ANNIHILATOR

By

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EXT. – DAY – CEMETERY

SUPER: Austin, Texas June 1885

A funeral with a few dozen women and children, some older men also standing around a casket draped in the Texas flag.

THE MAJOR and RANGER COY VANCE stand together but apart from the crowd. An oddly dressed black man - ARCHIBALD PAYNE - stands in the distance next to a beautiful, Native-American woman in her late teens or early twenties. She’s wearing a purple dress and a matching ribbon in her hair. She and Vance make eye contact and she gives Vance a sad smile. Once the Minister concludes people begin to file past the casket dropping yellow roses. Coy looks away for a moment and when he looks back the woman is gone.

INT. – DAY - TEXAS RANGERS HEADQUARTERS, THE MAJORS OFFICE

The Major is sitting behind his desk with his feet up, Coy Vance is sitting on a leather couch. An open bottle of whiskey is on the desk next to an empty glass. Coy stares at the bottle while rolling a cigarette, the Major has a drink in his hand.

THE MAJOR

By Ranger standards he was one of the best. He could ride, shoot, read, had a head for math, and understood procedures. Next to him the rest of us were dumb as a hoe handle, present company excluded of course.

COY VANCE

It’s harder when it happens to them young like that. But we do dangerous work. Did he have a family?

THE MAJOR

He was married to a pretty little Mex gal no children though. We told the papers that he was killed in the line…you know, for the general peace and wellbeing but...

COY VANCE

Not the case?

THE MAJOR

Someone tried to make it look like a suicide.

COY VANCE

What?

THE MAJOR

Single shot to the head, Schofield in his hand but no powder burn around the wound.

COY VANCE

How did the killer get his gun?

THE MAJOR

Shit-fire if I know.

COY VANCE

Christ Major, they disarmed and did a murder on a Ranger in his own home with his own gun.

THE MAJOR

Last we spoke he said he had a lead on the lunatic that’s killing all those maids and was going to look into it.

COY VANCE

You think it was the badman he was chasing what killed him?

THE MAJOR

Maybe. If so it’s a new kind of badman Coy. He’s not motivated by money, revenge, love or hate, just likes killing women of a certain station – coloreds mostly.

COY VANCE

And not afraid to face down a Ranger.

THE MAJOR

That is fact for consideration to be sure.

COY VANCE

Our local wordsmith calls him the Servant Girl Annihilator.

THE MAJOR

Jesus. There’s something else we kept out of the papers. You know about the murder of Mollie Smith in December and the attacks on Clara Strand and Christine Martenson?

COY VANCE

Yeah.

THE MAJOR

Apparently this maniac took the month of April to himself.

COY VANCE

As far as we know.

THE MAJOR

Yeah, as far as we know, then in May he went back to work and killed Eliza Shelly and Irene Cross.

COY VANCE

Both domestics?

THE MAJOR

Yeah.

COY VANCE

Cut up the same way?

THE MAJOR

Yeah.

COY VANCE

Who’s going to…?

THE MAJOR

That brings us to you. We got Rangers spread out from Orange County to El Paso. The soonest any of them could get back here would be a week. And you have a knack for figuring out the ones where the culprit ain’t right minded – no offense intended.

COY VANCE

None taken.

THE MAJOR

But I can’t have a repeat of…before. So Coy I have to ask, have you tempered?

COY VANCE

Yeah, I have.

THE MAJOR

Taking this on would mean a promotion to Captain.

COY VANCE

Captain?

THE MAJOR

With commensurate pay, of course you wouldn’t have anyone under your command per se but…

COY VANCE

Okay, yeah, I’ll look into it. Maybe he’s done and moved on.

 THE MAJOR

Maybe. One other thing…

COY VANCE

Yes sir?

THE MAJOR

The State of Texas isn’t looking for a trial by jury as much as some measured justice. This is an opportunity for you to get right Coy.

COY VANCE

Yes sir. I understand. I’d like to take a look at the scene.

THE MAJOR

Yeah let’s, you saddled?

COY VANCE

Yes sir.

EXT. – DAY – SMALL RUSTIC HOUSE

Two horses are tethered out front.

INT. – DAY - SMALL RUSTIC HOUSE

Capt. Vance, now wearing two pistols and a badge is with the Major in the living room area. A large blood stain is on wall.

COY VANCE

In his own house?

THE MAJOR

In his own chair even.

The Major points at a chair with its back to thr blood-stained wall.

COY VANCE

He hunted down a lawman and killed him like some prey animal. Where’s the wife?

THE MAJOR

She went to San Antone to stay with her people for a bit…

We hear the sound of a door opening, both men turn toward the rear of the house drawing their pistols at the same time.

ARCHIBALD “ARCHIE” PAYNE, the oddly dressed black man from the funeral enters carrying a small tool bag. He sees the Rangers drops the tool bag and raises his hands.

ARCHIBALD “ARCHIE” PAYNE

Oh Lawd please don’t kill me! I don’t want to die in Texas Jesus!

THE MAJOR

Stay just like you are and state your business.

ARCHIBALD “ARCHIE” PAYNE

I’s a fix-it man, met the Ranger, you know the one what was buried today, he hired me to do some work around his house while he was chasin’ a badman.

THE MAJOR

Or, maybe you figured since he was dead and his family was gone you would just come around and help yourself to few things he wouldn’t be needing anymore.

ARCHIBALD “ARCHIE” PAYNE

Aww no suh I don’t steal. Never have. Ya see I done took the money for the work already befoe, so’s I figured I owed his family, so here I is.

