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Jorge Vega's

GUNPLAY

32-PAGE PREVIEW EDITION
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FEATURING A BRAND-NEW
PENNY DREADFUL
BY PRIEST

MATURE
CONTENT



Jorge Vega's GUNPLAY™

Gunplay is the haunting, bullet riddled tale of a Buffalo Soldier condemned to roam the Big Empty with a hellish curse slung at his waist - a demonic shooting iron that forces Abner to kill once a day or suffer soul searing pain.

The 88 page, full color graphic novel invites readers to ride alongside Abner and the boy, revealing how the black cavalryman fell victim to the gun and how an adolescent faith healer brought death to an entire township. Under a scorching western sun, their hostile relationship will be transformed - with the boy not only offering companionship to a lonely soul but providing Abner with the moral compass that will guide his curse, transforming the gunman from desert nightmare to high plains folk hero.

#0

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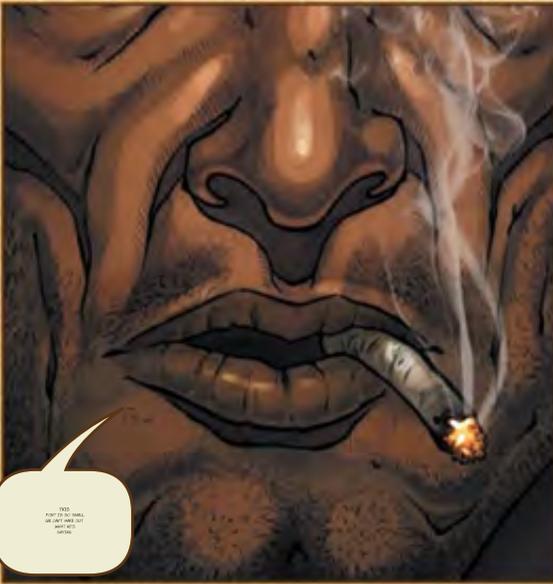


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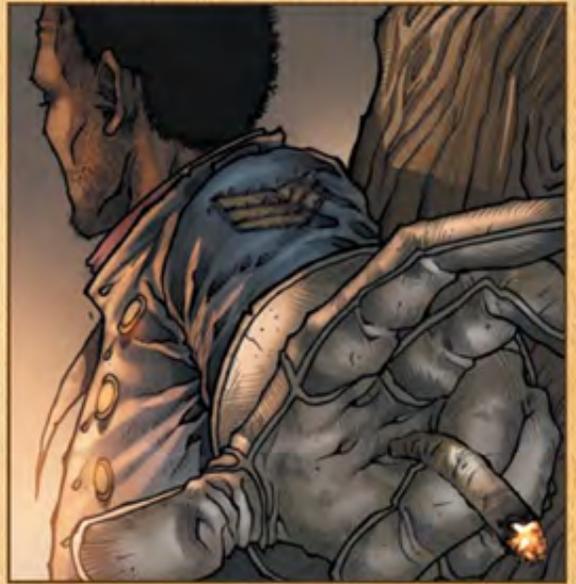


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JUNE 4, 1868



THE
FIGHTING
AND
THE
SUNSET
WAS
GREAT.



HA!

CREEPING
'ROUND MOUTHING
WORDS CAN'T NOBODY
HEAR LIKE YOU SOME
KIND OF NEGRO
BOGEYMAN!

THAT
SUPPOSED
TO FRIGHTEN
ME?



IT'D
BE IN YOUR
BEST INTEREST TO
SET ME LOOSE,
BOY.



THIS
IS TEXAS.



KNOW
WHAT FOLKS 'ROUND
HERE ARE LIABLE
TO DO THEY SEE SOME
NIGGER MAKING SPORT
WITH A YOUNG
WHITE MAN?

A
NIGGER IN
UNIFORM TO
BOOT.





HMPH.



DON'T
BE SHAMED NONE,
BOSS.

