

Drelbs in Aspic¹²

NB Smart ass comments by the writer are in []. This is information for the GM not the players. Supposedly clever asides are in () parentheses.

Once again the universe itself is in danger...no, not really. Once again a great and noble civilization is...no, that's not it either. Okay, your screwed up futuristic society is in trouble again. So you and your sibs have been decanted to once again save the day. After a seeming eternity of floating in your nutrient baths dreaming of well, nothing since you're pretty mindless, someone rudely pulls the plug on your snooze. You feel pain as someone has stuck a sharp tube in your head and find that your brain is rapidly filling up with information. Lots and lots of information. Until your head feels like it's going to explode. Suddenly you realize that well, you can realize. Sentience! Abruptly you realize that the warm, sticky nutrient solution is draining from your bath. The suction pulls you down the narrow fleshy tube and you are rudely deposited on the floor with a loud slurp. Someone reaches over and slaps you on your naked ass. Hard. What do you do? If you make any sound you're helped to your feet and led off down a brightly lit hallway by people?, robots, drones? in full combat armour. If you don't make a sound you're recycled. (And yes it's as unpleasant as it sounds. You start over).

You realize that a number of naked drelbs equal to the number in the party are all being ushered into a somewhat darkened room. Quite a relief from the brightly lit hallway. There you are led to line up in front of a ridiculously tall dais. There is no one behind the dais at first. After a brief while a platform comes out of the darkness on which stands a beautiful androgynous leader. A construct made of tubes, cylinders, discs and orbs hovers beside the dais. [This is a Mark 60000 combat drone possessing enough destructive power to wipe out the entire Canadian armed forces]. The leader addresses you (there is a strange echo to her/his voice as if a multitude are speaking at once-think the Knights who say Nee from Monty Python and the Holy Grail). The leader expects strict obedience and the Mark 60000 is there to enforce this. Any transgression, real or imagine is greeted by a stream of auto-fire powerful enough to shred a Leopard tank. This fire is quick and accurate enough to destroy just one drelb (and anything behind him/her holes in the wall or floor fill themselves in as the drelbs watch). After any drelb is shredded the rest have to wait until a replacement arrives from the vats.

The leader goes on and on about the glory of the race and the importance of the mission and the weight of the universe resting on their shoulders and so on, and the importance of this mission (oh, I already said that didn't I?). The gist of the mission is that they have to retrieve six objects from a spaceship and bring them back. Each drelb has a built in homing device that will allow

¹ * I believe huh? is the dominate thought in your mind. Originally this scenario was entitled Starship Drelbs but a friend brought his copy of James Lilek's The Gallery of Regrettable Food (see <http://www.lileks.com/institute/gallery/index.html>). Inspired by the horrors within that very, very funny book the giant cube of gold became encased in aspic. (Why? Why the heck not?) Voila! Drelbs in Aspic.

² This mess is all my fault! c2003 Oliver D. Bernuetz

the incredibly powerful teleportation device your species possesses to snatch them from wherever they are and bring them back home to a richly deserved reward [being turned into fertilizer]. [To activate the homing device you have to recite the following cryptic speech in your mind:

Mary had a little lamb, it's fleece as white as snow
And everywhere that Mary went the lamb was sure to go.

And away you'd go!]

No one is supposed to return until all six items have been acquired. [Anyone who does so gets to be fertilizer early]. These six items are of critical and unimaginable importance to your species!

The reality is that that's just a crock of shit. What's really going on is a good ol' fashioned scavenger hunt with the drelbs just being one team of several. See the leaders like to gamble and they've all [there's only three of them] decided to set three teams of drelbs to hunting these items. Where are they hunting? Why the SS Peter Wang an incredibly old and "abandoned" generation ship of course. Once the leader finishes his spiel (s)he will retract back into the darkness. The party will be told that they have 4 glyzsbits to prepare before teleportation. [How long is a glyzsbits? Funny that wasn't included in the information they received. Hmmm. Just long enough to build tension and make them worriered]. A spotlight will then light up a cardboard carton which contains:

1. [Equipment](#)
2. [The Equipment List](#) - a piece of paper.
3. [The Six Items the Team is Hunting For](#) - another piece of paper.

As they examine this junk they will hear a computer voice saying 4 glyzsbits until teleportation, 3 glyzsbits until teleportation, etc. Make the intervals of random length just to play with their minds some more.

