

## Drelbs on the Hindenburg - (aka "Seven Brides for Seven Herr Schmidts.")<sup>1</sup>

The date is May 3, 1937 or is it? Far off in some distant future...

You awaken to darkness, in the warm nutrient bath of the cloning tanks, floating serenely around, buoyed by the clinging fluid. You know things but what is it that you know? Suddenly the darkness is replaced by a harsh light as you are suddenly and unceremoniously decanted from the tanks. Technicians in environment suits help you into one piece overalls and you are ushered into a dark room where you huddle next to your brothers.

Suddenly spot lights center on a figure in a long shrouding, sweeping robe who stands high platform. The figure speaks in a rich, ambisexual voice :

"Drelbs, on your shoulders rests the future of the human race. All our attempts to rejuvenate our species have failed. The genetic material brought back from the Lusitania failed to propagate properly due to time strain damage so we must once more look to the past for genetic material. This time we want you to bring back breeding specimens from the past. We have identified a period in Earth's history before exposure to chemicals and radiation have irreparably damaged the human genotype. This is also a time of unrest and poor historical records so some disappearances should go unnoticed. We are going to send you back to an old Earth state called Germany to board a primitive aircraft called the Hindenburg. Agents have arranged your transport aboard this craft and once on the craft you must identify some good specimens and bring them back. Any questions?"

If anyone complains about the task or raises any negative questions or seems unwilling to go, or even asks any questions the leader waves its hand and the drelb in question is disintegrated. Immediately his identical replacement is brought in by armoured troopers.

"No questions, good. Now our agents have arranged for period garb for you as all we can transport back with you is the return device minus one critical part which cannot, unfortunately be temporally transported. Our scientists have identified period components which can be used to render the device operable. It's something called a vacuum tube which was used in communications back then. Once you have retrieved one of these vacuum tubes and identified a prime breeding candidate simply place the completed temporal re-displacement device on the breeder's head, embrace them tightly and push the big red button on the front. [The leader displays the temporal transportation device which looks exactly like a copper colander to the untrained eye]. You will find yourself in a secure area once you arrive where you can put on your clothing aided by our agent and get ready for your voyage.

The Leader straightens up, gives you the drelb salute and says.

Good luck the future of our species relies on you.

---

<sup>1</sup> Of course the cutesy title only works if you have seven players like I did, so there, nyah.

The troopers take you to the time machine where you are all stripped naked and thrust into the chamber, each holding a temporal colander. The machine does its magic and you find your self in a huge space (the zeppelin hanger in Frankfurt) where the agent, a "man" in a long trench coat helps you get dressed gives you your papers and ticket (all the papers and tickets identify each of you as Herr Johann Schmidt<sup>2</sup> of Bremen) hands you a suitcase (containing today's Frankfurt Zeitung (lots of headlines about how great Herr Hitler is and a change of underwear). Let the madness begin!

In the nature of incredibly useful game aids here are some floorplans my friend Doug did in Visio and which I have turned into pdfs :

- 1) [GM's floorplans A & B Decks](#)
  - 2) [Player's floorplans A & B Decks](#)
- 

This scenario was supposed to consist of the traditional two party set up but the turnout was too low for that. My friend Doug did a lot of research both in print and on the web and I did a bit too. We recommend the following information sources :

The beauty of the Internet is that there are lots of useful resources for this scenario available on the Internet.

- 1) ~~The Hindenburg Historical society~~ <http://www.hindenburg.net>

~~This site had pictures and a complete passenger/crew list including who survived and who didn't. There's a timeline for the last flight and all sorts of useful information. Defunct!~~

- 2) The Navy Lakehurst Historical Society <http://www.nlhs.com/hindenburg-lz-129.html>

This site has excellent resources as well. Including passenger list and oral histories.

- 3) ~~Army Radio Sale~~ <http://www.armyradio.co.uk/publish/Zepplin.htm>

~~Has an actual photo of the Hindenburg's radio room. Defunct.~~

- 4) Airships over Cologne <http://www.stryder.de/luftschiffe.html>

This site has nice zeppelin pictures including this plan of the ship.

<http://www.stryder.de/lz/lz129plan.jpg>

- 5) Airships.net <http://www.airships.net/hindenburg/>

---

<sup>2</sup> Leading of course to all sorts of bad jokes, "When the Schmidt hits the fan.", "We're in deep in Schmidt here!" , "What a pile of Schmidt!", etc, etc. (Sorry to every real Schmidt out there).

Nice section on the Hindenburg with lots of plans.

There are some excellent library books as well that Doug read and recommends (the numbers at the end are of course Dewey decimal numbers):

- 1) The Giant Airships by Douglas Botting, Time-Life Books, 1980, 629.13324 BOT
- 2) Zeppelins: rigid airships 1893-1940, by Peter W. Brooks, Smithsonian Institute Press, 1992, 629.13325 BRO
- 3) Who Destroyed the Hindenburg? by Adolph A. Hoehling, Little, Brown, 1962 629.1332 HOE

Being surpassingly lazy I read the following young adult book which is very good and quite touching :

- 1) The Disaster of the Hindenburg by Shelley Tanaka, Scholastic/Madison Press, 1993, J 363.124 TAN

### **What Happened in my Session ("Seven Brides for Seven Herr Schmidts.")**

Fortunately the players were all more or less prepared for the silliness of it all. The armoured guards did have to evaporate three of them for not saluting fast enough but after that they were quite compliant. They arrived in the hanger where the agent helped them dress. He showed them a Betty Grable pinup calendar to show them what a "breeding specimen" should look like, helped them into their suits and then left after flashing them the salute. They checked their bags and read about how wonderful Herr Hitler was. Then some guards found them and were going to arrest them until they showed them their tickets. Fortunately most people decided to ignore the unfathomable thought of seven identical men and treated them like they were just cousins or brothers (some comments about how inbred the families are around Bremen were expressed). The Customs officials were very curious about their empty suitcases and the colanders were closely examined. They seemed awfully interested in whether they produced sparks. Once they decided they didn't they returned them.

