

The Knife Thrower

You prefer to be known as The Knife Thrower. It is what you do. It is who you are. Oh, you have a name: Sasha. Sasha Rasputinov. You hate your name. Rasputinov, as if you had anything to do with the goings on in the Russias or with the Tzar. Feh. Let them call you by what you are best at, by what you are known for: The Knife Thrower.

You began your lifetime's work when you were perhaps five. You were raised by a poor mother, a serving girl at a local tavern. Your father had run off. You had to learn quickly to defend yourself in a fight and you also fought to defend your mother's honor.

And it was in such a fight that you learned of your talent. You were, as has been said, perhaps five. Old enough to know your mother was slighted, but too young to know not to go against a fully-grown adult man. He backhanded you across the room and you crashed into a wooden table. Dazed, you groped for the first weapon you could find - a steak knife - and threw it at the rascal.

It hit. And stuck. Deep into his thigh. Not quite where you were aiming, but it was your first throw. Your aim has improved over the years. The villain cursed and stumbled out of the tavern and into the night leaving behind a trail of blood. You rushed to your mother, to be comforted as much as to comfort, and you knew then your choice of weapons.

You've been training with the knife ever since. And you are good, perhaps the best in the world. You can judge how well a weapon can throw just at a glance. Picking it up and sensing its heft will allow you to throw even the most unbalanced knives with deadly accuracy. You can hit moving targets while blindfolded. Yes, you are that good.

As you grew, your horizons expanded. You were living on the streets by the time you were a teenager, but by your early twenties, you were making a good living. It's amazing how much people will pay to have a knife thrown just *so*. And because you are quick and nimble, you have never been caught.

By your mid twenties, your services were no longer available to the common man on the street. You were in the employ of heads of state, and specifically the Regent of Freedonia. You have always been, in your own way, a loyal citizen of the Independent Republic of Freedonia, and you do not mind your work one bit.

Your current assignment is a bit odd, however.

It seems that a few months ago the circus was in town. Specifically, an American circus, Colonel Sebastian T. Rawhide's Circus of the Spectacular, came thundering through the capital of Freedonia. It was an exciting event. Even you attended; you wanted to see what a real American circus was all about. But it was so bright and gaudy. Some of the acts were interesting. You were impressed with the wild animal trainer and the clowns did make you laugh, but it was too gaudy and unrefined. Americans are so common.

However, they are also apparently very clever. For the day after the circus left, it was discovered that someone had made off with the well-guarded Freedonian Crown Jewels. They were taken from a locked room and the room remained locked. No signs of a break in could be detected. Someone from the circus had committed the perfect crime: one without any evidence.

The Regent needed to get the Crown Jewels back. Everyone in Freedonia, even the lowliest peasants, knows the story of the Crown Jewels, although stating it aloud can get you arrested. It all started five hundred years ago when the first Regent had the King and Queen killed. Their son, Prince Marcus, was sold to the Old Woman of the Woods, an evil hag, a witch who lived in the forest.

The Regent's descendants have ruled Freedonia ever since, but the myth persists. Some day the young prince will return to Freedonia decked in the Crown Jewels, throw off the Regency, and restore Freedonia to its former glory.

Of course, the Regent has declared it illegal to repeat this story, but it gets told regardless. People need hope. The Regency is not well liked. The standard of living in Freedonia is pretty low and the Regent keeps pushing toward war with neighboring Fandonia. Even you would prefer to have the Regent overthrown with a kinder leader. In fact, as a loyal Freedonian citizen, you would welcome a return to the monarchy, if it were possible.

But that is just a dream. The Regent is paying your bills now. So you have gone on an undercover mission to return the Crown Jewels. Very few people know that they are missing. The Regent wants this matter solved with finesse and as quietly as possible.

And so you joined the circus. It was a simple matter for one of your talents to join this circus and soon you were accepted as a fellow performer. Circus life is interesting. Besides the roles, there is actually some intrigue.

On the personal front, you have reason to believe that the princess of Fandonia is among the circus folk. At least that was the rumor you heard not long after you joined. Oh, not from the circus folk. Most of them are from America and wouldn't know a princess from a milkmaid. But in the taverns and inns of Fandonia, there they spoke of the princess.

You know a bit about the princess yourself. It is your understanding that she ran away from home rather than marry the Regent of your country. You bet the Regent would pay you good money for her return. And if not him, then her parents might. You have no great love of the uppity Fandonians, but their money is as gold as anyone's.

Unfortunately, you have no idea what the princess actually looks like. You know she was in her late teens when she ran away and that she was highly educated. You also know that she has a birthmark of the Fandonian Royal Seal on her body, but you don't know exactly *where* on her body that might be. Still, it is worth keeping a lookout for her.

And if the rumors are true and the Princess is here, then the Fandonian government has almost certainly also planted an agent in the troupe. You will have to keep a careful lookout for such an agent, as he will almost certainly mean you ill will. Remember, Fandonia and Freedonia are on the verge of war.

The other intrigue that has happened recently has been the recent slate of sabotage. They sabotage happened in France. You cannot tell if it was the work of a professional or an amateur. Nobody was seriously hurt, but you aren't certain if that was the intent.

The first act of sabotage happened to Uma the Unicyclist. Her high unicycle was tampered with and she fell, severely twisting her ankle. She has stayed in France under the care of a doctor. You may be able to tell more if you examine the unicycle, but you do not know what has become of it.

The second act was set on Preston the Prestidigitator. A panel swung open when he was sawing a woman in half and it revealed the illusion (and a pair of fake feet). Colonel Rawhide had to fire him. He left the circus and hasn't been seen since.

