COLONIES

Settlement stories for *Uncharted Worlds*
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COLONIES

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INTRODUCTION

Hab-domes clustered around atmosphere processors. Pressure shelters built into underground caverns. Tin shacks under an alien sky. Every colony world is different. But every one of them is a community, full of people trying to make a new life in a new place.

Colonies is a story supplement for the *Uncharted Worlds* roleplaying game which provides additional material on running campaigns set on colony worlds. It is intended to be used as a source of ideas during campaign setup. *Colonies* includes:

- Advice on campaign setup
- Optional rules for colony campaigns
- "Frontier Hellhole", a quick-start campaign.

Because people live in all sorts of places...

COLONY CAMPAIGNS

The default setting for *Uncharted Worlds* is a Starship campaign. A plucky band of adventurers crammed together on a small ship, travelling from planet to planet, getting into trouble, and running away from it. The fictional inspiration is *Firefly*, but could also be *Blake's 7* or *Dark Matter*. Regardless, the campaign is mobile and inter-planetary or interstellar, and the characters can always try and outrun their debts.

Uncharted Worlds also suggests other possible settings: Cities, Stations, Grand Starships, and Colonies. In a Colony campaign, the characters live in a frontier colony, a town shared with a number of NPCs. A Colony campaign charts the growth of the community, its struggles and trials, and all the interpersonal drama and small town politics. Fictional inspirations are TV shows such as *Defiance, Earth 2, Fortitude, Outcasts,* or *Terra Nova,* and books such as *Dragonsdawn, Forty Thousand in Gehenna, The Legacy of Heorot,* or the *Coyote* series.

Colony campaigns differ from Starship campaigns in important ways. The campaign is fixed around the colony and its people, and stories limited to a single planet, or a single solar system at most. There is likely to be a greater focus on politics and relationships. Most importantly, the characters can not simply run away from trouble or Debt — at least, not if they want their home to survive unscathed.

Multi-threaded stories
In a typical starship campaign, the characters all being on the same ship means they can be assumed to act as a group at least some of the time. This makes it easy to introduce and manage stories. But in Colony, City or Station games the characters are more likely to be independent of one another and may not form a group or traditional "adventuring party". They may even be working at cross-purposes.

This requires a change in story structure, from group-focused to individually-focused stories. The sequence of play (*Uncharted Worlds*, page 14) stays the same, but the focus of it should move from character to character as appropriate. Jump Points will need to be either colony-wide events to which every character can react, or individual micro points for each character. Whether those threads link up or cross-over is a question to be determined in play.

CAMPAIGN SETUP

To set up a Colony campaign, follow the process in *Uncharted Worlds* (page 156), with the following changes:

- **Choose a Setting:** Obviously, the setting is "Colony", but the players and GM should also decide on the basic concept of the colony (page 5) and on what sort of story they are telling (page 6).
- **Character creation:** The players should decide what role their characters fill in the colony and why they are there. Common roles from fiction include colony administrators, law enforcement, scientists, community leaders, and explorers. Ideally, the characters should be influential in some way, or people others look to to solve problems.
- **Faction creation:** After the usual Faction creation process, the players and GM should answer the question "why is this Faction interested in the Colony?". The group should also assign Colony Debt (page 13) if desired.
- **Colony creation:** Instead of creating a ship, the players and GM will create the Colony itself, fleshing out the details (page 7), deciding its resources (page 10), and placing their Workspaces. They should also create a basic map of the Colony if required.

Quickstart

This book includes a quickstart campaign, "Frontier Hellhole", for groups who wish to get started quickly. The group should create characters as usual, or use the templates from http://uncharted-worlds.com/indexdownloads.html. The quickstart includes Factions and the basics of the Colony, as well as some prompts to allow the group to customise it. The GM can either create an introduction specific to the characters (see "Stories" on page 22), or use one of the Jump Points provided in this book. The "Assassination Attempt", "Storm", or "Unexpected Arrivals" Jump Points from *21 Jump Points* could also be used.

The book also includes two example colonies, Korad (page 14) and Wakefield (page 15). Each of these has a broad concept, a few details, and a single defined Faction. The rest can be customised by the group.

