

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



The Adventures of Black Mask & Pale Rider by Tim Holtorf is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-No Derivative Works 2.5 Canada License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/2.5/ca/>).

Based on a work at [taholtorf.wordpress.com](http://taholtorf.wordpress.com). Permissions beyond the scope of this license may be available at <http://taholtorf.wordpress.com/black-mask-pale-rider/>.

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

## PART TWO

“If you will please give generously as the collection plate is passed around,” the preacher said with a kind smile. The service was drawing to its end, as the well known rituals were conducted. “Please don't forget, we will be holding a small picnic this afternoon, so I do hope that you will all attend. I have been informed that the Women's Christian League...”

The preacher's announcement was never finished as the doors to the church burst open. All eyes turned as a small boy, no more than nine or ten came running down the center aisle. “Quick!” he shouted, not waiting for the looks of annoyance to become scolding voices for his rudeness. “Ya gotta come quick. Black Mask is robbin' the bank 'cross the street.”

The entire church sat in stunned silence for a brief moment. Finally, one man jumped to his feet, racing to the back of the church to collect his trappings. One of the deputies, he called out to anyone who would listen. “Sheriff Calloway's at the station house! Somebody has to get him!” The Sheriff of the district may have been a God fearing man, but he was often accused of being a bit too studious in his duties as peace officer. Often he would work even on a day of worship. The boy who just made the announcement bolted out the door, racing to the station house.

The congregation then had their worst fears confirmed as they heard a loud shout that penetrated the walls of the church.

“Dang it, kid!” Shani cried out in a scolding voice. “Sunday ain't no day ta rouse people from their rest.”

“It's true!” one woman said as she looked through a pane in the stained glass. She could see Shani on her horse, the satchels filled to the brim as money bills floated out. “It's the Black Mask!” More of the men in the church began to rush to the back, shouting out they would offer assistance to capture her. The preacher himself shouting out Biblical verses, an attempt to encourage the men to victory.

“We ain't gittin' a slow ride t'day, Gypsum,” Shani called out to the quarter horse as she spurred him forward. “C'mon, time ta git!” Gypsum knew all too well what this was like. Shani would ride him hard, until any pursuers were nowhere in sight. And he was looking forward to a nice stable with hay and water.

The shouts behind her spurred her to move faster, even the horse became a bit more desperate. Escape was all they had to do, get out of Harrisburg, on the road and lay low for a few days. To think, a nine year old started this little posse. “Last time I rob a place on a Sunday,” Shani muttered to herself as the horse's hooves pounded the cobbled street. The elven gunslinger crouched low in her saddle as she tried to make herself more streamlined. “South, that's our best bet, Gypsum. We head a good stretch south, an' then we start makin' our way back

north. May be cold come winter, but I doubt anybody's gonna care ta look fer us.” The words were more an encouragement for herself than for the horse. This town had already achieved mob mentality. “Dang right, last time I rob a place on a Sunday, mark my words.”

---

“So 'ow's the 'ome life, Capt'n?” Pania asked as the small group slowly moved along the road. They had only been traveling for fifteen minutes and no one had said a word. So Pania decided to start the conversation. The stoic looks upon the faces of her escort did not change at all.

“I am not permitted to speak to you,” Williams responded in a gruff tone. “Besides, I've been warned of your sultry ways. How you charm men to do your bidding. How you bed them down and leave them with nothing.”

“Oh!” Pania said with a slight grin. “Those from them dime store novels 'gain, Capt'n? B'cause, I'll le' ye in on a secret.” She leaned over in her saddle as she moved her horse closer to him and lowered her voice to a whisper. “I dunna sleep wit' men, Capt'n. I prefer ta bed down with their wives.” Captain Williams looked over to her for the first time since they began riding, a look of disgust on his face. Pania only grinned and winked at him. “I s'ppose I'll 'ang fer tha' one.”

“The more serious crimes are what we're concerned with, Miss Allow,” Williams replied. “Your godless and heathen ways will have to be dealt with on your own, when you meet your maker.”

“Oh, don' ye bloody star' preachin' ta me, Capt'n,” Pania huffed, her voice filled with disgust. “I've at least read yer Bible, an' there's thin's I've seen tha' ye people should be ashamed o'. The way ye treat the tribes fer example.”

“Godless savages,” Captain Williams spat. “They refuse to see the light, and therefore become an enemy of this great nation.”

“Ye know they were 'ere first, righ',” Pania remarked. She let out a breath as she shook her head, bringing her horse to a complete stop. The soldiers responded, stopping the small escort as they looked to Captain Williams for orders. “Onestly, Capt'n. Did ye miss the par' wha' said do unta others as ye would 'ave 'em do unto ye?”

Captain Williams steered his horse to face Pania, a look of rage in his eyes. “I have my orders Miss Allow. I am not here to debate things which you have no clue of. I suggest you keep your mouth shut until we get to Harrisburg.”

There was an icy calm that settled between the two, one that could only end in violence should the conversation be pressed further. Pania only hoped that

some of these soldiers saw she did not reach for any of her weapons, even though they had left her unshackled.

"Fine," Pania huffed as she looked to the sky. "Gettin' on noon. We bes' make tracks 'en, shouldn't we." She prodded the horse forward and the small company joined her movement.

