

# *Double Adventure 5 Horde*

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# **TRAVELLER<sup>TM</sup>**

*Science-Fiction Adventure  
in the Far Future*

Game Designers' Workshop

*Double Adventure 5*  
*Horde*

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***TRAVELLER***™

*Science-Fiction Adventure*  
*in the Far Future*

Game Designers' Workshop

A modified portion of *Horde* was used as the official **Traveller** tournament at Gencon East, July 23-26, 1981.

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## *Horde*

**TRAVELLER**, Double Adventure 5, Part 2

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This booklet is a double adventure for Traveller, GDW's science fiction role-playing game set in the far future.

Traveller is GDW's trademark for its science fiction role-playing game materials.

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# Introduction

This booklet contains two complete and independent adventures for **Traveller** printed back-to-back. Both revolve around the same menace, but each is designed to stand entirely on its own. This adventure, entitled *Horde*, deals with a group of adventurers striving to save a planet from an alien invasion. If both adventures in this book are played, *The Chamax Plague* should generally be played first.

It is assumed that this adventure will be administered by a referee who has read it through completely and who is familiar both with it and with the rules for **Traveller**. This situation calls only for the basic **Traveller** booklets (Books 1, 2, and 3); no additional supplements, books, or other information are necessary for resolution of this adventure. As usual, paper, pencils, six-sided dice, and square-grid graph paper will prove useful.

## **Requires only the Basic Traveller Set**

## **STANDARDS AND ASSUMPTIONS**

The following standards and assumptions are used in the text of this adventure.

**Dates:** all dates herein correspond to the Imperial calendar. The year is 1107: the 1107th year since the founding of the Imperium. This

**Date:** 1107 adventure takes place sometime in that year. Once the adventure begins, time should flow normally. If necessary, alter the date for the purpose of continuity or to fit into an ongoing campaign.

**Place:** This adventure takes place on Raschev (C8697C4-6) which is located in the Reidan subsector just outside the Darrian subsector of the Spinward Marches. Raschev is one parsec from Garoo and one parsec from the Alenzar system found in *The Chamax Plague*. Raschev is a fairly large world, measuring 13,000 km in diameter with a standard atmosphere and water covering 90% of the world outside the Imperium surface. The planet is a largely agricultural world with extensive farmlands and a major fishing industry. The

climate is quite Earthlike, but the inhabited areas are concentrated in the southern temperate zone on a single subtropical continent; the weather here tends to be rather more moderate than usual for Earthlike planets, with temperatures usually ranging around 10 to 25 degrees Celsius.

Raschev was first settled by colonists from the Imperium about two centuries ago. It remains a comparative backwater, and off-world ships rarely land, with the exception of a packet from Garoo every 3 months. As a result, there is a general attitude of respect, even awe, for off-world technology; the people are inclined to look up to off-worlders in general and Imperials in particular.

## **CHARACTERS AND EQUIPMENT**

This adventure is intended for a band of adventurers numbering at least two and no more than eight, and in possession of a type A free trader or similar ship. A group of pre-generated characters is supplied in *The Chamax Plague*, although the referee may allow other individuals instead.

Characters may be allowed to purchase equipment as in *The Chamax Plague*.

## SITUATIONS

*Horde* is presented as a series of situations, all taking place against the backdrop of the invasion of Raschev. The referee should lead the players through the material presented on pages 7 and 8 which introduces the planet and the situation. Then the players may play through as many or as few of the scenarios as desired. It is recommended that situation 1, Outbreak, and situation 8, Last Chance, always be played, since the first serves as the opening of the troubles on Raschev and the last provides a resolution of the problem. From there, the referee is free to lead the group through any or all of the other six situations. Each scenario begins with background notes that summarize what has gone before; it is recommended that the referee who skips over certain scenarios acquaint the players with the relevant background material to give them some idea of the course of events.

The alien invaders in *Horde* are the same creatures as are found in *The Chamax Plague*, and the referee should be thoroughly familiar with the section of *The Chamax Plague* entitled The Chamax.

## FURTHER ADVENTURES

Decisions made by the players may alter the course of events, making necessary scenarios not given here. In such cases, the background provided in existing situations should make it fairly easy for the referee to devise others.

The referee may also desire to create additional situations within the existing framework. Other situations might include having individual travellers stranded alone, with limited ammunition and equipment, behind bug lines, escaping by evasion rather than open combat. Another possibility is that the adventurers might organize and protect an evacuation of a village by sea, encountering problems with desperate refugees. The government might experiment with the use of radio lures to draw a bug swarm into a trap. There are many other possibilities.

These scenarios have been designed for the standard adventuring party, but players who so desire can also use *Striker* or Book 4, *Mercenary*, to provide adventures based on larger actions between military units, perhaps led by or containing player-characters, and the bugs.

# An Unexpected Stopover

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The adventurers, passengers and crew of the free trader *Mudshark*, enter normal space near Raschev, an unimportant world of the Reidan subsector. Their hold contains a large cargo of laser carbines and power packs purchased speculatively on Garoo; the adventurers are hoping to make a profit by selling these weapons at another world. Although Raschev is an unlikely marketplace, it lies on a safe route to the center of the subsector, said to be a lucrative market. The group plans no more than a brief visit to Raschev for fuel and supplies before moving on.

They have not reckoned with an old, ailing ship; a key component in the fusion magnetics assembly fails during the final approach orbit. Only desperate improvisation and good luck get them down intact. One look at the Raschev starport makes it clear that the replacement part will have to be ordered from off-world, and port authorities inform them that Raschev's only regular off-world contact, the packet from Garoo, isn't due for two more months. Taking stock of their finances, the adventurers calculate that they won't be able to pay for repairs, support themselves on Raschev for the necessary five months, and still have enough money to supply their next jump.

The adventurers try to make the best of things. They can secure rooms at the rather shabby Raschevport Hotel. During the next week, attempts to sell their cargo are met with little interest; the militia force that passes for Raschev's army has no need for sophisticated laser weapons and no skill whatever in their use. So the week passes, with the adventurers growing bored, restless, and more than a little apprehensive about the state of their finances. One evening while relaxing with a computer-directed role-playing game in the hotel recreation area, they are interrupted by a well-dressed official named Hin Levairi.

Levairi tells them that a strange spacecraft has landed 230 km southeast of Loka, the planetary capital, in an uninhabited stretch of the Jourin Peninsula. Since the adventurers are widely travelled and familiar with many of the peoples (and spacecraft) of the outside universe, Levairi requests their assistance in identifying the strange vessel.

Levairi is willing to pay Cr100 per day per man to the party. He can't say how long the assignment might last; although it seems routine, there is always the possibility that this will prove to be an armed ship bent on raiding. In such a case, there might be further work for the group as advisers to the military.

The group is requested to join the staff of General Kal Varnikov who is assembling elements of the militia to surround the craft — just in case. They are to go out with an armored column early the next morning.

General Varnikov (567898, age 50) commands the armed forces of Raschev, a militia army established by the government primarily as a check upon possible civil disturbances. The last incidence of popular unrest occurred some seventy years ago, the so-called "Newton massacre" in which a street agitator and three bystanders were killed.

The militia is a reserve force led by a handful of professional officers and NCOs. It has not seen combat in many years; none of the present officers or men have ever

heard a shot fired in anger. Reservists spend one month out of each year on duty, training, drilling, putting out forest fires, and digging out storm-damaged towns.

The relatively low tech level of Raschev is reflected in the weaponry of the militia. The soldiers are equipped at tech level 6, with rifles, submachine guns, and even shotguns. There is a small armored force of light tanks and scout cars riding on four or six hard rubber tires, with ½-centimeter armor plate and turrets mounting heavy machine guns or 20 mm cannon. They are capable of 60 kph on roads and slow, limited mobility off roads, their purpose being to seize and hold towns.

The planet has no air force, but light 2- and 4-seater propeller aircraft are used for aerial recon, and a variety of transport helicopters are used to move troops, equipment, and supplies as needed. The wet navy on Raschev consists of a number of 5- to 10-man, 20-meter long powerboats used for coastal patrol and rescue. The only other sea-going vessels on Raschev are ketches, luggers, and similar small, open sailing craft used as fishing boats and as ferries across narrow stretches of water.

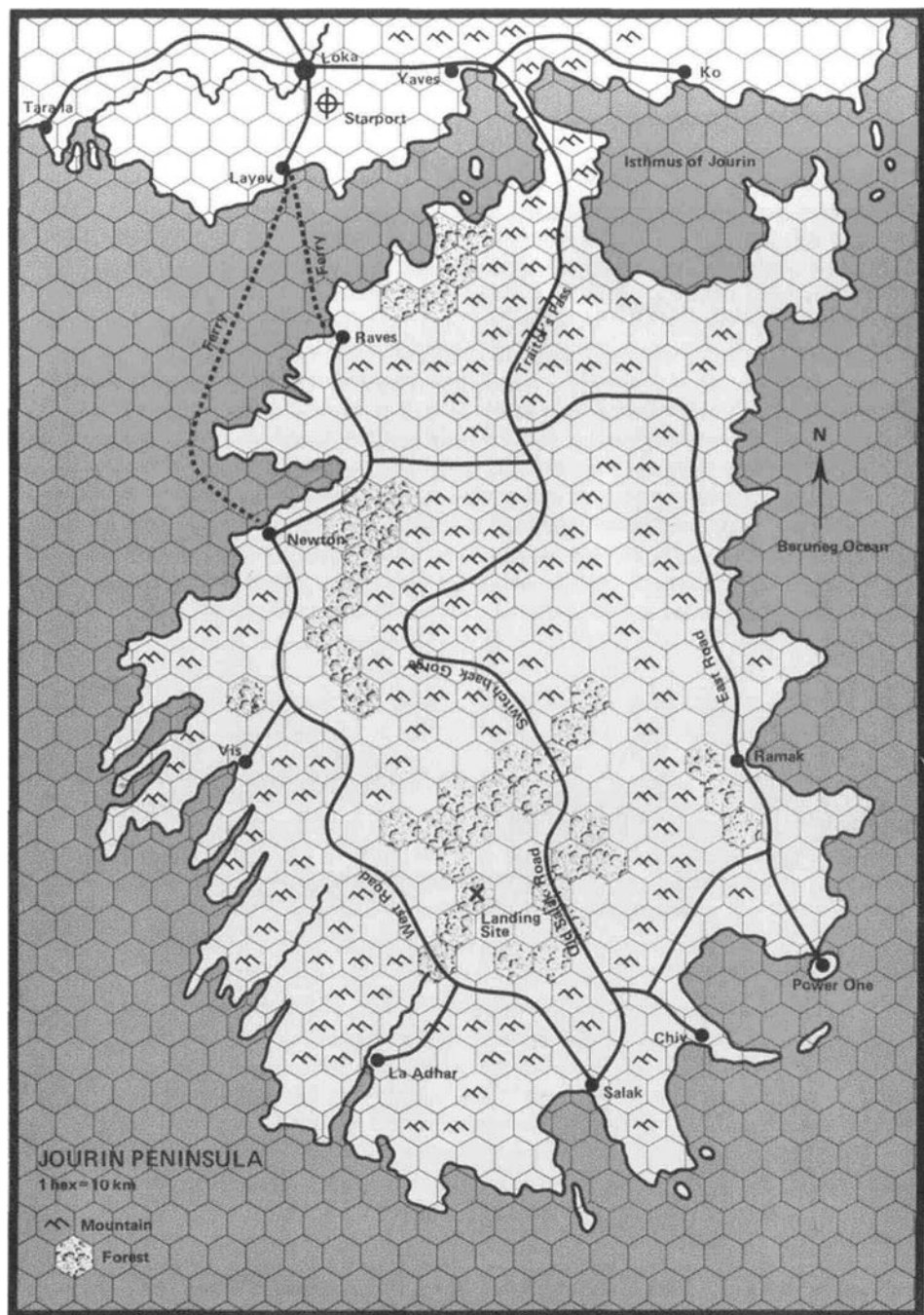
## **THE JOURIN PENINSULA**

The map on the facing page shows the Jourin Peninsula, jutting roughly south-east into the Beruneg Ocean. Like most of Raschev's single continent, it is a jumbled mixture of rich farmlands, broken terrain, mountain ridges, and forests. The marked towns are small, each having perhaps 8,000 to 10,000 inhabitants. Most of the towns rely heavily on the fishing industry for their livelihood, although privately owned farms are also numerous in the open areas around them. The peninsula has no dangerous native animals.