The Drelbs

The drelbs are your standard unit. All of them are masculine except one at random who is female. Their physical development is ridiculous in the extreme (think porn star or Ahnuld and his Russian opponents in the steam bath scene in Red Heat). The overfilling of their brains has resulted in their knowing how to do anything but only at a 50% chance for anything. They can take 20 points of damage and the Insta-drelbs™ are identical. Let the players roll randomly for their birth order. [A nice touch is to give each player a tent card with a number from 1 to however many vict...err players you have. Change them whenever one or more drelbs have accidents. You'd be surprised by how important those cards become. Accidents may increase in frequency]. This is their seniority as far as the leader and the mission goes. Any new drelbs are automatically at the bottom of the ladder as far as seniority goes.

Once the party has the equipment sorted out or not depending on how mean you are they are teleported. Describe it like there on drugs or watching a movie or TV filmed by someone who thinks music videos are an art form. They actually get to see themselves leaving the home world (covered completely in buildings) and go zooming across the universe until they reach the extremely phallic SS Peter Wang. (It's clearly written on the side).

NB If any accidents occur that wipe out the old party a new party will be started. This party will be shown a video of what happened to the old party. For some reason this has the same narration and video quality of a 50's era instructional video. They're videoing the whole business on the SS Peter Wang as well. (What amazing technology they must be squandering to do all this!)

On The SS Peter Wang

The SS Peter Wang is an unbelievably old generation ship. It's got two huge spherical engine pods and a long main section. [Yes it's supposed to look like that]. The long main section is made up of five modules each the size and shape of the SkyDome in Toronto. (Or your local enclosed sports arena if it's bigger). The engine pods are off limits because they're still incredibly radioactive from the accident that originally crippled the ship. Fortunately the main section is sufficiently shielded to keep it safe.

The ship is divided into six sections with each section being separated by an elaborate airlock system that carefully weighs each person going through (in imperial measurements).

1) Command module [err, the head]

The only thing here is a terribly lonely and somewhat hostile computer system without fortunately any combat capabilities. It can't even turn off the air supply as life support has been on manual for a long, long, long time. All the computer can do is insult them, use a small speaker and blink a red light on and off. The computer spends its spare time (it's got a lot of it) calculating Pi. It's desperately lonely but it also forgets where it was whenever people talk to it which pisses it off quite a bit. It knows the following bits of information:

About the SS Peter Wang:

- 1) It's mission was to penetrate the universe, spreading man's seed wherever it could find fertile soil. (It was on the stationery, honest).
- 2) The captain's name was John Thomas.
- 3) It's as big as it is because another planet had built a huge generation ship and the builders had a bad case of generation ship envy.
- 4) About ten years into the mission there was an accident that killed everyone aboard [as far as the computer knows] and the ship was knocked off course. It's been flying (yes, yes it's not the right term so sue me) on autopilot for over 33, 000 years. (The computer knows the exact number of seconds it's been flying).
- 5) The computer knows the original layout but has no way to show the drelbs. If they're persistent cusses it will flash the little light in binary code to create a digital picture which they

have no way to interpret. It hasn't a clue as to what's beyond the airlock though it does know where it was. (Which is where it is).

Other Stuff:

- 1) The computer knows a fair bit but often has to access deep memory to retrieve bits. When it does so it plays old pop songs or jazz standards. It knows or has recorded 47 different versions of Like a Rolling Stone, including the hitherto unknown William Shatner version [shudder].
- 2) It knows 3, 498 different pop songs including the entire Dionne Warwick song book [okay, I admit it, I like Dionne Warwick].

There are no bodies or dust as two cleaning robots keep things nice and clean. They scurry occasionally through small flaps in the wall which are only big enough to allow the breadbox sized robots through. They are unintelligent.

The airlocks are controlled by semi-intelligent computers who all play different pop songs [your choice]. They do share some features however. They all announce the weight of the group in the airlock in Imperial units. [(Figure roughly 250 pounds per drelb and make something up for anything they pick up). Don't explain what the numbers are just say them in a deadpan voice after the first door is shut]. They have a hysterical fear of radiation and will automatically deploy anti-radiation foam which will amazingly remove all traces of radiation from anything so tainted. They also won't allow both doors to be open at the same time [though they can be] and will demand that the party close one before opening another. They will get annoyed and ask the party, "What were you, raised in a barn?" if they do this. What can they do about it? Well nothing.

2) The Module of Voluptuous, Wanton Cannibalistic Women (VWCW)

This module used to be the arboretum [look it up] and is overgrown with incredibly thick and lush tropical vegetation. It is void of animal life forms except the VWCW's who are driven by two appetites. Sex and sausage. [They're kind of the same thing aren't they?] The VWCWs will approach the drelbs, (Did I mention that they're completely invisible yet? Well they are.) and start rubbing themselves up against the drelbs (except the female one) and try to entice them out of their suits. Which is unfortunately impossible. The IVWCWs (Invisible, Voluptuous Wanton Cannibalistic Women) can control their hungers long enough to have fun first and then make sausage later. (Not that they don't enjoy making sausage. It's just a different kind of fun).