COLONY CONCEPT

Before creating characters and factions, the players and GM should decide on the basic details of the Colony. What sort of a world is it? Why is the colony there?

What sort of a world is it?
Paint in primary colours here: is it a forest moon, arid and mountainous, or frozen plains? Remember that people have to be able to live there, but people can live in some pretty barren places with enough support. While all of the above examples assume a breathable atmosphere, your Colony could be a collection of pressurised habitats on an airless rock.

Why is the Colony there?
Colonies are founded for a reason, usually economic. So why colonise this world? What resource(s) does the Colony exploit? How do the colonists expect to sustain themselves and make a living?

This doesn't necessarily mean all colonies are mining worlds, scientific outposts, or aimed at harvesting valuable local wildlife. Breathable air and space to grow is a resource, as is freedom from whoever was following you. A Colony could simply be a habitable world its discovers decided to settle.

After answering these questions, you should have a one-sentence capsule description of the Colony. For example:
*   *Pana* is a frigid and icy mining colony, populated by transported prisoners
*   *Waoku* is a scientific outpost, studying the wildlife of the world's towering jungles.
*   *Siginak* is a arid, barely habitable rock, colonised by desperate refugees fleeing their homeworld.

STORY TYPES

Colony stories in science fiction tend to fall into two categories. In *colonisation stories*, the characters struggle to establish the basics of life on a new world while uncovering the mysteries of their new home. Themes typically involve exploration, the discovery and study of alien life, and finding a way to survive in the new environment. In *established colony stories*, the initial struggle is behind them, and the characters must instead contend with threats such as disease or invasion, or struggle for self-sufficiency or independence. Overlapping with both of these are *contact stories* exploring the relationship between the colonists and an intelligent indigenous population.

At this stage, only the type of story needs to be decided. The specifics will come later, during play.

Native life
A lot of colonisation stories revolve around interactions with native life. For example:
- The colonists could discover a previously unknown but dangerous lifeform, or new behaviour from a known species which makes them far more dangerous than initially expected.
- A species believed to be unintelligent could display previously unobserved signs of intelligence, creating threats and ethical dilemmas for the colonists.
- Many colonisation stories explore a version of the Gaia Hypothesis, positing some sort of awareness in the planetary ecosystem which causes it to resist invaders.

Contact stories and colonialism
Colonialism is a sensitive topic. In the real world, contact between European colonists and indigenous peoples led to subjugation, exploitation, the elimination of indigenous cultures, and genocide. Groups wishing to tell a contact story may wish to negotiate some boundaries about acceptable content before beginning. They should also discuss which perspective the story will be told from: that of the colonists, or that of the indigenes.

The characters may do a better job of handling contact than historical humans did. The only way to find out is to play and see what happens.

COLONY DETAILS

Once you have decided on your Colony concept and created characters and Factions, it's time to flesh out the details of your Colony. The players and GM should discuss the following:

Basic needs
In order to survive, people need atmosphere, food, water, and power. How does the Colony provide these? Is the atmosphere breathable without assistance, or is it tainted or deficient in some way (requiring filter masks, goggles, or other protection to breathe, as well as pressurised habitats)? Does the Colony import food, grow it hydroponically or in greenhouses, or have open-air crops in the local soil? Does it use a solar farm or fusion reactor for its electricity supply, and is there enough power to go round? Do the colonists live in domes, pressurised habitats, or houses built of local materials? Answering these questions will give an insight into daily life of the Colony.

History
Who founded the Colony, and how long ago? Who owns it, or *thinks* they own it? Who were/are the original settlers? Do they have any cultural quirks? What social divisions did they bring with them to their new home? If the group has chosen a contact story, they should also start thinking about the indigenous population (see below).

Social divisions
Social divisions can also have been created after colonisation. One of the staples of colony fiction in SF is a generational divide between the initial settlers and their children who know no other way of life.

Economy
What does the Colony produce locally? What (if anything) do they export or import? How do the colonists make a living? What essential goods do they always need?

Frontier self-sufficiency
In *Uncharted Worlds*, interstellar travel involves chains of fixed Jump Points. Travelling between inhabited systems can take a month or more. Travel time on the fringes can be even greater. As a result, colonists have to make do with what they have — they can't just order up new antibiotics when the nearest real medical facility is a couple of months away. Which is why they have Moves like Tinker, Construction, and Survival...

