



**Weird Western Quarterly #0**  
Susan Hillwig

**Published:** 2005

**Categorie(s):** Fiction, Fan Fiction, Westerns

**Tag(s):** "Jonah Hex" western comics DC2

Weird Western Quarterly  
Featuring Jonah Hex  
Issue 0: "Death and Gunsmoke, Prologue"  
Written by Susan Hillwig  
Cover by Brandon Herren  
Editor: David Charlton

**1878:**

There are places along the border between Texas and Mexico where the line grows blurry, and if you were to ask just which side you currently stand, the answer would vary widely from one person to the next. El Gato Negro was one of those places. Consisting only of a two-story saloon and a tiny livery, it served as a way station for people traveling a half-forgotten trail between the two lands. It had been there for as long as those who frequented it could remember, and it would probably still be there after their bones had fallen to dust. So long had it stood, in fact, that no one could remember why it was called such — no cat had ever been seen there, black or otherwise. Trivial things like that mattered not to its patrons, who would come to the sandblasted building, fill their bellies with booze and greasy Mexican dishes, and perhaps spend a night in one of the rooms for rent before moving on.

As the sun began to set for the day, El Gato Negro held a population of eight: six customers idling in the saloon, and the elderly couple that currently owned the property. The man, Enrique, stood behind the bar, polishing glasses and watching his wife, Rosa, move about the tables. She paused at one of them, inquiring of the three men engaged in a poker game if they wanted another drink. At another table sat a traveling salesman dressed in a well-tailored (but fraying) brown suit and bowler hat, a sample case tucked between his legs as he finished his dinner. A graying cowboy smoked alone near the dusty front window, and at the bar itself stood a large, rough-looking Mexican, his nose permanently out of place from too many late-night brawls. He knocked back his fourth whiskey of the hour and banged the shot glass on the counter, calling out in Spanish, "*Ay, viejo*, another drink...and do not be so stingy this time."

"*Si, señor.*" Enrique refilled the man's glass, brimming it with liquor. When the finished, the man scooped it up and tossed it down with just as much vigor as the first. Once it hit the bar again, he looked at the bartender expectantly, waiting to get another shot. Instead of obliging him, however, Enrique said, "*Señor*, if I may...you have not paid for the others yet. I will gladly give you more, once you..."

"I will pay when I am done," he answered, "and I am not done. So..." He rapped the glass on the counter again.

Behind the Mexican, Rosa's eyes met her husband's as she mouthed "No", shaking her head for emphasis. Enrique's own eyes darted away from her, down to the bar. "*Si, señor,*" he repeated, and poured again. The Mexican had come in before, and was known for having a short temper — so long as things stayed quiet, and he got what he wanted, everything would be fine.

The planks on the porch outside the saloon squeaked, and a moment later, a tall figure dressed in Confederate gray stepped into the doorway, blocking out the waning light. His face was all shadows beneath the brim of his hat, and they did not disperse even as the man passed beneath the kerosene lamps hanging from the ceiling. All eyes were upon him as he walked to an empty table near the back of the saloon, the silence broken only by the ticking of the clock on the wall and the thud of his boots on the floorboards. Traildust was ground into the fabric of his old uniform, and some of it shook loose as he eased the saddlebag off his shoulder and onto the floor, then took a seat, stretching out his long legs before him. As he did so, the clock began to buzz and whine, the inner workings threatening to break down completely, until the chime finally rang out seven times before falling back into its steady tick-tock rhythm.

Rosa, never one to shirk her duties, approached the man. "*Buenas tardes, señor,*" she said, then continued in English, "Do you wish to have a drink?"

Instead of answering, the man removed his hat, revealing his face to the other patrons. He was middle-aged, just beginning to develop some decent creases around his eyes and the corners of his mouth. One might be inclined to call him handsome, were it not for one obstacle: the right side of his face lay in ruin, his cheek torn through and scarred, and the skin

around his eye partly burned away, giving half his face a gritted, staring expression. He ran a hand through his red hair and scratched the back of his head, paying no mind to the looks he received from all around the saloon.

"*Dios mio*," Rosa gasped, then quickly recovered her composure. "Forgive me, *senor*, I should not... "

"No need tuh say sorry, ma'am, Ah've seen worse reactions," he told her in a thick Southern accent. "Ah met a French gal in a bar once, not too dif'rent from this place. She got a good look at me an' fainted dead away... twice, if'n Ah recall correctly." Putting his hat back on, he gave her a lopsided smile. "Once we got better acquainted, though, she didn't seem tuh mind it much." He nodded towards the salesman (who almost choked on a mouthful of food when the newcomer did so) and said, "Any chow left, or is the kitchen closed?"