They'll trade sex for sausage. How is this accomplished? Well Insta-Drelbs™ don't wear clothes at first. That'd work. Just don't ask who, err, what the sausage is made out of. The IVWCWs don't care if the party makes a shrubbery (though they might kibbitz a bit, try that bit over there, etc.) They get really mad if someone starts shooting at them and will swarm the drelbs. They have short term collective memories though and will greet new parties or the same party just as friendly a manner as the first one, if you know what I mean.

They have sausage (and lots of it). They also have sharp teeth.

Attack 13
Seduce 14
Make sausage 18
Hit Points 10
Armour 0

(How the heck did invisible women evolve and where are the men? Do you want this mess to actually start making sense NOW?)

3) The Green Fields of Home Module. Full of Gently Rolling Hills Under a Beautiful Artificial Sky (No Shrubs)

Just beautiful, This is grass that's evolved over millennia to become the perfect lawn. And it's been mowed within an inch of it's life. You wish your lawn looked this good. This module is only inhabited by a crazed, kilt wearing Scottish robot whose prized possession/wife is a riding mower called Alice. Any threats to his beloved riding mower will set him off. The crazed robot and the mower can resist nuclear blasts but will be welded together. He will go along with the party if forced but he and Alice will have to be carried over the thresholds of the airlocks.

Attack 17
Damage 1D6
Hit Points 30
Armour 10 Points

4) The Storage Module

Full of boxes. Did I mention that they're all orange? And 20 cm each side. There's approximately 9×10^{16} boxes in the module all in lovely mobile shelving units. (Do a Google image search for mobile shelving for an idea of what it is). The boxes can only be opened with the proper password (which the crazy computer knows) or by firing a nuclear shell at one. Which of course destroys the contents. What they see is a long corridor with vertical grooves running from floor to ceiling every five feet with handles on the side and sliding doors in the front. Inside are the boxes which I've been told taste "starchy" and can hold pretty much anything you like. (They're actually small temporal displacement units which can hold objects of any size. Opening most of them in the corridor would be a bad, bad thing). They rattle, slosh or make no sound at all. The leaders don't care which one the drelbs bring back.

5) The Module of the Ridiculously Big Chunk of Gold.

In a space the size of the SkyDome is a huge cube of gold. In aspic. It's standing on the biggest bloody manual pallet jack you've ever seen. (Again Google image search it if you don't know what a pallet jack is). [That you've seen, the drelbs haven't been so lucky]. The damn handle reaches to the ceiling. Who could move such a monstrosity? [Shrug.] There's no sign of any doors big enough to move the cube anyway. And let's not forget the giant pallet! (No, I take that back forget about it. It doesn't matter). Anyway the chunk of gold reaches all the way to the

ceiling (but it's still a perfect cube). In aspic. How come its own weight and malleability haven't caused it to become deformed? Maybe it's the aspic.

Huge spotlights play over the surface of the gleaming gold. (Rendered all the shinier by the aspic it's covered with). It's huge (much larger than 3,000 kg). How are they going to get a chunk off? How are they going to move 3,000 kg of gold? Good questions. The blasters will blow chunks off as would a nuclear blast. [Well actually that would result in the creation of a radioactive gold/aspic monster. Definitely not a good thing.] Plus the blast would kill the party who set it off. [The monster would be the next party's problem]. Eventually the party will realize that the airlocks weight them so they can use the airlock to calculate 3,000 kg worth of gold. This will take a while but they've got plenty of aspic to eat. They don't have to worry about the genetic mutation the aspic will cause in their descendants. They should be so lucky as to get a chance to reproduce.

They can recite the poem in the airlock or by the gold pile they make so they don't have to move it too far. The teleportation device will move it automatically.

6) Crew Quarters.

Visualize a space the size of the SkyDome. Imagine poles set seven feet apart running from the ground to the ceiling. (So very far away). On each pole are rungs for a ladder. Every five feet up every second pole is a small cabinet for personal effects. Just below the cabinet is slung a hammock. Visualize the entire space filled with these poles. Imagine living here. Imagine sleeping hundreds of feet above the floor. Imagine not rolling over in your sleep ever! The space is empty save for more breadbox sized cleaning robots who all whistle "Whistle while you work" and have the names of the dwarves from Disney's Snow White stenciled on them. (Well the first seven do then they start having the names of the Duff beers from the Simpsons and similar names). They don't interact.

