



Danger Trail #15

Don Walsh

Published: 2009

Categorie(s): Fiction, Fan Fiction

Tag(s): Comics DC2 "Enemy Ace" "Sun Koh" "Steven Savage" "Plastic Man" "Rose Psychic" King "King Faraday" "Andrew Bennett" vampire "pulp fiction" pulp action adventure mystery

Previously...

... our heroes had turned to their various other activities and interests: Speed Saunders, Michael Gallant, Argent St. Cloud and Doctor Occult had stopped a manifestation of Koth in Raynham, England while stopping a plot by mystic Nazi spies, and Speed learned that Dr. Occult has always held the Sigil of Seven that the missing Harriet Cooper had long sought; King Faraday faced disciplinary actions back home in Washington, D.C. for his attempts to expose Project M and its connection to Vandal Savage, only to come face-to-face with a new mover and shaker with an old identity once thought fictitious, Doctor Zero; and Rose Psychic was working with Eel O'Brien to investigate shadowy machinations surrounding a secret society called the Order of St. Dumas, and their enemies seemingly on the move; all these plots and more now making it treacherous for our heroes to walk...

The DANGER TRAIL!

Issue #15: "The Falkenstein Affair"

Written by Don Walsh

Cover by James Stubbs

Edited by Mark Bowers

Pfronten, Germany

"So explain to me, please, if you can, how a castle just pops up overnight over a small town in the German countryside, and no one at all bats so much as an eyelash," Steven Savage, the famed Balloon Buster of the Great War, challenged his companion as he took a sip of his coffee. To emphasize the point, he glanced up to the grand structure, perched on its mountaintop in commanding fashion, a fairy-tale castle of grandeur and whimsy. It was gleaming white and burnished gold against the backdrop of blue sky and white skittering clouds.

Hans Von Hammer, the companion in question, sipped at the hot liquid in his mug as he followed Savage's gaze up to that old-yet-new structure, and shrugged in frustration. "I can't tell you, Steven. I can tell you that you see Castle Falkenstein, complete as King Ludwig II imagined it when he purchased the land. But it was never even begun. He died

before it could happen.”

“So maybe some kind of... I can’t believe I’m about to say this, but some kind of time-meddling or some such?” Steven asked in dismay and took a deep draw of his drink. “I seen pulp magazines with more believable garbage than that, but after our dust-up with ‘Granpa’ Savage*, I can’t say I can’t believe it.” He sounded bitter as he spoke the words, and Hans nodded in affirmation.

**‘Granpa’ being Vandal Savage, and the battle to stop him from Danger Trail #10-12 and Annual #1*

“I understand. I am like you, a simple warrior of the skies, a former soldier, but it seems to have fallen on us to do these other things, for our peoples and our world, and so we do them,” the Enemy Ace replied, before his attention was diverted, along with several other customers at the small restaurant, and other passersby on the street. Diverted by a newcomer who marched directly toward the Enemy Ace and the Balloon Buster.

The man was tall, six and a half feet in height, with a powerful build under the rugged shirt and pants he wore. He had piercing blue eyes and short blond hair, with skin the color of bronze, and carried himself with a confident gait, steadily approaching the other two as he stared straight ahead. This was a man built for action and survival, and his presence parted people on the sidewalks like a shark in the ocean.

By the time he’d reached their table, Savage had already risen to his feet, muscles tense for trouble, as Von Hammer kept his seat and finished his coffee. Though he maintained his normal stoic appearance, it was clear that the German bristled at the newcomer’s arrival.

“The Hammer from Hell,” the man of bronze said in a clipped tone with an accent Steven couldn’t quite place. “It is an honor to meet one of your hard-earned prestige, Herr Baron.”

At last, Hans stood and turned to face the huge man. “Sun Koh. What are you doing here?” The tone was icy, and Steven was taken aback by the barely-restrained distaste.

"You are not going to introduce me to your ally, Baron?" Sun Koh asked without a hint of reaction to his reception.

