

## THE MASKED RIDER

**Y**ou have a job to do, a duty, and duty is important. It is your life.

You are Dana “Jumping” Jehosiphath, Captain of the Guards of the Royal Kingdom of Fandonia. Fandonia is a small country in eastern Europe. It shares a border with the Independent Republic of Freedonia. And, unfortunately, Fandonia and Freedonia are on the brink of war.

The war has been brewing for decades, perhaps longer. According to legend, Freedonia was once a peaceful, happy country led by an enlightened monarchy. However, the monarchy was overthrown and a Regent was installed in place. The Regent and his heirs have been ruling ever since in a cruel tyranny. It is the height of hubris that they dare call their country an Independent Republic. They are a dictatorship pure and simple.

The current Regent is the worst of the lot. He has been goading his people toward war for the past two decades. The countries stand on the brink of war and this could destabilize all of Eastern Europe. But the Regent doesn't care; all he wants is the fertile land of Fandonia.

In a last ditch effort to stave off war, the King and Queen of Fandonia made one last reconciliation attempt. They contacted the Regent and offered their daughter in marriage, uniting the two countries without war. The Regent actually approved this plan, for the princess was young and beautiful. However, when she discovered the news, the Princess was so upset that she fled from the castle never to be seen again.

You took her disappearance personally. As Captain of the Guard, she was your responsibility to protect. But more than that, she was your friend and student. You were training her in horseback riding.

You may, in fact, be the best horse rider in the world. You have trained on all manner and size of equines, from the Shetland Pony to the stately Percheron. You can handle almost any maneuver on any sort of horse. You can joust, ride while standing, canter without reins, even perform acrobatics and other maneuvers. You are an expert in all manners of horsemanship and grooming. Well, everyone needs a hobby.

So, with the disappearance of the Princess, war has been looming ever closer. The Regent took it as a personal insult, which – truth to tell – it was, and tensions between your two countries has gotten worse than ever.

That is why it was such a relief to get confirmed sightings of the Princess.

Oh, there have been many sightings over the years. And you investigated them all. Rumors. Unsubstantiated rumors were all they turned out to be. The common folk believed that she was taken by the Old Woman of the Woods, a local superstition, a witch who claims the souls of lost children, but you are above superstition. You believed that she was in a foreign country, living a life of relative anonymity. She always was the clever one.

However, a few months ago, reports started coming in about the Princess being part of a circus touring in Europe. You went to see this Circus while it was in Germany, and – sure enough – there were a number of females working with the circus that looked similar to the Princess. But you were unable to get a closer look. You went back to the court and devised a plan with the Queen and King.

Thus, when the Circus played for the royal court, you donned a mask and introduced yourself as the Masked Rider. You were able to quickly demonstrate your prowess and you were signed on immediately. You then began your circus career.

You have been with Colonel Sebastian T. Rawhide's Circus of the Spectacular for nearly six months now. In that time, the circus has finished its European tour and has returned to the United States. This is your first time overseas and you are enjoying yourself immensely, despite your mission.

You are well paid, too. You earn more from the Circus than you ever did as Captain of the Guard. That is because the American dollar is strong compared to the Fandonian grilling. You have been sending your payment home to help support Fandonia and the war effort. Unfortunately, Colonel Rawhide owes you fifty dollars of back pay. This would translate to nearly three hundred and seventy five grillings and would be of great use back home. You need to speak to Colonel Rawhide about your missing payment.

But you must never forget your mission. There are three women in the circus who look like the princess. They are all roughly about the same age. You assume the princess would be in disguise, so it could be any of the three. The trick will be seeing which one has the royal birthmark.

All the descendants of the Fandonian throne have the royal birthmark on their body. The princess has the birthmark on her upper calf. It is impolite to ask a woman about a birthmark, or to lift up her dress, so you have been unable to determine which of the women has the birthmark.

The three women are:

Daisy Belle, Colonel Rawhide's Fiancée. She looks a great deal like the princess, although she speaks with an American Southern accent. You have not been able to get close to Miss Belle, as she claims to disdain all circus people. You are certain that she would raise a fuss were you to ask her about a birthmark or ask to look at her calf. It should be noted that the Princess is very well versed in languages, and could affect a southern accent if she so chose. Colonel Rawhide believes that Miss Belle is from Georgia and has claimed to have met her father, but these things could have been faked to fool Colonel Rawhide. Miss Belle started travelling with the circus well over a year after the princess ran away from home.

Helena Ferez, the Bearded Lady. Her beard hides her face well, but she resembles the princess in body. Also, suspiciously, she avoided Fandonia and Freedonia on the European tour, taking a leave of absence. However, she does have a certificate signed by a doctor authenticating that she is a bearded lady. These things can easily be faked, so you looked up the Doctor in question and – under interrogation – he swore that the examination and certificate were valid. Furthermore, the date of the certificate is within two weeks of the Princess' disappearance. It is physically impossible to travel from Fandonia to the United States in two weeks. Even at fastest speeds, the steamship itself would take nearly two weeks, and that does not include travel time from Fandonia to the coast. Unless the Doctor lied under interrogation and oath, Miss Ferez is not your lady.