The body of the peninsula is joined to the mainland by a narrow isthmus (8 km at the narrowest point). One road winds through the difficult terrain, running in part through Traitor's Pass, a narrow gorge surrounded by impassible terrain.

On the northwest coast of the peninsula is the fusion power station Power One, the first and only result of an Imperial technical assistance mission, since withdrawn due to budget cutbacks. Power One was constructed five years ago on a rocky island joined to the mainland by a high, narrow bridge. The plant, although largely automated, is staffed by a small group of technicians and a militia detachment, and has dock facilities for two patrol boats. The plant provides power to much of the area, including the capital, Loka.





# Situations

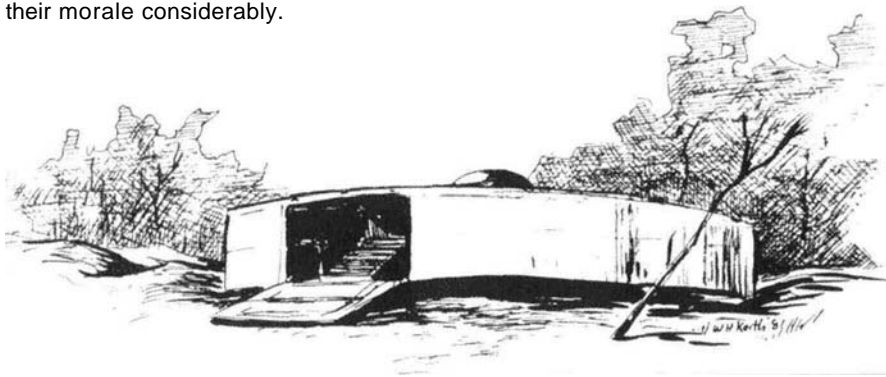
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The eight situations below are intended to present a coherent account of the invasion of Raschev. They are given in chronological order, and each deals with an important part of the course of the invasion. If a situation is not played, the background information contained within it should be given to the players at the proper time; the situation will occur whether or not the adventurers take part in it.

## SITUATION ONE: OUTBREAK

The armored column escorting General Varnikov and his staff (including the adventurers) leaves Loka early on the morning following the discovery of the unknown ship. The craft was first seen by an eccentric prospector, whose story of "a big flying canteen covered with frost" was ignored. Later reports on the presence of the ship (without frost) from more reliable sources have prompted the government to send out two regiments of militia and Varnikov's armor.

The army has surrounded the ship at a range of about 100 meters and can be seen after the group's arrival on the site to be quite nervous and uncertain. They are obviously poorly prepared for trouble, but the arrival of the armored forces lifts their morale considerably.



The grounded ship is unlike anything ever seen by the adventurers. It is a squat cylinder 50 meters across and 7 meters high, not counting an opaque dome on top and an undercarriage that has been partly buried in soft ground. There are no port-holes, openings, or markings, and there will be no response to any attempt at communication.

**Referee's Notes:** The adventurers may sit tight along with the militia and wait for developments, or they may try to get aboard. In the latter case, they will find the hull as resistant to damage as any starship bulkhead, with 1000 hit points being required for a breach.

In any event, after a period of waiting to be determined by the referee, an audible hum will be heard and a ramp will slowly unfold, revealing an opening in the side of the ship. Almost immediately, a large number of creatures will appear, boiling out of the opening in great agitation. They will at once begin to attack any

and every living thing in the vicinity. If the adventurers have played *The Chamax Plague*, the creatures will be recognized as chamax; their characteristics are fully described in *The Chamax Plague*. Since they will otherwise be unfamiliar, the creatures will be termed "bugs" in this adventure to avoid revealing their origin.

There are several hundred bugs on board the ship. They might be stopped with a resolute defense, but the untrained militia soon break and run in the face of what seems to them an inexhaustible supply of alien monsters, leaving the adventurers with a simple goal: survive, escape, and reach safety in the face of swarming bugs and panicked soldiery.

The referee should note that the bugs are aroused at the very start of the adventure; they will not, however, tunnel through the sides of the ship, as they are greatly disoriented and confused. The first ones outside, sensing food, will relay news of their discovery to the creatures still in the nest, who will use the door as the fastest route toward their meal.

As the party flees, the referee should roll every 15 minutes for an encounter. An encounter occurs on 6+, DM +2 if within 5 km of the landing site. The nature of the encounter is determined by the referee's decision or by an additional roll on the table below. Events 2-7 should occur only once. If one is rolled a second time, roll again; once all these events have occurred, treat a roll of 2-7 as no event.

<i>Dice</i>	<i>Encounter</i>
-------------	------------------

- |    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2  | A twisting dirt road through the woods. It leads back toward the landing site, and the adventurers will begin to suspect this if they follow it for a short time.                                                                                                                                                                |
| 3  | Two militiamen (one is 869534; the other was 764684, but has been badly wounded and is now 014684). The uninjured soldier will not leave his unconscious buddy, and will force the adventurers to help him get the man to safety, at gunpoint if necessary.                                                                      |
| 4  | An officer on General Varnikov's staff (677A98), wandering through the woods looking for his HQ unit. His presence with the adventurers will provide a DM of + or -2 (whichever is favorable) on the actions of militiamen elsewhere on this table, and will be likely to induce soldiers who are encountered to join the group. |
| 5  | A government truck, undamaged but stuck in a ditch. 45 strength points will be required to free it, while one person drives.                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 6  | 3D panicked soldiers. If the adventurers have transportation, they will attempt to requisition it on 8+. Otherwise, if the officer is present, they will attach themselves to him on 7+.                                                                                                                                         |
| 7  | A truck, driven by two militiamen on a dirt road. The truck will stop when hailed on 9+.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 8  | Ravine. If the party is following a road, the bridge has been blown by panicked soldiers. It will take 2D hours to detour around.                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 9  | 1D bug hunters.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 10 | 2D bug hunters.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 11 | 3D bug hunters.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 12 | One flying bug juvenile maternal.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

The referee should prepare a map of the area around the landing site, placing the closest hard-surfaced road about 15 kilometers away. The danger is over once the party has reached the road, gained transport, and driven away. If they do not have transport by the time they reach the road, a military vehicle will pass by on a roll of 10+ every 15 minutes, and will pick them up.



## SITUATION TWO: REFUGE

The breakout of the bugs from the alien craft was a blow that no one on Raschev was prepared for. It resulted in days of disorganization and total confusion. The adventurers escaped with fleeing elements of one of the militia brigades, reaching Loka after a desperate night's travel. Raschev's ruling council declared the situation to be a military emergency and called for martial law.

By the fifth day, reports from throughout the peninsula began to show a pattern. Refugees were fleeing into villages along the coast, and north across the Jourin Isthmus, running from an ever-increasing tide of bug hunters which were stripping the countryside of everything living. Every attempt to organize local defenses failed; the routed militia remained scattered, and efforts to reform units seemed to invite overwhelming attacks by roving hordes of bugs. Worst of all, General Varnikov, one of the few people on Raschev with the military experience to set up a defense and the ability to handle the shaky militia, was missing somewhere in the Jourin wilderness.

The adventurers are met in Loka by members of the ruling council, and a squad of militiamen. Their ship and their cargo have been confiscated for use during the emergency. The cases of laser weapons in the hold are to be issued to elite militia units which will begin training with them at once; it is hoped that these advanced off-world weapons will give the defense a desperately needed advantage.

The council is conciliatory. The adventurers are promised reimbursement for their cargo, their ship will be free (if and when the parts arrive), and a large but unspecified bonus will be theirs if they help with Raschev's defense. The council knows that the adventurers, with their familiarity with high-tech equipment, can do far more with laser weapons and their air/raft than the locals could hope to, with so little time for training. The party has little choice but to join the Raschev military, such as it is, against the invading horde.

Already there is an urgent need for the adventurers' talents. A single radio transmission has been received from General Varnikov: FORCE V TO LOKACOM. UNIT TRAPPED BY INVADERS NEAR SWITCHBACK GORGE. WARNING: ENEMY ATTRACTED BY RADIO TRANSMISSION. MAINTAIN RADIO SILENCE. AM LEAVING TRANSMITTER AS DECOY AND BREAKING OUT TOWARD HIGH GROUND. MESSAGE ENDS. The message, apparently taped, was repeated 18 times and then cut off. The party is asked to take their air/raft into the Jourin Peninsula, locate the general, and get him back to take charge of the defense.

**Referee's Notes:** Additional equipment will be available (tech 6 only) and can be requisitioned as needed. Weight limits for the air/raft must be considered, however.

Referring to the map of the peninsula, everything within 3 hexes of the landing site has been devastated, with little or no life remaining except for the bugs themselves. All areas within 8 hexes of the landing site contain large numbers of bug hunters and juveniles. Anyone flying over the area will run the risk (10+ each 15 minutes) of encountering juvenile maternals which can land on and attack an air/raft in flight.

The referee should secretly designate one hex in the mountains around Switch-back Gorge, within 6 hexes of the landing site, as the location of the General's stronghold. Rugged ground in the area has slowed the bugs down, and a perimeter defense has been able to hold them off for the time being. The defenders are, however, losing ground as more bugs enter the area and join the attack.

The players can locate the hex by tracking bug attackers from the air; obviously, attempts at radio communication will be unanswered.

The militia strongpoint will be crowded by civilian refugees as well as troops, cut off by the bugs, and with little hope of escape. Varnikov will refuse to abandon these people, despite the Council's orders. He will come only if helicopter transport is arranged, which will take 3D hours to organize, and 3D more hours to carry out. In the meantime, pressure from the bugs will be building.

The role of the adventurers in this scenario will vary. They may attempt to force the General to escape, or they may take a hand in coordinating the evacuation and assisting the troops in holding the shrinking defensive line.

The referee may of course add additional complications, such as panicked troops attempting to hijack the air/raft, or danger from juvenile maternals in the area.

### **SITUATION THREE: PERIMETER DEFENSE**

Within three weeks of the bug breakout from the ship, all of the Jourin Peninsula south of Traitor's Pass was overrun by bug hordes. Government forces finally succeeded in establishing a dug-in battle line across the north end of the pass and, supplied by road convoys from Loka, have been killing bugs as quickly as they advance through the pass. The terrain, fortunately, is such that the bug hunters are unable to cross the mountains at any point except the pass, although in time flying juvenile maternals will establish themselves on the other side. The bug tunnelling ability does not allow them to tunnel under mountains.

A new phenomenon has been observed: vast columns of bugs moving in formations several miles long, with the grossly distended and oversized bodies of adult maternals borne upon the backs of hunters. Apparently, as long as food remains available at a fairly close range (within 50 km or so) the bugs do not go into starvation-induced hibernation but migrate to find additional food. Until recently, bugs have only been approaching Traitor's Pass in comparatively small groups. Now, however, a massive column with a maternal has been observed approaching slowly, blackening the countryside over several square kilometers.



The militia has some long-range artillery on hand which is being assembled behind the front lines. A forward observer must be sent south of the pass to call in artillery fire to break up the approaching column before it gets too close and the weight of numbers outweighs the strengths of the barrage. The adventurers are

asked to provide air/raft transport for a forward observer, plus protection while he performs the job. The bugs' ability to home in on radio transmissions makes this job a particularly hazardous one; the authorities may have to turn the screws once again to persuade the adventurers to "volunteer" for the job, threatening to refuse ship repairs or payment for confiscated cargo.

**Referee's Notes:** The party will have to get the observer into position on a rocky hillock west of the junction between the two roads that meet south of Traitor's Pass; if they choose to proceed on the ground, rather than by air, they may have to fight bands of 1D to 6D bugs on the way. Roll 7+ every 15 minutes for such an encounter to occur. The same roll is used after the party is in position, except that a DM of +2 is applied during each period that the radio is in use.

The referee sets the length of the scenario secretly in advance by rolling 90 and recording the number. Thereafter, for each 15-minute period in which the radio is being used to call in fire, subtract the level of forward observer skill being used, plus 3, from the number. When the cumulative total reaches zero, then fire from the artillery has disrupted the column sufficiently for the group to withdraw.

