

COLONEL SEBASTIAN T. RAWHIDE'S CIRCUS OF THE SPECTACULAR

WELCOME

Ladies and Gentlemen!

Children of all Ages!

Turn your Eyes to the Center Ring

As **Interactivities**_{ink} Proudly Presents...

COL. SEBASTIAN T. RAWHIDE'S CIRCUS OF THE SPECTACULAR



The year is... Well, the year doesn't matter. It's the Golden Age of the Circus, a period spanning the late Victorian and early Edwardian eras. Anywhere from 1860 until the 19-teens.

The place is... Well, the place doesn't matter either. You're in America. You're at the Circus. The Circus is a world of its own, a world of life and wonder and joy. You don't need to leave the Circus.

The history is... Ah, history, that can matter can't it now. It *does* matter who did what to whom. But when? When is vague and nebulous. And exactly what can be full of gaps. Fill in the holes as you like. The important history is in your character sheet... And here...

Colonel Sebastian T. Rawhide's Circus of the Spectacular started out as Colonel Sebastian T. Rawhide's Wild West Spectacular. Colonel Rawhide, a distinguished

veteran of the Civil War, has always been a charismatic and charming southern gentlemen. Over time, he started adding in a sideshow. The Townshed Brothers and Helena Ferez, the Bearded Lady were among his first acts.

Eventually, the Wild West Show became a thing of the past, and the Circus was born. But the Circus didn't catch on until Colonel Rawhide discovered Herman Binkowicz, also known as Binky the Clown.

Binky has an almost preternatural ability to make people laugh. His zany antics brought crowds in by the thousands. The circus was a success, so following in the footsteps of P.T. Barnum, Colonel Rawhide staged a European tour.

The tour was less than a success for three main reasons. The first is that European audiences weren't as interested in the American form of the circus. They didn't enjoy

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themselves as much and the crowds, and thus the money, was much smaller. Also, despite the playbill, the circus never performed for Kings or Heads of State. Perhaps a Baron or Duke or two, but nobody important in any government showed up.

Compounding on the fiscal problems were the new acts. Colonel Rawhide decided to take in a number of new acts while in Europe. While this may have been fine under normal circumstances, the circus was already losing money. Now it began hemorrhaging money at a fantastic rate.

Finally, there were the accidents. Just at the end of the tour, disaster befell two of the performers. Although both survived, neither Uma the Unicyclist

nor Preston the Prestidigitator made it home with the rest of the circus.

But now the circus has returned home. And there is trouble afoot already. Jack Bungling, the co-owner of a rival circus has arrived to try to buy the circus from Colonel Rawhide. The Bungling Brothers Circus is well known, but unlike Colonel Rawhide, the Bungling Brothers are known to not be the most likeable of folks.

Will Colonel Rawhide be able to scrape together the \$500 he needs to pay the bank? Or will the circus fall into the hands of the Bungling Brothers? And what about that newcomer, The great Zamboni?

There's only one way to answer these questions... On with the show!!!

Colonel Sebastian T. Rawhide's Circus of the Spectacular is a work of fiction. The opinions and events expressed in this work do not reflect the beliefs of the author or Interactivities Ink, Limited. Any resemblance between the events or characters in this work and any real incidents or persons living, or dead, or undead is unintended and purely coincidental. Our game is a romanticized view of life behind the big top and is no way to be construed as an accurate portrayal of circus life.

YOUR ROUSTABOUTS

Roustabout: (n): A laborer, especially a circus worker who undertakes menial jobs, such as setting up tents, cleaning after the elephants, and the like; in an opprobrious sense, a shiftless vagrant who lives by chance jobs.

You can go to the Roustabouts if you have any questions about the game rules or mechanics, or if you wish to interact with a non-player character, such

as a visitor to the circus. Also, please talk to the Roustabouts if your plots seem to be floundering or you don't know what to do next. We are here to make your game *fun!*

All Roustabouts can be easily identified as they will be wearing a carnival barker's vest and a colorful plastic boater hat. If you aren't certain, please ask.

THE RULE OF MELODRAMA

"Remember, no one ever shines a spotlight on the trapeze artist sitting safely on the ground." – JMC.

Our game does not take place in the real world and real world rules don't apply. Your character must obey the rules of drama, and that means that your character may, at times, do things that as a player you would consider unwise, or your character may not realize things that are blazingly obvious to you as a player.

Go with it. Don't try to over-think. This is a high melodrama of the first degree and bold, daring moves will win over well thought out plans. Wacky schemes will work, or perhaps they will complete backfire landing you in a sticky situation, but at least they won't be boring.