"Steven Savage, this is Sun Koh, adventurer and hero of the Deutsches Reich, the man who fell from the sky," Hans Von Hammer said. "Sun Koh, this is Steven Savage."

"The Balloon Buster of the Great War, and erstwhile enemy of the Hammer from Hell," Sun Koh added as he offered a hand to the wary American. "I've read much of your exploits during that conflict, Mr. Savage. It is a pleasure to meet you."

"Thanks," Steve replied as he shook, his hand wrapped in the granite-like hand of Sun Koh. "That's gratifying to hear. I'm guessin' yer not here by coincidence?"

"Not at all. I am here for the same reason you both are, at the request of the Ahnenerbe, to push back this irruption that looms before us," Sun Koh stated with an easy smile and no hint of irony or disbelief, as he waved his hand up toward the castle of splendor high above the town.

"That's not quite the story as it was told to us, Koh," Steve replied, a little more settled now. He wasn't sure how to handle this guy, who seemed pleasant enough, but the reaction from Hans left him cautious. "We got the idea it was this Ahnenerbe people who were behind this, and we were asked... to... look into... this..." Steve's voice trailed off at the withering glare he received from Von Hammer.

"Yes, well," the Hammer from Hell said, "now that our secrets are out in the open, let's decide what happens next. If you are being truthful, then perhaps you can explain to us exactly what this... eruption is, and what your people know of it."

"Relax, Herr Baron. I *am* on your side in this, regardless of our disparate allegiances," Sun Koh countered as he sat down at the table. "I am nothing if not honest. I have no reason to be otherwise, it is beneath me to lie and engage in deceit. If I say that I've been asked by the Reich to force this castle back where it came from, then you can be sure that is what I am here to do."

Hans settled back in his chair and signaled for more drinks to be brought to the table as Steven also sat down, and asked, "So what's the castle? You know why no one here is bothered by it suddenly popping up?"

"I do. It is not an *eruption*," Sun Koh answered with that confident, disarming voice and smile of his, stressing the long 'e' in the word. "It is an *irruption*, a thrusting through into our reality of another, in this case, parallel reality. And the nature of its arrival has slowly started to alter the fabric of space-time around it, thus why the villagers here are unmindful of this new situation."

"Okay, my head hurts now," Steve answered with a chuckle. "Try it one more time, Sun, slowly and in one-syllable words."

Hans narrowed his eyes and watched the man of bronze nod his head and laugh as well. It was easy to see how Sun Koh had won the allies he had; there was a pleasing and effortless charm to the man, one that put him as far from Von Hammer's own personality as possible. He was set on edge from more than just a clash of personalities, though: Sun Koh, for all his alliance with the Reich, claimed to be of the mythical Aryan heritage Hitler strove to join his German people to, and from what Hans had uncovered, that seemed to imply that Sun Koh had his own agenda. One that could put the Nazis, and worse, Von Hammer's beloved Germany as a whole, in terrible danger, if he couldn't get to the bottom of whatever this 'Aryan' stranger was up to. That this discussion of parallel worlds, and altered realities, came so easy to Sun Koh's tongue only continued to make Hans uneasy and suspicious.

"Got it now, I think," Steve said as he took the new cup of coffee up and drank deep. "Another world, another Earth, where this Castle Falkenstein did get built, is pushing its way into our world, and its changing everything and everyone around it as it does. That's something I can get behind putting a kibosh on."

"Excellent," Sun Koh said with a clap of that huge hand on Savage's shoulder. "Then let us drink to our endeavor, and make this invader pay!" He raised his mug, Steve responded with a tap of his own against Sun's, and Hans hesitantly followed suit, cold dark eyes locked on the man of bronze.

Upper West Side of Manhattan

The three men moved quickly through the grand halls of the American Museum of Natural History, each step swift but carefully placed to make as little noise as possible. Their dark clothes helped them fade in with the numerous shadows that crouched between the many exhibits. The operation had been planned down to fine detail, and the trio of criminals drilled over and over until each move became unthinking instinct.

