

Legal Stuff

Martin & James vs. The Masked Moss-Trooper
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Ramblings

Welcome!

I wanted to greet you and thank each of you for taking the time to read this story. As an author, that's all we want - for people to read what we've wrote. To find some enjoyment in a world that we created and to share adventures with characters, we hope, you'll come to love.

This isn't the first story I've written. I have a couple other stories and a book I've been working on. So why send this out in the wild first? Because it's done. It also gives me a chance to practice writing while I work on a full length novel.

Why a short story and why this short story? Well, I've always enjoyed classic sci-fi, written in the 1930's or so, and I've always enjoyed pulp fiction - like Conan the Barbarian. When I started feeling the itch to actually write the stories that were in my head (stories, not voices), my first thought was to create a series of short stories. Eventually, this idea turned into the book I'm working on, but I still wanted to do some short stories.

The Martin & James adventures came into being based on some dreams of a young friend of mine. A very vivid dreamer. If he had a dream that he remembered and it seemed interesting and action packed (which most of his dreams do seem to be), I adapted it to a Martin & James story. Yes, this means there are other stories waiting and they'll all be released for your reading pleasure. I know some people may not like what I'm doing here. They want to know who these characters are, what organization they belong to, who they are chasing and why, etc. I get it, but that's not what just this one story is about. I want these stories to be action, not tons of background nor learning everything about the world in one sitting. Think of it as the beginning sequence from a James Bond movie - all action without all the details of what's what. And it starts in the middle of the action - which is one thing I always loved about Star Wars.

Give it a chance and check it out. I promise as the next couple stories become available, you will learn more about this duo and their background, who they work for, who they are chasing, etc.

Happy Reading!

The Masked Moss-Trooper

CHHHHTTT! Whooooooooooooo.....

The man with the long, brown trench coat jumped, landing in a puddle, to avoid a jet of steam that had just erupted in front of him. Dust spewed off his outer clothing, turning the air around him into a miniature sand storm. Beside him, a shorter, red-headed boy, that looked like a miniature of the man without the mustache, giggled and immediately stifled it as he received a stern look. Surveying his dripping shoes and waving dust from his eyes, the man startled once again when the engine whistle pierced the air, signaling imminent departure. Adjusting his top hat, his eyes resumed shifting around, taking in everyone and everything around him. Flitting quickly, his gaze rested for just a moment on each person in the depot, searching and moving on when he didn't find what he was searching for.

Moving along the platform, a slight limp slowing his progress, he continually studied each person he passed. The boy followed in his wake, evading the rushing passengers and leaping the puddles which the man splashed through, ignoring the spray of water and cries of alarm from others. While the man's coat and clothes were dusty and slightly rumpled, the boys were downright filthy. Every step he took, little puffs of dust and dirt exploded off of him, as if miniature creatures were engaged in combat on his clothing. The people the duo moved past were much cleaner and most gave the tall man and his short companion a cursory, if disgusted, glance, some turning their noses up at the dusty, dirty clothing, before resuming their good-byes or, for those leaving the train, hello's, with friends and family. The noise all around didn't distract the man from his intense study of each person, eyes flitting to each face as he slipped between the throng, making his way further along the coaches. Trailing, the boy hurried along, looking at the people all around him, though with less scrutiny. Several times he bumped someone, causing a small chorus of exclamatory cries as he struggled to keep up.

Stopping suddenly, the tall man didn't notice when the boy bumped into him. A small dust cloud rose around the boy as, rubbing his nose, he took a step back and looked up into the narrow face, the piercing eyes still looking all around. "James, the current moment is not appropriate for levity." Confused, the boy had forgotten the giggle of several moments ago, though the man had not. Forgetting his confusion, the boy saw the man's mustache quivering, causing him to stifle yet another laugh and instead something that sounded like 'Snork' came out.

Clearing his throat, the boy puffed out his chest and threw his head back. This caused his baker boy cap to fly off, but was ignored for the moment. "Yes sir," he said, looking around as if he was spying on slews of evil doers. The man glared at the boy, but decided to not say anything as the boy took an overly dramatic stance while peering around.

Again the whistle sounded it's long wail. The boy said it sounded like another banshee, earning an even sterner glare.

"James, we must locate Vincent and we must endeavor to do so before he can board

this train!” The man, Martin, stated. The boy thought every word sounded like an order from some general on a battlefield, but he kept a straight face, with only a small giggle, easily covered up by the sound of rushing feet as people hurried to climb on board. Throughout the station, people swarmed, saying good-bye to loved ones with hugs being given all around. The man and boy struggled to see through the crowd.

