

# *Double Adventure 5* *Horde*

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## **TRAVELLER**

*Science-Fiction Adventure  
in the Far Future*



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*Double Adventure 5  
Horde*

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

*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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# Table of Contents

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<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	5
Standards and Assumptions .....	5
Characters and Equipment .....	5
Situations .....	6
Further Adventures .....	6
<b>AN UNEXPECTED STOPOVER</b> .....	7
The Jourin Peninsula .....	8
<b>SITUATIONS</b> .....	10
Situation One: Outbreak .....	10
Situation Two: Refuge .....	12
Situation Three: Perimeter Defense .....	13
Situation Four: Power Station .....	14
Situation Five: Metastasis .....	15
Situation Six: Prisoners .....	16
Situation Seven: Second Landing .....	17
Situation Eight: Last Chance .....	18
Aftermath .....	19
<b>THE COMPUTER RECORDS</b> .....	20
<b>THE ALIEN SPACESHIP</b> .....	22



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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 Alenizar system found in *The Chamax Plague*. Raschev is a fairly large world,

**Place:** Raschev measuring 13,000 km in diameter with a standard atmosphere and water covering 90% of the world 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.

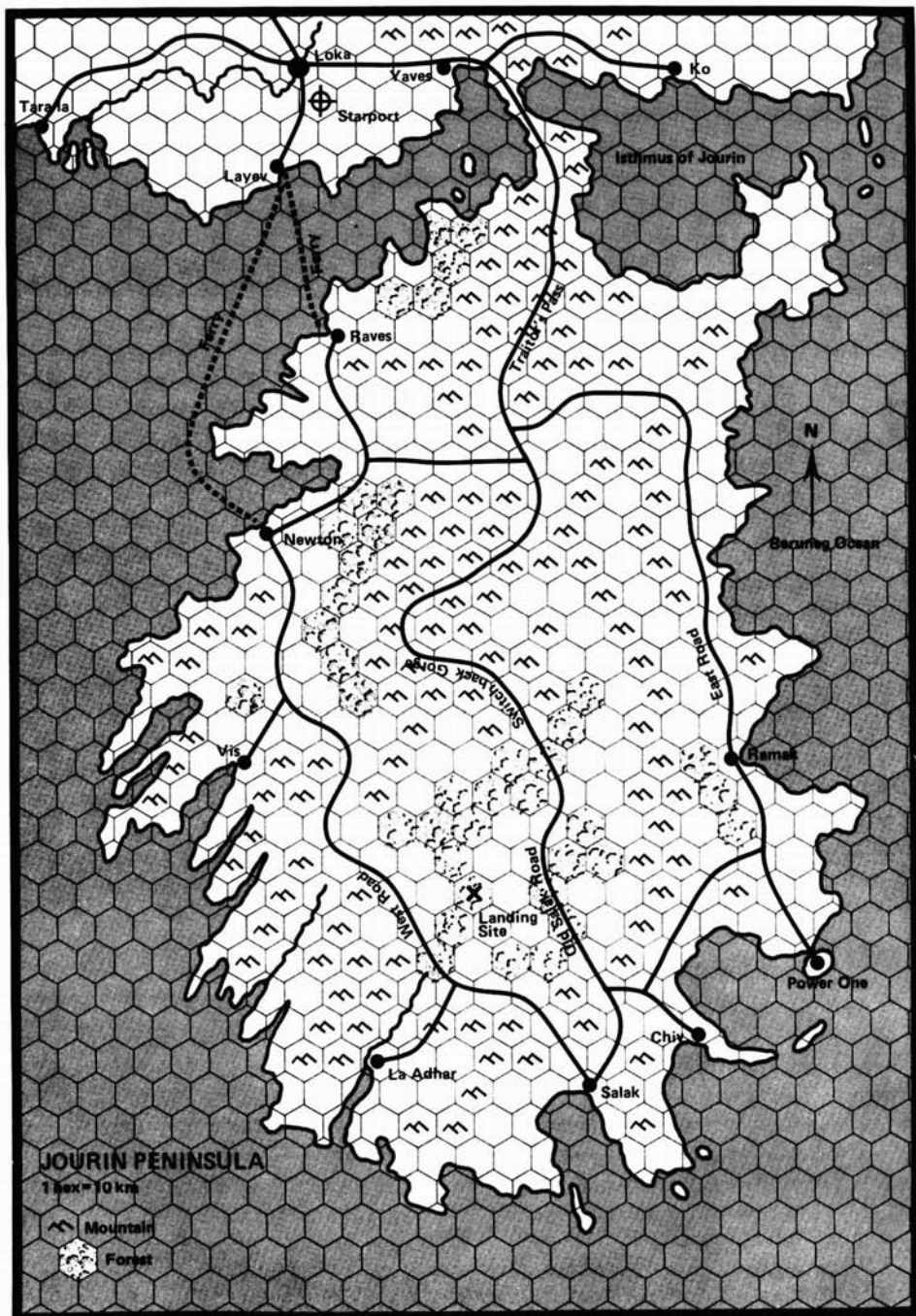
The planet has no air force, but light 2- and 4-seater propeller aircraft are used for aerial recon, and a variety of transport helicopters are used to move troops, equipment, and supplies as needed. The wet navy on Raschev consists of a number of 5- to 10-man, 20-meter long powerboats used for coastal 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 southeast 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.



