even then they will make very certain that no military-grade ships come out of its berths. Shipyards can fix up to 20 hull points of damage per day on any given ship, and can perform all necessary maintenance and resupply without extra expense to the far trader.

Shipyards are also capable of building new ships. Shipyards owned by a far trader are quicker to do their owner's work than non-affiliated yards. Building a ship in a shipyard owned by the trader takes two weeks, plus one week more for every million credits or fraction of the ship's final cost. This time can be cut in half in emergency situations, but such frantic construction costs three times the usual price for the craft. Ships built in a shipyard owned by the far trader cost only 80% of their usual price.

Minor shipyards can construct space stations and any craft of frigate size or smaller, and can build military hulls where local politics make it feasible. Major shipyards can construct even capital ships, provided their available tech base allows it.
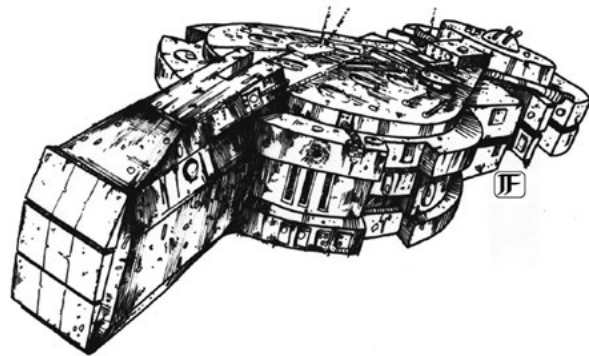
SOCIAL SUPPORTS

These are colonial welfare networks designed to allow for efficient, effective provision of goods to those colonists most in need of them. These supports allow the far trader's government to get food and supplies to those in need, whether due to a local disaster, the consequences of a patron's decision, or an outbreak of crippling illness. They also permit the discreet bribing and co-option of those members of the community who are exceptionally loud about their unhappiness.

When events, actions or Troubles would normally result in the loss of Morale for the colony, the patron can spend Supplies equal to a month's consumption for the colony and make a Morale check at the old, unadjusted rate. If successful, the loss is averted.

SOVEREIGNTY

This glittering diplomatic benefit for those far traders with offworld colonies or deep-space holdings grants them the dignity of a recognized interstellar power in the diplomatic corridors of the host world. The planetary government recognizes the far trader's enterprise as a sovereign polity with full ambassadorial privileges. Usually the company headquarters is treated as the new power's embassy. Other holdings operating on the world are still obliged to obey local laws, assuming they haven't acquired the Extraterritoriality holding.

Sovereignty grants a far trader a degree of legitimacy in their rule, and it comes with the implicit assurance that the planet has no intention of overtly interfering with the far trader's offworld holdings. Espionage, sabotage, and deniable operations are always in season but the far trader can expect the same degree of respect shown to their enterprise as is received by other independent worlds.

SPACE DEFENSES

These represent the ground batteries, braker guns, nuke snuffers, and orbital mines necessary to hold back anything short of a major military strike. The gravitic manipulations of braker gun arrays prevent long-range asteroid hits and simple kinetic attacks from orbit, while the beam weaponry and orbital missile arrays are backed by groundside fusion plants and targeting computers far larger than can be carried on conventional starships. An invading force with a sufficient indifference to casualties can crack space defenses, but only after costly ground forces drops to disable the installations. Civilian ships can shut down all nonessential systems and try to "fly dark" to make a landing or liftoff from the planet's surface, but they stand no chance in a direct engagement.

Minor space defenses are sufficient to prevent orbital bombardment with asteroids and other space debris and have planted enough ground installations to protect a nation or small planetoid from unopposed landings. Getting troops through such defenses requires costly orbital drop technology or a landing elsewhere on the planet and then surface transport to the target, fighting off the native ground forces all the way. Major defenses are elaborate enough to cover the entire planet with defensive installations.

Almost all TL4 planets will have at least minor defenses over their major population center and its surrounding area, along with braker guns to prevent asteroid strikes. Those with large populations or a strong economy will often have major defenses.

FARMING IT OUT

Some far traders might get the clever idea of buying cargo ships, staffing them with reliable allies, and sending them to do trading on their behalf. While the GM might make exceptions for remarkably talented and loyal retainers, most minions simply are not flexible or capable enough to be far traders. PCs cannot normally create networks of trade independent of their own efforts. If they want to make the big scores, they're going to have to cut their own deals with the unfriendly cosmos.

SPECIAL SERVICES

These are those forms of assistance that a far trader can provide that may not otherwise be entirely licit or possible. The include recreational drugs for the decadent, advanced medical treatment for local rulers, espionage equipment for a government's intelligence office, and foreign technology or goods that might be socially unacceptable on this world, among other benefits. The favors are rarely beyond the moral pale as they are with disavowed ops, but discretion is required for those who would receive them.

Minor special services decrease local Friction by 1, and major services ease the path by 2 points. Every time a trade deal is struck, however, the merchant must roll 2d6. On a natural 2, their dealings have come to light and their patrons are forced to cut ties, though the deal still goes through. The unwanted attention then degrades major special services to minor, and destroys minor ones entirely.

TRADE LEGIONS

These forces are raised by those merchants with a need for a private army and the ability to organize one without meaningful government resistance. Only the most lawless or supine worlds would allow a private citizen to marshal such a force, but those worlds are often dangerous enough to make them useful to their master. Trade legions are equipped with standard military gear and vehicles appropriate to the tech level of the world, along with a few hundred elite troops and vehicles of the highest tech available to the merchant. The holding price does not change with the tech level, as a low-tech world may have simpler gear and cheaper labor but the expense and effort of maintaining organization and supply with a primitive infrastructure eliminates the cost savings of lower tech.

Minor trade legions are large enough to overwhelm virtually any private organization or actor. Crime bosses, rebel towns, unruly religious zealots- the legion will almost certainly crush them if they stand and fight. The PC owning the asset can call in their troops and transport to use at their discretion, which means that any problem that can be solved by throwing several thousand troops at it is unlikely to remain a problem for long.

Major trade legions are the size of a national army, and can stand up to the military forces of entire invading nations. Such military conflicts are beyond the scope of this book, but if the far trader really wants to recreate the Somme on some nameless frontier hellhole, he has the men and guns to do it.

Trading Quick Reference

Basic Concepts

Your far trader has an *expertise* score equal to their Business skill, their best applicable Culture skill for the world, and the highest of their Intelligence or Charisma modifiers. A cooperating group can use the highest available scores among participants.

Worlds have *Friction* representing taxes, bribes, tariffs, port fees, corrupt middlemen, local customs, and other drags on a far trader's profit. A world's Friction score usually ranges from 2 to 5, and is never less than 1 no matter how good the conditions- with one exception. If your party manages to pull off a scheme to avoid local exactions, the adventure can drop the Friction on a deal to 0.

A *factor* is your NPC lieutenant and CEO on a world, for running any established businesses there while you are away. You should choose factors carefully. Factors operate your *holdings* on the world, your businesses, special relationships, unique privileges, and other affairs.

Holdings cost money to establish and take up a certain number of holding points. You must have a *corporate headquarters* on the world capable of managing all the holding points your possessions require. If you have no permanent business on a world you can go without, but otherwise you're going to need an HQ and a factor.

Local Credits

Worlds in a merchant campaign each have their own local currency. A million credits on Gateway are worth precisely zero on Polychrome, though non-isolated worlds can usually change a few thousand credits at extortionate rates when needed. You need to keep track of your local credit balances for every world you contact, and use the native credits for any dealings there.

Finding Goods For Sale

Roll 1d10 twice on the planet's trade table. That commodity is the best bargain currently available. You can roll twice more to get different products, but each pair of rerolls adds 1 Friction. Optionally, you can special-order a specific good that the planet is able to produce for an additional 4 Friction on the deal.

You can buy up to 1 ton per month of any given cargo for each 5,000 inhabitants on the planet. You can sell an unlimited amount of cargo per month, granted the GM considers it reasonable.

Buying and Selling Cargo

To buy goods, roll 3d6. Subtract your expertise, add the world's Friction, and add any modifiers the world may have for the type of good you're buying. Compare the total to the sales chart and apply the modifier given to the cargo's base price. That is the cost per ton for the following month.

To sell goods, do the same thing- but add your expertise and subtract the world's Friction. Planetary modifiers are applied as normal. You can call off a deal before the trouble roll is made, but the price is fixed for one month.

The Trouble Table

Every world has a *trouble table* listing some of the more common problems you might face there. These range from delays to cargo loss to Friction increases on the deal. To find out if trouble hits a deal, roll 1d10 and compare it to the world's trouble threshold. If equal or less, the GM rolls on the table to find out what happens.

If you want to dodge the catastrophe, you're going to have to come up with some plan to mitigate its effects. The GM may have some suggestions if your own low cunning needs some help.

Establishing Corporate HQs and Holdings

On most worlds, you can simply pay credits to buy a storefront office and give the job of being your factor to some trustworthy local you've found in your adventures or a capable party retainer. Expanding the HQ's size and holding point capacity takes more money, and very large corporations may require an adventure or two to persuade the locals to allow your expansion.

Holdings are built in the same way. Some may require nothing more than spending enough local credits, while others may involve delicate negotiations with the local government to gain permission to build some of the more elaborate or disruptive asset. As a general rule, one holding can be established per month.

You can buy and sell remotely on any planet where you have a factor. They are assumed to know what you'd want done. Such actions use the factor's skill levels for expertise, however, and they cannot respond to problems as creatively as you might.

Sales Chart	
Modified 3d6 Roll	**Price Modifier**
2 or less	-90%
3	-70%
4	-60%
5	-50%
6	-40%
7	-30%
8	-20%
9	-10%
10 - 11	Base Price
12	+10%
13	+20%
14	+40%
15	+60%
16	+80%
17	+100%
18	+150%
19 or more	+200%

TREASURES IN THE SKY

WORLD CREATION TAGS AND TRADE PROFILES

Some campaigns can comfortably play out entirely on a single world. Others are content to deal with the frictions between a small handful of planets, or play out the drama of a particular corner of a sector. Far trader campaigns rarely occur in such a neatly contained area of space, and this chapter will help you flesh out your sector with the information you need to run a vigorous merchant campaign.

THE TRADE PROFILE

The first step happens before the game and involves creating one or more **trade profiles**. At the beginning of a merchant campaign it might be necessary to create these profiles only for those worlds nearest to the party's starting location. As play goes on and a wider range of worlds become accessible, new profiles will need to be created for these untouched destinations. In the Resources section at the back of the book you'll find a blank trade profile which you can use to keep track of this information.

The trade profile starts with the world's name and tags, assuming that you've already run through the world creation process given in the *Stars Without Number* core book. In addition to the tags provided in the core book, this chapter contains a number of new trade tags specifically aimed toward mercantile campaigns. You can randomly roll or choose from this list, synthesizing the result with the planet's existing tags to define the world's commercial character.

Some tags will be obvious matches, while others might not seem to fit with the existing tags for a planet. In that case, you can simply reroll, choose a more appropriate one, or ponder ways in which the tags actually can be made to fit. The purpose of these tags is simply to give you a few easy, obvious choices for filling out the rest of the profile. While conventional tags focus on the character of the world as a whole, these trade tags are meant to provide you with the inspiration you need for handling specifically mercantile interactions.

The next step is to fill out the template slots with NPCs, objects, places, and rules that can later be inserted into a quick adventure template. You can simply add names to figures taken directly from the planet's tags or you might think of ways to synthesize multiple figures together from all the tags to create a type of NPC unique to that world. As a general rule you only need one element for each of these slots, though you might choose to create more than one if you find it entertaining. As you "use them up" in adventures, just generate fresh ones to fill out new schemes or recycle older ones as recurring NPCs.

Once you have your NPCs and trimmings established, you'll want to fill out the trade and trouble tables for the world. The prior chapter contains full details on these tables and a list of potential commodities that might fit a world. Other tables provide help for generating your own unique treasures of commerce, ones fit to draw the attention of rapacious far traders.

A planet's Friction and trouble threshold will vary with how friendly the world is to far traders. Overtly hostile worlds may be impossible to deal with outside of small groups of renegades and secret societies, but even less blatantly hostile worlds can be effectively closed if the local taxes, corruption, and inefficiency is too great. A world with an effective Friction score above 5 is almost impossible to turn a profit on unless the far trader has special connections and holdings to win the favor of the local elite- or is willing to provide certain adventurous favors to those in charge of levying trade fees.

For most worlds, a Friction of 3 or 4 is suitable along with a trouble threshold of 3. Worlds that emphasize free trade and honest officials might have Friction a point or two lower, while those planets without any reliable mercantile institutions or safe markets might have Friction of 5 or worse. Trouble thresholds might be lower on worlds that are particularly comfortable with far traders or that have a long tradition of interstellar trade and institutions capable of handling the unusual situations they present. Worlds with particularly capricious or corrupt rulers or weak property laws might have a threshold of 4 or even 5 for the most troublesome worlds.

Once you've taken these steps you will have a complete planetary profile. In conjunction with the trade quick reference sheet it contains everything you need to run commercial dealings on that planet. If things get hairy and the PCs want to conduct more than strictly mercantile doings there you can use the elements you've created with an appropriate adventure template to quickly and easily generate an adventure for the evening.

TRADE TAG ELEMENTS

This section includes a collection of new trade tags to complement the existing world tags in the *Stars Without Number* core book. You can add one or more of them to your planet to help flesh out its commercial aspects, either rolling randomly or picking ones that seem appropriate to what you've already established about the planet.

The sheet in the Resources chapter has space for six different elements characteristic of the planet. You'll later use these elements to flesh out an adventure template and create a quick evening's entertainment that fits with your group's needs and the planet they're currently exploring. Particularly for the NPCs, it's likely that these elements will be further developed in play. Right now, however, all you need is a name, a description of how they fit into the world, and perhaps a distinguishing characteristic or two for easy memorability.

The first slot is for an ***Authority*** and should be filled by someone representative of the government or other ruling structure. Trade ministers, starport officials, local princes, tribal chieftains, or some other NPC of consequence should be generated for this slot. Authorities must often be placated or bypassed by traders, as they have the power to make trade impossible or prohibitively expensive for the party.

1D6	1D12	TRADE TAG
1-3	1	*Alien* - Strange or inhuman inhabitants
	2	*Closed* - Contact is technically forbidden
	3	*Communist* - All belongs to the State
	4	*Disorganized* - There's no central authority
	5	*Dying* - The world is doomed in the near future
	6	*Fractious* - The locals are in struggling factions
	7	*Kleptocratic* - The rulers are unabashed thieves
	8	*Laissez Faire* - Free trade is a prized value
	9	*Megacorps* - Giant corporations control trade
	10	*Military* - The planet is heavily militarized
	11	*Opened* - They only recently contacted others
	12	*Panopticon* - Everyone is always watched
4-6	1	*Primitive* - The locals are tech-primitive
	2	*Restricted* - Someone is restraining trade there
	3	*Scarcity* - The world direly lacks something
	4	*Secret* - The outside cosmos is a secret there
	5	*Sophisticated* - They're jaded toward far traders
	6	*Theocratic* - Trade goes through priest-rulers
	7	*Thriving* - The local economy is booming
	8	*Tribute* - Everyone works to provide tribute
	9	*Tyrannical* - The ruler is a brutal tyrant
	10	*Usurped* - Someone else profits by their trade
	11	*Vendor* - Something precious is only made here
	12	*Xenophobic* - The locals fear and hate outsiders

The next is for an ***Antagonist***, some figure with plans or intentions directly contrary to the interests of the party. These antagonists might have noble ideals or a morally-defensible cause, but what they want is directly opposed to the best interests of the PCs, and they will have to be stopped or suborned if the party is to have success in their commerce.

Next you need a ***Thing***, a trade good or significant object characteristic of the world's commerce. This is something the locals would want for their own purposes, or the party would want for trade, or some vital necessity to the planet's smooth operation. The Thing should be unique to this world or characteristic of its traits; any sensible trader would want a pile of pretech atmosphere filters, but they become a good Thing when they've been lost in a ruined pressure dome on a planet wreathed in invasive, toxic gases.

After that, you need a ***Place*** characteristic of the world's terrain and people. The trade tags in this section do not include them because they are much more about the cultural terrain and physical geography of a planet rather than their commercial traits. You can lift them from the core book's tags or choose a characteristic location of your own. The Place you choose should be dangerous or forbidding in some way- a hostile slum, a warlord's private estate, a desolate glacier cave, a megacorp's headquarters building, or some other location that does not invite casual entry. If players need to go to this Place it should be a challenge to get there or act once they arrive.

That established, you need a ***Complication***- some local trouble or disaster that might rear up at any time to make life difficult for the people and the PCs. The templates will use these Complications to make simple things difficult for the players, so you'll want to pick one that could theoretically arise anywhere on the planet. Geographically limited problems or difficulties unique to a particular city aren't likely to be useful unless the PCs happen to be in that particular place.

Finally, you need a ***Regulation***, a commercial law that's likely to cause problems for the PCs. Most worlds have a forest of trade regulations to siphon away the wealth of outsiders, but most of them are simply covered under the Friction of a particular world. This Regulation is different, a ban or a requirement that will produce a direct personal problem for the PCs if they mean to be in compliance with it.

Once all of these details are in place, you'll have all the ingredients you need for a quick trade adventure. Simply insert the necessary pieces in the slots provided in the next chapter's adventure templates, grab the quick combat stats and maps from the Resources chapter, and you'll have something you can run for your players with no more than five or ten minutes of preparation.

Alien

The denizens of this world are either aliens or else possess such a strange culture that they might as well be non-humans. Such societies tend to have strange estimates of value by ordinary human standards, often prizing substances of limited interstellar value or requiring bizarre procedures before business can be conducted. Dealing with alien societies is fraught with danger even by far trader standards, as it is easy for a human to trespass taboos that seem so obvious to their local dragoman that there is no thought to warn them beforehand.

AUTHORITIES:	Member of a special trading caste, Bureaucrat that communicates in strange idioms, Judicial official of an incomprehensible law, Gone-native human transplant with full authority over human traders
ANTAGONISTS:	Amoral far trader selling the aliens tech dangerous to humans, Alien renegade seeking offworld goods for its plots, Alien trader trying to sell local artifacts forbidden from export, Alien selling goods that are actually very dangerous
THINGS:	Alien religious artifacts, Exotic alien tech, Alien slave caste, Precious biological extract from dead aliens
COMPLICATIONS:	The locals suddenly become very dangerous due to alien ritual behavior or biological impulses, Aliens suddenly demand a particular good to continue trading, Aliens become enraged over inexplicable slight, Alien rebels start fighting for control of human trade
REGULATIONS:	Humans are restricted to trade zones, Traders are required to give passage to members of a non-starfaring species, Traders must prove themselves honorary members of the species, Offworld trade is always prefaced by harsh ritual

Closed

The planet flatly refuses to conduct any trade with offworlders, or may be prevented from trading by some organization or power, or may simply be so strange that no coherent concept of "trade" is possible. Primitive worlds have few ways to physically enforce this ban on landing, but their government or social structure has enough moral sway to prevent most members from breaking the prohibition. More advanced worlds may have orbital defenses to ensure that interloping far traders do not come where they are not wanted. Some such worlds permit landing and communication, but no significant business can be conducted- or at least, no significant *legal* business.

AUTHORITIES:	Zealously xenophobic security officer, Guardian of cultural purity, Interstellar quarantine officer, Brutish monopolist
ANTAGONISTS:	Corrupt local potentate, Bribed quarantine enforcer, Relentless far trader smuggler, Native aspiring to break the seal
THINGS:	Blatantly offworld goods, Uniquely precious cultural artifacts, Key or tools for bypassing trade barriers, Offworld goods disguised as precious local products
COMPLICATIONS:	The planet was wide open until very recently, An exceptionally vicious local ruler wants to open outside trade to support his regime, The local culture forces people to profess public contempt for all offworld goods, Seemingly innocuous offworld tech caused a horrific disaster
REGULATIONS:	Trade is possible for "friends of the people", Trade at a very few traditional times and places is allowed, Offworld traders are universally treated as spies, Religious experts are allowed to handle offworld goods

Immish

Breathable, Cold, Imiscible, TL2, 44 million inhabitants

The Frost Princes of Immish rule a cold and reclusive alien race, one that dwells in towers of multicolored ice that well up from the bottomless seas of their homeworld. The Immish themselves are vaguely humanoid in shape, with hard, translucent bodies and ice-carving claws on their six limbs. They worship the sea beneath the planet's thick crust of ice, feeding on the thick plankton forced up through cracks in the crust and taking oracles from the periodic tremors and the misshapen "talking gods" that are caught in one of the periodic upwellings of hot water. These hideous beasts burst slowly as their tough shells fracture in the surface atmosphere, and the terrible cries they utter are taken as messages from the Melting Ones below. Most Immish hate offworlders as they come from the direction of Hell, from the empty sky, but a few are amoral or desperate enough to deal with the soft-fleshed ones.

AUTHORITIY:	Sagoth the Demonologist, leader of a remote sect of Hell-worshippers who seek contact with outsiders.
ANTAGONIST:	The Ice Priest Krittash, scourge of demon-summoners and leader of the dreaded Cold Teeth inquisitors.
THING:	Ice of the Outer Hell, a strange transparent solid that constantly absorbs heat without melting or changing.
COMPLICATION:	A talking god has been forced up through a nearby rift, and an Ice Priest claims that its cries warn of an infestation of offworlders somewhere near where the party is located.
REGULATION:	All offworlders are to be exposed upon remote ice-needles until they die of the cold.

Tercio

Breathable, Temperate, Miscible, TL2, 6 million inhabitants

Established by the Unified Communist Party centuries ago, Tercio has collapsed into a dozen warring states, each following a different interpretation of communist doctrine. These range from hard-core Stalinism to something barely distinguishable from laissez-faire capitalism. The governments are united in their willingness to nationalize anything that looks valuable, however.

AUTHORITIY:	Wise Comrade Wilkins, the god-king of the only nation with a still-functional starport. Utterly corrupt.
ANTAGONIST:	Citizen Thompson, glorious rebel leader of one of the yearly revolutions that result in no change whatsoever.
THING:	A hull load of rare mineral bars, largely useless to the locals but refined due to an error in central planning.
COMPLICATION:	Revolutionists are demanding the expropriation of all offworlder goods as "thefts from the people".
REGULATION:	All holdings are technically the property of the State, and may be seized whenever an authority feels like it.

Communist

The world's economic system is communist in nature. All goods and all production are under the control of the state, and private trade tends to be minimal where it is not outright forbidden. On planets with very small populations, this communism tends to be of a crude variety expressed through familial obligations and a sense of shared labor for communities small enough to police their own members. Unlike ancient Terra, however, most worlds now lack the hyperintelligent AIs and precognitive economist-psychics that once made command economies practical on a planetary scale. As a consequence, most surviving large-scale communist worlds are gray places of calcified bureaucracy, populist rancor, or fresh-faced enthusiasm yet untempered by experience.

AUTHORITIES:	Eager bureaucrat with a poor grasp on private property, Cynical apparatchik who just wants his share, Local factory manager desperate to make quota, "Fixer" for the regime looking for vital spare parts
ANTAGONISTS:	Vengeful survivor of the former propertied class, "Enemy of the people" out to overthrow the government, Far trader with moral objections to dealing with communists, Aspiring tyrant seeking to seize control of the world
THINGS:	Stock of overproduced goods, Crude but tough equipment, Last cache of some underproduced product on the planet, Goods seized from capitalist roaders and wreckers
COMPLICATIONS:	The locals actually have the AIs or cornucopia factories to make it work tolerably, The communism is for the commoners while the elite actually own property, The communism is a thin facade over a grim totalitarian state, The communism is recent and everything seems to be working well so far
REGULATIONS:	Only state traders are allowed to buy and sell to offworlders, Offworlders must bring specific state-mandated goods to be allowed any trade, Only far traders with "good politics" are allowed to trade, Far traders must demonstrate their commitment to the revolution to be allowed to trade

Disorganized

The world is a chaotic mass of tribes, statelets, warring classes, hostile ethnicities, atomized philosophical adherents, or some other churning mess of inchoate humanity. There is no real centralized power despite whatever proclamations may be made by the government of the hour, and no infrastructure for handling sophisticated trade. The people of different regions, castes, or cultures might be drastically different in their attitudes toward far traders, and the rules can change lethally in a matter of kilometers or minutes. While a far trader is free of the coordinated rapaciousness of a planetary government, he must fight off innumerable smaller exactions, and has no better avenue of justice than what he can get from the local ruler or his own strong arm.

AUTHORITIES:	Egomaniacal prophet of the new dispensation, Desperate remnant-lord of the old order, Survivalist tribe chieftain, Leader of a recognized sanctuary from the chaos
ANTAGONISTS:	Aspiring offworlder planetary warlord, Offworld government agent seeking control, Local lord cooperating with an amoral trader, Organlegger trading copious spare parts
THINGS:	Losers of local quarrels made into slaves, Caches of the old government's weapons of mass destruction, Stockpile of the resource the locals are fighting over, Salvage from a ruined lab or city
COMPLICATIONS:	The local balkanization is relatively stable among numerous small powers, The disorganization is peaceful in nature and the product of genteel disagreements, The planet is experiencing an inevitable and brutal population cull, The chaos is recent enough that the locals still have many artifacts of the old order
REGULATIONS:	Trading with one group will incite bitter hatred from their neighbors, Trade is eagerly sought for weapons and other military supplies, The only serviced spaceport is constantly fought over but never itself attacked, All deals need to involve all sides of any live conflict

Dying

The world is in the process of collapse. Unlike the conventional anarchy of a savage world, basic human survival on this planet is becoming gradually more and more difficult, either from a hostile environment that the locals can no longer fend off, or from a cultural collapse so complete that basic survival processes can no longer be maintained. In some cases, astrophysical events such as impending solar flares or unstoppable rogue-planet impacts might spell the doom of an otherwise healthy world. The time pressure is usually not so intense as to cause complete social breakdown, but almost everyone on the planet realizes that their time is coming to a close. Trade still exists on such worlds only insofar as the locals are not convinced they can successfully steal a trader's ship, or if they think they have enough time to build their own with the help of outside supplies. In almost no case is it feasible to save anything but a tiny fraction of the world's population, and their leaders are usually determined to be the ones rescued. In a few cases, the death spiral might be reversible with enough outside tech and support- if the locals can be kept from mad panic.