"No, *senor*, there is plenty. We have roast *cabrio*, and some fried rice."

"Ah'll take a mess o' thet. Toss in a bottle of whiskey, too, if'n yuh please."

She left the table and headed for the door behind the bar that led to the small kitchen, while Enrique brought over the whiskey and a glass. The man thanked him, paying for the meal and drinks, then poured himself a shot, sat back, and began drinking at his leisure.

Over at the poker table, one of the men leaned close to the other players and whispered, "Well now, there's a sight I never thought I'd see. Just hope I live long enough to tell folks 'bout it."

"What, it's just some old johnny-reb," the youngest of the group replied.

The third man shook his dark-haired head and hissed, "Are you blind, kid? That's Jonah Hex a-sittin' over there! Man was killin' folk afore you were born!"

"Jonah... *that's* Jonah Hex?" The young man spoke a tad louder than the others, and his outburst caught the attention of the man in question. He turned his head slightly in the direction of the poker table, the glass of

whiskey still raised to his lips, then turned away as if he'd lost interest. In a much quieter tone, the young man said, "Oh Jesus... he looked at me, he looked right at me."

"And you're still alive... congratulations," the first man said without a hint of humor. "I hear-tell he's shot fellas just 'cause they didn't get out of his way fast enough when he's walkin' down the street. Thought for sure that old lady was gonna die a minute ago."

"Naw, he don't kill women," the dark-haired man added. "Reckon if he's here, though, somebody'll die right soon." As he said that, Rosa came out of the kitchen with a tin plate loaded down with rice and goat meat. She set it in front of Hex, who gave her another small smile before picking up his fork and digging in. "Wonder how he manages to eat with a big hole in the side of his face?"

"Very carefully, I'd imagine."

The young man kept watching Hex, doing his best to not be obvious about it. Like many that lived out West, he was aware of the bounty hunter's reputation, but to actually be sitting in the same room with him was something else. "What the Hell happened to his face, anyhow?"

"Indians. They kidnapped him an' his wife, raped her while he watched, then started carvin' him up just for fun. Ain't been right in the head since." The dark-haired man tapped a finger against his temple.

"Pardon my interruptin', but that's a load of bull." The three men turned around and saw that the cowboy had moved his chair closer to their table. He leaned towards them, elbows on knees, a cigarette dangling from his lip. "It was the War what did that to him. First battle he was in, a lucky shot hit his gun, blew the whole thing up in his face. The man died right then an' there... only he don't know it, he just keeps on fightin' like nothin' happened. That's why he's still wearin' that uniform after all these years: he's a goddam ghost."

"A *ghost*? Now who's talkin' bull," the first man scoffed. "He's a real man... and he was born like that, so I'm told. His daddy done shot his mama soon's he popped out."

The cowboy dropped his smoke on the floor and ground it under the toe of his boot. "That don't explain Red Dog," he said.

"What's that?"

"Little piss-ant town. 'Bout three years ago, the Devil himself jumped Hex in a bar there an' dragged him down to Hell. Told 'im his soul had been wanderin' around long enough. 'Course Hex didn't believe him, so he whupped the Devil's ass an' crawled his way back up here."

"Did you see it?"

"No, but I heard it on good authority from a friend of mine. Said they wrote 'bout it in the local paper, so you know it must... " The cowboy stopped, realizing that Hex was looking their way again. It wasn't a casual glance this time either — the man's cold blue eyes lingered, taking in the full measure of the gossiping patrons as he ate his *cabrio*.

With fumbling hands, the first man scooped up the cards scattered across the table. "Whose deal is it?" he said a bit too loudly. "Is it mine? I think it's mine..." He peeked at Hex out of the corner of his eye, and saw they were still being watched. He remembered his offhand comment earlier, that he hoped he'd live long enough to tell others about the encounter. Forgot to knock on wood when I said it, he thought, and wondered if the bounty hunter would let him off the hook if he just bolted for the door right now.

Before he got a chance to test the theory, the Mexican at the bar began to holler in Spanish, "I did not tell you to stop, *viejo!* You get me another drink, or I crack open that empty head of yours!"

"Please, *senor*, all I ask for is a little money... just a few pesos..." Enrique cowered against the back bar, his wife beside him. "I will give you more after..."

The Mexican slammed his palm on the counter — the old couple flinched like a gun had gone off. "You think I am joking? You think I would not kill a man as old and shriveled as you?"

Still seated at his table, Hex said in Spanish, "Do you think killing old

men makes you brave? Or is it because anything else is too much of a challenge for you?" When he spoke, the Southern accent disappeared from his voice, the words coming out with the precision of a native. "Perhaps you should start with some small children, work your way up from there."