If you take the slow path, the tried and true path, you might reach your goal, but you won't have nearly as much fun as the player who swings around the ledge, taking leaps of faith as needed.

And there is no great shame in not achieving what you set out to do, especially if you are a "bad guy." Some characters are genuine villains. Going down in a big, overdone ball of flame is far more satisfying than sneaking away halfway through the game, and watching the rest from the sideline.

Some characters are genuine heroes. Don't plan to win all the battles. It's more fun if you have to rescue the damsel in distress than if you keep her locked up, never to be seen by the villain. More fun for you *and* her.

Some characters are morally ambiguous. Will you be redeemed or will you side with the villains? The choice is yours. But no matter what you chose, remember the credo of the game:

Win Big or Lose Big, but make sure to Play Big!

WHO'S WHO IN THE CIRCUS

Stage Name: Colonel Sebastian T. Rawhide

Real Name: Sebastian T. Rawhide

Colonel Rawhide is a fine Southern gentleman, a war hero, and the owner of a mighty fine circus! His performers agree that he is one of the best Circus owners/ringmasters around and always has a good word to say to everyone. He's a good man, that Colonel Rawhide.

Stage Name: N/A

Real Name: Daisy Belle

Colonel Rawhide's Fiancée, a lovely woman, and a pure Southern belle. While

sweet and demure, Daisy does not like the circus. She feels that such a life is beneath her and her betrothed and she is constantly trying to get Colonel Rawhide to sell the circus and become an accountant. While Daisy does have disdain for most circus folk, she does have a soft spot in her heart for those she sees as helpless or victims. She is often seen working with Zelda the Clown trying to teach her to read and write.

Stage Name: N/A

Real Names: Jack and John Bungling

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Jack and John are the co-owners of the Bungling Brother's Circus. The Bungling Brother's Circus is well known, but its critics claim that the circus was built on the backs of smaller circuses that have gone bankrupt and the Brothers snapped up for a song. Jack is the obvious leader of the Bungling Brothers. John seems to be a lackey, happy to be in his brother's shadow. Jack and John are the sons of Senator Hiram Bungling, the most powerful man in Washington DC. The Brothers may have some sway over their prestigious father.

THE SIDESHOW

Stage Name: The Strong Woman

Real Name: Susan Wildes

Susan is a real conundrum. Only eighteen, a teenage runaway, she seems to be as strong as ten strong men. She can lift tremendous weights and even bend iron bars. However, she looks small and frail. She has barely any muscle tone to speak of. Susan will not speak of her condition or how she came to be that way. Susan seems to have befriended Señora Mysterioso, and the old gypsy fortune teller has taken her under her wing.

Stage Name: The Bearded Lady

Real Name: Helena Perez

Helena is one of the originals of the circus performers, starting back when it was still Colonel Sebastian T. Rawhide's Wild West Spectacular. She is an authentic bearded lady and has a Certificate from a Doctor to prove it. Helena is a nice person, and educated too. She tries to hide it, but every once in a while her education shines through.

Stage Name: Lydia The Tattooed Lady

Real Name: Unknown

Lydia joined the circus just before it left for Europe. She is covered with tattoos from head to toe. Like many circus

performers, Lydia doesn't like to talk about her past. While in Europe, Lydia got a tattoo from each country the circus visited.

Stage Name: Señora Mysterioso

Real Name: Jane Doe

Not that anyone believes that Jane Doe is her real name. Señora Mysterioso has been with the circus for a number of years. She claims to be a genuine gypsy fortuneteller and snake charmer. And whether or not you believe in prognostication, her predictions and clairvoyance have been remarkably accurate.

Stage Name: Bobo the Dog Faced Boy

Real Name: Unknown

Bobo joined the circus in Europe. He's a plucky eight year old boy with more facial hair than most grown men. Bobo has been very helpful around the circus, running errands and assisting Franklin Winters.

Stage Name: The Siamese Twins

Real Names: Rupert and Rudolph Townshed

Not actually from Siam, the twins hail from Virginia. The Townshed brothers have also been with the circus from the very beginning. They are always a good draw - Rupert play the fiddle while Rudolph sings. But the twins have always been a bit argumentative. Right now, they are having a big disagreement and seem to be very angry at each other. Unlike most other performers, the Townshed brothers are more than happy to talk about their past.

THE BIG TOP

Stage Name: The Flying Credenza Brothers

Real Names: Alexander, Bartholomew, Clifford, and Douglas Credenza

The Credenza Brothers are amazingly accomplished acrobats, perhaps the

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best in the business. They seem to be in almost completely harmonious synchronicity at all times. The Brothers are from Italy and come from a family with a longstanding circus tradition.