AUTHORITIES:	Sweating local ruler bent on escape for their family, Grim chooser of the slain apportioning dwindling resources, Military officer providing security for the remaining far traders, Resigned religious leader working to save his flock
ANTAGONISTS:	Desperate local grandee bent on ship theft, Ruthless local ready to do absolutely anything to get their loved ones away, Furious demagogue convinced the doom is the work of offworlders, Cheat selling passage on the PCs' ship without telling them
THINGS:	A king's ransom gathered to buy passage for a now-dead ruler, Precious cultural relics symbolic of the world, Cold sleep pods for hundreds of infants, A cache of usable spike drive cores
COMPLICATIONS:	Only the world's elite realize that they are doomed, Half the planet is still convinced there is hope, Outside rivals actively seek the death of the world, The doom can be averted with lost alien tech
REGULATIONS:	Openly acknowledging the impending armageddon is a capital crime, All travel offworld is restricted to those permitted by the elite, Local currency is based on chances at a ship berth, Far traders must take a certain number of passengers in order to leave

Fractious

Where a disorganized world is an incoherent mess, a fractious world is divided up into several strong, organized groups. These factions may have de facto existence in the form of rival nations or geographic regions, or they may be political artifacts of a disjointed planetary government, with different groups of officials jousting over control of offices and delegated authority. Most such worlds have not devolved into overt warfare, but tensions can range from a decided coolness toward rivals to assassination and deniable guerrilla strikes.

AUTHORITIES:	De facto but discreet faction leader, Figurehead leader controlled by hidden masters, Eminently corruptible bureaucrat working for the highest bidder, Desperate faction member on his way down the ladder of power
ANTAGONISTS:	Faction member seeking to discredit a troublesome superior, Saboteur seeking offworlder weapons, Reformer seeking offworld resources, Renegade seeking a plague on all their houses
THINGS:	Forbidden tech meant for a faction's leadership, Restricted data stolen from a faction, Precious resource the factions are fighting over, Offworld tech shipment meant for "freedom fighters"
COMPLICATIONS:	All of the factions honestly mean well, One faction is clearly dominant but opposed by all the others, One faction has heavy offworld support, The factions are very good at hiding their membership
REGULATIONS:	Openly admitting the existence of the factions is a grave crime, The factions offer different trading terms with their own advantages and problems, Some factions have won over xenophobic locals by forbidding offworld trade, The leading faction is built on control of offworld trade

Jansen's World

Airless, Frozen, No life, TL4, 7 million inhabitants

A stony world of bubble cities originally established to mine a now-useless mineral extract, the life support systems of the cities are inexorably failing. Each city's leadership is desperate to escape or buy time, and rival groups are secretly stealing parts from each other. The truth is hidden from the public, but it's getting harder and harder to explain the "minor maintenance issues".

AUTHORITIY:	Mayor Ofume, a prematurely-aged woman whose only interest is in preserving her large extended family.
ANTAGONIST:	The Voice, a secretive rebel convinced that offworlders could fix the domes but want to claim them afterward
THING:	Irreplaceable Pretech life support components that might eke out another few years of life for a bubble city
COMPLICATION:	A dome's power fails- including the power to open the hangar doors to let the PCs' ship out
REGULATION:	Admitting the true extent of the crisis will inevitably result in murder by henchmen of the ruling cliques

Kleptocratic

The planet has a dominant trade framework, but that framework is hopelessly corrupt. Nothing happens without money, and possession of wealth is license enough for every variety of crime and wrongdoing. The local officials are ferociously greedy, peeling every spare credit off a far trader and making very narrow estimates of how much profit the offworlder will need in order to justify return. The endless corruption makes for poverty and suffering among the common folk, but those who control the levers of wealth do very well.

AUTHORITIES:	Corpulent port master with detestable tastes, Local trade official who doubles as a crime boss, Supervisor of a security department that's just another gang, Paranoid bureaucrat being pressured by numerous murderous "friends"
ANTAGONISTS:	Abominably corrupt ruler who demands loathsome tribute, Hard-bitten underclass entrepreneur with no god but profit, Offworld reformer who blames far traders as the root of the problem, Savagely vengeful renegade
THINGS:	Goods "mislaid" as a bribe payment, The forbidden tech that all the local factions want, The goods due as protection money to keep someone from getting killed, An offworld criminal's stash of looted goods
COMPLICATIONS:	A reformist movement is growing stronger but is hostile to far traders, The society used to be much less corrupt before a disaster or war, The corruption is carefully and ruthlessly hidden from the populace, Without the grease of corruption the local legal framework would paralyze society
REGULATIONS:	Openly acknowledging the corruption is a grave crime, Bribes are never paid in money, Far traders are squeezed much more harshly than locals, Corruption is ruthlessly punished when revealed yet remains ubiquitous

Brandenburg   **Breathable, Temperate, Miscible, TL4, 73 million inhabitants**

Once a major trade hub for the sector, Brandenburg is only now reviving with the rebirth of interstellar trade. The "old ways" of laissez faire commerce are enshrined in their law books, but the centuries of isolation since have led to a kleptocratic disregard for these ancient principles. A faction of true believers struggles to implement the old ways, but most of Brandenburg's leadership is interested only in lining their own pockets with the wealth these far traders bring.

AUTHORITIY:	Judge Hawthorn, a cynical commercial judge who gives verdicts to the deepest pockets.
ANTAGONIST:	Minister Wen, chief of the Trade Ministry and one convinced that every credit that reaches the world ought to have a slice for her. Those who disagree tend to find their businesses encountering "problems".
THING:	Ancient trove of pretech goods left behind on this world during the chaos of the Scream.
COMPLICATION:	A rival just purchased the good offices of an authority able to harm a holding or a deal being conducted
REGULATION:	Trade taxes on the books are extremely low- but docking costs and other incidental fees are sky-high.

Laissez Faire

The planet has few if any trade laws, but retains enough social coherence and infrastructure to facilitate large-scale trade. Some worlds of this type recognize almost no trade laws except basic rules about fraud and contract enforcement and permit virtually anything to be bought and sold in their markets. Most laissez-faire worlds either have so few inhabitants that tariffs are unnecessary, or else have a deep cultural commitment to free trade, or are so populous and divided in power sources that no single faction or government can maintain restrictive trade practices. Minor far traders love these worlds, though greater trade princes tend to prefer captive markets.

AUTHORITIES:	Entrepreneurially-minded bureaucrat, Harried goods inspector, Official hunter of offworld rarities for the government, Hidebound administrator relic of a more mercantilist age
ANTAGONISTS:	Amoral merchant trading in foul things, Aspiring monopolist seeking to control the market, Lobbyist seeking to control the regulators, Failed merchant who blames far traders
THINGS:	Forbidden goods unknown on other civilized worlds, Recently-outlawed wares hidden for later pickup, Defrauded goods cached for later claiming, Cases of the One Thing Outlawed Here
COMPLICATIONS:	The new liberty is fragile and old economic powers want the market restrained in their favor, Economic losers in the market are growing violent, A government faction fears the market is starting to threaten their power, Society is thrown in flux by the sudden flood of new wealth
REGULATIONS:	A person can sell anything here- even their own life and freedom, Local contract-law judges can be openly influenced by "favors", Contracts are all bearer documents and he who holds the physical document has the deal, Grand fraud is a capital crime

MEGACORPS

All significant economic activity above the individual freelancer is controlled by a relatively handful of giant corporations, either directly or through a web of subsidiary companies obedient to the megacorp's will. Some of these corporations might be private in origin and others might be state enterprises, but their size and importance has left them integral partners with whatever government might exist on this world, to the extent that many of them effectively are the governments of their spheres of influence. Their rivalry rarely extends to outright warfare, but deniable strikes and industrial espionage are a way of life on this world. On those worlds where public government has not entirely withered away the remaining states retain their independence by the strength of their military forces and their willingness to handle less profitable work for a stiff fee from the megacorps. So long as the money keeps coming and their military primacy is not threatened, such crony-capitalist leaders have little interest in what the megacorps do with "customers".

AUTHORITIES:	Colorless Mr. Johnson with trust issues, Government bureaucrat working for a patron corp, Military officer wanting hardware the corps don't have, Utterly mercenary port master
ANTAGONISTS:	Industrial saboteur working for a rival, Official who hates "destabilizing" far traders, Violent anti-corp terrorist-slash-freedom fighter, Megacorp creation gone rogue
THINGS:	Exotic R&D product, Warehouse of goods left in legal limbo by a subsidiary, Product of some brutal human experimentation, Vital parts for a crucial manufacturing facility
COMPLICATIONS:	The corps are actually making the standard of living very good here, The corps hold the key to some process vital to local survival, The corps maintain functional pretech facilities, The corps are actually deniable government proxies completely in thrall to the local rulers
REGULATIONS:	No one wins a legal case without corp patronage, Corp agents have a license to kill, All business holdings must be corp-affiliated, The corps sell local sovereignty to the highest bidder

MILITARY

The world is heavily militarized. For a rare few worlds this militarization may revolve around the space navy, with the citizens organized to support a fleet vastly in excess of the usual limits. For most military planets, however, the focus is on ground and atmospheric forces and the rivalries that have led to their growth. A world in this state might have huge conscript armies, completely militarized societies, or otherwise be dominated by the effort required to build and maintain huge numbers of people in martial professions. Such worlds may have limited wars breaking out in client nations or among allied vassal states. Others may be locked in generations-long trench warfare.

AUTHORITIES:	Quartermaster military official, Military port police, Internal security spy-hunter, Black ops supply officer
ANTAGONISTS:	Zealot confiscating goods "for the war effort", Ruthless enforcer of military quarantine, Enemy saboteur bent on ruining far traders, Deserter looking to make a profit
THINGS:	High-tech military prototype gear, Supplies vital to a beleaguered unit, Crates of weapons banned by local laws of war, Luxuries beloved of high brass
COMPLICATIONS:	All civilians are essentially slave labor unless they can enter the military caste, The world is rapidly tearing itself apart with the fighting, The dominant military power hates far traders as destabilizing wild cards, Foreign worlds use the planet as a testing ground for military tech
REGULATIONS:	Far traders are required to earn military ranks to trade, Far traders are expected to support military missions, Goods are subject to confiscation at times of military necessity, Far traders risk conscription

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APHELION **Breathable, Warm, Miscible, TL4, 88 million inhabitants**

More than a dozen heavily-militarized megacorps have gradually absorbed the conventional functions of government on Aphelion, and citizens pledge loyalty to their employer. Commercial necessity keeps the corps trading with each other and prevents open warfare, but a constant low-level seethe of "terrorism" and sabotage is a prelude to what some fear will be a global war.

AUTHORITIY:	Chief Executive Commander Ndele, leader of Uplift Industries, the megacorp that controls the best spaceport
ANTAGONIST:	Captain Murphy, the notorious mercenary saboteur and his gang of corp-employed "terrorists"
THING:	A lost and illicit database of advanced military schematics copied by a now-dead traitor to their corp
COMPLICATION:	"Terrorist" saboteurs launch a military raid on a mercantile exchange in the middle of cargo transfer
REGULATION:	Every holding or corp on Aphelion needs to have a megacorp "patron"- one that extracts a hefty cut of profits

OPENED

An opened world is fresh to the game of interstellar contact, one willing to reestablish the ancient bonds of trade that once webbed worlds together. Regrettably, most of them are not entirely certain how the whole business is supposed to work. The natives have little experience in dealing with offworlders, often misinterpret their customs, and have certain assumptions and expectations that they never think to question... along with an often-overblown esteem for "offworld tech". Opened worlds usually have not had time to develop sophisticated starports, complex interstellar trade bureaucracies, or a jaded indifference to far traders.

AUTHORITIES:	Confused minister of the local trade bureaucracy, Personally ambitious official, Leader of the faction that advocated for opening the world, New port master with no idea how to do his job
ANTAGONISTS:	Angry xenophobic local, Ruthlessly exploitative far trader rival, Offworld ambassador with a grudge against the far trader, Local ruler who expects pliant service from the offworlders
THINGS:	Pretech spare parts useless to the locals but priceless offworld, Cargo container full of enormously disruptive offworld tech, Access codes to a military space station inaccessible since the Scream, Cache of goods that the locals don't realize are extremely valuable
COMPLICATIONS:	The locals opened up trade because they need the far traders to save the planet from something, The locals are convinced the far traders are Space Gods or something similar, Another world's government wants them quarantined for economic or religious reasons, The locals think far traders all belong to the same company- and are culpable for each others' sins
REGULATIONS:	Far traders don't yet have legal standing in the local courts, A rival trader has "helped" the locals set up the trade laws to his own benefit, The locals have dusted off trade laws from before the Scream, Spaceship travel is permitted only to and from designated "starports"

PANOPTICON

The world is watched. Everything of consequence is monitored, every interaction recorded and logged. Panopticon worlds usually form only on planets sufficiently hostile to force bubble cities or similar contained, controlled habitats. In such compressed circumstances it becomes possible to track individuals to an extent that would be infeasible on more free-ranging worlds. Some panopticon worlds are relatively benign, but most exist in order to enable some ruthlessly oppressive power structure. In an effective panopticon society the only people with unpunished crimes are those responsible for monitoring the observations. The societies that grow from such soil tend to pair spectacularly corrupt overseers with a populace trained to a half-demented degree of dissembling.

AUTHORITIES:	Spaceport monitor official, AI surveillance controller, Official empowered to turn off surveillance, Local elite of the Great Unwatched
ANTAGONISTS:	Monitor saboteur, Official paranoid about unobserved far traders, Offworlder seeking to subvert the monitors for their own purposes, Avid blackmailer
THINGS:	Monitor-proof shielding shipment, Cargo of hyper-advanced surveillance gear, Semi-intelligent monitoring hardware, Entertaining but extremely illicit surveillance logs
COMPLICATIONS:	Telepaths run an undetectable psychic comm network, Locals actually communicate via subtle contextual cues rather than the words they speak, The surveillance state is new and society is in turmoil over it, The watchers are actually looking for something specific and mortally dangerous
REGULATIONS:	The local currency is based on privacy allotments, Local clothing is transparent, Concealment or deceit of any kind is a serious crime, The locals are incredibly good at detecting smuggled goods

INGET STATION
Airless, Frozen, No life, TL4+, 200,000 inhabitants

This unwelcoming planetoid was originally hollowed as a Mandate signals-monitoring station for the now-dead world of Inget Prime. In the decades since, the locals have come to mythologize their role as watchers, and the entire station observes each other as a religious duty. The station's existence has only recently been announced to to the outside world; some resent this.

AUTHORITIY:	Arch-Observator Colm, a man devoted to the idea of unearthing every possible secret of the outer world
ANTAGONIST:	Shiro Hoffman, the Maintainer of Silence. Bitter leader of the faction dedicated to keeping the station hidden
THING:	The station's remarkably advanced sensor technology, which they've barely been able to maintain
COMPLICATION:	The locals demand to completely interrogate the ship's computers, including any sensitive data
REGULATION:	All offworlders must be accompanied by an all-seeing minder at all times, waking and sleeping.

Primitive

The world is technologically primitive. Their societies may be quite sophisticated in cultural, artistic, or aesthetic terms, but they lack the raw materials or expertise to move past the muscle-powered stages of technology. Few such worlds can support centralized governments or large numbers of non-farming specialists, and social organization tends to be oriented toward stability and survival. Far traders who can bring in tech to unlock formerly-inaccessible resource deposits or jumpstart an industrial base can unleash drastic changes on these worlds. The natives often lack the experience to recognize these impending changes before their world has transformed around them.

AUTHORITIES:	Confused local autocrat, Unrelentingly hidebound guildmaster, Local official with wildly inflated expectations about far traders, Local grandee unable to understand that her authority is not universal
ANTAGONISTS:	Official privately determined to drive the offworlders away, Local crime boss desperate to steal offworld goods, Local demagogue bent on extorting the offworlders, Far trader who really dislikes competition
THINGS:	Colony-era pretech parts that are useless to the locals, Amazingly refined art or liquors, Exquisitely-bred and trained warbeasts, Papers proving ownership of local serfs or slaves
COMPLICATIONS:	A local priestess has cynically duped the locals into thinking her far trader partners are holy figures, The world is on the cusp of an explosively disruptive industrial revolution, The locals are Luddites for a reason that is or was rational, The last far trader to come through left chaos in his wake
REGULATIONS:	Offworld tech use is restricted to the native elite, Tech use is relegated to a tightly-policed underclass of laborers, Tech use is permitted only after dangerous purification rites, Tech use is considered a declaration of rebellion

Squall

Thick Atmosphere, Temperate, Miscible, TL1, 800,000 inhabitants

With a thick atmosphere prey to terrible storms, survival hinges on the weather towers that dissipate atmospheric disturbances. The Storm Lords who maintain these towers forbid almost any technology with moving parts to the "windblown" lesser caste, punishing rebels with killing winds. The Storm Lords are rapidly running out of spare parts, however, and need outside supplies.

AUTHORITIY:	Storm Lord Barstow, eager for postech spare parts, much less eager for windblown getting their hands on tech
ANTAGONIST:	Wind Talker Katrianna, a windblown rebel convinced that the world's storms aren't prevented by the towers but are actually created by them. She seeks to destroy them all.
THING:	Trove of precious mineral created by the interaction of the thick-air windstorms with a local ore
COMPLICATION:	The full force of a weather tower must be used to hold back a storm at the same time as rebels attack the tower
REGULATION:	Offworlders are forbidden from carrying around illicit tech in public

Restricted

The locals of this world labor under a regime that tightly restricts the employment of common technology. While most worlds have strictures against devices of mass destruction or private biological weaponry development, this world goes so far as to control the use of entire classes of technology- weapons, communications tech, medical science, or other society-changing artifacts. Use of this restricted tech is usually reserved to the local elites or priestly class, and its possession often comes with powerful cultural significance. Enforcement of these restrictions is usually at the hands of the tech's proper owners, though some worlds are locked into their laws by outside powers.

AUTHORITIES:	AI robot of the synthetic ruling class, Tech-priest devoted to the mysteries, Cynical warlord with no delusions about the tech, Ruthless inquisitor rooting out illicit tech
ANTAGONISTS:	Rebel bent on getting a new source for tech, Elite in desperate need of replacements for dying tech, Far trader inclined to destroy the monopoly, Colonial offworld official enforcing the rules on the hapless locals
THINGS:	Cache of tech lost when the owner was killed, "Cloaked" tech that looks like allowed objects, Superior local tech reserved for elites, Trove of the incredibly dangerous tech that provoked the restrictions in the first place
COMPLICATIONS:	The tech is self-aware and using the elites, The restricted tech is extraordinarily dangerous on this particular world, The tech is vital to life and the elite's lynchpin of control, The tech is fueled by something precious or deplorable
REGULATIONS:	The tech isn't so important as the ritual or cultural meaning of holding it, Social rank is based on tech permissions, All tech is theoretically owned by the state and loaned to the worthy, Non-elite cannot use the tech even to save their own lives

Scarcity

The planet is miserably poor in some vital necessity for civilization. Food, water, breathable atmosphere, workable metals, or some other staple of human society is available in very limited amounts. Control of this commodity rests in the hands of the planet's elite, and most conflicts revolve around its apportionment. While most far traders lack the cargo space to bring in truly world-changing amounts of the material, tech that breaks the scarcity through superior production or extraction techniques can result in convulsive change to the society. Even so, many far traders prefer to bring in more limited amounts, the better to string out the local profits as long as possible.

AUTHORITIES:	Barbarous chieftain adorned in tokens of the material, Grim gray technocrat in charge of distribution, Engineering official responsible for production, Ritualized semi-priestly official in charge of the material
ANTAGONISTS:	Saboteur bent on destroying a rival's supply of the material, Radical redistributionist with no fear of the consequences, Far trader bent on keeping the material scarce, Local elite trying to make sure the status remains quo
THINGS:	Secret warehouse of the material, Material lost in fighting long ago, Ancient tech that creates the material, A virus or nanocontagion that destroys the material
COMPLICATIONS:	The scarcity is so recent that society is still coming to grips with it, The locals believe that the scarcity uplifts them and must be maintained, A crazed demagogue accuses the rulers of having a superabundant cache of the material, A nigh-unlimited supply or generation tech lies locked away behind ancient guards
REGULATIONS:	Wastage of the material is considered a hideously evil deed, Private trade in the material is forbidden, A special distributor caste manages all storage and disbursal of the material, The more of the material you possess the more spiritually worthy you are

Secret

Any trade with this world must be conducted secretly with those few local powers aware of the far traders' existence. The rest of the planet may be virulently xenophobic, or overseen by offworld imperialists, or the private economic fief of a different far trader empire. The locals may not even realize that interstellar travel is possible. Those permitted to conduct offworld trade are usually government representatives or secret societies aware of the truth. The construction of significant holdings on such a world can be difficult, with everything conducted through a complex series of local cutouts and native "geniuses" recruited to explain new technology. The governments of such worlds vigorously discourage any attempt to widen a far trader's market.

AUTHORITIES:	Government trade official in black, UFO enthusiast with a secret landing site, Cynical business tycoon, Illuminati minion with business connections
ANTAGONISTS:	Investigative reporter, Business competitor baffled at the new products, Rival government saboteur, Relentless conspiracy theorist
THINGS:	Slaves comprising people the locals want "disappeared", Government-extracted resources, Stealth technology to defeat local scanners, Irrefutable evidence of "alien" contact
COMPLICATIONS:	The locals are convinced that space travel is impossible since the Scream, The locals are actually hyper-advanced and extremely isolationist, The planet's history gives them good reason to hate and fear offworlders, The locals are extremely hard to infiltrate
REGULATIONS:	Government agents track down and deal with secrecy breaches, Government departments duel each other for control of the trade, Government prices are decidedly stingy, Far traders must bring in certain goods to trade at all

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Boreline
Breathable, Temperate, Immiscible, TL3, 6 million inhabitants

Boreline is a world of vibrant life that is totally inedible to humankind. Human communities revolve around food production, the owning Grangers forming the world's nobility. Birth licenses are jealously guarded, and the local cities are suspicious and fearful of each other's constant hunger. Several Grangers deal with offworlders but keep their dealings secret lest their neighbors combine to destroy them before they can use the offworld tech to cement their dominance over their fellows.

AUTHORITIY:	Granger Sanchez, ruler of Riverbend Farms. Weakest of the surrounding Grangers, he seeks hydroponic tech
ANTAGONIST:	Weeder Martinez, a secret agent of a powerful neighboring Granger who suspects offworld involvement
THING:	Long-lost pretech protein synthesis tech capable of converting local biomass into something mostly edible
COMPLICATION:	A careless far trader has landed at a nearby community, and is about to be slaughtered by rapacious locals
REGULATION:	Every crumb of food is the property of the local Granger, and must be kept under guard by his men

SOPHISTICATED

The world may or may not be a thriving hub of interstellar trade, but it is certainly comfortable with the idea and at ease with the concept of a wider cosmos. Sophisticated worlds may have large space navies or a long tradition of astronautic adventuring, but they show none of the usual awe toward far traders that more backward worlds might demonstrate. They know what the local sector has to offer and are quite canny about what they are willing to buy and sell. They may be more technologically advanced than most other worlds in the area, or have enough social contact with their neighbors to have formed a polyglot, cosmopolitan sort of local culture. If they have little trade contact with other worlds, it's likely because they're convinced that the barbarians have nothing to offer them.

AUTHORITIES:	Supercilious official in need of "favors", Disinterested mandarin unconvinced of trade's value, Blase local tycoon wanting new products, Jaded entertainer seeking fresh inspiration
ANTAGONISTS:	Con-man playing on far traders' expectations of bumpkin locals, Offworlder agent working indirectly against a rival power, Decadent local demanding grim amusement, Apparently wealthy local actually in dire financial straits
THINGS:	Inexplicably compelling collection of artwork, Magnificent relic of a long-lost civilization, Local specialty jealously kept on-world, Precious trove of data logs on now-lost societies
COMPLICATIONS:	The locals are actually simply invincibly arrogant rather than accomplished, They are cultural heirs to a very strange society or alien race, The locals are convinced that they should rule the sector, The locals are eager to export culture
REGULATIONS:	Outsiders must present tribute before they are allowed to trade, Far traders affiliated with savage worlds are unwelcome, The local customs house is unpleasantly good at preventing smuggling, Otherwise forbidden goods can be traded here in certain areas

THEOCRATIC

The planet is under the control of a theocratic government, either as a centralized religious bureaucracy or one dominated by numerous smaller sects. In the chaotic aftermath of the Scream the mutual ties and unquenchable hope provided by many organized faiths often left their clergy the most respected group on the planet. Over time, this respect easily transformed into outright rule. Those faiths that were best represented among colony worlds tended to be those that coped well with issues of technology and rationalism, but the Scream also encouraged a strong Luddite strain. The faith that is a cynical and tired bureaucracy on one world can be a creed of fire and bloody triumph on its neighbor, and a far trader sometimes cannot discern the difference until after they've been surrounded.

AUTHORITIES:	Overfed priest-bureaucrat with very secular concerns, Underpriestess looking to make a vacancy above her, Purely nominal cleric-official concerned only with the social forms, Leader of a persecuted sect interested in offworld allies
ANTAGONISTS:	Extremely militant heretic, Xenophobic zealot bent on purging offworlder corruption, Offworld cultural saboteur seeking to cripple the world's society on a rival's behalf, Far trader trying to move forbidden goods on the world
THINGS:	Beautiful religious artwork, Technology sacred to the faith, Priceless relics of the religion, Stores of religious tithes that went missing
COMPLICATIONS:	The local theocracy is a substantial improvement on what went before, The clergy secretly war with each other over obscure doctrinal differences, The theocracy is decadent but the locals can imagine no other life, The theocracy is in the midst of upheaval and the commoners are divided
REGULATIONS:	Offworlders are required to participate in potentially repugnant local rites, A valuable commodity is forbidden by religious law, Trade must be sanctified by permission from a querulous religious leader, Painfully stiff tithing requirements are on all trade

AXIOM
Breathable, Temperate, Miscible, TL4, 56 million inhabitants

Founded by the devotees of the Book of the Sky, Axiom is led by a Great Captain and a nobility modeled on a starship bridge crew, with different noble houses as different departments. The faith spiritualizes the concept of space travel as a moral journey, with lay "deck hands" obedient to "officers". Cosmopolitan in mindset, Axiom ironically lacks the raw materials for spike drives.