Community
Colony stories are about communities, and the best way to get that across is to give it a human face. Who are the important people in the Colony, besides the characters? Who are some other people they might interact with? What do members of the Colony celebrate, remember, hope, fear? What do they expect their future to be like?

Native life
Was there native life on the planet before it was colonised? If so, what form does it take? Are there viruses, bacteria, multicellular organisms? Mats of toxic algae on the shores, or terrifyingly fast predators in the jungles? An indigenous population? Most importantly, how do the colonists interact with it?

Atmospheres and life
Humans require oxygen to survive. But as currently understood, oxygen is a byproduct of life. If the Colony's atmosphere is breathable, then that implies either that there is native life, or that the world has been terraformed. Alternatively, it could be a mystery for the colonists to solve...

Indigenous populations
By default, *Uncharted Worlds* is a humanocentric space opera. Groups wishing to tell a contact story should decide whether the indigenous population are an alien species, or the human remnants of a previous colonisation effort.

Intelligent alien species can be defined using the rules in *Far Beyond Humanity.* A single-planet species should be either Independent or Cultural. If you do not have *Far Beyond Humanity,* ask the group some basic questions: what do they look like, how technologically advanced are they, how are they governed?

For indigenous humans, the group should decide how long ago they colonised the planet and what happened to the original colony. If they have technologically regressed, then indigenous characters can be represented using the "Brutal" or "Rustic" Origins.

Regardless of whether they are human or alien, the group should also decide why a Colony is being established on a planet which already has someone living on it, how much the two groups know about each other, and the general attitude of the colonists towards the indigenes.

Alternatively, groups which prefer a real first contact mystery story could define all of these facts in play.

Final touches
Once the group has discussed the above, the GM should ask the players the following questions:
- How is the Colony governed? Who is unhappy with the current administration and why?
- What hostile feature of the environment makes life difficult for the colonists? How do they try and mitigate this?
- What does the Colony desperately need and will fail without?
- What is the Colony's biggest advantage?
- What is the biggest threat to the Colony's survival?

These should give an idea of current problems facing the Colony and some initial hooks for stories.

Integrating the characters
Once the Colony details are settled, the GM should prompt each player for details about their character to help integrate them into the community. For example:
- What generation of colonist are you?
- What ship did you arrive on?
- Where did you / your family come from?
- What were you running from when you decided to come here?
- What did you hope to build by coming here?
- Who do you remember from your childhood, and why?
- Who was the first person you met when you arrived here?

COLONY RESOURCES

The resources possessed by the Colony are those demanded by the fiction. At minimum this will be:
- A basic spaceport, sufficient for ships to land, unload cargo, and refuel.
- A minor market, providing basic goods to the colonists

If the Colony has any sort of organised government, it will usually also have:
- A handful of utility vehicles (typically Class 1, but Class 2 if e.g. Sealed vehicles are required)
- Two Class 1 crews useful for Colony administration.

Whether any of these resources can be accessed by the characters depends on their roles in the Colony and the fiction.

If the group prefers, they can customise their resources, by choosing two advantages and one drawback from the lists below:

Advantages
- Additional crew: Another two Class 1 crews.
- Additional vehicles: another 4 suitable vehicles
- Armoury: A stockpile of Class 1 weapons for defence, sufficient to arm the colonists as a militia.
- Specialist crew: Two crews are Class 2.
- Specialist vehicles: All vehicles are Class 2 (or Class 3 if Sealed vehicles are required)
- The Colony has an additional market, providing some form of specialised or illicit goods (specify what)
- The Colony is visited regularly by traders: Class 1 and 2 goods are available, at a price, if you wait long enough

Drawbacks
- Inexperienced crew: Two crews are Class 0 rather than Class 1
- Poor vehicles: The Colony has only two working vehicles.
- The colonists are a lawless bunch: Need: +Law
- The colonists suffer from persistent ill-health. Need +Medicine
- The Colony's equipment is poorly maintained and may not be working when needed. Need +Maintenance
- The Colony is a backwater and rarely visited. Need +Trade