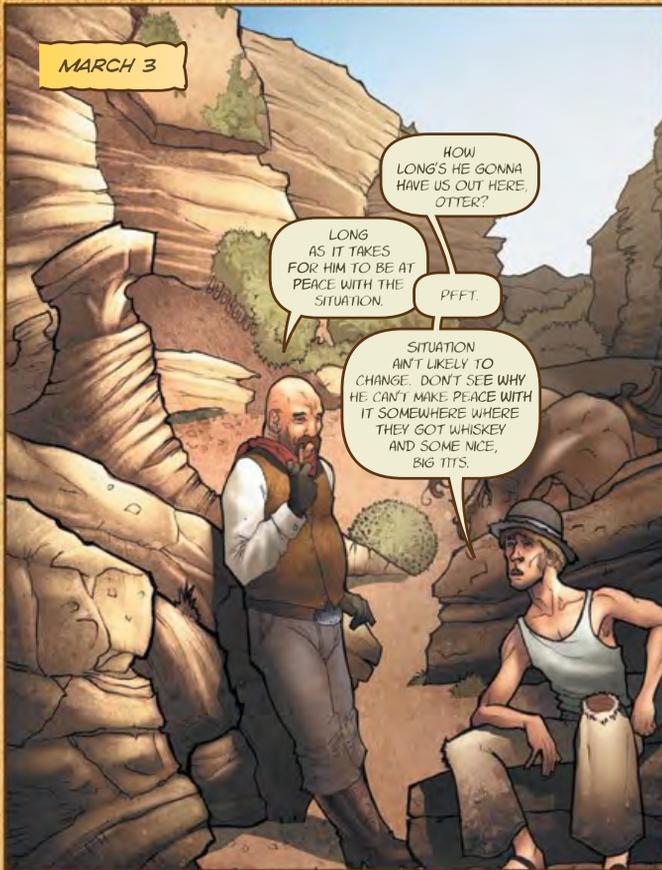


THIS
HEAT'LL
HAVE YOU DRY
SHORTLY.



AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHH!!!

MARCH 3

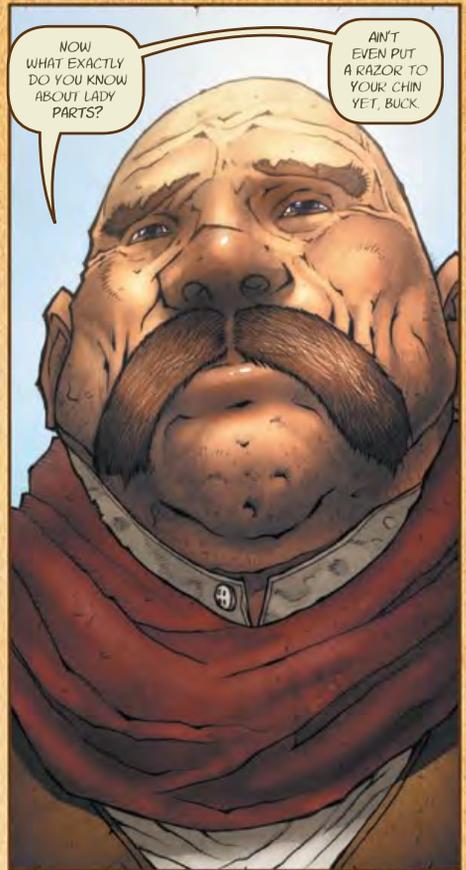


LONG AS IT TAKES FOR HIM TO BE AT PEACE WITH THE SITUATION.

HOW LONG'S HE GONNA HAVE US OUT HERE OTTER?

PFFT.

SITUATION AINT LIKELY TO CHANGE. DONT SEE WHY HE CANT MAKE PE-ACE WITH IT SOMEWHERE WHERE THEY GOT WHISKEY AND SOME NICE, BIG TITS.