They reached a service door in short order, unlocked it and opened it up for the woman on the other side. Dressed in a sleek black dress with no sleeves and dark opera gloves covering slender pale limbs, the woman was a stunning figure even in the semi-gloom. Dark eyes took her men in with cold calculation. "Excellent time, gentlemen. Let's proceed, shall we?" Her voice was like velvet, and as she sashayed past the criminals, the effect left them almost unable to respond. But they shook out of their momentary stupor and followed the legendary Black Beauty into the depths of the museum.

Their trek took nearly ten minutes to reach the targeted gallery, bypassing the occasional security guard, with them disarming alarms as necessary. Black Beauty did nothing but watch her men in action, and then lead them further along, dark lipstick revealing the prideful smile at the results. She'd spent significant funds for these best of burglars, and the plans to the museum. She'd spent hours in refining the plan, and it unfurled now to perfection.

Finally, they reached the array of glass cases scattered around on three-foot-tall pedestals; shards of pottery, pieces of bronze and brass, small antique weaponry, each had their own glass home in this hall. Black Beauty opened up her large purse and pulled the tools she needed from one particular case and then laid those cold, calculating eyes on the red velvet pillow. It still held the depression of whatever object had so recently lain on it; now instead, there was only a fragment of glass that had been neatly sliced into a circle.

"Where is it?" she began to shriek, and quickly muted her voice. She trembled, and each of her men took a step back from her. She reached in

and moved the glass to one side, and patted around the pillow, refusing to believe the case was empty. She darted her head over her shoulder and stared at the fellow criminals. "Which one of you did this?" she hissed in fury.

"Boss, honest, none of us did," one of the men insisted as the men all grew more nervous. "Why would we? What the hell would we do with a copper skull? I mean, seriously, we wouldn't know who'd fence or buy something like that."

"Yeah, what you're payin' us, that's more 'n we figure somethin' like that skull is worth," another man said with an anxious stammer. "Serious!"

She fumed as her alabaster face gained a pink shade. "Someone else stole the skull?" She started to march away now. "Come on, boys! We've a chicken to pluck!"

Across the street, tucked into the shadow of a rooftop door, Eel O'Brien watched through his binoculars as Black Beauty and her men slipped out of the museum in all different directions, much as they'd broken in. He chuckled as he sipped at a Thermos of coffee. *Well, Rose, you got what you wanted. An agitated queen of crime, who knows someone's out to skunk her and her people. Hope you know what you're doing, because these ain't people to mess around with.*

After he made sure they were gone empty-handed, Eel stood up, screwed on the top of the vacuum flask, and hefted up the satchel at his side. "Copper skulls, secret religious societies, European underworld," Eel muttered as he made his way down the building and to the car Rose had rented for him. "What the Christ have you gotten yourself into, buddy?" He pulled away and drove down the empty streets, as he tapped an agitated finger on the steering wheel. "Compensation's nice, but this... this is not the sort of thing you do." He grumbled and twisted hard on the wheel to take a corner. "So why are you still doing it then? Huh? Explain that one to me? It's can't be the money. Can't be one night of passion. Fantastic passion, but can't be only that." He drummed his fingers now as he took another turn. "Man, Steve and the others, they ain't getting to you, are they, buddy? Are they making you a good guy?"

He shuddered comically at the thought then laughed. "Must be, 'cause they got me talking to myself out loud."

Castle Falkenstein

"How goes the operation, Herr Doktor?" The steamwork figure stomped into the chamber at the very top of the spiring fairy-tale castle of Falkenstein, the cylindrical head pivoting to aim small photoreceptor lenses toward the person it addressed.

Another person walked in just a step behind the towering construct, this man of flesh and blood, dressed in gray and brown, with slicked black hair and beady, mean-looking eyes set into a face scarred and pocked. "Indeed, we are anxious to see this done. I have received reports of enemies gathering in the town below to stop us."

