

ECOLOGICAL SCIENCE FANTASY RPG

CLOUD EMRESS



LAST VOYAGE OF THE BEAN BARGE



FOR USE WITH THE
MOTHERSHIP
SCI-FI HORROR RPG

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LAST VOYAGE OF THE BEAN BARGE

Content Warning: Last Voyage of the Bean Barge contains large bugs, familial abuse and violence, mental illness, blood, amputation, and violence to insects.

Delta City is a dilapidated old town, hanging on for dear life amongst the clouds. The ruling Lordling, Amana the Chaste, has mismanaged the city's prospects; its condensation sails produce half of the water they caught only ten years ago. Dozens of Cloudling soldiers stand on the docks nearby, slung with packs and weapons, guarding the queues for the airbarges. The PCs stand on their own in a much shorter line, the wind whipping away their body heat.

People always move in the summer, but this is different. Crowds two or three times bigger than usual gather to leave for the wastes below. News has spread that the Cloud Empress is walking the earth a mile below, just waiting to be saved.

Cloudling soldiers say fortunes will be made and their greatest wishes will be granted when they save the Empress. Brood Monks preach that the Century Brood has come ten years early, and they long to rejoin their Imago teachers. The PCs' aspirations for travel are far simpler. They reach for summer relaxation after a cold miserable winter in Delta City.

The PCs wait to board the Bean Barge, a beat-up little airship with two bean-shaped water tanks. The Bean Barge is past its prime a dozen times over. Whatever its original purpose, it now ferries travelers and supplies from cities above the clouds to the farmlands below.

The ship is headed to Tack Town, the Lowland Wastes' largest city. Once landed, the Bean Barge will exchange one tank of water for twenty bags of rice. Captain Stello is too stubborn to believe recent rumors of the Century Brood unearthing early and he's in no position to turn down paying travelers.

Onion, the ship's first and only mate, greets the party at the dock and scurries from person to person taking their bags. Cyppa, Menfa, and Genmo, the ship's only other passengers are already aboard.

"Oh gosh, I hate to say it, but I'll also need your weapons. Don't worry, they'll be secured below deck until we land. Captain's orders."

The Bean Barge is overloaded with a fortune of purified water, groaning and bobbing under the weight like a pregnant goat-cow. Once everyone is seated, the barge begins the descent through the poisonous clouds. The ship is launched, and there is no going back.



RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

The Imago appear 20–30 real-time minutes into the descent.

Roll 1 Encounter every 15 real-time minutes once the Imago appear.

When an Imago lands, they land on a random ship location.

1d10	Name	Effect
1	Entering dense acid cloud covering.	Anyone on the deck when the ship enters an acid cloud takes 3 Damage. Anyone who is not holding onto something is knocked around by turbulence.
2	A nearby Cloudling air-barge is covered in hungry Imago. Their radio operator yells for help as the chalk engine bursts into flames.	Requires a successful maneuver by the pilot to avoid. If there is a collision, the Bean Barge takes 2 Wounds.
3	A nearby Cloudling air-barge is covered in hungry Imago. Their gunner opens fire, throwing huge slugs into dying bugs. Soon dozens more bugs swarm the ship in a rage.	The sky floods with aggressive Imago. The next time you roll an encounter, roll twice as many encounters instead.
4–7	Juvenile Imago.	The Imago lands on the ship searching for dead bodies and chalk engines. The juveniles are drawn to the escape pod at the bottom of the ship.
8–10	Full grown Imago.	The Imago crawls across the exterior of the ship in search of chalk power sources. When an adult Imago finds a chalk power source, it chews away at the plastisteel armor and feasts on the energy within.

SHIP LOCATIONS

Each unengaged Imago attacks a location of the ship every 15 real-time minutes and deals 1 Wound to the ship per attack.

1d10	Ship Location	Location's Maximum Wounds	When destroyed
0–1	Front sail	2	It falls off, increased difficulty steering.
2–3	Front engine	3	It explodes, dealing 2d10 Damage to all nearby, and begins losing altitude.
4–5	Fuselage	5	Ship cracks in half and falls out of the sky.
6–7	Rear sail	2	It falls off, increased difficulty steering.
8–10	Rear engine	3	It explodes dealing 2d10 Damage to all nearby. The ship begins losing altitude.