CAPTAIN VANCE

What’s your name?

ARCHIBALD “ARCHIE” PAYNE

Archie, sir, Archibald to be proper wit it but nobody pays much mind on that point.

CAPTAIN VANCE

Well, Archibald, why don’t you take a slow step away from that bag and let me look at the tools of your trade?

ARCHIBALD “ARCHIE” PAYNE

Oh yesuh glad to oblige.

Archie steps away from the bag. The Major keeps his gun trained on Archi while Vance holsters his pistol, goes over to the bag and opens it. Vance moves some of the contents around and we hear the sound of metal clanking together.

CAPTAIN VANCE

These are carpenters tools all right.

THE MAJOR

Did you steal those son?

ARCHIBALD “ARCHIE” PAYNE

No suh. Like I said. I don’t steal, I works for a living.

CAPTAIN VANCE

Archie what kind of nails you got here?

ARCHIBALD “ARCHIE” PAYNE

Well I got some three-penny for outdoors like porches and such and then I got a few dozen six-penny for fences and corrals and I got smaller ones for…

The Captain and the Major exchange glances.

THE MAJOR

That will do.

The Major holsters his pistol. Archibald looks at the mantle and sees a family bible.

ARCHIBALD “ARCHIE” PAYNE

Was the Ranger a religious man?

THE MAJOR

Not as far as I know, but then again he just got married…what concern is that of your’n Archie the Carpenter?

ARCHIBALD “ARCHIE” PAYNE

Lots of dust in the air this time of year, none on that Bible though.

Vance and the Major exchange another glance then look back at Archibald.

ARCHIBALD “ARCHIE” PAYNE

My mother – God rest her soul – was a cleaning lady so’s I learned to spot what’s clean and what ain’t real quick.

Captain Vance takes the Bible from mantle and opens it. A folded piece of paper falls out.

THE MAJOR

Anything of interest Captain?

Vance retrieves the paper from the floor.

CAPTAIN VANCE

Looks like a page from a medical journal…

THE MAJOR

Maybe his wife got pregnant.

CAPTAIN VANCE

Well this pertains to a brain disease called, Why-tie-ko sigh…sigh…sigh-co-size.

THE MAJOR

Sounds like some egg-head bullshit.

Vance puts paper in his vest pocket and holds on to Bible.

ARCHIBALD “ARCHIE” PAYNE

What about me Rangers?

THE MAJOR

You’re a carpenter ain’t ya? Well go carpent!

Archie picks up bag and exits while Vance watches him. We hear the sound of the back door slamming shut.

THE MAJOR

Sneaking up on a Ranger can get a man killed. Boy should know that. You need to look at anything else?

Vance still looking after Archie and doesn’t respond immediately.

THE MAJOR

Ranger, you on duty?

Vance refocuses as the sound of hammering starts.

CAPTAIN VANCE

Yes sir. Just thinking.

THE MAJOR

I need to get home. The station is unlocked you know where everything is and the account is still open at the Orange’s Store.

CAPTAIN VANCE

See you in the morning then.

THE MAJOR

Coy, I don’t feel the need to say, but I have to anyway… Ranger Irvine didn’t drink and this bastard got around him…

CAPTAIN VANCE

I can hold off the bottle for a bit.

THE MAJOR

Ok…for your own good mind you?

CAPTAIN VANCE

Yes sir.

We hear the sound of sawing in the background.

EXT. – DAY – BACK OF HOUSE

The rear steps are missing. Captain Vance opens screen door and sees Archie working.

ARCHIBALD “ARCHIE” PAYNE

Mind your step Ranger.

CAPTAIN VANCE

Thank you kindly.

Vance leaps down from the porch and walks toward Archibald.

ARCHIBALD “ARCHIE” PAYNE

It’s the ones you don’t see that get ya, yes suh.

CAPTAIN VANCE

Yeah, I guess your right. Well thanks again.

Captain Vance extends his hand and the two men shake. Captain Vance turns to walk away but continues his turn drawing his pistol and aiming at Archie in one fluid motion. Archie raises his hands in panicing.

ARCHIBALD “ARCHIE” PAYNE

Oh Lawd what I done done na? I is so sorry…

CAPTAIN VANCE

You can drop the fresh off the plantation bull-shit. Now you need to say something convincing enough to stop a bullet.

ARCHIBALD “ARCHIE” PAYNE

I showly don’ know what you mean Mr. Ranger! Please don’t kill me! I don’t want to die in…

CAPTAIN VANCE

…Texas…I heard you. But I don’t think you heard me.

Vance cocks hammer on pistol.

ARCHIBALD “ARCHIE” PAYNE

Easy Captain, we’re on the same side.

CAPTAIN VANCE

Easy ain’t in the Ranger code. Now start clarifyin’.

ARCHIBALD “ARCHIE” PAYNE

If I may reach in my bag to retrieve my identification...

CAPTAIN VANCE

Retrieve your… Tell you what, if you think you can move slow enough to put my mind at ease reach away my Moorish friend, reach away.

ARCHIBALD “ARCHIE” PAYNE

Well, to avoid any confusion about my intentions…

Archie picks up his bag turns it over and unzips a compartment hidden in the bottom and removes a letter. He hands it to the ranger. Ranger Vance keeps his eyes on Archie and reads the letter.

CAPTAIN VANCE

Son. Of. A. Bitch. You’re a Pinkerton?