

# *Double Adventure 5* *The Chamax Plague*

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## **TRAVELLER**

*Science-Fiction Adventure  
in the Far Future*



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*Double Adventure 5*  
*The Chamax Plague*

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

*Science-Fiction Adventure  
in the Far Future*

Game Designers' Workshop

*The Chamax Plague* was first playtested at the Chicago Wargamers Association Spring Game Fest on April 4th, 1981.

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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 pinnace 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 pinnace 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 Alenazar. 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

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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 klick 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.

<i>Type</i>	<i>Weight</i>	<i>Hits</i>	<i>Armor</i>	<i>Wounds</i>	<i>Weapon</i>	<i>Behavior</i>
Hunter (hibernating)	50 kg	12*/0	cloth	none	none	A0 F0 S0
Hunter (questing)	50 kg	12*/0	cloth	2D-3	teeth	A2 F0 S1
Hunter (aroused)	50 kg	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	25 kg	20/10	cloth	1D, etc.	acid	A5 F7 S3
Hunter (1st brood)	20 kg	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; all 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 ¼ 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.

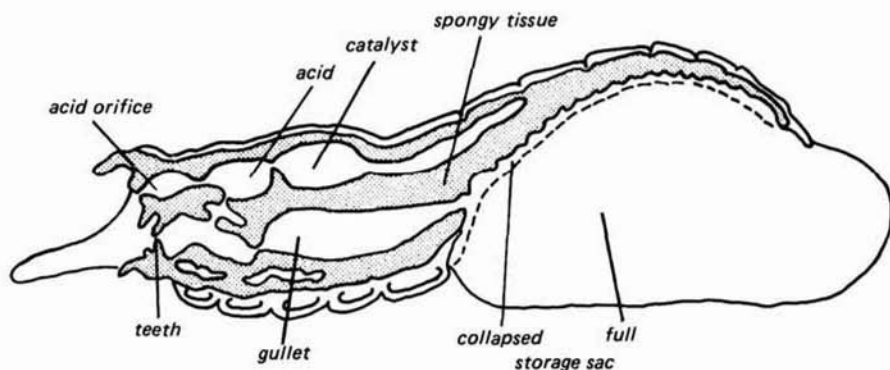
Approximately three in every hundred newborn chamax are juvenile maternals. They are fed for one or two days, after which they migrate. They are smaller than hunters and are equipped with acid-secreting mouth parts and three sets of membranous wings. Upon finding a burrow or sheltered area, they shed 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.