Broadcasts from the adventurers may turn the bug column, but such an event is unlikely in view of the greater amount of life it detects beyond the pass. Roll 11+ each hour the radio has been used at least once for the column to turn toward the group. Each hour, a cumulative DM of +1 is applied to the number rolled for attacking bug hunters.

The militia observer is a junior lieutenant (685989) with forward observer-3. If he is killed, one of the adventurers will have to take over.

The referee is encouraged to work in additional complications, such as juvenile maternals, short ammo supplies, radio malfunction, or similar problems, to increase the level of excitement and the element of danger involved.



#### **SITUATION FOUR: POWER STATION**

The constant activity of the off-worlders eventually resulted in low power for

their laser weapons, a dangerous situation considering their reliance on the high-technology weaponry. Some spare power packs, of course, could be had by depriving the militia of some of their requisitioned lasers, but the question of recharging would only be postponed, not solved, by that answer.

One source of high energy for recharging the laser weaponry exists on the planet: Power One, the Imperial fusion power plant on a rocky island off the Jourin Peninsula. With the adventurers' ship still down because of its inoperative power plant, Power One is the only potential source of energy for recharging weaponry on Raschev.

The ruling council wants to find out if recharge at Power One will be feasible. There is a good chance that the bugs have not overrun the station, which was evacuated by sea early on in the invasion. The party is requested to investigate the island; since they are more familiar with laser weapons than the locals, their expertise will be needed. If possible, they are to blow up the bridge leading to the mainland in order to isolate and secure the position. Then they will power up the plant, recharge their own nearly depleted power packs, and turn the station over to militia forces.

The adventurers are allowed to draw one spare power pack each from the militia forces; more than that cannot be risked. They are also being sent in with minimal additional support: a technician and, if desired, one or two militia troopers. Larger numbers, it is feared, would attract too many bugs before the bridge could be blown and the station secured. The group can go in by air/raft (but watch weight limitations) or a small coastal patrol boat can be provided for a seaborne raid.

**Referee's Notes:** The referee must decide just what difficulties will be encountered in getting to the island and in securing it. The power station was attacked once by bugs during the retreat of the militia and technicians; it has sustained some slight damage to the main transformer (roll 1D for number of hours it will take to locate and patch the damage, with DMs for engineering or electronics skill among the adventurers). Another 1D hours will be needed to rig adapters on the power plant equipment to fit their packs, if they didn't think to rig something before setting out. Finally, 2D hours will be needed to power up the reactor.

A demolitions expert from the militia forces will be one of those available to assist them. If he is not taken, or if he is killed or incapacitated before the bridge can be mined, the only character in the party with experience in handling explosives is the army major.

The basic throw to blow the bridge successfully is 8+, DM +2 if the character placing the charge has experience with explosives. If the demolition throw is not made, roll again. A throw of 6- indicates that the charge was improperly set and will explode when someone attempts to see what has gone wrong; anyone within 10 meters will take 8D damage. Referees using Mercenary will want to follow the rules given there for demolitions instead.

If the bridge is blown, there will be danger from flying juveniles but not from hunters. The referee must determine bug encounters as needed to keep the game exciting.

## **SITUATION FIVE: METASTASIS**

The defensive line across the Jourin Peninsula was holding, and the numbers of migratory bug columns seemed to be dwindling with the food supply. It began to

seem possible that, if the militia could hold on long enough, the plague could be contained until the bugs succumbed to starvation.

Then reports came to Defense HQ from the fishing town called Layev, just across the bay from the ravaged peninsula. Gardens, trees, animals, and people were disappearing in small numbers near the edge of town, and several hysterical townspeople reported being attacked by horrid, pale spidery things. As evidence was pieced together, it became obvious that at least one juvenile maternal had hidden in the town, no doubt blown there from the peninsula by a storm that had raged a few days before. The adventurers are asked to help local militia locate the maternal and destroy it, before more maternals are born.

**Referee's Notes:** The referee must prepare a rough map of the area where the deaths have been reported: a town street with ten or twelve houses arranged along each side. Each house will have several likely hiding spots: basements, storm cellar style storage areas, empty spaces under front porches, backyard tool sheds, and so on. The area has been evacuated, but the buildings must be searched to locate the hidden maternal. The referee can use his map to describe each building to the players as they approach it; the characters in turn describe to the referee what they are doing and where they are searching. For each half hour, roll 1D; an aroused bug hunter will be encountered on a roll of 6. If the characters state that they are looking for one, they may spot an open screen grating with melted edges, leading to a basement. Another possibility would be to set out bait and watch from an air/raft, following the hunter to the maternal's nest.

The hunters encountered will be from the first generation produced by a newly nested maternal; as explained in *The Chamax Plague*, these are smaller and weaker than normal hunters. Their stunted size may fool the adventurers, but they are nevertheless quite dangerous. 5D of these small hunters are loose in the town; the referee should stress, when one is encountered, that it is much smaller, paler, and spindlier than the hunters the players are familiar with.

The referee should feel free to complicate things: newborn juvenile maternals or second-generation (full-sized) hunters may be in the nest area, and the possibility that more than one juvenile was blown into town should not be overlooked.

## **SITUATION SIX: PRISONERS**

Raschev was holding its own; the defense of Traitor's Pass was still intact, thanks to the artillery. But the danger of juveniles establishing new nests on the mainland could not be ignored; all it would need would be a single nest to bring the defenses of Raschev to disaster, and with the approach of the storm season high winds blowing from the peninsula toward the mainland were becoming more frequent. The status quo could not be long maintained; a solution had to be found.

Nuclear weapons were one answer. The planet could manufacture atomic bombs, and it was hoped by many that a combination of fallout and blast effects could be used to eliminate the bugs on the Jourin Peninsula. Production had already begun, but the pro-bomb faction of the Ruling Council had not yet won the support to order their use.

Other politicians were seeking ways to solve the problem without resorting to a nuclear attack that would be nearly as dangerous as the bugs themselves. But not enough is known about the invaders. Since examination of a live bug is, to say the least, hazardous, and since dead bugs have the disconcerting habit of being con-



sumed by acid before an autopsy can be performed, research into the creature's metabolism has been stymied. Some means must be found to capture — and contain — live specimens.

The adventurers are appealed to once again. The air/raft's mobility can get them deep into infested territory, into areas where the nests are hibernating and the threat is limited to questing hunters. A way of capturing specimens has been discovered, the result of an incident on the perimeter. Some soldiers were cut off by a small group of bugs, with no ammo and no hope of escape, when one discovered a fire extinguisher. Blasts from the cold CO<sub>2</sub> had a startling effect, causing the bugs to lapse into temporary hibernation. The group is to be equipped with fire extinguishers for making capture, and a large (one ton) refrigerated container is hooked up on the air/raft, powered by the onboard power system, to keep the captured beasts in suspended animation.

At least three specimens are required, preferably four or five, and each should be from a different bug nest. In this way, scientists hope to learn more about the mysteries of communication and cooperation.

**Referee's Notes:** The mission should be fairly routine, though the risk of activating hibernating nests should not be ignored. Follow normal procedures, as outlined in *The Chamax Plague*, to set up and resolve encounters.

Fire extinguishers are hand-held tanks of CO<sub>2</sub>, each capable of firing 5 bursts. When using a fire extinguisher, roll 8+ to hit the target at up to 3 meters distance. Bugs take no damage, but lapse into hibernation for a period of 10 minutes. Weight, 3000 grams. Tech level 5. Price, Cr25 each.

The referee should consider increasing the excitement of this adventure by having the air/raft power system fail at some crucial point of the adventure. When this happens, not only will the adventurers be stranded, but they will also have several hibernating specimens in their now-dead refrigerator, specimens who will wake up in approximately 30 minutes. Hasty repairs to the air/raft may be attempted, but doing so increases the danger from the imprisoned bugs.

Should the air-raft have been destroyed previously, aircraft may be substituted: 2- or 4-seater planes or transport helicopters. Copters can also be called in should the air/raft be abandoned, but radio calls for help will, of course, attract attention from bugs.

## **SITUATION SEVEN: SECOND LANDING**

Even as plans to counterattack the contained bugs are pushed ahead, a new disaster strikes Raschev. Starport Control picks up an incoming, unidentified craft entering the atmosphere and beginning a slow descent. The projected course for the unidentified ship carries it to a point not far from Loka, and the ship refuses to answer any signals from the ground.

A pilot, flying a two-seater plane toward the capital after a scouting mission, heard the radio traffic concerning the unknown vessel and flew to investigate. He reported that the ship was identical to the first invader; it was glistening with frost or ice of some kind as it descended. Then contact was lost, but ground radar recorded the pilot's suicidal crash into the alien ship in a desperate attempt to stop this new threat.

The alien craft lost control and crashed, causing great damage to one of the outlying suburbs of Loka. The hull was torn open in several places; witnesses on the

ground confirmed the pilot's report about frost covering the ship, frost which soon melted. Shortly thereafter, a number of bugs were seen emerging, and those who had not already fled the coming of the ship now panicked and ran.

The adventurers, who are back in Loka, are approached once more by the council. Some militia reserves have been summoned from Traitor's Pass to try to fight this new danger, but they will not arrive for several hours. In the meantime, it is hoped that the crash has killed large numbers of the bugs on board; certainly those that came from the downed vessel were fewer in number than the occupants of the first ship. The authorities hope that an early attack could stop these bugs. Otherwise, quite simply, Loka is doomed. The adventurers are requested to scout out the crash site, kill as many bugs as possible, and try to assess the situation so that the militia, on their arrival, will be better prepared to handle the crisis.

**Referee's Notes:** The single maternal aboard the ship is dead. 6D hunters survived the crash and are now blundering about without direction. Instinct alone guides them; they collect food, return to the ship, and expel it on the deck in front of the dead maternal.

Approaching the ship, the adventurers may encounter bugs on a roll of 8+ on 2D, the roll being made every 15 minutes. 1D of bugs will be encountered; there will always be 1D of bugs entering or leaving the ship. The hunters are fully aroused and will always attack adventurers within 50 meters. They will be drawn to radio signals as usual.

The relatively low numbers of bugs may lead the group to attempt to board the damaged ship and investigate; this, in fact, should be urged by accompanying militia officers or civilian scientists. The party must kill as many hunters as possible while exploring the craft. There will be extensive damage to the interior, from the crash and from the acid-splattering deaths of hundreds of hunters; exploring dark corridors riddled by holes in bulkheads and decks will be dangerous. The referee is responsible for locating and recording these holes and describing them as they are encountered. The adventurers will find the badly mangled components of a highly sophisticated electronics system in the central core, which appears to be connected to some kind of device projecting an energy field throughout the ship.

## **SITUATION EIGHT: LAST CHANCE**

Examination of the bug specimens by scientists did little to assist the anti-bomb faction. While a poison affecting the invaders was discovered, synthesis of sufficient quantities to turn the tide was a logistical impossibility. The one major weakness found by researchers was a low tolerance for radiation, which served to strengthen the argument for nuclear weapons.

A plan of attack was laid out, involving the use of atomic warheads mounted on buzz bombs fired from coastal vessels and from behind the perimeter. Some of the bombs would be targeted on known concentrations of invaders, but most would be detonated in the air to provide a fallout pattern over the entire peninsula. Needless to say, the plan had severe drawbacks, entailing a high risk of also contaminating inhabited areas of Raschev with radiation, but there seemed little choice.

Even at this late hour, Raschev scientists are hard on the trail of a new weapon that might be far more effective in eliminating the bugs without the dangers inherent in the use of nuclear weapons.

Analysis of the second spacecraft that crashed near Loka has led to some import-

ant new theories concerning the bugs. First, of course, it is definite that the bugs themselves, unintelligent beasts that they are, could never have built the ships. How they got aboard, and why, remain mysteries for the moment. Even more important, however, is the mystery of the strange frost seen on the outer hull of both spacecraft shortly after their entry into the atmosphere. These questions are puzzling scientists on Raschev, but they believe they see their way clear to finding some answers.

Examination of the electrical equipment from the wrecked craft has led to the theory that these ships are "sleeper ships" which move at sublight speeds over a very long period of time. The passengers would seem to be frozen by a form of molecular field suppression. Theoretically, atoms within the reach of this field lose some of their kinetic energy; objects within the field become very cold. This would appear to induce hibernation within the bugs for as long as the temperature remains low, and serves as protection for the ship during take-off and landing.

