

PRESENTING: BARTHOLOMEW CREDENZA

You are Bartholomew Credenza, second oldest brother of the Flying Credenza Brothers, the greatest acrobatic troupe in the world. You, and your three brothers, Alexander, Clifford, and Douglas, were born in Italy to parents who had performed for the circus their entire lives. You grew up 50 feet above the ground and learned to walk on a high wire by the age of five. The four brothers are all that's left of the once proud Credenza family and you don't like to talk about your parents. You left home, joined a circus, and have never looked back.

At least that's your cover story anyway.

You are Galactic Patrol Officer #19328-00345B: Bitá CR\$DZH*. Your three hive brothers, Alet, Ceto, and Delt all have separate bodies, but you share a single mind. That is not technically true. You all have independent thought processors, brains, but you are intuitively mentally linked, so that all four of you know and sense and feel everything together. This allows you to work with incredible coordination.

Approximately three of this planet's years ago, your hive pod crash-landed on this world while in pursuit of a galactic criminal. You had to fashion a disguise. Earth has been declared a Stage Two world, off limits to Galactic Personnel until it has developed a strong moral culture with the technology to travel to other worlds. This could be centuries away. Luckily, none of your hive pod was hurt in the crash.

You were chasing the infamous intergalactic criminal, ■■■■■. ■■■■■ is wanted for many crimes, including robbery and murder. It feeds on the life force of sentients, and is clever and slippery and difficult to catch. ■■■■■ has escaped from the Galactic Patrol on over seven different occasions. It is one of the most wanted criminals in the spheres.

The chase lasted for several time spans when ■■■■■ banked a close turn around Sol, attempting to use its gravity well as a boost to escape. It miscalculated, and you watched horrified as its ship exploded in the third planet's atmosphere. What a terrible way to go. Your horror was short lived as an urgent beeping from your control panel turned your attention to more pressing matters.

Your ship was low on fuel. Desperately low on fuel. Your ship gets its power from the matrix lattices inherent in carbonic crystals. You were far away from any fuel source. You did a quick scan of the system and discovered that there were many unrefined carbonic crystals on the third planet, the prohibited planet. Also, the third planet was the only

one with the right conditions to support your bodies. You had no choice; you made a controlled crash landing on the planet.

Your ship is damaged and is running on auxiliary, solar, power. It does not have enough power to leave the atmosphere, but it does have enough to move about, to keep intruders out, to run the computer banks, and for disguise capability. Yes, your ship can disguise itself to look like a native house or transportation device. Currently, it looks like a circus wagon, a circus wagon that only your hive pod can enter. Luckily, your individual bodies look like earth humans, so you did not need to disguise yourselves.

You did as much research on the culture as you could – there is a regrettable lack of information about Stage Two words – and went out to meet the people. Your ship had landed in a country called The United States, a land recently recovered from a messy and barbaric civil war. You had landed outside of a small town in a state called Kansas. The occupants were naturally curious about you. To cover up your lack of knowledge about the local customs and language, you claimed to be from a foreign country. The rest of your cover identity was made up piecemeal as it was needed. You didn't have to worry about your individual bodies making a mistake as each immediately knew what the other had said.

One of the local residents asked if you were with the circus. Apparently a circus is a show made up of oddities and outcasts, a perfect cover. You had also quickly realized that carbonic crystals were either incredibly rare, or the locals did not know their use as nobody knew what you were talking about when you asked for them. The local fuel seems to be burning wood or an inferior version of carbon, known as coal.

You went to visit the circus and met with its owner Colonel Sebastian T. Rawhide. You later learned that Colonel is a title, not part of his name. It was fairly simple for the four of your bodies to put on an impressive display of acrobatics. Besides being able to move as one, your four bodies had years of null-gravity experience. You were hired on as acrobats, working on the trapeze.

Life in the circus is fine, if intellectually unstimulating. You have sent numerous distress calls from your ship, now disguised as a circus wagon, and have begun waiting for humans to develop a power source for you to return home. It is highly unlikely that this will happen in your lifetime, however. You still hold out hope. You know there are carbonic crystals on this world; you simply have to find them and you can use them to power your ship and return home.

In the meantime, you have been acclimating yourself to this world. It is nice enough, albeit primitive. As of this writing, you have lived here for three years. You have learned the language well enough, and though you still make some errors, they are few and far between. At least your cover story of being from Italy has been accepted. You can always fall back on that when you find yourself caught in an embarrassing situation.

While on earth, you have done your best to catalogue the various flora and fauna. This information will prove quite useful back home. You have done some preliminary research on the various types of creatures at the circus. You are aware that some of the animals are quite dangerous, even deadly, but you need information for your catalogue. You also want to interview several of the humans – discretely of course – as many of them are atypical for their species. Details follow your history narrative.

