



Weird Western Quarterly #11
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Weird Western Quarterly
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*Out where the desert meets the sky
Is where I go when I wanna hide
Oh, peyote
She tried to show me
You know there ain't no cause to weep
at Bitter Creek*

Sweat dripped down Johnny Thunder's face, trailing from his temples and over his brow, beading on the tip of his aquiline nose, trying its hardest to distract him from his focus. Clear blue eyes stared straight ahead, at the fierce-looking creature with flaming hair and emeralds for eyes, ivory flesh shimmering in the burning noon sun. They faced each other over a chasm of writhing shadow, his pistols pointed at the alabaster harpy, for long, tense minutes. The heat bore down on him, and he licked his parched lips and watched over the wriggling dark mass at their feet. The strange figure stood unmoving and waited, until at last Johnny had no choice. He dropped the guns toward the darkness and fired on it. It cracked and shattered and chains that stretched out all around them from the shadowy pit broke into hundreds of useless pieces, its terrible threat ended for good and all.

That's when the flame-haired, ivory-skinned harpy with emeralds for eyes pointed a finger at the cowboy hero of Mesa City, and he was pierced straight through his heart while she just smiled, wide and wild.

"Here, drink," James Thunderborne said as he handed a small cup to John Tane. The blond-haired young man shook his head, wiped the

sweat from his face and reached up for the cup as the images dripped away from his eyes like a chalk picture rinsed away by rain.

“Thanks.” John drank deep, feeling the cool water wash down his throat as he glanced around, trying to reassert a more normal view. The sweat lodge was still filled with steam, the heated rocks in the pit in the middle, the low hide roof not high above his head from where he leaned back. His head buzzed as well, and he rubbed his temple with his free hand. “That was... strange.” He passed the cup back to his friend. “I hope we’re done, because I’m not sure I can take much more of this vision stuff.”

“I think we can safely say we got what we came here for,” James answered with a nod and a smile. He held the flap of the small leather dome open for John, who crawled out and stood tall, slowly stretching his arms up to the sky. He was surprised to find the late afternoon air cool against his soaked skin.

“Thanks for sharing this with me,” John said as he reached for his shirt. “I know it’s a private thing for your people.”

“Not much of my people left to keep it private for,” the medicine man answered somberly, starting to break down the small camp around the sweat lodge. “It wasn’t all my choice anyway. While communing with the spirits of my birthright, I saw that you would need to see something. Something they had to show you.”

John adjusted the round wire-frame glasses on his face while giving an incredulous look at his friend. James Thunderborne was the English name for his long-time friend, one of the few of the Indians left to these lands around Mesa City. He was really Born-of-Thunder, and the shaman had often told John with pride that he descended from the great Son-of-Thunder, Arak, who walked the length and breadth of Turtle Island in the old days, long before the coming of the White Man. To James, this wasn’t fable or legend, it was his family tree, and his birthright, and he took it very seriously. For John to be included in some way by his spirits left the teacher confused, skeptical, and honored.

“It’s true, John. I can’t explain it and don’t care to right now. It might be that your vision is not for you, but your other self.” He gave a wink, as

he carefully rolled up his gear. "Either way, you're meant for something greater on the horizon, and I hope to guide you."

"Well, I don't know what to say. Other than thanks. Here's hoping I don't disappoint." John mused on the matter further as he helped his friend clean up the area. James was apparently right, it was Johnny Thunder in the vision, not schoolteacher John Tane.

Then again, it was James who had helped make Johnny Thunder a few years back, so maybe it shouldn't have been a surprise. It was James who had come to the son of Mesa City's sheriff on a mission from Born-of-Thunder's own mentor, a mysterious person James only called Windrunner. He had befriended John at a time when he felt terribly trapped by his oath of peace to his dying mother, and yet his father needed desperate help against a group of much-younger bandits raising hell in their city. James had helped John to understand the idea of masks, of adopting the nature of another, as medicine men often did to reach the spirit world. John was less sure about the spirit world, and the idea of masks, but as he trained and practiced and sharpened his skills, James coached and carved from an odd piece of wood he'd brought with him. When John felt he was ready, James handed him the carving, a clasp for his neckerchief in the shape of a black Thunderbird. "For you shall be John Thunderbird, and strike like a raptor from the Heavens," James had said.

"That handle seems a bit fancy for this," John said. "But Johnny Thunder, now. Yes, he'll ride to town." And he did, ever since that day.

"John?" James asked as he tapped his friend on the shoulder. "Are you alright? Your eyes went vacant. You need more water?"

John shook himself from his memories and smiled at his friend. "Just remembering."

The conversation slowly shifted to other matters, including what John would make them for dinner back at his place. James was a survivor and a wanderer, but he never passed up a chance to indulge in John's cooking. All the while though, something haunted the back of the teacher's mind.

Those emerald eyes, staring at him.

*You got to gamble on your story
You got no guts, you get no glory
And I'm bettin' my money on an ace in the hole
Think I'm gettin' out of control*

The estate was in a flurry of activity, the commotion increased by the scout's report that the gang was on the way, riding fast toward the front gates. Gregory "Silk" Black was heading out of the main house, cigar clamped tightly between his teeth as he strode across the dusty courtyard. He was impeccably dressed, immaculately groomed, an older man who enjoyed his station as land baron, and let everyone around him know it by his bearing and in every action. He reached the gates of the wooden palisade that enclosed the sprawling estate, and puffed impatiently as he waited for the riders.

The dozen men stormed through the gates in short order, hot, dusty and tired from the long ride, but also whooping and very excited by the successful raids. At the head of this group was the thick-bodied Peter Coffey, known as "Coffin" to his gang for the number of them he'd filled in his career. He slid from his horse and patted the saddlebag bulging with ill-gotten wealth as he grinned at Black.

"Boss, we're back, and we're rich," Coffin said with a laugh. "Everything went down just the way you planned it. Blantonville, they never knew what hit 'em."

"Silk" Black looked over the gang of criminals, puffing away and arms akimbo as he took the scene in. He said nothing for several long minutes, and everyone went quiet, and grew nervous. His gaze settled onto one rider in the center of the group, and then finally back on Coffin.

"Something you want to tell me?"

"Oh yeah, boss, did I forget to mention, we got someone who wants to throw in with us." Coffin stammered a bit and grew red at the quiet reprimand from the powerful man.

The figure slid off the horse and marched up to Silk Black, head up high, chest out, unimpressed with the wealthy man's attempts to impress and intimidate. Black stared back into the green eyes, matching unblinking gaze as Coffin continued to talk.