If an intact field generator could be recovered, it would be the key to a weapon far more effective (and much safer) than A-bombs.

The adventurers are asked to make a vital recon probe to the original landing site. There they must get on board the ship and remove the generator responsible for creating the field, which will hopefully still be functional. The adventurers are taken to the crashed second ship and shown the smashed generator there, which weighs about 40 kg, and scientists explain how to disconnect it. The adventurers may request any aid they require; the military is willing to commit a great deal of support to this mission, subject only to limitations in logistics.

However, they must act fast. The date set for nuclear sterilization of the peninsula is one week in the future. The military believe that action cannot safely be delayed for longer than that. Scientists are certain that if the generator is returned to Loka within 24 hours, the alternative plan will be ready for execution in time to replace the nuclear option.

**Referee's Notes:** The heart of the peninsula has long since been stripped of all life, and those bug nests which did not migrate out have gone into hibernation. The referee should set up this situation in much the same way as was outlined in *The Chamax Plague*. Use the ship plans given for the alien ship on page 23. The generator is undamaged and can be disconnected in 15 minutes by one person.

## AFTERMATH

If the adventurers succeed in their mission to retrieve the field generator, scientists will be able to duplicate it almost immediately; in a week, enough will be in the hands of the military to convince them of the alternative plan's value. Armed with a field generator, militia can move into an area and destroy every bug in it without danger, and soon the perimeter has been moved forward to cover the entire northern coast of the peninsula.

After the immediate threat has ended, scientists are able to secure enough generators to protect a research team investigating the intact alien ship. It is discovered that the onboard computer is running and contains a program designed to communicate with aliens; beginning with simple mathematical concepts, it leads Raschev scientists gradually to the point where they can begin to decipher the records within the machine's memory and solve the mystery of the ship's origin.

The adventurers are free to leave with substantial rewards, although they may prefer to remain long enough to find out what the scientists have learned.

# The Computer Records

---

After a few weeks of work with the extremely cooperative alien computer, Raschev scientists are able to piece together the story below from the massive amount of information contained within the computer's memory banks.

The original homeworld of the bugs was the planet now known as Chamax (X654000-0). A burrowing race of sentient pseudocrustaceans distantly related to the bugs was the dominant race of the planet until about 400 years ago. They boasted a tech level of 9 and had developed interplanetary flight, but not jump drive.

The aliens had a low birth rate, and population pressure had little influence on their history; consequently, there was much wilderness even in the most civilized areas and large parts of the planet had not been settled until late in their development. One small continent on their world had been discovered by early seafarers, but never settled. Eventually, colonies were established there, and a life form native to that continent — a large, burrowing carnivore - proved to be an intolerable nuisance, tunneling through walls and collapsing whole levels of the sentients' underground cities. This problem was solved when the natives learned how to wipe out the carnivores with poisons that prevented their reproduction.

The realization came too late that the carnivores were the only check on another much more dangerous life form, known to Raschev as the bugs. Bug maternals, hidden in their underground nests, were the chief food source of the carnivores; the efficiency of the predators' attacks was the reason for the bugs' high birth rate.

With the ecological balance upset, bug reproduction got completely out of hand. The continent was overrun within a few weeks, with a few survivors being evacuated to the main landmass. At first it was thought that the problem had ended there, but then the plague of bugs broke out almost at once in several coastal areas; it was theorized, before the natives became too busy to discuss theories, that maternals had stowed away on cargo ships before the continent had been quarantined. There ensued a bitter war as the intelligent defenders fought a long retreat across the face of an increasingly devastated world. Countless times the defenders thought they had the problem under control, only to have another outbreak occur in a new area. The continent was just too large, the defenders too few, the bugs too many, for containment.

The planet was doomed; the damage to the ecology was fatal even if a means could be found to wipe out all the bugs. Therefore, the natives chose to ensure the survival of their race. The defense was charged with buying time while a massive fleet of spacecraft was prepared to evacuate as many beings as possible.

Jump drive was unknown; the natives had to settle for sublight craft. Luckily, their metabolism was such that they could enter hibernation as a result of exposure to cold. The molecular field suppression technique was used to cool their ships, which would then proceed, guided by sophisticated computers, toward nearby suns that might have planets. Each computer was programmed with as much as could be recorded of the race's science, history, and technology, as a means of preserving the race on their new worlds. Everything was automatic; when a ship detected a full

complement of passengers on board, it sealed itself, the hibernation equipment came on, and it set out on its journey. The process was designed to be foolproof, so refugees could escape even if trained personnel were not available.

No one expected the final collapse to come so suddenly. The last enclave of greenery in a planet-wide desert was overrun in hours, and it was inevitable that flying juvenile maternals would find the starships standing ready, open and inviting. The ships became nest sites, and the foolproof system became too foolproof. The computers, unable to distinguish between species, detected the presence of a critical number of bodies and launched the ship, with a frozen but still deadly cargo on board.

Thus the bugs came to Raschev, taking 400 years to cross the distance of one parsec. It can be inferred that Raschev and all other planets lying within a parsec of the Alenzar system are in danger of visits from similar infested starships within the next few years. But an added concern must now be taken into account as well: some ships may contain intelligent, potentially friendly aliens who managed to flee their world ahead of the bugs, and a policy of destroying any incoming ship could be genocidal.

The computer records also contain a vast amount of technical information, history, literature, and coded sounds and images: in short, as much of the aliens' culture as could be crammed in. The educational program, which enabled Raschev scientists to decipher the records, seems to have two purposes. The first purpose is to provide a further degree of safety; if the ship were to land in an inhabited system and its revival equipment should fail, the computer would be able to teach friendly sentients how to revive the passengers. Second, and more important, the records are intended to communicate the race's heritage to sentients who find it; in this way, a portion of the race's memory would be preserved even if none of the passengers survived.

# The Alien Spaceship

---

Several situations require use of the deck plans provided for the alien ship. The ship used in situations one and eight is intact; the one in situation six will be suffering from considerable damage, determined and recorded by the referee.

The deck plan shows the interior layout of the ship. There are two main decks, identical in every way; a ramp (1) leads from the entrance to the upper deck and a central spiral ramp winds around the central core from the engineering deck to the computer deck.

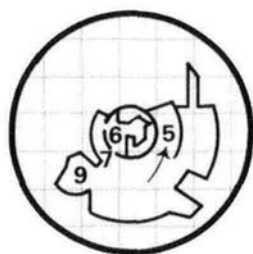
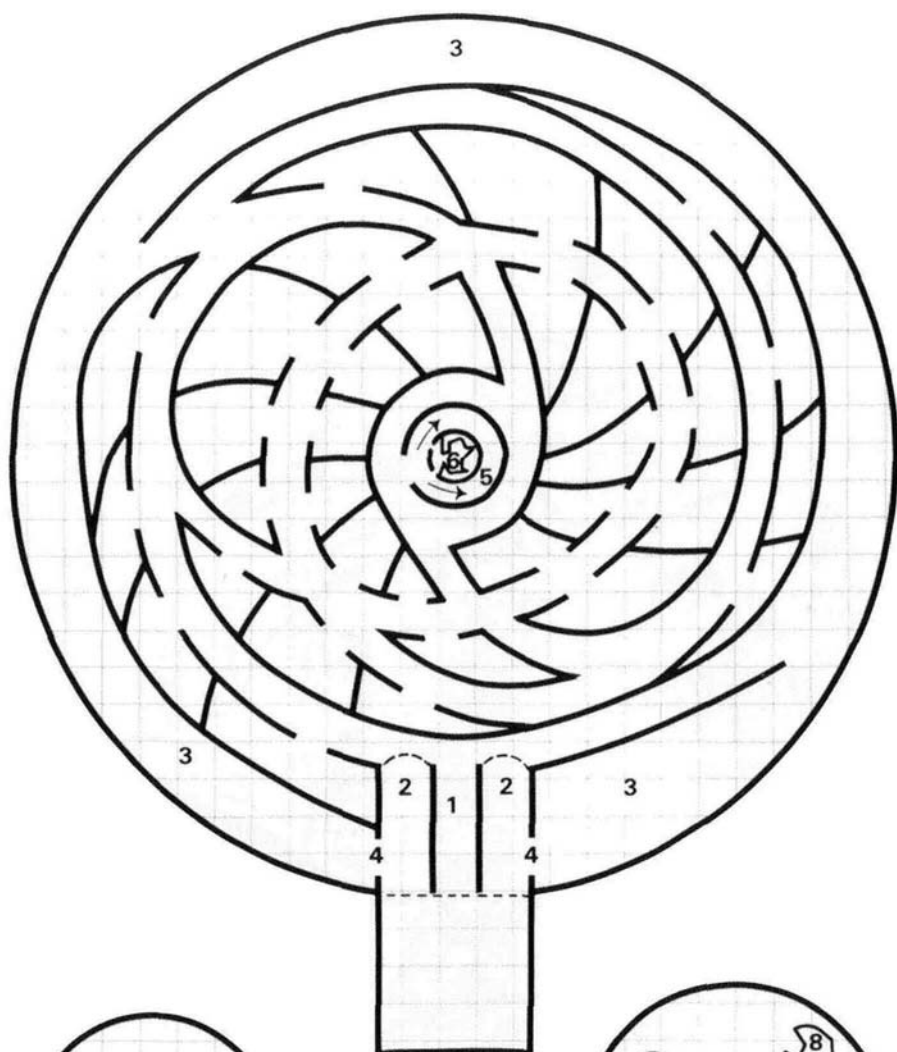
1. Ramp from entrance to upper deck.
2. Entrances to lower deck.
3. Storage area, empty in bug-infested ships.
4. Openings from storage hold to entrance. A drop of 3.5 meters from the upper level to the entrance deck is normally handled by machinery, absent or not working on bug-infested ships.
5. Central spiral ramp around core of ship running from engineering deck to computer deck.
6. Central core: space lined with conduits and electrical equipment running from engineering deck to computer deck. Hand grips designed for alien physiques provide a dangerous ladder (roll 9+ to fall, DM +1 each for strength or endurance of 9+).
7. Entranceway (1 meter by 1 meter) to central core.
8. Complicated-looking equipment on engineering deck related to molecular fieldsuppressor.
9. Main terminal for the ship's computer.

The rooms on all decks are without furniture or fittings of any kind, though the decks are molded to create scattered depressions that might serve as alien couches. Lighting panels in the bulkheads are dead, and adventurers will need hand or suit lights to explore the interior. All doors are diamond shaped, 1.5 meters wide and 1.2 meters high, and do not close.

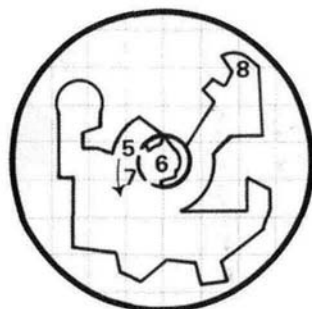
Besides the ship's computer and the field generator, little of interest or value will be present aboard either ship.

Once landed, these ships can never fly again.

