

**THE ADVENTURES OF BLACK MASK AND PALE RIDER**  
**A TALE OF SIX GUN AND SORCERY**  
**BY TIM HOLTORF**



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Black Mask & Pale Rider, Shani Wennemein and Pania Alow are copywritten by Tim Holtorf 2009.

## PART SEVEN

**W**hile the young woman had given herself freely, a sacrifice to save the rest of the village, fear still welled up in her breast. The vampire was stunning in his appearance his skin seemed perfect, his features quite handsome. His eyes held an unshaking calm about them. He was dressed in only the finest silks and only the best of leathers. He approached the woman slowly, a sickening smile forming on his face. She thought she recognized the man from somewhere before. Could it have been a traveler, unfortunate enough to stumble upon the clutch? She didn't know, nor would she know. The only thing clear to her was this would most certainly be her last night on this earth.

The vampire reached out a hand, gently caressing the woman's cheek, cooing ever so softly as he did so. "Such soft skin, for one who lives in a community such as this," he whispered as he slowly walked around her, pressing himself to her as he wrapped an arm around her waist, gently resting his hand on her belly. "Mmmm, and untouched as well. Only the finest, I see. This village has decided to offer me only their best." His hot breath caressed her neck as he took in her scent, almost becoming aroused by it. Tonight would be a good night indeed. The woman began to relax as though she found his advances welcoming. She looked into his eyes, and a smile formed on her face as though death meant nothing. This would be exactly what she wanted.

She snapped back to reality as a sudden crash from behind them both. A scowl formed on the face of the vampire as he looked toward the doors of the church. "Who would dare interrupt my feeding?" he seemed to scream in anger.

"I would, ya varmint," Shani Wennemein said as she held firm both pistols. Beside her, Pania gripped her rapier and aimed her pistol at the vampire. "Time ta send ya back ta the hells where ya b'long."

A laugh, a mocking laugh, was all that greeted the pair of elves. Obviously the vampire was highly amused. "You must be joking," he scoffed as he pushed aside the young woman. She fell to the ground, but fear had gripped her as she only lay where she fell. "Oh, to the contrary. You will be the entrée," he said pointing to Shani. "She will be the main course," he pointed to the young woman. "And for dessert," he said as his hollow eyes drifted to Pania.

"Ope I make ye fat," Pania hissed. The comment was almost like a signal, as Shani began firing. Pania took the cue and began to circle the vampire, taking a shot every so often to draw his attention from Shani. Bullets normally don't hurt a vampire, but silver, that is something different.

While they would not kill the vampire, they did slow him down. Silver has a paralyzing effect on vampires. Unlike werewolves, which can actually hurt and even kill, vampires are only slowed by the

components in silver. As the pair of elves unloaded, the vampire's movements became sluggish. He growled, knowing that each bullet strike was slowing him more and more.

"Ow many rounds left?" Pania shouted out to Shani.

"Two. What 'bout you?"

"Last one!"

Shani gritted her teeth and ran forward, hoping the effect of the silver would be enough. She slammed her shoulder into his chest. While he was slowed, he still had his strength. He grabbed her and threw her violently to the ground, falling to straddle her as his fangs dripped venom. "Perhaps I should turn you, little bit. Hmmm? How would you like that?" His right hand reached out to grasp Shani's throat as he raised his free hand up in victory.

It wasn't victory just yet. There were two elves, not one.

Pania drove the rapier through the vampire, just so it would exit his chest. The blade's appearance caused confusion, and maybe even a touch of pain in the vampire. His reaction was even slower than he would have liked. By now, he would have grabbed the person who had done this, and feed viciously upon them. Instead, he heard the familiar click of a hammer being pulled back, and then the violent report of the pistol as it fired the bullet point blank into the back of his skull.

Pania forcefully removed the rapier from the vampire as the creature slumped to the ground. He was heavily injured, but his body was still regenerating. Should he escape, he could recover easily from his wounds, but Pania had other ideas. Quickly, she jumped onto the vampire's body, wielding a wooden stake. Quickly, she drove it through the creature's chest, aiming for his heart. As the blood spurted forth from the wound, Pania's scream matched the death cry of the vampire.

"Burn in the 'ells, ye bastard!"

With that, it was over. Pania pushed herself off of the vampire as it twitched and writhed, turning to nothing but dust. Shani rose to her feet, coughing slightly as she was finally getting air into her lungs again. Even still, she took out a cigarillo, and lit it. The match she tossed onto the frills that decorated the vampire's silken shirt. It caught quickly, eventually engulfing the creature. Shani marched over to Pania and offered her a hand to her feet. Once standing, Pania just watched as the fire ate away at the remains.

Slowly, the streets filled, all watching the spectacle. No one had ever killed a vampire in the village before, but these two elves, these two strangers had succeeded where they had failed. Perhaps these two weren't demons, but in fact, saviours.