Needs

Several of the drawbacks apply Needs to the Colony. When a Colony needs something, the GM should raise it whenever it seems appropriate in the fiction, using the foreshadow trouble, advance a threat, or break something Moves as required. These Needs should snowball to serious problems if left unaddressed. For example:

- **Need: Law** should result in escalating criminal activity, starting with bar brawls and escalating to thefts of vital equipment or even murders.
- **Need: Maintenance** should see persistent minor equipment failures, with vital equipment (the power, water or air supply) failing if required.
- **Need: Medicine** should start off with minor illnesses, and snowball to a full-scale epidemic if untreated
- **Need: Trade** means that people can't purchase vital supplies from offworld when needed, resulting in hoarding, black markets, and discontent.

RULES VARIANTS

This section contains optional rules and suggestions for how certain Moves should be handled in a Colony setting.

Acquisition: Colony Economics
In addition to acquiring personal assets or services, the Acquisition Move can be used to acquire assets or services from or for the Colony.

Examples of acquiring assets or services from the Colony include getting the colonists to support or work on the construction of a new building, provide goods for a common purpose, or contribute to a ransom. Costs or tasks could include having to persuade or do favours for key NPCs or groups, political opposition, or activation of a relevant Need.

Examples of acquiring services or goods *for* the Colony include obtaining a new reactor core, recruiting large numbers of new colonists, or persuading a ship captain or Faction to make regular trade visits to the Colony. Usually these services will come from offworld, requiring offworld visits for negotiation or significant delays for messages to travel. Costs or tasks could include trade concessions, land grants, the provision of unusual cargos, or political support. If a Favour is required, this can either be incurred personally, or as Colony Debt.

Command: Community Leadership
The Command Move (*Uncharted Worlds*, page 24) allows characters to give orders to NPCs inclined to follow them, such as indebted NPCs or crews loyal to them or an ally. In a Colony setting where the characters are seen as leaders of some sort in the community, this may include groups of ordinary colonists, especially in a crisis where they are looking for someone to tell them what to do.

As usual, any orders must be within the NPC group's capabilities and consistent with its values and loyalties. Ordering a group of ordinary colonists to put out a fire, search for a missing person, dig graves, or build emergency shelters is unlikely to be problematic. Ordering them to fight attacking pirates or care for obviously infectious plague victims will require the character to be especially convincing.

On a partial success, in addition to the suggested outcomes, ordinary colonists as a whole may be unwilling to obey future Commands from the character until the issue is rectified. Depending on the circumstances, failures could lead to strikes, protests, or other political challenges within the Colony.

Cramped Quarters: Community Life
The Cramped Quarters Move (*Uncharted Worlds*, page 29) is easily applicable to a Colony setting. While there may be more physical space than on a starship, the small social world of a Colony can easily lead to similar tensions. GMs should call for Cramped Quarters rolls whenever a significant amount of time has passed.

In a Colony setting it is more likely that Cramped Quarters will be used on NPCs. In such circumstances the GM can prompt another member of the group for a question e.g. *"I don't know - what does Dow want to know about Orcha, and what will they do with the information?"*

Optional Rule: Colony Debt
Founding and maintaining a Colony is an expensive business, and usually beyond the means of any individual. To represent this, the group may choose to assign the Colony Debt as if it was a character. The group should decide whether the Colony is independent, or whether it owes allegiance to a particular Faction (typically the Faction which funded or founded it), and assign Debt appropriately (see *Uncharted Worlds*, page 136).

Colony Debt can be used to make significant Acquisitions for the Colony e.g. new parts for the atmospheric processor, vital medical supplies to quell an epidemic, a contract for a dedicated supply ship. It can also be accrued by failing to meet Faction demands. If the Colony has too much Debt, the relevant Faction(s) may foreclose, by seizing the Colony's exports, installing their own government, or launching a punitive expedition.

EXAMPLE: KORAD

Themes: Oppression, Labour relations

Korad is an arid world, barely habitable by humanity. Most of the planet's water is locked up in its small polar ice-caps or in deep underground aquifers. The surface is mostly barren desert, with only a handful of areas where crops can be grown without assistance. There is a shallow ecosystem of various types of lizard-like creatures, many of which are dangerous.