The men at the poker table gaped at the gunfighter, uncaring now whether he saw them doing it or not, and made ready to dive for cover should bullets start flying.

"Perhaps I should start with you," the Mexican answered, and left the bar to approach Hex's table. He towered over the man, his meaty hand resting on the pistol strapped to his right hip. "I would be doing you a favor, I think, killing someone as ugly as you."

"The day I ask for a favor from a *canalla* like you," Hex replied without looking up, "is the day I should be killed." He spun his fork idly around between the fingers of his left hand, digging a hole into the pile of rice on his plate. "Today is most certainly not that day."

"You filthy, ugly..." The Mexican began to draw his gun, but before he could even lift it out of the holster, the bounty hunter flipped the fork up and jabbed it into the back of the Mexican's hand, the tines sinking into the soft tissue between his thumb and forefinger. Howling in pain, he tried to pull away, but Hex quickly stood up, giving the fork a twist as he did so. The Mexican went to grab him with his free hand, but Hex caught him by the wrist and, keeping both of the man's hands pinned to his sides, slammed his head into the man's crooked nose. He then spun the Mexican around, still holding on to the fork, and forced him against the bar, the man's jaw bouncing off the counter.

Jerking the Mexican's wounded hand up behind his back, Hex growled into his ear, "Pay the man."

He spat out a gob of blood instead. "Rot in Hell, you *hijo de perra*."

"Pay the man or lose a thumb." The gunfighter twisted the fork again, and the Mexican reconsidered what he'd said — with his other hand, he reached into his pocket, pulled out a handful of coins, then tossed them onto the bar. "*Muchas gracias*... now get out of my sight," Hex said, and

let go of him, yanking out the fork as he did so. The Mexican turned to face him, cradling his wounded hand against his chest and snuffling blood from his nose. There was a moment where it seemed the man hadn't learned his lesson, but it passed without incident and he left the saloon, glancing back at Hex one last time before walking through the batwing doors.

The old couple stepped out from behind the bar, thanking Hex over and over for what he'd done. The gunfighter didn't seem to notice the words of praise as he bent over to pick up his hat, which had fallen off when he head-butted the Mexican. Over at the poker table, the four men seated around it began to relax, and the dark-haired one even managed to find his tongue again, muttering, "Looks like I was wrong 'bout somebody dyin'... but the night's still young."

Once again, Hex looked in their direction, only this time, he didn't stay quiet about their comments. "Ain't nobody dyin' by muh hand tonight," he told them in English, his accent slipping back into place.

The dark-haired man gagged on his own spit and turned pale. The others scooted their chairs away from him a bit, just in case. "W-w-why won't you... I mean..." the man stuttered.

He smoothed out a dent in his hat and settled it back on his head before saying in a low voice, "Personal reasons." He went back to his table to finish his meal, then seemed to reconsider and tossed his fork onto the plate, the tines still tipped with the Mexican's blood. Turning to the old couple instead, he asked, "Y'all got any rooms available?"

"*Si... si*, we have a very fine room for you, *senor*," Enrique said with a smile, "no charge."

"Ah ain't no hard-luck case. Yuh charge me the same as everybody else, yuh follow?" Judging by the look in Hex's eyes, one wouldn't have known that he'd just saved the old man's life moments before.

The smile fell away from Enrique's lips. He took the gunfighter's money without another word, then led him upstairs to the rooms, Hex carrying his saddlebag in one hand and the whiskey bottle in the other. Not until after they heard a door shut somewhere above them and saw the old

man come back down the stairs did anyone at the poker table dare speak. "Reckon I'm thinkin' 'bout sleepin' out in the livery tonight," one of the men said.

"I may join you," said another.

The young man, his eyes still on the stair, said, "Do you think he was joshin'? 'Bout not doin' any killin' tonight, I mean."

"You honestly think a fella like Jonah Hex takes a day off now and again? He's a mad-dog killer... this is just a pause before the chaos sets in."

From his lonely table, the salesman offered, "Maybe he's Catholic." The other men looked at him like he was crazy, but he continued anyways. "Today's the first of November... All Saint's Day. I think Catholics are supposed to spend the whole day in church or something." He shrugged. "Maybe not killing anyone is his way of observing it."

"I don't think a man like him could have religion an' still do what he does," the dark-haired man replied.

The cowboy sparked up another smoke. "Probably tryin' to make things right with God so he don't go to Hell again."

"Either way, once midnight rolls around," the first man said, "I plan on bein' nowheres near him, just in case." As if to challenge his claim, the clock ground out a single chime to mark half-past the hour.