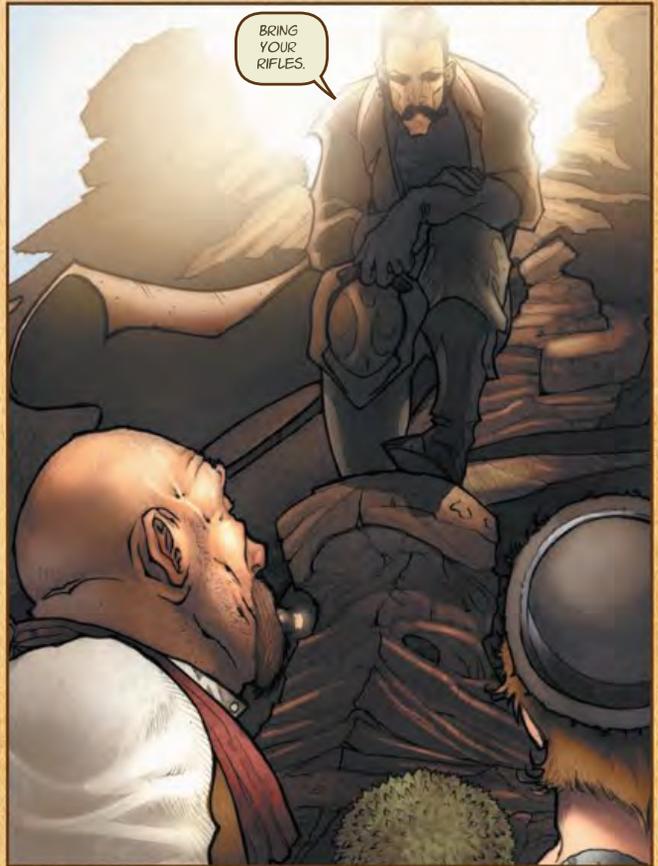
NOW WHAT EXACTLY DO YOU KNOW ABOUT LADY PARTS?

AINT EVEN PUT A RAZOR TO YOUR CHIN YET, BUCK



YOUR SISTER MIGHT SAY DIFFERENT, YOU WRINKLE DICKED SON OF A--

GOT SOMETHING TO SHOW YOU.



BRING YOUR RIFLES.







WE SPIED YOU OUT HERE ON YOUR LONESOME. A FELLA SHOULDN'T TEMPT FATE AND TRAVEL ALONE IN THESE PARTS.



DON'T YOU KNOW BAD THINGS HAPPEN OUT WEST?



THAK



AAAAGH!

