



**Danger Trail #16**  
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***Previously...***

*... Hans Von Hammer and Steve Savage, Jr. had been asked to investigate the sudden appearance of a completed and grand Castle Falkenstein, where they were joined by Sun Koh, adventurer and bronze-skinned hero of the Nazi Party. Despite the misgivings, the trio uncovered clockwork automatons of the kind used by Doctor Tock, and Sun Koh surmised that there was an intrusion from a parallel Earth! Meanwhile, Rose Psychic and Eel O'Brien beat out international thieves Black Beauty and the Gimp to the Copper Skull, and forced it to reveal a strange prophecy; now Rose has called for the aid of vampire Andrew Bennett to help allies Midnight and Trin Dee and prepare to go where the prophecy leads...*

**The  
DANGER TRAIL!**

Issue #16: "The Blood of Templars Affair"

Written by Don Walsh

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Walter Carmichael stood before the ancient metal doors, the hinges turned green with age and neglect, the stone walls and ceiling dark and cracked in places, keeping the air cool, the light dim despite the number of gas lamps along its path.

He was nervous as he stood there, eyes darting about and looking over the ancient symbols carved into the door. Familiar, comforting symbols of purity and strength, holiness and purpose as has filled his life. He fingered the rim of his hat as he stood in agitation, sweating under the simple brown tweed suit he wore, despite the cool damp air. He swallowed hard as he heard muffled steps from the other side of the door, a loud thump accompanying every other footfall. Each time it rang out, it sounded closer to the door; each time it rang out, another cold chill ran down Carmichael's back.

Walter Carmichael was not a man given to fears. He'd played football in high school before having to work in a mine. He'd survived a harrowing

cave-in and terrible injuries, to build his health and strength back up. It was during this recovery that he found faith in God. That faith led him ultimately to here: to the Sacred Order of St. Dumas, the last surviving, active sect of the Poor Fellow-Soldiers of Christ and of the Temple of Solomon. They who continued to watch the evils of the world from secret now, and battle them on their own ground; in the darkness, in the cold and gloom, the remnants of the Knights Templar battled as the Sacred Order, and he'd done his part, to the best of his ability. Large, rugged, and eager to use his fists, Walter Carmichael understated his usefulness to the Order; he'd be one of their best, most able, warriors.

He heard the doors creak open, hinges protesting feebly against the weight and movement, and the Voice of the Elders was there to greet him. An old man with short wisps of gray on his balding head, dark eyes peering out from the heavily-lined face, he stared at Walter impassively, no trace of emotion to be seen. He grasped a tall, iron-shod crozier, carefully cleaned and oiled copper topped it in the ornate symbols and swirls of St. Dumas, and with it, he ushered Carmichael into the great hall.

A high vaulted ceiling of granite and marble dwarfed the small number of men who stood within. Tall candlesticks were evenly placed to form a path toward the far end of the chamber, while sconces held more torches against the walls. The result was a flickering dance of shadows and metallic glints that bedeviled the eyes as Walter Carmichael followed behind the Voice of the Elders, a steady pace to the three men who stared over the scene, and waited.

They stood in dove-gray robes emblazoned with scarlet *crosses fleury*; a small pair of scarlet wings swept upward stitched onto the breast above the heart; ornate wigs of powder white were draped over their heads and down to the shoulders, and each bore a slender sword, with the point rested on the ground and their hands on the crossguards. They murmured to each other as they watched Carmichael being led toward them, agitated and concerned.

"This man is not the one," muttered the man to the left bitterly. "We make a mockery of the mantle of champion by doing this."

"We can't be sure of that, Silas," corrected the man to the right. He leaned ever so slightly to the center in order to be heard as he whispered.

“This Carmichael fits many of our champion’s necessary traits.”

“Silas, Gaspar, silence,” hissed the man in the center. He kept ramrod straight, and never once blinked as the Voice led Walter ever closer. “It is decided. The Copper Skull has been made to speak, and the First Prophecy approaches. Whether or not this man is meant to be or not, it is incumbent on him to find the armor, and ensure it is left in the proper place for the true champion and the Second Prophecy.”