Stage Name: The Lion Tamer

Real Name: Franklin Winters

Franklin seems to be an upright man, but has a bit of a drinking problem. Like many circus performers, he is reluctant to talk about his past, and many suspect that he is running away from something. However, his talent in training animals cannot be denied.

Stage Name: The Fire Eater/Sword Swallower

Real Name: Peter Wainwright

Peter has been with the circus for many years and his flashy act has entertained thousands. Cocky and self-assured, Peter enjoys his job, especially playing with fire. Peter doesn't talk much about his past, but that isn't that unusual. Lately, Peter has been restless, as if he expects something important to happen soon.

Stage Name: The Masked Rider

Real Name: Unknown

The Masked Rider joined the circus in Europe. A true master of the equines, the Masked Rider has shown amazing capability in all aspects of horseback riding. Desiring privacy more than any other performer, The Masked Rider has not revealed anything about the past, or even the Rider's real name.

Stage Name: The Knife Thrower

Real Name: Unknown

The Knife Thrower also joined the circus in Europe, about the same time as the Masked Rider. Like the Masked Rider, the Knife Thrower has not revealed a past or a real name. The fact that the Knife Thrower and the Masked Rider have so much in

common, at least so much secrecy has not escaped most rumormongers.

Stage Name: The Great Zamboni

Real Name: Unknown

The Great Zamboni showed up today asking for a job. Even though the circus is in dire financial straits, Colonel Rawhide decided to give him a chance. That's the kind of man Colonel Rawhide is.

Stage Name: Binky the Clown

Real Name: Herman Binkowicz

The so-called "savior of the circus," Binky's happy antics drew crowds in by the hundreds. Thanks to the amount of money that Binky pulled in, Colonel Rawhide was able to organize a tour of Europe. Offstage, Binky is quite the cut-up, constantly cracking jokes and making people laugh. Anyone who needs a lift should go talk to Binky, even after a few minutes, you're guaranteed to break out laughing.

Stage Name: Zelda the Clown

Real Name: Unknown

Zelda is a true mystery. She joined the circus while it was in Europe, but she can neither talk nor read nor write. She seems to understand what being a clown is all about and obviously has some training in tumbling and gymnastics. Still, nobody has managed to get a life story from her, or really communicate with her in any meaningful way.

Stage Name: Zimmie the Clown

Real Name: Unknown

Zimmie keeps to himself a lot. He is not very sociable and sometimes scares the small children. It's a wonder that Colonel Rawhide has never let him go, especially with the current financial troubles of the Circus. Still, goes to show you what a kind, generous man Colonel Rawhide is.

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MENKS

Our combat system is Mike's Extremely Noisy Combat System (MENKS). We will also be using MENKS for other things, such as performing. You should have a number of MENKS cards in your character packet. How many? Well, you'll also have a booklet of Special Abilities, and the number of MENKS cards should be on the cover. Keep your MENKS cards with you. We will also have a clearly labeled MENKS box, which is a repository for used MENKS cards.

If you want to attack someone, point at that person and say "Combat," or "Hey Rubel!" or some other phrase that makes it clear you're attacking. Each of you should then pull out your MENKS cards. If you don't have yours, then you can get some from the MENKS box.

This is how it works. The person who started the fight plays one of the four basic cards: CRASH, BAM, BIFF or POW. If the player doesn't have any of the basic cards then he cannot start the fight; he's too weak or something. After that, players alternate playing cards. The cards state clearly on them what cards they can be played on.

For example, if you have CRASH, BAM, and ZOWIE, and your opponent plays a POW, then you could play your CRASH or your ZOWIE, but not your BAM. When playing the card, make sure to say the sound effect out loud, otherwise it isn't noisy.

If you can not - or choose not to - play a card, then you lose the fight. So the object is to play cards in such a way that your opponent cannot play a card. Of course, since hands are kept private, this can be difficult.

There are five special cards:

- BOOM - After playing this, you can take any card, other than a BOOM, that has already been played in the combat and put it in your hand.
- ZOWIE - Your opponent must play two cards in a row. The first card must be played on the ZOWIE. The second card is played on the first card, as if you played the first card.
- OOF - Your opponent must discard a card of his or her choice. Place the card at the bottom of the already played cards pile. That card can be taken with a BOOM (unless it is a BOOM itself).
- THUMP - When you play THUMP, choose a card name (CRASH, BAM, BIFF, POW, BOOM, ZOWIE, OOF, THUMP, or WAHOO). Your opponent may not play any cards with that name for the rest of the combat. You can still play them, though.
- WAHOO - This card can be played on any card, except WAHOO. Any basic card can be played on it. It is, in essence, a wild card. Strategy tip: Save your WAHOOs until you cannot play another card.