TIMELINE IF THE PCs DO NOTHING

Timeline (Real-time minutes)	NPC actions	Environment
-30 minutes	Onion loads the ship's passengers and then large barrels of purified water, before securing all visible weapons in a locked cabinet in the crew quarters.	Bluish, almost white skies speckled with cloud cities
Departure	Cyppa murders her sister, Lace, and hides the body in an escape pod. Genmo sneaks away from Menfa.	The ship enters a curtain of sickly pale clouds. The Bean Barge rocks with turbulence.
+30 minutes	Cyppa dies from her untreated wounds. Genmo breaks into the weapons locker, stealing the highest Damage weapon.	Scattered Imago appear through the blanket of clouds below.
+60 minutes	Genmo locks himself on the bridge, diverting the ship to the Western Feeding Grounds. On the upper deck, Menfa sings to the Imago, pacifying the single Imago that hears her voice.	An angered flock of Imago devastate a flying battle brigade of air-barges. Two of the five ships plummet out of the sky. Dying soldiers scream over their radios.
+90 minutes	Imago swarm the ship searching for Lace's corpse and chalk engines.	Holes in the tree canopy reveal thousands of skittering Imago feasting on piles of the dead. The sky is filled with cicadas.



SMALL ONION

First Mate (they/them)

INSTINCT: 35 AP: 0 WOUNDS: 3

Belongings: Bandana, scrawled instructions, coveralls, rice mesh boots, dirty rag and lubricating oil, Flare Rifle (1d5 Damage), 2 flares, 4 red onions (2 servings).

Small Onion tends to ramble about onion varieties when the opportunity arises, and the opportunity always seems to arise. They are excited to give the PCs a grand tour of a ship that is far from grand. This is Onions' first gig away from the onion farm.

Onion idolizes Captain Stello for his life in the clouds, not fully aware of the Captain's predicament. They ignore the Bean Barge's failing engine, its chipping paint, and the strange wires dangling out of Stello's back. Onion's lot has already been cast, the bed already made, bedbugs or not. Onion is also eager to impress their first Lordling passenger. Onion seems flummoxed when they can't locate Lordling's cloaked servant anywhere.

When the Imago appear, Onion is brave, dependable, and the first to stand in harm's way.



CAPTAIN STELLO

Veteran Courier (he/him)

INSTINCT: 40 AP: 0 WOUNDS: 1

Belongings: Engraved silver-tipped cane (1d5 Damage), mechanical hole for a heart, locket with a photo of two young men kissing in front of the Bean Barge, loose-fitting robes, spyglass.

The captain's steady hand belies his failing health. Baggy robes hide the serpentine mess of tubes that winds from a hole in his chest to the engines of the ship. All Stello has left are his half-written memoirs and Onion. He cherishes his daily walk to the deck, disconnected from those blasted tubes. Enough time to watch the sun evaporate on the burned horizon. Enough time to pretend all is well, and all will be.

At the sight of the Century Brood, Stello warns the passengers through the Bean Barge's intercom system that they're in for a rough flight. Stello knows supercharging the barge's engines will destroy the chalk cores, but as circumstances grow dire, he tasks the PCs with manually increasing the power in each engine room. As a last resort, Stello suggests manually ejecting the chalk cores to draw the Imago away.



CYPPA, LACE'S SHADOW

Defeated Lordling (she/her)

INSTINCT: 48 AP: 4 WOUNDS: 2

Belongings: Major rest of Overflowing Chalk, experimental solar cannon "Houndscatcher" (3d10 Damage, long range, requires a night under the full moon to fire again), cornhusk doll, servant's armor (4 AP), Tattooed mark of the clone (right foot).

Cyppa can barely hold herself up, disgraced and dying. Her left arm ends halfway down in a ragged saber wound. Blood pools on the stolen crest and the whole ordeal is covered by a sheet. Cyppa will die without medical stabilization. Her body is marked by countless old scars, bone fragments, and permanently firing nerves. Having a younger sister is a blessing, and an older sister, a curse.

Cyppa and her older sister, Lace, boarded the Bean Barge fleeing the fallout of a lost duel. Cyppa could stand bloody failure in the dueling ring, but she could no longer stand her endless abuse. Cyppa finally silenced Lace's patronizing words by slitting her sister's throat.

Now, by habit alone, Cyppa holds onto her family's secrets. She whispers formalities through the pain. She is free, but she will be hunted by her family's Sellswords. Cyppa gladly gives Houndscatcher to any who will help her live to see another day.



MOTHER MENFA

Old Brood Nun (she/her)

INSTINCT: 40 AP: 0 WOUNDS: 1

Belongings: Antique wooden mask, canteen, cooking pots, two sticks of chalk, brown rice (8 servings), scroll of temple songs, walking staff (1d10 Damage). Spells: Levitate.



GENMO THE BLOODY KNUCKLE

Disguised Sellsword (he/him)

INSTINCT: 65 AP: 5 WOUNDS: 4

Belongings: Hastily made clay mask, fur cloak wrap over battle casing, boxing fist wraps and hidden brass knuckles (1d10 Damage).