The three old men fell silent as the Voice of the Elders stood to one side and positioned Walter Carmichael in place before the pedestal. Smokey incense curled upward from the little pots stationed around the skull, yellowed with age and varnish. The dome was etched in numerous brown sigils and symbols, as the hollow sockets stared vacantly up at the nervous man. The three elders stepped down from their station and took their places around the pedestal and Carmichael.

“I, Prior Nikolo of the Sacred Order of St. Dumas, as witnessed by my peers, Elder Silas and Elder Gaspar,” intoned the middle man, eldest and so straight and tall despite his age, “speak now the truth told to us by St. Euphemia, our beloved virgin and guiding voice.” His fingers rested on the skull, reverent and feather-light, as his eyes fell on Walter Carmichael. “In this age of uncertainty, in the name of our holy founder, it has been told to us that our most worthy brother, Walter Carmichael, shall be granted the mantle of Azrael, our champion, to march out into the greater world and battle our enemies, to bring justice and holiness back unto the people.”

Walter was in shock at the words, as each of the three men dipped fingers into the oily ash on the pedestal and daubed it on each cheek and his forehead, in shapes of the cross. Then Prior Nikolo hefted the longsword and struck the flat of the blade against each shoulder. “Let these be the last unjust blows you receive unanswered, Azrael of the Order of St. Dumas,” he pronounced in a voice that rang through the hall.

Walter was stunned, wide eyes staring in disbelief. “M-me? You... I... I’ll do you proud, Prior, Elders, I...” he stumbled and knelt suddenly, bowing low to the elders and their ancient relic.

“Now, Azrael, you must be told of your very first, and perhaps, most

pressing assignment," Elder Gaspar said as Silas took a step back and watched with a frown. "For your mantle has been long lost. Others want it, to see it destroyed, and so you must go, and retrieve the Suit of Sorrows."

### *San Francisco*

Trin Dee walked up the old wooden stairs and down the tired, dilapidated hallway of the hotel. Her focus was missing, it always was when she came back from temple. Her mind flew over far vistas from the ratty transient home she had chosen in the city by the bay. She pulled her key out to unlock the door, and sighed. She had not even gotten to see Dave that night. He was across the city, on Mt. Davidson, involved in a case. She chose to meditate this evening, disturbed at how completely unable she was to locate the Queen of Blood. How she could hide from her coin was beyond her, and it—

She stared at the vacant space where her door should have been and glanced up from the expected, but missing, lock. There was a man, a huge mass of a man, who pulled himself up out of the rickety chair and shrugged his waist coat from the wide shoulders. "Evenin', girl. Pardon my not knowin' your name, but truth to tell, you're just another Oriental skirt, and we just need ya long enough to get yer boyfriend."

He was surprised at her speed. He expected her to know that kung fu stuff he'd heard about, but this was so graceful and so swift, and she suddenly had these two thick, short swords drawn from nowhere. "You have made a grave error," she finally spoke as she landed close to the Gimp and lashed out with the sharp blades.

Gimp shook off the surprise as one of his men attempted to block one swing with his own dagger, only to scream in pain as his forearm was neatly sliced off. The Gimp's other man tackled Trin, leaping into her midsection and keeping the second blow from striking.

"Very nice. This will be a bit of a fight then," Gimp grumbled approvingly. He reached down with one hand and tugged at his left pants leg, as he watched his other minion when he staggered back and clutched his hand. Trin had leaped back to her feet, eyes narrowed and focused on

her enemy. "C'mon then, let's do this," he growled as he held his ham-sized fists up defensively, his weight resting on his right leg.

She responded, another speedy dash, one blade clutched protectively, the other lunging for his side, but she diverted it to tear into the flimsy night table he upended into her now. It was then she saw what made her suspicious: his false left leg was left standing in place as the vicious pike attached to his knee stabbed out and nearly impaled her calf, to be blocked with a ringing of metal. For a muscled man well over six feet in height and weighing upward of three hundred pounds, Trin was impressed by the speed he moved. Not as fast as her, but his other hand snapped up the handle that popped out of the back of his prosthetic and wielded that to block her blades.

