

# THE DESERT

BY N. SCORER

THEME: HARD WORK



The heavy desert sands tugged at my aching legs, my trek through the dunes was chipping away at my morale. It had been hours since I had last seen any life, the barren landscape around me was empty as I trudged onwards through it. The desert heat was unbearably hot, any moisture within me had long since left my wretched body, leaving me with a dry throat which gasped for water and skin drenched with a thick covering of sweat, which permeated my clothing as well.

I surveyed my surroundings looking for something to drink from, a river, a lake or anything to sustain my hollow husk of a body. Squinting under the powerful light of the desert sun, I glanced upon a small, round cactus, it was a vibrant, emerald green, and was pulsating with all the water it had greedily drained from the surroundings. I had heard rumours of certain cacti being hallucinogenic but I did not care, my body demanded that I obtain something to drink. So, hastily I plucked the small cactus from the sand (being careful not to catch myself upon the spines that covered it) and ripped it apart, letting its refreshing juices spill out into my open mouth.

The taste was bitter and sour in my mouth, but the abundance of liquid was just enough for my body to regain its energy and continue to walk through the silken sands of the desert. I was continuing my journey, when suddenly I felt a sharp sting of pain in my head, it was unrelenting in its torment of me, and left my poor brain throbbing incessantly. As I looked upon the light brown of the sand at my feet, contrasted with the deep, azure, blue of the skies above my vision began to blur and the colours around me melted into a prismatic rush of stimulus.

Deep crimson red swirled around my eyeballs, accompanied by verdant greens and elegant purples that were intoxicating to view, a wave of fear and unease fell over me as I stumbled about the dusty environment, when suddenly before my very eyes, a horrible, canine form started to take shape. Sharp claws dug into the sand of the desert and spines the length of my thumb extended from the scaly skin on its back, a set of vicious fangs snarled at me, accompanied by a guttural screech that sent shivers down my sweat covered back. It was then that the creature reared its bony face upwards, revealing two piercing red eyes that seemed to shimmer in the desert sun, just from one look at *the beast's* glare, I knew it was poised to lunge at me.

Thinking fast I started to swiftly sprint from the creature, I could feel my lungs contracting and expanding rapidly in a pathetic attempt to keep me alive as I desperately hurried across the sands. I could still hear *the beast's* howls behind me, closing in. It wasn't long before I had reached a much rockier landscape, small rocks were scattered across the floor of the desert, it was just as soon as I had noticed these jagged little pebbles that my moccasins had gotten caught on one, it was only seconds before I found myself falling forwards onto the crumbly earth of the desert, knocking me out cold.

I was woken up with a jolt as I felt a playful tug upon the leg of my pants, getting up quickly I found myself beside *the beast* I had been running from mere moments ago, startled, I pulled my leg away from *the beast's* grip, only for it to whimper sadly. I took a moment to look upon the creature, I glanced with uncertainty at its red eyes which no longer looked to be full of hate, they only looked sad that I had retreated from it. It was then that I realised, *the beast* was trying to lead me somewhere.

Getting up was difficult as my joints were stiff, but it seemed as though *the beast* was happy I had gotten the message, and scampered forwards before looking back at me excitedly. Without any inclination of where *the beast's* path would lead, I followed it carefully through the rocky grounds of the desert. Together, *the beast* and I passed many bizarre cacti, many of which were adorned with colourful flowers, it was many minutes before we had finally reached our destination.

I stared onwards my eyes squinting from the light of the sun, and was shocked at what I saw, it was a lush and beautiful oasis brimming with life and splendour. The waters were a bright sapphire blue with hues of green mixed in, palm trees stood proudly around the edges of the spring and were weighed down by heavy coconuts causing them to sway gently in the breeze. Upon the verdant shrubbery, many brilliantly coloured parrots were perched, filling the air with their melodic chirps and squawks. Immediately I felt the cracked dryness of my throat and felt an intense thirst, I could distinctly feel the earth pounding on my sore legs but I did not care, at last water was in sight.

I was soon met with the water's edge, I plunged my shaky hands into the spring, the water was cool and soothing on the sunburnt skin of my hands, as I carefully scooped the precious liquid to my lips, the pleasure I felt at finally getting a drink of water was indescribably euphoric to me, I laid down to rest for a while and *the beast*, who had been barking at parrots for the past few minutes, did the same. I shared a glance with the creature, and gazed into its fiery red eyes, and realized all along *the beast* had been trying to rescue me. As I sat back watching the magnificent, desert sunset, I couldn't help but feel as though *the beast's* hard work had paid off.