# FOREWORD

**METAMORPHOSIS ALPHA** is one of the new breed of role-playing games. It is designed such that the referee and players will develop their own "game world" as they go along. **METAMORPHOSIS ALPHA** plays much like a good science-fiction book reads. Each player takes the role of a person, humanoid mutation or creature mutation on a vast, radiation-ridden starship which is out of control in deep space. Radiation has caused all knowledge to be "lost" and humans are in a state of semi-barbarism. The players must learn to survive in a world of fantastic mutations and hostile radiation, using only their natural cunning and such sophisticated space equipment as they can find and learn to use.

**METAMORPHOSIS ALPHA** is a free-form system, giving rules and guidelines for the basics of play and setting up the starship, but allowing the players and referee unlimited use of their imagination to create new problems and methods of solving them. Using the guidelines of the rules, the referee "creates" the starship (beginning a little at a time), sets up social structures for his people, plans the various mutations, places clues about the starship for the players to find, and any other of a multitude of possible happenings. The players take it from there as they explore the starship ("seeing" only what they actually would. as the referee keeps his plans and notes secret), trying to gain the knowledge and technological devices they need to survive. From then on, the referee can add new facets to the game as they become desirable. The game is a continuous adventure which need never end.

Readers familiar with TSR's *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* will immediately recognize many similarities between the two game systems, and they will just as quickly note the numerous important differences which make **METAMORPHOSIS ALPHA** a similar but outstandingly different sort of contest. On the other hand, the existing parallels in the games make it a simple move for the players to go from one to the other, and those with existing *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* campaigns may wish to incorporate ideas from this game into their campaign "worlds."

GARY GYGAX
15 July 1976

BRIAN BLUME
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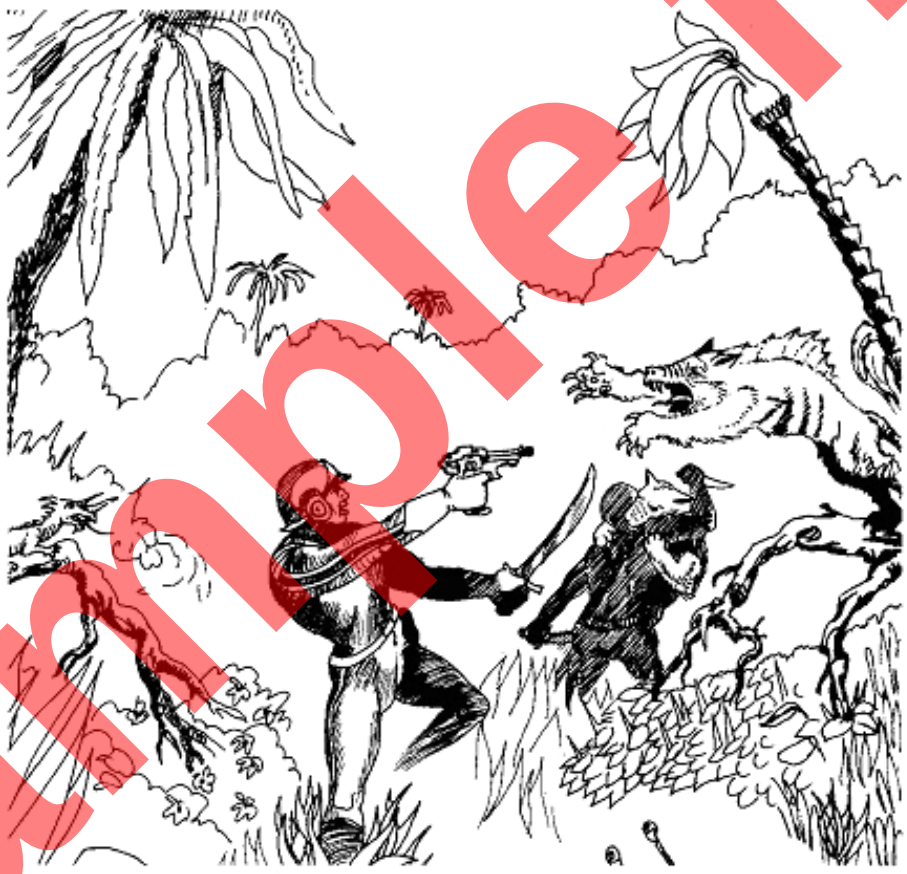
# METAMORPHOSIS ALPHA