As soon as the group got on board they all started asking questions about first vacuum/radio tubes and then the radio once they learned the tubes are found in radios. Since it was evening tours weren't going to happen until the next day and no one was able to persuade the stewards that they desperately needed to get at the radio.

They mingled checking out the "breeding specimens" and getting strange looks from everyone due to their lack of social skills. Some of them went to bed after supper deciding to wait until the tours arranged for the next day while others checked out the smoking room and attached bar. Two of the Herr Schmidt's had the signature Hindenburg cocktail and learned how to smoke cigarettes. Later that evening after almost everyone had gone to bed one of the Herr Schmidts decided to buzz the steward and ask about the radio again. He was told that he would have to wait until the next day. That Herr Schmidt then went to visit another Herr Schmidt whose roommate was still smoking and boozing it up. The pair decided to lay a trap for the steward and

returned to the first Herr Schmidt's room. There one hid while the other buzzed the steward. The steward arrived and was reluctant to come in due to the strange behavior of the first Herr Schmidt. Eventually he went into the stateroom where he was bashed over the head with the colander/temporal travel device by the second Herr Schmidt. The first Herr Schmidt then proceeded to bash his brains in with his colander/temporal travel device. The second Herr Schmidt put on the steward's uniform and the pair went in search of the radio room. They found it right off and after poking around a bit discovered how to get the tubes out. The phony steward removed enough tubes for all seven Herr Schmidts. Just as they finished the wireless operator returned catching them in the act. Confused by the uniform he grabbed the first Herr Schmidt along with the phony steward who then tried to brain him with the colander. The wireless operator escaped with minor bruises and ran for it. He got as far as the control cabin with the two Herr Schmidt's in pursuit. When they realized the control cabin had a lot of crew members in it they ran for it. The phony steward was in the lead and managed to get back to his cabin undetected. The first Herr Schmidt was followed to his cabin and when they discovered the dead steward he was arrested. (Despite protesting that he was innocent. ("Are these your bloodstains, and what about this dead steward here, eh?") He did try to get into another Schmidt's room but they had wisely locked their door). Another Herr Schmidt was arrested as well by mistake when he stuck his head out of his stateroom to see what was up. The three Luftwaffe intelligence agents on board questioned the two and decided to release the falsely arrested Herr Schmidt (where was he gonna go?) but locked the first Herr Schmidt in a storeroom.

Everyone was awoken by all this fuss and the captain set guards on the staterooms. Eventually the second Herr Schmidt managed to distribute radio tubes to three of the other Herr Schmidt's (plus his roommate). This provided all of the Herr Schmidts except the prisoner and two others with tubes. The second Herr Schmidt also managed to throw the stolen steward's uniform out a window much to the surprise of a Belgian family on the ground. The first Herr Schmidt found a fork and tried to pick the lock which didn't work. He then managed to bash the door down and attempted to brain the guard with a smoked salmon in a box. This failed as the guard was armed with a large monkey wrench. After a brief tussle some more crew members managed to subdue him and he was tied up in a different store room.

The next morning all the passengers were woken up quite early and sent to the dining room so the crew could search their cabins. The second Herr Schmidt gave his roomie all the remaining vacuum tubes along and all but one of the other free Herr Schmidt's brought their colander/temporal travel device along. One of the Herr Schmidts decided to seize this opportunity and added his vacuum tube to his colander thus completing the temporal travel device. He immediately grabbed the nearest "breeding specimen" and hit the big red button. This started a mini craze among the Herr Schmidt's in doing the same. The second Herr Schmidt was next in grabbing a specimen and the roommate Herr Schmidt started tossing vacuum tubes to those Herr Schmidts who didn't have one. The first one broke when it hit the deck but he managed to pass out two more to those Herr Schmidts who didn't already have one. Those two Herr Schmidt's also grabbed "breeding specimens" (one of them grabbed both a daughter and her father right after her mother had been abducted to the future). An old lady managed to successfully evade capture and the roommater Herr Schmidt was wrestled to the floor by crewmembers. The Herr Schmidt who didn't bring his colander was arrested and his protestations of being innocent and not knowing these other guys were not believed.

The two Herr Schmidts who had been newly captured were locked in a stateroom for the remainder of the voyage. When the airship reached Lakehurst the first Herr Schmidt managed to escape (well, he had been untied by then) and he and the roommate Herr Schmidt managed to leap off of the ship (the roommate Herr Schmidt actually saved the lives of the two little boys whose parents and sister had been abducted into the future). Unfortunately the Herr Schmidt who hadn't brought his colander along to the dining room didn't get off the ship.

What happened to the surviving Herr Schmidts? Well the roommate was a hero and spent the war in a German prison being freed by the Russians after the war. The first Herr Schmidt was executed by firing squad since he was such a dangerous felon. Was the mission a success? Is the human species saved? What do you think?:-)

Interestingly "new" evidence has pretty much exonerated hydrogen in the crash. See the following web sites for information on how back in 1937 they knew that the explosion and fire were caused by the coating on the airship not the hydrogen.

<http://www.clean-air.org/hindenberg.htm>

<http://www.hydrogenus.com/advocate/ad22zepp.htm>

If you really have too much time on your hands most of the FBI report on the investigation is available on their Freedom of Information Act website. <https://vault.fbi.gov/Hindenburg%20> I did look at it, pretty damn cool! It however had no influence on the scenario.

---

*This page last modified June 13, 2002, Oliver D. Bernuetz*