"She helped us slip away from the posse after us, she said she wanted to throw in. This is—"

"Madame .44. Your reputation precedes you, ma'am." Black gave a nod of his head at long last.

The fiery redhead, clad in her stark white riding clothes, kerchief hiding the lower half of her face, stared back at him without response for a time, and then the cloth over her mouth shifted, indicating a smile. "You too, Mr. Black. I've heard all about you, and how you make tough people rich. I want in."

He chuckled and slipped the cigar from his mouth, perching it between two fingers as he moved up to her side, turning back to his mansion. "Well then, let's have a talk. I can definitely use someone like you in my organization." He escorted her to his home with a smug smile and left the criminal gang to return to whooping it up over their victory.

*In one hand I've a Bible
In the other I've got a gun
Well, don' you know me
I'm the man who won*

"Heard you were out seein' that Indian again a few days back, son," Sheriff William Tane said as he walked up to John, as the teacher hitched his horse to the post in front of Max Barlowe's general store. The older man had a concerned look in his weather-beaten face, lined and creased. "You know what I think of that."

"I know, Father," John replied with a sigh as he gave his father a heartfelt hug, returned by the old man. "It's okay, we were just talking. He was showing me something interesting about a site his people used to use. Nothing more serious than that." He gave an inner sigh at the lie,

just another on the mountain of lies since that day Johnny Thunder was born.

“He’s a good enough fella, for one of them. Just be careful to listen to the Word of Wisdom when you’re out there with him,” his father admonished.

“Of course,” John replied. “How have you been? Things seem to have gotten pretty quiet of late.”

“And I’m happy for that,” Bill replied with a smile as he leaned on the hitching post and looked around his town. “Things have been just a little too hectic for this old man in the last few months. It’s nice to have that Johnny Thunder fella around to help, but it’s much nicer to not need him.”

John chuckled and nodded in agreement. “I’m happy you don’t need some masked man around either. Makes me nervous to have you relying on him.”

“Well, I wouldn’t need to, if you’d just help me out like a son should do.”

John bit his lip and shook his head. “You know I promised Mother... ”

“Yeah, yeah. You’ll be over on Sunday for dinner?”

“Of course,” John said as he started to head into the store. “Never miss it, Father.”

“Sheriff, glad ta see ya about, I been meanin’ to talk to ya.” Short, stout and balding, Max Barlowe made for an almost comical figure as he stepped around his service counter and headed straight toward the lawman. “Somethin’ weird been’s happenin’ and I wanted to see what you got to say.”

“Okay, Max, what is it?” Bill tried to calm the man down, putting a reassuring hand on his shoulder. “Can’t be that bad, I’m sure.”

“Well, it’s not bad, really, to say. It’s just that... well... I don’t want ta be

getting' no one in trouble or anythin', you understand?" Bill nodded to keep the shop owner talking. "It's just that... well, in the last couple of days..." He paused to take a deep breath, then led the sheriff back to the counter, and pulled out a pile of yellowed papers. "See for yerself."

Bill Tane looked over the bills with a bemused look. "You see what I mean, Sheriff? People payin' off their tabs, that's a good thing. Got no complaint. But some of these people, they are always in debt. They always got tabs run up, and now they're free an' clear. All at once. And I'm not the only one, Cotter and Simpkins mentioned they've been gettin' runs like this too. Like I said, I don't wanna be gettin' anyone in trouble but... this is weird."

"Well, it's worth asking around, sure. But I can't see the harm in paying off bills. But I can kind of see your point. I'll check into this, Max. Thanks for letting me know," Bill replied as he turned back to his son. "Guess I'll head over to the saloon, see what Cotter has to say about this. I'll be chatting with you later, son." He walked up to the younger Tane, and arched one wrinkled brow at John, who stared out through the large window of the shop. "Son?"

"Who is that?" Bill looked over John's shoulder and watched the young woman step down from the stagecoach. The driver helped to unload her gear from the top of the vehicle, while the sun shone down off golden hair and creamy skin and a green dress that helped to hide and display her figure all at once.

"That's Jeanne Walker," Bill answered with a chuckle, putting a hand on John's shoulder.

"The photographer?"

"Yup. She's here to do some pictures of the town, and the area, even some of your pal James, from what I understand."

"She's beautiful," John said in an awed voice, his finger pushing his glasses up the bridge of his nose.

"She is at that, son. And it's mighty glad to hear you say that. For a while now, I've been kind of worried."

“Worried, Father?”

“Well, yeah. You dress nice, teach school, speak all proper and like. I was worried you might be a bit... *fancy*. If you know what I mean.” He chuckled nervously now, and pulled his hand back. “Nice to hear you noticing a woman. And not a bad one at that, if maybe a little... wild.”

John Tane looked up at his father for a moment, and then back to Jeanne Walker, as she carried her luggage into the hotel. “Nothing bad about wild,” he murmured as his father headed out of the shop.

*Well, the towns lay out across the dusty plains
Like graveyards filled with tombstones, waitin' for the names*

Gregory Black was an unhappy man. From the elation of the recent return of his men from Blantonville, to this dark mood, it tainted everything and everyone in his small fortress. He looked again at the papers spread across his large, mahogany desk, and clenched his teeth so hard his jaw hurt. He smacked a fist into the top of the desk, then quickly stood upright and marched to his bar. He poured himself a glass of Scotch, single malt, only the best of liquors, like only the best of everything, for him.

“What is going on here?” he yelled as he marched back to the desk and stared at the papers.

There was a knock on the door to his study, and a young man peered inside. “Sir? You called?”

Silk Black turned to the door and motioned the man inside. “No. But now that you’re here, you’ll do fine.”

The young man swallowed hard at that and stepped into the large office, closing the heavy door behind him. “What can I do, sir?”

“I went into town today, and do you know what the banks told me?” Black leaned on his fists against the desk, his back to the aide. “They told

me that my latest round of acquisitions are paid up. That there are no foreclosures, that I can't have the land. So tell me, who here hasn't been doing their job?"

"Um... uh, no... no one, sir. That is, everyone has been. Doing their job. The... the farms, the ranches... none of them should be turning a profit, sir. Everything... everything's on schedule, sir."

Black spun around and slapped the young man hard across the face with an open palm, sending the aide crashing to the floor. "Not possible! If everything is driving these properties under, then how are they getting the money to keep them?"

"I... I don't know, sir?" The man cringed and then peered back up at Black, who had turned back to his desk. Tentatively, he got back up to his feet. "What... what do you want to do?"

"I have to turn the screws on these people," Black said. "I wanted the Blantonville money for other ventures, but now I'll have to use it to buy out these people. Directly. Hell with the bank."