"You are a surreal warrior, but I respect your skill, if not your narrow vision," Trin snapped back as she used both blades to push down the leg-shaped club and give her the barest opening to plant a powerful kick into him.

"Gotta say, I wasn't expecting this much of a workout from a wee slip o' dame like you," Gimp replied as his muscled arm shoved back up with his weapon and threw her off-balance. He brought the metal spike up as high as he could bring it and it crashed into her side. She grunted in pain and surprise as it sent her tumbling hard to one side. "I wish I didn't have to take you in whole, or this would be easier on me."

Trin crashed to a wall, but sprung back quickly, her brain refusing to register the pain. "Why do you want Midnight?" she asked as she crouched below the pike and leaped to the far side of the room to try and keep the big man off-balance.

"Need him to do something for us, is all," Gimp answered as he twisted around. He stayed in place and again blocked a sword blow. He pivoted and used the artificial foot now to kick the detached forearm of his minion. He grinned as Trin landed on its palm. She stumbled as it slid out from under her and she crashed to the floor on her side. "You'll see when it's time, chink. Don't ya worry about it." He picked up the door now and brought it down hard over the slip of a woman, then again, and a third time before inspecting the results. He casually replaced the artificial limb so as to walk more easily, pulled the belts from the gasping,

mortally injured thugs he'd brought along in order to bind her arms and legs, then tossed her easily over his shoulder and left the room. "You have no clue how mad I am at the damage ya caused, skirt," he grumbled as he slapped her rump viciously. "I hate driving myself."

### *Germany*

"This is my friend, Jan Mayen, and his most magnificent aircraft," Sun Koh announced in a proud voice, arms spread wide to indicate them both.

Jan Mayen stepped up to greet Hans Von Hammer and Steve Savage, Jr. with a polite smile and a handshake. <"I've heard much of you, Herr Baron. It is a true honor to meet you at last.">

<"You are kind,"> Hans answered with a nod of his head. <"I have heard much of your own exploits in these past few years, and the airplane you have developed.">

"Pleasure to meet ya, Mr. Mayen," Steve interjected with his own handshake. "Heard about your atomic plane, and I gotta say, it sounds unreal. Hope yer gonna give us a tour?"

"Of course, Mr. Savage, of course," Jan answered so courteously. "In time. Time that we do not have now, as I understand it from the call my friend Sun placed to me. True?"

"Yes indeed," Hans answered for the three adventurers. He glanced over to Sun Koh and clenched his jaw, unable to explain more he realized.

"Well, anything I can do to help out then," Jan said as he walked with the others back to the makeshift airfield, three different planes scattered about on the green grass. "Perhaps it is not atomic, Mr. Savage, but I must say, your aircraft is quite impressive-looking as well."

"Thanks. My own design. Still needs some work, but I'm rather pleased with the results," Steve answered with a puffed up chest. "Yours through, Jan, I gotta say... sleek ain't the word. No propellers, air intakes... jetcraft?"

“Yes and no. Similar principles, but the engine provides superior thrust to the prototypical engines currently in development,” Jan answered reluctantly, and turned back to Sun. “What do we need to do?”

“There is a Castle Falkenstein thrusting its way into our dimension, most likely from a parallel Earth. Irrupting as it is into our reality, we are as yet unable to reach it for a direct attack,” Sun Koh explained to the three of them.

“Like a shroud draped over it,” Hans added as he took the information in. “We need to be able to set up... counter-vibrations? Was that how you put it?”

“Yes, that is it. I think we can adjust your engine enough to start the process,” Sun continued.

“And the other two planes circling at the distances and positions will help to spread the counter-harmony,” Jan said as he caught on. “Let me guess: enabling you to enter the enemy’s stronghold, and find a way to send it back across the voids between Earths?” He grinned sincerely now as he slapped his old friend’s shoulder.

“You know me too well, old friend,” Sun answered with a laugh and they glanced back to Steve and Hans. “Well?”

“I don’t quite follow, but you brainy types seem to have it together, so point and I’ll follow,” Steve said with a tip of his Stetson.