An insistent beeping joined the racket. Reaching into a coat pocket, Martin pulled out a device that looked like a small, mangled bike frame. Pulling and twisting, in moments he had assembled a mini dish sitting on a platform with a wire trailing to an apparatus that looked like a flight helmet. Handing the dish to his small companion, who immediately started moving it slowly around while watching a red, blinking light on the back, Martin pulled the helmet on.

Inside, he was greeted with an image, though fuzzy, of his chief.

“Yes, chief,” he said.

“Well, do you have him? Stop beating around the bush, my boy,” the stern looking man said.

Without even blinking, Martin answered, “No, sir. We are trailing him, but since he destroyed our car, we have been unable to apprehend him.”

“Well, hurry it up then, I don’t have all day. It is vital that he be apprehended. We have been one step behind him for much too long. So quit standing around like it’s tea time, do your job!” The little man in the image, mustache quivering, slammed his hand down and everything went dark. Feeling a tugging, Martin removed the helmet to regard James.

“There!” the boy yelled, pointing to a man about to board the train.

The man, one hand gripping the rail to haul himself aboard, jerked his head, looking back at the pointing boy. His face was covered in a mask that looked like part leering demon and part wild animal. The eyes behind the mask widened, looking at the two now hurrying through the surging crowd. Cries of outrage erupted as the tall man shoved past people already pushing to get on, his limp giving him a drunken quality. The boy was left behind, struggling to catch up and collapse the instrument he still carried, and was knocked about as angered passengers once again pushed to get aboard.

As James reached the steps, he was grabbed and hauled on board, just as the train gave a lurch and the wheels started turning slowly, dragging the behemoth down the tracks.

“Damn,” Martin swore under his breath. He knew it would be harder to capture Vincent while on the moving train, but at least they knew he was definitely here. Entering the passenger car, he drew the boy along, hurrying down the aisle and receiving stern stares from passengers attempting to get situated. Trying to rectify the situation, James tipped his hat in apology to many, but was constantly getting yanked forward before he could smile and complete the kind overtures.

Stopping, Martin waved his hand, trying to clear smoke and dust that still lingered in the car. Mimicking the movement, James also waved his hand, enthusiastically flapping it back and forth while coughing from smoke inhalation. Others, standing and seated,

turned to glance at the newcomers. Giving the man and boy a cursory once over, they turned back to their conversations, ignoring the two.

Reaching the end of the car, James dramatically wiped his forehead. “Whew, that about did me in,” he said. Grimacing down at the boy, Martin didn’t reply as he stepped onto the landing to reach the next car. Sensing movement from the corner of his eye, he started to turn, but was thrown off balance by an umbrella slamming into the side of his head.

Staggering, he heard a screech from James. Trying to focus, Martin turned to where the attack had come. James hung onto the rail, his feet dangling above the ground, which was moving faster with each passing moment. Wavering as he tried to stand and reach the boy, Martin heard a clattering and saw feet, which he could only presume to be Vincent’s, disappearing up the rail car ladder to the roof. Starting to reach for the ladder, he hesitated, hearing the boy’s call for help behind him. Spinning, he snatched the dangling youngster and set the boy next to him.

“You must keep your feet on more solid ground, James my boy.”

James wiped his nose while looking up at the taller man. Fear played across his face, which then turned to anger. “Well, I was trying to help you. That dirty, rotten scoundrel blindsided you and before I could give him a POW,” this was emphasized with a small, swinging fist, “he shoved me. I barely had time to grab the railing before I was drug under the clacking wheels!” This was emphasized by flinging himself against the railing, arm thrown over his face for dramatic effect. Lowering his arm, eyes wide, he looked at Martin, utter conviction and sincerity on his face.

“Clacking wheels, James? We have just begun moving.” Seeming to emphasize the statement, the train lurched causing, the man and boy to sway. “It is of no consequence. Our foe has attained the roof and I must labor to engage him before he can unleash his nefarious scheme.”

Grabbing the ladder, Martin hurried up. Hearing noise below him, he glanced down, seeing James climbing also.

“James, do go into the car and wait for me. It is much too dangerous up here. I can not be responsible for you and apprehend Martin at the same time.”

The little face looked up, voice whining. “But sir, I’m your partner.” Not getting the reaction he wanted, James tried again. “Please, I won’t screw up like last time, I promise. Cross my heart, well, if I wasn’t holding a ladder I’d cross my heart.”