Some of the folks are worried about the sabotage and if it will continue. You are fairly certain it will. But with only two attempts, it is difficult to find a pattern. Maybe after the next attempt...

And there is some politicking that you must do. You occasionally send reports back to the Regent. When her heard that the Bungling Brothers ran a rival circus and Jack Bungling had been seen at your circus, he hatched a plan. The Bungling Brothers' father, Hiram Bungling, is the most influential man in Washington DC. The Regent has asked that you

speak with Jack or John Bungling and convince them to convince their father to support Freedonia in the coming war.

This is, no doubt, within your abilities. Nonetheless, you are a bit miffed. You are an adventurer, not a politician. Still, you are a loyal Freedonian, so you will do as ordered. And paid, of course, and paid.

And that brings up another concern. Colonel Rawhide owes you \$50 in back pay. Oh, you can afford without and you are also being paid by the Regent. But it is the principle of the matter. No, you allow one person your services without payment and pretty soon it is all IOUs and letters of credit and you go hungry. No, you will not do your act without payment, and you must remind Colonel Rawhide about that.

ITEMS

A Number of Knives: You have as many as you need.

ROLEPLAYING HINT

If your character could be summed up in one word, it would be: dashing. You are a bold adventurer, confident and self assured. You are not specifically a bad person, you just happen to work for a bad man. You are loyal to your country, but not necessarily the Regent

THE OTHER CHARACTERS:

Colonel Sebastian T. Rawhide: The current owner of the circus. The circus is having some financial trouble and he owes you \$50 of back pay.

Daisy Belle: Colonel Rawhide's fiancée. She is stuck up coming from a life of leisure. She does not care for those working for the circus, and for you, the feeling is mutual.

Jack Bungling: The older of the two Bungling Brothers, owners of the Bungling Brothers Circus. His father is a rich and powerful man in Washington DC. You have been requested to convince Jack to convince his father to support Freedonia in the coming war. You do not care much for politics, but if there is a Fandonian agent in the troupe, then it is important to do this. With aid from the USA, Fandonia could win the war, and you cannot have that. You do not work for losers.

The Flying Credenza Brothers: They keep to themselves a great deal. They have their own private wagon, and they don't let anyone else in. You've often wondered what was so valuable that they need to keep others out.

Herman Binkowicz, "Binky" the Clown: Binky was one of the original performers. He is a very funny man and always makes you laugh.

Susan Wildes, The Strong Lady: Quite a puzzle, she is. She is a mere slip of a girl and only eighteen, yet she is stronger than any man you have ever met. Odd.

Franklin Winters, The Lion Tamer: He drinks quite a bit, but you also enjoy a beer now and again. However, you have never managed to beat him in a drinking contest. This galls you a bit.

The Townshed Brothers: They were also part of the original circus. They constantly bicker. They must have led rough lives.

Helena Ferez, the Bearded Lady: She is also one of the original members of the circus. She seems to be quite refined, a bit more so than most Americans.

Peter Wainwright, the Fire Eater/Sword Swallower: He has a very flashy act, including some slight of hand. You almost would like to test your abilities against his. He seems the sort to be dangerous with a sword.

Bobo the Dog Faced Boy: He joined the circus in Europe. He's only eight years old, but he's a very fast learner. He helps Franklin Winters with the animals.

Zelda the Clown: She is a mute who joined the circus in Europe. You've often wondered if she was a true mute or simply didn't talk.

Señora Misterioso: An older gypsy woman who tells fortunes and is also a snake charmer. She's obviously a schemer, and perhaps a ne'er-do-well to boot. You two should get along just fine.

The Masked Rider: The Masked Rider also joined the circus in Europe. The Masked Rider likes privacy, but is very talented.

Lydia the Tattooed Lady: She joined the circus just before it left for Europe. She is cute if a bit shy.

Zimmie the Clown: He also likes his privacy. Zimmie is fairly rude and routinely scares small children. You do not know why he still has a job.

The Great Zamboni: He arrived today asking for a job. Colonel Rawhide decided to give him a chance. You know nothing about him. Could he be the Fandonian agent?

WELL KNOWN CHARACTERS NOT IN GAME:

Senator Hiram Bungling: He is the father of the Bungling Brothers. He is the most powerful man in Washington. The saying goes, "as goes Bungling, so goes the nation."

John Bungling: The younger of the Bungling Brothers. He might also be someone to influence his father, but he hasn't been around.

Uma the Unicyclist: While in France, on the return part of the tour, Uma slipped off her high unicycle and severely twisted her ankle. She has remained in France.

Preston the Prestidigitator: His act also was ruined while in France. While he was sawing a woman in half, a panel swung open revealing the illusion. He was booed out of the tent and Colonel Rawhide had to fire him. You suspect sabotage in both cases.

ABILITIES

Combat: 12 cards.

Amazing Dexterity: Once per combat, you may ignore the effects of an opponent's advanced combat card (BOOM, ZOWIE, OOF, or THUMP). You must still play a card on it as if it were a basic card.

The Knife Thrower: You can throw knives with deadly accuracy, or completely non-lethal accuracy. If you wanted to, say, pin someone's clothing to a wall so they couldn't move, you probably could do that. If you are initiating a combat using thrown weapons, you may start the combat with an advanced combat card (BOOM, ZOWIE, OOF, or THUMP).

Lockpick: You have a good chance of getting into any locked room or strongbox. This may take time. You may escape from a locked room or from being bound in five minutes instead of ten.

Binky the Clown: You find Binky so hilarious that after a few minutes of listening to him (or interacting with him in any way), you must burst into laughter, no matter what the topic of conversation is. You cannot stop laughing until he leaves, and afterwards, you cannot clearly recall what he was talking about (or doing), but – my – that Binky sure is funny.