

HERMAN BINKOWICZ, BETTER KNOWN AS "BINKY THE CLOWN!!!!"

You make people laugh. It's what you do. You go to the center ring, and start to do your act and people start laughing. And they laugh and they laugh and they laugh. And they never stop!

The laughter haunts you, mocks you. You try to talk to people and they laugh. No matter what you say. No matter what you do. They laugh. The laughter never stops. It never ends. Oh, you are so sick of laughter!

It wasn't always this way. You had a very happy childhood. Your parents had just moved to the United States from Europe. Your mother worked as a seamstress and your father worked in a restaurant. You were well liked by the other kids – you were, ironically, the class clown. You didn't do very well in school. You hadn't been raised speaking English and you just didn't understand math. But you had friends and were loved and you were happy.

And then it all changed, one fateful day. You were, perhaps, thirteen. You woke up feeling strange, a bit sick, a bit dizzy, but just different. You weren't sure how. You still aren't. You went downstairs to greet your mother and father, but after a few minutes they started laughing at you. And they would not stop! You were puzzled and worried; you couldn't figure out what was so funny. Your friends, too, they laughed at you. Your teachers in school, strangers on the street. Everyone just laughed and laughed and laughed. In tears, you ran away from home.

You ran for a few years, never staying in one place too long. People would just laugh at you no matter where you went. It was a lonely life. You had nobody to talk to, nobody at all. You tried expressing yourself without talking, like charades or writing, but you just weren't that good at English, and it seemed that people would laugh just being near you even if you weren't speaking.

You were good at charades, though, and soon you had developed as sort of "act" that was part physical comedy and part your curse and people would laugh, but they would also throw money. This let you live. You were alone, but you were still alive, good trade off, right? Right?

You first thought about joining the circus after seeing a poster for the Bungling Brothers show a few years back. They had already left town, but there was a small circus, just starting up, that had moved into town. Its name? Colonel Sebastian T. Rawhide's Circus of the Spectacular.

It wasn't very spectacular at the time. They had a few animal acts, some acrobats, even a small "freak show" featuring a bearded lady and a set of Siamese twins. You talked with Colonel Rawhide, and sure enough, after a few minutes he was laughing hard enough to burst. He offered you a job as he lead clown. You took it and your life has never been the same since.

For a while, you were happy. You had a nice-paying job and a new family of sorts. But it was really all the same; no matter what you said, no matter what you did, people laughed at you. You began to hear rumors – rumors travel faster than the speed of laughter – that you were competitive and always "on," trying to be the best and not trying to work with everyone else. It wasn't true, but you couldn't explain – they'd just laugh.

And then the real pain started. You were no stranger to emotional pain when you first joined the circus, but this pain was new and real and very physical. You were able to get a doctor to stop laughing long enough to check on you. Kidney stones. Painful, agonizing, kidney stones. The first one was the worst, but you've passed about twenty of them since you've joined the circus. You didn't know what to do with them, so you've kept them. The last one was about a month ago, so you aren't due for another for a few more months. You hope.

Between the kidney stones and the fact that you cannot seem to connect with another single human being, your life has been a complete living hell. You go to the center ring; you don't have to do anything, really, and the crowd roars with laughter. You are Colonel Rawhide's favorite act. You have made so much money for the circus, that he took it on a tour of Europe.

Europe was interesting. The circus gained a number of new acts and you became even more miserable. While you made the audiences laugh in Europe, they didn't seem to appreciate you as much. Reviews were mixed at best. Working, the one joy in your life, was turning sour. You didn't know what to do.

Colonel Rawhide was starting to lose money. He had hired on a number of new acts while in Europe – he has a big heart and sometimes cannot bear to say "no" – and he was starting to find it difficult to pay performers. You were still making people laugh, of course, but now you weren't getting a steady paycheck.

You had been sending a few dollars a month home to your parents. You had forgiven them for laughing at you, but you still couldn't bring yourself to see them

again knowing the laughter would still be there. But your money is running out. You don't need money for food or lodging; the circus provides that. But you need money to make better props and accessories. You need money if you want to do anything outside of the circus. You need money to send home...