Doctor Sander Toque glanced up from his bench and gave a crooked, lipless grin. He shifted the multi-lensed goggles he wore to rest on his high forehead and dabbed his paunchy, pale face with a rag. "Oh, it goes well, my Iron Chancellor. The Dimensional Irruptor is set to complete plane-breaching in only another hour or so. We just need to hold off these enemies for that long, Herr Schultz. Enough diversion for the effects to become permanent, is all."

"See, Karl?" The Iron Chancellor's metallic head pivoted back to stare unnervingly at the Nazi agent. "Proceeding apace. I told you my Dr. Tock would succeed. With the foundation your party is laying in advance, and the steamtech might of my German Empire, we will achieve all our dreams!"

The mechanical voice made Karl Schultz shiver enough, but when the Chancellor's volume increased, it sounded like broken glass raked over gravel, and the Nazi visibly cringed. "Good. Very good then. But my fellows in the Ahnenerbe inform me we face Hans Von Hammer, Sun Koh and an American by the name of Steven Savage, Jr. This is no ordinary opposition, I assure you."

"Three men," Iron Chancellor grumbled in that fake voice. "Tock, you know how to respond to that, right?"

"Of course, my Chancellor." Dr. Tock slid his chair over and flipped up several switches. "The soldiers are on the move, and everyone shall see exactly what it is I bring to the table, Herr Schultz." He chuckled as he slid back to the bench and resumed his efforts. "If you don't mind now, I have a schedule to keep."

"Of course, Toque," Karl said with a polite bow and spun on a heel to walk out with a smug grin on his face.

"A grand moment is upon us, Sander," Iron Chancellor said as the Nazi started to walk away. "A whole new Europe to add to my dominion. It has been too long since I have felt this way."

"The possibilities *are* endless, aren't they, sir?" Sander nodded his head as he adjusted some dials and machinery in another part of the room started to hum. "Very soon. Now if you will pardon me, this will take a lot of concentration, and I need to be alone to focus properly."

The Iron Chancellor turned and stalked away, clanking and hissing echoing in its wake as Dr. Tock chuckled. "All sorts of possibilities, Otto."

Dewey Beach, Delaware

King Faraday stalked along the white sands with a scowl that darkened the rather sunny day around him. Blue skies and bright sunlight were only occasionally marked by fast-moving white clouds, but Faraday noticed none of it. His hands were stuffed into the pockets of the dull blue trousers, white shirt with the open collar catching the stiff cold breeze, as he marched along, alone.

"Hey there, fella! Yer lookin' kinda down in the dumps. What's wrong, women troubles?" Faraday looked up to see a man near the water line, a pail in one hand and small shovel in the other. The stranger was slim but in good shape, with tanned skin, bright red hair and glittering green eyes, a big smile plastered on his face as he waved. "C'mon and help me dig up some shells, and it'll perk you right up." The thick red mustache hid the man's upper lip, as he stood barefoot, pants rolled up to his

knees.

"Thanks, no," Faraday answered curtly as he kept on walking.

"Aw, c'mon, buddy. It's not like it'll make you late for any appointments, or anythin', trust me."

Faraday stopped and looked back over his shoulder to see the stranger's grin, and then a knowing wink. "You have got to be kidding me."

"Nope, not at all, buddy. C'mon, got a spare shovel for you to borrow, so we don't mess up that pretty manicure of yers." The man pulled a second digging tool off his belt and tossed it to Faraday, who deftly caught it, kicked out of his expensive shoes and stepped up to the newcomer.

The two bent down near some shells as water rushed in and pulled back away from them in a steady rhythm.

"King," the red-haired man greeted the agent.

"King," Faraday answered with a sigh. "Is it that bad?"

"Would I be digging up shells just to make a fool out of you, buddy?" The master of disguise known only as the King to the United States government shrugged and gave that grin of his again. "What have you stepped into, buddy?"

"I stumbled over Project M, some sort of operation using government resources, set up by Vandal Savage," Faraday relayed as the two stood up and began to walk further down the beach, gazing for new shells as they talked. "When I got back from all that, though, I was suspended for interfering in government operations out of my jurisdiction, and then when I got back to my apartment, I met up with Doctor Zero."