AUTHORITIY:	Lieutenant Privathi, an unflappable noblewoman of the Comms with a burning desire for spike drives
ANTAGONIST:	Freethinker Randall, atheistic rebel convinced that offworlders must be driven off to weaken the faith
THING:	Cache of holy artifacts that are actually extremely valuable pretech ship navigation systems
COMPLICATION:	Numerous lesser nobles demand spacer experience in order to gain unimpeachable status among their peers
REGULATION:	Actual spacers are considered holy figures- and expected to act that way lest they be taken for false prophets

GANNETT

Breathable, Warm, Miscible, TL3, 42 million inhabitants

A handful of peasant locals made contact with far traders a generation ago, gaining access to mining and industrial tech that bootstrapped Gannett's rich natural resources into fabulous profitability. These "Tycoons" rule the planet, a loyal corps of enforcer minions sharing in their abundance. The supporters of the old regime have been reduced to oppressed laborers.

AUTHORITIY:	Constance Espada, a Tycoon with cold contempt for her formerly-noble workers and a brutally grasping nature
ANTAGONIST:	High Lord Hernan, an ore-shoveler who secretly leads the bitter remnants of the old regime's military forces
THING:	Shipment of TL4 weaponry diverted from Tycoon enforcers by the rebels and consequently lost
COMPLICATION:	A former noble clan is rising in Luddite hatred against offworlders and their Tycoon beneficiaries
REGULATION:	Every person in a Tycoon's territory must pay regular and heavy exactions or face indentured service

THRIVING

The world is in the throes of an enormous economic boom. Whether through the discovery of new resources, the integration of new tech into their industrial base, or a renaissance of ideas and creativity, life on this world is getting better for almost everyone. If the world is not already a major player in sector affairs, it is likely to become so in the foreseeable future. While the good times are widely spread among the population, it is inevitable that someone is going to be left out- and former oligarchs and ruling elites tend to find such universal prosperity to be disruptive to the pillars of their former rule.

AUTHORITIES:	Befuddled official suddenly responsible for much more trade than ever before, Nouveau-riche tycoon with wild ambitions, Local desperate for offworlder help in exploiting an opportunity, Deeply suspicious old-guard elite
ANTAGONISTS:	Suddenly wealthy local who plots revenge for old slights, Far trader who wants to capture the local market, Deposed elite who wants to end the "chaos" of the boom, Megalomaniac local who plans sector dominance
THINGS:	Products of an upgraded factory, Motherlode of precious mineral, Trove of goods bought by a now-dead entrepreneur, Vital industrial equipment lost in transit
COMPLICATIONS:	The boom is actually based on a false impression and is doomed to collapse gruesomely, A deeply unsympathetic group is prospering most from the boom, The losers in the boom would rather have the entire planet poor, Neighboring worlds are fearful of potential expansionism
REGULATIONS:	The world's legal system is unprepared to handle the new business arrangements, The old guard is struggling to maintain former sumptuary laws, Threatened rulers are regulating to kill the boom before they are challenged, Economic nationalists are prohibiting offworld investment or holdings

TRIBUTE

The world's economy revolves around providing tribute. It may be to a powerful local elite, or a colonizing offworld power, or a bizarre local custom of destruction. Whatever the specifics, society is designed to create large surpluses of necessary goods for the benefit of others. In the rare case that the tribute-collectors are offworlders, the tribute itself usually is in the form of some small, precious commodity that can be carried in limited interstellar cargo space. Local elites can be more widely rapacious, and whole nations can be set to slaving to produce the fantastic opulence enjoyed by a blessed few. Such tribute arrangements may have physical force to encourage the workers, but some degree of cultural acceptance is necessary for such a small minority to effectively commandeer the labor of so many. As such, the elites tend to be very sensitive about offworlders who question affairs.

AUTHORITIES:	Dead-eyed tribute collector, Official in charge of handling offworlder contributions, Collector of "special orders" from the elite, Local desperate to make his quota somehow
ANTAGONISTS:	Offworlder scheming to steal the tribute, Local elite unable to understand that they can't simply take everything, Deluded elite with impossible demands on far traders, Ruthless tribute collector snatching whatever he can
THINGS:	Store of tribute material, Tech to vastly increase tribute production, Tech the elite use to help enforce the tribute, Precious byproduct of tribute creation unknown to the locals
COMPLICATIONS:	The tribute is demanded by implacable Mandate-era tax robots, The peasants are ground under as the elite fight over who is to control the tribute, Tribute production interferes with creation of a much more valuable good, The far traders incidentally fit the criteria for deserving a share of the tribute if they can collect it
REGULATIONS:	Locals don't trust offworlders until they fill a tribute quota, All property belongs to the elite and the tribute is just what they choose to take, Social status among commoners is based on quota fulfillment, Legal cases always go to the party who has contributed more tribute

TYRANNICAL

The planet is under the control of an all-encompassing tyranny. Multiple dictatorships might be locked in perpetual struggle, or the entire world might be gripped in a single fist. The only law is the will of the ruler and the prerogatives of their minions, and any deal lasts only so long as the tyrant finds it advantageous to keep it. Personal freedoms are nonexistent, and long-standing tyrannies might have so beaten the resistance out of their people that their only real threat to the ruler lies in a palace coup. Such worlds are eager to buy new tools of restraint and luxuries from distant worlds, though they can be risky trading partners. Their rulers are not accustomed to being balked.

AUTHORITIES:	Gray-souled bureaucrat seeking an edge, Overfed scion of the ruling class, Personal shopper for the tyrant, Military officer seeking special orders
ANTAGONISTS:	Rebel who blames offworlders for the tyrant's power, Brutal secret police chief with suspicions of offworlders, Zealous party propaganda chief seeking offworlder support, Suicidal saboteur out to destroy far trade
THINGS:	Wealth taken from enemies of the state, Slave-produced goods, Advanced surveillance tech, Store of exceptionally vicious weaponry
COMPLICATIONS:	Maltech gengineering has left the locals incapable of rebellion, The tyrant seems necessary to resist some grim threat, The tyrant has genuine popular support, Members of the former regime have formed a rebel underground
REGULATIONS:	Official "minders" must remain with offworlders at all times, Commoners are forbidden from speaking with offworlders, Costly gifts of luxury goods are necessary to even begin trading, Far traders known to deal with the regime are subject to legal repercussions on neighboring worlds

USURPED

The interstellar trade conducted on this world has been completely suborned by some outside power. The local government or society does not control the terms of the trade or benefit much, if at all, from the fruits of it. Most often this is the product of a weak world and a powerful far trader combine seizing control of the spaceports through a mixture of bribery and threats. Sometimes a foreign world is also able to force all trade to pass through its "customs houses", often placed in orbit where less technologically-sophisticated locals can't overwhelm them with numbers. A few alien races might do the same thing- or humans might do such to an alien world unable to throw off this unwanted "administrative assistance". The locals receive only a pittance for their products and the far traders are gouged on the prices in turn, with the surplus collected by the usurping power.

AUTHORITIES:	Colonial customs officer with a distaste for the locals, Plastic-souled combine bureaucrat who wants off the world, Local collaborator hated by their neighbors, "Negotiator" who handles all contact with buyers and sellers
ANTAGONISTS:	Bitter local nationalist, Reckless far trader smuggler, Corrupt customs official, Brutal trade enforcer
THINGS:	Tightly-restricted local specialty, Cache of goods taken by the usurpers as profit, Equipment vital to maintaining the trade stranglehold, Weapons cache meant for local rebels
COMPLICATIONS:	The local rulers desperately need the usurpers for something, The usurpers have colorably legitimate claims on the world's wealth, The usurpers are backed by extensive local collaboration, Only the usurpers know how to turn local resources into a rare specialty
REGULATIONS:	Not even personal gear is allowed out of the starport without a tariff, Far traders are forbidden from communicating with sellers, Far traders are restricted to the starport, Far traders must befriend the usurpers before trade is allowed

LIFENG

Breathable, Warm, Immiscible, TL1, 200,000 inhabitants

A small jungle world with a relative handful of settlements tied to the few food-producing areas on the planet, Lifeng was recently seized by a megalomaniacal ideologue and his heavily-armed companions. This "Father Senzai" is convinced that his leadership and unimpeachable wisdom are the keys to universal harmony, and he'll kill anyone who disagrees. Any failure is evidence of "wreckers" who must be rooted out. His minions are partly converts to his magnetic attitude and partly brutes who just enjoy playing gods over the tech-primitive locals. Enough locals have been won over by bribes to make rebellion difficult.

AUTHORITIY:	Trade Minister Ulrike, a former pirate slave rescued by Senzai's men and blind to his growing madness.
ANTAGONIST:	Chen Lin the Harvester, rebel leader with very little inclination to distinguish between hated offworlders
THING:	Precious jungle plant extract useful to offworld industry but extremely dangerous for the locals to gather
COMPLICATION:	Father Senzai announces that the party is completely in agreement with his cause, leaving the locals unamused
REGULATION:	Whenever one of Father Senzai's plans fails, at least one person involved must be executed as a "wrecker"

VENDOR

There is a valuable thing this planet produces that can be found nowhere else, and the bulk of their offworld trade revolves around selling this thing and gathering the tariffs and taxes that come from it. It may be a rare plant, or a precious mineral, or the product of some still-functional pretech nanofactory, or the fruit of native ingenuity, or even the remnants of an advanced alien race. Whatever its specifics, this is the only planet in the area that can offer it, and they extract every possible credit from its trade. Control of this resource is very important to the locals, as the far traders will naturally cooperate with those capable of cutting off their supply.

AUTHORITIES:	Chief manufacturer of the good, Religious official in charge of the good's disbursal to the populace, Labor union chief involved with making the good, Tax collector bent on stopping the smuggling of the good
ANTAGONISTS:	Brutal and red-handed smuggler, Saboteur who seeks to destroy a supplier of the good, Con man selling fake or adulterated goods, Extortionist threatening to cut off the supply of the good
THINGS:	Secret untaxed cache of this good, Machinery vital in its creation or extraction, Prototype of a synthetic equivalent that threatens to destroy their monopoly, Tainted or otherwise dangerous batch of this good
COMPLICATIONS:	The goods are the product of a brutally exploitative system, The goods are running out or being depleted, A foreign world has seized all trading rights for their own people, Vast stores of these goods are yet untapped or undiscovered and have provoked a gold rush
REGULATIONS:	Local regulations to prevent smuggling are very elaborate, Revealing or stealing the manufacturing process is a capital crime, Sale of the good is allowed only to registered and approved buyers, Buyers require a local official as a patron if they are to obtain the good

XENOPHOBIC

The locals hate offworlders. This hate may be born of some venerable crime against the planet, or it might just be the product of cultural loathing. Most planets naturally assume that their culture is morally or aesthetically superior to those of other worlds, but these people actively hate their neighbors. Offworlders are depraved, vicious, filthy beings who likely host a variety of social diseases and ought to be shunned or worse if they dare to show their faces on the clean soil of this world. Unsurprisingly, this makes trade a rather difficult business, but some among the governments and major corporations of this world are willing to make grim sacrifices to necessity. Of course, any such deals must be hidden from the populace or else mob violence is almost certain to ensue. Few traders have any love of landing on these worlds, but their very isolationism tends to make them fabulously profitable for those few ships that actually do arrive.

AUTHORITIES:	Profoundly disgusted bureaucrat, Furtive corporate executive fearing discovery, Official who thinks the PCs have no moral reservations about any work, Desperate local willing to deal with the devil for some vital thing
ANTAGONISTS:	Purity-minded local demagogue, Investigator for "alien influences", Politician seeking to tie his rivals to offworlders, Local who wants to bury his former contracts permanently
THINGS:	Store of goods too obviously alien to release to the market, Local specialty kept from outsiders, Cache of goods hidden by a lynched trader, Local treasure of incalculable value to natives
COMPLICATIONS:	The locals have been misled by manipulative rulers, The locals blame offworlders for a great disaster, The natives have a deeply alien moral framework, Only the ruling class is xenophobic
REGULATIONS:	Offworlders are executed on discovery if the mob doesn't get them first, Locals will buy only goods that can be disguised as local wares, The locals view certain wares as being too good for offworlders, All trade must take place under the pretext of tribute and submission.

COUCY
Breathable, Temperate, Miscible, TL3, 102 million inhabitants

Shortly after its founding, Coucy was nearly obliterated by a pirate raid launched to seize the valuable catalyst crystals that form on the planet. The locals now believe the wider cosmos consists of nothing but savages and pirates. A few locals desperate for aid in their schemes against each other are willing to secretly deal with far traders, but the price of discovery is certain mob violence.

AUTHORITIY:	Interior Minister Petain, who runs a secret wilderness starport to fund his plots against his rivals
ANTAGONIST:	Francois Joubert, a far trader who dislikes rivals and schemes to get them killed without blowing his cover
THING:	Cargo load of processed catalyst crystals, extremely valuable to TL4 tech but only mildly useful to locals
COMPLICATION:	An actual pirate raid hits the planet uncomfortably near the party, riling up the locals
REGULATION:	Possession of any form of astronautic tech without a government permit is proof of pirate ties

An Offer You Can't Refuse

Creating and Running Trade Adventures

One of the most difficult parts of running a trade campaign is the need to manufacture engaging and exciting adventures that involve a party's mercantile exploits. The conventional elements of sci-fi adventure are familiar to most GMs- alien monsters, space tyrants, inexplicable technological wonders and hostile bug-eyed xenomorphs lend themselves to easy adventure creation in a way that extortionate tariffs do not. This chapter will demonstrate a method for creating records and templates that allow a GM to quickly and easily transform a sticky trade situation into an evening's adventure.

The Adventure Templates

The greater the wealth and influence of a group of PCs, the harder it is to anticipate all their potential courses of action. A grubby pack of freebooters in a frontier system bar can only end up so many places by the end of an evening's play, but the directors of a multistellar trade empire have a great many more options when it comes to dealing with a problem. Adventure templates are meant to ease the burdens of a GM by providing a quick, generalized pattern for an adventure that can be filled in with elements from the trade profile of whatever planet the PCs happen to be acting on.

Adventure templates are designed to be quick, simple adventures keyed to accomplishing specific ends. Because they are meant for generation with no more than five or ten minutes of prep, they are of necessity rather straightforward patterns. If you know what sort of adventure you'll be needing in advance, you can sit down and embroider them with more complications, possibly stringing several together into an extended adventure. Still, the basic goal of the templates is to give you something you can run when the players spring something unexpected on you halfway through an evening's play.

Using the Templates

The templates are organized by general goals- Do Favor, Unseat Authority, Kill Target, Establish Holding, Retrieve Plunder, and Incite Rebellion. To use them, you first identify the general goal of the players and choose or roll from the appropriate category. If the PCs are trying to achieve multiple goals at once, you can either oblige them to deal with their ambitions one step at a time or mash multiple templates together with a shared group of actors and targets.

Next, take the trade profile for the planet and slot in the elements labeled in the template. Some of the templates will have bit players or secondary NPCs; you can pull a spare name from the trade profile and flesh out additional details from the one-roll generator in the Resources section. Some templates will need maps for places of importance if exploration or combat is expected. You can use ones provided in the Resources, recycle maps from previous adventures, or just sketch out a crude diagram for reference during play.

Combat statistics will be needed for some templates. The enemy sheet in the Resources section gives a list of potential antagonists in generic form. You can simply slap on a coat of paint to turn them into native thugs, government enforcers, alien fauna or other suitable hostiles.

Some templates refer to a generic Conflict, which you can generate using the table in this section. The table provides the basic outline of the conflict, which you can skin in the particulars of a given situation. You can also brew up a completely unrelated Conflict just to add confusion into the situation, but you should be prepared for the party to take the matter seriously. They might come to believe that their success hinges on resolving the red herring- and given the flexibility of events in a sandbox game, they may not be wrong.

The whole adventure shouldn't take more than five or ten minutes to confect. Resist the temptation to detail things too tightly. It's inevitable that a certain degree of looseness is going to creep in, and the more you define about the adventure, the more likely you are to run into self-contradictions or unexpected complications. Most players are willing to accept a certain degree of ad-hoc invention when you obviously are producing something on short notice, and cooperating with them will make life easier for everyone involved.

Once you've run the adventure, take a moment to note down the general course of events and any important repercussions that will appear down the line. When you need inspiration for your next session's gaming, just flip back through these short adventures and pick up some thread that was left untied. Even if the PCs aren't around to witness the consequences you can note it down for them to discover on their next visit or to learn through interstellar gossip.

Do A Favor

The PCs are trying to curry favor with someone, either to eliminate Friction on a deal, win trade concessions, earn forgiveness for a trespass, or some other need for approval. These templates largely assume that it is an Authority that needs placating, but it's quite possible to swap an Antagonist in for those occasions when the PCs need to make friends with less acceptable members of local society.

1d6	Template
1	The *Authority* has a problem with an *Antagonist*, who has cached a *Thing* at a *Place*. Technically the Authority is supposed to alert his superiors or the local authorities about the matter and let them recover the Thing, but it would be more advantageous to him to acquire it for himself without burdening anyone else with the knowledge. The PCs are asked to go to the Place and recover the Thing for the Authority. There are *Hostiles* at the Place in the employ of the Antagonist, who may or may not be there himself. The Hostiles may have been overrun by Hostiles in someone else's employ, by law enforcement who got there ahead of the PCs, by dangerous native wildlife, or may be seeking to steal the Thing from their Antagonist employer. The Place might actually turn out to be inhabited by locals willing to barter the Thing peacefully.
2	The *Authority* has an *Actor* who is their spouse, child, lover, debtor, or other person of importance to them. This Actor has been kidnapped by local criminals, taken by an *Antagonist*, seized by the secret police, taken hostage by rebels, lost in the wilderness, or otherwise taken from them. The local authorities have either failed to retrieve them, cannot be trusted with the work, or are actually responsible for the kidnapping. The Authority wants the Actor back. The captors may not realize the Actor's importance, may have the Actor slated for execution soon, may be transporting the Actor somewhere and are vulnerable during transit, or may be temporarily occupied by dealing with a local *Complication*. *Hostiles* are likely guarding the Actor, or may be present in the wilderness, or may actually be employed by the Actor in their attempt to fake their kidnapping and escape the Authority.
3	The *Authority* needs to resolve a conflict between two *Actors*, each of whom represents a significant social group, financial power bloc, religious authority, government bureau, or other section of society that must be placated. These groups are in a *Conflict*, and require neutral outsiders to arbitrate between them. In the middle of negotiations, a *Complication* arises and one of the groups makes an attempt to use it to destroy or discredit their rivals- yet this Complication simultaneously produces the evidence or objects necessary to prove one of the groups in the wrong, and is sufficient to resolve the issue if the PCs can successfully reach the Authority with it.
4	An *Authority* needs a relatively simple task performed at a *Place*- a message brought, an object delivered, an *Actor* escorted- yet this simple action will lead to the ruination of an *Antagonist*, who will approach the PCs with false (or possibly true) evidence that the Authority is sending them on a task that will result in their destruction, and offers the bribe of a *Thing* if they arrange to bring the message, object, or Actor to a different Place. If the players refuse, the Antagonist will either provoke a *Complication* to hinder their work, direct *Hostiles* to attack, or feed false information to the Authority to make it appear as if the PCs really have double-crossed him.
5	A dangerous *Actor* is threatening an *Authority*- promising physical harm, loss of position, romantic defeat, or the like- yet it is not feasible to kill them. The Authority wishes to bribe the Actor with a *Thing* and entrusts the PCs with it since he knows they need his cooperation to function on the planet. Unbeknownst to all involved, however, an *Antagonist* has got wind of the deal and plans to relieve the PCs of the Thing at the desolate *Place* where the handover is to occur. A *Complication* may occur during the handover, or it may be that this particular exchange requires breaking an important *Regulation* while remaining undiscovered.
6	An *Authority* needs the use of the PCs' ship to reach a *Place* that would otherwise be impractically remote. There, he intends to meet with an *Antagonist* with whom he is secretly cooperating, arranging for the transfer of a *Thing* of value to both. The pair did not anticipate the sudden surge of *Hostiles* that turn up in the area: native wildlife, a pack of bandits, a rebel group, a rival Antagonist gang. In the course of the attempted escape the Antagonist and Authority might each decide that their deal would work better if the other one perished tragically.

1d12	How do the PCs learn that the authority needs the favor?		
1	A lover of the Authority conveys a private message	7	A public advertisement seeking help from capable offworlders
2	An underling anticipates his boss' needs	8	An official tries to blackmail them into helping
3	The PCs hear of another far trader failing in the job	9	An ally of the authority offers an inducement to help them
4	A government operative invites them to take the job	10	A PC ally gets entangled in the situation and asks for help
5	The PCs accidentally intercept a request for help	11	A PC holding or their ship is somehow embroiled
6	A PC is mistaken for the far trader that was hired	12	Ships are temporarily grounded until help is given

Unseat Authority

Sometimes a ruling power is beyond negotiation. Some authorities just cannot be persuaded, bribed, threatened, or coerced into cooperation, and the only remaining option is to ensure that they no longer have the burden of authority. At other times, an Authority might require that a rival be deposed or a troublesome superior relieved of his office. On primitive or decadent worlds a well-placed laser beam can open up space in the hierarchy, but in more orderly societies such usurpation requires more finesse.

While violence is always an option when trying to free up an office, most advanced worlds require somewhat more delicacy when deposing an official. Use this template when the party cannot simply gun down the offending functionary.

1d6	Template
1	The PCs learn that the ***Authority*** is being blackmailed by an unscrupulous ***Antagonist***, and if the party is able to get hold of the blackmail evidence they can surely push the target out. Unfortunately, the Antagonist was last spotted at a ***Place*** of substantial danger, and it may be necessary to get the location of the ***Thing*** that will prove the Authority's malfeasance from them. At the same time, the Authority himself may be moving to "solve" his blackmail problem permanently.
2	The ***Authority*** actually yearns for a different position in a more clement location, potentially lucrative office, or less physically dangerous job. Getting it requires the good offices of a local ***Actor***, who has a ***Thing*** which will certainly earn the Authority the transfer they desire. The Actor hates the Authority, however, due to some old ***Conflict*** that ended poorly for them, and they are intentionally withholding the Thing. They might be dealt with firmly by the PCs, or their grudging cooperation might be won by doing them a favor or saving from a sudden ***Complication***.
3	The troublesome ***Authority*** actually usurped their position from the former holder, an ***Actor*** now reduced to a miserable condition. The Actor knows the ***Place*** where evidence is stashed showing official malversations that he started and the Authority continues, but insists on confronting the Authority personally in his well-guarded offices, where the Actor is decidedly unwelcome. In truth, the Actor intends to attempt to murder his rival on the spot, quite indifferent to the inferences this will cast on his PC "friends". Their hatred overwhelms even their sense of basic self-preservation.
4	The PCs learn that the ***Authority*** is planning a rebellion, betrayal or coup that will almost certainly fail horribly for him and result in his disgrace and possible death. An ***Antagonist*** has found a ***Thing*** that will prove the existence of the impending treachery, however, and means to use it to get his puppet put into the newly-empty office. At the same time, the Authority is struggling to get the Thing back, and his minions will assume anyone who knows of the Thing is a threat. The PCs must steal and hold the Thing from both sides if they are not to trade a bad Authority for a worse one.
5	The ***Authority*** is discovered to be enormously in debt from a failed market play, and is establishing new ***Regulations*** that are making life intolerable for offworlders. If the Authority's true degree of debt were proven to his superiors he would be removed as a security risk and a fool, but ***Hostiles*** have kidnapped the ***Actor*** who is his creditor, and mean to hold them until the Regulations have drummed up enough bribe money to pay the debt. Meanwhile, complying with the Regulations promises to greatly complicate any attempt to break the Actor out.
6	The ***Authority*** is holding on to his position thanks to blackmail against a superior or rival underlings. An ***Antagonist*** knows where the ***Thing*** that provides evidence of the charge is hidden, but ***Hostiles*** in the pay of the Authority are pursuing them. An Actor is willing to take them to the ***Place*** where the Antagonist is hiding out, but the Hostiles are coming in quickly and there won't be much time for negotiation. If the Thing is taken offworld or destroyed, the Authority will be unable to maintain his station.

1d20	What vices, vulnerabilities, or flaws does the authority have?		
1	They have a taste for the spouses of underlings	11	Their avarice and grasping ways are notorious
2	They have a powerful addiction to an illegal substance	12	Their superior has always hated them for an old slight
3	They have murdered many of their potential rivals	13	A close relation is an infamous criminal they may be shielding
4	They betrayed family members to get their post	14	They are secretly in the thrall of a rival far trader
5	They sold out a former patron to win the position	15	They rely on horrible maltech to deal with a grave illness
6	They are a devotee of a despised local religion	16	They share profits with a local criminal gang or bandit chief
7	They make critically poor choices of who to trust	17	They've covered up their causative role in a shocking disaster
8	They've left a trail of living enemies behind them	18	They can never keep a deal without trying to squeeze a bit more
9	They're from a commonly-despised ethnic group	19	They have a sexual inclination utterly unacceptable to locals
10	They showed mercy to a relentless enemy	20	Their spouse hates them for some long-standing reason

KILL TARGET

There are some worlds where problems can be practically solved in very direct ways. Whether a tyrant king, rapacious warlord, vexing clan leader, grasping guildmaster, savage rebel leader or other figure of consequence, the players want to murder somebody. In some cases this will be a matter as simple as pulling out a mag rifle during negotiations, but at other times a more sophisticated approach will be necessary. The templates below assume that the target is somehow defended or protected to the degree that a direct assault is impractical without some kind of preparation.

Kill Target adventures are fairly easy to compile on short notice. You can pull one of the example maps from the Resources chapter of this book or just lift a floorplan from the internet, place the Target accordingly, and garnish the area with a sufficient supply of Hostile guardians and placed defenses. If you don't have time or inspiration to come up with complications to the situation, you shouldn't feel obligated to make it more involved than it has to be. Far traders play rough at times, and if the PCs have the muscle and opportunity to resolve their problems with direct violence, you should let them bring out their guns and deal with the consequences that follow.