“I see sense to the plan, and your combat prowess is well-regarded,” Hans conceded. “Let’s proceed, and quickly. We have no idea how much time we have, but I can’t imagine there’s much.”

The four men got to work quickly, and in short order, three planes roared off, up into the blue skies and toward the fairy-tale castle imposing itself on the countryside.

*Newark Airport*

"So explain to me again why we're headed to the Middle East?" Eel O'Brien asked as he adjusted his sunglasses and hunched into his trench coat. He looked around at the busy terminal building, staying close to his companion for several reasons, the first of which was a nagging feeling of unease. "As I understand it, there's a whole lot of shooting going on between people that don't really like each other at all. And like your homeland even less."

Rose Psychic smiled at him as her hand clutched her carry-on bag tightly. The fingers of her other hand were entwined with the thief's, and she squeezed reassuringly. "The prophecy, silly," she chided him gently with a wink. "The whole 'sands torn by brothers' tribes' means the home of Isaac and Ishmael. We'll just have to be extra-careful."

"Oh, is that all?" Eel asked incredulously. "Silly me, worrying about nothing."

"We have plenty to worry about, but believe me, it's not the Jews and Arabs shooting each other," Rose stated bluntly now as she led her partner to their plane.

"I know, I know, this Order of Dumas group," Eel countered in a tired voice. "People we've heard not a peep about since you first told me about 'em. Then there's Black Beauty and the Gimp. They gotta be fronting for someone, I figure, but I'll be damned—" He forced a cough, then continued, "darned if I know who wants a copper... um, package."

"And don't forget the people who are following us," Rose added with a sweet, disarming smile.

"Right, almost forgot about the people—" Eel stopped quickly and turned back to stare over the frames of his sunglasses. "Who's following us?"

"Good question, but really, they're only following me right now, so we have the edge," Rose answered as she continued to pull Eel along now. "Come along, we do *not* want a fight in here with all these people. We want to be out on the field."

"I don't fight! I talk, real well. I sneak, pretty darned good. I run

amazingly fast. But I don't fight!" Eel protested as he stumbled along after Rose now.

"You knew this was coming, Patrick," Rose said as she pressed through the doors, her legs picking up speed. "Believe me, you're going to do fine, because our followers can't see you."

"What do you mean 'can't see me'? That makes no sense. I see me," Eel said as he glanced at the crowds watching the pair dash through. "Looks like these people see me. And no one calls me Patrick. My *mom* doesn't even call me Patrick."

"Watch and learn," she said with a wink. As she released his hand, she pushed him to one side, and continued on without missing a step.

Eel stumbled up against the outside wall of the building and watched as Rose continued on. He had no clue what she was talking about, and started after her when he saw a pair of men hunched up in dark black pea coats move past him. They paid him no mind, and he saw they were clearly focused on Rose; he also noticed they were identical in size and appearance. He dropped in behind them and watched as they sped up to catch up with their target, now halfway to the loading ramp of the plane. They drew within arm's reach of Rose and Eel felt his mouth go dry, and his heart pounding so hard. He wasn't a fighter. He wasn't much of a lover either, and she trusted him to do both, and he wished to God at that very moment that she hadn't offered him such confidence and such bliss as he grabbed up a heavy wrench from a nearby toolbox.

"Scuse me, I think you dropped this," Eel said as he tapped one of the men on the shoulder. He watched in amazement as the person turned and stared right through him. Without any further hesitation he brought the wrench down hard against the side of the man's head, as his twin partner also turned at the disturbance.

"Quince?" asked the man as he watched his partner crash unconscious to the ground. Eel braced himself, tense, terrified now, wrench upraised as he wondered if he could do this a second time when he realized that this man knelt now. He examined Quince while glancing around with wide, unnerved eyes; he completely failed to see Eel. "What happened to you? What manner of magic is this?"

Eel took a moment to look carefully at the two people. Even unconscious, the one called Quince moved his lips as if echoing the words his partner spoke. The irises were blood red, a lattice of spidery veins stretching across the milky white of the eyes. Eel swallowed hard and trembled at the ashen face and unnatural evenness of the features on both, carbon copies of each other, and appearing as if they were sculpted.