## Fantastic Role-Playing Game Of Science Fiction Adventures On A Lost Starship



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# INTRODUCTION

Mankind's urge to explore and expand its frontiers finally caused another push into the vastness of space - first interplanetary, then interstellar. By the 23rd Century a great migration wave was spreading from Old Terra to the hundreds of inhabitable worlds that had been discovered in the Milky Way galaxy. During the next hundred years colonization ships of all types and descriptions went out to the stars, bearing seedling colonies seeking a better life. Many found their new homes - for better or for worse - but for one reason or another scores of these starships never reached their destination. This game is based on just such an event, the fate of a colony ship that became lost...

The starship Warden was created from the designs used in the United Western Starship Cartel program, and it was laid down in the Trans-Plutonian Spaceyards in 2277. The design was the most ambitious ever attempted, the blueprints calling for an oval spheroid of tremendous size using a new metal alloy of tensile strength previously unknown. The ship was an incredible 50 miles in length, with a width of 25 miles, and a height of eight and one-half miles. Additional levels above and below the central one brought the total number of decks to 17. Warden required 11 years to complete, and it did not leave the Sol System until 2290 because of the effort required to outfit the starship. The vessel contained complete Terran environments, and the colonists were not rigidly screened for the expedition, for it was held that Warden's accommodations would place few physical or psychological stresses upon colonist or crewman.

A description of the starship's levels, as well as some of the equipment typically found on each, follows. The vessel was basically given over to large, open areas, with a simple system of electronic locks used to insure that colonists did not stray into command or possibly harmful areas. With its cargo of the flora and fauna of Earth, 1½ million colonists, and 50,000 crew members, the wonder of the Interstellar Colonization Age set forth to found a new world many light years from its old home.

**DISASTER:**

Some one-third of the way to the planetary destination that had been selected for *Warden* stretched the very fringe of a cloud of space radiation. This cloud had been charted and analyzed, so that *Warden's* captain was aware that he was to plot a course to avoid any possible danger. Somehow the vessel came too close to the radiation, and the cloud contained disaster. The energy given off at the fringes of this celestial hazard was foreign to all previously known radiation types. It passed through every one of the ship's protection systems and defense screens. The effects on the ship itself were startling. The worst hit were the colonists aboard, and most of the human beings exposed to the radiation simply turned to piles of calcium with no advance symptoms. Hard hit also were the flora and fauna that underwent mutation if they even survived at all. Even some of the vessel's systems were affected, and unstable, radioactive areas were caused from the cloud's radiation. The humans who survived the initial exposure discovered too late that life forms in their natural setting - such as the ecologically prepared forest areas and the like - seemed to have the greatest resistance to the effects of the radiation. A few of the crew and colonists then took to living in the huge parks of *Warden*. A handful remained who tried to restore sanity and order to the starship. They failed.

Life became a struggle merely to survive for those humans that were left. In this struggle all knowledge of the ship's mission or even, in fact, that the humans were on a ship was lost. Ship's systems were maintained in a minimum operative state by the vessel's main computer and the robots that were operating at the time of the cloud's entrance into the starship. Later generations of humans lost all sense of identity, with the ship regressing into a state of savagery. Life quickly stabilized (as life has a habit of doing) with new life forms created from exposure to the unknown radiation. The humans settled into a tribal way of life and those few that travelled and came back told of areas where the animals walked like men and plants were able to talk and move. The vessel travelled on past its assigned planet with its safety systems preventing the ship's destruction by crashing into a planet or burning up in the sun. It is only a matter of time until even those almost perfect systems fail and the starship dies. Until that time, life continues to flourish and the Warden travels on, much changed from what it once was.