Behind the closed door to his room, Jonah Hex could hear the chime through the thin walls, and nodded absently when he did — the day was almost over, and he'd managed to keep his hands mostly clean. The Mexican had walked away from the scuffle, so he didn't feel that he'd broken his promise to himself one bit. It was a hard one to keep, but Jonah did his best for just that one day: so long as no one drew his blood, he would refrain from killing any man. One day of peace in a year that was always steeped in blood and pain. One day to remember that it's possible to live without a gun in your hand every moment. One day that was his alone, and couldn't be bought at any price.

He unbuckled his gunbelt and looped it over one of the bedposts, then

tossed his battered Confederate coat and hat on a nail sticking out of the wall. Next to it hung a dingy mirror, with a wash basin sitting on the small table below it. He'd set his whiskey bottle there, and picked it up to take a drink before filling the basin with water from a pitcher. Jonah loathed bathing, and avoided getting dunked in a tub for as long as he could stand his own stink, but he wasn't above washing the grime off his face once every week or two. When he slipped his hands into the water, a thin ribbon of pink sank to the bottom — blood on his hand from the stab wound he'd given the Mexican. Jonah splashed the water over his face, and felt a sting on his forehead. He looked into the mirror to see a cut there, surrounded by a darkening bruise where his head had connected with the man's nose. *It'll heal up fine*, he thought as he ran a finger over it, a drop of his own blood mingling with the Mexican's in the water. It might leave a scar, but it would be lost among all the others, especially the one that had become his trademark over the years. Most folk never saw past the twisted, burned flesh on his face — to them, he was just a monster that dispatched other monsters, nothing more. Some had asked him over the years how it happened, and why he chose to lead such a lonely, violent life, but they all wanted pat answers when he had none to give. He had trod the Earth for forty years now — a man can do a lot of living in that time, and he was no exception — there was no way to sum all that up in one sentence.

Water beading on his cheeks and running through the stubble, he gazed upon his face in the mirror, taking stock of the crow's feet forming near his eyes and the threads of gray beginning to take root in his hair and whiskers. He then gave another absent nod, satisfied for another year with what he saw there.

"Happy birthday, Jonah boy," he said to himself

---

If you liked this story, more stories of all your favorite DC superheroes can be found at DC2 Universe.

All characters are (c) DC Comics and no infringement on their copyrights is intended. Support DC Comics by buying their monthly comics and graphic novels.

## From the same author on Feedbooks

Weird Western Quarterly #1 (2006)

Jonah Hex: Death & Gunsmoke, Part 1 (of 4): Once Upon a Time in Texas.

The origin of Jonah Hex begins here! Before he could become the most feared bounty hunter in the Old West, he had to survive childhood. You're guaranteed to never look at the man the same way again!

Weird Western Quarterly #2 (2006)

Jonah Hex: Death & Gunsmoke, Part 2 (of 4): Into the Wilderness.

The origin of Jonah Hex continues! Just when it seems things can't get any worse, Jonah's father makes a fateful decision, and the path of the boy's life takes an unexpected turn. It's frontier action at its finest as Hex moves closer to his destiny!

Weird Western Quarterly #3 (2006)

Jonah Hex: Death & Gunsmoke, Part 3 (of 4): Life During Wartime.

The origin of Jonah Hex continues! He's finally got the life he wants, but will Jonah be able to keep it when war breaks out between North and South? Sides are taken, choices are made, and Hex dons a familiar-looking uniform for the first time!

Weird Western Quarterly #4 (2006)

Jonah Hex: Death & Gunsmoke, Part 4 (of 4): When Jonah Comes Marching Home.

The final chapter in the origin of Jonah Hex! As the Civil War ends, Hex's new life begins, but first he faces an old enemy for the last time. It's the moment you've all been waiting for, and it ain't pretty! Don't say we didn't warn you!

Weird Western Quarterly #5 (2007)

Nighthawk: 'Til Things Are Brighter.

The soul of the Egyptian prince known as Khufu has passed through many lives, and, in each one, he's been a force for good... or has he? For the first time anywhere, it's the untold origin of Nighthawk!

Weird Western Quarterly #6 (2007)

The Vigilante: A Lonely Soldier Away From Home

Weird Western Quarterly #7 (2007)

Bat Lash: In for a Penny, In for a Pounding

Weird Western Quarterly #8 (2007)

Windrunner: Inherit the Wind, Part 1 (of 2) - Secrets.

Before Barry Allen, before Jay Garrick, another man had been granted the power of the Speed Force. But who he was before he'd obtained those powers has always been a mystery...until now. A young man's quest for answers becomes entangled in magic and riddles in the first half of this 2-part tale!