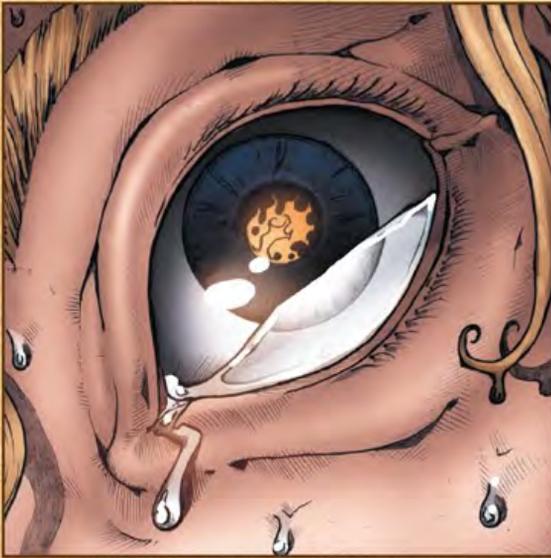




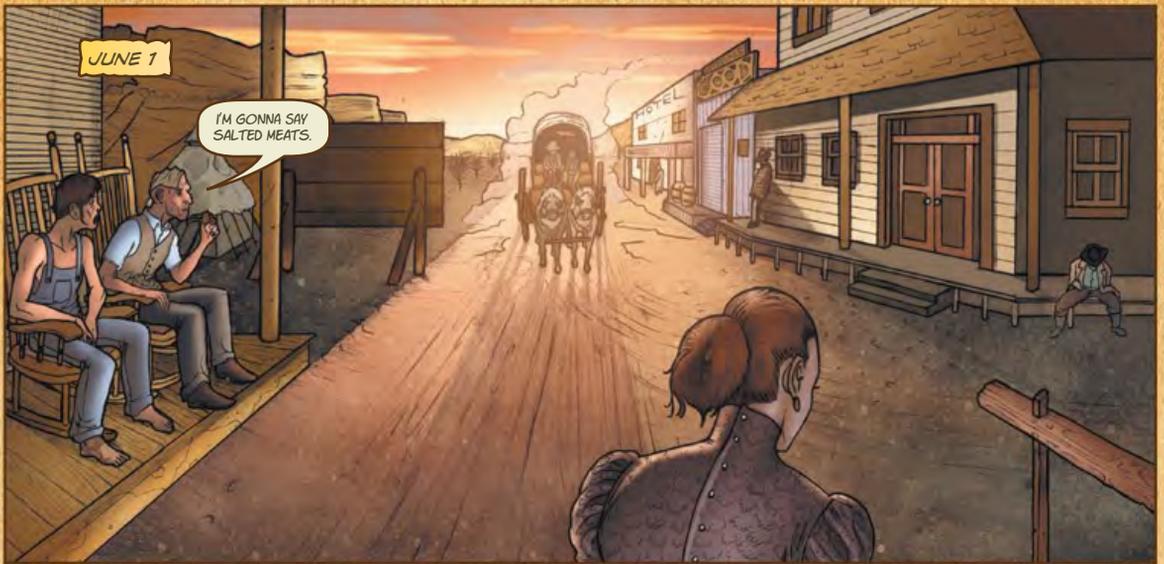
WHEN HE
COMES
TO...

"PANT PANT"...

LET'S
DO IT AGAIN,
HUH?







JUNE 7

I'M GONNA SAY
SALTED MEATS.



SALTED MEATS? NAH. GOT TO HAVE MORE IMAGINATION THAN THAT.

LADIES UNDERGARMENTS.



FRILLY THINGS, GIRDLES AND SUCH.

YOU THINK?

I HOPE.

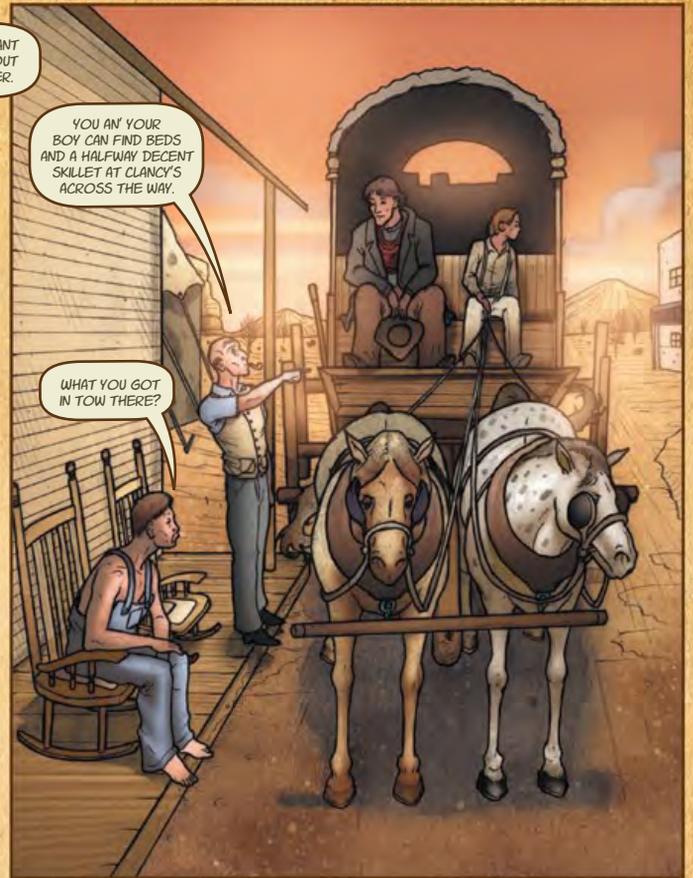


GOOD DAY, BROTHERS!



WE'RE LOOKING FOR A PLACE TO REST UP. NOTHING TOO EXTRAVAGANT.

HEH. EXTRAVAGANT DON'T TRAVEL OUT THIS FAR, MISTER.



YOU AN YOUR BOY CAN FIND BEDS AND A HALFWAY DECENT SKILLET AT CLANCY'S ACROSS THE WAY.

WHAT YOU GOT IN TOW THERE?