**SURVIVAL:**

The players of the game are put into this situation as humans, mutated humanoids, or intelligent monsters. What they do and how they survive the dangers of the ship makes for an interesting situation for all participants alike. The travels up and down through the starship are only accomplished by using bits and pieces of ancient knowledge the players are able to gather from the referee and their starting point. Travelling throughout the ship forces the players to gain technological devices and information just to survive on a day-to-day basis. They can also make use of the secretions and liquids produced by the mutated plants and creatures of the forest levels.

# THE GAME

**Age Level:** Adults 12 years and up.
**Number of Participants:** 1 referee and 2 to 24 players.

Much of the material herein is presented in order to give participants the proper "feel" for play. This may cause some readers to hesitate to become involved in a game which has, seemingly, so many rules, but actually the system is quite simple; and it provides a nearly endless, multi-levelled, and completely absorbing science fiction game which will offer a challenge to the most imaginative intellect.

The *referee* is the participant who decides he would enjoy running the game and is willing to accept the burden of drawing the starship levels and locating the life forms on each level as well as noting where various technological items and/or information is to be found. These posts give complete instructions to guide the new referee in this activity. The referee will find that imagination and creativity are most helpful in his role as Supreme Arbiter (or Starship Master) of the course of the game. He must carefully balance risk and reward. His starship must not be so laden with deadly hazards as to make survival of player characters impossible - or even nearly so. On the other hand he must not be so kindly as to make the game too easy and the rewards too great, for that will remove all of the challenge, and play will quickly become boring routine. At the beginning of the game the referee must plan to present his players with problems which are not too difficult to overcome and rewards which are correspondingly low in value. As players become more adept, he can then increase the difficulty of the problems they will face, and at the same time increase the value of the items they find if they solve the problems - animal, vegetable, mechanical or something else entirely.

The *players* cannot begin the game (called a campaign because each episode of play will be connected to the next with results going forward from game to game) until the referee has prepared one to three levels. Once the referee has made the necessary preparations, the players create game personas, called characters herein. The players then assume the various roles that they have selected for their characters - pure human, mutated human, humanoid, intelligent animal, or whatever. Each player keeps careful records of his character and his character's possessions as well as of what areas his character has explored and mapped.

**SUGGESTED ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT:**

**Random Number Generator:** Random numbers can be generated by means of a small electronic calculator, by drawing numbered chips from a container, by selecting cards from packets of specially selected playing cards, etc. The simplest system is to roll one or more special percentile dice. These dice are available from your hobby dealer or from the publisher of this book. They are twenty-sided dice numbered 0 to 9 twice.

Several pairs of 6-sided (ordinary) dice are most helpful for speedy play.

**Polyhedra (Multi-sided) Dice:** A set of polyhedra dice (4,8,12 and 20-sided) will be found useful for some aspects of the game if alternate means of randomizing (other than the suggestions above) are desired.

**Graph Paper:** The referee will find that several types of graph paper will be needed – 4, 6 and 8 lines to the inch in both 8 ½" x 11" and 11" x 17" sizes are suggested. Each participant should likewise have a pad of some sort of graph paper on which to map areas of the starship, which he or she explores.

**Hexagon Paper:** The referee may also wish to use 8 ½" x 11" paper overprinted with hexagons on which he will draw his large-scale starship level maps. This special paper is also found at hobby shops or can be purchased directly from the publisher. It is by no means necessary.

**Sheet Protectors:** The referee will find that mylar sheet protectors are needed in order to preserve the hard work he has put into his starship levels, for constant handling of unprotected maps will quickly smear color (or even plain pencil markings), fray the paper, and so on.

**Notebooks:** All participants in the campaign will find it very helpful to keep all game-related material in a notebook. The referee will usually have two: one will contain his maps and matrices showing what is keyed onto each level; the second is used to keep his copies of records on player characters and similar miscellaneous information.