1d6	Template
1	The **Target** spends most of his time in some heavily-defended location, but will shortly need to move discreetly to a **Place** in order to conduct a secret exchange with an **Antagonist**, both of them with their own escorts of **Hostiles**. An **Actor** opposed to the Antagonist is willing to give the details of time and place to the PCs in exchange for their promise to hand over the **Thing** that the pair are exchanging.
2	The **Target** has a detestable vice that requires the discretion of a **Place**. While the Place has tight security, it would be possible for the party to enter as fellow appreciators of that sin, and once inside to conduct an assassination. An **Actor** scarred by the Target's actions is willing to give the party details on how to get inside if they can convince them that the party really will kill the Target. Once the Target is dead, the party will need to evade the **Hostiles** posted there to guard the patrons.
3	An **Antagonist** wants the **Target** dead for his own reasons, and an **Actor** agent of his contacts the party to offer cooperation in getting past the Target's defenses and getting a clean shot at him. The Antagonist can lure the Target to a **Place** with some false report or feigned communication from an ally, whereupon the party is expected to get past his **Hostile** escort and hit him. The Antagonist may or may not then decide to clean up loose ends- or might hold the event as convenient blackmail for later favors.
4	The **Target's** heir or next of kin despises him. It may be for some unforgivable offense, a lasting cruelty, or the simple vicious malice of the kinsman. This **Actor** is willing to bait the Target into a position of vulnerability, offering a precious **Thing** to the party if they cooperate in the murder. The Thing may itself be a "hot" commodity, however, or be implicit proof of their involvement in the assassination, or may be trapped to tie up loose ends, or may be completely legitimate and above-board.
5	The **Target** is a patron of a local charity, fraternal brotherhood, or other altruistic community. This may be a sincere dedication or it may be a convenient veil for his real nature. The charity will soon gather on neutral ground for some ceremony, celebration, or commemoration, and those present will have few guards. The locals view the neutral ground as holy and violence is taboo there. If the party is discovered profaning the peace there will be hell to pay, but a renegade **Actor** is willing to help them get into position for the assassination, either for pay, for hope of personal advancement, or for hate of the Target.
6	An accident- the genuine consequence of a sudden **Complication** or something fabricated by an **Antagonist**- has stranded the **Target** at a **Place** distant from their usual defenses. The party is in a position to get to the Place faster than the Target's backup, but the **Hostiles** that make the Place dangerous are apt to be just as unfriendly toward them as toward the Target.

1d20	What special defenses or allies does the target have?		
1	An extremely remote home that is difficult to reach	11	An ultra-competent bodyguard with a life debt to them
2	A grav-suspended flying palace or estate	12	A precognitive psychic warning them of danger
3	A labyrinthine lair stocked with stand-in doubles	13	A swarm of semi-sapient alien attack-vermin
4	An estate under the sea reachable only by submarine	14	Alien protector pledged for inexplicable reasons
5	Private quarters on a military naval base	15	Mob of ruthless toughs from their political party's street wing
6	Experimental pretech shields against psionics	16	Circle of assassins who work for coin or traditional duty
7	Hardened estate with reinforced fortifications	17	Religious templars from the faith that backs the target
8	Large numbers of expert-system weapons turrets	18	Numerous toughs from the target's ethnic or national group
9	Quarters on a military space station	19	Constantly surrounded by children and other human shields
10	Nuke-hardened hidden lair beneath a mountain	20	Allies off-screen who will cause chaos if they are killed

ESTABLISH HOLDING

Some commercial holdings are easy to erect. On some worlds, it's simply a matter of visiting a real estate agent and a good recruiting firm, and the party has a serviceable office, factory, or other useful enterprise. On other worlds, things are not quite so simple and orderly in execution. It may also be that the party is attempting to establish the kind of resource that the local authorities would find distressing, and a certain degree of discretion is required in arranging their affairs. When the party is trying to put together a holding that falls under such circumstances, the following templates can cover the necessary exertions.

For some worlds where the only hindrance to establishing a holding is the need for official approval it can be more useful to use the Do A Favor template for these sort of tasks. Establish Holding templates assume a somewhat more vigorous opposition to the party's plans.

1d6	TEMPLATE
1	An *Actor* represents a group of people whose cooperation is vital in establishing the holding, yet this group is suspicious and mistrustful of the party. A recent *Conflict* with an *Antagonist* is leaving them beleaguered, however, and help in driving off the Antagonist and his *Hostiles* would convince them to help the party. At the same time, an *Authority* really wouldn't mind if the group were entirely broken by their troubles, and if the party helps in destroying the group's power the Authority will aid them in establishing the holding.
2	A *Place* would be perfect for the holding- but it's currently under the control of an *Antagonist*, who has blackmailed the relevant *Authority* with evidence in the form of a hidden *Thing* or kidnapped loved one. If the Authority's hands weren't tied, they could crush the Antagonist and let the party use the Place for their holding. Alternately, the party might directly confront the Antagonist and their *Hostiles*, driving them out and taking the Place for their own use.
3	A holding identical to the sort needed by the party already exists on the world, but it has fallen into decay and is ripe for a takeover. An *Actor* currently controls the holding, and is trying desperately to keep it functional. Unfortunately, they're caught by the pressure of a local *Antagonist* who is trying to squeeze them out and take over the holding under cover of a *Complication* they've provoked. If the party can provide protection from the Antagonist and secure the Actor's control of the holding, they will become a loyal minion of the PCs.
4	The necessary components of such a holding are said to be at a remote *Place*, long since lost after an influx of *Hostiles* made the area too difficult for business with their extortions, general violence, or rigid behavioral demands. The Hostiles have little interest in the remnants of the holding and the most critical parts are man-portable, but they're certain to be very unfriendly toward outsiders. An *Actor* claims to have a way in, but a local *Authority* or *Antagonist* has decided to finally move against the Hostiles just as the party makes their attempt on the Place.
5	A similar holding once existed on the world, either as a pre-Scream relic or as the recently-failed effort of another figure. An *Actor* currently holds the deed to it or the key to unlocking its secrets, but is sought by an *Antagonist* for reasons embodied in a *Conflict*. Once the key is obtained, the PCs can reveal the hidden cache of necessary components hidden within a potentially dangerous *Place*.
6	An *Authority* with numerous enemies has been struggling to bring about such a holding for the general good of their subjects, but lacks the finances and technical expertise to do so. They are glad to let the PCs do the heavy lifting, but the involvement of the far trader earns them the enmity of an *Antagonist* and paints them as collaborators in the eyes of the Authority's rivals. They will seek to undermine the project with *Hostile* minions in conjunction with the Antagonist's schemes.

1d20	Who is most opposed to establishing the holding?		
1	A wealthy oligarch whose business is threatened by it	11	Bureaucrat who demands effective control over the holding
2	Religious group opposed to the holding's existence	12	Maltech cultist whose needs would be hindered by it
3	Rival far trader who wants the holding for himself	13	Offworld agent of a rival planet who fears its benefits
4	Brotherhood of small traders threatened by it	14	Trade official who wants less offworld involvement on the world
5	Luddite workers who fear their jobs will be lost	15	Xenophobic native organization popular with the locals
6	Venal official who feels he wasn't bribed well enough	16	Rival far trader who owns a similar holding himself
7	Precognitive who foresees disaster- right or not	17	Locals who hate the idea for bizarre customary reason
8	Arch-traditionalists who view the innovation as evil	18	Crime boss who wants to extort complete control over it
9	Ultra-progressives who think it's all inadequate	19	Corrupt clergy who want to be paid off to stop denouncing it
10	Contractor who wants to squeeze the PC mercilessly	20	Native law enforcers who are convinced it's a criminal front

RETRIEVE PLUNDER

Valuable cargo has a way of falling off the back of gravtrucks, and sometimes it can be a trifle awkward to retrieve it from its new possessors. Far traders bedevilled by thieves or cheats are often in the position of collecting on unpaid debts, either through forcible reclamation of the lost cargo or extraction of a different form of compensation. Other traders have the chance to learn of hidden caches and secret stores unknown to their worldbound competitors. Such merchants are obliged to spirit away these treasures before the locals realize what they've been missing. For some situations, a Thief is responsible for absconding with the loot, while other templates assume that it was lost long ago or was never recognized for its true worth.

1d6	TEMPLATE
1	The **Thief** is collaborating with a corrupt **Authority** to arrange for the theft of goods, and has the aid of potential **Hostiles** in the Authority's employ. The Authority's corruption in the matter is well-concealed, but an **Actor** at a certain **Place** has evidence that would pin the theft on them and force their removal by their peers. The Authority knows about this, however, and seeks the Actor's capture and tragic accidental death under trumped-up charges.
2	The plunder has been secreted in a **Place** very difficult to access without a ship- some remote region of the planet, some orbital cache, or elsewhere beyond ordinary reach. Due to some treachery or mishap, the original **Thief** who stole or found it has had it reaved away by a band of **Hostiles** who now hold the plunder. The Thief and their allies will hit the cache at the same time as the PCs go in.
3	The cargo has been mislaid or misrouted by an honest error or incompetent underling, and is now in the legal possession of a local **Authority**. This Authority is willing to return the cargo if an **Actor** important to them is retrieved alive from the clutches of an **Antagonist**. The Actor's affiliation with the Authority is somehow dangerous or illicit for one or both of them, so ordinary law enforcement must not be involved in the rescue.
4	The plunder was actually thought worthless at the time, either due to mistaken labeling or current ignorance of its uses. It was discarded in a massive landfill, waste place, or now-ruined neighborhood that is currently under the control of an **Antagonist** and their **Hostile** minions. If they are alerted to the plunder's presence they will most certainly seize it for themselves. An **Actor** knows where it is located in the zone, and will cooperate in guiding the PCs so long as they are given a **Thing** which is also secreted with the loot.
5	The plunder was accidentally mixed with a damaged cargo consisting of an extremely dangerous substance or a shipment of hostile xenolife. The **Place** in which it rests is now crawling with these **Hostiles** or rendered lethal by the leaking substance. At the same time, a local **Antagonist** seeks the Place in order to loot the dangerous substance or corral some of the xenolife for later use against his rivals. When the authorities are alerted about the situation, they'll certainly sterilize the Place, ruining the plunder along with the hazards.
6	The plunder actually dates back to the colonization of the planet, a cache of some ancient treasure lost to the memory of the locals. If they were to learn about the **Place** it is kept they would certainly take it for themselves, but if the traders can get past the **Hostile** guardians that still infest the place and the **Complication** that threatens to reveal the location or doom them there they can spirit the wealth away under the natives' noses. Unknown to the PCs, a **Thing** there may reveal some long-buried secret about the colony or be proof of some truth that would cause a social upheaval on the planet.

1d20	How is the plunder defended or concealed?	1d20	
1	Ancient guard robots from the colony's founding	11	It's a set of cargo crates in an uncharted orbital debris field
2	Alien defenders with strange life cycles	12	It's been lost somewhere in a long-ruined structure
3	Cryo-suspended human guardians from ages past	13	It's far under water or in some hostile atmosphere
4	The plunder itself is trapped to be toxic	14	It's mixed in with innumerable crates of worthless trash
5	The hiding place is meant to trap and starve thieves	15	It's buried beneath shifting sand dunes
6	Savage native beasts infest the area	16	It's hidden within a glacier somewhere
7	The plunder's just under a really heavy object	17	It's stacked neatly in a forgotten warehouse on a military base
8	Automated defense turrets fire on strangers	18	It's under the Prime Minister's dining-room table
9	The area around the plunder gives way to deep caves	19	It's been buried by a recent mudslide
10	The plunder itself is alive and defends itself	20	It's been packed into the basement of a famous monument

INCITE REBELLION

Far traders have a way of running into horrible planetary rulers, especially when they try to bring in some good that threatens to disrupt the cozy tyranny of the current ruling elite. Even when the local autocrat is a good business partner, they may have little habits which prove intolerable to civilized human beings, pastimes such as slave-trading, cannibalism, mass murder, or extreme rudeness toward PCs.

Unlike the average rootless interstellar vagabond, far traders often have the ability to make these rulers regret their sins. Even the least significant far trader controls a starship, and merchant princes can hurl entire interstellar fleets against those who cross them. As the GM, you should not be surprised if somewhere along the course of your campaign the PCs decide to depose some problematic despot. The adventure outlines below assume that the tyrant in question is relatively minor. For truly spectacular feats of regicide and the toppling of sophisticated planetary governments, you might be advised to check the "Massive Schemes" advice in the following pages.

1d6	TEMPLATE
1	The **Rebel** is able to bypass the **Target's** defenses and get the PCs an opportunity to kill him, but is currently overshadowed by an **Antagonist** who leads most of the opposition to the Target's rule. The Antagonist needs to be taken out of the picture, or they'll take over any government that forms in the wake of the Target's downfall. They can currently be found in a **Place**, guarded by **Hostiles** loyal to them. Any elimination of them would have to be deniable if the rebels are not to be hostile toward the PCs, though they might be able to be sidelined if the PCs can somehow empower the Rebel to make a better deal to their followers.
2	The **Target's** rule actually hinges on the ruthless employment of an **Antagonist**, who has cowed the locals otherwise capable of deposing him. This Antagonist employs **Hostiles** as his muscle, but also personally controls a **Thing** which forces the other potential claimants to rely upon his good offices for their continuing prosperity. If the Thing were stolen or the Hostiles were dispatched, the Antagonist would have much less leverage with the potential replacement rulers, one **Rebel** of which is actively seeking offworlder help to depose the Target.
3	The **Target** has a cache of tech or a source of offworld support that he uses to safeguard his position- but an offworld **Actor** is vital to maintaining that tech, either due to their rare pretech engineering expertise or their possession of tech skills unknown on the world. The Actor is being coerced into loyalty by familial hostages, lack of transit offworld, or some other snare. If the Actor were spirited away or killed the tech or offworld support would vanish. A **Rebel** is interested in killing the Actor, but might be persuaded to try other means if given sufficient inducement.
4	A **Complication** is threatening to spiral out of the **Target's** control, taxing the current limits of their authority and ability to maintain order. A **Rebel** is waiting to take advantage of any cracks in their control, but an **Antagonist** happens to be coincidentally shoring up the Target's control by their own actions. PCs might choose to increase the magnitude of trouble being provoked by the Complication or move to take the Antagonist off the board, trusting in entropy to the do rest.
5	A **Conflict** between two important supporters of the **Target** threatens to paralyze their usual instruments of control. If one of the participants loses badly enough, a **Rebel** might be able to topple the other, leaving the Target vulnerable to being overthrown. A **Thing** currently held in the possession of an **Antagonist** would be enough to tip the conflict in the direction desired by the PCs, though they might choose to arrange matters by their own more direct intervention.
6	A recent **Complication** is a direct result of some atrocity or grave mistake made by the **Target**. They are throwing their full strength into quelling the **Rebel** stirred up by this misstep, and have enlisted an **Antagonist** to help them keep the locals suitably cowed. If the Antagonist and their **Hostiles** are taken out, the Rebel might well be able to overthrow the tyrant- or else the PCs might strengthen the Rebel sufficiently to stand against both the Target and the henchman.

1d20	What powers are eager to exploit a rebellion?		
1	A formerly-oppressed religious group	11	Naive scientists and intellectuals with access to high tech
2	Partisans of the government before the current one	12	Zealous political party with extreme prescriptions for society
3	Ruthless far trader rivals of the PCs	13	A dozen different regional governments seeking balkanization
4	Agents of another world's intelligence services	14	An ethnic or national group with long-nursed grudges
5	Operatives in service to a neighboring alien race	15	Lesser members of a planet's hereditary nobility
6	A secret cabal of psychic conspirators	16	A coalition of merchants chafing under restrictive customs
7	A populist movement of demagogues and the poor	17	A tech-primitive group seeking autonomy from the government
8	Aspiring theocrats in the dominant local faith	18	A vicious criminal organization wanting a kleptocratic state
9	Native industrialists who dream of oligarchy	19	Fanatics seeking a future utopia after the ruin of existing society
10	Savage barbarians from untamed regions of the world	20	Maltech cultists capitalizing on the chaos to entrench control

HOSTILES, ACTORS, AND CONFLICTS

These tables provide some quick inspiration as to possible hostile groups, random actors, or adventure conflicts that might be useful for your templates. As with all the tables in this book, you should feel free to mix, match, pick and reject parts as your judgment advises you.

1d100	HOSTILES	LEADERSHIP	SPECIAL TRAITS OR CIRCUMSTANCES
1-4	Swarming alien vermin	Hive queen or huge symbiote	Can creep anywhere, Flying, Acidic mandibles, Cyclic swarming
5-8	Alien pack hunters	Alpha hunter or mated pair	Perfect camouflage, Poisonous bite, Telepathic, Taboo animal
9-12	Dangerous escaped xenolife	Cunning alpha survivor	From very alien world, Psionic capabilities, Human intellect
13-16	Impoverished street gang	Cynical dealmaker boss	Locals fear and obey them, They've trapped their territory
17-20	Ethnic supremacists	"Pure-blooded" ruling family	Unofficial state backing, Law enforcement ties, Mad grudges
21-24	Violent religious zealots	Prophet, priest, or heretic	Suicidal courage, Strange taboos, Respected by co-religionists
25-28	Dangerous isolationists	Clan elder, Venerated guru	Esoteric philosophy, Entrenched defenses, Tacit official tolerance
29-32	Quarrelsome squatters	Grizzled boss, "Family" elder	Claim to have the true deed, Tolerated nest of social outcasts
33-36	Scholars of the forbidden	Maltech scientist, Cult leader	Unholy abominations, Unearthed horrors, Maltech gear
37-40	Organized crime gang	Businesslike gang boss	Bribed law enforcement, Street gang footsoldiers, Vice ties
41-44	Roving bandit pack	Brutal bandit chieftain	Blend with normal travelers, Demobbed impoverished soldiers
45-48	Rebel cell	Zealous revolutionary leader	Extremist politics are popular, Grudge for a governmental sin
49-52	Terrorist group	Cold-blooded ideologue	False flag for another group, Popular with many natives
53-56	Rogue government agency	Deniable official	Only *seems* to be rogue, Has milspec gear, Has mission to do
57-60	Jaded decadents	Wealthy, nihilistic youth	Have a trademark vice, Semi-official protection, Trade in sin
61-64	Sapient alien natives	Bitter alien chieftain	Masquerade as humans, Have human allies, Exiles in this place
65-68	Rival far trader's thugs	Ruthless offworlder factor	Ties with local government, Secret deals with corrupt locals
69-72	Elite mercenary troops	Amoral professional warrior	Unofficial military branch, Favor a specific weapon or tactic
73-76	Esoteric disciplined mystics	Bodily-perfect master	Some are psychics, They use psitech, They're gengineered
77-80	Political thugs	Party official	Arm of the ruling party, Widely-mistrusted extremists, Popular
81-84	Ancient guard robots	Decayed and erratic AI	Lethal but damaged pretech weaponry, Original colonial guards
85-88	Scruffy cut-rate mercs	Substance-addicted captain	They can be bought by the PCs, Very economical in courage
89-92	Culturally-permitted thugs	Arrogantly confident chief	Their violence is socially endorsed, They hate outsiders
93-96	Militant utopians	Wild-eyed dreamer	Outsiders poison their "perfect society", Death to all wreckers
97-100	Offworld agents	Deep Black commander	Trying to stay hidden, Here to scout the local government

1d10	COMMON ACTOR	SOCIETY ACTOR	OFFICIAL ACTOR	PRIMITIVE ACTOR
1	Tired factory worker	Glittering noble	Minor governmental clerk	Brutal war chief
2	Clueless office drone	Official's favorite mistress	Military intelligence agent	Slave captured in war
3	Ordinary beat cop	Famous local artist	Confused customs inspector	Keeper of lost tech
4	Curious scientific researcher	Banker owed money by all	City law enforcement chief	Feral psychic madman
5	Petty street thief	Local poet-laureate	Ruling party political theorist	Hard-bitten caravan master
6	Reluctant prostitute	Important native priest	State church official	Trainer of war beasts
7	Luckless burglar	Rich, notorious degenerate	Tax inspector	Barbaric nobleman
8	Underground artist	Crusading society matron	Mid-ranking military officer	Missionary from other world
9	Naive political partisan	Noveau-riche upstart	Bureau research scientist	Mistreated native peasant
10	Weary street clinic doctor	Alien or foreign ambassador	Government-paid mole	Fearsome tribal priest

		CONFLICT TABLE		
1d12	1d8	ONE SIDE OF THE CONFLICT...	1d10	THINGS IMPORTANT TO THE CONFLICT
SOCIAL 1-3	1	Gave up a Thing but wants it back now	1	A hand in marriage
	2	Has already caused a Thing to a rival's chagrin	2	Inclusion in a powerful social group
	3	Is owed a Thing by a recalcitrant other side	3	An official position
	4	Lost a Thing and wants revenge on the takers	4	Family social preeminence over peers
	5	Wants to defend a Thing against an enemy	5	Acknowledgement of some worthy deed
	6	Wants to create a Thing despite hostile rivals	6	Right to an inherited social rank
	7	Wants to ruin and destroy a Thing	7	Liberty from certain customary duties
	8	Wants to take or claim a Thing	8	Acknowledged guilt of a crime
			9	Right to live in a place
			10	Control of the local government
ECONOMIC 4-6	1	Has discovered a Thing and wants to keep it from foe	1	Buried pretech relics
	2	A Thing they have is tainted by dangerous maltech	2	Cache of advanced weaponry
	3	They're doing reckless, foolish deeds for a Thing	3	Grand or ritually-important building
	4	A Thing was stolen from them by a rival	4	Large inheritance
	5	Their rightful ownership of a Thing is doubted by a foe	5	Number of slaves, serfs, or clients
	6	They fight among their own kin over the Thing	6	Plot of land
	7	A Thing is being sought by corrupt officials or nobles	7	Precious goods or cache of local credits
	8	A Thing was lost long ago but its whereabouts surface	8	Profit from a risky mercantile effort
			9	Profitable business
			10	Rich mine or resource extraction site
MILITARY 7-9	1	A Thing's military forces have crushed the local forces	1	"Taxmen" from neighboring clan or state
	2	A Thing demands tribute or will kill hostages	2	Bandit raiding band
	3	A Thing threatens to depose the local ruler	3	Deniable military raiders
	4	A rival is secretly backing a Thing	4	Brutal raiders who kidnap others for troops
	5	A Thing is flexing recently-gained power	5	Heavily-armed religious zealots
	6	Two rivals bid for the support of a Thing	6	Local rebels against authority
	7	A Thing is destroying a trusted ally	7	Mercenary band turned raider
	8	A Thing has been smashed and the survivors run wild	8	Ferocious, man-eating local wildlife
			9	Vicious bully and his minions
			10	Warriors of a tyrannical ruler
RELIGIOUS 10-12	1	Violent zealots have focused on a Thing	1	Bones of a holy person
	2	A Thing has split the religion into factions	2	Book of holy rituals
	3	A Thing is denounced by a violent demagogue	3	Dominant community religion
	4	Mistrusted strangers have brought a Thing	4	Expulsion of "heretical" priests
	5	Documents surface leading to a Thing	5	Local religious persecution
	6	A young priest flees those who would hide a Thing	6	Miraculous pretech device-cum-idol
	7	The local laity have become obsessed with a Thing	7	Relic of a great holy person
	8	A Thing has been stolen or caused by foes	8	Psychic activity within the religion
			9	Temple hierarchy dominance
			10	Troublemaking missionaries

RUNNING MERCANTILE CAMPAIGNS

As a GM, you're likely to be faced with certain issues in a mercantile campaign that might not come up in a more conventional framework. The average PC freebooter might become rich in the course of their adventuring or might become an important leader of some faction allied with their ends, but a party rarely has the kind of focused, concentrated wealth that is possessed by a successful merchant prince. Beyond these fiscal issues, there are also points to consider if your players simply mean to pick up a load of cargo now and then to pad out their wallets. These pages will review some of these issues and ways to deal with them in your own games.

INTERFACING WITH THE WORLD

It is extremely unlikely that your game circle is made up of international financiers. Most of the people you game with probably have little to no idea how large-scale international trade operates, how to structure large commodity deals, or how to deal with specific customs procedures and trade regulations on a major scale. For a lot of the things that merchant PCs do, these players will be almost entirely dependent upon you to feed them the information they need to operate.

Just as you wouldn't make a swordsman PC explain exactly how he's going to block an enemy's blade and riposte, you can't expect a merchant PC to explain precisely how they're going to arrange for selling 1,000 tons of industrial chemicals in some lostworlder capital,

or how exactly they're going to find sellers for the products they want to buy, or specifically how they mean to find an official to get some troublesome regulation relaxed for them. You need to act as the interface between their character's skills and your world, and you need to do so in a way that doesn't leave the players frustrated and confused.

With that in mind, if a situation needs specifics, provide them yourself. If a player says that he wants to find an official to get his cargo released from quarantine, don't make him fumble through a dozen layers of irrelevant functionaries. Don't force him to study the world's governmental structure until he can identify the Assistant Under-Secretary for Licensure who can get him the approval. Instead, just pick a functionary and tell the player that she's the most likely woman to work with. If the PC has no skills that would get him the info he needs, just aim them at a fixer in need of persuading.

The PCs should not necessarily have their solutions handed to them, but they should always be given avenues to further their goals. As your players grow more comfortable with your campaign and start to build up a backstory of enemies, rivals, and allies, they'll be able to start answering a lot of these questions without your help. They'll just naturally turn to old friends for assistance or direct their hostility towards unavenged offenses. At the start of the campaign and when their ingenuity flags, you should be ready to give them a road forward that their PCs would logically propose.

A PATTERN FOR INQUIRIES

A simple pattern of response is useful when your PCs want to obtain or find out something. Far traders have a habit of digging for information and resources that aren't easily available on the open market, and having this basic process in mind can simplify your job in these circumstances.

First, find out what it is they want to discover or obtain. Then privately decide on the answer to their search, keeping in mind whether or not the item even exists on this world or whether the fact they're looking for is known by anyone at all. If it isn't, replace it with the nearest available equivalent- don't make the players waste their time on a dead end without giving them a clear hook to more fruitful directions.

Next, pick an NPC to know the answer or have access to the desired item. Knowing what the truth of the matter is, you can choose an NPC who might reasonably have access to that data or that object. If the PCs have absolutely no way of knowing who this NPC is, insert a second NPC who can get them that information for a suitable consideration.

Optionally, put a problem between the NPC and the party. It might be a social problem, with the NPC being very remote from the common populace and sheltered by a small army of servants, or given to consorting with dangerous thugs, or cantankerous and reluctant to speak with anyone. It might be a physical problem, such as dwelling in a very remote place, or being recently

kidnapped, or being very sick. If you do choose an obstacle, you might pick one that is well-suited to the skills of a PC who hasn't otherwise gotten much chance to shine in the evening's adventure. Many far traders find it necessary to have decidedly non-mercantile companions around to help deal with these little obstacles.

Finally, once the PCs get to the NPC, set a price for the information or object. This price will vary depending on how well the PCs make their pitch, how dangerous it is to cooperate with them, and how much the NPC cares about their ultimate goal. The price may be in a flat sum of credits, but is often in some favor that only the party can grant- transport offworld, some exotic good they sell, or passage for a friend or client of the NPC. Whatever they charge should be something the PCs can actually pay; if what they're asking for is beyond their current means, then it should require a sequence of favors for various NPCs rather than a flat refusal or a prohibitive price.