Weird Western Quarterly #12 (2008)

It's the first annual Christmas issue of Weird Western Quarterly featuring a holiday tale with the Old West speedster, Windrunner as well as a Jonah Hex vignette, "Prelude to a Reckoning."

Weird Western Quarterly #9 (2008)

Windrunner: Inherit the Wind Part 2 (of 2) - Revelations.

Special extra-large issue! Torn between civilization and the wilderness, Chris Maxwell tries to find out where he fits...but when a strange old Indian shaman enters his life, he finds himself thrust into a power struggle beyond anything he can imagine, and a new legend of the West is born in a flash!

Justice League #15 (2008)

Lead Us Not Into Desecration, Part 1 (of 3).

What starts as a typical day for a group of Leaguers turns deadly as they are attacked by an unknown enemy. Who is the Lord of Time, and what diabolical scheme does he have that threatens both the past and the present with destruction? You won't want to miss what happens at the end of this issue!

Weird Western Quarterly #10 (2008)

Lead Us Not Into Desecration, Part 2 (of 3).

It's 1878: Do you know where your heroes are? Lost in time, their memories gone, four members of the Justice League have been marked for death by the Lord of Time. And if they want to make it

out of this one alive, they're gonna have to rely on the kindness of strangers...namely Jonah Hex, Scalphunter, Bat Lash, and making her DC2 debut, Cinnamon!

Justice League #16 (2008)

Lead Us Not Into Desecration, Part 3 (of 3).

It's past and present versus the future as the Justice League teams up with some of the greatest heroes of the Old West to take down the Lord of Time! Can they stop his scheme before it's too late, or will Arizona be blown right off the map?

Weird Western Quarterly #13 (2009)

Jonah Hex: Children of Heaven

When Jonah Hex gets caught up in a fight between Chinese railroad workers and their white bosses, he thinks it's a pretty straightforward affair. But after meeting a young Chinese woman named Mei Ling, his life gets more complicated than he likes.

Weird Western Quarterly #16 (2009)

Weird Western Quarterly: The Better Part of Valor.

Rogues Gallery #17 (2009)

Rogues Gallery: El Diablo.

Legends of the Old West still resonate even today. One of the most persistent legends is of El Diablo and Lazarus Lane.

Journey with us back in time to the yesteryear of the Old West... as Rogues Gallery continues to put its spotlight on our guest writers...

This time by the acclaimed Susan Hillwig.

Weird Western Quarterly #20 (2010)

Weird Western Quarterly: The Reckoning.

Driven to the brink by the events of the previous issue, Jonah Hex goes on the warpath...but at what cost?

Weird Western Quarterly #19 (2010)

Weird Western Quarterly: Domestic Disturbance.

Jonah Hex: Shades of Gray #1 (2010)

Jonah Hex: Shades of Gray: The First Day of the Rest of Your Life.

The Blackest Night is over, and the Brightest Day has begun for twelve newly-resurrected people...but unbeknownst to all, there's a thirteenth person that got brought back as well. A hero to some, a villain to others, Jonah Hex once again walks amongst the living, and Death itself is a closer companion than ever!

Jonah Hex: Shades of Gray #2 (2010)

Jonah Hex: Shades of Gray: Back In Black.

Wait a minute, how in blazes can we have a second issue if Hex was killed in the first? Well, y'see, that's the funny thing...

What, you think we're gonna spoil the surprise here? Go read the issue and find out for yourself!

Jonah Hex: Shades of Gray #3 (2010)

Jonah Hex: Shades of Gray.

What started out as a quiet visit to Paradise Corners has turned into a big mess, and now Jonah has to decide between running for his life or making up for past mistakes.

Weird Western Quarterly #21 (2011)

Weird Western Quarterly: Brothers in Arms.

In the midst of the Civil War, Scalphunter and Matt Savage try to help a mysterious black woman ferrying slaves out of the South, while circumstances beyond their control threaten to drive the brothers apart.

Weird Western Quarterly #22 (2011)

Weird Western Quarterly: How Can I Miss You If You Won't Go Away?

Bat Lash once again crosses paths with Penny "Dreadful" Dreasney. Has the gambler learned his lesson from their last encounter? Yeah, I don't think so either.

Weird Western Quarterly #23 (2012)

Weird Western Quarterly: At War With the Devil, Part One.

As the North and the South begin to clash, Windrunner finds himself on the front lines of a different, more personal war. When the smoke clears at the end of this issue, you'll know this is only the beginning of a battle that's been a long time coming.



**[www.feedbooks.com](http://www.feedbooks.com)**  
Food for the mind