The planet is rich in minerals, and so is the site of a small mining colony. Nominally self-governing, the colony is effectively controlled by **Dhatu Holdings**, a *brutal industrial conglomerate*, which owns the starport, the refinery, and the vast, open-cast mines from which rare-earth ores are extracted. Labour is shipped in from offworld with promises of good money to be made in the mines, then subjected to contracts which verge on debt-slavery. Many die before they are able to repay the cost of their passage, let alone a ticket home. Some become "defaulters", fleeing into the barrens and trying to scrape a living from the wasteland. A small middle class of independent colonists and "paid-offs", ex-miners who have worked their way out of their contracts, provides services to the miners while wondering if they can build a better world. Some have also fallen in love with the planet's harsh landscape, which the mines are slowly destroying.

Discontent is growing and there is talk of the miners organising a union to fight for better pay and conditions. Can the colonists gain a better life without a corporate crackdown? Or will **Dhatu** abandon and embargo the planet rather than allow its workers to get a better deal?

EXAMPLE: WAKEFIELD

Themes: Colonialism, Inter-cultural conflict

Wakefield is a terraformed world, with a completely introduced ecology and an engineered environment optimised for human habitation. Originally known as "Kari", it was first colonised a century ago. The original colonists were part of the Rustic movement, and established an intentionally low-tech, low-population agricultural society, sustainable in the event of a collapse of interstellar civilisation.

A decade ago, shifts in the interstellar economy decreased the value of the agricultural goods exported to pay off Kari's terraforming loan, resulting in bankruptcy. The colony did not import much, so life onworld was initially unchanged. However, settlement rights to the planet were sold to **Austral Frontiers**, an *underhanded colonising society*. Renaming the planet "Wakefield", they embarked on a new colonisation drive, based on exploitation of natural resources, development of manufacturing, rapid population growth, and replication of their hierarchical social model — with **Austral Frontiers** profiting at every step of the way.

A complicating factor is that while **Austral Frontiers** has acquired settlement rights, it has not gained outright control of the colony's government, or its land and resources. The society has been able to purchase some land, and has established a settlement near the original colony site, but future expansion depends on their ability to acquire it from the Kari colonists. Meanwhile the society's dubious methods and the different lifestyle and values of the new colonists is leading to rising tensions. Can the two colonies find a way to pursue their separate visions on the same world, or is conflict inevitable?

QUICKSTART: FRONTIER HELLHOLE

Themes: Community, Independence

OVERVIEW

"Frontier Hellhole" is a campaign quickstart, intended to provide a framework for groups to begin their own Colony campaign. It includes Factions, a description of the lawless colony of Busby's World, and a few plot suggestions. The background information should be provided to the players before character creation.

The characters should be influential in some way, or people the other colonists look to to solve problems. They may also seize on the seeds in the setting to write themselves into the colony's history as e.g. the newly arrived **Republic** governor, justice or marshall, the current owner of Dow's bar, or the new **Vyapara** starport administrator. Other good roles include a town doctor or religious leader, a trader trying to profit from the *hurhur* trade, or an influential hunter.

The GM will need to create an initial situation suitable for the characters from the components provided, after which the player's choices will shape the story as usual.

Historical inspiration
"Frontier Hellhole" is inspired by a real place: Kororāreka in New Zealand's Bay of Islands. Nowadays it is known as Russell, and its a sleepy tourist town best-known for being over the bay from a place called Waitangi. But two hundred years ago it was a lawless whaling port known as the "the hell-hole of the South Pacific", infamous for drunkenness, brawling, and prostitution.

The chief difference is the absence of prior inhabitants. New Zealand was already settled by Māori when Europeans arrived, and Kororāreka's story was one of trade and eventually conflict with them. I wanted instead to focus on the themes of lawlessness and distant government trying to exert control, while also leaving space for groups to use the traditional colony story trope of alien life if they wanted, so I've left that bit out. Groups wanting to explore themes of colonialism and inter-cultural conflict could consider using the Wakefield example colony (page 15) or other early New Zealand settlements as inspiration.