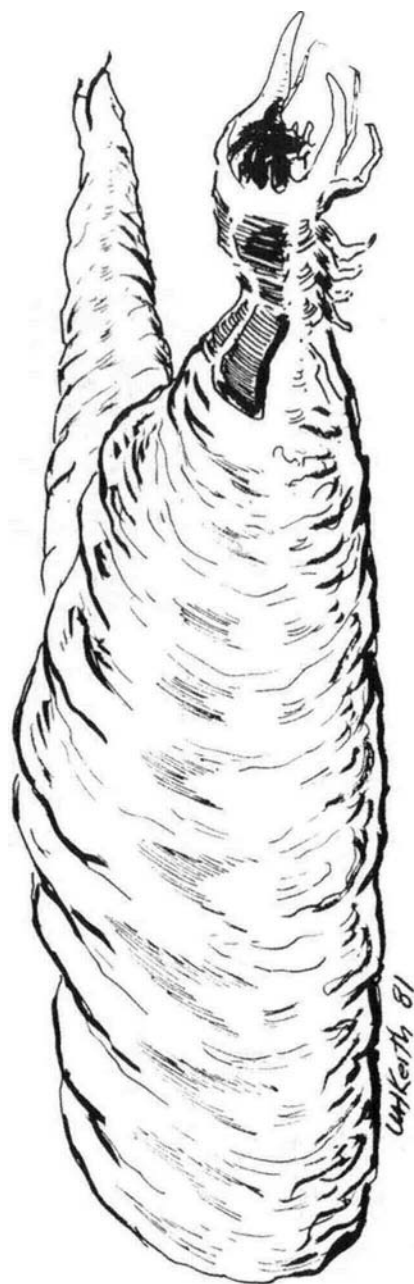
# MAIN DECKS



COMPUTER DECK



ENGINEERING DECK



Maternal





Hunter

*Double Adventure 5*  
*The Chamax Plague*

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**TRAVELLER<sup>TM</sup>**

*Science-Fiction Adventure  
in the Far Future*

*Double Adventure 5*  
*The Chamax Plague*

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*Science-Fiction Adventure*  
*in the Far Future*

Game Designers' Workshop

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*The Chamax Plague*  
**TRAVELLER**, Double Adventure 5, Part 1

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This booklet is a double adventure for **Traveller**, GDW's science fiction role-playing game set in the far future.

**Traveller** is GDW's trademark for its science fiction role-playing game materials.

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# Introduction

This booklet contains two complete and independent adventures for **Traveller** printed back-to-back. Both revolve around the same menace, but each designed to stand entirely on its own. This adventure, entitled *The Chamax Plague*, deals with a survey mission in danger on an unexplored world. If both adventures in this book are played. *The Chamax Plague* should generally be played first.

It is assumed that this adventure will be administered by a referee who has read through this adventure and who is familiar both with it and with the rules for **Traveller**. This situation calls for only the basic **Traveller** booklets (Books 1, 2, and 3) and no additional supplements, books, or other information are necessary for resolution of this adventure. As usual, paper, pencils, six-sided dice, and square-grid graph paper will prove useful.

## STANDARDS AND ASSUMPTIONS

The following standards and assumptions are used in the text of this adventure.

**Dates:** All dates herein correspond to the Imperial calendar. The year is 1107: the 1107th year since the founding of the Imperium. This

**Date:** 1107 adventure takes place sometime in that year. Once the adventure begins, time should flow normally. If necessary, alter the date for the purpose of continuity or to adapt it to an ongoing campaign.

**Place:** This adventure takes place in the Alenzar system, which is in the Reidan subsector, just outside the Darrian subsector of the

**Place:** Alenzar system Spinward Marches. Alenzar is one parsec from Uniqua, Reidan Subsector Garoo, and the Raschev system found in *Horde*. outside the Imperium Aside from the Alenzar Belt (C000414-9), the system has only one planet of interest, an uninhabited but

fairly Earthlike planet designated Chamax. Until now, mineral exploitation in the Belt has been the chief interest of the star system, and little is known of Chamax.

## CHARACTERS

This adventure is intended for a band of adventurers numbering at least two and no more than eight. A group of pregenerated characters is supplied below, although the referee may allow other individuals instead.

- |   |                                                                            |        |        |         |        |
|---|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|--------|---------|--------|
| 1 | Retired Merchant Captain                                                   | 779C99 | Age 56 | 5 terms | Cr2000 |
|   | Pilot-2, Vacc-1, Cutlass-1, Dagger-1, Body Pistol-1                        |        |        |         |        |
|   | Electronics-3, SMG-1                                                       |        |        |         | Ship   |
| 2 | Merchant First Officer                                                     | 6A7C8A | Age 34 | 4 terms | Cr1000 |
|   | Pilot-2, Vacc-1, Navigation-2, Steward-1, Computer-3, Laser Rifle-2        |        |        |         |        |
| 3 | Merchant Second Officer                                                    | 756987 | Age 38 | 5 terms | Cr500  |
|   | Engineer-3, Vacc-1, Mech-1, Jack-of-all-trades-1, Gunnery-1, Auto Pistol-2 |        |        |         |        |

4	Merchant Third Officer	B59848	Age 30	3 terms	Cr1000
	Gunnery-2, Vacc-1, Mech-1, Electronics-1, Computer-1, Blade-1				Blade
5	Merchant Fourth Officer	7958C3	Age 26	2 terms	Cr500
	Vacc-1, Steward-1, Bribery-1, Body Pistol-1				Body Pistol
6	Ex-other (working passage)	A92789	Age 26	2 terms	Cr1500
	Vacc-0, Streetwise-1, Brawling-1, SMG-1				
7	Ex-army Major (high passage)	7A98B6	Age 30	3 terms	Cr800
	Forward Observer-2, Laser Carbine-2, Tactics-2, Rifle-1				
	Air/raft-1, Medic-1				Laser Carbine
8	Ex-scout (middle passage)	6B4387	Age 26	2 terms	Cr900
	Pilot-1, Vacc-1, SMG-1, Air/raft-1				

A skill level of 0 (for example, vacc-0) has been assigned to show some familiarity with a skill, sufficient to allow use, but no expertise. In *Horde*, all characters may be given laser carbine-0 in addition to their other skills.

## EQUIPMENT

Referees using an on-going campaign should ignore the remainder of this section, with the possible exception of the available equipment table on page 4.

Characters should review their equipment and may purchase more. It is essential that one of the characters be the merchant captain (character No. 1) because he

### SHIP'S LOCKER

eight vacc suits, each with oxygen tanks for eight hours and medium range commo gear.

four shotguns, each with ten loaded magazines (100 rounds).

two automatic pistols, each with ten loaded magazines (150 rounds).

four cutlasses, each with a belt scabbard.

one long range communicator

provides the ship which serves as transport for the adventurers. The merchant captain has possession of a free trader, the *Mudshark* (type A, 200 tons). Its ship's locker contains the equipment shown on the table. Before the characters are told the details of the adventure, they should be allowed to purchase any other equipment they feel will be necessary or desirable. Any equipment available may be purchased, subject to the following restrictions:

1. It must be described in Books 1 or

3 of **Traveller** or on the available equipment table on the facing page. Items from other **Traveller** materials are not available.

2. The price indicated must be paid. Since the only assets available to the characters are the credit balances above, some items (battle dress, for example) are precluded because of expense.

**Merchant Ship Equipment:** The *Mudshark* is a type A free trader, as described in Book 2, now 50 years old and finally without a mortgage. Armament consists of one triple turret fitted with a heterogeneous mix: one missile rack, one beam laser, and one sandcaster. The ship carries an air/raft in a fitted hull compartment.

## RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

The introductory material on pages 5 through 7 should be made available to the players through the referee, rather than allowing them to read it directly.

The section entitled Rescue can be run as a separate adventure, used as a prelude

## AVAILABLE EQUIPMENT TABLE

**Cable:** Fine, flexible plasteel cable, capable of supporting 250 kilograms. Available in 50-meter coils, each weighing 3 kilograms. Up to 10 coils are available. Price: Cr100 per coil.

**Wall Patches:** Steel-backed plastic patches faced with adhesive. The patches measure one meter by one meter and are activated by peeling off a paper backing and then slapping the patch over a hole or leak. These patches are good only if applied on the high pressure side of the leak and will serve for several days. Price: Cr150 each.

**Medical Kit:** A modern first-aid and medical treatment kit designed for nondoctors (medical skill of 1 or 2) to use in handling injuries and trauma. The kit contains medical instruments, diagnostic aids, written instructions, and medical drugs, and is capable of treating gunshot wounds, animal bites, radiation or chemical burns, poisoning, and drug overdoses. Size: 200mm by 100mm — small enough to fit on the belt at the small of the back. Weight: 1 kg. Price: Cr600.

**Medscanner:** A device used by medical personnel attached to scout service missions. It includes several types of sensors (ultrasonic scanner, infrared, and electric field sensors), and a small processor to integrate data. In one setting, it is a diagnostic unit which can record vital signs of patients and correlate data. With a radio link to ship-board computers, it can evaluate symptoms and recommend treatments.

In a second setting, it can be used as a sort of life detector, capable of distinguishing large animals at up to 50 meters; range is cut drastically if there are intervening obstacles. Size: 100mm by 175mm by 20mm; it comes with a sling for carrying over the shoulder. Weight: 1 kg. Price: Cr1500.

**Radio Receiver, Recorder, Transmitter:** A miniaturized electronic device capable of receiving voice or radio input, recording it, and transmitting the stored information on a signal or continuously. Reception and transmission is on the standard voice communication bands. The device can listen for signals and then retransmit them, or it can continuously transmit a pre-recorded message. Tape length: 10 minutes. Transmitter range: line of sight. Tech level: 11. Size: 25 mm by 50 mm by 50 mm. Weight: negligible. Price: Cr800.

**Portable Airlock:** An inflatable, portable chamber that can be attached to the vacuum side of a bulkhead, entered, and pressurized, allowing a hole to be cut into a pressurized area without depressurization. It includes a patch held in place by pressure which seals the hole when the airlock is depressurized. Size: 500cm by 20cm by 200cm (deflated), 1.5 meter by 1.5 meter by 2 meters (inflated); size includes a pressurized air cylinder and an automatic pump. Weight: 6 kg. Price: Cr1000.

to the main adventure, or skipped entirely. The main adventure begins with the section entitled Contract.

Contract should be read aloud to the players and made available to them for reference through the game.

The rest of the information in this adventure is for the referee alone, and should be divulged only in the course of play.



# Rescue

Alenzar (C000414-9) is a colony built into the largest of a swarm of asteroids in a very close orbit around an old red star. InStarSpec, a mining and exploitation company, maintains a major corporate office in the colony, which was settled originally by company employees. The colony has expanded somewhat since the early days of Alenzar's development, but the class C starport is still considerably larger than is needed by the colonists. Traffic into the system is small in volume, consisting mostly of company ships and a few prospectors searching for prized cerulene crystals. Little attention has been paid to the system's one planet - a cool, uninhabited world called Chamax.

The *Mudshark* has just completed a charter for InStarSpec, bringing in a load of electronic parts from outsystem, and the crew are preparing to leave the system again, hold empty, with little prospect of meeting their monthly expenses.

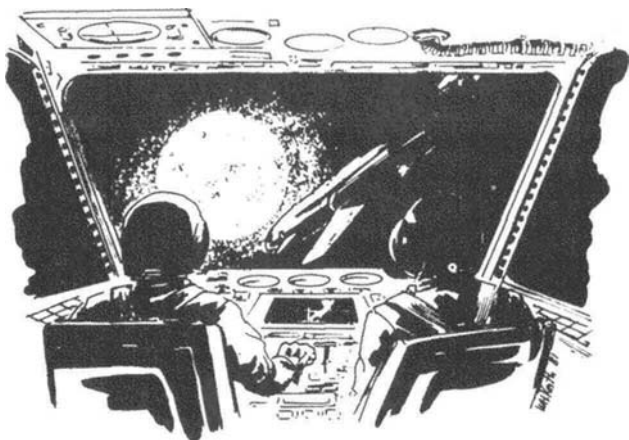
## AN URGENT MESSAGE

Three hours outbound from Alenzar, the adventurers receive a priority call from the starport. A single ship has been detected inbound from Chamax, moving at high speed but not under power. Course predictions show that it will pass several million kilometers from Alenzar and fall into the sun. No communications have been received from the ship. Under interstellar assistance laws, the *Mudshark* is asked to intercept the ship and render all possible aid in keeping with the safety of the ship and crew. No other vessels are available at present at Alenzar to make the intercept until too late.

Two days will be required to match course and velocity with the other ship; by this time, the *Mudshark* and her target will be quite close to the sun. Outer hull temperatures will be very high and will cause considerable alarm among the party. They have little time to complete their mission; it will, in fact, be impossible to do anything to save the other ship, but it will be possible to board the falling vessel to look for passengers and information.

## DERELICT

The other ship is a 40-ton pinnacle, the InStarSpec logo painted on the prow. The retractable wings, normally extended only for atmospheric flight, are out. Close inspection shows a number of scorched and burned spots along the aft and ventral hull surfaces; in some places, irregular,



one-meter holes appear to breach the hull entirely. Even at visual range, there are no communications or signs of life.