If the PCs botch their approach or refuse to deal with the NPC, then let them find some other means of accessing the information, but don't hesitate to make the process harder, more expensive, or more time-consuming. It's also possible to simply tell the party that they've screwed up their only real chance on this world, and that any further efforts will require them to make their own opportunities. If they really have made a mess of things then you should make that clear to them rather than allowing them to fumble around for half a session trying to force something that isn't going to happen.

Never block the PCs with the ignorance of their players.. No matter how outrageous or outre their request, give them *something* they can do to advance their cause, even if it's simply laying out the obstacles in front of them and asking which one they want to try to deal with first. PCs are assumed to be competent and capable adventurers. Even if they don't have the precise answer to a problem or ambition, they should know someone who can point them in a useful direction.

Massive Schemes

Once a party builds up enough credits, they're likely to use them to fuel truly vast ambitions. This book includes the specific process for founding and developing a colony world, but other parties might care to found a personal space navy, overthrow a wicked interstellar empire, or drag a benighted sector back into the light of postech advancement.

Some GMs may have a hard time dealing with these plans. The Faction rules in the core book can be used to fabricate a faction to represent the party's combined enterprises, but it can actually be more effective to play things a little more loosely. The Faction system is designed to provide broad-stroke background and quick answers for complex questions, but when players want to focus on their own personal plans, it can be more useful to deal with them in a focused sort of way.

One simple way to resolve these huge schemes is to break them down into a quick **goal pyramid**. By chopping a huge ambition into manageable bites, both the GM and the players can get a more practical handle on the tasks they need to accomplish.

At the top of the pyramid is the goal itself- overthrow the empire, rebuild technological civilization, form a confederation of worlds around the party's newly-founded colony world, or something else of a similarly vast scale. Conversely, it might be something smaller but still difficult, such as eradicating a pernicious cultural practice on a PC's homeworld. Whatever it is, it's a task that can't possibly be accomplished in a few short game sessions.

This main goal is then broken down into two or more lesser goals. In the case of overthrowing the empire, they might be "Organize an effective shadow government to step in afterwards." and "Topple the tools of control that the empire uses to enforce its will." Each of these lesser goals has two or more sub-goals of their own, all of which add up to the larger ambition. Thus, organizing a shadow government might involve "Find and gain the cooperation of an inspiring rebel leader", "Establish a safe zone for rebel government to use as a sanctuary", and "Convince the people that the rebel government deserves their cooperation". If the task is exceptionally difficult, you just keep working down the scale, adding layers until you've broken the goals into adventure-sized bites.

Then you just take the bottom layer of goals and hand them to the players to give them some idea of what they need to accomplish. Some goals may be hidden by circumstances and the PCs may have completely different ideas on how to reach their ultimate ambition, but the pyramid gives you an easy fallback schematic for pacing their attempt.

The harder the ambition, the more layers of sub-goals and the more problems the PCs have to solve before they can get at their ambition. Some of these problems they might be able to solve by throwing credits at it, but you can generally assume that each sub-goal is going to take a session's worth of play to resolve if they can't just buy it out.

As always, players may topple this scheme with their own wild streaks of genius or inexplicable forays into odd directions. You should let this happen. If they come up with a great idea you didn't think of, then let them have the pleasure of their cleverness. By the same token, if they do something pointlessly stupid, well, there's no need to save them from the consequences. The goal they chose is of their own choosing, and if they choose to screw it up beyond salvage, it's not your job to rescue them.

Rival Traders

In *Suns of Gold* rival traders are treated largely as environmental hazards and adventure antagonists rather than full-fledged mechanical equivalents of the PCs. In large part, this is because a GM has enough to manage with the finances and holdings of a single party, and asking them to track multiple NPC cartels is impractical for most GMs. There's not enough payoff at the table to make it worth the effort.

Instead, you can simply use a particular cartel as a recurring Antagonist in your adventure templates. They can provide a nice anachronistic tech surprise on a backwater world where the PCs are expecting more primitive resistance, and their minions can serve as the challenges that PCs need to overcome if they are to establish significant holdings on a world. Trouble checks can relate directly to their interference, or to the chicanery of their agents among the local government.

Players being players, it's likely the PCs will eventually get sick of this interference, and attempt to strike directly at a rival. By the time they get powerful and frustrated enough to do this, you should be fairly familiar with the cartel and be able to place its headquarters and define some of the defensive measures they might take.

For those parties that want to inflict less directly physical chastisement on their rivals, you can take an adventure template and turn it "inside out", putting the PCs in the role of the Antagonist and the rivals in the role of the PCs. If the PCs manage to avoid their rivals' attempt to foil them, they'll win a reprieve from their attention for some months while their enemies struggle to recover.

Far trader rivals operate on a continuum of hostility. The rarity of interstellar trade makes any competitor a threat to a far trader, but these rivals are also potential allies against the uniform avariciousness of the local government. Such competitors might operate as arm's-length allies on some worlds while engaging in open warfare on others. Necessity is the only law that all traders are obliged to respect, and poisonous courtesies in some cosmopolitan world's salons can just as easily be replaced by gravtank engagements on a lost world's battlefields. A far trader must be prepared to show a certain versatility, and those who cannot do not prosper long.

Wealth and Campaign Types

Interstellar trade can be fabulously profitable. A talented merchant who brings in a freighter full of medical supplies to a world in the grip of a plague can end up making more money in an hour than most adventuring parties see over the entire course of their careers. Freelance troubleshooters and wandering freebooters can make very large sums of money for their work, but there is a reason that these people are often employed by far traders, merchant princes, and other patrons associated with interstellar trade. That reason is because these people have more money than adventurers.

As a GM, one of the first things you're going to notice is that far trading PCs experience something much like a boom-and-bust cycle. Novice PCs probably won't be enjoying more than 2 or 3 points of expertise on most of their deals, which is hardly enough to cancel out the Friction on most worlds. If they carefully buy cargo types that are cheap on one world and expensive on another, they'll probably make a modest 20-30% profit on the deal if the dice don't go against them. However, it doesn't take much of a bad roll to turn that profit into a loss, and if the trouble check is against them they could lose half their goods and end up plunged into debt as well.

You'll notice that almost all of the bad things that can happen to a deal can be counteracted by PC actions and adventures. Friction is a profit-killer, but if the PCs can think of some way to do the right favors for the right people, they can get it waived on a deal- and adventure templates are meant to provide them with the ways to do

that. Trouble checks can cost them half the cargo in their hulls, but again, the right adventure can undo that disaster. Even a bad price roll can be alleviated if the PCs can find a more desperate buyer or are willing to wait another month to try the market again. The system is designed to allow a far trader to become very rich indeed if they are able to successfully adventure their way to fiduciary glory.

More experienced far traders don't need to do this so often. Their expertise is higher, and their holdings on a world have brought down its Friction enough for them to regularly turn a profit on almost anything they bring in. They can reserve their personal attentions for the really big deals, or spend their adventuring time dealing with goals that don't necessarily involve turning a direct profit.

Under the trade system given in this book, novice PCs will grow their wealth relatively slowly unless they successfully perform adventures that revolve around smoothing their path to riches. In that case, they will rapidly rise in wealth and influence, as will those PCs with advanced trade skills or good, low-Friction markets for their cargo. Once you understand this basic dynamic you can sensibly choose the kind of campaign you want to run for your players.

Space Truckers

One of the most popular forms of merchant campaign is the classic "space trucker" model, where the PCs are just small traders trying to make a living carrying goods from world to world. They may not even own their own spaceship and might be constantly pressed to make enough money to pay off the loan installments. They may strike it rich on a deal now and then, but the money usually slips through their hands without fundamentally changing their lives.

Among those who enjoy this style of campaign are those who savor the business end of the game. They like calculating out actual profit and loss, making careful decisions about itineraries and trade routes, and working with the trade rules of a game to maximize their profits. They may start out as space truckers, but they have no especial desire to always *stay* that way. They enjoy the pressure and excitement of struggling against hard mercantile odds, but if they make a big score they want to carry those newfound riches to their logical conclusion- which is usually a personal trade empire or some triumphant, costly victory over a foe from their past.

For these players you can use the trade rules and holding guidelines as written. They'll naturally grow out of their space trucker phase as they make smart deals and do the kinds of risky things that win them favors in the right places. You need not worry about them suddenly coming into a huge amount of money, because that is precisely what these players are trying to accomplish. It's what happens *after* they become filthy rich that can become challenging for a GM.

Others who favor space trucking want to keep the game focused on that style of play. They don't want to establish dirtside holdings, worry about currency conversions between worlds, or calculate optimal trade routes between the worlds of the sector. They want to be roaming peddlers and small-time far traders, always one step ahead of ruination and foreclosure. Even when they own their ship,

it's usually in such a shabby condition that they're constantly working to earn enough for repairs and oft-neglected maintenance. The trade they do is the context of their adventures, not the focus in of itself.

For these games, there are three modifications to the rules in this book that can help you maintain the right flavor for such a campaign.

Credits are universally valuable. In space trucker campaigns, a credit is a credit, and worlds can be tacitly assumed to cooperate in valuing each other's currency. Exceptions might exist, but usually the crew is scheming to make a big strike on a given world even if they have to rapidly depart with their newly-gotten loot. The cash they earn in one place spends just as well in another. This can cause balance issues if PCs start to accumulate a great deal of money, as they can use the profits from one world to quickly establish holdings and income on another- but for most space trucker campaigns, the PCs have little interest in becoming entangled in planetary enterprises.

Divide all cargo prices by ten. Ten tons of metawheat go for 50 credits in this campaign rather than 500. These prices may not be quite as internally consistent, but they minimize the odds of the PCs cutting a deal so fabulously remunerative that they're catapulted out of the space trucker context. They earn thousands or tens of thousands of credits on a deal rather than the economy-bending fortunes of a merchant price.

Make interstellar trade more common. Having access to a spaceship is a significant resource in a space trucker campaign, but it's not a particularly remarkable one. Enough trade exists between the civilized planets of the sector that one more free merchant frigate isn't going to draw much notice on a world. Spacers may be interesting to the locals, but they're rarely rock stars or frightening aliens. By making interstellar trade more mundane in the setting, you give more room for the kind of gritty, hard-bitten cadging for business that a lot of space trucker campaigners enjoy.

If the players eventually decide to change the tone of their campaign and start to shoot for ambitions above those of a wandering small trader, you can gradually reel these modifications back. It may turn out that the worlds were willing to honor the small amounts of credits they were working with before, but massive bank accounts require local credit instruments that aren't transferable. A sector-wide military crisis or disaster can inflate cargo prices while cutting down on the number of other ship captains willing to run the risk of far trading. By the time your players decide to move to a different style of campaign, you should have plenty of available events to justify any changes you need to make to the market environment.

Setting up a Space Trucker Campaign

First, create your sector using the usual techniques given in the *Stars Without Number* core rules. Apply a trade tag to each world in your sector and assign them trade and trouble tables taken from them eight examples given in the trade chapter. Don't worry about personalizing things just yet- you just need a basic overview of the sector and the most important traits of each world.

Next, find a good trade opportunity in the sector. This should consist of two worlds within close drill range of each other, each one offering and wanting complementary goods. An agricultural world next to an industrial one, a primitive world next to a developed one, or

so forth. The cargo type modifiers should be complementary, with one planet offering cheap prices on minerals and the other paying a premium for them. The more developed of the two worlds should be the starting world for the campaign. This may not be the actual homeworld of any of the players, space truckers being the wanderers that they are, but it will serve as the start point for the game.

Once the start point is chosen, flesh out that world and any others within a single spike drill. Integrate their trade tags into the world description, apply names and details to the tag elements, and personalize their trade and trouble lists if it seems necessary. You'll want to get each of these worlds into serviceable shape, because your players might end up on any of them after their first session. As the campaign progresses, flesh out additional worlds based on the PCs' potential drill range. Make sure that you've established at least the basic ingredients for an adventure template for any world the players might reach by their next game session.

After you've framed your initial set of worlds, you need to decide what starship the party is going to possess and how they came to own it. In a few cases you might want to make the initial adventure revolve around obtaining this ship, but most campaigns should start with the ship as an old and familiar part of the enterprise. The table provided here can give inspiration for the source of their ship, while the actual craft itself should probably be something along the lines of the free merchant detailed in the *Stars Without Number* resource chapter.

The last step is to determine how they're going to get their initial cargo. The easiest way to handle this is to drop the new PCs immediately into an adventure that revolves around acquiring a

1d20	How did the PC get their ship?
1	Inherited it from a relative
2	Discovered it in some remote location
3	Won it in a card game
4	Borrowed for it with family as collateral
5	Borrowed from a criminal group
6	Repaired one condemned as scrap
7	Stole it from someone
8	Awarded it for some great deed
9	Fly it on another trader's behalf
10	Loaned it as part of a government job
11	Got it on detached naval duty
12	Fly it for a religious missionary group
13	Fly it for a "non-governmental" group
14	Given it by an alien for its own reasons
15	Fly it for a terrorist/freedom fighter group
16	Won it as a prize of war
17	Last remnant of your former wealth
18	Last ship of a now-destroyed navy
19	Legacy of an ex-lover
20	Saved up somehow and bought it

cargo. You can slot the tag elements you've already established for their starting world into an adventure template chosen from among those earlier in the chapter and simply make the reward a suitable load of goods. Once they have a cargo for their ship, they can pick a likely destination and drill out, with the downtime between this and the next session used to flesh out the new world's adventure possibilities.

Due to the natural wanderlust of a space trucker campaign, you're going to have to be prepared for the adventurers to make sudden and drastic detours. They may not want to make neat, clean progressions from one world to the next, or they may choose to just conduct a simple trade roll on a planet rather than engage in the adventure you planned. Resist the temptation to drag them into it. Instead, just use the basic template scheme to swap out the elements of one world for the elements of another, saving your preparations for when you actually need them. Don't hesitate to take the extra five or ten minutes you might need mid-game to adjust your works. Most players will be quite understanding of the need once they realize just how much freedom they actually possess in your game.

Merchant Princes

Where space trucker campaigns tend to focus tightly on a highly-mobile starship and its crew, "merchant prince" campaigns revolve around interstellar trade empires. Ships are valuable for moving cargo and getting PCs to the places where money can be made, but the real focus of the game is on the party's planetary holdings and influence. The PCs conduct trade to finance massive ambitions, and not merely to keep their ship flying for the next drill out.

These ambitions may have much to do with the political powers in the sector. Aspiring merchant princes might want revenge on vast interstellar polities, or seek to uplift their benighted homeworld into a better place for all its inhabitants, or dream of forging a united confederacy of worlds out of a squabbling handful of planets. Merchant princes dream big, and their ships and holdings are tools to help them bring those dreams to fulfillment.

Merchant prince campaigns most often resemble the fiction of Poul Anderson, Andre Norton, Robert Heinlein, and Frederik Pohl. PCs cut figures not unlike those of Nicholas van Rijn or David Falkayn, interstellar operators on a grand scale forever seeking the next great opportunity for expansion and profit. Sometimes their plans fall to pieces around them, and the loss of a world's ransom on a single bad bargain is not unknown- but even in the face of utter collapse, they always return with a fresh fortune and a new scheme to grow it.

Of course, very few campaigns start out with the PCs in such a glorious position of influence. While such campaigns can be entertaining as a change of pace, it's usually much easier for the GM if the PCs grow into the roles more gradually, building up a history of deals, allies, rivals, and hated enemies that can be used to drive further action in the campaign. A slow buildup gives everyone more comfort in the campaign and more investment in their ultimate uses of their power.

To get this gradual growth from petty trader to far-famed trade prince it's usually not necessary to do anything but sit back and give the players the adventures they seek out. A group that eliminates Friction with well-placed favors and evades trouble checks with suitably bold responses can expect to make a great deal of money in a hurry while far trading. Of course, these adventures take time to carry out at the table, and so each session of play tends to be naturally structured around the PCs attempting to turn a larger profit on their latest deal.

The GM doesn't really have to do anything but provide the necessary details and facilitation for these plans, dishing up the applicable adventure templates and responding to PC choices. With each session, the list of friends, enemies, rivals, and old grudges the PCs carry grows longer, and it becomes easier to fit the pieces into templates that fit their latest ambition. A campaign can practically run itself under such circumstances, with the constant ebb and swell of the party's credit balance driving them onward to new frontiers.

Eventually, however, the party is going to want to *use* that money. They're going to want to buy useful holdings on a world, or found a fresh colony world, or bankroll a rebellion against some interstellar tyrant. You should joyously embrace such ambitions, because they provide you with a self-generating supply of adventures. The bigger the plan, the more resources it will consume and the more daring deeds will be needed to carry it off. Not only do you get the adventure hooks related to the goal itself, but you also generate more adventures as the party tries to earn the money to finance their trans-stellar crusades.

All along, you should simply relax and enjoy the schemes of your players. They're likely going to end up operating at a very high level of influence in your campaign, becoming significant players in affairs of interstellar import and patrons of whole colony worlds loyal to their wills. If they start to exhaust the conflicts and opportunities inherent in your starting sector, just start adding space around them. There are always new frontiers to conquer, and you can make sure they prove a worthy challenge to the dreams of your mercantile emperors.

Setting Up a Merchant Prince Campaign

Assembling a fresh merchant prince campaign is in many ways the same as putting together a space trucker sector. Very few traditional mercantile campaigns start out with the PCs in charge of vast fortunes, and their rise to wealth often takes up a significant part of the campaign's overall progress. The same tools you use to build a space trucker campaign can set you up quite serviceably for the party that aspires to a future of gilded glory.

You will save yourself a significant amount of effort if you embed the large-scale goals of your players into the sector from the start, however. If you know they want to accomplish certain vast ambitions, you can set up goal pyramids for each of those and let the players know from the start of the campaign which of the most obvious steps need to be taken to get closer to their greater goal.

Given the mortality inherent in the far trade, it wouldn't be surprising if some of these PCs never live to see their ambitions reach fruition, but that's not really your problem. Goal pyramids don't take long to assemble, and even if the party decides to abandon a fallen comrade's dream as soon as he's been shot into the nearest sun, it's no real loss for you. Their goals provided the grist for one or more good adventures and fun sessions, and that's all that was ever expected of them in the first place.

LORDS OF THE NEW SUNS

FOUNDING COLONY WORLDS

With the gradual fading of the Silence humanity once more reaches out to the empty stars. New worlds await the coming of humankind, worlds barren and lush, planets to be forged into new homes for those who dare to dream of better lives. The scarcity of ships, the unsettled state of the space lanes and the mystery of uncharted systems hinders this expansion, but it cannot be checked forever. Those with the courage to plant new worlds in this fresh renewal will be the planetary rulers and sector hegemons for generations to come.

There are few organizations with the ability to establish a new colony world. Only the wealthiest governments are capable of marshalling the tonnage of ships, supplies, and colonists necessary to make a self-sustaining society on a virgin world. Even those worlds with sufficient resources to make this attempt often lack any nearby world suitable for such colonization, or are reluctant to go to the enormous effort that such a colony must involve. Every surviving world of the former Mandate knows of neighboring planets that didn't make it, worlds where humanity was wiped out by the Scream's sudden isolation. Every tyrant and politician is acutely aware that their grand plans for expansion could suffer a very similar fate if the colonization effort falters while incomplete.

Despite this bureaucratic hesitation, there are some with a greater degree of vision and a greater appetite for risk. Far trader enterprises are some of the only organizations in space capable of establishing a self-sustaining colony world. Almost alone among other interstellar organizations, they have the ship tonnage, the wealth, and the access to a sufficiently broad pool of potential colonists to make such an enterprise possible. Just as significantly, the greatest of them have powerful incentives to plant such a world.

There is no captive market like a colony world. Commercial friction is almost nonexistent compared to other worlds, with local government a mere extension of the far trader's commercial organization and any locals carefully selected to fit into the economic plan of the colony. Particularly grasping or tyrannical merchants can even forbid any outside trade, though the cost of enforcing such measures and the anger they provoke from colonists can be counterproductive in the end. Even so, even the most loosely-managed colony world is still a trade paradise compared to the hostile, greedy, quarrelsome governments of less obligated worlds.

Aside from this, colony worlds also provide a marvelous degree of freedom and safety for the far trader. On a colony world, the far trader *is* the law. Only the most powerful sector hegemons are able to physically compel the obedience of an adequately-defended colony world, and very few of them would have any reason to do so. The far trader is obliged to deal with all the intrigues and schemes that any absolute monarch must endure, but even these are significantly fewer-not only because the far trader can hand-pick suitable colonists, but because the very youngest colonies are dependent upon his enterprise for their survival. By the time the colony has become self-sustaining, all but the most politically incompetent far traders have been able to firmly seat their control. These dynasties may not last for too many generations, but their founders usually live to prosper from their rule.

Finally, colony worlds allow for the selective exploitation of resources and opportunities that would be otherwise unreachable. Some worlds may have precious mineral deposits, plant extracts, or alien trading opportunities, but lack the work force to exploit them. Robots are useful for much industrial labor, but even they need handlers and maintenance techs and the extraction of truly enormous and cartel-pleasing profits requires a significant number of workers. There comes a point at which the investment required to keep a mere outpost settlement functional is so great that it is more economical to attempt a self-sustaining colony.

Aside from these practical mercantile considerations, there are also the wishes of the players to consider. By the time the average party of far traders has accumulated a suitably heroic amount of wealth and influence, they've probably spent a significant part of the campaign dealing with quarrelsome, frustrating local governments and treacherous local partners. By the time they can afford to plant a colony, the prospect of a world where they know they won't have to deal with these problems can be incredibly enticing.

It could also be that the PCs might be bystanders to some other group's attempt at colonizing a world. It may be that a world has suddenly lost its patrons to some calamity back on the

COLONY WORLDS

homeworld, and only the help of the PCs can stave off certain doom for the struggling colony. Even one that is still receiving support from its homeworld is likely to want more goods shipped in, or help of a kind that their patrons would not find pleasing. PC far traders can be the wild cards in such situations, the ones to decide whether a struggling world lives or whether an outpost of some oppressive interstellar power gets the freedom they crave.

PREPARING YOUR SECTOR FOR COLONIZATION

A GM starts the colonization process by deciding how many worlds might actually be suitable for new colonies. First, roll 1d4+1 to determine how many potentially viable colony worlds exist in the sector. You may choose to ratchet this number up or down based on your own good judgment, but you should have at least two potential sites from which your players can choose.

Next, determine which star systems contain these worlds. Go down the list of worlds for your sector and roll 1d100 for each of the worlds. Those with the highest rolls have a potential colony site in their system. Thus, if you have four potential worlds, you can put them in the four systems that rolled highest.

If one of the high rolls is a double, however, such as 88 or 55, the colony world is actually in an uncharted system, one long since lost from the conventional astrographic charts of the sector. Enough legends of its existence persist to give the players a clue to its location, but to get to it they have to either make an extremely dangerous blind drill to its location or find a polymorphic route oracle, a piece of astronautic psitech listed in the next section. You can place the location of this hidden system anywhere you wish on your sector map, and you might choose to place it in a gap that separates two rival polities, thus making it of concrete interest to the neighboring powers.

Most far traders will prefer to set up their colonies in systems where an inhabited planet already exists but is too primitive or inward-turning to have a meaningful space navy. Those worlds with naval forces are unlikely to permit the establishment of a rival power in their own home system, even if they lack the strength or inclination to use the world. More technologically primitive worlds rarely have any interest in such matters, and they can provide a "close" supply of food and other vital necessities with the use of cheap, simple system freighters.

Those far traders with a true love of privacy will prefer to colonize hidden systems. Unless some other power gets access to a suitable polymorphic route oracle or a traitor in the PCs' navigation department, the players will be the only ones in the sector with an up-to-date map of the drill course to reach the world. Any other power would have to be ready to risk a spike drive ship on a near-suicidal scouting mission to obtain the nav data. Sooner or later the course is bound to leak out, but the secrecy of the world's location can buy a colony precious time to strengthen itself against the pressures of outside powers.

Players should be given a rough list of potential colony sites when they start seriously investigating the possibility. Survey data may be centuries out of date and the available information might be nothing more than a few sentences, but they should have some clue about what each world is like. If they have a deeper interest in a prospect they can travel there to conduct more in-depth investigations.

CREATING THE COLONY WORLDS

While you can run the usual world creation steps to define a potential colony world, it's actually often more useful to work backwards. It's already been established that this world is at least theoretically tempting to the PCs as a potential colony site, so there's no point in randomly assigning it a boiling surface temperature and a spectacularly lethal gaseous chloride trifluoride atmosphere.

Instead, first decide whether or not the planet ever hosted human life. Many potential colony worlds once hosted at least an outpost of humanity, whether one planted by the Mandate, by some local hegemon, or just by a social group that wanted to live by its own customs. The chaos of the Scream killed numberless worlds, and it may well be that this world was one of its victims.

If you decide that the planet was once inhabited, you can use the included tables to define why the world was founded in the first place, the peak population and development that it obtained, and the way in which it finally perished. Depending on the one-time abundance of human life, the remain they left behind might range from a half-buried patch of ceraplast survival huts to entire dead cities.

While there are potential advantages to recolonizing a failed world, these benefits have their limits. Unless the doom that came to the world was a swift, clean biological extinction, the locals almost certainly tore down whatever was left of their civilization in a last desperate effort to stave off inevitable destruction. Tech was torn down for spare parts and scrap, buildings were destroyed for salvage and the needs of local infighting, and mad excess consumed the last reserves of resources as the locals finally recognized their doom. A dead world is usually in very poor condition.

More than that, such worlds sometimes have handfuls of survivors still creeping among the ruins, living on the last dregs of their ancestors' provisions of holding out in tiny pockets of life that have yet to be wiped out by a hostile world. These populations are always small and desperate, and most of them have a somewhat less than honored place in their cosmology for the uncaring outer worlds that left their ancestors to die here. Exceptionally diplomatic or patient colonial powers can sometimes persuade them to rejoin humanity, but rarely without proving their good intentions in terms the locals can recognize. These terms often involve dangers and challenges that can rapidly terminate a trader's career.

On the other hand, you could decide that the world is virgin. No real human presence ever touched it, either because other nearby options were much superior or because the local worlds had no desire to expand their reach. Some of these worlds might have lacked any useful minerals or biological products to the scouts of that age, but post-Silence civilizations could find them overwhelmingly attractive. A few exploratory adventures could pay off dramatically.

Save the deep, detailed work for after the PCs make their pick, unless you're having particular fun with the process. At this stage, all you need to have is a vague idea about the worlds and enough information to let the players make a rational choice among their options.