GOD'S TEMPLE! WE BRING THE WORD TO THE OUTLANDS—A CHURCH ON WHEELS, SO TO SPEAK.



OH.

NO MEATS?

JUST SANCTIFIED AND CERTIFIED MIRACLES.



WELL, THAT'S GOOD TOO, I SUPPOSE.

NOT FRENCH BLOOMERS GOOD, BUT FINE IN ITS OWN RIGHT.



WHO'S THAT?



THAT THERE IS UNCLE SAMBO.

A UNION STAMPED NEGRO SOLDIER.



NOW, EXACTLY WHEN DID THEM ROUGH ONES DRAG HIM INTO TOWN?

WAS JUST A BIT AFTER CLARICE DELIVERED, SO--

THREE MONTHS BACK THEY DROPPED UNCLE SAMBO RIGHT HERE--

IN FRONT OF US.

THEY'D WHOOPED ON THAT BOY SO HARD WE WERE SURE HE WAS DEAD.



DOC SAYS HE'S ALL HEALED UP.

COURSE IT DON'T KEEP HIM FROM HOWLING LIKE A DESERT MONKEY COME NIGHTFALL.





JUNE 4



HRRM.



CLEAR OUT.



NO.

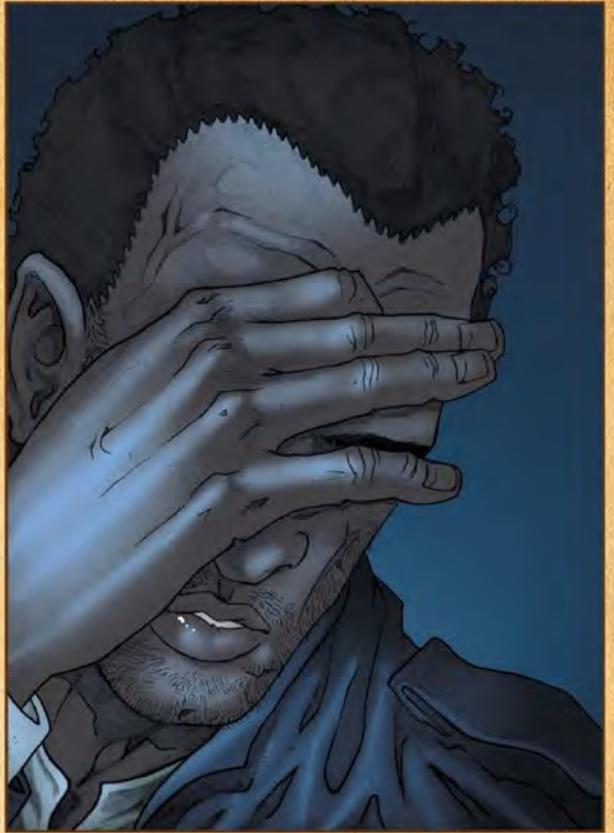








HUH!



GUILTY CONSCIENCE
MAKES FOR A
RESTLESS SLEEP,
HUH?



MUST BE
ESPECIALLY BAD
FOR A WANTED
MURDERER.

I REMEMBER
YOU.



NOT ANYMORE,
YOU DONT.

READ THE REST
OF THE STORY.
NEXT MONTH IN

Jorge Vega's

GUNPLAY

THE
GRAPHIC NOVEL

AVAILABLE AT
YOUR LOCAL
COMIC STORE



GUNPLAY

PENNY DREADFUL

by Priest

CHAPTER ONE: KYRIE ELEISON

Though they weren't kin, Buck and Otter had spent more than a reasonable portion of their young lives in one another's company as apprentices in the charity of helps, traversing God's country in the patronage of Mr. Satch, their humbly learned schoolmaster, building school houses and promoting literacy throughout the west. Such was the investment which led them to be encamped at a rocky pass near the town of Sandalwood, the young men paying Christ His nightly honor, when there came suddenly a distant braying.

"Mr. Satch returns!" young Buck exclaimed exuberantly. "Fresh meat and rye!"

Otter playfully swatted his brother-in-the faith. "Not for you, boy, once I tell 'im how bad your Latin is!"

The braying grew louder. "Wait," Otter said, "Buck—that sound like ol' Nelly to you...?"