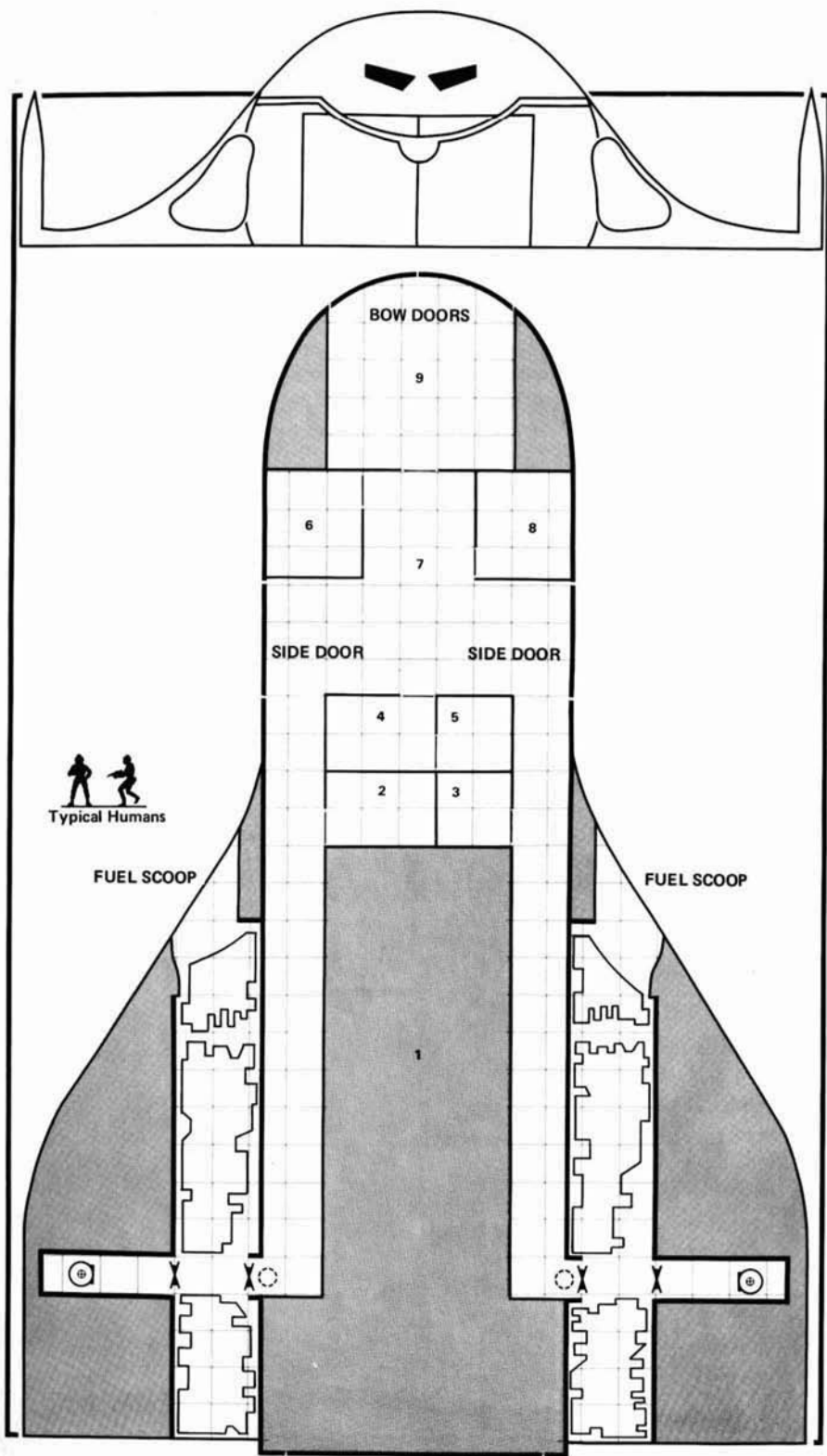
# The Shaarin Challenger

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.





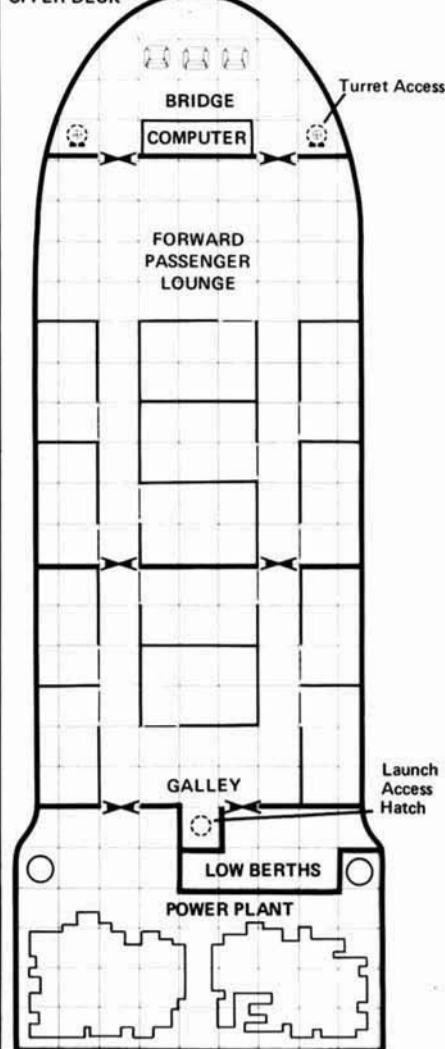
## Deck Plan Symbols

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

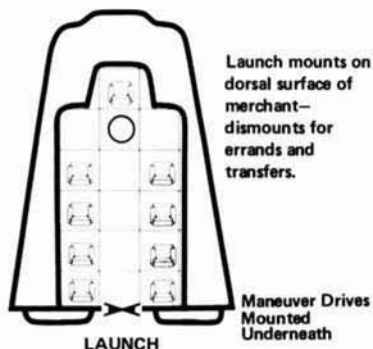
## THE SHAARIN CHALLENGER

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





Maternal