CREATING A FAILED COLONY WORLD

Many suitable colony worlds were never touched by humanity at any time, not even during the height of the Second Wave of interstellar expansion. There are simply too many worlds in the galaxy for a single species to intrude upon all of them, and it is perfectly reasonable for you to decide that the potential colony worlds that you make for your sector have never been occupied by humanity.

At times, however, you might find it more interesting to present your players with a pre-owned world, one that once hosted human inhabitants before the chaos of the Scream or some more banal ruination killed off all the locals. If the world is particularly clement there may be a few tiny bands of humanity hiding out in the wreckage of their ancestors' mighty works, but most such planets are barren of survivors. The exact details of their destruction can be interesting to the new proprietors of the world, and might serve to foreshadow perils that will be their own. Their ability to deal with such catastrophes might spell the difference between success and another tombstone among the stars.

1d20	How developed was the original colony?
1 - 4	*Landing Party.* Nothing but the barest survival structures and raw beginnings of a colony.
5 - 10	*Outpost.* At least one town-sized population center and spaceport.
11 - 15	*Young colony.* Multiple population centers and farms or other facilities for self-sustaining existence.
16 - 17	*Mature colony.* Population centers, agricultural zones, and some industrial facilities.
18	*Frontier world.* Hundreds of thousands of residents with supporting industry.
19	*Developed world.* Millions of residents and astronautic industries, if the planet had the resources.
20	*Advanced world.* Hundreds of millions of citizens and multiple major cities and provinces.

1d20	Why was it first colonized?
1	It had a vital position in the spike drive trade lanes.
2	It was exceptionally rich in rare minerals and ores.
3	The climate and biosphere was unusually friendly to human inhabitants.
4	It was barely habitable and thus perfect for convicts and exiles.
5	Its location was of military importance in holding back aliens or dangerous humans.
6	Local flora or fauna were abundant and commercially valuable.
7	It was the site of some mysterious, research-worthy natural phenomenon.
8	It was very distant from then-inhabited worlds and the locals wanted privacy.
9	Aliens natives that may still be around were very friendly toward humans.
10	It had the raw resources to produce a type of good that other worlds lacked.
11	It was ordained as a new homeworld by some prophet or ideological leader.
12	It was accidental, colonized out of desperate need or mistake rather than any choice.

1d20	How did the original colony fail?
1	A virulent plague wiped out the young colony, but there is reason to believe someone has a vaccine.
2	The locals killed each other off in an orgy of political, religious, or ethnic violence.
3	The mineral strike or plunder opportunity that brought the original colonists played out and everyone left.
4	Pirate raiders hit them repeatedly and drove them beneath a viable population for survival.
5	A piece of infrastructure vital for surviving the planet's atmosphere or biosphere broke down.
6	Some maltech weapon of mass destruction was unleashed on the planet.
7	Hostile alien naval forces wiped them out on their way through the system.
8	The population changed voluntarily or otherwise into something rather less than human.
9	A psychic rampage during the Scream caused unsurvivable chaos in the colony.
10	Solar flares or astronomic conditions rendered the world uninhabitable, but all that's over now. Honest.
11	The colonists were slaughtered by indigenous natives, but took their assailants with them.
12	The colony was too small for genetic viability without newcomers, and gradually dwindled away to nothing.
13	The locals effectively committed suicide in service of some crazed ideology or religious demands
14	A bloody anarchy destroyed the colony after they were cut off from the power that was forcing them to cooperate
15	The planet was laid waste in the process of unseating a tyrannical ruler, whether local or an offworld warlord
16	An unexpected phase of planetary weather or biospheric activity destroyed the unprepared colonists.
17	The Mandate or a sector hegemon smashed the world as a rebel or hostile colony.
18	Despair at their harsh and hopeless existence after the Scream gradually wore them to nothing
19	They gambled on a failed space program or great public work that ended up collapsing their remaining industry.
20	They were killed or left to die by their founding world due to politics or a change in the colony's value.

COLONY WORLDS
Colony Mechanics

There are three necessary ingredients for a successful colony- people, supplies, and organization. Without any of these three, the outcome is unlikely to be celebrated by their patrons, and the more the colony has of each, the more likely it is to pull through to full, self-sustaining prosperity. To help simplify the countless details of running a colony, these totals are rendered in a few basic statistics for the newly-established outpost of humanity.

Population is simply the number of humans on the world. The effective population growth rate for a new colony world is usually zero or less- the population is still learning how to avoid common dangers and cope with local conditions, and deaths from accidents, disease, planetary allergies and sheer helpless ignorance easily counterbalance new births. For some worlds, this rate of growth never rises above the infinitesimal, but even outside that case it's going to be years before the locals are comfortable enough with their surroundings to start expanding their population. For the early, critical days of the colony the PCs are going to have to ship in warm bodies from other worlds.

Morale is an intangible quality measured on a scale like that used for personal encounters, with checks rolled as 2d6 against the colony's Morale score. If the roll is equal or less than the score, the check is successful and the colonists keep their spirits high.

A colony's Morale represents its hope, cohesiveness, and willingness to trust its leadership. A colony with a low Morale becomes absorbed in backstabbing, desperate self-interest, and hopeless contemplation of inevitable doom. Such wretched worlds have a great difficulty in avoiding disaster. Those with a high Morale, on the other hand, can face great troubles without panicking the locals or putting them under the sway of demagogues.

The initial Morale of the colony will depend on several factors, and rise and fall as events occur on the world. If it ever drops below 3, the colony will collapse in an orgy of recriminations, theft, and violence. Most new colonies will start with a Morale of 7- cowards rarely seek a new life among the stars, but everyone knows the tales of the tomb worlds left behind when a young world's supplies failed. Colony Morale can never exceed a value of 10, barring true fanaticism among the colonists.

Supplies indicate the number of tons of food, water, atmosphere filters, or other indispensable supplies necessary for continued existence on the world. Given the usual rations, waste recycling, and incidental local production, the locals will consume 1 ton of supplies per month for each 50 people. If the supplies run out, the colonists are going to be exposed to the raw conditions of the world, which may mean anything from slow starvation to quick death from thirst to instantaneous explosive decompression, depending on the particular features of the world. Usually, this results in a minimum of 10% of the colony population dying each month they are out of supply.

Supplies must be tailored to the particular needs of a specific colony world. They are a specific commodity with the Agricultural and Survival types and a base cost per ton of 1,000 credits. Most TL4 worlds can provide them if it seems plausible to the GM, albeit the difficulty of seeking a specific commodity type not in common circulation will increase the Friction by the usual 4 points, which can make these goods an expensive prospect for purchase.

Materials measure the tons of industrial tech, raw construction components, hand tools, survival gear, and other implements necessary for significant construction work and infrastructure development. A PC ruler can build any holdings on their colonies that they please, but they're going to need to ship in their own construction materials. A colony must expend one ton of Colonial Materials for every thousand credits in the holding being constructed.

As a cargo type, Colonial Materials can be pieced together from many different sources, depending on what's available and the particular needs of the colony. They count as a unique commodity with the Postech, Survival and Common types and a base cost per ton of 2,000 credits. Any world with postech technology available can fill these special orders, but if no local production center is available to specifically produce them, they'll add the usual 4 point Friction penalty for buying uncommon goods.

Tech levels for a colony are the average tech level for homeworlds of the colonists themselves. While a tribe of hunter-gatherers may be well-suited to endure the privations and sufferings of a foreign world, they aren't going to have the technical expertise and engineering familiarity of colonists from a more technologically advanced worlds. It may be necessary for the proprietor to establish Prometheus Projects to bring some of them up to a more advanced level if more sophisticated holdings are to be built on a world.

The initial Population, Supplies, Materials, Morale and Tech Level of a colony will depend on what exactly the PCs choose to bring with them. Later infusions will rely on local holdings to produce necessary goods, or regular visits from supply ships chartered by the PCs. Every fresh colony is certain to face serious problems over the first few years of its existence, but if it can tough out that dangerous early stage of vulnerability and hard-won education, then it has an excellent chance of surviving to self-sustaining health and prosperity.

Advantages of a Colony World

There are certain mechanical advantages that go along with ownership of a colony world, quite aside from the aesthetic satisfaction of being a planetary ruler. These special charms can draw in those merchants who might not be motivated by a simple love of rule.

Friction on a colony world is always effectively 1 for its rulers. A certain amount of theft is inevitable when dealing with humans, but the PCs are the government, and they get very good prices from the locals. Buying and selling work a bit differently when you indirectly own the entire economy of a planet, however, and that is discussed later.

For holdings, the proprietors naturally start out with Sovereignty and can have any number of additional holdings as they desire. Their headquarters is always assumed to be able to take on another enterprise and approval is never necessary. Holdings do require the standard minimum population to establish them, however. A new holding costs its usual price in local credits, but also consumes 1 ton of Materials for every 1,000 credits or fraction thereof of its price. If the planet has no available industrial hardware on it, no amount of local credits is going to be able to set up a factory.

The local government also automatically draws taxes from the colonists equivalent to 1 local credit per citizen per month. In

young colonies, these taxes may not be actual credit assessments but are instead a certain amount of requisitioned labor for the common good. These taxes represent the greatest amount of cooperation and forced labor the PCs can get out of their colonists without causing problems. The colonists all signed up for hard work building a new world and they're willing to work for it, but they didn't join the enterprise to become corvee slaves. Demanding more than these taxes in credits or kind will cause Morale problems.

Establishing the Local Bank

Every colony needs some kind of banking institution, and for most such worlds this boils down to a single colonial bank that establishes the local currency, creates it as required, and manages accounts among the colonists. Colonists trade their time and labor for local credits, spend them on access to luxuries and personal goods, and thus create a basic economy amongst themselves. A few ideologues or esoteric thinkers shun this system for something more or less centralized, but few such people are far traders.

As a corollary of the proprietor's complete control over the bank, the PCs can simply award themselves any amount of local credits that they desire. There is nothing that can stop them from simply crediting their shared account with 50 million credits. While there are times that this stimulus is necessary to buy the labor to erect important colonial infrastructure, it tends to infuriate the locals.

When the PCs simply hand themselves significant amounts of money, it inevitably inflates prices and weakens the value of the local credits held by the colonists. This punishes savers, empties the pockets of their subjects, and leaves a much-increased amount of money chasing an unchanged amount of goods. As a consequence of the inevitable price increases that follow, any such "created money" effectively vanishes within a month, after PCs have the time to spend on in erecting some new holding or paying off some large local debt. The remainder may still exist in the central bank's accounts, but prices have risen so much that it is effectively useless to the PCs. They instead are left with whatever amount of money they've managed to "honestly" acquire.

Sometimes the PCs will feel themselves forced to debase the currency this way. They may need to complete some vital piece of infrastructure quickly, and while they have the Materials they lack the money. In such cases they may just credit their accounts, pay the colonists, and get the holding built. A month later, however, any left-over created money vanishes and they are left with only the credits they earned through honest trade and taxation- along with a bitterly resentful population left poorer for their necessity.

Whenever credits are created ex nihilo by the PCs, the colony's Morale automatically drops by 1, no matter how many or how few credits are created. Their simple willingness to inflate the local monetary supply is enough to produce mistrust among their people.

Buying and Selling Goods

Before the merchant can buy goods from the locals, there need to be goods available for purchase. A new outpost produces nothing; its entire efforts are turned toward learning about their new home and surviving its little surprises. To produce goods the proprietors need to bring in Materials and pay local credits to establish factories, farms, mines, and other production center holdings that generate goods. Once there's something available to buy, the merchant can purchase it with local credits through the usual buying process.

Merchants can sell goods on a colony world in one of two different ways; they can sell on a "tight money" basis, requiring payment with available funds and limiting their sales to one ton of goods per month per 500 citizens, or they can sell on a "loose money" basis, loaning buyers the requisite sums to purchase any amount of goods from the company. While the latter is a fast way to build an initial stake of local credits, the looming debt can become a drag on the population and lead to instability and unhappiness.

Whenever the merchant sells on a loose money basis, the colony must make a Morale check, with a penalty of -1 for each other loose money deal that year. On a failure, the colony's Morale drops by one.

Deals made on their own colony world have an effective Friction of 1 and are not subject to any chance of a trouble table roll.

Dollarizing

Some patrons prefer to take advantage of the strength and reputation of an existing currency rather than create their own. While this prevents them from creating money as needed, it allows them to import substantial wealth from foreign trade to finance their colonial holdings, simplifies trade between worlds, and increases confidence in the currency.

"Dollarization" is the process by which a patron chooses another world's currency as the legal tender of their own new colony. Once established, the free trader can freely exchange credits between worlds and spend them in either place. Goods bought and sold on their colony are denominated in those credits. The far trader cannot create money *ex nihilo*, however, and must work within the limits of their own credit supply.

Patrons who later think better of dollarization can convert it purely local currency on a 1 for 1 basis. Such a conversion allows the patron to then create money as needed, but the shift invariably provokes fears among the populace and always results in the loss of one point of Morale. Re-dollarization is theoretically possible after that point, but since the existing money is very difficult to exchange, the merchant's local currency holdings will be effectively wiped out and another point of Morale will be lost.

1d100	Colony Trouble Table
1-3	An unknown local fungus has managed to infect and ruin half the world's Supplies.
4-6	Unexpected tectonic activity damages the world's most recently-built holding. Each turn, make a Morale check for the world; the holding is useless until the check succeeds.
7-9	A colonist snaps under the pressure and causes a disaster that kills 1d4 x 5% of the population.
10-12	Wild economic fluctuations destroy half of the local credits the far trader holds on that world.
13-15	Vicious freak weather conditions ruin a random holding and intimidate the colonists, dropping Morale by one point.
16-18	Vicious native life forms are attacking the colonists, halting all holding construction or trade possibilities for 1d4 months until the beasts have been driven back.
19-21	The Materials on the colony have proven badly unsuitable for local conditions. Half have been scrapped as useless.
22-24	A religious or ideological zealot has accrued a following of 1d6 x 5% of the colonists, who will refuse to participate in maintaining holdings and will not count for purposes of determining minimum population. The movement will collapse in 1d6 months if not ended sooner.
25-27	Critical mistakes in adapting to local agricultural conditions absolutely halt all local food production for 1d4 months. If the world doesn't have sufficient stockpiled Supplies, they'll starve.
28-30	Allergic reactions to native microbial life kill 1d4 x 5% of the colonists before physicians can develop vaccinees. Morale drops by one.
31-33	Criminals within the colony's trade bureaus steal half the output of the colony's factories and other production centers, halving available goods for purchase. The ring will be broken up in 1d6 months.
34-36	Rebels and malcontents seize an important holding, demanding concessions that amount to at least half the goods and credits the far trader has on the world. Crushing them will destroy the holding.
37-39	Sharp cultural distinctions begin to form for colonists engaged in some important role. Friction reduces the colony's Morale by one.
40-42	A string of very public misfortunes leaves the colonists shaken. Colony Morale drops by one.
43-45	Mistakes made while bringing up the planetary banking system leave half the colonists penniless. Colony Morale drops by one.
46-48	Pirates are raiding the world. If no planetary defenses are in place, it loses one holding and all stockpiled Supplies and Materials.
49-51	A heretofore-unknown local life form is extremely dangerous, and kills 1d4 x 5% of the colonists before countermeasures are developed.
52-54	A terrible disease races through the population, killing 1d4 x 5% of them and lowering colony Morale by one.
55-57	Colonial religious or social leaders are discovered to be manipulating supplies to their ow advantage; colony Morale drops by one point.
58-60	A small breakaway fraction of colonists has turned bandit out of greed, anger, or ideology. They steal or ruin a quarter of the Supplies and Materials on the world and lower Morale by one point.
61-63	Saboteurs in the employ of a rival power manage to destroy half the Supplies or half the Materials on the planet, whichever is greater.
64-66	Errors at the central bank threaten to destabilize the local currency; either lose half your local credits or lower colony Morale by one.
67-69	Mistakes in the local manufactories destroy half the stockpiled goods produced on the world. Supplies and Materials are unaffected.
70-72	Rent-seeking and inefficiencies have become entrenched in the colony's economy; Friction rises by 2 until three consecutive months pass with no patron purchases or sales at all in the colony.
73-75	A colony structure was sited on unstable ground; one Colony Housing holding is destroyed.
76-78	An embittered colonist arranges the assassination of important colony officials. The world is in turmoil and can do nothing for a month.
79-81	Local flora or fauna that seemed valuable and useful are actually dangerously allergenic; colony Morale drops by one.
82-84	A get-rich-quick scheme among the colonists cleans most of them out- either sacrifice half your local credit balance to succor them or colony Morale drops by one.
85-87	A minor problem is blown out of proportion by a demagogue who wants to use it to gain political power; colony Morale drops by one.
88-90	Colonists are rebelling against rationing and harsh lives here. Immediately expend a month's worth of supplies to placate them or colony Morale drops by one.
91-93	A random holding has been utterly ruined by local termite-equivalents heretofore unknown to the colonists. Future structures can be built with protection in mind.
94-96	The world's factor is breaking down due to a personal tragedy. Replace them, or for the next three months, 3 in 6 chance that nothing can be built on the world that month.
97-99	Land deeds are being forged by corrupt colonial administrators, causing fighting among the colonists. Pay half your local credit supply to sort things out or lose one Morale point.
100	False alarm- no disaster occurs.

Colonizing Bastiat: An Example of Colony Founding

A brave band of interstellar traders have searched the stars for a suitable home for their new colony and have struck on the long-lost world of Bastiat. The world is temperate and the atmosphere is breatheable, though the local flora and fauna are inedible to humans. Rich minerals and a valuable extract from the glass forests of the upland plateaus give the PCs a reason to find commercial appeal in the world.

The GM has decided beforehand that Bastiat had developed into a small self-sustaining population before a dramatic plague wiped out the locals, who were cut off by the Scream from outside medical help. Their sole major settlement is in ruins from centuries of exposure, but over the course of a session's explorations the PCs learn of the fate of the original colonists and retrieve the formula for a vaccine. The locals lacked the necessary equipment to synthesize it, but the PCs are able to produce it in bulk.

Having charted the drill route and surveyed the planet, the PCs now need to marshal their colony expedition. They need Supplies, Materials, and warm bodies to work the mines and forest camps. None of the local worlds offer such commodities as their usual fare, but a nearby TL4 world is sophisticated enough to build them to special order. The PCs endure the +4 Friction penalty for a special order of goods and fill their cargo hold. A brief detour to the planet gives them time to unload the supplies into the makeshift warehouse they erect in the ruins of the former town stadium. They leave behind a few expert-system guard robots to keep off the local fauna.

Their next stop is Ravenna, a TL3 world torn by savage warfare between nations locked in generations-old mutual hatred. One of the smaller nations is clearly doomed- the Bianchi have no hope of holding off their enemies for more than a few more years. The PCs appeal to the Bianchi goverment, offering to take some of their people to a new world where their culture and society can survive. It takes some persuasion and an adventure in which the PCs delay the advance of the nation's enemies for a season, but the Bianchi eventually agree to supply the colonists.

The Bianchi are desperate, and agree to travel by means of hibernation drugs rather than bulky cold sleep pods or luxurious passenger quarters. The PCs fly a heavily-armed cargo cruiser with 1,500 tons of cargo space. They allocate 1,100 tons to colonists, and divide the rest between additional Supplies and Materials, just in case something has happened to their cache on Bastiat. The hibernation drug allows them to pack 11,000 Bianchi into the hold, and the 300 tons of Supplies they pack along will feed up to 15,000 people for a month. The remaining 200 tons of Materials will be used to throw up housing.

The PCs navigate the drill route back to Bastiat and land to find that the entire cache of Supplies they left behind has been reduced to a foul-smelling goo by a hostile local microbe. While their synthesizers can easily develop a spray to counteract the bug, they have no more food than what they brought with them. In addition, 8% of the colonists die in transit due to the hibernation drug, making the first act on Bastiat the consecration of a new Reformed Catholic graveyard for those who didn't survive.

The surviving colonists knew the risks and are determined to survive for the sake of those left behind. Their initial Morale is 7. The PCs decide not to dollarize their economy, but instead adopt a loose money policy at the colony bank and sell the colonists most of the Materials they've already brought onto this world. The sale brings in 1,000,000 credits to the bank, though the vast majority of that sum consists of loans the bank made to its own buyers. The prospect of starting their new life neck-deep in debt to their patron disturbs many of the colonists, but a Morale check is successful and the colony maintains its Morale 7.

The PCs appoint one of their own trusted retainers as factor of the colony world. The Bianchi are left to manage their own social and cultural affairs, but the PCs find it wisest not to let one of their own people actually govern the colony, as they can hardly be expected to be more loyal to the PCs than to their own kindred.

As the PCs didn't bring along premade housing facilities for so many citizens, the first order of business is to build Colony Housing for them. As with any Holding, it will take a month to build. The base price is 250,000 credits, halved for the world's low population, for 125,000 as the final price. One ton of Materials is needed for every thousand credits in the price, so 125 tons of Materials are put into the housing. The population is close enough to 10,000 that the GM decides that a single unit of Colony Housing will hold them for the time being.

While their Factor oversees the construction, the PCs drill out in search of direly-needed food supplies. They visit a neighboring ag world where they have a hefty local credit balance and load up their hold with 1,500 tons of Supplies, enough to feed the colony for almost eight months. Unfortunately, a Trouble check finds the deal delayed by several weeks... which would mean starvation back on Bastiat. The PCs conduct a little impromptu "negotiation" with the local longshoreman boss to speed up the process, and are back on Bastiat just in time to avert hunger.

As the colony is active, the GM makes a colony problem check, rolling 1d10. The result is 6- no problem, but the threshhold for problems rises from 1 to 2. There *will* be a problem sooner or later, but this month passes without issues. The GM adds 10,000 credits to the PC bank balance on the world to represent local taxes.

While the food supplies the PCs brought are sufficient for several more months, the PCs decide that they won't be really comfortable until Bastiat can avoid starvation without their help. Their next Holding will be Local Supply, costing them 250,000 credits and 250 tons of Materials. They spend the month relaxing on Bastiat and socializing with their colonist-subjects while their cruiser refuels from a local gas giant and does light maintenance that doesn't require a real starport.

At the end of this second month, another colony problem check is rolled and comes up 2- this time, there's a problem. A random roll on the colony problems table shows that a botch in the local agricultural program has completely shut down local food production for 3 months. Luckily, the colony has a stockpile of Supplies and can eat them until the problems are sorted out. Another 10,000 credits are taxed and the colony turns to face this new challenge....

Colony World Quick Reference

Colony World Basics

Colony worlds are defined by a few basic totals and a monthly sequence of checks, taxes, and expenditures. As with any other mercantile endeavor, your party's heroics and schemes can be used to aid your colony even when the dice rule against it. When disaster strikes- and it *will* strike- be ready to do something about it.

Population is the total population of the colony. You're going to need to bring them in from some population desperate or tempted enough to seek an entirely new world. If you can develop a colony world's population to at least 100,000 self-sustaining locals, the world will cease to be a mere colony and will become a self-sustaining world equal to those of much longer establishment.

Morale is measured much like normal NPC morale, and indicates the confidence, cooperativeness, and hope of the colonists. If it drops below 3, the colony will collapse. It cannot rise above 10 unless you've got fanatics for colonists. Most colonists arrive with an effective morale of 7.

Colony Supplies are foodstuffs, life support components, medical supplies, and other consumable necessities for surviving on a world. They usually must be custom-ordered to fit a particular colony world and thus normally involve a +4 Friction special order deal on a TL4 planet. They have a base price of 1,000 credits per ton and the Agriculture and Survival types. A colony consumes 1 ton of supplies each month for every 50 inhabitants. Running out will kill at least 10% of the deprived by the end of the month.

Colony Materials are construction components, industrial tools, and other necessities tailored to the conditions of a particular world. As with supplies, they usually require a special order from a TL4 world. They have a base price of 2,000 credits per ton and the Survival, Postech, and Common cargo types. A colony consumes 1 ton of materials for each thousand credits worth of holdings it constructs. Thus, if they spend 125,000 credits raising a Colony Housing holding, they need 125 tons of materials to do it.

Colony World Holdings

As you have complete control over the colony world's government and economy you can have any number of holdings on a colony world and need not invest in a corporate headquarters. You will need a factor ro run the world, however, and will need Colony Housing, Local Supply and other holdings to help sustain the place. You can usually build one holding a month on a colony world.

Banking and Local Credits

You can issue your own credits on this world or use the credits of an existing world. In the former case you can arbitrarily create credits as you need them, but each time you do so the inflation will lower colony Morale by 1 point. Any "created" money not spent within the month vanishes as inflation erodes it, leaving you only with the local credits you earned through conventional means.

If you choose to "dollarize" and use the credits of another world, you can freely import such credits to spend on your world. You cannot create such credits with local stimulus, however.

Buying and Selling Goods

Your colony world produces nothing of its own except what your production center holdings might create. All other efforts are turned toward basic survival. Goods can be purchased from production centers as is normal.

Your colonists can purchase up to 1 ton of goods per month for every 500 citizens. If you sell on a "loose money" basis, loaning colonists money from your central bank to buy the goods you offer, you can sell as much as the GM decides is plausible. These loans can be a drag on the colonists, however, and each time you perform a loose money deal, you need to make a Morale check for the colony at a -1 penalty for each other loose money deal that year. On a failure, colony Morale will drop by one.

Goods you sell to your own colonists are assumed to be consumed or otherwise used up in their own endeavors. You can't sell the locals 200 tons of Colony Materials and then use those same materials to build a new holding.

Colony Troubles

Every month, the GM rolls 1d10. On a 1, something bad will happen to your colony. Most of these events move slowly enough that your party can try to do something to stop them, but not all of them can be prevented. Factors rarely have the ingenuity needed to deal with true disasters without PC involvement.

If no disaster strikes that month, the threshold for the roll rises by 1 until something bad does happen, after which it resets back to 1.

Taxes and Corvee Labor

Colonists will pay 1 credit a month in taxes without special complaint, either in cash or labor. If you're feeling exceptionally grasping you can try to claim more than this amount, but such avarice is likely to provoke your citizens into resistance.

Monthly Colony Event Sequence

1) The colony consumes 1 ton of Colony Supplies for every 50 inhabitants. Lack of these supplies will kill at least 10% of those without them by the end of the month.

2) The colony pays 1 credit per person in taxes.

3) The PCs or the colony factor may buy goods from local production holdings, use holding abilities, or build a holding if sufficient credits and materials are available.

4) Any locals lacking the shelter of adequate Colony Housing will take at least 10% casualties. Deep-space habitats or very hostile colonies may kill all of the excess.