"There's a monicker for ya," the redhead said as they paused to examine another shell.

"Problem is, Dr. Zero is a nonentity, it's a shell identity used by Project M to conduct public experiments," Faraday added.

“Got it. Put an outlandish bad guy out there, turn some do-gooder onto him, test out some sophisticated doohickey, no one’s the wiser. Pretty sweet shell game going on there.” King stood back up and stretched his back out. “So now there is a Zero, and I suppose he gave you some big threat of some kind?”

“Midnight and I, we’re the only ones outside of the Project that know Dr. Zero doesn’t exist.”

“So for some reason, he needs to keep this a secret? That’s not much, but it’s something, I guess,” King answered with another shrug.

“I’m going to get out west, try to get to Midnight and see what the two of us can do about this. At the least, the guy deserves to know he’s going to be hunted by someone he doesn’t think exists,” Faraday said. “You... ”

“You need me to try and get into Project M, using my amazing abilities,” King answered with a laugh. “I’ll see what I can do for you, buddy, but you have to get out of here fast. I know for a fact that there’s a high level meeting about you later today. Very high level, very hush hush. So you get out of here as soon as you get off this beach. I’ll get in touch with you when I have something more useful for you.”

Faraday shook hands with the Man of a Thousand Faces and then trudged back out over the pale sands as King watched him leave. King felt the cold water rush around his feet, sand slowly burying him up to his ankles as he stood and dwelt on the repercussions of what Faraday told him, and what he’d been given for information from other sources. *Times like this, I really think I should go freelance.*

San Francisco

“Yes, Madame, I hear you and understand,” said the huge block of a man on the phone.

He leaned forward in the overstuffed easy chair, as he looked so out of place, and so large, in the home-like setting. A table next to the chair

with a white lace doily, a simple brass lamp casting a simple light over the room; a radio on the other side of the room, bounded by side tables containing a bowl of fruit, a couple of silver candlesticks; a divan kitty corner to his own seat; all of this so domestic and quaint, with the huge man settled squat in the middle, in his green suit.

“The skull’s taken. The Order is on to us, and will be able to get the First Prophecy. I agree with you that our only chance now is to shove in the clutch and roll that Prophecy out ahead of time.”

He paused to listen to Black Beauty on the other end of the phone, as he sipped at a glass of Scotch. “No, no. Don’t worry. No, we don’t know who he is, or how to find him other than blind luck. But we do know where his dame’s been staying.”

He took another sip and nodded at her voice. “Yeah, that’s right, the chink girl with the Brit name. We know how to find her, and find her, the alarm will ring Midnight in no time.” He barked a harsh laugh at his joke, then stood up and swallowed the last of his liquor. “I’ll get the boys and we’ll get things rolling tonight. I’ll contact you when we got the broad and we’re ready for the ambush.”

He hung up the phone and limped across the floor to snatch up his suit coat, then straightened his tie before stepping into the hallway. “C’mon, boys. Time to get some action in.” The two men fell in behind him and they headed for their car.

They drove through the early morning streets of San Francisco, slicing over the semi-dark hills, the black night with rosy dawn barely hinted; the powerful man in the passenger seat, the dangerous enforcer known as the Gimp, stared out at the passing buildings, a scowl on his face. He pulled out a handkerchief and wiped his bald head, rubbing at the back of his neck as he contemplated the events he found himself involved in.

The car pulled up before a low-brow hotel in a seedy-looking locale only a block or two from San Francisco’s legendary Chinatown. The three men got out of the car, and marched up the stairs, Gimp flanked by his two lackeys as he headed through the lobby. Not a single look from any of the men was needed to keep the desk clerk silent and focused on his magazine, and hunched down lower to not be noticed. They climbed the

stairs, and reached a door marked 32.

"You sure about this, roughin' up some girl?" one of the men whispered as Gimp unbuttoned his suitcoat and loosened up his shoulders in preparation.