The party can start climbing and snooping through the cabinets. Anything you can imagine is in them including a wide assortment of ointments and jellies. But no postcards. Many of the hammocks still hold bones. If the party starts throwing things to the ground (or falling - unless it's a short fall it's inevitably fatal) the robots swarm out to clean up.

Way up at the very top is a lone hammock with a skeleton in it. In that skeleton's hand is a postcard. It shows a picture of a beach with some gelatin molds on the front. [At least I think they're just molds and not some alien species]. The caption says "Greetings from Aspic Park". On the back it says Dear John, I hate to have to tell you this but...etc. There is no return or any address for that matter. If a drelb can survive a climb up (50/50 chance) they can get the postcard. They don't have to survive the climb down the postcard will anyway.

The Conclusion

Once they have all the items (and it's gotta be exactly 3,000 kg of gold they can tell) they will teleported back to the home world. (IF they try and return without the six items a disembodied voice will tell them they're not ready yet and will threaten them with remote detonation of their

nuclear rockets if they don't retrieve all the items. (And they will, they're just crazy enough to do it!)) If they return they will be congratulated and rewarded [turned into fertilizer. What you were expecting a happy ending?]. They could just stay on the ship. No one would send a team of killer hunter-seeker drones after them, honest.

Equipment List

This list and a cardboard box are given to the drelbs. The list only includes the following:

1. 1 can of Insta-Drelb™ "You can't tell 'em from the real thing." (patent pending). Good for six uses. [Insta-Drelbs appear naked and talk like surfer dudes until a player takes them over. If that happens]
2. PU-678 PDC (Portable Drelb Containment) Suit. [An extremely skin tight, bright orange jump suit]. ("It's like you're wearing nothing at all!") A masterpiece of nanotechnology and made of a space age fabric that is actually cleaned by sweat! The PU-678 is a self-cleaning unit which can operate in any environment.³ The PU-678 is designed to contain all of a drelb's bodily functions so they need never leave the suit. An automatic⁴ visor deploys to covers the face in hostile environments. The self-cleaning and air recycling unit stores bodily excrement and other wastes so that they may be used to power a hostile environment propulsion unit (HEPU) housed directly behind the buttocks. The suit's air supply is good for...

[The PU-678 is amazingly damage resistant, i.e. it's hard to damage. This doesn't help the wearer though. The PU-678 also needs very badly to be worn and will immediately or as soon as possible cover a new Drelb. I.e. #4 gets killed, (say he's pushed through an airlock and turned into sausage). A new drelb is created. Even if the old PU-678 is on the other side of an airlock it will squeeze under it somehow and cover the new drelb. If for some reason an extra drelb is created and kept for longer than it takes to sacrifice him for the good of the species one of the PU-678s will split into two suits].

3. A two-four of Drelb Chow. "All the nutrition and high carb food a drelb needs." A small label on the can reads, "As preferred by poor lonely old ladies everywhere."

What the Box Contains

The box itself contains the following:

1. A pop top can with a picture of a smiling drelb on it. [The PU-678 PDC suits which take the form of bouncy orange balls. When the top is removed the balls bounce out and bounce around the room. If a drelb catches one it quickly spreads to cover their body].
2. "L" shaped metal and plastic thingie. Shorter bit has a button on it. One per drelb. [Blaster, does 3D6 damage]

³ May not operate in certain environments.

⁴ Automatic deployment of visor may not function in all environments.

3. Long hollow tube with two shorter non-hollow sticks protruding at 33 degree angles from it. The second stick has a button on it. [Something seems to be blocking the tube]. [Bazooka, normal shell does 10D6 damage. Nuclear shell does 100D6 damage]
 4. A smaller cardboard box with 24 pop top can with pictures of smiling drelbs on them. [drelb chow]
 5. A spray can with a picture of a smiling drelb on it. [Insta-Drelb™] It rattles if shaken.
 6. Twelve colour coded cylinders with fins. The cylinders look like they would fit inside the hollow tube. [6 have blue tips and six have red tips. The red tipped ones are nuclear. But not if the whole party starts over again! Mwa-ha-ha!]
 7. Plastic stick with individual soft plastic sticks protruding from it. One per drelb. [toothbrush]
 8. Metal foil tube with plastic cap. [toothpaste - minty fresh.]
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The Requested Equipment

1. A riding mower.
2. An orange box 20 cm a side.
3. A sausage.
4. 3,000 kg of Au.
5. A shrubbery. [It's a nice arrangement of plants, with some rocks, maybe a garden gnome, a little fence around it. You know].
6. A postcard.

Handouts

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 2. "L" shaped metal and plastic thingie. Shorter bit has a button on it. One per drelb.
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