"Well... um, well, sir, the thing there is... " the man recoiled as Black spun back toward him, face red with rage, "... you see, the money... it's not as much as it should have been. Either... either Coffin's people didn't get all they said they did or... or well... he kept some."

"No." Black was stunned at the accusation. Peter Coffey had been one of his most reliable men. For years, he'd been his strong right arm, stupidly loyal even. To think that Coffey would be stealing from him was inconceivable. *Except... well, it was how history always worked, wasn't it?* Black thought. *It was always the strong right arm that stuck visionaries like myself in the back. Stupidly might be the operative word in that phrase.*

"Get some of the men to search his room," Black said in a level, low voice as he reached for a cigar. "Then go through his men's rooms. Including the masked dame. Her rep's pretty hard, but she's also a survivor. I won't have her surviving at my expense, if she's behind this. But check Coffey out first. Find that money!"

*Some men call me Abel
Some men call me Cain
Some men call me sinner, Lord
Some men call me saint*

"Find the money," Johnny Thunder muttered to himself in the mid-morning sun as his black charger, Lightning, trotted along, filled with energy from lack of adventure recently. "These are good people out here, so where's the money coming from?"

His white hat was down low over his head, the dark coal smears over his brow and around his eyes making it look like his upper face was hidden in shadow. The coal mixed into his normally-blond hair helped to enhance the effect, and by this time, he'd learned to ignore the itchiness his disguise caused. He had found nothing in his search so far, as he rode out to the Connor house. His father had turned up nothing out of the ordinary, and let the matter go as good fortune and improved money management from the residents out here. Johnny felt something odd was involved; that somehow, the poor folks coming into money that didn't appear to come from the relatively closed system of Mesa City might be connected to the fact that, for a couple of months now, there were no real criminals in the region either. Things had been so quiet, noted fugitives hanging on the walls of his father's office being missing; all of it left him uneasy now.

He was distracted by other thoughts too. He'd attempted to make contact with Jeanne Walker the day before, and that hadn't gone quite as well as he'd hoped.

Okay, here goes, all set now, know what to say, just have to say it, John thought to himself from the corner of the street. He approached the camera, stationed on its tripod, rubbing his hands against his jeans. "Hello there, Miss Walker, pleasure to meet you. I'm John, John Tane. You met my father earlier?"

As he spoke, he watched Jeanne Walker walking down the street, for some lunch with the handsome young carpenter, Will Poole, well out of earshot by the time John had worked up his courage. "Yeah, that's him. That's me. Glad to have had this chance. You have a nice time now," John continued to say to himself softly.

Now Johnny was out in the edges of Mesa City, seeking out some new scoundrel at work, unafraid of the danger that might come. That was just punching and shooting and horse chasing, after all. *Jeanne Walker though, she was beautiful. And smart. And full of pluck.* He sighed. *Great. Now I'm sounding like father,* John chided himself.

He stopped short as he came within sight of the Connor home. Things suddenly started to become much clearer now, the mystery unraveling as he saw the dangerous outlaw Madame .44 just ahead, white clothes almost shimmering in the bright sunlight. He carefully slipped out one of his pistols as he carefully approached the criminal, aiming it at her.

"Don't move! Just stay right where you are, ma'am!" Johnny Thunder announced as the redhead twisted around in her saddle to see the vigilante with a bead on her. Even under her kerchief, Thunder could tell her mouth twisted up into an angry frown at being caught like this.

"Well, at least I got a handsome one getting his hands on me," she replied as she recovered from the surprise and lifted her arms up. "You gonna tie me up so I'm all helpless?" She fluttered her lashes at him, her bright green eyes distracting his attention as she flirted with Johnny.

"Get off the horse!" he insisted after a brief shake of his head to clear his thoughts. *Such a wanton woman, flaunting herself like that,* he thought with less derision than he intended. It was then he heard a gate creak open and a cry of 'Help!' in the air. He turned to see the pen had opened up and a herd of pigs were swarming out, bumping and pushing Lightning, who struck back and tried to pull himself out of the situation. "No... no that way!" Johnny tried to control his mount and move him toward the outlaw woman, who took the opportunity to laugh and dash away.

"Be a good little hero and help Mr. Connor keep his herd intact!" she called to him as she galloped off down the road and soon out of sight. Johnny's mouth set into a thin line of anger and he turned back to help the man recollect his pigs.

"You did that on purpose!" Johnny Thunder declared as he jumped from his horse and stormed up to Roger Connor, who stood in place and put his hands up, palms out in response. "You helped an outlaw get away!"

Why? Why did you do that? She could have killed me in her escape. What did I ever do to deserve that?"

"She wasn't going to shoot you, Johnny," Connor replied. "Listen, yeah, yer right. I let the pigs out... let her get away. She's on our side, don't yeh get it?" He led Johnny to the front of the house, where Madame .44 had been, and picked up a leather satchel from the ground. He handed it to Johnny. "Here. See?"

Johnny opened it up to find a pile of dollar bills, in various denominations. "She dropped this?"

"She brought it to us. We've gotten good and squeezed out here, and while you and the sheriff haven't got any reason to suspect foul play, we all know better," Connor explained. "And she knows it too. She got that from Silk Black, and gave it to us, so we could keep our homes. She's a hero. She'd never have shot you. If I thought she would have, I'd never have let her get the drop on you. You've been good to us here, but... but you don't know what's been happenin'."

"Gregory Black?" Johnny asked as he looked out in the general direction of the land baron's walled estate. "He's behind this? Why didn't you report it?"

"What's to report? It's all been quiet, all been good and subtle. We got no way of proving it. Some of us out here, we can't be sure we're right."

"If you are, we'll find out soon, I'm afraid," Johnny answered as he swung himself back up onto his horse.

"Why do you say that, Johnny?" Connor asked, as he watched the gunfighter turn Lightning around and prepare to head out.

"Because if Black's been trying to get your land on the sly, and now you have his money, I doubt he's staying quiet. And he's got some bad, bad men in that fort of his. Be careful. Keep a sharp eye out, Connor. Things are going to get very, very dangerous, very fast, I think." With a click and tap of his spurs, Johnny Thunder headed out in the other direction, musing over what he'd learned.

*Whatever happened
To Saturday night?
Choosin' a friend and losin' a fight*

“Coffin” Coffey was in a foul mood, paranoid and angry, and wanting to hurt someone bad. He had a good idea who it was he wanted to hurt too, but how he’d get his hands on her remained a mystery for the moment. Right now, he was holed up in the back of the blacksmith’s shop, hiding out from his former boss, and trying to figure out where he could find some place safe to hole up so he could plot revenge on a whole lot of people.