"No. I'm much happier letting my enemies be up, and awake, and facing their deaths with a semblance of dignity," Gimp admitted as he let his knuckles softly rap over various spots on the door. "But the Society has its needs, and I've got no time for niceties, dame or not." He pulled up his thick, heavy arms and brought them down hard against the flimsy wood, blowing the door off its hinges and allowing the trio to storm the darkened apartment.

"She's not here, boss," the other thug said as he pulled a gun out. "Where is she?"

"Still out with her boyfriend," Gimp grinned. "Worse comes to worse, we just have to wait for her to pop back up. If we're really lucky, the man called Midnight'll be coming back for a little cuzzy, and we get 'em both. Until then, make yourselves at home, boys." Gimp limped over to the window and stared out at the dark city, his frown in place, fingers gripping the sill in frustration, and paid no heed as his men went to loot Trin Dee's refrigerator. "C'mon, get back here. I want to be done with all this."

Outside Castle Falkenstein

The three adventurers retreated back down the hills, bounding and crashing over the rocks and brush in sprays of debris as they battled the remaining clockwork warriors. Sun Koh caught up two of the automatons with his powerful hands by their pipe-like necks, golden-skinned muscles strained as he hefted them off their feet and set them to tumbling into a mass of rocks with him. Steven Savage leaped like a gazelle as he outpaced the machines, only briefly pausing from time to time to pivot and fire at them with his revolvers before continuing his escape. Hans Von Hammer stood his ground, ramrod straight against the metallic onslaught, his Mauser blasting away at one as he pulled forth a saber that he used to smoothly block a punch from another, directing that blow

into a third as it moved in.

“Waaa-HOO!” Savage shouted as he charged down the slope almost out of control. “Incoming, Hans!” He barreled into the clockwork that Von Hammer had shot at, and the two crashed and rolled away as the Enemy Ace spun around the new machine and swiped twice at its back, slicing apart hydraulic cables that allowed it to operate.

Sun Koh stalked back toward his companions, the heavy denim shirt in tatters, his brawny build revealed beneath, an odd tattoo scrawled over his back and left side visible through the tears. “These metal men seem quite the sport, eh?” he asked with a jaunty grin.

“Yeah, sport, that’s what I was thinking,” Savage answered, unconvinced as he pulled himself back up the hillside toward Hans. “Was that the last of ‘em?”

“So it would seem,” the Hammer from Hell said as he crippled the last couple of downed automatons. “Do these creatures not look familiar to you, Steven?”

“Yeah, I was thinkin’ the same blamed thing,” Savage said with a nod as he kicked at a detached limb, and rubbed his own shoulder. “I thought Mr. Faraday told us that these clockworks were from some madman called Tock, working for Granpa?”

“That was the story we were told,” Hans replied as he wiped his sword clean of water and grease. “And that Tock’s body was uncovered shortly after we defeated Vandal’s plan.”

“I don’t know what you two are talking about, but if you think you know the inventor of these machines, then I would guess he’s not quite as dead as you thought him,” Sun said as he looked back up at the castle. “Our initial foray has revealed that this is indeed a one way irruption into our reality. Whatever devilish device is at work here, it lies within the castle.”

Hans also stared up at the castle and stroked his jaw thoughtfully. “The fact that we can’t penetrate the castle grounds has got to be known to our foe as well as us. I daresay they are relying on that to keep us away from

whatever is allowing their passage.”

“Aye, but I have a plan, and another partner for us,” Sun answered with a clap of his sure hand on the Enemy Ace’s shoulder. “Jan Mayen awaits nearby, and I suspect his aircraft provides the edge we need.”

“Oh really?” Savage looked up at the German man of bronze. “I’ve heard of this guy. He’s got some sort of futuristic aircraft, right?”

“Yes, he does, and with it, and a little modification, and your planes, we have a chance,” Sun continued to explain, as his face became more and more excited by the prospect. “We need to set up a counter-vibration, one that will allow me to penetrate the castle. Come, let us get Jan and get to work.” He spun about and marched off quickly down the hill as Savage glanced at Hans.