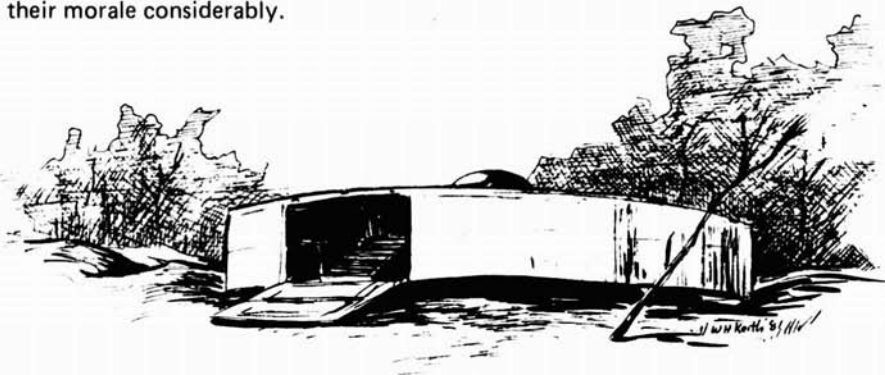
# Situations

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 Switchback 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 9D 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 Rashev.

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 Rashev. 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

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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

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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 field suppressor.
9. Main terminal for the ship's computer.

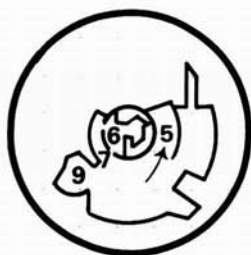
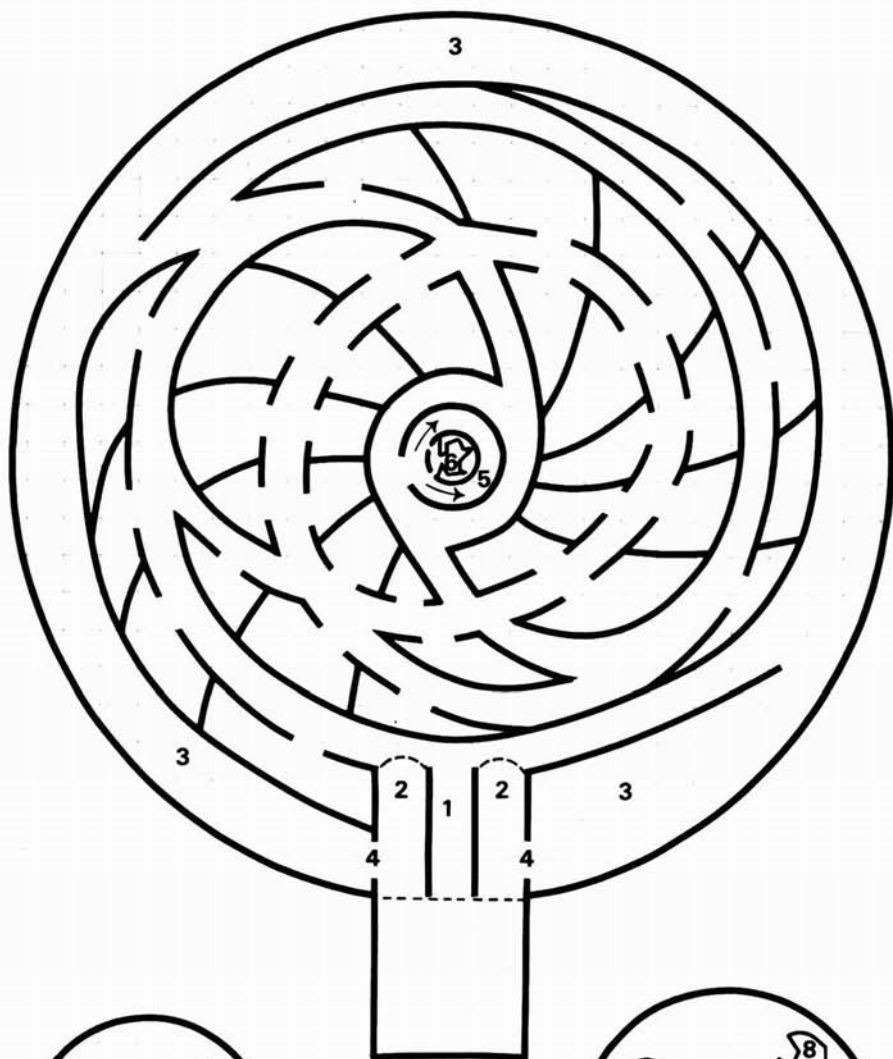
The rooms on all decks are without furniture or fittings of any kind, though the decks are molded to create scattered depressions that might serve as alien couches. Lighting panels in the bulkheads are dead, and adventurers will need hand or suit lights to explore the interior. All doors are diamond 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