Starting with that masked whore, who needs a couple of good lessons put into her, Coffin thought. She had to be the one who snuck the boss’s money into my gear. She framed me, wanted me outta the way. Probably gonna sink her hooks into the boss next, and who cares? Serve him right, siding with her over me.

As the sky grew darker, and the cold night air blanketed the town, Coffin decided the time had come to move again. So far, he’d seen none of Black’s people following him, meaning he’d given them the slip. People thought he was stupid, but he kept his street smarts hidden, just so people would underestimate him. They did, and now he was sure his old gang was out scouring the hills. In fact, he headed to the far side of Mesa City, and the one man left he could trust.

He had a cousin, Will Poole, and Cousin Will, he was a good kid. Young, loyal, more like a kid brother. He’d hoped to bring him into the gang soon. Instead, Coffin carefully dashed to his cousin’s house to hide, to explain what had happened, and to have Cousin Will get ready to help him get revenge. On a whole lot of people.

As he approached the small, sturdy cottage, Coffin gave a wicked smile and thought, *Time to become a man, Cuz. Time to finish growin’ up.*

*We’re gonna hit the road for one last time
We can walk right in and steal ‘em blind
All that money*

*No more runnin'
I can't wait to see the old man's face
When I win the race*

"Sheriff," the voice said from the darkened interior of Bill Tane's small jailhouse.

"Johnny Thunder," Bill said back, as he walked toward his desk and sat down heavily. "I guess our little vacation is over then?" He chuckled and leaned back in his chair.

"I'm afraid so, Sheriff," the gunfighter said from the semi-gloom, hiding his features, his voice low and hushed. "I've learned that the money coming into town was stolen from Silk Black. Stolen by Madame .44."

"Really? Well now, ain't that an interesting fact." The sheriff rubbed his jaw as Johnny spoke.

"I caught up with one of Coffin Coffey's men earlier this evening. Apparently, they're looking for Coffin. Black thinks he stole the money, and now Coffin's gone to ground," Johnny further explained.

Bill turned to look at the wanted posters on his wall, and ran a hand over Coffin's. "Been wanting that bastard for a while now. I wondered where he'd gotten off to. Hiding out in Black's retinue was pretty smart of him."

"No one can figure out where he went to," Johnny added. "And now I have to wonder who else is lurking inside of Black's little fortress."

"Never did trust that guy," Bill said quietly. "Didn't come down with us when we started Mesa City. And never really mingled, just sat out there, buying up parcels and making his business dealings, and never really helping the townsfolk out." He turned back toward Johnny. "You know Coffin has a cousin, right? Here in town?"

"Really?"

"Yup. Will Poole. Quiet kid, out north of the town proper," Bill

described. "Don't think too many people know that, Will likes to play up this poor little orphan act of his." Bill picked up some papers from his desk and noticed a strange piece of rich-looking parchment, folded up in the pile. He unfolded it, and looked at the soft flowing script on it. "Huh?"

"What is it, Sheriff?" Johnny asked.

"According to this, Black's people are riding out tomorrow," Bill explained, reading over the letter. "Planning on recollecting the lost loot."

"But it's been used. They don't have it. Not most of it."

Bill nodded and added, "Right. They're going to strong-arm deeds, I suspect. Says here, Black's window is getting slimmer and slimmer. Something about his business partners getting itchy for the land."

"Well, that's very interesting. I think we may need to have a talk with them then, when they don't have wooden walls keeping them safe." Johnny started to move toward the door of the jailhouse. "First though, I think I'll be going to have a little chat with Will tonight." He tipped the brim of his hat. "Good evening, Sheriff." The vigilante then strode out of the building into the dark.

Bill watched the gunfighter leave, and answered, "Good night, John." With a heavy sigh and shake of his head, he looked again at the letter in his hand, and then got to work checking on his equipment for the next day.

*They got respect, oh yeah,
He wants the same, oh yeah,
And it's a certain kind of fool who
Likes to hear the sound of his own name*

"C'mon, Petey, let's just get outta town, huh?" Will Poole watched his cousin nervously from across the table as they ate a simple meal the younger man had scraped together at the last minute. "Why stick around? I can pack up, we can hit the road, and we can make a name for

ourselves out on the road.”

“Great plan, Will, but I got some scores to settle first,” Coffin snapped back. “You don’t get it. You only read those stupid stories of yours, and think it’s all ticking noon clocks and riding out into the desert for camp-fire biscuits and the next town for whores. But it’s not that. It’s about bein’ a man, Will. And men don’t just run outta town when they get stabbed in the back. Not for nuthin’.”

“I don’t feel comfortable with what you want to be doin’ though, Pete,” Will answered. “I mean, so this dame set you up. She’s still with Black, and he’s not gonna let you just ride up and... y’know.” He squirmed when he thought about the plan his cousin had explained to him when he’d first shown up at his doorstep.

“He’s gotta pay too, Will. He stuck the knife in my back worse than that hussy.” Coffin was finished and shoved his plate away before pulling his guns out to inspect and clean them. “You don’t go turnin’ on a friend because of some woman’s lying mouth. Ya just don’t. It’s what bein’ a man is about, kid, and I’ll be teachin’ ya, you’ll see.”

Will bit his lip, stood up and collected the dishes to clear room for Coffin to work on his guns. “I guess. But Silk’s got all those guys. It’s gotta be suicide to take ‘im on.”

“A man’s honor is at stake. You don’t let a woman mess with ya, don’t let a friend two-time ya, and ya don’t run from people when they do that to ya. Don’t matter if ya walk away from it when the teachin’s done. Ya do it anyway. No one points to your stone ever and says ‘here lies a yellow-belly.’ You don’t let that happen.”

Will sighed and nodded in agreement as he pulled his own pistol out and played with it, practicing the quick-draw and spinning it around on his finger. “I’ve been working with it every day, just like you taught me, Pete. I’m gettin’ real good.”

“Good. You’ll get a chance to show me. Silk’s dumb thinking he can just turn on me like he did,” Coffin explained as he finished the first pistol and started working on the next one. “I got me a back-door into his little palace, and I know he’s short on time. He’s gotta have his people and

mine out lookin' for me, lookin' to those homesteads out there. He's only gonna have those walls around him, and I know how to get inside of them, and you and me, we'll pay him a visit and teach him ta knife a good friend in the back. You'll see."

Outside the house, Johnny Thunder paused as he leaned against the wall, and peered cautiously through the open window. He smiled, and nodded, before slinking away. "Well now, a back-door, huh? Well, well, well."