MULTIPLAYER COMBATS

These should be avoided. Try to break multiplayer fights into as many one-on-ones as possible.

However, if two (or more) people want to attack someone, then that person should play multiple games of MENKS against the attackers at once.

So if Gordon and Adrienne are attacking Denis, Denis must use his cards to defend against Gordon and Adrienne simultaneously. These are considered two separate combats for

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the purposes of special cards. He might get lucky and beat one or the other. Or, if Denis knows that Gordon is weak, Denis might choose to lose automatically to Gordon so he can use all his cards in the fight against Adrienne. Remember, you lose if you cannot play a card or choose not to play a card, even if you can. You never *have* to play a card.

AFTER THE COMBAT

Put all cards played in the MENKS box with the extra cards. Give the box a hefty shake and draw out as many MENKS cards as you started with.

TIED UP, KNOCKED OUT, OR INCAPACITATED

If you are knocked out, or in some other way incapacitated, you come to after five minutes. If you are tied up, or locked in a room, or some other way bound, you can escape in ten

The loser of the fight is at the winner's mercy. The winner can do one of the following:

- Force the loser to answer one question truthfully.
- Force the loser to perform one task, even ones that are against the loser's best interests or core beliefs.
- Tie the loser up, or knock the loser out.
- Damage the loser. See a Roustabout if you want to harm someone else.
- Some other thing, as long as both players agree or it was arranged ahead of time with a Roustabout.

minutes as long as nobody is guarding you. If someone is guarding you, you must beat your guard(s) in combat to escape.

SPECIAL ABILITIES & WACKY SCHEMES

You will find a booklet of special abilities in your character packet. Keep them with you. These abilities list all the special things that you can do. Some of them have a specific number of uses. Keep track of those on the card.

But, don't feel limited by your special abilities. If you want to try something, talk it over with a Roustabout. The Roustabout may give you some idea of what might happen or your chance of success. You can *attempt* anything, but that doesn't mean you will always get what you want.

Roustabouts Like:

- Schemes that are daring, bold, inventive, wacky and fun.
- Schemes that involve your fellow players,

especially if they help.

- Schemes that have an element of danger or chance to them.

Roustabouts Don't Like:

- Schemes that are too complex to understand.
- Schemes that would unbalance the game or presume more ability on your character than you have.
- Schemes that would kill another character or take another character out of the game.

The Roustabout may ask you to play a quick game of MENKS to see if you are successful. You will have to act out your scheme, of course, and interact with the other players.

MASKS/DISGUISES

You will find a nametag in your character packet. Please wear it all times that you are "in-game."

You'll also find a mask card in your character packet. Place it over your nametag in the badge holder when you are wearing a mask. The Roustabouts will have blank nametags for those who wish to disguise themselves over the course of the game.

If you see a player wearing a mask or a disguise, do not assume you know who they are. A character wearing a

mask looks *completely different* than the same character unmasked. Likewise with disguises. This even goes for characters who are obviously physically different than the norm.

If your character is especially perceptive and/or intelligent – if you aren't sure, ask a Roustabout just to be on the safe side – you may realize that a "freak" wearing a mask is that "freak." After all, how many bearded ladies, or bearded eight year olds, or Siamese twins does one see walking around? Again, if you aren't sure, ask a Roustabout.

ITEMS

For the most part, we will be using props to represent "in-game" items. If you aren't sure if a prop is in-game or not, or if you aren't certain what item it is supposed to be, please ask a Roustabout.

However, each Roustabout will also have a number of index cards to use for in-game items. Treat these "item cards" as if they were the item they represented. Use common sense. For example, a battleship item card could

not fit in your pocket, and a pot of boiling water would be too hot for most people to pick up.

Finally, if you have an item that you wish to hide, destroy, or otherwise rid yourself of – short of giving it to another player – please give that item to the Roustabouts. Please do not destroy our props or hide things around game space without telling us. Please do not take items out of game space. Thanks!

CONTINGENCY ENVELOPES

Some of you may have envelopes in your character packets that say to open when a specific event occurs. Don't open them until that event.

And don't go searching for that event to

happen. Your character doesn't know that anything special has happened, so he or she wouldn't do anything special to make your contingencies happen.