Lock-to-lock docking is impossible. It will be necessary to maneuver the ship to put both locks in shadow and cross in vacc suits. The pinnacle airlock holds pressure and operates if used. If the adventurers board aft, through the stern cargo doors or one of the burned holes, they will find the cargo area depressurized and entry into the pressurized forward compartment possible only through the airlock.

The ship is in total disarray and completely deserted. Power for lights, grav plates, and iris valves is still on, but scientific gear lies broken and scattered everywhere. There are no bodies. The bulkhead between the cargo area and the passenger compartment has blisters and scorch marks on the cargo hold side, as though great heat had been applied in patches to bulkheads, overheads, and decks.

While examining the bridge, one of the party will notice four bolts, and a tool for removing them, lying on the deck. This will lead them to a circuit access panel under the communications console that has been removed, then wedged back into place. Inside, they find a single survivor, huddled into a tiny space. When the panel is removed, he becomes wildly agitated, thrashing about and screaming, "No! Chamax! They. . .they're. . .NOOOO!" He then loses consciousness.

Further searching of the bridge reveals a log recorder with a tape clipped in place. Taking this and the survivor, the group returns to their ship just in time to change course and miss plunging into the sun. They watch the pinnacle vaporize in the star's photosphere.

If the adventurers try to play the recovered tape, they will find it coded and indecipherable in their own computer. Near the end, however, is a holographic image of a small statuette carved in cool, translucent blue crystal, impressionistic in form, shaped to capture and reflect cascades of rainbow colors as the viewer shifts his viewpoint. The image may be of some unknown alien being, but there is not enough detail to make this certain. What is certain is that the object's value is unguessably high.

The survivor will not respond to any treatment available on board the ship and must be hospitalized at Alenzar. InStarSpec will request the log tape, which they naturally assumed would be there.

## **NOTE TO THE REFEREE**

This portion of the adventure should be optional. The referee may elect not to involve the players in the ship rescue; if so, what is learned may be presented during the briefing covered in the next section. It is recommended that this adventure be included, however, as it provides a buildup into the coming action.

This section may be used as an introductory adventure for referees and players new to role-playing. It is fast and easy to run, involves few difficult rules problems, but will accustom player and referee alike to the problem-solving and role-playing aspects of Traveller.

# Contract

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Shortly after they return to Alenzar, the adventurers are called into the office of Sevor Hallin, branch manager of InStarSpec's system office. Hallin tells them that the pinnacle was part of an expedition sent to Chamax, the single planet of this system, some two weeks before. It accompanied a converted 400-ton subsidized merchant fitted with scientific gear, and the mission was to survey Chamax and research commercial possibilities. The merchantman, *the Shaarin Challenger*, would be the base of operations for fifteen people — eight scientists and seven crew — for an extensive survey that would use the pinnacle and the *Challenger's* launch as scout vessels. The pinnacle was also to make runs between Chamax and Alenzar with equipment and personnel.

Chamax has, until now, been largely ignored by InStarSpec. It was surveyed once from orbit and found to be marginally habitable but totally without life on land. There is a great variety of marine life, however, and popular speculation holds that life has not yet emerged on land. Recently, company planetologists examining survey photos discovered ruins scattered across the equatorial zone, half buried in shifting desert sand. As antiquities and art objects are excellent trade and speculation items, the *Shaarin Challenger* expedition was organized to study the ruins and search for exploitable artifacts.

Initial reports were exciting. An advanced culture must have flourished on Chamax until between four and eight hundred years ago. There is much speculation about what destroyed this culture (and apparently all other life on land), including invasion or some terrible disease. This unknown destroyer is referred to as the Chamax Plague. Coded tapes describing the finds would be sent soon. But no follow-ups came, until the pinnacle appeared, falling into the sun. The survivor was the pinnacle pilot, who is still under treatment and unable to give a coherent account of his experience. Fourteen people are unaccounted for on the planet.

Hallin offers the adventurers a contract with InStarSpec. They still have the best ship insystem at the moment, and it will be at least two weeks before another mission can be brought in from outsystem. Each of the group will receive Cr50,000 if they will go to Chamax, investigate the *Challenger's* loss, and search for surviving expedition members. They will receive a bonus for any information on the cause of the survey's loss, and a bonus for each survivor rescued. Speed is crucial, for if there are survivors, they may not last until a company expedition can reach them from outsystem.

Equipment is limited at present, but the group can get a Cr10,000 advance to purchase gear from the available equipment table or **Traveller** Books 1 and 3. They will be provided with deck plans of the *Shaarin Challenger*. Hallin volunteers no information on the recovered log and is evasive if questioned.

The adventurers are provided with all known data on Chamax, which amounts to very little. The planet is classified X654000-0. The land surface is divided among extensive ice caps, heavily glaciated alpine regions, and vast tracts of lifeless desert. The equatorial regions, where the ruins are located, have a mean temperature range of from 5 to 18 degrees Celsius.

ADDITIONAL CHARACTERS AND EQUIPMENT

Three non-player characters join the party: InStarSpec employees who will come along as specialists and to safeguard the company's interests.

Dr. Kel Wurrin	498AA5	Age 54	
Medic-5, Computer-1, Vacc-1, Revolver-1			Revolver
Lotin Delaradi	984783	Age 30	
Pilot-1, Vacc-1, Computer-2, Auto Rifle-2			Auto Rifle
Cal Yotisk	785663	Age 26	
Air/raft-1, Vacc-1, Brawling-1, Laser Carbine-2			Laser Carbine

Wurrin is a medical doctor employed by InStarSpec. He also has experience in xenobiology and has portable lab equipment for conducting specialized chemical and biological tests. He is friendly and open, and expresses his fear that the *Shaarin Challenger* expedition may have been stricken down by some unknown disease.

Delaradi is along as watchdog for company interests and to pilot the *Challenger* if she can be salvaged. He is sullen, intense, and nervous, and in a hurry to get on with the mission. During the voyage to Chamax, the adventurers will discover that Delaradi has changed places with the company agent originally chosen to accompany the mission. He is frantic with worry, for the *Shaarin Challenger's* medical officer is his fiancée.

Yotisk is a second, junior company official. He is quiet, obeys orders, is efficient, and has no opinions about the mission. He spends most of his time stripping and cleaning his laser carbine.

**Referee's Note:** The NPCs described above are used to keep the adventure moving and to provide information to the players. The doctor can pass on his conclusions concerning biology or medicine, as outlined in the rest of the adventure. Delaradi will constantly be demanding action, and may go so far as to threaten violence if he feels the party is not exerting enough effort in the search for survivors. Yotisk is an example of a classic and very useful character type known as the "spear carrier" or "extra". The referee is encouraged to use Yotisk as a first victim, to show the characters what they are facing.

# The Adventure

---

The party reaches orbit above Chamax, and the *Shaarin Challenger* will easily be detected. The ship shows no visible damage, and there is no visible clue to whatever is wrong. Delaradi demands that the *Mudshark* land immediately.

## ON CHAMAX

The *Challenger* is grounded half a klik from one of the largest ruins — a group of low domes, mostly shattered and choked with sand. She shows the same scorch marks as the pinnacle, and several meter-wide holes can be seen in the hull near the ground. Nearby, an ATV and a portable advanced base display ragged, half-melted holes. No bodies, human or otherwise, can be seen.

There are no signs of activity on any of the instruments, and no response to radio calls, although the doctor points out that survivors may be shielded or unable to respond. Delaradi will insist on immediate examination of the ship. He is willing to delay only until Dr. Wurrin runs some tests in their airlock and pronounces the air free of bacterial or chemical agents. After that, only physical restraint can prevent him from leaving the ship.

There will be no clues around the landing site. The ruins can be approached but, with the exception of one dome opened by the *Challenger* party, will be inaccessible. The exception will be distinctly uninviting: pitch black, deathly quiet, and emitting a stale, foul odor. Even Delaradi won't suggest a search inside. The *Challenger*, while hardly inviting, offers the possibility of log tapes, bodies, records. . . even survivors. It will be obvious that they must explore the *Shaarin Challenger*.

## INSIDE THE CHALLENGER

Access to the *Shaarin Challenger* can be gained through the forward or side cargo doors, through manual hatches on the underside of the ship's wings, or through the iris valve access hatch used for the dorsally mounted 20-ton launch. This launch is not present, an indication that not everyone was with the ship when disaster struck. Access can also be gained through any of the holes that riddle the ship's hull.

Adventurers exploring the *Shaarin Challenger* will have one of two goals in mind: carrying out the conditions of the contract, or hunting for artifacts such as the one seen in the pinnacle log. The bridge will be a logical place to search for information or clues to survivors. Artifacts might be anywhere, but the hold may be a good place to begin.

All power is out; no powered doors or iris valves will operate, and there is no light aboard. Characters will find broken scientific gear, weapons, and the like scattered about. Some of this, at the referee's discretion, may be intact, but most will be damaged, smashed, or half melted.

The referee will have prepared a copy of the *Challenger's* deck plan with holed bulkheads and hull sections marked, as well as the locations of artifacts, usable equipment, and the dangers that infest the derelict (see Setup). He will be able to lead the adventurers through the ship, describing damage, breached walls, and dangers as they encounter them.

On the bridge, the adventurers will find a personal recorder with a tape cartridge in place. It will provide details of the last hours of the *Challenger* expedition. One important bit of information: the ship's launch, which left the camp shortly before the disaster, was bound with five people for ruins 300 km north of the landing site, near a glaciated mountain range. Contact was abruptly lost with this party, which included the ship's medical officer: Delaradi's fiancée.

Within the *Challenger* lurks the Chamax Plague, the cause of the disaster which has befallen the expedition. Speculation up to this point may have suggested alien invaders or disease-induced madness, but inside the ship the adventurers will find the true answer: the unintelligent but very dangerous animals which the *Challenger* expedition named chamax, since they are the only land animals remaining on the planet. A complete description of these creatures for the referee's use is found in the section entitled The Chamax, and the referee should be thoroughly familiar with that section.

The first chamax to be encountered by the party should be a hibernating hunter. The party should be allowed several minutes to examine it before they are encountered by the first questing hunter. After that, encounters and arousal of the nest will occur as described later.

## SETUP

Before exploration of the *Shaarin Challenger*, the referee should prepare a copy of the ship's deck plans, marking it with the locations of breached bulkheads, artifacts, and the chamax maternal and hunters. This is for the referee only, who uses it to guide the adventurers through the ship.

Breaches may be in any number and location desired and are essentially random, in bulkheads, decks, overheads, hatches, and even instrumentation. External breaches will occur near the ground; hunters can leap up to 3 meters but would have difficulty clinging to a vertical metal surface. The adventurers will have access to deck plans of the *Challenger* but will, of course, not know the positions of breaches until they encounter them.

The chamax maternal can be located in any room or passageway containing more than 10 squares, except the bridge. Artifacts, at the referee's discretion, can be located anywhere except the bridge and will consist of 25 kg crates of packed and sorted art treasures of unknown value.

There are 4Dx5 chamax hunters aboard. 3D of these are the "palace guard" and will always remain with the maternal, even when aroused. All remaining hunters are placed throughout the ship; the referee can simply note on his copy of the deck plans the number present in each room or corridor. Placement is random and up to the referee. However the adventurers enter the ship, they should always find a hibernating hunter immediately.

When the nest becomes partially or fully aroused, the hunters will begin moving, generally in the direction of the party. The referee should keep track of hunters' positions; the simplest method is to record the numbers in each room on the deck plans, changing the numbers as necessary, although the referee may find a different method more convenient to his needs.

## THE SURROUNDING AREA

There will be other chamax maternals in the area — in the ruins or in under-

ground warrens outside the ship. The referee is responsible for determining the number and locations of these nests and the numbers of creatures in them.

Some characters may want to explore the ruins, although the referee should make these appear most uninviting. These ruins are, in fact, collections of underground buildings, each accessed through a surface opening shielded by a low surface dome. All domes except one will be blocked by rubble and drifting sand. One has been cleared by the *Challenger* party and has a ramp leading into a collection of empty rooms and passageways, most of them partly blocked by collapsed walls and debris. There will be nothing of value, but at the end of the ramp leading to the next lower level will be the decomposing body of a chamax maternal; the excavators aroused every lair in the city when they uncovered this nest and killed the maternal, thereby unleashing the attack which wiped them out.