*Well the stage was set the sun was sinkin' low down
As they came to town to face another showdown
The lawmen cleared the people from the streets
"All you bloodthirsty bystanders, will you try to
find your seats?"*

The dozen men stormed out of the wooden gate and down the wide dirt track, billowing clouds of dust in their wake. They turned and twisted along the rocky trail, then to where it sloped down as they headed for the first homestead on their list. That's when a shot rang out from up ahead and the man at the head of the troop went down in a crashing heap.

"That was your only warning shot!" Sheriff Bill Tane cried out as he crouched behind a large boulder, taking aim on the next bandit in line with his rifle. "This is the sheriff, ordering you to get off your horses, lay down your guns, and surrender!"

The gang stopped up short, some retreating several steps, others looking for their own cover, all seeing various glints of gun barrels scattered around the roadway. The second-in-command looked down at his leader, laying in the dusty road in his own blood, unmoving, his horse having already bolted away, and then grimly stared back up in the direction of the voice. A posse of townsfolk stood between them and their targets. Hell, some of this posse was more than likely their targets. "Looks like the boss messed this one up, 'cuz they're sure 'nuff ready for us," he grumbled to the men near them. "Back to Black's!" he shouted and spun his horse around quickly.

The sheriff watched as the group began to retreat and cursed. He couldn't let them hole back up behind those walls, especially not with Johnny Thunder sneaking in to catch Silk flat-footed. "Fire!" he called out in a voice heavy with regret, and shot his own rifle. *Shooting men in the back*, he grumbled inwardly, angrily. *Hate this job someday.*

The gunfire erupted, several of the bandits dropping to the ground in response, as others dove for cover and tried to return fire. But it was too little, too late, as the bright sun rose higher into the sky and looked down on the dusty, smoke-filled battleground. Slowly, Black's men were whittled down until a few injured survivors threw their guns aside and raised their hands, leaving Bill to gaze down the long track of road back to Silk's personal fort with grave concern.

*Got no cause to be afraid
Or fear that life will ever fade
'Cause as I watch the rising sun
I know that we have just begun*

Johnny Thunder watched as 'Coffin' Coffey and his cousin, Will Poole, clambered up a gnarled tree that led them to a storage shed just a short jump away over the palisade wall. Normally, it would be carefully watched, but with most of the men off doing Silk's dirty work, it provided easy access in, if a person were aware of it.

Coffin was. And now, so was Johnny.

So Johnny quickly followed along the criminal's trail, dropping inside the walled compound and quickly getting his bearings, staying crouched low, and then darting to a shed for cover. He took in the layout of the courtyard, and watched as Coffin and Will crept up to the main house, intent on their targets.

It's too risky to follow directly from here, Johnny mulled over his choices. *I'll have to locate a rear entrance, and that means... this way.* He settled on his direction and headed for the rear of the single-story manor, running as quickly as he could. Things seemed largely empty, save for the

occasional worker going about the routine of the day. He evaded them easily enough, but he refused to let his guard down at this point. It was just too dangerous. *Black, Coffin... heck, I can't be **that** sure what the Madame will do, and Will... all of them, and it's just me. Have to be extra-careful. If I get myself shot dead, Father will tan my hide.* He paused in mid-stride, *Okay, I need to rethink that one.* He then ducked up to a rear-side window, back pressed against the shaded wood wall.

He carefully peered through the glass and saw a pantry. He crept along the back wall, checking out the windows one by one, wanting a good choice of entrances. When he found a window at the far corner that peered into Silk's study, he stopped and gave a smirk. *Paydirt!* he thought as he saw Silk at his desk, Madame .44 in the room as well, leaning a rounded hip on the mahogany, peering over Black's shoulder as he worked.

"So it's this Bray & Steele Rail that's been backing your play?" Madame .44 asked, thick red hair in a heavy braid that fell in front of her, the only splash of color against the bone-white outfit.

"Yes, ma'am," Black replied. "Between their plans to get track laid from the east and hook up with Southern Pacific's Los Angeles line, and their surveyors turning up indications of precious metals in the surrounding hills... well, there's lots of money to be made here. So staking me as they did, it'll pay off big." He looked up and gave her a leering grin and reached a hand out to touch hers. "For all of us."

Inwardly, the woman shuddered at his oily touch, but she left her hand in place and forced a hidden smile back at him. "Of course, with Southern Pacific looking at other investors, you're running out of time. Can you get the deeds—"

She was cut off by his hand squeezing hers tightly and his smile melted away quickly as his cheeks grew red. "Of course! I've not gotten this close to be ruined by some dumb gunslinger and a masked man! Not with what's on the line!" He gave his own repressed shiver now, as he thought back to the demonstration his masters at Bray & Steele had given him about the last employee that failed them. The flash of fire, the smell of sulfur, the soul-searing scream of agony before the failure was swallowed up... he shivered again, and closed his eyes against the

thought. "No. No, there's no failing."

Madame .44 tugged her hand away from his and then rubbed it carefully as she stepped back from him. She wasn't afraid of him, not intimidated, and he'd pay for trying to hurt her like that. But the flash of fear in his eyes unnerved her. There was something that spooked him, and that spooked her. She had no time to ask further about it though, for the study door crashed open at that point.

"This is too good to be true!" Coffin shouted as he saw both of his targets together. "It's like a visit to the general store; everythin' I want is right here!"

Silk Black watched in astonishment as metal flashed all around him. Coffin had his revolvers out, one pointed at him, the other at Madame .44 while the masked woman had her weapons out as quickly and aimed at Coffin, while Will Poole was only a little slower, and had his weapon aimed at Madame .44. Silk kept his hands on the edge of his desk and stared up at the stand-off, eyes wide, sweat beading up at his temple.

"Peter, Peter, Peter, what are you doing?" Silk asked as he regained some measure of composure. "Put your gun away, there's no need to be threatening me."

"Like Hell there isn't, you two-timin' snake!" Coffin snapped. "You turned on me quicker than an angry rattler, and I aim to get a piece of mine back fer that!"

"Don't be foolish, my friend. You did exactly what I needed you to do," Silk continued, looking up at the masked woman at his side. "I had to expose the true snake in our midst, and like Eve and her apple from the Bible, we can lay the blame for our woes on the female."

"Whut?" Coffin was confused now; he knew Silk used those fancy words to keep the hired hands at bay, but he wasn't going to fall for it. He already knew the woman was responsible, and she'd get hers.

"So much for you and me walking away from this rich, Black," Madame .44 sneered, though she knew that he'd turn on her in an instant. She knew she had only a tiny window to take his ill-gotten booty and get it

to the right people before she'd be uncovered. She kept her pistols trained straight at Coffin's chest as she glanced over at Will. "And how come you're here? You have to know what sort of person your cousin is. You can't be throwing your lot in with him."