“No, and that is final. Wait for me inside and I will join you shortly.” Seeing the hurt on his young charges face, Martin endeavored to soften his harsh words. “James, please go into the car and help guard the ladies there. When I return, I need to be assured that you kept them safe.”

The little face beamed up before the boy hurried down the ladder and stepped into the passenger car. Martin resumed climbing, pulling himself onto the roof. Glancing the length of the train, he spied the other man heading toward the engine. Pushing off, he struggled against the wind, coat flapping behind him, the last of the dust streaming off. Grabbing at, and missing, his hat as the wind lifted it, he continued forward, not

watching as the hat tumbled along the car and was lost.. Fighting the rushing air, he couldn't stand and instead snaked onto the roof, pressed flat like the man ahead of him. Under his hands, the rough wood was warm, but cooling from the steady stream of air.

Feeling his knee throb, he rubbed at it, clinging with one hand. Berating himself, he vowed to pay more attention from here on out. Silently, he thanked whatever gods looked down upon his kind that they hadn't seen fit to take James from him. As an afterthought he added a quick thank you that he himself had not perished in the crash with the lorry. James had been so excited to be a part of the pursuit, Martin hoped there were no unseen injuries. He would have to get James checked as soon as Vincent was caught. Coming back to the present moment, and ignoring the agony radiating up his leg, Martin pushed himself toward his foe, grim intent covering his face.

Ahead, Vincent crawled along the train car, hair whipping behind him like sails, yet his mask remained firmly in place. The sound of the train and hurricane force winds hammered his ears, but kept any sound Martin made from reaching his enemy. Despite this, the man paused and slowly turned his head to stare back. Behind the mask, his eyes widened once again. The two men stared at each other while the train pounded through the countryside and Martin could have sworn that Vincent smiled, and just the thought of that smile caused a shiver to run along his back. Straining, he pushed himself harder to catch up to the figure before him, which had resumed his own struggle toward the front of the train.

As he neared Vincent, Martin reached out a gloved hand, grasping an ankle and causing the other man to snap his head around, both of them teetering on the knife-edge of balance. Feeling the wind slamming into his chest, Martin gripped tighter, refusing to lose his foe again. Flattening himself even more, the masked man lashed out with his free foot, striking the hand gripping his leg. Once, twice, he smashed the fingers, causing Martin to grimace, but not let go.

Yanking, Martin pulled the fleeing man closer, causing him to scramble to hang on, searching for any grip and handhold. Another pull brought Vincent's flapping coat tails within Martin's reach. Straining, the tenseness causing his neck muscles swelling to near bursting, Martin was satisfied to see the other man inching closer despite his efforts to halt the backward progress. Vincent stopped struggling before flipping onto his back, twisting Martin's hand.

"Argh!" Martin yelled, struggling to retain his grip.

Looking at the still clutching man, Vincent grasped his coat tails and spread his arms. The extreme wind lifted him like a kite. Astonished, Martin watched as the figure rose in the air above him, floating for a moment as if about to take off like the kite he resembled. With the force of a sledgehammer, the flying man slammed back down onto the rushing vehicle. Martin cried out once again as what felt like wildfire spread through his arm, and he released the other man. Without a moment's hesitation, Vincent started to scramble back the way they had come, kicking at Martin. Realizing he needed to end this quickly, Martin lunged toward the fleeing man, his leap enhanced by the wind. He landed on top of his foe, both of them sliding as they lost grip. Relentlessly, the wind

tumbled and rolled both men until they fell between coaches, landing heavily, the rushing ground below them, blurring past faster than any single item could be seen.

Struggling to their feet, the two eyed each other, neither advancing toward the other. Martin wondered how he was going to apprehend his foe. Hearing the sounds of the train change, he glanced down to see water far below as they passed over a river. Looking back up, he realized his lapse in concentration may have cost him, as he caught movement and readied himself for an attack.

Grinning as the devil before All Saint's Eve, Vincent reached over his shoulder, seeming to grab something on his back. Drawing his arm forward, a sword appeared, slowly being drawn from an invisible scabbard. Sunlight danced along the sword's uneven blade. The triangle shape made this blade unique and Martin knew he had to be careful or he would get more than a cut from it. Vincent tensed, readying himself, knowing he could over take the other man, but before he could close the distance there was a clatter as the door behind him opened.