“What the Hell are you guys?” Eel asked as he brought the wrench back down with both hands, the metal crushing into the man’s temple. “Actually... never mind. I just don’t care enough.” The makeshift weapon dropped nervously from his fingers and he glanced around, then headed for the ramp and into the plane.

### *San Francisco*

Midnight stared up from under the baleful glow of the street lamp with a stony expression. Arms were folded across his chest as multiple scenarios ran through his mind. He was glad he decided to check in on Trin after he’d finished his earlier investigation, and found the wreckage of her room. Not that there was any difficulty in locating her. Whoever had done this had left the message behind, clear as day: come and try to rescue your girl. It was a call-out, complete with the address across the street. The former speakeasy, full of hidden passages, and just waiting for him to raid it.

“Caution. That’s very much unlike you, Midnight,” Andrew Bennett said in that elegant British voice as he materialized from the light San Francisco fog.

“Whoever can put down Trin isn’t someone you take lightly,” Midnight replied without moving, without even glancing toward the voice. Inside, he jumped at the sudden intrusion, but then again, something tough enough to take down Trin would almost have to warrant a trip on the Danger Trail, and that thought just made the man under the mask sigh. “What brings you out here? Not that I mind the help, if that’s what you’re here for.”

"I am here for you," the vampire replied as he stepped up next to Midnight. "There are powerful forces at work, and I fear you might well be a target."

"Not powerful underworld forces, with crime bosses and moonshiners and hit men; those aren't the powerful forces you're talking about, are they?"

"No. I sense dismay. Sorry about that, but sometimes, we can't choose our destiny."

"I just want to get Trin out of there. That's all. Do you know what's inside?" David Clark rubbed his knuckles as he frowned at the new information.

"A powerful European gangster known as the Gimp. That's according to another who is involved in this larger web," Andrew answered. "There is a prophecy that starts with midnight falling. It could be the time, but both I, and the man behind the Gimp, don't believe that."

"Put me down, start the prophecy?"

"My concern exactly. You should stay out here, I'll rescue your friend, and then we can meet up with the rest of our allies. Hopefully, by that time, they will have learned more."

"No. I appreciate the offer, but this is my showdown. I don't mind the back up. Not at all. But I have to be involved," Midnight said with finality.

"Very well. You make your move then, and I shall be there, when it is most advantageous." Andrew's form turned hazy and blended back into the early morning mist as Midnight marched across the street.

The masked man hunkered down and charged the main door with his shoulder, barreled through the wood and stumbled into the main room. He rotated his arm at full extension as he quickly looked over the dusty, decayed tavern room. He marched toward a rear door, and knew instantly he'd chosen the correct path when two men tackled him. As he crashed back into the floor, he kicked at one and elbowed the other. He

leaped back up to his feet, then lunged his thick body into the elbowed attacker, smashing him through the thin walls, before lashing back at the kicked thug, his fist pummeling the face black and blue. He tugged his gloves up tight around his fists and marched on down the hall.

At the spiral staircase at the end of the corridor, Midnight grabbed the next thug that lunged at him, and brought the man to the ground and drove his knee hard into the sternum with a vicious crack. He took the stairs three at a time, a hand snaking up to wrap around the ankle of another lackey, who cried out as he plunged down to the dusty darkness.

Without even sparing a glance, Midnight continued into the second floor lair. Slowly, he made his way through the rest of Gimp's men, knuckles aching and muscles stretched against the odds, as Midnight grew more and more tattered in the endeavor. Not that he paid any notice to that either.

The last couple of thugs were clutched by their collars in his hands as he kicked down the last door barring his way. Black hair tousled, lip bleeding, muscled arms taut under the torn sleeves. He dropped the unconscious criminals and stepped fully into the room with a maniacal grin, fueled by adrenaline. "I believe I was invited?"

"You were, you were," the Gimp replied with a smile like a shark's mouth. The metallic pike of his lower left leg glinted in the half-light as he puffed on a cigar. "Glad you could make it so quickly. I want to wrap this up and get back home."

"Where's Trin?"