"Be quiet you!" Will demanded, his voice cracking a bit and he emphasized his point with the barrel of his gun, shaking it like a finger at her. "You... you don't know me! He's blood, and blood stands by blood!"

"Jest like I taught you, cuz," Coffin said approvingly. "I got you covered, bitch, so jest put them guns down!"

All this time, using the noise and bluster and demands to cover the noise, Johnny Thunder had quietly opened the window from outside. Now, with space enough for him to make his move, he leaped up over the sill and rolled to a crouch, his own firearms drawn and pointed at Will and Coffin as he stayed knelt to lower his foes' target. "How about everyone puts there weapons down?" he announced with a cocky grin.

"Dammit! Thunder! How in tarnation did you get here?" Coffin gave a quick glance in disbelief, and one of his gunhands wavered on which target to maintain. Madame .44 never wavered, keeping her guns trained on Coffin, while Will looked more rattled as he tried to keep his aim on the woman.

"Doesn't matter the how, it does matter that no one here has to get carried out of this place carried on the back of horse, if you all just put your weapons down!" Johnny Thunder repeated. Out of the corner of his eye, from his crouched position, he could see Silk's fingers edging toward a small pistol strapped to the underside of the desk. Coffin would have to notice the last sudden movement Black would make to yank the weapon out, and fire. Everyone would shoot. His eyes swept over to the flame-haired woman of ivory and everything fell into place.

"Then no one walks out of here, hero!" Coffin snarled as he looked back at his targets.

Johnny moved one gun from Madame .44, realizing her real role in all of these events, and swung it to Black just as he prepared to snatch out his pistol. Madame .44 caught the movement, in a better position to see the

local hero in action. "Will, Jeanne knows you better than this," she said to Will softly, trying to reach his better nature. "Remember your talk?"

"Shut up!" Coffin raged, but those would be his last words. Johnny's guns roared to life, one bullet striking Peter "Coffin" Coffey in the side of the head and sending him crashing to the floor as the other struck Gregory "Silk" Black in the shoulder while the wealthy land baron made his move. Black cried out in agony, dropped the pistol and went still as he clutched his wound. Will watched it all happen so suddenly, his hand shaking, his eyes locked on hers.

"Thank you, Will," she said as she blew him a kiss through her kerchief. "You saved my life. My friend Jeanne, she'd be proud of you."

Johnny stood up now, and approached Black, guns on him as he watched Madame .44. "Your part in this is going to have to be explained. Far as I reckon, you're still an outlaw and a bandit, and Sheriff Tane will want to talk with you."

"No can do, sweetheart," she said back to Johnny. "I've got too many other people to help to be stuck in the hoosegow in Nowhere, USA."

"You killed him!" Will cried out at last, looking up from where he'd gone to his cousin's body. "Killed him!" He raised a gun and aimed it at Thunder, who now had to split his attentions between Will and Black.

"He was a bad man, Will," Madame .44 said as she crept toward the door out of the room. "You know that. You'd have shot me when everything went down if you really thought otherwise. Don't do this. Don't. Not now. Please."

Will's hand shook, and Johnny could only stand in place and watch as she slipped out the door before blowing a kiss to Johnny now. "Dammit!" Will shouted in fury and threw the gun to the side. "I hate you!"

Johnny looked from Will to Coffin to Black and sighed heavily, picking Silk up by the scruff of his neck and shoving him over his desk to bind his wound then tie his hands. "Get out of here, Will. For her sake... get out of here." He glanced out of the window, and watched as the

gleaming white figure of Madame .44 raced away across the courtyard, ahead of the approaching thunder of the sheriff's posse. His vision was right, the flame-haired, alabaster harpy had shot him right through the heart.

*The queen of hearts you say you never met
Your twisted fate has found you out
And it fin'lly turned the tables
Stole your dreams and paid you with regret*

It had been four days since Gregory Black had been brought in to the custody of the sheriff; two days since Peter Coffey had been buried on Boot Hill; one day since Will Poole had run into the wild frontier in an angry daze, torn between a love for Madame .44 and a hatred of Johnny Thunder.

John Tane, schoolteacher, sat in the tavern, drinking a glass of water, eating a light breakfast and going over the lesson plan for his class the next day. His father had left not twenty minutes earlier, to see the photographer off now that her assignment in the area was complete. He shrugged at the fact that the excitement of the last week had kept him from ever finding a chance to meet her. Then again, she seemed taken with Will, and he would have just... fumbled...

He looked up from his book, eyes wide with astonishment. "No. She's... blonde." He ran a hand through his own blond locks, freshly washed free of the coal he used for his disguise. "That's... crazy." He smiled slowly.

"Hey there." The voice was soft, respectful and gentle as someone approached him from behind. He turned to see Jeanne Walker step up to the table. "You're the sheriff's son, right? John? I'm Jeanne Walker." She held a hand out.

He stood up quickly and shook her hand, and then offered her a seat. "I'm familiar with your work. It's been amazing. Father mentioned you were heading out this morning though. I understood you were done here. Seems everything got wrapped up nicely." He winked, wondering

if she'd catch the innuendo, wondering if he was right.

She chuckled in return and took the seat. She nodded in response and then answered, "Well, I found a lot about Mesa City to keep my interest. You know, traveling around the wilderness gets kinda tired and lonely after a while. So I thought I'd stick around, maybe get to know some of the folks here." She leaned in on her hands and added in a whisper, "If that's okay with you?"

"Could we get some more of those great eggs of yours?" John called over to the tavern keeper.

The End

All lyrics quoted are from "Desperado", by the Eagles, released 1973

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From the same author on Feedbooks

Danger Trail #1 (2007)

Danger Trail: The Blood & Dragon Affair, Part 1 (of 3)

Danger Trail #2 (2007)

Danger Trail: The Blood and Dragon Affair, Part 2 (of 3).

Ninjas and vampires and diabolical plots, oh my! King Faraday, Speed Saunders and the Enemy Ace are joined by a masked crime-fighter as they face two secret societies with a monstrous agenda! Pulp action at its finest as we seek out...the Danger Trail!

Danger Trail #3 (2007)

Danger Trail: The Blood and Dragon Affair, Part 3 (of 3).

Learn the mission of the Blood Red Moon! Uncover the mastermind behind the Black Dragon Society! Watch our heroes try and work together when some can't trust others, and one has no clue that there's cavalry coming to the rescue! Who would have thought marital strife could be so much danger for the heroes, or so entertaining for the readers! It's the conclusion to "The Blood and Dragon Affair!"