Shani ripped off a piece of bread and used it to soak up some of her stew. It had been so long since she had a good meal like this. Her usual fare consisted of rations, whiskey, the odd rabbit, whiskey, and a sparrow or two. It was more than evident that Pania felt the same way, but the lithe elf figured that at least she got a meal or two from some of the tribes. Shani lifted a stein filled with cider and washed down some of her stew.

The two elves were the only ones seated at the long table in the rather spartan looking house. They had moved there after the townsfolk disposed of the vampire's remains, and the mother of the young woman offered the two a good, hot meal in reward. Although, she kept noting aloud how thin Shani and Pania were.

"Thank ya kindly fer the meal," Shani spoke up after finishing her stew. "Ain't had anythin' as fillin' as thet in a good long while." Pania nodded in agreement as she drank down some cider. She was still finishing off her meal, proving that she could pack away the food when need be. Shani could only stare in amazement. "Y'all ate more 'n I did, ya gots a hollow leg 'r sumthin'?"

Pania stopped eating and looked to Shani for a moment, then heard the giggling from one of the smaller girls in the room. All told, there was twenty people just watching them eat. If it hadn't been for the fact that Shani and Pania had just saved the village from a vampire, the feeling would be rather unsettling.

"So, um..." Pania spoke up as she cleaned herself up. "Wha' appens now? We still dunna 'ave 'orses 'r any supplies."

"All that will be taken care of," one deep voice replied as the door to the humble house opened. "I believe we may have found two horses that could suit you. But we ask only one thing of you two."

"Hell, we won't say a dang thing 'bout this village..." Shani started to say until she felt a sting on her shoulder as Pania gave her a swat. "Ow! Thet dang well hurt."

Pania looked to the man, obviously Dieter's father by the similar features in his face. "Wha' 'xactly is it tha' ye be needin'?"

"That vampire was not the only one," the man spoke softly as he took a seat at the table. "While you were eating, the village elders discussed something. It is evident we need assistance. And you look more than willing to be able to do this. We ask if you might be able to help us rid this curse which has befallen our community."

"Well, we really ain't vampire hunters 'r nuthin', we's jist a pair o' gunsl..." Shani started until she felt another sting on her shoulder. "Ow! Dangit, girly girl, stop hittin' me."

"Shani's righ'," Pania offered with a small sigh. "We're no' vampire 'unters, bu' we'd both be remiss if we turned our backs on this problem an' jus' rode 'way.

We do 'ave some experience with the supernatural, bein' where we from." Pania watched the group for some reaction, seeing their attention was riveted to her words. "We come from 'nother plane o' existence. Elves 're common place there, an' magic abounds. We 'appen ta be o' wanderin' 'earts, an' tha's why we wound up 'ere. From wha' we've found, people on this plane 'ave myths o' elves, so ye could say we migh' be the same as those." She sighed slightly as some of the people nodded in reply, attempting to understand, but Pania knew they never could. "As I said, we'd look more like scoundrels if we jus' walked 'way from ye." She smirked slightly. "No' tha' it would give us any forgiveness with the United States government..." she said as she shrugged.

Frederick Van Bueren nodded with a smile, resting his large arms on the table. "For now, rest," he said in a calm and even tone. "We'll prepare in the morning. We have weapons and extra bullets. But for now, just rest."



Pania was thankful for the linen nightshirt, it was warm and cozy. Even the feather bed was a comfort and luxury compared to the hard ground she'd been laying on as of late. She crawled into the bed, and then looked over at her new partner. Shani leaned back in a chair, still wearing her denims, chaps and cotton shirt, her hat tilted down over her eyes. "Ye know, they do 'ave a nice nightgown ye could wear, an' the feather bed's go' more 'n 'nough room."

"No thank ya, I'm fine where I am," Shani's muffled voice said from behind the brim of the hat.

"S'prised ye dunna ge' a back ache tha' way." Pania grinned as she patted the bed next to her. "I could give ye a massage, work out the kinks."

"No thank ya, I'm..." Shani stopped mid sentence as she realize just what it was Pania was saying. Slowly, she tilted the brim of her hat up with a finger tip and looked over to the elven bard. "I don't swing thet way!"

"Oh," Pania seemed to whine just a bit. "C'mon, at leas' dunna sleep on a chair. I'd feel guilty if I took the bed an' ye 'adda stay there."

"Then, how 'bout I take the bed an' you take the chair," Shani offered in a deadpan tone. Pania was fluttering her eyes now, offering a tempting smile. "Stop thet," Shani said gruffly as she lowered her hat.

"No' e'en jus' a wee bi' curious?"

Shani tilted the brim of the hat up slowly again, her brow furrowed as she studied the pale elf. There was that charming smile again. She had a point, the feather bed was a lot more comfortable than a hard, wooden chair. She smirked just a bit and rolled her eyes as she pushed off the chair, and began to prepare for bed.