FACTIONS

The following Factions are suggested. Some details are deliberately left vague to allow customisation:

- **The Avalon Republic** is a *controlling, authoritarian government*. It is distant from the frontier, so its **Might** is weakened here — but if it so chose it could bring down the full military force of dozens or hundreds of star systems. Its **Ideology** is to establish order. Its interest in Busby's World is to bring it fully under control and prevent any threat to the Republic, law or commerce from arising there.
- **Vyapara** is a *rapacious corporate cartel* which aims to completely control interstellar trade for its own profit. It has interests on most worlds and a lock on bulk commerce; if it wishes, it can cut off trade to a world, destroying planetary economies. Its interest in Busby's World is twofold: it controls and collects tariffs from the starport, and it wants to expand and monopolise the *hurhur* trade.
- **The Taskar Syndicate** is a *secretive criminal network* of smugglers and pirates. It has contacts on most settled worlds, and if you want it, they can find it, regardless of legality. Its interest in Busby's World is in smuggling goods to and from the colonists under the nose of **Vyapara**, and in using the Colony as a base for R&R, transshipment and cargo laundering.
- **The Omega Group** is a *sinister scientific council*. Their aims are obscure, but they are involved in all aspects of research, regardless of ethics or legality. The profits from sale of their products provides more than sufficient funds to defend their facilities and intimidate those who threaten them. They have a research facility on Busby's World, ostensibly for ecological study and pharmaceutical research from the world's unusual biochemistry. They may be seeking to replicate the *hurhur* through genetic engineering to claim the market, or to clone the *kotkar* for use as a biological weapon.

BUSBY'S WORLD

Named after its discoverer, Busby's World or Busby is a habitable world beyond the formal frontiers of **Avalon Republic** space. Physically, the world has a slightly smaller radius and surface gravity than standard. It is orbited by two small moons, Khidak and Canda. The planet has an oxygen / nitrogen atmosphere, though a high proportion of carbon dioxide (7%) makes it unsafe to breathe without assistance.

Threat: A tainted atmosphere
Breathing Busby's atmosphere unaided will cause dizziness, headaches, dimmed sight and hearing problems within a few minutes, followed by unconsciousness and eventually death. This is represented as a passive threat with an agenda of cause dizziness, knock unconscious. The problem can easily be avoided using filter masks, and buildings are constructed with filters, airlocks, and overpressure systems to prevent leaks.

Busby's World has a well developed native ecology across a number of biomes. The equatorial regions support vast temperate forests home to numerous forms of animal life, some of them dangerous. However the native biochemistry is chirally incompatible with that of humans, and this combined with dangerous wildlife and the atmospheric taint meant the planet was not considered a desirable target for colonisation. Busby was ignored for decades, visited only by occasional scientific expeditions.

Incompatible biochemistry
The ecosystem of Busby's World uses L-sugars and D-amino acids, meaning that it is incompatible with Terran-evolved life. Ordinary humans can not gain nutrition from Busbian plants and animals, and vice versa, and ordinary crops will not grow in untreated Busbian soil. The problem can be solved with genetic engineering, or with appropriate enzyme supplements, however. Some explorers may also know of a few species which can be consumed.

Approximately fifteen years ago a scientific expedition discovered the *hurhur*, a large furred herbivore native to one of the equatorial forests. The fur of the *hurhur* was highly marketable and became a luxury item. Freelance expeditions were launched to meet the demand, with small groups of hunters armed with stunners and rifles competing to kill and skin as many *hurhur* as possible. It did not take long before a freelance settlement grew up on the equatorial continent to supply the hunting parties. Named "Dow" after an early resident, the settlement soon acquired a reputation for lawlessness, drinking, fighting, and prostitution. It

is informally known as "the hell-hole of the frontier".

The situation did not go unnoticed. A lawless colony beyond the frontier was not acceptable to the **Avalon Republic**, and it is moving to establish order in the settlement. Meanwhile, **Vyapara** seeks to control the *hurhur* trade, and has started by acquiring control of the starport.

Dow today

Dow is on a river in Busby's great equatorial forest. The settlement consists of three areas: Dow proper, the starport, and an adjacent scientific post owned by the **Omega Group**.