5) The GM rolls 1d10 to check for colony troubles. On a 1, something bad happens. If nothing occurs the threshold rises by 1, resetting after trouble eventually strikes.

TOOLS OF THE TRADERS

EQUIPMENT AND FITTINGS FOR THE FAR TRADE

While a far trader is commonly willing to deal in every conceivable cargo his customers might possibly desire, there are some goods and particular usefulness to a merchant. This chapter includes a selection of some of the more commonly-valued tools used in the pursuit of a better bargain- or at least, a more survivable one.

Most of these goods can be acquired freely on any world with a tech level sufficient to support their manufacture. Those that require a pretech industrial base are too rare for ordinary trade, however, and often require dangerous ventures into ruined Mandate naval bases or hidden storage caches if they are to be acquired.

"BLACK BOX" FUSION CORE

This ruggedized, completely sealed fusion core is a popular model with far traders as it provides a simple source of electrical power that primitive natives cannot possibly reverse-engineer or repair. The fusion core is extremely reliable under normal operating parameters, providing enough electrical power to provide light, heat, and other domestic uses for up to 5,000 homes or energy sufficient for one power-hungry industrial factory. A modest water supply is all that is necessary for fuel. The packaged fusion core itself is very bulky, taking up twenty tons of cargo space, and requires its own building when fully installed on a world. Setup and basic maintenance can be performed by almost anyone capable of understanding the operating manual, but actual repair of a damaged core requires the Tech/Postech skill.

CARGO COFFIN

These self-contained cold sleep pods are more cumbersome and bulky than the integral cold sleep fittings available on some starships but remain popular for transporting excess passengers who wish to avoid the risks of hibernation drugs. Each cargo coffin takes up a full ton of cargo space and can maintain a living occupant in suspended animation for up to six months. If the coffins are attached to a suitable power supply and tended by a medic or expert system robot with Tech/Medical skill they can maintain a subject indefinitely. The "chilling" processes takes a full day to safely suspend a user and just as long to bring them out of their stasis. A shock revival can be accomplished in a single round but requires a Tech/Medical skill check at difficulty 8 to avoid death.

CONTROL DRUGS

A general name for a large family of synthetic and natural compounds, control drugs are all extremely pleasurable and extremely addictive chemicals. Many planets with imiscible flora and limited biological resources have relatively little experience with addictive substances, and have difficulty recognizing the danger of these "gifts". An incautious native can be quickly reduced to a helpless pawn by the threat of a withheld supply. The price given is per dose of the drug.

Control drugs are formulated to produce few side-effects, and with careful metering of supply a subject can remain addicted for years before the mental and physical damage becomes impossible to hide. Addiction usually requires a number of doses equal to the addict's Constitution score; as long as the addict gets at least one dose per day of the drug, they may not even realize that they are addicted to its use. Those cut off lose 1 hit point each day from their maximum hit point total, down to a minimum of 1 hit point. While in the grip of withdrawal, they must make a Physical Effect

Equipment	Price	TL
"Black Box" Fusion Core	50,000	4
Cargo Coffin	5,000	4
Control Drugs	50 / dose	3
Grav Container	10,000	4
Hibernation Drugs	25 / dose	4
Ingestive Sealant	25 / dose	4
Polymorphic Route Oracle	N/A	5
Nuclear Inhibition Field Projector	25,000	4
Pocket Nuke	25,000	4
Prefab Colony / Microbase	50,000	4
Prefab Colony / Garrison	N/A	5
Prefab Colony / Imperial	N/A	5
"Rimworlder" Semiauto Rifle	50	1
"Slingshot" Scout Vehicle	5,000	4

saving throw before attempting any combat or skill check; on a failure, the withdrawal symptoms are too strong for them to function.

The withdrawal lasts for two weeks, and each day they spend at 1 hit point forces them to make a Physical Effect save to avoid death. TL4 medical care during this period eliminates the chance of death. Those psychics with the Biopsionic discipline are effectively immune to control drug addiction, and their level 3 Purge Toxin power can negate the effects of withdrawal for a day.

Victims of control drug addiction must make a Morale check to resist the commands of their dealer after experiencing the pains of withdrawal, with a -1 penalty for each day of withdrawal they are currently experiencing. On a successful Morale check they may resist the demands for 24 hours. Most victims will not even try to resist their supplier unless the demand is exceptionally repugnant to them. PC addicts can always resist the demands when desired.

Grav Container

Massive ceraplast boxes with integral antigrav elements, grav containers are commonly used in high-traffic ports to ease the loading and unloading of both starships and wet-navy cargo craft. Up to one hundred tons of cargo can be fit neatly into a grav container and a single handler can get it on or off most standard craft with no more than fifteen minutes' work. Grav containers float at the rate of 5 meters per round and maintain up to one meter of clearance over the ground. A fully-charged container can move up to four kilometers before requiring a fresh Type B power cell or ship recharge. The containers are pressurized and temperature-controlled, but have no integral oxygen supplies.

In an emergency, a grav container can be "hot dropped" out of a starship, jettisoned from the cargo hold without landing. Fragile cargo will lose 1d6 x 10% of the contents to breakage and any passengers in the container will suffer 4d6 damage if not carefully secured inside. Ground-based anti-air defenses can pick off grav containers effortlessly, but some pilots find them the only way to get supplies and people into remote territory. After a hot drop, there is a 3 in 6 chance that the container's antigrav cells are hopelessly ruined by the strain of slowing the fall.

Hibernation Drugs

There are several different chemical mixes that go under the general label of "hibernation drug", but all of them share similar qualities. The drug slows a living subject's biological processes to a crawl, allowing them to survive on trivial amounts of life support. So long as their environment remains pressurized and at a tolerable temperature a drugged subject can hang on for at least six months. The subjects must be brought out of hibernation by a stimulant injection before the drug runs its course or death is inevitable. Even with careful administration of the drug, at least 5 to 10 percent of the users will die during the awakening process. The drug must be applied to a willing or restrained subject, as violent motion during its onset disrupts the chemical's effects.

Hibernation drug is usually used when transporting livestock in standard cargo holds, but it is also an old favorite of pirates, slavers, and other dealers in human flesh. Up to ten drugged humans can be stacked in each ton of cargo space, and the inevitable losses of life during revivification are considered mere costs of doing business. Some captains keep a stock of it on hand for emergency use in case of life support failure or for those occasions when desperate refugees must be crammed into every spare meter of space.

Ingestive Sealant

This large tablet is chewed for a few moments before collapsing into a thin slurry of transparent adhesive sealant. The bonding film physically isolates the user's digestive system. Food and drink consumed will not actually be digested by the user or contact their tissues for the six-hour duration of the seal, allowing the comestibles to later be expelled in privacy. Given the prevalence of poison and impressively horrible "local delicacies", some far traders find it wisest to "bag" the viands they are offered.

Polymorphic Route Oracle

This enigmatic piece of pre-Scream psitech is prized by explorers and treasure-hunters, but the few examples of the tech remaining are usually kept in the ruins of heavily-guarded Mandate naval stations or tomb world capitals. They were never intended as anything but emergency navigation tools and few of them were created even at the peak of human expansion.

Route oracles are keyed to specific star systems and cannot be changed. An expert navigator must enter in the full data from a successful drill into that star system, though this drill record may be centuries out of date. Once the data has been loaded, a psychic with at least one point in Precognition must trigger the oracle, whereupon the psitech augments their natural precognitive abilities to foresee a successful metadimensional path to the star system. This vision updates the entered drill route into a fresh map of the metadimensional currents along the route and allows a pilot to make the drill as if the course were freshly-charted.

Route oracles were initially intended as emergency tools for re-establishing contact with a lost world in the case of some disaster that cut off travel for an extended period. With a historical drill rutter and a route oracle, a band of treasure hunters can hope to make a safe transit to a world that may have been lost to conventional charts for centuries. Raiders and maltech cultists particularly cherish these artifacts as they allow them access to refuges that their enemies may never be able to reach.

Their age and the complexity of operation make route oracles quite fragile in operation and potentially dangerous to users. After each use, roll 1d6; on a 3 or less, the oracle burns out and becomes useless. On a 1, the psychic suffers severe precognitive backlash and must roll for attribute loss as if they had torched one of their powers.

Nuclear Inhibition Field Projector

The same principles that enabled the development of spike drives also allowed the creation of "nuke snuffers" capable of squelching nuclear explosions within a vast area. The simple, rugged, and easily-scaled technology of these nuke snuffers is standard to all TL4 worlds and any planet with significant offworld commerce. A fusion plant and a basic snuffer array can quash any nuclear weapon on the same continent, and most developed worlds have multiple backup arrays in place. This type of security is not available on primitive lost worlds.

Most lostworlder kings only need one demonstration of nukes to pay almost any amount for a nuke snuffer to protect their palaces and important cities. This simple, reliable snuffer model is designed to operate on a wide range of available power sources, from steam to solar to actual muscle-powered wheels. A building is required to house all of its components, but the diagnostic tools and large supply of spare parts that come with the snuffer allow even primitive techs to maintain it for decades on end. Provided it remains powered, it can shelter up to a forty-kilometer radius from nuclear detonations.

Aside from these small emplacements, every ship with a functioning spike drive is normally set to project a snuffer field as part of its standard defensive array, with fighter-class ships protecting a four-kilometer radius and frigate-class hulls sheltering everything within forty kilometers. These fields are left active even when the ship is grounded as long as it has power. Any attempt to nuke a starport usually requires the careful deactivation or disabling of these fields before the nuke can successfully trigger. Persistent rumors speak of some maltech developers who have managed to integrate pretech shielding components into their devices in order to allow detonations from within a ship's snuffer field.

Pocket Nuke

The pocket nuke is a small, portable fission weapon that provides enough destructive power to erase a small city. Some are built into carrying cases or backpacks, while others are mounted on orbital drop rods. Nukes developed by military or espionage agencies are usually carefully sealed against radiation detection, while homebrew devices are subject to detection by TL3 radiation sensors at a thirty-meter distance.

Pocket nukes can be triggered by a remote signal or fused to go off at a preset time. Most developers build in anti-tamper measures to defeat attempts at defusing the bomb. Attempts to defuse a bomb outside of a controlled detonation environment can be performed by making an opposed check against the builder's Int/Tech roll, with the bomb disposer using the best of their Security or Tech/Postech skills. Failure has a 50% chance of causing immediate detonation. A bomb tech with time to conduct a controlled detonation of the bomb can destroy it without risk.

The price given for a pocket nuke reflects the parts and components necessary for a tech to construct one. Anyone with Tech/Maltech-0 or Tech/Postech-2 can successfully build a pocket nuke, with the process taking a month and a functioning postech workshop. For an amateur, the GM secretly rolls 2d6 when the nuke is built; on a 3 the nuke will fail to detonate when triggered, and on a 2 the bomb-maker accidentally sets it off in their own workshop. Pocket nukes cannot be constructed within a nuke snuffer field, as it disrupts the readings necessary for alignment of the elements. Building one aboard a starship is normally impossible.
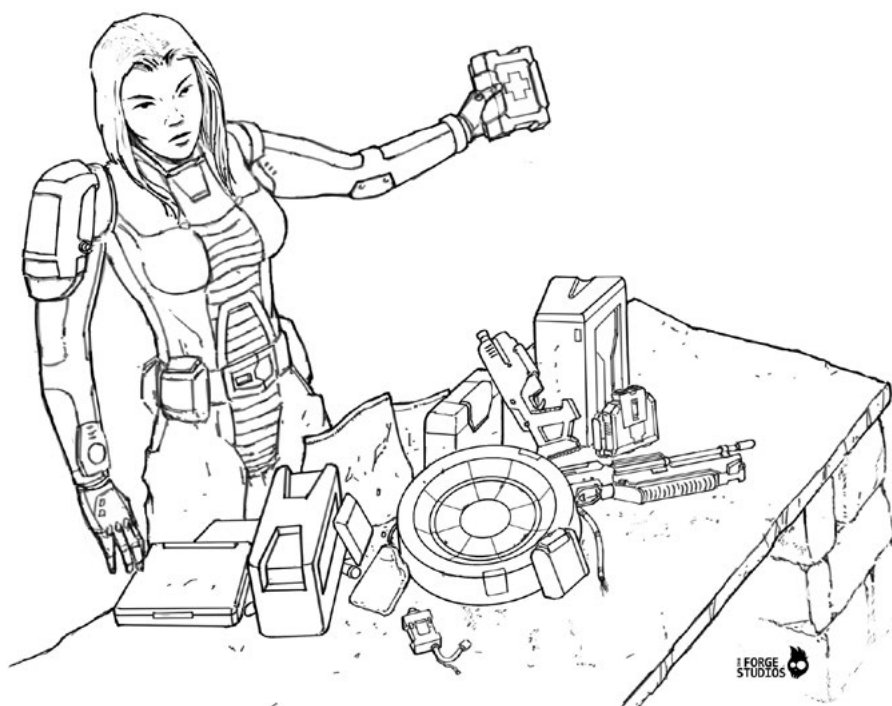
A pocket nuke that goes off will obliterate every non-hardened structure within a four-kilometer radius and cause severe burns and radiation poisoning within an additional four kilometers. PCs with some plausible shelter may all make two Luck saving throws. If only one save is made they are reduced to zero hit points and left mortally injured. If both are made they take only half their maximum hit points in damage. If both are failed, death is instantaneous.

Prefab Colony Base

Ceraplast support walls, aerogel thermal insulation, an integral fusion plant, and regenerative atmosphere scrubbers make up a complete colonial base in several tightly-packed modules. These bases are fabricated to be serviceable on any planet without a corrosive or invasive atmosphere or a burning surface temperature. Provided personnel maintain the plant life necessary for the atmosphere scrubbers and perform the usual maintenance of the facility, the colony base's atmosphere and water can be recycled for decades with no external inputs. The colony base package does not include hydroponic facilities, however, or foodstuffs beyond a few weeks of supplies for those who must erect the base. The very smallest bases can be torn down and repacked for transport, but larger colonial infrastructures can only be planted once.

The "microbase" is designed for long-term and comfortable use by up to 25 inhabitants, and is derived from a late Second Wave research outpost schematic. It takes up ten tons of space in the cargo hold. The "garrison" model is a relatively primitive but serviceable combination of minor starport and military base, with armored fortifications, maintenance tools sufficient for frigate-class ships and a basic suite of system comms and scanning satellites. It can house up to 1,000 inhabitants, takes up 200 tons of cargo

space, and usually requires regular cargo drops to supply food on imiscible worlds. The garrison's fusion plant can power as many as a dozen heavy energy weapons turrets, though many buyers prefer to invest in some projectile weapons for indirect artillery fire.

The "Imperial" model was intended for serious, long-term colonization efforts and is essentially priceless in the insular post-Silence era. A fully-intact Imperial-class colonial base is a small domed city in its own right, with all the machinery and tools necessary to jump-start technological civilization on a planet, provided sufficiently trained colonists are there to use it. Everything from powered hand tools to hydroponic farm units to modular earthmoving vehicles are stowed in the package, along with scientific equipment designed to ease the rapid adaptation of the agricultural domes to local conditions. Up to 10,000 people can be supported indefinitely by such a colonial effort, a large enough population to serve as genetic seed stock for a new world's populace.

A full installation requires 1,000 tons of cargo space, which is prohibitively large for all but dedicated cargo freighters. The load can be split over multiple craft, but that kind of monopolization of a merchant fleet is beyond the means of most aspiring colonists. The very few Imperial-class colony bases in existence are almost always either relics unearthed from long-lost Mandate supply depots or the culminating effort of major planetary government programs.

If you are using the planetary colonization rules provided in the book, the garrison base is assumed to function as a Ship Service Depot and colony housing for 1,000 colonists. The Imperial-class base serves as a Ship Service Depot, housing for 10,000 inhabitants, and ten Local Supply holdings sufficient to keep them supplied indefinitely. Both such facilities are so rare that they are never available on the open market, and must be salvaged from some suitable Mandate naval base or colony staging area. Still, the mere rumor of such rich pickings is certain to bring pirates, foreign navies, and worse.

Primitive Flyer

These fliers take advantage of modern aeronautic principles to use native materials and crafting tolerances to construct a serviceable aircraft that can operate on most thick or normal-atmosphere worlds. These slow-flying planes are remarkably nimble and maneuverable, although their top speeds are no competition to more advanced craft. Most far traders bring in only a few vital components necessary to build the flyer, though designs exist that can be fully replicated by a TL2 infrastructure. Most models fly on fuels that can be distilled from ordinary biomass, a full tank providing a six-hundred kilometer operational range. Vehicle statistics for a primitive flyer are Speed 3, Armor 0, 20 HP, up to 6 crew, and two hardpoints.

"Rimworlder" Semiautomatic Rifle

Favored by hardscrabble colonists and revolutionaries alike, the Rimworlder was a famous model of late-Second Wave semiauto rifle designed to function in the harshest environments. Any reasonably skilled blacksmith could fabricate the components and even an illiterate peasant could be expected to master the desultory maintenance needed to keep it functioning. Full automatic and burst fire modes were omitted from the design due to the common scarcity of ammunition and poor trigger discipline exhibited by its usual users. Simple conversions even allow the Rimworlder to be used with black powder and paper cartridges, for those planets without the luxury of brass cartridge manufacture.

A Rimworlder fabricated with modern machine tools is about as accurate as any other standard rifle, but the genius of the design allows it to be fabricated by TL1 societies with access to the necessary ferrous ores and gunpowder components. Almost every world can manage to brew up some adequate gunpowder analog, barring those civilizations totally trapped within hab bubbles or deep space stations.

Such primitive forged guns suffer a -1 penalty on hit rolls but do the same damage. Those societies without metallic cartridge manufacture can usually put together a paper cartridge that makes the Rimworlder a single-shot weapon with a reload time of 2 rounds.

The Rimworlder has a special place in the hearts of far traders, who often make a point of dropping crates of these cheap, tough guns into the hands of useful rebels and private goons. On low-tech worlds, the Rimworlder can make the difference between a peasant massacre and a successful revolt. The consequences of these weapon drops often spiral out beyond the control of all involved, but many far traders consider that an acceptable risk.

"Slingshot" Scout Vehicle

A remarkably flexible vehicle platform designed for widespread colonial use during the late Second Wave, the Slingshot was meant to distill the most important elements of a fast scouting vehicle down into a few crucial components that could be shipped in and maintained with minimal drain on limited cargo space.

The actual TL4 components of a Slingshot will fit into four bulky packs that can be carried by four porters of ordinary human strength or two common pack animals. The local industrial base is expected to provide metal or hardwood struts required to conenct the components, though the TL4 elements include a wet-applied structural matrix that can render these native materials as tough as tempered steel. When such local supplies are not available, the chassis struts can be packed in with an additional four porter-loads of components. A Slingshot packed away for shipment takes up one ton of cargo space, or ten tons if fully-assembled.

Anyone with any Tech/Postech skill can assemble a Slingshot with nothing more sophisticated than hand tools and two hours of work for two laborers. Less skillful operators who have received a few hours of training can also assemble the vehicle.

A fully-assembled Slingshot can run on either Type B energy cells or simple alcohol distillates that can be refined out of almost any biological material. A fresh power cell or a full tank of fuel will power the vehicle for up to 500 kilometers of travel over typical outdoor terrain. The engine can also serve as a generator for recharging depleted power cells. A full tank of distilled fuel will recharge half of a Type B cell or ten Type A cells with a few hours of operation.

Vehicle statistics for a Slingshot are Speed 2, Armor 3, 25 HP, up to 6 crew, and no hardpoints. While it can be repaired by TL3 users, the advanced engine and drive components require TL4 to build.

Ship Fittings and New Hulls

Contextual Camo Field

Favored by traders forced to deal with unfriendly worlds, contextual camo fields disguise shuttles or frigate-sized craft as objects appropriate to their local landing site. Holoprojectors embedded in the hull and shaped composite shells allow the ship to appear as a dune in a desert, a ruined building in an ancient city, a cluster of trees in a forest, or any other object of comparable size and dimensions. The physical composite shields heat and energy signatures while spoofing radar pings, while the holoprojectors mask the visual outlines of the ship.

The illusion is quite imperfect, and any observer within a hundred yards of the ship can tell that something is wrong. Personal inspection always reveals the imposture. Camo fields can easily defeat any TL3 form of long-range sensor. The fields usually stand up to civilian-grade TL4 detection, but landing in an area under significant military observation is not advisable.

Camo fields can be mounted on shuttles or frigates. The fittings have a base power drain of 2 power and a base mass cost of 1 free mass. The price for a shuttle instillation is 50,000 credits. Power, mass, and base price are all multiplied by the hull class they are installed into, as per the fittings table in the *Stars Without Number* core book.

Nuke Launcher

These old-fashioned nuclear missiles suffer from the same limits on effectiveness that rest on the pocket nuke. Virtually useless in TL4 ship-to-ship warfare, the missiles can wreak havoc on a primitive civilization or on crude TL3 spacecraft unequipped with nuke snuffer technology or quantum targeting jammers. When fired against such ships any hit will result in 1d6 x 20 damage, and immobile space stations and other ships unable to avoid direct hits will be obliterated. Against a surface target, each missile is sufficient to erase a small city or trigger an EMP burst that can ruin most unshielded TL3 electronic gear on the continent. "Clean" nuclear missiles are usually available at most shipyards and industrial worlds as they are used most often to break up asteroids for mining purposes. Bulk purchases by non-miners are likely to be viewed with suspicion.

While nuclear warfare remains an option for some merchants, few far traders are willing to use these missiles as weapons. A reputation for causing planet-devouring conflagrations is rarely good for business, and the hatred their use brings would be sure to ruin their business prospects permanently with any survivors. Some far traders or aspiring freebooters are murderous enough to use the weapons to hold a more primitive world hostage, however, threatening fiery ruin for their cities. Such arrangements rarely end well for the extortionists but millions of people may die before the collapse of their rule. Outsiders willing to smuggle in nuke snuffer technology can win the gratitude of worlds in such situations, if they can survive the wrath of the inevitable local collaborators.

Nuke launchers can be installed as a weapon on any ship of frigate size or larger, costing 50,000 credits for the launcher and taking up 1 point of power and 3 points of free mass. Each point of mass dedicated to its magazine holds 6 nuclear missiles, each of which costs 50,000 credits from a reputable asteroid mining supplier.

Smuggler's Hold

These shielded cargo holds are carefully designed to appear as machinery bays, engine compartments, and other "dead space" inside a ship's hull. Standard TL3 searches have no chance of detecting them, while the relatively light inspection done by most TL4 starport customs officials will discover them only on a roll of 2 on 2d6. A focused, hours-long search by zealous TL4 inspectors will reveal the compartments on a roll of 7 or less, while several days of actual mechanical stripping will inevitably reveal the hiding places. PCs searching a ship for such holds can discover them on a successful Wis/Perception or Int/Tech/Astronautics skill check of difficulty 10 for each hour they spend investigating.

Cargo held within a smuggler's hold is undetectable on biological or radiological scans and can be discreetly unloaded with the rest of the ship's cargo for sale to buyers unconcerned with issues of legality. Cargo smuggled in through these holds also experiences only half the normal Friction on sales, rounded down to a minimum of 1.

Each free mass point dedicated to a smuggler's hold grants 2 tons of room on a frigate, 20 tons on a cruiser, and 200 tons on a capital ship. Smuggler's holds require no power for their fitting and have a base price of 5,000 credits per mass point, multiplied as normal for the hull class involved in the fitting.

Exodus Ship

These gigantic capital-class colony ships were rare even during the height of the Second Wave. In these fallen days after the Scream, the few that remain are most often lost in orbit around dead worlds or hidden in the debris of ancient battles. While their makers intentionally built them with simple components that could be maintained on the primitive frontier, their sheer size and the rarity of any real need for them kept them scarce along the borders of the Mandate.

Exodus ships were meant to be able to carry an entire colony's worth of passengers and supplies to some distant world, and once there to support the colony until it was capable of standing on its own. The life support and power systems are remarkably robust, with multiple failsafes and self-repair automation. Derelict exodus ships found in deep space often still maintain a vigorous internal ecosphere.

Aside from whatever unique fittings were mounted a particular craft, an exodus ship can carry up to 20,000 colonists in a massive bank of specialized cold sleep pods. Their integral workshops and hydroponic systems can provide indefinite sustenance for up to 10,000 people, allowing a colony of up to that size to survive without an outside source of supply provided that the ship remains in orbit. Ponderous "shelter shuttles" detach from the main hull to land passengers anywhere on a planet's surface before being easily converted to cramped but securely-sealed housing for up to 10,000 people. Colonists not immediately landed on the world can be kept in cold sleep to provide replacements for the inevitable casualties a virgin world will inflict.

As long as the exodus ship remains in orbit around the colony world the settlement is granted the benefits of Minor Space Defenses. Raiders or pirates who mean to make a landing anywhere near the colony will need to bring down the exodus ship first- and while the ship has relatively few weapons or defenses, it is still a capital-class hull and capable of absorbing enormous amounts of punishment.

An unfitted exodus ship hull is a capital-class hull with a base price of 40 million credits. It has effective scores of Speed 0, Armor 10, 100 HP, 100 crewmen minimum for operation and up to 10,000 awakened occupants, an AC of 5, 40 free power, 40 free mass, and 4 hardpoints. While these ships are artifacts of the Mandate, they were specifically designed to be maintained by relatively crude frontier tech. If a far trader can find a full set of schematics for them, they can be built in a sufficiently large TL4 shipyard.

GM Resources

Tables and Record Sheets for Quick Use

In this section, you'll find some general-purpose tools for assembling your adventures and piecing together your campaign. You'll find a quick summary of combat stats for common hostiles, tables for one-roll NPCs, rival business generation, quick customer creation, a sheet for a planetary trade record, and a selection of unkeyed maps for fast adventure generation.

If you're reading this document as a PDF, you'll find that the maps and their explanatory text are all on separate layers, and you should be able to selectively turn them off and on for printing. You can then note down the key on the blank half of the page. The enemy quick reference and planetary record sheets are also designed with minimal amounts of black ink so as to be kinder to your toner.

Quick Planetary Financial Crisis

PCs have a most unfortunate lack of respect for the financial solvency of the worlds they visit, and it's not unlikely that at some point in their adventures they're going to drop some kind of bomb on a planet's economic system. On other occasions, the PCs might happen to be luckless bystanders as the natives do something to bring down their own fiscal house around their ears.

The consequences for these crises are up to you, but the severe depletion or outright loss of local credit holdings are common as the cash becomes devalued into worthlessness or is confiscated by the state. Holdings might survive a disaster if they produce something salable, but if the local government is hostile then they are almost certain to be nationalized by the outraged locals.