**Pencils and Paper**: A good supply of both is most useful. While the referee will need colored pencils to help delineate his level maps, most players will need only common "lead" pencils. Paper here means just about any form of scratch paper handy.

**Imagination:** Both referee and players need plenty, but neither would be interested in a game of this sort if they didn't already possess a high degree of this important commodity!

**One Very Patient Referee.**

**Players:** The more the merrier!

# THE STARSHIP

The gigantic starship, Warden is ellipsoidal in shape, being approximately 50 miles long at its extremes, 25 miles wide, and 8½ miles tall, with an additional ½ mile high dome on the top of the ship.

The starship is divided into 17 levels, or "decks." These levels vary in height, length and width. As a safety factor, the hull of the ship is up to a half-mile thick, but the hull is not completely solid - it is segmented with strong and thick bulwarks and contains supports, cables, conduits, machinery and other such items with paths and crawlways throughout. Access is limited to this area for engineering purposes only, and the few access points will open only for command or engineering color bands.

The floors between the levels are each approximately 330 feet thick. This area contains supports, machinery, electrical wiring systems, plumbing tubes and the like. Additionally, this area may also contain transportation systems (such as subways or transport tubes), supply transport tubes, or other such facilities. There are pathways within this labyrinth, but again access is greatly restricted, and the few entrances will admit only those with a command or engineering color band.

There is an elevator system running down the center of the ship. There are four heavy-duty cargo elevators with varying capacities of 5 tons, 20 tons, 50 tons and 100 tons. These elevators will operate only in response to the use of two color bands, either engineering or command type (two of the same, or one of each). There are 20 personnel elevators, each with a capacity of approximately 30 persons. Of these, one elevator is a top security elevator used only during emergencies and which will operate only in response to a command color band. Note: some levels may have elevator shafts passing through them, but without direct entrance or exit from the elevators, depending upon the level and security considerations. In addition, if a bulwark near the elevators divided a level, doors might open on one side only to allow access only to a certain area (one side of the bulwark divider). And, access to certain areas or levels might be impossible without a specific type of color hand. The personnel elevators will operate with the brown general-purpose bands, though exits to certain levels may be restricted.

There may also be other elevators of a secondary nature located elsewhere connecting various levels, depending upon design considerations.

The following descriptions of the levels and what they contain are intended ***only as examples*** to illustrate what the ship interior might look like. Each referee should design his ship interior to his own specifications, using these descriptions as guidelines for gaining ideas only. A referee's concept of the interior of the Warden should vary considerably from the example presented here, so that players will be unaware of its layout and will be able to learn its details only by exploration - not by referring to this booklet for other than an example of what might be discovered. The factors of newness, surprise and the unknown will only add to the campaign's enjoyment.

**Level 1** (31 x 13 x ¼ miles): This level is filled with supplies destined to be used on the colony planet. There are gigantic stacks of raw materials, refined metals, plastics, glass, emergency food rations, etc. etc. Ramps and catwalks connect the stacks. Robots are usually used to pick up the needed supplies. There is a large, reinforced pressure hatch on one part of the hull for on-planet removal of supplies from this level.

Entrance to this level is by the main elevators and 4 inclined planes or spiral ramps leading down to level 2. Access to this level is gained only through use of the command or security bands.

**Level 2** (34 x 15 x 1/8 miles): This level is similar to level 1, but the supplies stored are more of a finished nature: electrical components, wire, machine parts, farming tools, geology equipment, land-clearing machines, prefabricated moulds for home units, home accessories, etc. etc. There are also several types of computers for on-planet settling computations. Robots are used in this area as on level 1.

Access to this level is by the main elevators and 4 inclined planes or spiral ramps leading up to level 1 and down to level 3. The ramps and planes have a standard width of 50 feet, and are located in the ship's hull with entrances to and from the levels indicated. Not all levels are interconnected, however.