Dow proper consists of a series of pressurised hab-modules of various types placed on a cleared area of riverbank. The hab-modules mostly contain shops, workshops, bars, hotels, and brothels, with a few homes for the permanent residents. The permanent population numbers less than five hundred, and they are usually outnumbered by itinerant hunters visiting town to sell their furs, party, and resupply. Accommodation is often in short supply, and it is not unusual to see pressure tents pitched between the buildings when many hunting parties are in or there have been new arrivals from offworld. The town is lawless, with the large number of drunk hunters leading to nightly brawls and occasional fatalities. Business-owners are usually armed for their own protection, and the richer ones employ guards for their property.

The river is used for transport to the interior and various low-tech watercraft are usually beached on the riverbank. Flyers and shuttles are also usually landed and parked there.

The town gets its water supply from the river. Most of the early hab-modules were deliberately self-sufficient for power, and have inbuilt powerplants or small solar farms. One early entrepreneur brought a small surplus fusion reactor, and this supplies much of the town with power. There are a few small hydroponic farms and pop-up greenhouses, and even some carefully sterilised and treated patches of soil, and these are sufficient to provide a basic diet, but much of the world's food is imported. The exception is alcohol — there are local yeast-analogues capable of producing alcohol from native vegetation. But liquor and recreational chemicals are still a significant proportion of imports.

The starport is located in a clearing a few kilometres inland from the river. Originally just a patch of bare earth, a beacon, and a few sheds, it has recently been acquired by **Vyapara**, who are upgrading it. **Vyapara** now charges a landing fee, as well as a tariff on all goods coming on or offworld.

A kilometre upriver from Dow is the **Omega Group** base. Originally a small cluster of habs like Dow, this has recently been expanded, with a full pressure dome surrounded by laboratories. The base has its own power supply, landing pad, and orbital comms system.

Economy
Dow's economy is based around resource extraction. The Colony's primary export is *hurhur* fur, with a small amount of timber and scientific specimens. Imports include supplies for hunting parties, food, liquor, and pressure habitats and filters. There is as yet little on-world manufacturing beyond a few basic tools.

The great equatorial forest
The great equatorial forest covers most of Busby's largest (and best-explored) continent. The climate is temperate, and rain in the central highlands feeds the local rivers. The forest has a well developed ecosystem and numerous forms of plant and animal life, of which the most interesting is the *hurhur*, a large pack herbivore whose fur provides the basis of Busby's economy. Also notable are the *kotkar*, a dangerous clawed predator known to attack hunting parties; the *kia*, a small scavenger which seems to delight in stealing and destroying equipment; and the *wera*, a small predator whose poisonous sting is often fatal despite (or because of) Busby's different biochemistry.

Threat	Agenda
Hurhur	Eat food, mate (defend territory)
Kia	Explore, steal, destroy something vital
Kotkar	Stalk prey, attack from hiding
Wera	Get somewhere it shouldn't, sting

What else lurks in the forest, and whether it is dangerous to humans or the Colony, is unknown.

The rest of the world
The focus of Frontier Hellhole is on the colony of Dow and its immediate environs. The rest of Busby's World is unexplored. There are other continents, with a variety of terrain types, but there is little data beyond initial orbital surveys. Each group will have to decide for itself what else is to be found on Busby's World.

STORIES

Which stories you tell on Busby's World should depend on who the characters are and who they owe allegiance or Debt to. A campaign where the characters are aligned to the **Avalon Republic** and trying to establish order will be very different to one where they are long-time colonists trying to maintain their business in the face of outside interference. The net result is that it is impossible to provide a single, easy Jump Point as a campaign starter.

Instead, the GM will have to build the story around the characters, using the story hooks in the background for inspiration. The first part of this is customising Dow and crystallizing the threats and opportunities implied in the background material. Ask the players the following questions:

- What has the **Avalon Republic** done recently to bring order to Dow, and who is unhappy about it?
- How did **Vyapara** acquire control over the starport? Who have they pissed off by doing so?
- What's the latest disturbing rumour about what the **Omega Group** are doing in their dome?
- Who is the **Taskar Syndicate**'s chief contact in Dow, and how are they planning to avoid the **Vyapara** tariffs?
- Who is the person in Dow that everybody knows?
- What two groups within the town are constantly at each other's throats and why?
- What serious crime was committed recently, and how was the perpetrator dealt with?
- What major project would improve things in Dow significantly, and who is pushing for it?

