THE DARKNESS #89 (Top Cow Productions) is a thrilling mix of the Western and horror genres. This one shot-special, “High Noon,” starts out with a life-threatening hanging and escalates to an action-packed train heist. A supernatural outlaw is on the search for gold, while his old gang is out hunting him as well. Readers will definitely be satisfied with the creative blend of monsters and guns.

On his 21st birthday, hitman Jackie Estacado became the bearer of the supernatural force, The Darkness. But there was someone else before him who wielded the uncanny power. In the Old West of bank-robbers and gunslingers, Ramon Estacado was a different breed of bandit. Using the Darkness, Ramon became unstoppable as he thrived on his greed and bloodlust.

Following the Western formula, the story delivers the all-too necessary train heist. Ramon is only interested in catching a specific train. He has his sights set on the dollars and gold locked inside the locomotive. The notorious outlaw runs with a new gang called Obscuritos, who are gremlinlike spies and gun-fighters. Ramon patiently waits for his train to arrive as he sits on top of his fire-breathing horse.

Clem, who now leads Roman’s old gang, has plans of his own to steal the gold from his ex-partner. Clem and the others have transformed into the menacing Darklings. They sold their souls and became monsters in order to exact revenge on their previous leader. In a neverending hail of bullets, Ramon has to fight his old crew while dealing with the special armed forces protecting the train.

Ramon is in a race against time to finish the heist before sunrise. During sunlight, the once powerful gunslinger unfortunately reverts back to a weak and average mortal. Ramon has to use his cunning and gunfighting skills in order to save himself from a demonic mob.

Author Joshua Hale Fialkov delivers strong characterization from an enigmatic antihero. Readers will never know what the unpredictable Estacado will do to get what he wants. Fialkov skillfully manages to create an ambiguous character who neither represents good nor evil, but only serves his own interests. The author definitely had a lot of fun with the story, particularly with the train heist, which is a gleeful homage to BACK TO THE FUTURE PART III.

Artist Matt Timson (IMPALER) captures the essence of Western films, particularly HIGH PLAINS DRIFTER. The Western landscape is depicted with long-stretching shadows and over-the-top bloody violence. Clem stands out because of his detailed description: a demonic beast with curved horns on his head. Timson brings out humor along with the scares, especially with the yellow-eyed Obscuritos, wearing their tiny cowboy boots and hats.

Comic book fans will have great fun with THE DARKNESS #89, a worthy horror oater hybrid. The evocative imagery will stay in your mind long after you put it down. If you truly love Westerns, definitely buy this comic!

{jcomments on}