Recently, the circus traveled to a different continent called Europe. This world has seven distinct continents, most separated by large bodies of water (oceans). You were pleased to learn that the tour did not include travels to Italy as that would have given away your ruse. Apparently, Europeans are not well traveled as those in the countries you did visit, (England, Spain, Freedonia, Fandonia, France, and others) easily believed that you were from Italy.

However, not long after your trip began, two sensors lit up on your ship. The first sensor was very exciting. You detected a power source, an advanced power source. It seems to be a battery of some sort, but it shows that there is some advanced technology on this world, other than yours of course. The second alert was much more disturbing.

■●● was here. ■●● had survived and is on Earth. And is nearby. In fact, ■●● probably is responsible for the advanced power source. Most likely, ■●●'s ship was destroyed, but ■●● was able to jettison to safety. You attempted to determine ■●●'s whereabouts, but were able to pinpoint them exactly. But, by the time the circus reached the end of its tour, in France, it was clear that ■●● was part of the circus, as was the advanced technology. Interesting. Perhaps it is hiding within the freaks.

However, that is not your main concern now. Yes, you must stop ■●● as it will certainly kill here on Earth, if it hasn't already. But, you have a more pressing problem. You have become ill. You have the Floo.

The Floo is a devastating disease for your kind. You require certain nutrients and atmospheric conditions that do not exist on Earth. Without them, your hive-pod will gradually disintegrate into four autonomous

beings. Being alone: it is, perhaps, one of your kind's greatest fears.

It has already started to affect you. Douglas – Delt – is perhaps lost forever. Ceto is soon to go next. You can feel the mind of Ceto slipping away. You have lost all but the most tentative of mental contact. And then you are next. You cannot communicate normally with Alet at all, but you still can send an emergency message every once in a while. Your hive-pod is deteriorating fast. If you do not get home soon, the Floo will overtake you and the invariable madness that results will make you wish you were dead.

You still have access to a method for temporarily overturning the Floo. You have a device in your ship which will allow your four individual brains to sync for approximately a half hour of time. During that time, it is as if you did not have the Floo at all. It even works with Delt. However, it cannot be used more often than once per twenty hours or so, so you use it to synchronize your brains before your act. Much to-do has been made about the Credenza's secret pre-performance ritual, but it will be a secret that the Brothers will never tell.

You have tried to keep your mind off the disease. Although it was a shock when you realized that "your mind" referred to Bito's brain and not your shared mental link. You have tried to throw your efforts into cataloging the various Earth creatures, especially the oddities attached to the circus. You have started a catalogue, and have gotten to know them and get them to trust you, especially the you that is Bartholomew, but the time has come to perform in-depth questions and try to get sample.

You have a small portable lab for taking samples, so you do not need to violate the security of your ship. However, getting the performers to provide blood and tissue samples may not be easy. Still, the results may prove very interesting indeed.

ROLEPLAYING HINT

You are a decent – if alien – sort. You do have a duty to perform, and you do want to return home, and you are very worried about your disease and what it is doing to your pod-brothers. You were, and still are, an Officer of the Galactic Patrol, although Earth is technically beyond your jurisdiction. Your body is outwardly human in all respects, although you may not react to some drugs or illnesses as normal humans do. You can eat Earth food and easily breathe the atmosphere. You have lived on Earth for three years, so your gaffes are few and far between.

ITEMS

A medical scanner. It is a portable doctor's laboratory, although you will have to go back to your ship for results. Note that it conspicuous and you will

have to be careful to use it. It requires tissue samples for analysis; it does not scan from a distance.

THE OTHER CHARACTERS:

Colonel Sebastian T. Rawhide: He was one of the first humans that you met. He is a good representative of his race and a fine leader. He is, as near as you can tell, a typical human.

Daisy Belle: You believe that Miss Belle and Colonel Rawhide are engaged in a prolonged mating ritual. You understand that their religious and moral beliefs are tied in this. Miss Belle, while otherwise a very pleasant individual, does not care for circus performers. You have been unable to procure a detailed analysis due to this rejection.

Jack Bungling: The older of the two Bungling Brothers, who are trying to buy out this circus. You have heard stories about the Bungling Brothers, stories about how things tend to go awry for people who oppose the Bungling Brothers. They have their eyes set on this circus and there were some problems in Europe. You do not believe that he is anything other than a normal human, however.