Lydia the Tattooed Lady. She also resembles the princess, although the tattoos do obscure her somewhat. The tattoos could have been used as a method for disguising the birthmark. The most telling thing is that Lydia does not seem to have a last name. She must have something to hide if she will not reveal her full name. Lydia apparently joined the circus just before it went on its European tour. The princess ran away several years ago, so this would have given her ample opportunity to become tattooed and the join a circus. Although Lydia is looking like the most likely suspect, you are secretly hoping that she is not the Princess. It might be better to return empty handed than to return with a Princess covered in tattoos.

Your mission is not easy, and – in fact – has just gotten more difficult. You have received a communiqué from the King and Queen. Apparently, there is a spy in your midst. Fandonian intelligence has uncovered a plot by Freedonia to kidnap the Princess and bring her back to the Regent, either to hold her for ransom or to use this as an opening act of war against Fandonia. This is not good. You need to ferret out the Freedonian spy in your midst and stop him... By any means necessary.

Also, you have been asked to gain America's support for Fandonia in the coming war. The most powerful man in Washington DC is Senator Hiram Bungling. His

two sons, Jack and John, own a circus and their majesties seem to feel that as a circus performer you would have some sway over the Bungling Brothers and that they – in turn – could convince their father to support Fandonia.

This annoys you somewhat as it means that you will either have to reveal yourself to be from Fandonia or you must work extraordinarily carefully to keep from revealing your secret. Either way, it is a headache. But it is also a royal order, so you must follow it. However, your mission – recover the Princess – always comes first.

There is, unfortunately, one more obstacle in your way. Your official badge of office has been stolen. Although you cannot detect any sign of a break-in to your bunk area or in your personal supplies, your badge is nonetheless gone.

This is a difficulty in two ways. The first is that this means that someone out there has discovered that you are a foreign agent. This could complicate your mission greatly. The second difficulty is that you no longer have the proof you will need when you must escort the Princess home. Without your badge as proof, you are just another person and could even be charged with kidnapping. Your badge gives you the authority to return the Princess. You need to have it returned, and at the same time you cannot allow your mission to be compromised. This is a bit of a quandary.

You will figure out what to do. In the meantime, you have a show to perform...

## ITEMS

A Number of Masks: In case you lose one.

Your Badge of Office: Missing.

## ROLEPLAYING HINT

You are faithful to the Crown of Fandonia and plan to do your duty. However, the Princess was your friend, and you know that her return will force her marriage to a cruel man. This causes you some discomfort, but you are loyal to the Crown and you do not want a war.

## 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 may be the Princess in disguise. You will need to do some investigative work.

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 Fandonia in the coming war. It will

be challenging to do this without revealing your true identity.

**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. This is not so odd, you suppose. You also have a reputation for keeping to yourself.

**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:** Obviously not the Princess. Besides being inhumanly strong, she looks nothing like the Princess.

**Franklin Winters, The Lion Tamer:** A notable drunk. His weakness disgusts you.

**The Townshed Brothers:** They were also part of the original circus. They constantly bicker. It must be trying being physically connected to someone else.

**Helena Perez, the Bearded Lady:** Another of your suspects for the Princess. She does resemble the Princess, except for the authentic beard. Again, more detective work is needed.

**Peter Wainwright, the Fire Eater/Sword Swallower:** He has a very flashy act, including some slight of hand.

**Bobo the Dog Faced Boy:** He joined the circus in Europe. Although he's only eight years old, he seems to be very wise. You aren't sure why.

**Zelda the Clown:** She is a mute who joined the circus in Europe. While she is not one of your prime suspects, she might be the Princess, hiding her voice. She is not very similar in appearance to the Princess, but a very good disguise might mask her true identity.

**Señora Misterioso:** An older woman who tells fortunes and is also a snake charmer. You do not believe in the supernatural, so you assume that she does everything by slight of hand and misdirection. However, she has often been very accurate.

**The Knife Thrower:** The Knife Thrower also joined the circus in Europe. The Knife Thrower likes privacy, but is very talented. You are impressed with the Knife Thrower's coordination...

**Lydia the Tattooed Lady:** She joined the circus just before it left for Europe. However, she does bear a passing resemblance to the Princess. You need to check for a tattoo.

**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, but the timing is too perfect for it to be a coincidence. He is most likely the Freedonian spy.

## 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.

## 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.

**Master of the Equines:** You are the best horseback rider in the world. You can stay on a horse even under the most difficult circumstances.

**Keen Insight:** You may ask the Roustabouts a yes/no question about something you have observed during the game. This question must be about an event or action, not about a specific character's identity or background. (For example: If you come upon a dead body, you may ask questions about the murder's identity, but you may not ask questions about Clifford Credenza's history.) You may do this three times during the game. The Roustabout may answer Yes, No, I Don't Know, or I Cannot Reveal That. If the answer is neither Yes or No, then the question does not count as one of your uses.

**First Aid:** Should anyone become injured, you have learned a few methods to patch people up in emergencies.

**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.