"Sounds like a *horse*, boy," Buck retorted, playfully shoving. "Like *dinner*." Buck scrambled toward the campfire. "I'll get the spit ready."

Otter gave his brother no notice, instead sharpening his gaze on the pass as the braying grew louder still, and the black beyond their fire glowed somehow luminous, heralding the arrival of what, young Otter shuddered to imagine. The braying could not possibly be that of an aging mare, but the viral snort of a vengeful stallion; the footfalls not the lolling trot of peace, but the thunderous gallop of war.

Otter reached for his Winchester, but found only his well-worn King James. Turning toward Buck, he could scarcely mete out a warning cry before his very voice was snatched from him, night becoming day as a blinding light caused him to turn away from his brother—and stare into the face of evil.

Whether man or demon, Otter could not determine, but the beast upon which it rode was black as night, snorting huge plumes of flame from flaring nostrils with each heart-stopping report. The beast's thundering hooves caused the earth itself to quake even as the wraith astride it blocked both moon and stars.

And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him.

"BUCK!"

Otter had barely made a sound before the horseman's blade, a Cavalryman's sword, opened him from shoulder blade to testes, death passing as suddenly as it arrived. Buck turned, a stone's throw distant, to see his brother sink to his knees, the crimson flow arcing from his body telling part of the story, the grim apparition now racing toward him providing the denouement.

"In principio erat Verbum et Verbum erat apud Deum, et Deus erat Verbum. Hoc erat in principio apud Deum..."

Buck prayed as he stumbled through his own campfire, reaching for the Winchester. *"Omnia per ipsum facta sunt, et sine ipso factum est nihil quod factum est... in ipso vita erat, et vita erat lux hominum...!"*

The black racer closed ranks, Buck now seeing clearly this man—this wraith—was a soldier. Or, at least, had a soldier's bearing. He wore a uniform, though Buck was not sure of what rank or even under which flag the madman served.

"...et lux in tenebris lucet, et tenebrae eam non comprehenderunt. Fuit homo missus a Deo cui nomen erat Joannes!"

As the wraith closed in, Buck could see the soldier was not merely a dark apparition, but was dark in measure—a Negro, a son of Ham—of the lesser race and under the curse of God.

"Hic venit in testimonium, ut testimonium perhiberet de lumine, ut omnes crederent per illum... Dominus sit in corde meo et in labiis meis..."

Buck sought the favor of the Almighty, aiming his Winchester with trembling hands, *"...ut digne et competenter annuntiem evangelium suum..."* He pulled the trigger, *"...Amen."*

With the Winchester's report, the devil was ejected from his snarling beast. Buck exhaled with disbelief, his chest pounding as a cannon, not believing his fortune to have found the favor of God. Reloading his Winchester, he hurried over to the demon, taking aim at the evil as it writhed on the earth.

The man was a Negro soldier, dressed as one of the Negro cavalymen—the so-called 'Buffalo Soldiers' of the 9th Cavalry. Even in pain, dying a well-served death, the soldier projected the aspect of violence, the currency of hate.

"Clearly, you're no son of God," Buck declared as he loosed both barrels, destroying the soldier's face before spitting on the corpse. Surely, when Mr. Satch returned, they would declare a feast of Thanksgiving, honoring God for destroying the demonic coon—

—which was when Buck heard again the braying.

He turned, seeing some yards away the evil stallion, its head bowed, its demonic eyes locked on him. Smoke plumed from its nostrils as its massive ribs heaved and contracted, its shining coat grown all the more waxen from its exertions. The stallion would be a fine prize, either fetching a handsome tariff or used to warn of the wages of sin. But Buck chose caution over enterprise, cracking his Winchester to load killing rounds.

Breath upon his neck startled him. Buck spun about to see the demon soldier looking him in the eye, the demon's face now implausibly returned mostly to its original state, yet still plagued by massive gashes and wounds too horrible to accurately report.

Buck held vacant barrels as his mind went blank from two horrors. The first, that the Negro soldier was apparently immortal. The second, that while looking Buck directly in the eye, the demon was on its knees.