The referee can prepare a map of the cleared area, which can be as complicated as he desires to make it. There will be other maternals among the ruins on lower levels, and questing chamax will begin roaming the corridors that are not completely blocked whenever the adventurers move within 50 meters of these nests. Caches of artifacts on lower levels, and the difficulty of reaching them, are left to the discretion, inventiveness, and nastiness of the referee.

## **SURVIVORS**

The log tape on the bridge will tell the adventurers that five of the survey party, including the medical officer, Delaradi's fiancée, have taken the ship's launch to another site 300 km north. Delaradi will insist in no uncertain terms that they go in search of this party and rescue them, if possible. The players should remember that there is a bonus for rescuing survivors.

The group can travel by foot or air. They will encounter no animals other than chamax, which will be hibernating among the ruins that might be found along the way. This phase of the adventure may be as long or as short, as straightforward or as complex as desired.

The launch will be found, abandoned but intact, near the ruins mentioned on the tape. Clues — a short-range radio beacon and an open communications channel — will lead the rescuers onto a glacier between two mountains. On the way, they will find many chamax curled up and hibernating on the ice; the missing party will be alive and well, hiding in a rock cave just off the ice. They aroused a nest while excavating in the ruins and fled onto the ice, where they discovered they were safe from attack.

# The Chamax

Chamax are vaguely spiderlike in appearance - like tarantulas the size of great danes. There are two distinct types: hunters and maternals. Each nest contains one adult maternal and a large number of hunters. Maternals produce hunters at a prodigious rate. Hunters search for and devour everything organic, returning to the maternal periodically to feed her.

Chamax eat anything and everything that lives and are, in fact, responsible for destroying all land life on the planet Chamax several hundred years ago. When food supplies run out, most die; a few, including the maternal, seek enclosed, protected burrows or spaces and enter a natural state of suspended animation that can last for centuries; they will be awakened by the presence of a food source, a few hunters entering a partially aware state called questing; discovery of sufficient food by questing hunters will trigger the awakening of the entire nest.

Chamax are not intelligent, but they do possess an empathic sense that draws hunters toward living creatures and, in some way, links the maternal with her brood. Chamax also have the ability to sense radio broadcasts, and they are strongly attracted to radio sources.

Aroused hunters descend en masse on any life forms in the area, attacking with jaws and a powerful acid secretion. They use the acid to tunnel through metal, stone, and even solid rock to attack. They can be killed by gunfire but are never discouraged by losses; they never retreat. They are killed when the acid-resistant sacs within their bodies are ruptured, releasing the acid, which consumes the hunter and damages anything else nearby.

## CHARACTERISTICS

The various types of chamax, and their characteristics in different conditions, are given below in the animal encounter format.

Type	Weight	Hits	Armor	Wounds	Weapon	Behavior
Hunter (hibernating)	50kg	12*/0	cloth	none	none	A0 F0 S0
Hunter (questing)	50kg	12*/0	cloth	2D-3	teeth	A2 F0 S1
Hunter (aroused)	50kg	12*/0	cloth	2D-3 1D, etc.	teeth acid	A2 F0 S2
Maternal	5000 kg	50/20	none	2D-3	teeth	A0 F0 S0
Juvenile Maternal	25kg	20/10	cloth	1D, etc.	acid	A5 F7 S3
Hunter (1st brood)	20kg	6*/0	none	1D 1D, etc.	teeth acid	A2 F0 S2

\*These animals are not killed unless they take the stated number of hits in a single attack. See the section entitled Attacks on Chamax, below.

Acid attacks are explained in the section entitled Attacks by Chamax, below.

A hibernating hunter appears to be a furry ball 0.5 meters across; it shows no signs of life and does not respond in any way to any stimulus. A questing hunter is characterized by slow, seemingly automated movement and the weaving motions of



its sensory palps. An aroused hunter is distinguishable from a questing hunter by its quick and purposeful movement, and by the ferocity with which it attacks any living creatures in its vicinity.

The maternal is a bloated sausage with shriveled legs and cannot move. It has the same mouthparts as a hunter but must be continuously fed by hunter attendants. Most of its body is devoted to reproduction.

The juvenile, an immature maternal, resembles a small, winged hunter, although its interior anatomy is more complex. It has no strong jaws, instead using its acid to dissolve its food before eating. A juvenile produces its first brood within a few days of its birth, and begins producing full-sized hunters within a week.

A juvenile's first several offspring (from 10 to 20 on the average) are much smaller and weaker than normal hunters, fit only to feed the juvenile for the few days she needs to grow to full maturity. Though less powerful, they behave in all ways as aroused hunters.

## **ATTACKS BY CHAMAX**

The various types of chamax have two basic modes of attack: teeth and acid. Hibernating hunters, of course, will not attack, questing hunters use only teeth, and aroused hunters use both. Maternals, being unable to move, attack (with teeth) only if adventurers come within reach of their jaws. Juveniles attack with acid only.

When a chamax attacks, it first grabs the adventurer with its strong, clawed forelegs, pulling him against its circular maw rimmed with sharp teeth. All chamax (except juveniles) attack only with teeth in the first combat round. In the second and subsequent rounds, an aroused hunter will attack with acid, expelled from its mouth at close range. Acid automatically hits and does 1D damage in the first round of use, 2D in the second round, 3D in the third round, and so on until the chamax is dead or the adventurer breaks away or is killed.

Armor offers partial protection: battle dress is breached by 100 hits, cloth or ablat by 50, vacc suit by 25, and any other type of armor by 10. Damage to armor should be recorded by the referee; it is cumulative and permanent. The adventurer suffers no hits from acid until his armor is destroyed.

Chamax may attack only when the adventurer is within their grasp. A chamax which is within close range automatically grasps the adventurer. The adventurer escapes the grasp of a chamax if he rolls his strength or less, at the beginning of each combat round. However, an adventurer may roll to escape only one chamax per round. An adventurer may also pry a friend loose from a chamax grasp, on the same roll.

Juveniles attack only with acid, and need not grasp their opponent to do so; they attack as soon as they are within close range, hitting automatically.

## **ATTACKS ON CHAMAX**

Chamax hunters have few vital organs, and these are clustered within layers of spongy tissue. Wounds on hunters are not cumulative, and if a weapon inflicts fewer than 12 hits in a round, it has no effect. If the weapon inflicts 12 or more hits, it has ruptured the hunter's acid storage sac, the creature dies, and its body is consumed by its own acid. Even hibernating chamax are consumed when killed. Juveniles and maternals take damage in the usual way; juveniles are consumed by acid upon death, but maternals are not, having only a small internal supply of acid.

When a hunter or juvenile is killed, any adventurers at close range must roll dexterity or less to avoid taking 3D damage from released acid. Walls, floors, and nearby objects will also be damaged.

## BREACHING BARRIERS

Aroused hunters will also use their acid to melt through barriers, if that is the shortest route to a sensed food source. Several chamax may combine their efforts to breach a barrier. Each combat round, each chamax will inflict 6D damage points on the barrier by moving up to it, expelling its acid stores, and moving away to be replaced by another. Ship bulkheads require 1000 points to breach, interior walls 100 points. The holes made by acid action will be about 1 meter across, irregular in shape, and dangerous to touch because of an acid residue around the edges.

## ACID DAMAGE TO AIR/RAFTS

Whenever the adventurers' air/raft is exposed to chamax acid, it may be damaged.

This occurs whenever a

chamax (most commonly a juvenile maternal) attacks with acid or is killed while at close range. To determine the damage, roll one die and consult the table at right. There is a DM of +1 for each consecutive round in which the air/raft has been under acid attack; other DMs may result from previous damage, as noted on the table. Damage may be repaired on a tech level 8+ world or at any type A or B starport.

<i>Die</i>	<i>Result</i>
1	No effect.
2	No effect.
3	Personnel affected; ail on board must roll dexterity or less to avoid 1D acid burns.
4	Minor damage; DM +1 on future damage rolls.
5	Minor damage; DM +1 on future damage rolls.
6	Damage; DM +2 on future damage rolls.
7	One lift module damaged; it fails on 7+. Reroll every half hour of use, more often under high stress conditions.
8	One lift module destroyed. Lift capacity is reduced by % of original.

## AWARENESS

Chamax nests with no available food supplies enter a state of hibernation; all nests on the planet Chamax and those in devastated areas of Raschev will be in this state. They will begin to wake up upon sensing food.

Chamax possess the ability, perhaps akin to the psionic talent of life detection, to sense life-forms over a few kilograms in weight at long distances, regardless of intervening barriers. When an adventurer (or other food source) approaches to within 50 meters of a nest's maternal, she will become partially aware, and 2D hunters will enter the state called questing. A questing hunter moves about at random until it comes within 15 meters of an adventurer, at which point it will begin to move toward him at a walk. If the adventurer moves to more than 15 meters distance, the hunter will return to its random movements. A questing hunter will not use acid to breach barriers, but will eventually turn away from a barrier and try to find a way around it. If a questing hunter is able to approach to within close range of an adventurer, it will attack.

range of an adventurer, it will attack.

When a maternal becomes partially aroused, the referee rolls 3D and records the result. Thereafter, every time a hunter (hibernating or questing) is killed, and every time a questing hunter attacks, subtract 3 from this number; when the total reaches zero, the entire nest begins to awaken. When this happens, all hunters enter the questing stage immediately, becoming fully aroused at the end of 5 combat rounds.

An aroused hunter (except for the maternal's personal attendants, which always remain with her) moves directly and quickly toward the nearest adventurer, taking the shortest route and tunneling through walls if necessary, and attacks.

If a hunter succeeds in killing an adventurer, it will not attack another. Instead, two or three hunters will cluster around the adventurer's body, partially digest it, and carry the food back to the maternal.

If a maternal is killed, all nests within a kilometer or more will become fully aroused, and their hunters will move toward the adventurers.

## **REPRODUCTION**

The chamax nest is clustered around a single maternal. She will have a "palace guard" of 3D hunters constantly attending her, and a variable number of other hunters supplying her with food. In addition, there will be 1D-2 juveniles in the nest, being fed by hunters.

One maternal supplied with food by her hunters will produce new hunters at the rate of roughly 100 every day: about one every 15 minutes. She can be pictured as a sausage-shaped assembly line 10 meters long, with thousands of young at various stages of development all along her reproductive tract. Reproduction is parthenogenetic, continuous, and stimulated by the presence of food. When the maternal enters hibernation (about a day after she stops eating), so do the young within her; this explains how newly-awakened maternals can begin producing young within minutes of awakening from a sleep that may have lasted centuries.

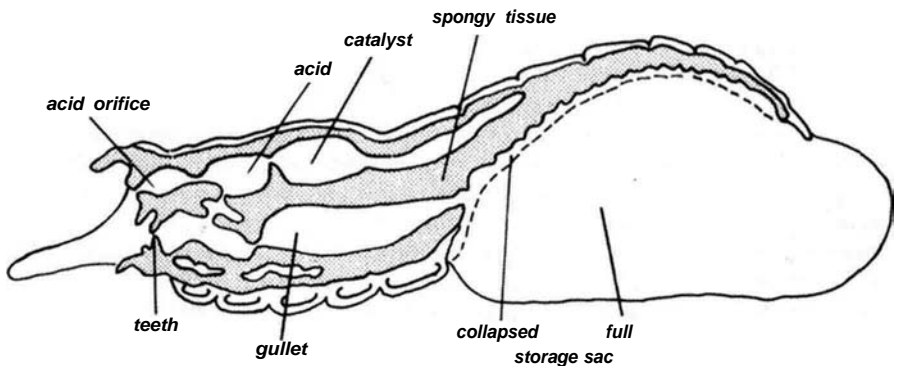
Approximately three in every hundred newborn chamax are juvenile maternals. They are fed for one or two days, after which they migrate. They are smaller than hunters and are equipped with acid-secreting mouth parts and three sets of membranous wings. Upon finding a burrow or sheltered area, they shed their wings, grow, and begin producing their own broods. The first hunters are produced after the juvenile is about 4 days old. The juvenile gives birth to about 20 hunters in her first three days of production, and these are small and weak, fit only to feed the new maternal until she can begin producing full-sized hunters, and die after a few days. In all, only a week passes between a juvenile's birth and her entry into full-scale production.