Danger Trail #4 (2007)

Danger Trail: The Verdant Darkness Affair, Part 1 (of 2)

Mightiest Mortals #1 (2007)

Mightiest Mortals: With a Stroke of Lightning!

Mightiest Mortals #2 (2007)

Mightiest Mortals: In a Crash of Thunder

Mightiest Mortals #3 (2007)

Captain Marvel: Under a Seal of Six Gods!

Justice League #8 (2007)

Justice League: Lucky Number 7.

What are the chances that a rash of good fortune across the globe could be the League's next case? Pretty good when this luck starts rewriting the laws of the universe and threatening the existence of

ages-old mystic defenses keeping ancient, primordial forces at bay!

Justice League #9 (2007)

Justice League: To See Tomorrow.

Why are there hawk soldiers of Thanagar on Earth? Who are the strange new superhumans appearing around the globe, testing and probing local governments? What exactly is the Justice League facing when a quartet of self-proclaimed heroes declares Earth "their last stand?" It's the beginning of an epic threat wrapped inside two strange mysteries that will leave the Justice League hoping that Earth survives "To See Tomorrow!"

Justice League #10 (2007)

Justice League: To See Tomorrow, Part Two (of Four).

"To See Tomorrow" continues as the stakes only get higher and secrets slowly start to unravel. Hawkman and the Martian Manhunter are caught between the Thanagarian invaders and their own satellite! The rest of the League is caught between Mon-El and Wandjina! And in the big picture, it's all symbolic of the Earth being caught between the enigmatic Overmaster and a still-hidden mastermind with dreadful intent!

Danger Trail #5 (2008)

Danger Trail: The Verdant Darkness Affair, Part 2 (of 2).

What connection lies between la Llorona's kidnapped children and Nyola's captured heroine Rima? What is drawing the natives of Central America and Mexico together? Speed Saunders, King Faraday and Midnight are joined by Doctor Occult to learn the truth before an Empire of Blood washes over the land!

Danger Trail #6 (2008)

Danger Trail: The Man in Stitches Affair, Part 1 (of 2)

Danger Trail #7 (2008)

Danger Trail: The Man in Stitches Affair, Part 2 (of 2).

The Revenant Program proceeds apace as Saunders and Midnight must struggle with former ally King Faraday to find the evidence that can shut down Doctor Zero for good! Maybe, just maybe, newcomer Argent St. Cloud can help out!

Speeding Bullet #4 (2008)

Bulletman: The Birth of Bulletman, Part 4 (of 4): Man Made Gods. This is it! The mystery is revealed and the gloves come off as Bulletman duking it out with the Murder Prophet and his god of murder, the Nihilist! Can he come through his baptism of fire and blood intact? And even if he wins, does the Prophet truly get the last laugh?

Danger Trail #9 (2008)

Danger Trail: The Nation of Murder Affair, Part 2 (of 2).

As Speed Saunders and King Faraday join Argent St. Cloud to search for Michael Gallant, a wave of murders leaves the city of New York reeling as the heat rises, tempers flare, and Rue Morgue revels in the bloodbath!

Danger Trail #8 (2008)

Danger Trail: The Nation of Murder Affair, Part 1 (of 2).

Gangsters want Thomas Dewey dead at all costs, bringing Michael Gallant onto the case, Argent St. Cloud at his side! But when Murder, Inc. steps up to the challenge, can even he call on enough reinforcements to save the day?

Danger Trail #10 (2008)

Danger Trail: The Stolen Myth Affair, Part 1 (of 3).

It begins here! Threads woven from the start of the series, put into play centuries beforehand, all start to come together in this issue, as familiar faces return to the scene, dark forces gather for the attack, and the secrets of the Trail yawn wide and threatening! All this and a special guest-star...the Queen of the Amazons!

Danger Trail #11 (2008)

Danger Trail: The Stolen Myth Affair, Part 2 (of 3).

Things heat up for our heroes as the Dragon Queen and the Queen of Blood unite to betray Vandal Savage; Savage raids Washington, D.C. to acquire the Ineffable Libram; and King Faraday and Speed Saunders face off with Queen Hippolyta and Rima the Jungle Woman! Things couldn't get any worse than this, could they?

Danger Trail Annual #1 (2008)

Danger Trail: The Savage Sins Affair.

As the Stolen Myth Affair heats up, as a covert war rages on the Danger Trail, take a peek inside the history of the man who has set this all into motion...Vandal Savage! Balloon Buster Steven Savage is doing just that as he uncovers threads and connections surrounding the many figures of the age that all lead back to this diabolical mastermind, some stretching back centuries! If the truth about him can't be unraveled soon, those threads will choke the present day and continue into the future!

Danger Trail #12 (2008)

Danger Trail: The Stolen Myth Affair, Part 3 (of 3).

Vandal Savage begins his plan to bring the world into his control! King Faraday, Speed Saunders and Midnight, along with their assembled allies, make their bid to stop him, but there are three queens in this game, and each one has their own vision for how the endgame should play out! It's the end of the first year on the Danger Trail...is it also just the end?

Speeding Bullet #1 (2008)

Speeding Bullet, Part 1 (of 4): Modern Gods.

James Barr has developed a special device that allows him tremendous powers! Now he steps into a new world of masked men and heroic deeds, but is he really ready to take his place among the world's newest gods? Will the Murder Prophet usher in an age of blood first?

Speeding Bullet #2 (2008)

Speeding Bullet: The Birth of Bulletman, Part 2 (of 4): Deepest Secrets.

James Barr steps into costume for the first time, and Bulletman is on the case of the Obermyer murders. But so is another person...the actual killer, a mysterious being called the Murder Prophet, who is paving the way for his master, and the police and the rookie hero struggle to catch up and stop him!

Speeding Bullet #3 (2008)

Speeding Bullet: The Birth of Bulletman, Part 3 (of 4): Bleeding Truths.

The race is on to uncover the real killer as Detectives Farley and Doherty try to dig through the murder mystery, Martin Obermyer meets the killer and Bulletman stumbles in a critical way, leaving him to face the fury of his wife!

Mightiest Mortals #4 (2008)

Mightiest Mortals: Wielding Fists of Virtue.

Captain Marvel is caught between a throwdown with Ibac and Sivana launching an all-out assault on our hero and the Fawcett itself! As bad as that is, though, it gets worse for Kit Freeman...much worse! Meet Sabbac!

Mightiest Mortals #5 (2008)

Mightiest Mortals: Scenes of a Day

Mightiest Mortals #6 (2008)

Mightiest Mortals: Between Opposing Forces.