**Level 3** (37 x 17 x ¼ miles): This level contains supplies for use in the factories on levels 4 and 5. In other respects this level is similar to levels 1 and 2.

Entrances are the main elevators, 4 ramps or planes leading up to level 2, and 1 ramp leading to level 4.

**Level 4** (39 x 18 ½ x ¼ miles): This level contains mothballed factories (A) that are intended for use after arrival at the new planet. These are surrounded by an uninhabited wilderness forest area (B). Although there are no human settlements in the forest, the entire area abounds with forest animals that live among the deciduous trees and conifers. The area has a number of forest-type ecology robots that operate in the forest, and human visitors visit the area on occasion for camping and wilderness outings.

Access to the level is by the main elevators and via one ramp leading up to level 3 and down to level 5.

**Level 5** (41 x 20 x ¼ miles): This level contains more factories that are designed for use after arrival at the destination planet. The factories are surrounded by large areas of open grasslands that form into mixed forest areas on the outer edges of the level. There are some small village settlements scattered throughout the level, each with dwelling units for up to 50 families. Forest ecology robots are also used on the level.

Entrance to the level is via the main elevators and one spiral ramp up to level 4.

**Level 6** (42 x 20 ½ x 1/8 miles): This level contains features of both the engineering and ecology fields. The developed area has various laboratories for manufacturing and scientific use - metal working shops, chemical refineries (plus a secured area for chemical storage), power experimentation labs, energy generators, biological laboratories, and a large botanical growth center with variable light systems. The latter is located as a part of the mixed-forest area that surrounds the developed section. The mixed-forest area contains rolling woodland, small lakes and streams, several swamps, and a variety of flora and fauna. There are 100 engineering, 50 general purpose, and 25 of each type of ecological robot assigned to the level.

Entrance to this level is via the main elevators or by the ramp that leads down to level 7. Access is limited to those with command, security, engineering, or horticultural color bands.

**Level 7** (45 x 21½ x 1/8 miles): This level is one of vast, rolling grasslands with a few widely dispersed ranches marking the prairie-like terrain. Groups of families live on these ranches, and raise cattle or sheep, which feed on the surrounding areas, but the families, are largely isolated. A small number of "forest" ecology robots assist with work on each of the ranches. Besides the domesticated animals, some herds of wild animals (like antelopes or buffalo) also roam on the level. Although the terrain is largely dry and the climate arid, there are some small streams on the level and numerous patches of trees nearby these sources of water.

Entrance to the level is from either the main elevators or by one ramp leading up to level 6, or either of two inclined planes down to level 8. Access to the level is possible by use of the command, security or horticultural color bands.

**Level 8** (47 x 22 ½ x ½ miles): This level features extensive farmlands with rural farms and villages for those families who favour the "outdoor" life of a farm setting. One large section is a horticultural test area with botanical laboratories for various types of experimentation. The farm areas feature large crop-growing areas, interspersed with light woods, occasional lakes, and so on. Individual farms vary in size - some are for individual families, some are for groups of families, and others are complete villages. A number of "garden" ecology robots assist with tasks. Rural wildlife of varying types is also found throughout the entire level.

Entrance to the level is via the main elevators or through use of either of two inclined planes leading to level 7.

**Level 9** (48 x 23 x ½ miles): This level contains administrative and security facilities and is divided into a number of parts: ship security (F), administrative/civil affairs section (G), family housing for personnel of the level a section housing small space ships for scouting missions (I), a storage area for munitions (J), and the ship's weapon systems (K). There is a repair center for weapons systems and a supply area for items needed in each of these areas. A forested area is also prominent on this level, and features the trees and animals common to level 4 but with a greater proportion of hostile or dangerous predator type animals (such as bears, tigers, etc.)