The Flying Credenza Brothers: Your pod-brothers Alet, Ceto, and Delt are really just bodily extensions of your hive mind. You have had to disguise yourself as separate individuals and have named your bodies Alexander, Clifford, and Douglas. Recently, you have been suffering from the Floo, making it seem like you are, indeed, different people.

Binky The Clown: Herman Binkowicz. You do find Binky's antic amusing, and he has a good act onstage. What you do not understand is why the other humans laugh at everything he says. It is obviously an Earth custom that you do not understand. You once inquired about it, and were rebuffed, so discussion must be an Earth taboo of some sort. Regardless, you make sure to laugh when talking to Binky, about three to five minutes into the conversation. Binky may be a scientific anomaly; however. Is it possible that he somehow causes this laughter? You will have to examine further.

Susan Wildes, The Strong Woman: She is a scientific impossibility. Her frame and musculature make her far too frail to lift such heavy weights. You need to examine her. You need to test her strength limits and find out if there are others like her where she comes from.

Franklin Winters, The Lion Tamer: He enjoys the drinking of fermented beverages. Alcohol affects you in the same way as it does humans, except that only the brain of the body drinking actually becomes intoxicated. It is very much like having a localized case of the Floo. He seems to recover from these bouts quickly. You have, as Bartholomew, had many

drinking matches with Franklin to test his endurance and fortitude. He does recover from them at an amazing rate.

Rupert and Rudolph Townshed: They are the exact opposite of you. You are one mind in four bodies. They share a body, but have two minds. They argue a great deal. Life must be difficult for them. Conjoined twins are a rarity among humans, and you wonder if they have special genetics because of it.

Helena Ferez: She is also a genetic anomaly. Female humans do not develop facial hair. You need to collect some of her DNA and compare it to that of a normal human male and female.

Peter Wainwright, the Fire Eater/Sword Swallow: Humans have no natural resistance to fire, although he has absolutely no fear of flame. You suspect that he is a normal human, but should probably test to make sure.

Bobo, the Dog Faced Boy: It is unusual for a child his age to have facial hair, and he has more facial hair than most adult humans. His mature attitudes are also unusual for a prepubescent human. You have tried to gain his trust as you wish to experiment on his reflexes and perhaps gain a gauge of his true age.

Zelda the Clown: You have been unable to ascertain if she chooses not to speak or if she is unable to speak. You could try for an x-ray recording of her vocal apparatus, perhaps while she is attempting to speak.

Señora Mysterioso: She is, as far as you can tell, a normal human. However, a brain scan would not be out of the question.

The Masked Rider: The Masked Rider joined the circus in Europe. You are unsure about this one; The Masker Rider is very solitary and is always seen wearing a mask. You suspect that the Masked Rider is human.

The Knife Thrower: The Knife Thrower also joined the circus in Europe. The Knife Thrower is almost certainly human.

Lydia the Tattooed Lady: She joined the circus just before it left for the European Continent. She has decorated her body with all manner of garish images. You are unfamiliar with the practice of tattooing and would like some skin samples.

Zimmie the Clown: He has an air of malevolence about him, but he is a fellow performer so you treat him amicably. He seems to be human.

The Great Zamboni: He arrived today asking for a job. You do not believe in true magic; he uses slight of hand in his act. You were able to get a brain scan of the former magician, Preston the Prestidigitator, and detected no anomalies from earth human.

■**9v9** : One of the above named characters must be ■**9v9**, your nemesis. ■**9v9** is a merciless killer that has crash-landed on Earth. It has probably already killed several times, and is now also part of the circus. You have never seen it, but you know that it is nonhuman, so you are on the lookout for those who are different. Your scientific testing will aid with that.

WELL KNOWN CHARACTERS NOT IN GAME:

Senator Hiram Bungling: He is very important in Earth politics, but more relevantly, he is the father of the Bungling Brothers who are trying to buy out the circus.

John Bungling: The younger of the Bungling Brothers. Jack is the public persona and John runs things behind the scenes.

Uma the Unicyclist: Uma used to ride a large one-wheeled contraption while juggling or across a high wire. However, while in France, she fell and severely twisted her ankle. She has stayed on in France in the care of a Doctor. She was, as near as you could tell, a normal human.

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 have a brain scan of Preston, showing no abnormalities.

ABILITIES

Combat: 10 cards.

Hive Mind: You may send a one-sentence telepathic message to Alexander or Clifford Credenza. You may do this five times for Alexander and twice for Clifford. This will become much more powerful after you perform your “pre-show ritual.”

Coordinated Attack: If you are fighting alongside Alexander, the two of you may discuss which MENKS cards to play, and may trade unused cards freely.

Native Language: You may speak your native language which only your brothers understand.