The number of maternals (and hunters) can increase with amazing speed. It can be calculated that, beginning with one maternal, after 30 days there will be over 6000 adult maternals at large. . . and over two million hunters!

## **PHYSIOLOGY**

Close studies of acid samples taken from melted holes or from dead creatures will enable a medic-3 or better to determine that the chemical is an extremely complex concentration of organically created fluoric acid and an unidentifiable catalytic compound that dissolves almost any solid. The sacs containing this liquid, and the protective membranes on the creature's body, are even more complicated

layerings of organic polymers and resinous secretions: a naturally grown plastic that cannot be duplicated quickly or easily. This material is all that remains when a chamax is killed and its body bubbles away. It looks like crumpled cellophane, is quite light, and will quickly be blown away by the wind. It disintegrates after several weeks' exposure to the sun, but immediately after a chamax attack, it should be possible to collect these remnants and fashion makeshift protective wraps from them. This is the only protection that will indefinitely resist chamax acid attacks, though, of course, it does no good against teeth and claws. Extreme care is necessary in gathering the material, since acid residues may remain for some time. Thorough washing with water will prevent acid burns. The characters should be encouraged to figure out for themselves the properties and uses of this material, which must exist if the chamax are not to be consumed by their own acid.



Chamax have few vital organs, all concentrated below the oral cavity and buried in folds of spongy tissue. This is why hits on chamax hunters are not cumulative: minor damage to this tissue is unimportant, and only piercing the acid sacs can kill the creature. Chamax which die of starvation or other causes are consumed by the rupture of the acid sacs during the creature's death throes.

Hunters will devour any sort of organic material, although large animals, being the most efficient food source, are their first choices. When a hunter eats, the food is shredded by the sharp plates in its circular maw, treated with small amounts of acid, and stored (except for a small amount used by the hunter) in an elastic sac under the creature's abdomen. At intervals, or whenever the sac is full, the creature returns to the nest and empties its storage sac into the maternal.

## HIBERNATION

When food becomes unavailable in a nest's area, the nest goes into hibernation. Most hunters die of starvation (and cannibalism is impossible for obvious reasons), while the maternal and a few hunters (up to 100) enter a state of suspended animation which can last for hundreds of years, awakening when the maternal senses a new source of food.

Nests awakened by adventurers will return to hibernation about a day after they can no longer sense food within a kilometer.

The chamax response to cold is similar. When the temperature falls much below

zero degrees Celsius, a chamax will enter a state resembling hibernation and will not wake up until the temperature rises, even if food is nearby.

Sometimes, if a large food source is available but not immediately accessible, a chamax nest may migrate, with the maternal carried on the backs of many hunters. The resulting column will march toward the sensed food-source, stripping the countryside as it goes. If the nest senses a very large food source, it may remain active for several weeks before it is finally forced to hibernate.

## **RADIO**

In addition to their life-detection sense, the chamax have an ability to detect and produce radio signals. This same ability was possessed by much of the planet's now-extinct land fauna, making the radio sense very useful to the chamax in finding food. To the chamax, radio signals indicate a source of food, and any broadcast will draw aroused creatures from great distances to investigate.

Adventurers may notice bursts of radio static over their communicators when questing hunters are nearby. When local chamax are aroused, several frequencies may be completely blocked by static.

The extent to which chamax radio signals are used for communication is unknown. However, each nest has its own characteristic radio signal, differing in nature and frequency from that of other nests, which in some way ties together hunters of the same nest and ties all hunters to the maternal. Some very simple messages are obviously sent, such as indications of a nearby food source or the signal to enter or leave hibernation. In addition, chamax hunters show an uncanny ability to home in on any radio signal, which presumably indicates that information from several chamax hunters is being integrated into a single triangulation.

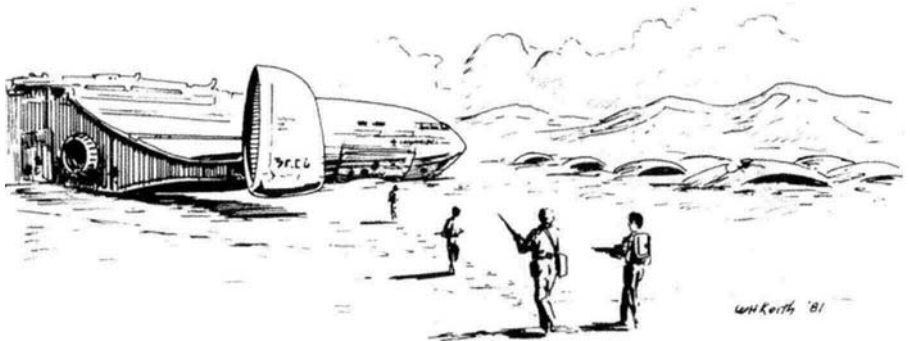
If a nest's communication frequency is jammed, hunters will lose the ability to coordinate their activities, but will move (after a period of random searching) in the direction of the transmitter.

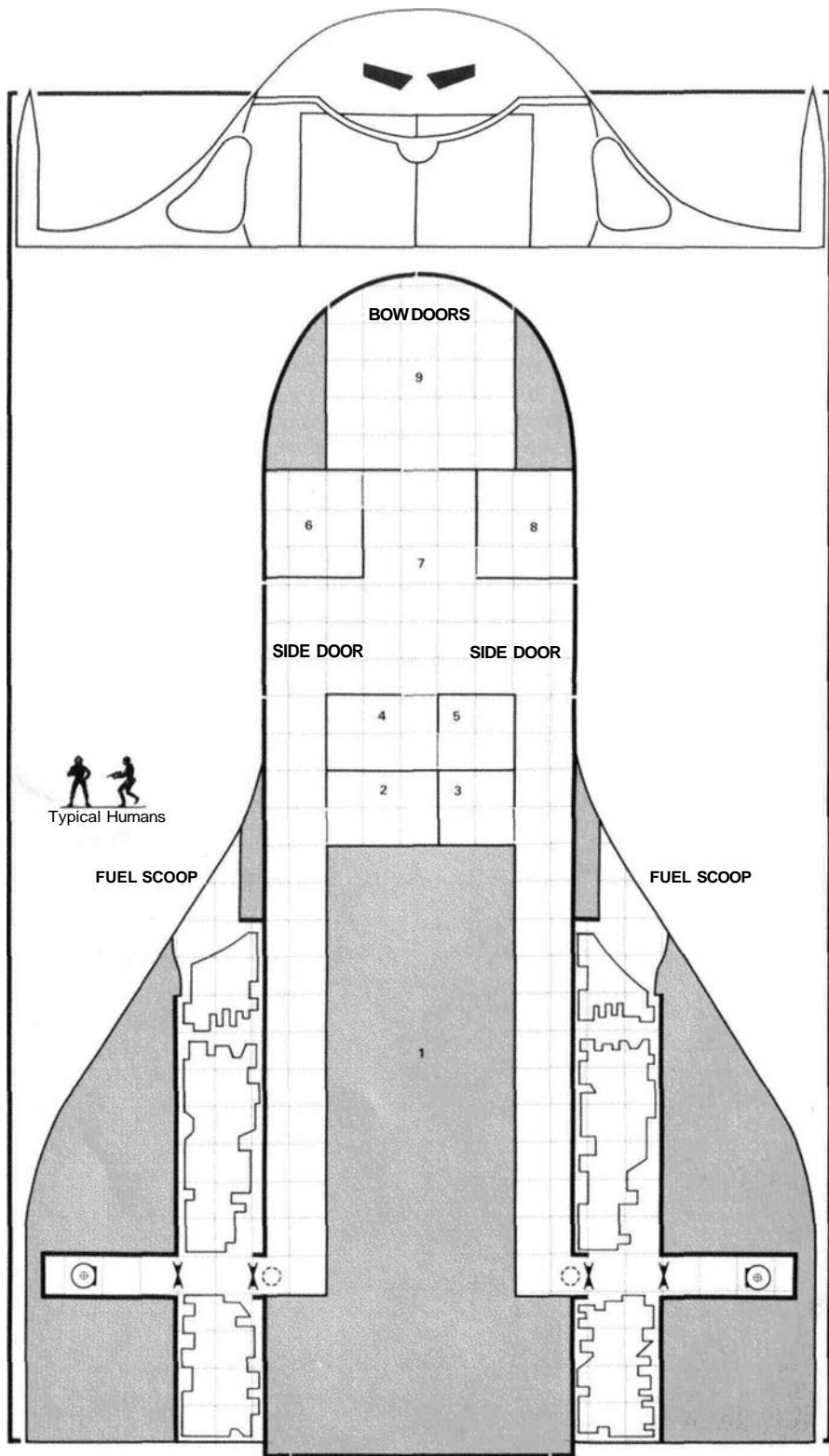
# The Shaarin Challenger

The *Shaarin Challenger* is a company-owned research vessel converted from a 400-ton subsidized merchant. Most of the modifications are in the lower (cargo) deck, where the hold has been partitioned for the storage of scientific gear, test core drill rigs, and survey equipment. A 40-ton fuel tank, added to increase the ship's range to jump-2, blocks the rear cargo doors.

The lower deck has been partitioned into the following areas.

1. Extra fuel tank holding 40 tons.
2. Planetology lab.
3. Photo lab.
4. Biology lab.
5. Electron microscope.
6. Equipment maintenance and repair station.
7. Cargo area.
8. Equipment storage compartment.
9. ATV bay.





## Deck Plan Symbols

	Interior Wall
	Sliding Door
	Bulkhead
	Maintenance Hatch
<b>IRIS VALVE    MANUAL HATCH</b>	
	Iris Valve
	Hatch
	Overhead
	Floor
	Both Floor and Overhead

## THE SHAARIN CHALLENGER

Tonnage: 400 tons (standard). 5600 cubic meters.

Dimensions: 46.5 meters long by 10 meters high by 15 meters wide. Wingspan: 32 meters.

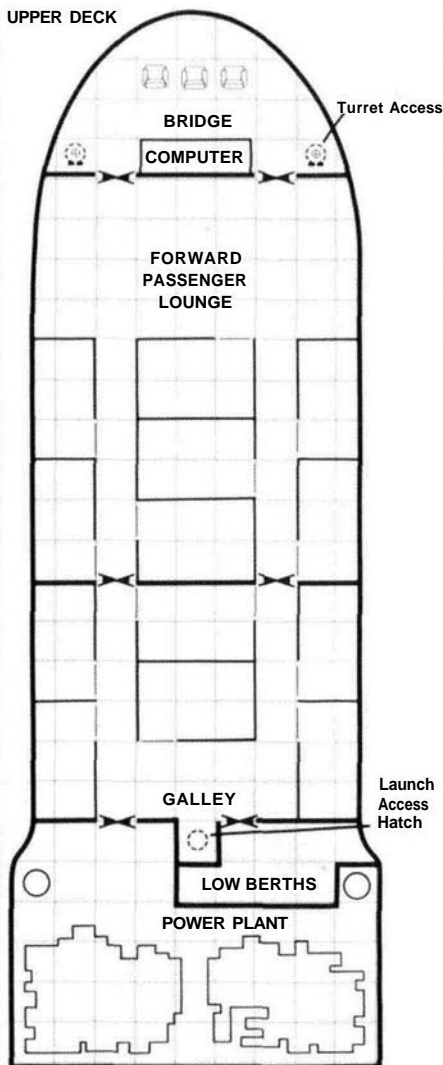
Crew: Five. Captain/pilot, navigator, medic, steward, and engineer. Staterooms for 8 additional expedition members.

Performance: 1G acceleration. Jump 1 (two jumps between refuelings). Standard power plant.

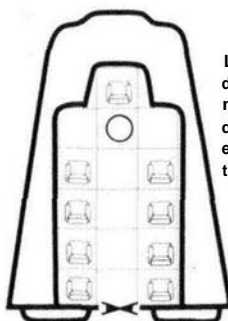
Electronics: Model/1 computer with scientific and navigation programs.

Ship's Boat: Launch mounted dorsally.

### UPPER DECK



1.5 meter squares for use with Snapshot or Azhanti High Lightning



Launch mounts on dorsal surface of merchant-dismounts for errands and transfers.

Maneuver Drives Mounted Underneath

LAUNCH