The security section of this level includes, among other things, storage of various items in different locations: 100 deactivated security robots, extra color bands for issue as needed (10,000 brown, 250 steel grey, 250 green, 250 white, 100, red, and 50 blue-red command bands), 50 sonic disruptors ("metal" sensitive), 50 disruptor pistols ("protein" sensitive), 25 paralysis rods, 50 laser pistols, 5 laser rifles, 25 gas ejectors, 5,000 hydrogen power cells, 525 water hydrogen energy cell rechargers, 50 shield attachments, 100 clips of gas darts (25 per clip), and other lesser items (clubs, tear-gas, etc.). Access to weapons storage areas requires - a command color ring or 2 command color bands to open the special locks. The security section also includes a sizable detention area for holding up to 2,000, persons in a secured area.

Entrance to this level is restricted, and is only accomplished by the main elevators and the use of either a command or security color band. There is a, special elevator connecting this level with level 10, restricted only to use by those with a command color band.

**Level 10** (16-mile diameter circle x ¼ mile ceiling): This level is the control center of the ship and has restricted entrance. It contains the command center or "bridge," the main ship's computer and auxiliary units for complete operation of, the ship's systems, and housing units for the personnel of this level and their families. The housing quarters are on the outer edge of the circular area and, afford a superb view of the forest/mountain area below (level 11).

The ship's command center contains a storage section with materials selected for the control and maintenance of ground-based operations, science and engineering labs for secret work (with several attendant robots), and the master control area. The master control area is divided into 8 sections: 1) The captain's, chair and command console, which has extensive monitors and tie-ins to every station in the area; 2) The computer science room for master programming and instant retrieval of necessary analyzes; 3) The security monitoring section which ties in with a similar room on level 9 and contains monitoring screens, a computer tie-in, a secondary intraship communications system, and audio pickup recorders; 4) The intraship environmental control room with 4 general monitors, 16 specific environmental monitors, and a computer that aids in the control of intraship environments; 5) The primary engineering bay, with numerous monitoring screens for power and on-ship operation, per level telltales, and a computer for efficiency levels analysis; 6) The navigation and power section, with main navigational controls, power monitors, and a special screen for plotting the, present and future course of the ship; 7) The primary communications room with direct line hookups to various parts of all the levels, large and small monitors, and, various display screens; 8) The emergency control area, with command of the outside ship's offensive and defensive weapons systems, an extensive engineering tie-in to coordinate damage control, a computer for related analyses, and a special emergency system for flooding any area of any level inside the ship with paralysis gas in cases of extreme necessity,

Although the main elevators pass through this level, there is no entrance to the level except from level 9 and the special elevator.

**Level 11** (49 x 24 x ½ or ¾ miles): This level contains forested area that features a large hill in the center and rough mountains all around the rim of the level. Wild animals of all sorts live on this level, and some may be dangerous to humans. Several small villages are found on this level, but they are largely isolated and the area is in a "wild" state. As on level 4, human visitors occasionally explore the area for camping and wilderness outings. A small number of "forest" ecology robots are on the level to perform tasks as needed.

Entrance is by the main elevators or by either of two spiral ramps leading down to level 12.

**Level 12** (48½ x 23½ x ½ miles): This level contains a tropical jungle that fills the entire area and contains all of the flora and fauna of such a forest. The vegetation is thick and lush in many places, although there are several main "paths" throughout the level, with some secondary branches. Although entrance is not restricted in the normal manner, warnings are posted due to the number of potentially dangerous animals found on the level. The jungle is used for human groups who wish to adventure and explore the area. A small number of "forest" robots work on the level as needed, and there is one biological station near the main elevators.

Entrance to the level is by the main elevators or via the spiral ramps leading from level 11.

**Level 13** (47½ x 22½ x ¼ miles): This level contains primarily supplies for levels 11, 12 and 14 and is in some respects itself similar to level 1. There is also a storage facility and repair area containing 50 deactivated "forest" ecology robots and 50 deactivated "garden" ecology robots.

Entrance to this level is by the main elevators or via one inclined plane leading down to level 14.