"You mean her?" He jerked a thumb toward one wall, where the Asian woman was hung up by chains bound tight to her wrists and pegged up firmly. Her hands were red from the constricting metal links, but she showed none of the discomfort. Her jacket and clothing were tossed in a far corner, under her swords; she was left in her one piece 'step-ins', but she chose to ignore the immodesty for now. "Don't worry. I don't plan on doing anything more to her. This is business. I'm here for you, and then I'm gone. Granted, the men I've hired need some payday, but..." he shrugged and that grin grew wider and more malicious, "... that's not my concern."

Midnight didn't really hear the last of the threat, instead leaping for the Gimp. He crashed into the massive man, arms locked together in a test of strength. "I'm going to take that pig-sticker of a leg of yours and shove it in places it was never meant to go, Gimp!"

The gangster sneered and brought his forehead down on the bridge of Midnight's nose now, then shoved his knee up into the mystery man's stomach. "I don't think so. Good effort, I applaud your endeavor, but—"

"Shut! Up!" Midnight snarled as he wrapped his arms around the leg jabbed into his midsection. "Just... shut up!" He put all his weight and strength into the leg and jammed the spike deep into the wooden floor, then rolled away to gasp in pain and recover his breath.

The Gimp snarled now, as he tugged on the left leg, his own weight working against him as he was pinned into the floor by his own weapon. He heard metal snapping and a slight thump on the floor by the wall, and watched with scared eyes as Trin Dee marched toward him, a tall man in an elegant, antique attire standing behind her. As he watched her arm raise up and take steady aim, he felt a axe-handle punch at the back of his neck, having momentarily forgotten about Midnight. The stars in his eyes hid the next couple of blows from his enemies, and then all was black.

"Trin!" Midnight called out with a look of relief as he wiped his nose and winced. "I... um, should get you your clothes." He turned to the corner, but felt hands grab his, and tug him back. He spun into her and she kissed him hard on the lips, and hugged him tight.

"Now you can get them," she said with a soft voice, a light pink on her cheeks.

"Then we must be on the way. We've a far distance to travel, even on the trail," Andrew said from his respectful distance, his eyes averted. "Sorry I can't let you have a happier reunion."

"Don't worry, Lord Bennett," Trin replied as she tugged her trousers on quickly. "The waiting will make it sweeter. So I am told."

Then it was Midnight's turn to blush.

### *Castle Falkenstein*

The three airplanes circled the craft, drawing as near as they could. They faced little threat, as the Iron Chancellor felt safe ensconced in the dimensional membrane. After ten minutes of their orbit, the planes began to rattle, as if struggling against a harsh turbulence.

"I think we're onto somethin', gents!" Steve Savage called excitedly into his radio. "Seems ta me, that vibratin' stuff is happening."

"You're correct, Mr. Savage," Jan said as he let a narrow smile curl up. "Is your passenger ready?"

"You betcha," Steven replied with a thumbs-up held to the cockpit canopy. "The courtyard is on my pass, so I'll dip down and drop our 'payload'."

"Excellent," Hans said in a low voice. "Let's just hope that he is as effective as the stories state."

"Why's that, Hans ol' buddy?"

"Because flying in circles is necessary, but hardly true combat, and I'd like to be done with it soon."

"Herr Baron, I think we both agree on that point," Jan agreed, as he watched the bomb bay doors of the P-38 Lightning open up and Sun Koh parachute down into the castle below.

As the powerfully-built adventurer drifted down toward the castle, he noted odd protrusions of metal from a particular turret. He tugged and pulled at his chute, altering his descent as best he could before disengaging and plummeting at that particular rooftop.

The slate shingles offered little for Sun to grab onto, and he felt himself slide down to the edge, thick fingers scrabbling for purchase. He slid

over the edge, bruised fingertips finally managing a grip, as he swayed high in the air.

“A very effective device,” Karl Shultz said as he looked over Dr. Sander Tocque’s shoulder. The two men stared at a small round screen, displaying a black and white image of Sun Koh as he struggled to reach a nearby window into the room with the Dimensional Irruptor. “These visualizers will make for effective security, Dr. Tock.”