“He seems a decent enough fella, but you really don’t like him, do you? Do we trust him?”

“There is something more going on here than we know, Steven,” Hans said as he stroked his jaw again. “But if there is, I suspect Sun Koh is not part of the scheme. As much as I dislike the notion, we are indeed on the same side.” He also pivoted around and headed off after Sun. “At least now, we will get to see this man’s ‘atomic airplane’, something I am sure we are both excited about.”

Steven followed after the baron. “Oh yeah, it’s obvious you’re bubbling over, Hans.”

Washington, D.C.

Colonel Philip Darnell entered the small conference room and looked at the two other men already seated at the table. “Gentlemen,” he said in greeting as he placed his hat on the table in front of a chair.

“Colonel,” Major Derek Trevor said as he and Martin Cook stood up and saluted. “Good of you to join us.” They all sat down after Darnell returned the salute, and then opened up their folders. “The Faraday situation. How do we proceed?”

Commander Martin Cook looked at the two other older men. "I'm trying to figure out how come he's in trouble. I've been out of the country for our little... 'hobby', and came back to find out about this suspension."

"I'm unclear on the details myself," Darnell replied gruffly as he flipped through the pages. "And now there's an arrest order going out for him? How did this happen? Project M is exactly what he reported. So how did it get to this point, Trevor?"

"I'm trying to figure out if someone is after Faraday, or if someone's aware that he's getting extra-curricular marching orders," Trevor replied. "Either way, there's a power play being made by someone, somewhere, and it's freezing Faraday out."

"I don't like where this is going," Cook muttered as he watched the way Trevor explained the situation.

"But that's where it's going, isn't it?" Darnell asked.

"Yes, it is. We have to leave Faraday out there, dangling in the breeze," Trevor answered unhappily. "We have to know who's behind this, and who his target is. If it's Faraday, we can hopefully get someone in there at the last minute. If it's us, then it's a larger agenda than some revenge and money grab, and we have to know."

"Hopefully?" Cook shot back angrily.

"You're in research and academia," Trevor countered just as angrily. "You'd better get used to some dirty laundry in this business. I really do hope we can pull Faraday out in time. But learning who is behind all this is more important to the big picture we're building."

"This is in your hands then, Trevor," Darnell stated as he slapped the file closed and stood up quickly. "You're responsible for keeping our little... conclave secret from whomever, uncovering this hidden enemy, and leaving Faraday's fate on your head." He stormed from the room before either man could comment and marched down the corridor.

"Well, Major, I'm not sure if that could have gone better or worse,"

Martin commented and packed his things into a briefcase. "But I'm glad I'm headed back to my desk, and *you* get to play babysitter."

Trevor chewed on the end of a pencil as Cook spoke, only staring at the door thoughtfully. "I mean it, Martin. You have to toughen up. You've seen what's out there. And it's only going to get worse. If you want our little project to work, you have to shit, shower and shave."

Cook took a deep breath and stood up, unable to look at Trevor at this point. "Being right doesn't mean I have to like hearing about it, Derek. Good luck."

Then the door closed and left Derek Trevor alone in the conference room, fingering the pages of the file, already worn thin from repeated readings. The major sat there and let the discussion run through his head, over and over, focused on Darnell's chair.

Darnell got into his car and pulled out of the lot, headed out onto the streets and then tore the mustache from his face. The King rubbed his upper lip where the fake hair had sat and let the conversation run through his head several times, plans forming in his head as he mentally prepared his next disguise.

Manhattan

"Can I just say one more time that this is as creepy as all get out?" Eel O'Brien commented nervously as he watched from the edge of the circle. The shape was drawn onto the hardwood floor, the room devoid of all objects save the circle, which contained an array of other arcane signs and symbols, with little pots of incense burning at nine points around Rose Psychic. Rose Psychic knelt at the center of the circle, her delicate fingers on the top of the copper skull, the tiny glyphs etched into the bizarre surface glittering in the candlelight, and Eel could swear they squiggled over the metal cranium, and that fact just made him shiver.