**Level 14** (47 x 22 x ¼ miles): This level is the city level. With high-rise living units, the potential population could be up to 10 million people, but the city on the Warden contains about 1½ million persons (95% of all the colonists on board).

The city is made up of family and bachelor dwellings, plus all the other features of cities on Terra: shopping areas, recreation centers, a wide variety of dining areas, entertainment centers, extensive parks, sports arenas and playing areas, and so on. The city also features several medical areas, plus one large complex where there are complete android fabrication laboratories containing the necessary facilities for production: formulation vats, mental matrix circuit facilities, programming energizers, chemical storage, and a test area. Also on the level is the main medical section of the ship with a large number of monitored beds, recuperative therapy areas, radiation labs, operating theatres, a medical school, and other facilities. There are 100 medical robots assigned to this complex and entrance to the area requires a command, security, or medical color band.

The city features a sub-level transportation system, plus several tracked systems for personal transport. There are also several other features of interest: a general library with extensive facilities (including large data banks), a museum of Terran history (with a technological section of interest), and a large zoo featuring many of the species of animals and insects brought on board. Parts of the city also are broken up with small farming plots where city-dwellers can grow food and flower crops of their choice.

Surrounding the larger city is a farming area with several farming villages, and also marked with some small forest areas. This area is similar to the farm area that comprises level 8. Entrance to this level is by the main elevators or via either an inclined plane to level 13 or a spiral ramp to level 15.

**Level 15** (44 x 20½ x ½ miles): This level contains the water supply for the ship and is ½ mile in total thickness - with the water ranging up to ¼ mile deep and the ceiling of the level being ¼ mile above the water level. The level contains approximately 600 square miles of water.

In the gigantic lake, fish abound in great numbers. The islands are lightly forested, and several are inhabited with small villages. Recreational boating of various sorts is popular, as is swimming - all under desirable conditions.

About ¼ of the level is taken up with the large recycling system and purification center that operates in response to the main ship's computer, the device that monitors the quality and purity of all the water on all the levels.

Entrance to the level is via the main elevators or by one ramp up to level 14 or one ramp down to level 16.

**Level 16** (40 x 18½ x ½ miles): This level contains the activated factories where many of the city dwellers work. Besides producing supplies for the ship, certain production is prepared for the new planet and stored in large storage areas.

One restricted section houses chemicals and contains a 5 year supply of all known stable chemicals which might be used by a new, on-planet colony plus sizable supplies of extra energy cells (solar, chemical, and hydrogen) and several hundred water/hydrogen energy converters. Another section houses a repair and storage section for the various types of robots, including the following deactivated models: 500 general purpose robots, 500 medical robots, 500 engineering robots, 500 security robots, and 500 of each type of ecology robots. There is also a large analogic computer system deactivated and reserved for on-planet use. Entrance to the restricted areas is limited to the use of a command color band or two security color bands.

Access to the level is via the main elevators or by one ramp up to level 15.

**Level 17** (40 x 18½ x 1 miles): This level contains all the engines, motors, dynamos, reactors, and the various power producing devices that supply the whole ship with the needed power to maintain life, run the machinery and robots, and to power all the devices on board. Large anti-gravity engines are reserved for use in landing the ship on its colony planet. External ion engines push the ship through space.

Entrance to this level is restricted and only possible via the main elevators that permit access to those with either a command or engineering color band.

**Observation Dome:** On the top of the ship at its center is a small observation dome that appears as a small bubble on the ship's hull. This dome contains an observation area for astronomical viewing and a large astronomy lab for scientific work that features optical and radio telescopes as well as the other types of specialized equipment used in such work. One restricted area of the dome contains a secondary command bridge with communications to the main command area on level 10.

Access to the dome is by the main elevators. Entrance to the secondary command area is restricted and is only possible with the use of a command ring.

The reader of this might think that the scale of these sections seems quite big, but bigness is exactly what the ship's designers *wanted to combat the psychological feeling of being closed in!*