

Terrence lay there in the baking sun, his back against hot sand. His wrinkles were so deep that sweat pooled in them like a riverbed, mixing with the precursor of a steady stream of tears. The bullet was lodged in his thigh. His back was probably broken. He was broken. Death was an enemy he'd learned to love to play hide-and-seek with. What was it his Mary used to say? *Are we still friends?* There were no friends, no lovers in a life chasing away from death.

"It's been a hell of a ride for you, hasn't it, Terry?"

A man in a black leather jacket unscrewed a silencer from his pistol. His mane of black, dirty hair blocked out the sun. So, this is how it would end.

The old man didn't budge—he couldn't. The tears ran down his cheeks and evaporated against the cracked clay. Nearly sixty years of running, all coming down to a desolate desert destination. These tears weren't for sadness. They were for relief.

"I'm not sure I would say I enjoy this," the Corrector said in his low, gravelly voice. "But it sure is satisfactory."

The gun's barrel was all Terrence could see. The Corrector never missed, but it didn't stop him from pointing a gun just five inches from the target. Terrence tried to speak, to give a last word. But, nothing, just the choked sound of an injured animal. Suddenly, his jeans and tank top, his big snakeskin belt and leather boots, all seemed to dissipate. He felt as if he was on a cloud, even as he stared up at a cloudless sky. Death had him in shackles.

"Smell you later, Terry," and the Corrector pulled the trigger.