“Yes, yes, I agree with you, Herr Schultz,” the steamwork genius said with a nod. “But for now, I believe this is our cue to secret me from the premises?”

“You have what you wish to bring with you?”

Tock patted a large leather case at his feet, and stood up to grab the handle. “I am quite prepared to depart. All I need, all that will make it worth your efforts to contact and extradite me, is right in here.” He grinned, a sickly smile on his pale face.

“Very well. Let us be on our way while your erstwhile liege duels with our ally, and is sent back to his world,” the Ahnenerbe agent said with a chuckle as the pair departed the lab. “Empty-handed.”

They hurried from the room as a different glass panel displayed a new scene, with Sun Koh before a large bank of cogs, wheels, belts and levers whirring and klanking, as the Iron Chancellor stomped into the room ominously.

### *Croydon Airport, London*

Rose and Eel stepped into the small cafeteria for food after the trans-Atlantic flight. Eel needed the food desperately; actually, he wanted several hard drinks more than anything, after Rose had tried to explain to him what had happened hours earlier in Newark Airport. But food was a good start.

“What did you call it again?” the thief asked as he munched on the sandwich.

"Tantra," Rose replied as she sipped delicately at her soup. "Tantric rites. A form of magic neither our enemy, or our... rival, uses. Would think to use. Would know to even look for."

He bit into the sandwich and chewed almost angrily before taking a deep drink from his cup of coffee. "Sex magic? You used me?"

"You didn't seem to complain at the time," Rose countered with a saucy smile. "Neither of us seemed to complain. You sell yourself short on a number of things. You're a better person than you'd like to admit."

"Uh, maybe, but when we're talking up this kind of thing... let's not refer to me being short anywhere, okay?" Eel looked decidedly uncomfortable.

"The rites I perform keep you safe from the magical sight of our counterparts," Rose explained once more. "That's all you need to really understand. The other living agents will see you just fine face-to-face, but scrying, divining, clairvoyant efforts... none of them will pick you out."

"So those two things I fought, they're like magic versions of those clockwork things chasing me awhile back, or like Frankensteins or something?"

"Close enough, yes, though I'd not make that comparison to Adam's face, if I were you," Rose answered coyly as she finished her soup.

"Adam's... Nah, I'm just chalking that one up to a joke," Eel insisted.

"Patrick, please," Rose said as she let her hand rest on his. "We're colleagues in arms, companions against a great threat. This has been a business arrangement from the beginning. It doesn't mean I don't think well of you though, and it doesn't mean you aren't enjoying yourself, somewhere deep down inside."

"Maybe," Eel said with a shrug as he leaned back in his chair. "Living agents aren't going to be fooled, you said? They'll pick me out?" He saw Rose nod, and sighed heavily. "Then this fight's going to get much harder, I think."

Rose looked over her shoulder and saw the three men approaching their table. She saw the crosses they wore on chains around their neck and shook her head, then looked back at Eel. "The difficulty with the trail we walk is that its synchronicity and serendipity can work for the enemy just as easily as for us." She slowly started to rise from her chair, and Eel followed suit, while the three menacing newcomers also approached slowly, reaching into jackets. All five were aware of the bystanders in the area, and none of them seemed interested in their getting hurt. As they neared each other, menace charged the atmosphere, made those innocents nervous, and they slowly began to move toward the exit. As a crowd they pushed for the door, while the three men stared at Rose and Eel. In minutes, only five people remained in the room. Eel stepped in front of Rose, not even aware at first he did it. He only knew it was three of them to him, and then his friend.

"Sorry I'm late, Rose, but I got bound up in traffic on the way," Speed Saunders called out from the door to the cafeteria with a cocky grin. "But better late than never, I say."

***To be continued!***

*As Sun Koh duels with the Iron Chancellor, will the secrets of the Ahnenerbe leak out as well? Can Andrew, Midnight and Trin reach our friends in time? Will Azrael find the armor that will grant him his power? What does that mean for our heroes? Who is out to stop the Order of St. Dumas and Rose's group? Has Midnight averted his fate, or is it still lurking, only minutes ahead, further down... **The Danger Trail! #17***

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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!

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 #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 #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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