Menfa is a warm and earthy, if slightly unhinged, older woman. Her watery eyes look out from beneath her wooden mask as she hums the old Imago songs to herself. Menfa counts her last weeks on her fingers. She heads to the feeding grounds to relinquish her bones.

Menfa is a font of Imago information. "Imago are afraid of water. Imago are temporarily disoriented by bright lights. Imago feed on the bones of the dead."

The old monks taught Menfa how to find the circular pattern in all things. The old nuns taught Menfa the old songs, the easiest way to calm a raging bug. Now she is the old nun. When the Imago board the Bean Barge, Menfa rushes to protect them.

Genmo moves like the wind. While some Sellswords work for a single patron for an entire season, Genmo works moment to moment. So when Genmo heard the old nun Menfa whispering about the Imago's big return, he quickly donned a Brood Monk disguise and asked to travel with her.

Genmo hides his intentions poorly. He's a bad liar and has the build of a brawler. His only saving grace is his silence. While other folks inevitably get talkative, Genmo keeps quiet. His dad saw to that.

He plans to hijack the Bean Barge and fly it towards the nearest feeding grounds to steal an Imago egg. Genmo fixates on warm fingers in the winter, a full belly, and the bed companions he can buy with an Imago egg. He just needs to beat the other chalk collectors to the prize.

Whatever comes to pass, Genmo can't bear to harm Menfa now—she reminds him too much of his old grandmamma.

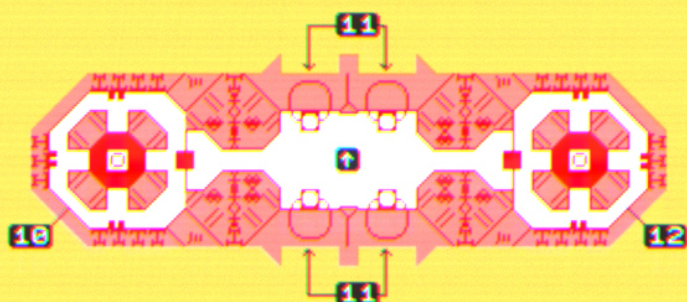
UPPER DECK



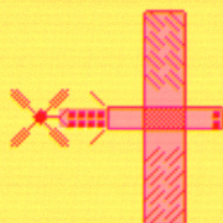
LOWER DECK



MECHANICAL DECK



SCOUT THOPTER



- | | | | |
|----|------------------------|----|----------------------|
| 1 | STORAGE TANK (CRACKED) | 7 | CARGO HOLD |
| 2 | STORAGE TANK | 8 | OBSERVATION ROOM |
| 3 | BRIDGE | 9 | OBSERVATION BATHROOM |
| 4 | CREW TOILET | 10 | REAR ENGINE |
| 5 | CREW SLEEPER | 11 | ESCAPE PODS |
| 6 | GALLEY | 12 | FRONT ENGINE |
| 4↑ | STAIRS | | |

UPPER DECK

1. STORAGE TANK (CRACKED)

A large plastisteel tank, water dripping from its poorly repaired cracks. A firehose is kept in a mounted box on the side of the tank.

2. STORAGE TANK

A large faded image of a bean is painted on the side of the empty tank. Well-worn with age.

STAIRS TO LOWER DECK

Two sets of wide stairs, one central set for cargo and forward stairs used for first-class passengers access to the observation deck.

3. BRIDGE

Captain Stello is usually here, his hands around the steering yoke. A tangle of life support tubes winds from a hole in his chest to the corner of the room. While he flies, a comms. terminal nearby spatters out radio chatter. Behind the Captain's seat is a small desk strewn with loose papers, two ornate fountain pens and his half-finished autobiography. Old wooden framed photos of unsavory characters dot the wall.

The Bridge is barred by plastisteel doors (10 AP) that can be locked from the inside.



BEAN BARGE CHALK ENGINE

LOWER DECK

4. CREW TOILET

A single molded toilet and sink. A photo of a farm is taped to a broken mirror.

5. CREW SLEEPER

A small, dimly lit room. Two hammocks hang from pipes in the ceiling. A few of Onion's clothes are folded in a bag attached to the wall. A single sunflower seedling hangs below the only small window, soaking in the light. A locked cabinet houses the PCs' weapons, two flare rifles (1 Damage), three flares, and a small toolbox.

Underneath Stello's hammock is a large wood trunk closed with a heavy padlock. Stello keeps the key to the chest and the thopter around his neck. Inside the trunk is one bloodied Cloudling uniform, two glass bottles of moonshine, two revolvers (1d10 Damage), and a handful of wisdom teeth.