Freddy finds himself having the most startlingly worst day of anyone's life! Can it be worse than losing a close relative? What about the dark secret within another relative? Or the secrets being held by his best friend? It all comes crashing down on him in a terrible avalanche of revelations! All this while the city moves on without him!

Mightiest Mortals #7 (2008)

Mightiest Mortals: From the Shadows of Twisted Minds.

Get ready for action and excitement! Freddy buries his cousin, Christopher Freeman, and has another showdown with his stepbrother Tim Karnes. And we discover just how fiendish Sivana can be when he pushes Captain Marvel's every attribute in an issue in which the World's Wickedest Scientist...doesn't even appear! All this, and the fate of Beautia!

Mightiest Mortals #8 (2008)

Mightiest Mortals: To the Truth of the Matter.

Billy and Freddy have their confrontations on secrets kept, power hoarded and relations hidden, all the while the forces of the law struggle to keep Lady Justice apart from her new champion and Miss Minerva asserts her innocence!

Mightiest Mortals #9 (2008)

Mightiest Mortals: The Abyss of Blood Relations

Fawcett City goes on despite the gang war, despite the debut of new heroes, despite it all, Fawcett City goes on. Come and see how it does, as Chief Kitchens deals with the presence of Captain Marvel and what it means for his police force! And has Miss Minerva over-played her hand?

Mightiest Mortals #11 (2008)

Mightiest Mortals: The Tide of Heroism.

The beginning of the stunning two-part finale to Captain Marvel's first year! Sabbac has gone on a rampage, and Ibac is taking advantage of the chaos! Bulletman struggles to intervene, but everyone wants to know where Captain Marvel is! All this and more (and boy, do I really mean it this time)!

Mightiest Mortals #10 (2008)

Mightiest Mortals: The Punishment of Good Deeds.

Amazing origins issue as we discover the secret behind the magic words, and the history of Sabbac and Ibac! Freddy walks into a deathtrap, Victor Craize starts to feel the power of the people, and the police make a startling discovery about Miss Minerva!

Mightiest Mortals #12 (2008)

Mightiest Mortals: By an Act of Love.

This is it! Sabbac is on a rampage! Ibac sends his men out against the leaderless forces of his gangland opponent! Into the middle of this stands Captain Marvel and his allies! When the smoke clears, who will stand triumphant?

Nightwing #30 (2008)

Nightwing: The Riddle of the Sphinx.

Just when you'd think Dick's got enough trouble juggling Titans duties as Nightwing, solo duties as the Batman, and mentoring duties with Tim, things get harder. There's a new villain hitting the streets, one with a dangerous delusion, and Dick's not happy to see that Nightwing is apparently on the case, without Dick's permission! Come and join us for "The Riddle of the Sphinx!"

Nightwing #31 (2008)

Nightwing: Riddle of the Sphinx, Part 2 (of 2)

Dick must try to get to the bottom of the crazed King Tut and foil his rampages, but he also needs to figure out how to deal with the new Nightwing! As he digs up more information on both, all three men spiral into a collision course of tragic proportions, and Professor McElroy might just be the ultimate victim in all of this!

Justice League #11 (2008)

Justice League: To See Tomorrow, Part Three (of Four).

Things are falling into place at a rapid pace now... for the villains! With the League stretched thin across the globe, friends come racing to the rescue and the action only heats up! Watch Hawkgirl lead the storming of the JL satellite; witness Superman confront Mon-El over his mysterious mission; and thrill to the throwdown between Wonder Woman and the Persuader, as the master villain behind it all draws closer to his goal! All this and more!

Danger Trail Vol. 1 (2009)

This volume collects Danger Trail #1-12 as well as Danger Trail Annual #1. This is the complete first story arc in which our pulp heroes confront the treachery of the Blood Queen, the Dragon Queen and their mysterious backer. Stay tuned for Danger Trail #13 coming soon!

Danger Trail #13 (2009)

Danger Trail: The Brown Lady Affair, Part 1.

In the wake of the battle with Vandal Savage, Speed Saunders has set his sights on finding the Sigil of Seven; that quest being his only remaining link to the missing (and treacherous) Harriet Cooper! His friends Argent St. Cloud and Michael Gallant, along with ally Doctor Occult, want to know what his intentions are, but first they must untangle a dark scheme involving the ghosts of Great Britain!

Mightiest Mortals #13 (2009)

Mightiest Mortals: Opening Passages.

As Fawcett City recovers from the fall of Ibac and Sabbac, our heroes find more things to be worried about. Susan Barr must prosecute the bloodthirsty Tim Karnes while reassessing her stance on costumed crime-fighters; Dudley must wrestle with what he

should reveal to Billy, and Billy must deal with the fact that Freddy refuses to return to his crippled body!

Danger Trail #14 (2009)

Danger Trail: The Brown Lady Affair, Part 2 (of 2).

Speed Saunders must deal with the fact that the artifact Harriet had been searching for, the Sigil of Seven, is Doctor Occult's primary weapon against supernatural evil! In the wake of her treachery, what can that mean? And none of our heroes can take the time to figure it out now, as they struggle to save Michael Galant from the Dagger of Koth!

Danger Trail #15 (2009)

Danger Trail: The Falkenstein Affair.

Once rivals of the air and enemies at war, now the Enemy Ace and the Balloon Buster must work together to penetrate the secrets of Castle Falkenstein and the strange mad scientist ready to bring two worlds together to fuel his rise to power!

Danger Trail #16 (2009)

Danger Trail: The Blood of Templars Affair.

Danger Trail #17 (2009)

Danger Trail: The Blood of Templars Affair, Part Two.

Things heat up for our heroes as they head into an ancient Knights Templar castle as one of three groups desperate to unlock its secrets and find a powerful relic that will decide the victor in the opening battles of a far greater war, one that has the attention of the enigmatic Sanguine Father! A far greater war that echoes across the decades!

Danger Trail #18 (2009)

Danger Trail: Affairs of Blood and Fate, Part Two: The Angel of Death!

The strangest crossover of all times continues here, as Rose Psychic, Eel O'Brien, Speed Saunders, Midnight, Trin Dee and Andrew Bennett find themselves caught in a holy war between the forces of the Order of St. Dumas and the Sanguine Father, who offers a glimpse into a terrifying future for the world!

Danger Trail #20 (2010)

Danger Trail: Affairs of Blood and State, Part 6 (of 6).

Danger Trail #19 (2010)

Danger Trail: Affairs of Blood and State, Part 4.

Weird Western Quarterly #18 (2010)

Weird Western Quarterly: Lust Faith Love Treachery.



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