A sound like someone smacking a tree was followed by a thud as two pieces of coal bounced off the masked man. Thrown off balance, he staggered, shooting a glare behind him. In the doorway stood James, arms loaded with coal, a third piece having just been launched. This piece struck the mask and a cracking sound could be heard over the rushing train. James, preparing to throw another piece of coal, spied the face beneath the mask and staggered back a step, forgetting the coal still clutched in his hand. He cowered against the door, face draining of color.

Martin started to move until the masked man, mask now hanging precariously on his face, turned. Horror spread across Martin's features. The ornamental mask showed glimpses of the face beneath. And that face! Ruined flesh, pulsing with puss running over fiery, red scars. The muscles crinkled as the man smiled, causing the flesh to ooze more and Martin took another step back.

A flick of movement, as of smoke dispersing in the wind, and Vincent hurtled over the side, plunging down toward the flowing water below. The man and boy rushed to the rail, peering down at the diminishing figure, seeing it reach the end of the fall and splash into the rushing water. They watched as the ripples expanded out from the entry point. Just before they lost sight, Martin thought he saw a head bob to the surface. Tightening his lips, he knew it wasn't the last chance he had to capture his foe.

Stepping back from the rail, he eyed his diminutive partner, who was still straining to see back to the water, a chunk of coal still cradled in his hand. James gave a small jump, as if startled, and realized what he was still holding. Tossing it overboard, he turned to the bigger man, dusting his hands off. Seeing Martin looking at him, he stopped in mid movement, staring back and wondered if he was in trouble. He relaxed when that familiar visage broke into a grin.

"James, my boy, you assisted me mightily today. Where, pray tell, did you acquire coal? We weren't near the coal car."

James' smile seemed to cover his whole face as he beamed back. "You're welcome," he said. "You told me to guard the ladies in the coach, so, as I knew you had Vincent up

top, I ran through the cars to grab some coal up front.” He waved his arms around, demonstrating how he had bravely run the length of the train to accomplish his mission. Then his smile withered a bit. “But we didn’t catch him.”

“True. Very true. That doesn’t mean we won’t get him at the next opportunity. I believe there will be a next opportunity and with your help, he may finally be in our grasp.” James’ radiant smile returned. “For now, though young squire, I think we need to get you checked out and I need a drink.”

“But, sir! I’m fine! Honest!” James pleaded, looking at the older man with such intensity Martin almost laughed, stifling it before the young boy noticed.

Scowling fiercely, Martin said, “You may be hurt from the crash. We can’t take that chance.”

All excitement left James’ face as he dropped his head, shoulders slumping. “Yes, sir. But there really isn’t anywhere to get checked out while we are traveling. And I really could use a drink too.” His voice was small, but not whining.

Giving the appearance of thinking it over, Martin said, “You just may be right. Since we can do little to ensure your health, we might as well quench our thirst.”

“You mean I can have a beer?” James asked, hopefulness echoed on all his features.

“No, this means you can have a *root* beer. I will drink the beer.”

Shrugging his shoulders, James skipped ahead, eager to drink his treat, leaving his limping, but smiling, partner.

Now that you're done reading ...

I hope you liked this adventure story. It's the first one in the adventures of Martin & James. As a thank you for reading this story, I'd like to offer the next story in the Martin & James adventures - Martin & James vs The Evil Mosquito Scientist. Click below to go to my website and download it:

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Here is a glimpse at that story:

Peering inside, he could faintly see some flickering torches and a hall that stretched beyond his sight.

Hearing a buzz, Martin twisted his head as far as he could. In the distance, but quickly getting closer, was what looked like a whole fleet of the mosquitoes. Disregarding any noise, he grunted as he applied every bit of strength to force the door wider. Slipping through, he called back to James.

“James! Don't come out, keep your head down. They can't get you in there. I'll be back.”

He didn't see or hear if James acknowledged him as a large mosquito body slammed into the crack, legs waving in his face as the creature tried to get to him. Thuds, as other insects slammed their massive bodies against the door, pounded his ears and drove the door closed.

“I hope that boy is going to be OK,” he muttered.

Adjusting his hat and turning, he surveyed the area beyond, holding his shotgun ready.

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Again, please go get this story, it's also free. Send it to your friends, I'd love to hear from everyone about these.

Soon you will find more stories to download with Martin & James, along with upcoming stories of Billie, Jordan, and Wentworth - the unlikely superheroes. Keep an eye out for Liza Jane and her friends coming. And maybe you can catch a glimpse of Melvin, the Redneck Trucker and his Paranormal Adventures. Want me to let you know when they are out, sign up for my newsletter to find out when more stories are available.

Thanks!