6. GALLEY

A wall with a built-in stove, sink, and freezer. There are a dozen or so cupboards filled with dried goods. The fridge is well stocked with frozen meat and soup. There appears to be enough food for a small crew to live on for a week. Above the sink hangs a medical kit that includes: 1 roll of bandages, a tourniquet, painkillers, antibiotics, stimulants, and 1 med-paste.

Menfa starts her journey fidgeting with pots and pans in the barge's cramped galley, giddy as a child at the early emergence of the Century Brood.

7. CARGO HOLD

A cramped storage area filled with sealed water containers strapped to the walls and floors.

8. OBSERVATION ROOM

The overwhelming smell of sickness, blood, and death wafts from the observation deck. There is something wrong here. Piles of twisted blankets and torn sheets have been bloodied and tossed aside. In the center of the couch, Cyppa lingers, barely able to sit up. Her face has turned gray-white. She looks like a living corpse.

Cyppa sits on a plush couch in front of a semicircle of portholes. Each window is a portal to the clouds and a gated view of an all-encompassing horizon.

9. OBSERVATION BATHROOM

A meager, but clean airship bathroom. A single molded plastisteel toilet and sink. "Houndcatcher" is tucked in the corner, leaning against the toilet.

LADDER TO MECHANICAL DECK

An 8 ft ladder in a tube leads down to the mechanical deck. Broken safety glass from the tampered escape pod terminal is visible on the landing.

MECHANICAL DECK

10. REAR ENGINE

A spinning bone-skin urn filled with super-heated liquid chalk surrounded by mechanical tubes. A relic from an era long since past and an extremely complicated machine. A twisting handle allows a user to manually overcharge the output of the engine, significantly increasing the barge's speed. Four large levers surrounding the chalk engine can be released to it from the bottom of the ship. Without the engines, the ship's sails can only provide some temporary lift.

11. ESCAPE PODS

The escape pods are single-use evacuation tubes that can comfortably fit two, uncomfortably fit three, and dangerously fit four. If asked, Captain Stello tells you none of the escape pods have been serviced in at least a hundred years, if the Bean Barge's maintenance records are to be believed.

Escape Pod 1. Sabotaged by Cyppa upon boarding the Bean Barge, the digital terminal has been smashed, and there is a broken saber blade wedged into the door's locking mechanism. Inside, a pile of bloody sheets peers through the window. The body inside the escape pod is Lace, Cyppa's sister, with a saber wound across her neck.

Escape Pod 2. This escape pod is missing. The launch date flashes on the terminal (50 years ago). Indicators suggest a malfunction; no record of a safe landing.

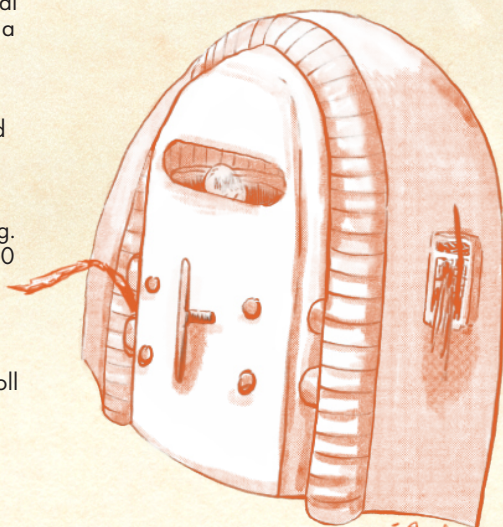
Escape Pods 3 & 4. Ancient, but in apparently working order. If launched, roll 1d10. On an 8-9 everyone onboard takes 1 Wound upon landing, on a 10 everyone onboard is instantly killed.

12. FRONT ENGINE

The same layout and features as the rear engine except this room is overheating. The engine sparks in its containment field. If asked about the state of the engine, Stello denies that there are any problems with the ship that can't be fixed with a little elbow grease. If the front engine is overcharged, it becomes increasingly unstable and explodes after twenty minutes, dealing 4d10 Damage to anyone on the Mechanical Deck, 3d10 to anyone on the Lower Deck, and 2d10 Damage to anyone on the Upper Deck.

SCOUT THOPTER

A slim, solar-powered flier stolen from an unguarded outpost. The thopter is docked underneath the Bean Barge and is only accessible from a service hatch in the mechanical deck. A narrow and exposed 20 ft ladder connects the ship to the thopter. The scout thopter seats two comfortably and three dangerously. It has no weapons, AP 10, and can take 2 Wounds.



ESCAPE POD 1

Credits:

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