The demon swatted Buck's Winchester from his trembling hands. The fiend stood slowly, rising higher and higher still until upon two legs firmly upright he towered over Buck, who was himself a young man of no small stature.

While making the sign of the cross, Buck's neck craned to maintain eye contact as the demon drew his weapon. It was, perhaps, the finest handgun Buck had ever seen. A custom 1860 Colt Army refitted with a rebated cylinder which chambered it in .44 caliber. The pistol was blue-black with what appeared to be emerald inlay along the barrel rib. The inlay radiated inexplicably, placing the grim visage of its owner within an emerald cast. A black man, a soldier, hideous in intent, awash in otherworldly green.

"*Kyrie Eleison*," (translated, 'Lord Have Mercy,') the demon hissed, as he allowed his weapon its terrible duty, red mist subsequently expelling from the back of Buck's skull.

The demon then turned, sprinting hard up the embankment toward Otter, who remained on his knees, head bowed, as the apparition approached. In the distance, the beast snorted an ungodly thunder, taking off in hot pursuit of its master. The demon soldier leaped effortlessly astride before firing a single shot at Otter; the top of Otter's scalp flying off—brain matter a fountain gushing—before being trampled beneath massive hooves.

As the demon rider vanished into the black, he passed Mr. Satch, dead and gone with a single bullet hole between his eyes, the indentation glowing emerald, his camp's provisions scattered about him.



CHAPTER TWO: RED SLEEVES

The cries of the Negro infant lying naked in the tall grass were drowned out by the screaming of white settlers being slaughtered by Chiricahua tomahawks on the grassy slopes of Santa Rita. The son of house slaves, Abner Bartholomew Meeks had less than six weeks under God's sky before coming face to face with Nantan, possessed of a feral rage, his stone axe head chipped and spattered with the blood of his enemies. Not long before, Nantan's master had been tied to a tree and beaten by evil white men, many of whom the Chiricahua had fed and clothed, and with whom they had sworn to be brothers. The treachery of the white invaders was unimaginable, the Chiricahua responding first with confusion, then with self-defense, and ultimately with rage; the white man's manifest destiny being measured in Apache blood.

Nantan raised the tomahawk's ball hammer above the uncomprehending infant, preparing to usher the child into the more merciful existence, when he spied something nearby in the grass. At first, Nantan believed it a snake. Upon closer inspection, he realized it was a pistol—symbol of the white man's power and a rare commodity among his people.

Nantan inspected the weapon. It was like none other he had ever seen. An emerald gemstone inlay along the barrel ridge, a branding design made of thin bands of metal set in sandalwood hand grips. Nantan might have thought the weapon beautiful had it not certainly felled many of his brothers. Nantan therefore believed it appropriate to employ the weapon to send his enemies along on their journey to the next life.

Nantan aimed the weapon at baby Abner, who remained oblivious to his circumstance, and pulled the trigger. The weapon did not fire. Nantan knew little about white man's technology, but knew enough to look for powder and lead in the chambers—the weapon was fully loaded. Nantan rotated the cylinder to another chamber and tried again. Still, the pistol would not fire.

Believing the weapon to be somehow defective, Nantan again picked up his Tomahawk, which required no white man's magic to operate. He wished the child happiness in the spirit world.

Suddenly, a voice called to him. Over his shoulder, Nantan saw Dasoda-hae—"Red Sleeves", his master—astride his war horse, his fierce countenance demanding obeisance.

"Look with better eyes, He-Who-Speaks," Red Sleeves offered. "What do you see?"

Nantan looked again at Abner Meeks, who remained indifferent to the moment. Turning the infant over, Nantan saw scarring in the child's flesh. An emblem, matching that inscribed upon the pistol.

"A... a flower...?" Nantan wondered.

"A brand," Red Sleeves said. "The child is not our enemy. The child is the victim of our enemy."

"A slave?" Nantan asked.

Red Sleeves turned his mighty steed, the horse walking back toward the massacre. "Not any longer."



