

**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 TWENTY-THREE

The day went by slowly as the people of Oxford went about their business. Rumour had spread quickly, something was going to happen on this day. No new people, no celebration in the town, nothing of happy times ahead, but news and rumours that put worry in the eyes of the townsfolk. They could feel it as they would pass by Sheriff Wennemein or any of her deputies.

Shani walked the streets just for something to do. She was nervous, excited, and worried about the events to come. She knew Dorval would cheat, as his nickname would indicate. He'd try to set up some sort of trap, and have her gunned down in the streets by his men. Fortunately, Shani had backup of her own.

Word came down where Dorval wanted to meet, and it was ironic that the location was where Cole had been gunned down by Mitch and his buddies in their drunken revelry. Shani would not allow that to happen to herself. So she inspected the town square, taking note of the rooftops, the alleyways, the hiding spots where Dorval might set up his men. She wanted all of the angles covered. So for most of the day, Pania, Walker and Ming explored the town square as best they could. They determined absolutely every possible location that Dorval's men could ambush the elven gunslinger from. They already knew that Dorval had ten men who would ride with him. More than likely they would come into town a couple of hours before the appointed meeting. Possibly half an hour before they would set themselves up, so Pania had her work cut out for her; thirty minutes to flush out the ambush.

Shani had the easy part. If one could call being faced down by a gun hand with the possibility of being shot dead in the street easy. However, with her three allies, she had nothing to worry about. Dorval would be the one who needed to worry. Shani just had to keep up her bravado.

Nothing like a date with death to make the time drag by slowly. Noon came and went and Shani paced with a nervous excitement in the office for an hour. Partially wanting to steel herself by letting Mitch mock her, call her down. After a while, even that outlaw knew that Shani was just using him to bolster her own confidence. Eventually, he quieted down and lay down on his cot until Shani finally decided to leave.

The afternoon dragged on. There was no contact and no sight of either Dorval or his men. The assumption was that Dorval would leave things until the last minute and not allow Shani the time to scope out the area decided upon. And so, Shani stayed close to Pania, Walker and Ming in case anyone tried to ambush her before the allotted time came.

By five thirty that afternoon, the message finally came.

Gator had an obnoxious smirk on his face as he walked down the street toward the Sheriff's Office. He

felt he was on the winning side, and felt justified in his cocky demeanor. Shani and her crew was lazily resting on the porch to the Sheriff's Office when they saw the cowboy approach. Shani pushed herself off the support post she'd been leaning on to meet Gator in the street. "Bout time ya come here," Shani called out, stopping Gator in his tracks.

He snickered as he studied the elven gunslinger for a moment. "Small change in plan," he stated with a smile. "Dorval d'cided it best thet y'all don't gotta git worked up too much. So he figger ya just stay here. Dyin' in front o' yer office'll be poetic 'nough."

"So Dorval thinks," Shani replied in an even tone. "Tell Dorval I'll be ready." She watched as Gator lazily turned and marched back down the street. Shani waited until he was out of earshot, then turned to her comrades. "Time's a wastin'. Guess we best git this started." The other three nodded wordlessly and moved into the street. They had just one goal, find Dorval's men, take them out and make certain to quell any thoughts of an ambush. Shani was suddenly very alone as she stood in the street and waited.

It wasn't long.

Dorval walked down the street slowly, his eyes landing on the elven gunslinger as she stood in the street. He smiled and let out a quiet chuckle as he called out. "Seem yer all 'lone, little girl." He came to a stop twenty yards away from her, his eyes staring her down.

"Oh, I got alla help I need," she said as she patted the pair of Colts that rest on her hips. Her voice held a brash confidence that Dorval could easily recognize. "Way I hear things, this has been a long time comin' fer you."

"Indeed it has," he replied quietly. "Sheriff always come inta town with dreams o' keepin' the peace. What he don't understan' is the peace always been here. I keep the peace. I set the laws. I am the king o' this here territory."

"Settin' yerself up fer a mighty big fall, Dorval," Shani called out, her voice echoing in the now empty street. Shopkeepers busily locked their door and boarded the windows, knowing full well what was about to happen. "Talk like thet draws all sorts o' nasty lookin' ta take ya out."

"Whyn't we just get this started," Dorval sneered as his hands rested lightly on his six guns. Shani nodded and positioned herself as her eyes stared down the gunman. The air grew still, and even the birds stopped their chirping as though they too knew what was about to happen. No one wanted to get in the way of this fight. Huddled in the safety of the surrounding buildings, some people prayed, hoping that this constant fight of chaos would today finally end.

The silence was broken, not by a gun shot, but by breaking glass. Ming had found a target in the upper

floors of the boarding house. The gunman was easily taken care of, as the cowboy's body broke through the window violently. Ming walked onto the balcony with confidence as he stood over the unconscious form of the would be assassin. Dorval glared as he realized that his plan was slowly starting to unravel. That became more of a confirmation as a shot gun blast sounded out. A wounded cowboy stumbled out into the street and fell to the ground. Walker strode slowly up to the man as he loaded the double barrel shotgun and stared at the wounded cowboy.

Dorval was growing uneasy. His plan was completely and utterly ruined. He only had one hope, and those were the men he'd ordered to position themselves on the rooftops, and he soon realized even they would not be able to assist.

Gun shots rang out, one man fell from the rooftop to the street below. Dorval looked up, seeing the elven bard with a smoking Smith and Wesson in her hand. And she didn't stop. Keen elven eyes spotted the other attackers and flashes from both pistols came to life as the elven songstress cut down the rest of the cowboys with ease. Pania looked down to Dorval on the street with a smirk as the last gunfighter fell to the ground. She twirled the pistol in her hand like an expert gunslinger and calmly blew the whip of smoke that trailed from the barrel. None of Dorval's men were killed. Wounded, but not killed. "Looks like the fight's gotta be fair, Dorval,"

Pania called out. "Guess ye'll 'aveta rely on yer own skill."

"Less yer a coward," Shani added as she smirked toward Dorval. The old cowboy was steamed. His plan was destroyed, and he was madder than hell. To be mad in a gunfight was a big mistake, because the gunfighter could slip up and that could have the most fatal of consequences. He reached for his guns, fully expecting to fill Shani with bullets, but found he was just a bit too slow. As his hands reached for the pistols the first of the bullets rained down. Shani was faster than he was, and she was so much more deadly. Her aim was perfect as the shots hit his chest first, filling him with lead. Her last shot struck Dorval dead center in the forehead.

His body seemed to float as it fell back. The windows of the nearby shops began to open as people peeked out. There was a sudden sigh that could be felt, as though a weight had been lifted from their shoulders. The tyrant who had ruled this territory with his own style of justice lay dead in the street.

Shani held up the pistols as she stared at Dorval's body. It was over. Finally over. Slowly, she twirled the now empty six shooters and holstered them. She looked up to Pania's position on the rooftop and offered a smile. Pania replied with a small wave. Ming and Walker gathered up the remaining cowboys and carted them off toward the Sheriff's Office.

It was all finally over.