It wasn't for very long, as almost seconds later, Williams stopped the group dead in their tracks. Harrisburg was not far away, they could see it on the horizon. They could also see a very large cloud of dust that sped quickly away from Harrisburg, toward them.

"Tha' look like a lotta people," Pania remarked. "Wonder if they in tha' much o' a 'urry ta get ta their Sunday picnic."

Williams shot Pania a look but quickly shrugged off the comment as he turned to his men. "Weapons, men. Protect the prisoner at all costs." The soldiers brought their rifles up, making sure they were loaded, cocked and ready in case the unidentified group was rushing toward them with ill intent.

Pania smiled slightly and turned to Williams. "Protectin'! Thank ye, Capt'n, ye so sweet sometimes."

---

“C'mon hawse!” Shani shouted as the quarter horse's hooves pounded the dirt beneath him. She had some time, she got a head start after all. The posse was still gathering extra men, But there were enough that were blazing a trail toward her already, and they weren't that far back. At least, not far enough back for Shani's tastes. “I'd shout eat my dust, but theys already doin' thet. HA!” She ventured a look behind her, taking an estimate of how many had already started to give chase. “Dang it, Gypsum. We gots fifteen on our asses already.”

On your ass, the horse thought. They'll let me graze at least.

The growing posse was starting to pick up momentum. Spurred on by a combination of the encouraging words spoken earlier by the preacher, the \$50,000 reward on Shani's head, dead or alive, and the sheer audacity that someone would attempt to rob a bank on a Sunday. They were determined to catch Black Mask, and make her pay. The lead riders had weapons drawn, and two of them took shots at Shani with their pistols.

“Dang it, y'all git uppity fer someone bustin' up yer day o' rest,” Shani shouted back in reply to the pistol fire. “Whyn't y'all take a breather an' jist let me go.” Of course, there was no response, and the posse did not slow down in its chase of the lithe elf. Shani shouted out a command to spur the horse faster, but Gypsum was already running full tilt.

The posse behind her responded in kind, as hoops and hollers sounded out, their own horses responding as their lunged forward in their quest. Again, they fired toward the lone rider, hoping a stray bullet would hit her, and knock her off the horse. But there was no indication

that she had taken any wounds.

“So dang glad y'all crappy shots,” she called out as she drew one of her Colts and fired back, aiming above the heads of her pursuers. Perhaps the return fire would begin to discourage them some how. The pounding of the horse hooves behind her told her that no, in fact it only encouraged them to push forward. “Didn't y'all read the wanted posters?” Shani shouted back. “I'm considered extremely dangerous, an' y'all shouldn't approach me. Jist inform the proper authorities.” Desperation was clawing at Shani. She'd been chased before, but never by a group so large “Wanted posters,” she snorted under her breath. “Yeah, alla thet information's jist a buncha bullshit. Proper authorities my ass!”

Strange how irony hits sometimes. Shani rode hard and fast, even as she caught sight of the small group of riders on the crest of a hill. “Ain't no way someone got a message thet fast ta the Army. This is jist a bad series o' coincidences. HA!” She spurred her mount to move faster as she thought of some way to get out of the obvious predicament she had suddenly discovered herself in.

---

“Sir,” one of the soldiers piped up with excitement in his voice. “I'm certain that's the Black Mask.” Williams guided his horse for a better look, his brow furrowing as he suddenly had a decision to make. Leave his current prisoner and pursue this new target, or leave Black Mask to the mob behind them. He had his orders, but they also included the capture of Black Mask.

“Johnson!” Williams barked. “Stay with the prisoner. The rest of you, come with me.” His men wordlessly followed his orders and began to ride fast down the hill, leaving Johnson to stand guard over the pale elf.

Pania looked over to her new guard with a smile. “So tha's the Black Mask.” Johnson didn't bat an eye. “I've 'eard she's dangerous.” Again, no response. Pania watched Williams and his men as they raced toward the distant rider. She could tell there was a hesitation in Black Mask as she now had a group behind her, and one bearing down upon her. Pania sighed as she watched the Black Mask fire wildly into the air, causing some of the soldiers to break formation. This only allowed the Mask to steer her horse through the ranks and break out in the open again. “I think ye better go 'elp 'em.”

Johnson finally looked Pania square in the eye, but his indecision was growing. “I have my orders, ma'am.”

“I know,” Pania cooed. “Bu', it look like they 'avin' some trouble catchin' 'er. Jus' think o' the 'commendation ye'd receive fer the 'eroic capture o' one o' the most dangerous criminals ever ta roam these parts.”

“We've already captured you, ma'am,” Johnson repeated as though he were trying to convince himself more than Pania.

“She's worse, I'm sure,” Pania said with a firm nod. Johnson didn't move, but Pania kept looking back to the riders, then back to Johnson. “Time's short, lad. Bes' make ye decision. Capt'n Williams'll either 'ave ye 'ead fer leavin' me, 'r lettin' Black Mask escape when she's so close. Pania could almost hear the gears turning in the young soldiers head. She was getting through to him.

Johnson took a deep breath, and for the first

time, stuttered. “Y... you'll stay here? Wait until I come back.”

“Ave me word,” Pania said with a smile. Johnson looked back and forth between the chase, and Pania. Finally, he spurred his mount forward, racing to help. “Course, I dunna 'xpect ye ta come back,” Pania mused to herself as soon as Johnson was out of earshot. “I've always wanted ta meet the elf known as Black Mask anyway.”