"It would appear you have just said it," Andrew Bennett spoke softly as he watched Rose's ceremony continue. "Why you insist on repeating it is beyond me."

"Because I got a knockout sitting in front of me in the middle of a hocus-pocus number, running her fingers over a skull made out of pennies trying to talk to it in gibberish," Eel rattled off as he jammed his hands in his pockets and then glanced at the tall pallid Englishman. "We won't discuss the fact that I'm having to explain this to a vampire, apparently," he added as he glanced past Andrew and failed to see him in the mirror on the wall beyond. "So maybe that's why I'm repeating this. Because this is *not* my usual racket. I steal, I grift, I hit and run, love 'em and leave 'em."

"Have you said that often enough to convince yourself of it yet, Mr. O'Brien?" Andrew asked as he kept watch on the ritual being performed.

"Not really, no," Eel muttered after several moments of stalling.

The two men stared as a low noise started to emanate from the skull, and it floated slowly away from Rose's fingertips. The empty sockets gazed down on the kneeling mystic, and spoke, an eerie voice echoing from within its hollow brainpan.

*"When Midnight falls, then shall come the false Angel,
and he shall lead a crusade against the Six Who Are One.
From sands torn by brothers' tribes
to a hidden city of people who are not people
shall this crusade be waged.
And when the false Angel's blood is shed,
despite the power of Sorrow,
then shall the road to the future be paved."*

The skull then slowly settled to the ground and all went quiet, the candles extinguished and the incense ceased to burn. Rose's forehead rested on the floor as she panted, and Eel stepped up next to her.

"Heya, doll, you did great," Eel said as he wrapped his arms around her shoulders and held her to him. "Just great. Jeez Louise, that was amazing."

Rose looked up at him with a weary smile and kissed him gently. "Glad

you enjoyed the show. Things get harder now. Much harder." She let the thief rest her against his chest, and closed her eyes to relax.

He stroked her shoulders and glanced back at Andrew, who remained in place, impassive, his face unreadable. "Harder?"

"Much harder, I daresay," Andrew replied. "I must retreat to a place of security before the sun rises. She'll need her rest, so make sure you guard her well, Mr. O'Brien. Though I have little fear she'll be leaving your sight."

"Hear that, doll? The vamp says I have to keep a close watch on you. C'mon, we'll clean up, get you into bed, and you can figure out what all that gibberish was we gotta do next," Eel said as he helped Rose to her feet and led her from the room.

"When Midnight falls," Andrew muttered after Eel had left the room with Rose. "On the Danger Trail, there can be no coincidences." His form grew fuzzy and shifted into mist, drifting from the room, and left the skull alone in the dark.

To be continued...

... in the next issue as we ramp up to the biggest happenings on the Danger Trail yet! As the Enemy Ace and the Balloon Buster work alongside Sun Koh and Jan Mayen to stop the Iron Chancellor and uncover the true plot at work, Rose, Eel and Andrew gather the forces they will need to uncover a special treasure that can help them uncover the secrets behind the First Prophecy of St. Dumas in part one of

The Blood of Templars Affair!

If you enjoyed this story, you can find more tales of your favorite DC heroes at DC2 Universe.

All characters are (c) DC Comics and no infringement upon their

copyrights is intended. Support DC Comics by buying their monthly comic books and graphic novels.

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!

Weird Western Quarterly #11 (2008)

Johnny Thunder: Steel Heart Iron Soul.

As Johnny Thunder, John Tane has evaded the deathbed oath to his mother never to do violence, and become Mesa City's great protector. Now he's about to be challenged on a whole new level when a powerful land baron makes a grab for greater wealth and glory, and the enigmatic renegade, Madame .44, has Johnny Thunder's heart in her sights! What might be his most dangerous

mission yet will also be the first chapter in a ballad of love and gunslinging like the Wild West has yet to see!

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 Gallant from the Dagger of Koth!

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.



www.feedbooks.com
Food for the mind