And then there have been the accidents. You were never close to Uma the Unicyclist or Preston the Prestidigitator, but you weren't happy to seem them lose their jobs in France. Uma fell off her high unicycle and nearly broke her leg. Preston was let go when a trap door fell open during his act, breaking the illusion. You hope that this isn't a trend.

The circus has recently returned to America, but the joy of performing has left you. What good is performing? What good is talent? What good is anything if you cannot have a single friend? If you cannot get close to anyone? The laughter drives them away. You hate it. You hate laughter and you hate the pain your life has become. You wish you could talk to someone, anyone. You wish someone would understand.

ROLEPLAYING HINT

You are extraordinarily depressed. You are not in great physical pain at the moment, though. Despite your depression, the GMs suggest that you plow through, trying to find someone to talk to.

ITEMS

A greasepaint kit. Can be used to disguise yourself or someone else.

A small bag of kidney stones.

THE OTHER CHARACTERS:

Colonel Sebastian T. Rawhide: Your boss. He is a nice guy and he was the one who really brought you into the show business. But even he cannot listen to you for more than a few minutes without laughing at you. He also owes you \$50 in back pay.

Daisy Belle: Colonel Rawhide's fiancée. She seems like sweet person, but she does not care for the circus very much. You aren't sure why.

Jack Bungling: The older of the two Bungling Brothers. You've never met them, but you know them by reputation. They have a large circus which they built by buying out smaller circuses. There is a pretty solid rumor that they are trying to buy out this circus.

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.

Susan Wildes, The Strong Woman: You can't understand how a frail looking woman like her can

lift such tremendous weights. She can sometimes be a bit clumsy, so you tend to keep your distance.

Franklin Winters, The Lion Tamer: He is quite the drinker, although you have never seen him drunk during his act. He keeps good care of the animals and gets along well with them.

Rupert and Rudolph Townshed: They have been with the circus since the very beginning, but lately they've become argumentative and aren't even speaking to each other. This has really hurt their act since they are Siamese twins.

Helena Ferez: The bearded lady. She also was one of the originals of the circus. She's the real thing, too. Colonel Rawhide has a "certificate of authenticity" signed by a real doctor.

Peter Wainwright, the Fire Eater/Sword Swallower: He's a nice enough guy, but he avoids you for some reason. He doesn't seem to like to laugh.

Bobo, the Dog Faced Boy: Bobo helps Franklin with the animals and they are good friends. You'd figure him to be no older than 8 or 9, younger than you were when you ran away from home.

Zelda the Clown: Zelda joined the circus in Europe. She seems to be trying to tell you something, but since she cannot speak and you aren't that good at reading or writing, you've had difficulty communicating. Zelda also can't read or write, but Daisy has been teaching her. Many people wonder if she is really mute or just pretending, but you know the truth. She doesn't actually laugh out loud when she's near you, but she convulses as if laughing. She cannot make a sound, but she still laughs at you, silently. She is an excellent tumbler and gymnast, though, and a fine clown. You might like her more if you could get to know her. Sigh.

Señora Mysterioso: An older woman who reads fortunes and charms snakes. She keeps to herself, though.

The Masked Rider: The Masked Rider is a very solitary individual, staying aloof since joining up in Europe.

The Knife Thrower: The Knife Thrower also joined the circus in Europe. The Knife Thrower also isn't a very forthcoming individual.

Lydia the Tattooed Lady: Lydia joined the circus just before you all left for Europe. She seems very nice.

Zimmie the Clown: Zimmie is odd. He gives you the creeps a little. He's very dexterous and has a fairly good act, but his makeup scares children. He isn't very friendly, either. Not that you could talk to him anyway, but still...

The Great Zamboni: He arrived today asking for a job. Colonel Rawhide decided to give him a chance. You hope he fares better than Preston.

WELL KNOWN CHARACTERS NOT IN GAME:

Senator Hiram Bungling: He is the father of the Bungling Brothers who are trying to buy out the circus. He is a powerful and influential man in Washington DC.

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 unicycle 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 a very nice person and you are sorry to see her go.

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 haven't seen him since.

ABILITIES

Combat: 10 cards.

Almost Illiterate: You cannot read or write any words more than four letters long.