FIRE & EMERGENCIES

"In game" fire will be represented by red and orange streamers. Things that have been burnt and destroyed will be covered by black streamers.

In the case of "in game" emergencies, the Roustabouts will try to play or

sing "Stars and Stripes Forever," the circus emergency song. Characters may call "Hey Rube," but the Roustabouts will not call that for emergencies.

PERFORMING & THE CROWD

The circus lives and dies by the crowd. Happy crowds bring in money. Unhappy crowds can kill a circus.

At our game we will have a sign to show the mood of the crowd. The sign can be one of three colors:

- Green - The crowd is happy.
- Yellow - The crowd is unhappy or neutral.
- Red - The crowd is panicked may actively be fleeing the circus.

Additionally, the sign may have a one word verbal descriptor of the crowd. ("Happy," "Enthusiastic," "Bored," "Horrorified," "Dead" and so forth). Obviously, it is much easier to lower the mood of the crowd than to raise it, and once it gets to a certain level in Red, it may be impossible to raise it again.

Every fifteen minutes during the sideshow (one half hour into the game until one and a half hours into the game), Colonel Rawhide will collect money based on the mood of the crowd. Green is \$40, Yellow is \$20, and Red is nothing. This will happen four times.

During the sideshow, each side show performer may perform to attempt to raise the spirits of the crowd. The mood of the crowd will automatically lower if nobody tries to keep the mood up.

Colonel Rawhide will also collect money after each main tent performance. Green is \$40, Yellow is \$20 and Red is nothing. Before the main tent performance starts (two hours into the game), Colonel Rawhide will have to schedule the performers in order and present that order to the Performance Roustabout.

One of the Roustabouts will be tagged as the performance Roustabout. To perform in the side show and before performing in the main tent, see the performance Roustabout. You may have to do a small game mechanic before your performance to determine how you did. After your performance, the Roustabout will update the crowd status and - if appropriate - pay Colonel Rawhide.

The crowd starts at Green, but just at the very bottom of Green.

PIZZAZZ

Pizzazz is that certain amount of savoir faire that can be added to a scheme or an act to make it even better.

Each Roustabout has a small number of Pizzazz cards to hand out to players. Players get a Pizzazz when they do something extra special, above and beyond the call of roleplaying. Also, Roustabouts may give out Pizzazz for especially striking costumes or props.

You can use Pizzazz when playing a special ability to make it work better (or you may give a Roustabout a Pizzazz card instead of a use of a

special ability). You can also use Pizzazz as a Wa-Hoo! in combat. Make sure to give the Pizzazz back to the Roustabout instead of putting it in the MENKS box. Note that you cannot use Pizzazz to do the impossible, but you can still try.

Finally, you can use the Pizzazz to spice up your act. If you use it when performing, you can also use it as a Wa-Hoo! in the MENKS game you will play before performing.

Remember to return your Pizzazz cards back to the Roustabouts. They have a limited number and when they're gone, they're gone.

ANIMALS & NPCs

The specific animals in the circus have not been well defined. Assume that the circus is well stocked with a number of different animals. If you

wish to interact with an animal or a character not actually in the circus, see a Roustabout.

DEALING WITH THE REAL WORLD

This game is often held in public spaces. This part of the book is for those times. People not actively involved in the game and curious onlookers may - and will - stop by. In such a situation, will have signs up explaining that this is **not** a real circus. But, please feel free to entertain people with tricks - to the best of your ability - and delight small children.

If people are curious what is actually going on, you can try to explain if you have the time, but if not, direct the bystander to a Roustabout. We will have explanation cards to hand out. These cards will be available to players if you want to hand them out as well.



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DEDICATION

Colonel Sebastian T. Rawhide's Circus of the Spectacular is dedicated to the hardworking circus folk and carnies of the past two centuries, and to those

brave souls who allowed themselves to be put on display simply because they were different.

THANKS

Special Thanks to: John Corrado for allowing me to bounce ideas and characters off of him, Roustabouting, continuity checking, taking over Palestine and allowing me extra time to move out of the basement; the other Roustabouts; Rebecca Ellis and Greg Crowe for building the scenery for us to chew; everyone who served food watched kids or helped set up; Laura Overman for completely disrupting my life in good way but still not complaining when I was writing the game instead of packing for the move; The fine folks of the Carroll Baldwin Hall; Arthur Adams for letting me use his video setup to host the video parties; the Screaming Puppets and the gals from Intercon B for plug assistance. And everyone I forgot. And **you** for taking the risk of playing a standalone four hour silly game by a guy who hasn't written anything new in two years. I'll do my best to make sure it was worth it!