The GM will then need to construct an *in media res* opening situation for the campaign. This should set the scene, present an immediate threat, opportunity or mystery which demands a response, and prompt the characters for action. One option is to use one of the example Jump Points from this book. Alternatively, the GM can construct one for each character. Some good opening situations are:

- A murder
- The arrival of a newcomer in town
- An experiment gone awry
- A problem out in the forest
- A celebration
- A funeral

Example questions for these include:
- Who has just turned up dead on the edge of town with a knife in their belly, and who is gunning for revenge over it?
- Who has just arrived in town, and why does their appearance mean trouble for you?
- What was the **Omega Group** testing which required a live *kotkar,* and how has it escaped?
- What have the *kia* destroyed with their curiosity, and what vital piece of equipment does one of them have in its paws?
- What is being celebrated, and why is it important to the Colony as a whole?
- Whose life is being remembered, and how did they die?

Once the campaign has begun the GM should follow the sequence of play (*Uncharted Worlds*, page 14) as usual. When it looks like things are slowing down, introduce a new situation and play to find out what happens. If the story seriously stalls, consider introducing a Turning Point, something which significantly upsets the equilibrium of the Colony. For example:
- A major disaster affecting the whole Colony
- A major discovery gives the Colony new opportunities or threats
- A Faction moves to establish control
- The colonists move to evict a Faction
- A significant influx of new colonists poses new challenges.

JUMP POINTS

CRASH

Themes: Mystery

Outline: A starship has crashed while delivering something vital to the Colony, and the cargo is missing.

Set the scene: (Read this first)
The crashed ship has ploughed a long furrow in the forest, knocking trees aside and smashing them into kindling. Miraculously, it is mostly intact, though it will never fly again. From the location, it was probably on final approach to the starport when whatever it was went wrong. But it is obvious to all that the crash was no accident — and that someone has already been here to pick over the wreckage.

Questions:
- What is the ship, and what vital cargo was it carrying for the Colony?
- What obvious sign is there that the crash was not an accident?
- How can you tell that someone has been here before you, and what is obviously missing from the wreckage?
- Did anyone survive the crash? What has happened to them?
- What natural threat is likely to interfere with your investigation of the wreckage?

FIRE

Themes: Crisis

Outline: An important Colony building is on fire, and the blaze threatens others.

Set the scene: (Read this first)
The flames leap up into the night. A crowd begins to gather, some wanting to help, some just wanting to watch. From inside the burning building there is a cry of someone trapped. The Colony is burning, and the fire could spread.

Questions:
- What important building is burning, and who is trapped inside?
- What will it spread to next, if nothing is done to stop it, and how will that be catastrophic to the Colony?
- How did the fire start? Who is being blamed?
- How does the Colony normally fight fires, and why isn't it working this time?
- What business were you involved in just before the cry of "fire", and how is this going to mess everything up?

MURDER

Themes: Mystery, Politics

Outline: A body is discovered, touching off conflict within the Colony. This Jump Point is inspired by *Defiance* episode 1, "Pilot".

Set the scene: (Read this first)
A crowd has gathered around the scene, and there are angry shouts. Someone is dead, and some of the bystanders want revenge on the killer. But is the case as clear as it seems?

Questions:
- Who is dead, and how did they apparently die?
- Who is the immediate suspect and why, and where are they likely to be hiding?
- Which group is already out gunning for them, and which group is going to protect them with force if necessary?
- What makes you doubt the suspect's guilt?
- What has recently been discovered, and who is trying to keep it secret?

RAIDERS

Themes: Action, Combat

Outline: The Colony is attacked and the characters must fight to defend their home.

Set the scene: (Read this first)
The Colony is going about its ordinary business. And then there is an explosion and a rattle of gunfire — the Colony is under attack!

Questions
- Who is attacking the Colony and why?
- Why did no-one detect the raiding party until it was too late?
- What vital facility is under immediate threat, and who or what do they want from it?
- Who or what is trapped by the fighting and needs to be rescued?
- What, in retrospect, makes you realise that this shouldn't have been a surprise?