1d12	What happened here?
1	A vital component to local industry is rapidly depleting, leaving large numbers of locals out of work.
2	A small group of natives have managed to legally plunder the treasury through control of the legislative process.
3	Military tensions have resulted in massive overbuilding of military goods, impoverishing other sectors.
4	A complex web of banking instruments have failed, incinerating huge amounts of local money.
5	Politicians have made welfare promises that now turn out to be impossible; vast numbers of locals find themselves beggared.
6	Local populists have seized power and are systematically plundering any political rivals above an arbitrary level of wealth.
7	A sudden strike of a new resource obsoletes huge chunks of the world's industrial sector, plunging many into joblessness.
8	A religious or cultural revival condemns an important local industry, forcing the locals out of work.
9	A long-impoverished and oppressed group is rising in something close to open rebellion, causing chaos and attacking enemies.
10	A demagogue leader blames a productive minority for national ills; furious natives are ruining their businesses.
11	A formerly-vital work that enriched many is now done cheaply by others, and it has left the former workers angry and poor.
12	Xenophobic protectionists are blaming offworlders for all evil, and riots against offworld contact are brewing in the cities.

Enemy Quick Reference Sheet

Print off this sheet and use the listings below as a quick reference for the combat statistics of common hostiles. Add armor or weapons as necessary for the circumstances and adjust morale for the zealous.

Remember the effects of Morale when running combat. Unless the PCs happen to engage a band of spacefaring Spartans, their foes are not likely to intentionally fight to the last man. After taking casualties or when the battle is clearly going against them a failed Morale check will mean flight, surrender, or hiding behind cover.

Enemy	MV	HD	Atk	Dmg	AC	Save	Skill	ML	Notes
Low-Tech Humans									
Primitive Warrior	20'	1	+1	1d6/Spear	9	15+	+1	8	or 1d8/Sword or 1d6/Bow
Primitive Elite	20'	3	+4	1d6+2/Spear	7/Leather	14+	+2	9	
Primitive Hero	20'	7	+8	1d6+3/Spear	6/Leather	12+	+3	11	
Armored Knight	15'	3	+4	1d8+2/Sword	3/Plate	14+	+2	10	
Unarmed Citizen	20'	1	+0	1d2/Fist	9	15+	+1	6	Applicable to any TL
TL 2-3 Humans									
Street Thug	20'	1	+1	1d4+1/Knife	9	15+	+1	7	or 1d6+1/Pistol
Gunman	20'	1	+2	1d6+1/Pistol	9	15+	+1	8	or 3d4/Shotgun
Law Enforcement	20'	1	+1	1d6+1/Pistol	9	15+	+1	8	or a religious enforcer
Elite Police	15'	2	+3	1d12/Combat Rifle	5/Woven	14+	+2	9	or a good bodyguard
Conscript Soldier	20'	1	+1	1d12/Combat Rifle	9	15+	+1	8	
Elite Soldier	20'	3	+4	1d12/Combat Rifle	5/Woven	14+	+2	10	
Postech Humans									
Common Goon	20'	1	+1	1d8/Monoblade	7/Undersuit	15+	+1	7	
Guard	20'	1	+3	1d6/Laser Pistol	7/Undersuit	15+	+1	8	Atk includes laser bonus
Law Enforcement	20'	1	+2	1d6/Laser Pistol	4/CFU	15+	+1	8	Atk includes laser bonus
Elite Police	20'	2	+4	1d10/Laser Rifle	4/CFU	14+	+2	9	Atk includes laser bonus
Postech Soldier	20'	1	+2	1d10/Laser Rifle	4/CFU	15+	+1	8	Atk includes laser bonus
Elite Soldier	20'	3	+4	2d8+2/Mag Rifle	2/Assault	14+	+2	10	
Alien Beasts									
Pack Vermin	15'	1/2	+1	1d4/bite	7	15+	+1	8	2d6 appearing
Flying Hunter	40' fly	3	+4	1d10/claw	6	14+	+1	8	1d4 appearing
Pack Hunter	30'	2	+3	1d6/bite	7	14+	+1	9	2d4 appearing
Lurking Predator	25'	5	+5	1d6 x 2/claws	5	13+	+2	8	1 appearing, +2 to Init
Vicious Herdbeast	30'	4	+4	1d8/gore	7	13+	+1	9	3d6 appearing
Burrowing Menace	25' dig	5	+6	2d6/bite	5	13+	+1	8	1 appearing, ambushes
Apex Predator	30'	8	+10	1d8 x 3/claws	5	11+	+3	10	Solitary or mated

One-Roll NPC Generation

While the core *Stars Without Number* book includes a one-roll NPC generator in the Resources section, it can be helpful to have a set of tables directed more specifically toward a far trader's likely needs. The tables below should give you what you need for a thumbnail characterization of random port employees or minor functionaries.

As with all random tables, you shouldn't feel any particular compulsion to actually roll on them. If you see some attitude or circumstance on the lists below that serves your immediate needs, you should simply choose it and keep the game rolling along. A serviceable answer at once is often better than a great one in ten minutes.

1d4	WHAT IS THEIR OVERALL ATTITUDE TOWARD OFFWORLDERS?
1	Wary curiosity and willingness to deal with them.
2	Suspicion, believing they want to exploit the natives.
3	Eager fascination with the possibilities of outside trade.
4	Utilitarian tolerance for them as long as they're useful.

1d6	WHAT'S THEIR MOST IMPORTANT RELATIONSHIP?
1	Their spouse or spouses.
2	A sole surviving child.
3	Their religious or ethnic community.
4	Their employer or job duties.
5	A lover of socially unacceptable character.
6	None- everyone around them is a tool to their ends.

1d8	WHO IS THEIR WORST ENEMY?
1	A tyrannical employer.
2	A local official with a grudge against them.
3	A vengeful psychic.
4	A subordinate who plots their ruin.
5	A former lover who feels wronged.
6	A co-worker who wants them destroyed.
7	A local criminal owed money or revenge.
8	A victim of their former abuse of power.

1d10	WHAT'S THEIR INITIAL ATTITUDE TOWARD THE PCs?
1	Sudden amorous attraction to the most compatible PC.
2	Star-struck giddiness at talking to real outworlders.
3	Considers the PCs to be hopelessly stupid foreigners.
4	Thinks the PCs are fabulously rich and can be milked.
5	Strong distaste for a religions/ethnic/racial difference.
6	Acute desire to make a good showing of their people.
7	Convinced the PCs are ultra-competent at everything.
8	Thinks the PCs possess deep spiritual space-wisdom.
9	Envious of the excitement and profitability of their lives.
10	Enormous curiosity about their business and past.

1d12	WHAT DO THEY WANT FROM A FAR TRADER?
1	Passage off this world in order to escape something.
2	An illegal object from this world's black market.
3	Some tech or item not available on this world.
4	A large sum of local credits.
5	The pacification of an enemy or tormentor.
6	A message carried to a destination they can't reach.
7	A job that pays well by local standards.
8	Medical help they aren't able to acquire on their own.
9	The ruin of a local business or organization.
10	Help given to an ally or kindred on another world.
11	Passage off this world to get to a specific place.
12	A local creditor's appeasement in cash or favors.

1d20	WHAT NOTABLE QUIRK OR TRAIT DO THEY HAVE?
1	Missing a limb or eye, with or without prosthetic.
2	Exceedingly slovenly dresser.
3	Always carrying a dataslab or work implement.
4	Always makes statements in the form of a question.
5	Ethnic minority for the world.
6	Constantly fiddling with religious icon or adornment.
7	Speaks a heavily-accented version of local language.
8	Remarkably old or young for the position they fill.
9	Dresses in loud offworld fashion.
10	Coughs, limps, or shows other signs of chronic sickness.
11	Rigid and stiffly disciplined comportment.
12	Constantly complains about their work or duties.
13	Assumes everyone is constantly lying to them.
14	Breathtakingly beautiful or remarkably handsome.
15	Has a gender identity unique to this world's culture.
16	Constantly alert for ambushes or impending violence.
17	Grotesquely obese or skeletally thin.
18	Nearly deaf, but pretends to understand everything said.
19	Always with a pet, dogsbody or disposable lover in tow.
20	Laconic to the point of rudeness.

One-Roll Rival Business Generation

It's not generally worth the time and tracking to run rival businesses as full-fledged interstellar enterprises, with full records of holdings and profits. Most often, rival businesses are important only insofar as they're aggravating the PCs on a particular world or plotting against their plans for expansion and profit.

For these occasions, it can be useful to have more flavorful information for a rival business. The tables below allow for a single handful of dice to give much of the information you might need to make a suitably engaging enemy for your party. For names, you can use the generator provided in the core book.

1d4	How strong is this rival?
1	Formerly very powerful, but has suffered severe reverses.
2	A relative upstart, but extremely vigorous and active.
3	Big, but turned complacent and slow from their success.
4	Restricted to one world, but overwhelmingly strong there

1d6	How do they feel about the PCs?
1	They aren't even aware of them, if that is possible.
2	They want to make the PCs into loyal minions.
3	They want to ruin the PCs' business.
4	One of their execs wants to use the PCs to get ahead.
5	An exec wants to use the PCs to take down a rival branch
6	They're afraid of the PCs, if that is plausible.

1d8	What large problem do they have right now?
1	Sclerotic leadership and an inability to innovate.
2	Incestuous feuding among upper-level execs.
3	Long-simmering labor problems due to mistreatment.
4	A major planet's government really hates them.
5	Dangerously overextended to support a particular scheme
6	Their products are badly outclassed by a new entrant.
7	Losing access to a vital material for their business.
8	Vast resources are tied up on an unstable planet.

1d10	What kind of CEO do they have?
1	An alien, with access to help from their own species.
2	A precognitive psychic with uncanny insight.
3	A subhuman degenerate reveling in wealth and power.
4	An AI, one which may or may not be safely braked.
5	A grizzled, ruthlessly cunning veteran of the far trade.
6	A new heir to the business, reckless and impulsive.
7	The religious leader of a sect important on their world.
8	A decadent aesthete only partly focused on the business.
9	An ice-cold corporate overlord solely interested in profit.
10	A complete psychotic, certain to do something deranged.

1d12	What's their current Diabolic Scheme?
1	Suborn a weak planetary government to their control
2	Use stolen pretech to build a new postech product
3	Sabotage their biggest rival using the PCs as catspaws
4	Physically conquer a weak state for a secure sanctuary
5	Use maltech to conduct unholy genetic engineering
6	Force all competitors to join them in a sector oligarchy
7	Devolve a planet's tech base to force their dependence
8	Sabotage a world's military forces to soften it for a client
9	Seize control of the only known source of a vital resource
10	Use their muscle to wipe out small far traders sector-wide
11	Seal off a particular planet to all other far traders
12	Break down a planetary culture to something more useful

1d20	What is their primary business?
1	Astronautics, trading in rare and vital spike drives
2	Pharmaceuticals, both medical and recreational
3	Agritech, with products that grow on hostile worlds
4	Miltech, providing advanced weaponry and vehicles
5	Medical, which may involve maltech experiments
6	Financial services, loaning money and collecting- or else
7	Mercenaries, providing military solutions for low-techs
8	Slaves, with "control tools" and highly-skilled labor
9	Power generation- fusion, solar, and stranger ways
10	Construction, including in very hostile environments
11	Biotech, for modifying plants, animals, and humans
12	Cyberware, prosthetics, implants, and augmentations
13	Computers, including AI research and development
14	Robotics, with expert-system workers and warbots
15	Mining, asteroid or terrestrial, with ore ships and lasers
16	Psionics, providing services and dangerous research
17	Alien liaison, dealing with an incomprehensible species
18	Religious services, providing clergy, relics, temples, etc.
19	Entertainment, both recorded and with live performers
20	Salvage, researching and plundering pretech sites.

One-Roll Business Contact

It's usually unimportant to establish the specific details of a customer or vendor when selling or buying goods. The players make the trade table roll, find out what they can buy, and then make their purchases. Conversely, when it comes time to sell, they simply find the price and assume that the market takes care of the rest.

When things suddenly go wrong, however, a GM can find it useful to have a few more details about the person who is trying to buy or sell the goods in question. The tables below can add extra flavor to the situation when the GM is putting together an adventure template to deal with the latest mercantile trouble.

1d4	How interested were they in this deal?
1	They have other possibilities; it was never crucial to them
2	They'd suffer a significant loss if this deal goes badly
3	This would ruin their quarterly numbers if it fails
4	It was vital to their interests, either in volume or timing.

1d6	Why did they want to make the deal?
1	They need immediate cash or the good they tried to buy
2	They know the market will soon be flooded/starved for it
3	A government contact told them to do it or else
4	They know a great deal but need the goods/credits for it
5	Their supervisor/creditors made it clear that they had to
6	They have a deal that needs the goods/credits to complete

1d8	Where does their money or power come from?
1	Old-money family with large resources
2	Head of a profitable native business
3	Government official in charge of stocking this resource
4	Retired far trader who now deals only on this world
5	Ambitious young entrepreneur with much borrowed cash
6	Crime boss who runs legit businesses as cover
7	Rebel or revolutionary leader with a facade of legality
8	Local fixer who handles "problems" for important clients

1d10	What's their relationship with the local government?
1	They're actually government officials
2	The local government is highly suspicious of their trade
3	They're from a government-disliked minority or religion
4	They're favored by one faction and hated by another
5	They used to be in the ruling faction, but no more
6	They backed the faction that recently won control
7	They operate only so long as the officials tolerate them
8	They hate the government and want it overthrown
9	They're secret agents of the government law enforcement
10	They're operating illegally, unknown to the local lawmen

1d12	Who would want them to suffer a loss?
1	A jilted lover or abandoned spouse
2	A cheated business partner
3	A former friend they left for dead as part of their rise
4	A former colleague they ruined to advance
5	A far trader they cheated in a prior deal
6	A government official they got thrown out for corruption
7	A crime boss who they failed to pay off for protection
8	An official who wants to show far trade as unprofitable
9	A local industrialist who wants to sabotage far trade
10	A local rival in the same trade who wants them ruined
11	An employee they've abused and mistreated
12	A family member who wants to control the business

| 1d20	What's the most problematic rumor about them?
1	They're hopelessly in debt to a local crime boss
2	They're actually with the hated secret police
3	They're secretly of a sect outlawed and persecuted here
4	They trade cheap and shoddy goods to far traders
5	They love to cheat far traders with native cultural dodges
6	They trade in goods that are toxic or dangerous to buyers
7	They're just a puppet for a secret mastermind
8	They're addicted to some offworlder drug
9	They have truly detestable sexual appetites
10	They cheat their employees of their rightful wages
11	The port longshoremen hate them and spoil their goods
12	They're secretly in league with rebels or revolutionaries
13	They're violently abusive toward a local minority
14	The local government wants to ruin them for some slight
15	They carry a socially detested disease
16	They're actually a very coherent feral psychic
17	They're somehow involved in forbidden maltech use
18	They actually stole their wealth and have enemies for it
19	They abuse their servants and minions in awful ways
20	They're building up credibility for a huge betrayal

Factory Building

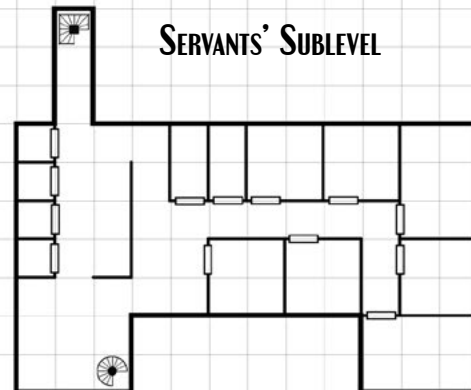Offices, Factory Floor, and Upper Floor
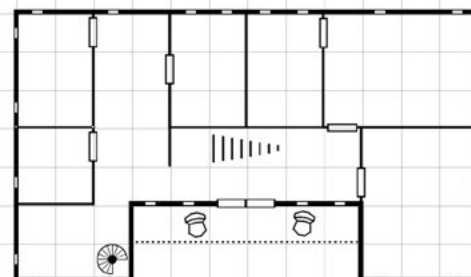
One Square = 3 Meters
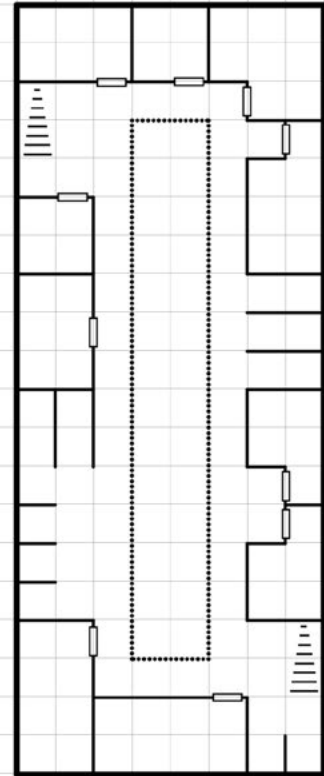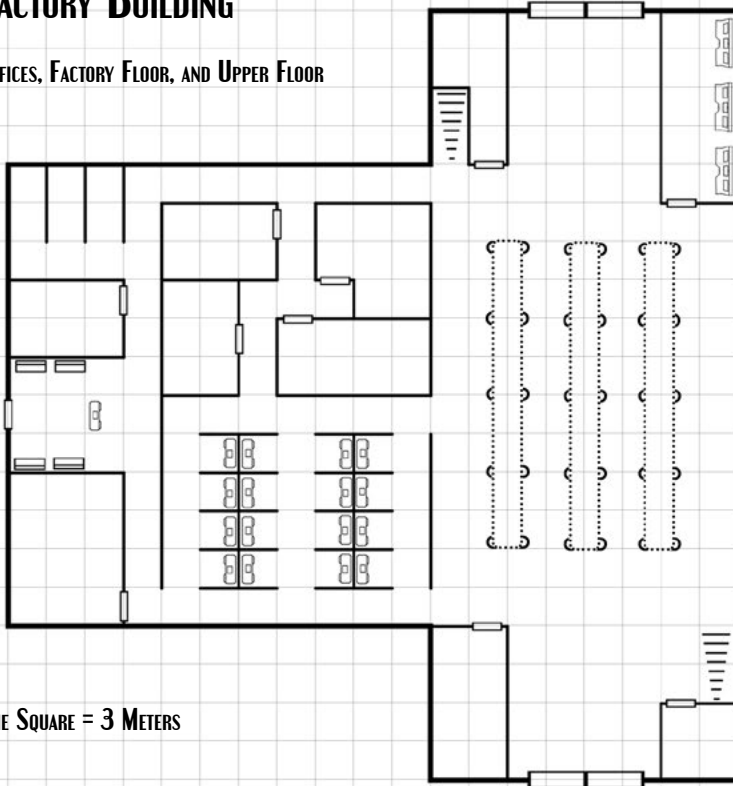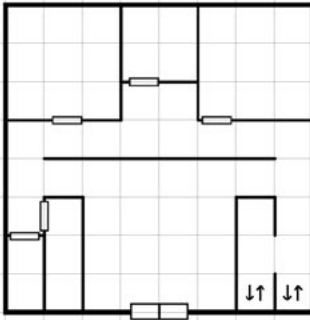
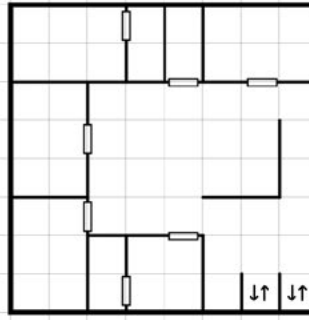# Walled Estate

Main Level
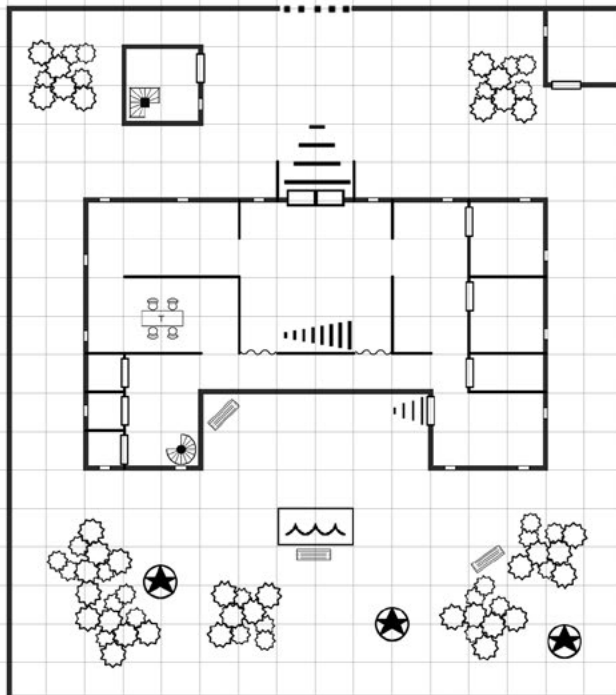
Servants' Sublevel
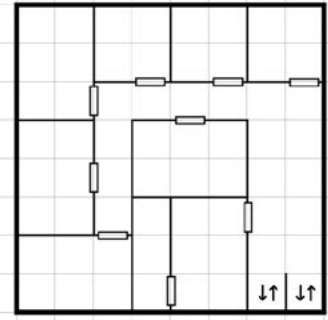
Upper Level

Urban Office

Ground Floor

First Floor

Second Floor

Third Floor
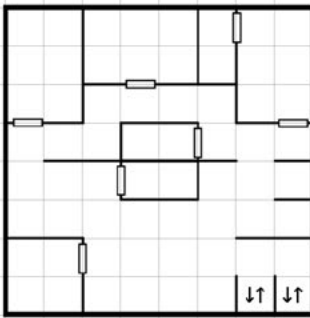
Fourth Floor
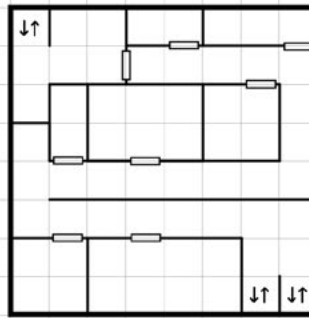
Restricted Floor
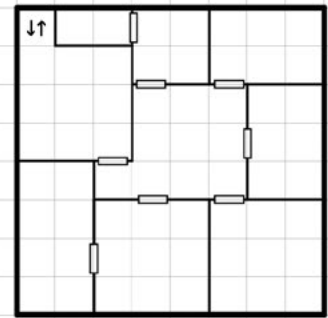
Shantytown
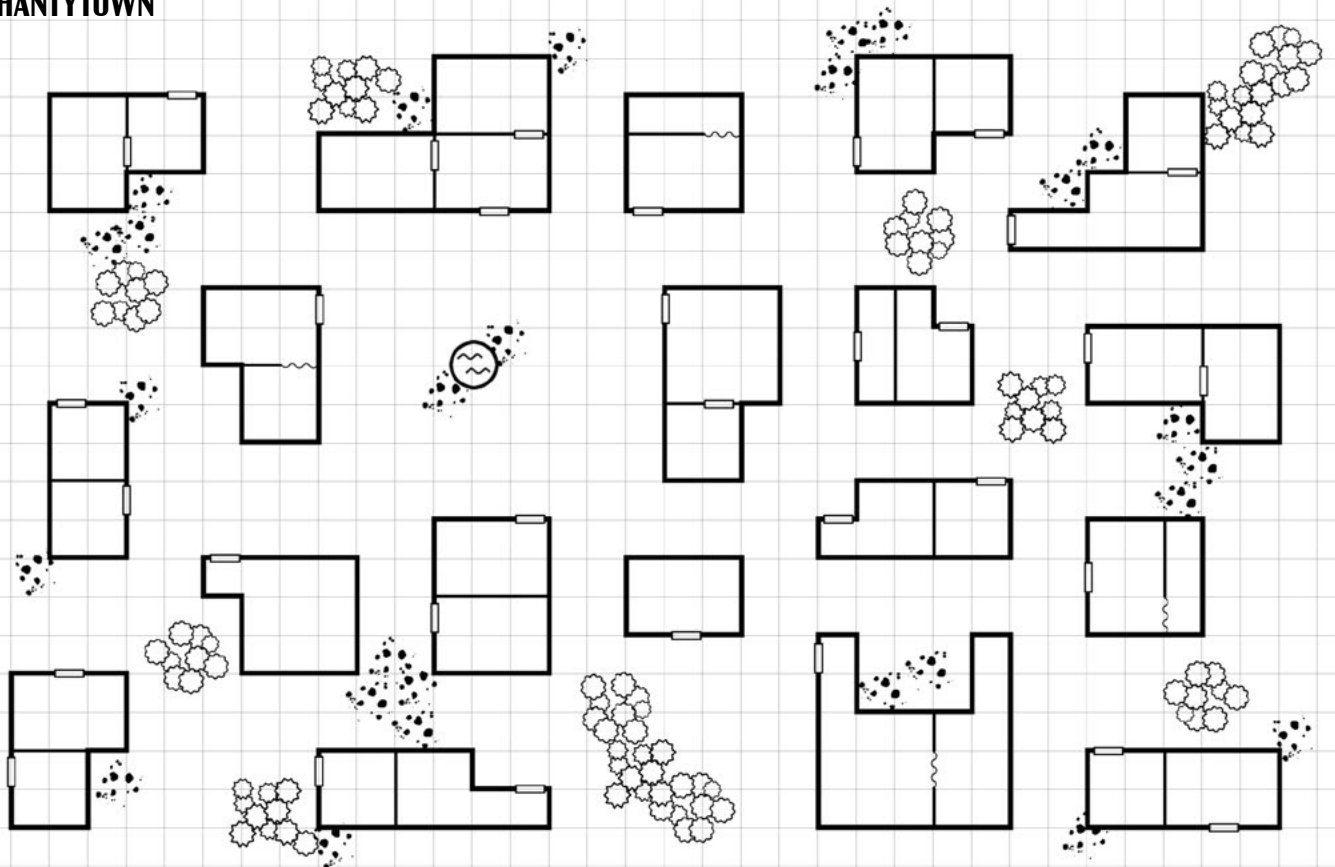
PLANETARY TRADE PROFILE

World	

Local Credit Balance	

Friction		HQ Level	
		Max H, Points	

Local Factor	

Holding	Point Cost

	Atmosphere
	Temperature
	Biosphere
	Population
	Tech Level
	Tags

Authorities	
Antagonists	
Things	
Places	
Complications	
Regulations	

1d10	Trade Good	Cargo Type Classes	Cost/Ton
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
Type Mods			

1d6	Troubles		in 10 chance
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			

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