CHAPTER THREE: THE WIDOW MARGRET'S DAUGHTER

The Reverend Josiah Huckabee Finn was, in the most practical sense, homeless. He made vague references to a home—stead and long-suffering wife in Kansas, but in the whole truth he had neither. The Reverend lived on wagon trains, making his living traveling a widening circuit as Americans pushed ever westward. The Reverend preached and taught, built churches and ordained ministers—all for whatever small consideration each settlement might afford the Lord's work. He saw himself as something of a modern day Apostle Paul, spreading the Good News for a nominal fee.

And so it came to pass that, as the Reverend performed his nightly engagement, proclaiming the importance of good Gospel while offering hand-stitched bibles at attractive prices, Josiah Junior negotiated other matters of pressing importance. Ushering The Widow Margret's youngest daughter beyond the veil afforded by the nearby barn, Finn delivered well-rehearsed and time-tested monologues to innocent ears. With only Temulia, the indifferent two year-old heifer, as a witness, Finn skillfully negotiated the jigsaw of clasps, knots and lattices beneath which awaited the hard-earned wages of a week's diligence.

"Josiah—" The Widow Margret's daughter protested.

"Call me Finn," the boy said, concentrating on his mission. His father's script had but a few pages remaining.

"Finn—do you love me?"

Finn chewed his bottom lip, his eyes transfixed on the damnable network of closures. He likened it to peeling an onion.

"Sure I do," he said. "You betcha."

"And... you'll marry me? Take me away from here?"

Finn's nimble fingers finally found the right combination, the Widow Margret's daughter's dress sliding off, unveiling petticoat and corset, her chemise and knickers beneath those.

Only twelve layers to go... Finn mumbled.

"Finn?" she persisted. "You'll take me away, then?"

"Umm-hmm. Thursday," said Finn, wishing for the world that he could stuff hay into her mouth. She was a fine thing indeed, but the unprecedented banality of her congress caused Finn to wonder how the child was not drowned years ago.

"And where shall we go?"

Finn struggled with the knots on her corset.

"Kansas," Finn said, his eyes locked on her corset laces. "You can meet my mom."

The Widow Margret's daughter was delighted. She turned to Finn, beaming, "Oh! That's wonderful!"



Finn spun her back, time wasting, "Yeah, darlin'. I'm sure it is. Now, hold still." Finn continued struggling with the knots, suspecting The Widow Margret had served time in the Navy.

Finn, a boy of not much certain conscience, had one night, once chance, to biblically know the widow's daughter. Come dawn, he and the Reverend would be but a memory, heading west with the town's gratitude and its offerings. With the widow herself thusly preoccupied by his father's heartfelt promulgation, Finn had this moment alone with which to settle his negotiation. He thought seriously about using his knife, but cut laces on a virgin's corset would surely send a posse after the Reverend and himself.

This was a matter that required patience, dexterity and focus. As his father prayed several yards away, so did Finn pray that the good Lord might reveal the mystery of The Widow Margret's maddening knots. As if in answer to his petition, the laces simply fell alose, corset and gown giving way to milky white flesh. A shoulder, the swell of a breast—things most favored of men. The night sky gave way to warm sun, and a chorus of angels swelled as Finn's hand closed around petite flesh—

—and a gunshot rang out.

The Widow Margret's daughter jumped, pulling at her vestments, "What was that?!"

It may have been possible for Finn to care less about the gunshot, but he seriously doubted it.

"Nothing. They're praising God," he said, gently but urgently resuming the heart of the matter before him. "Hallelujah."

Several more reports sounded, then a horse neighed—louder than any The Widow Margret's daughter had ever before heard.

"Something's wrong!" she said, leaping to her feet, pulling her petticoat and corset together. "Tie me!"

Finn remained seated, annoyed now, "You gotta be kiddin' me."

"Tie me, you little troll, or I'll tell my mother and they'll hang you!"

"Yeah," Finn scoffed, "like I haven't heard *that* a hundred times before."

"Finn!"

The gunshots were now accompanied by the pounding of impossibly heavy hooves and the roar of a distant fire. Finn came to his feet, peering out of the barn. He turned to The Widow Margret's daughter, "Stay here!"



**READ THE REST OF THE STORY IN
THE "GUNPLAY" GRAPHIC NOVEL,
COMING NEXT MONTH!**