

THE DESERTERS

Draft 1.28.15

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Story by

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INT. CHEAP DESERT MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

MIKE, 33, slicked back hair, wearing a classic and clean but wrinkled suit, sits talking on his cellphone.

The room has two double beds with outdated floral pattern covers and bad 1970's wood paneling on the walls.

MIKE

It's done.

VOICE OVER PHONE (O.S)

Good. There's another one.

MIKE

Alright. Who, when, where?

VOICE OVER PHONE (O.S)

It's James.

Mike takes a minute to put things together.

MIKE

James? Like my James?

VOICE OVER PHONE

Do it, Mike.

MIKE

But he's got a wife. And kids.

VOICE OVER PHONE (O.S.)

They'll be taken care of.

MIKE

You're gonna wipe them out too?

VOICE OVER PHONE (O.S.)

No. They'll be taken care of. Like they're set for life. Like, we'll look after them.

MIKE

Wow. James. What did he do?

VOICE OVER PHONE

None of your business really. Call me when it's done.

MIKE

Wait? I don't-- I don't have a plan, how would I--

VOICE OVER PHONE  
Put a bullet in his head and bury  
him in the desert.

JAMES walks in carrying a bag of groceries. He's younger than Mike but is dressed in a similar wrinkled suit. He throws Mike a can of beer from the bag and sets it down.

MIKE (TOWARD PHONE)  
Okay. I gotta go.

Mike hangs up the phone. James turns on the TV to a basketball game.

JAMES  
I got a G on this. These guys  
better come through tonight.

James digs through his grocery bag and takes out a cheap loaf of bread and a package of baloney. He makes two sandwiches.

MIKE  
That was Big Ronnie.

James focuses on the game and making sandwiches.

JAMES  
Alright.

MIKE  
We got another job tomorrow near  
by. It's weird though.

James hands Mike a baloney sandwich.

MIKE (CONT'D)  
It's-- a package pick up. Probably  
cash or hard currency. We need to  
dig a hole to find it.

JAMES  
Like buried treasure?

MIKE  
I guess, yeah.

JAMES  
Fine. I told the old lady I'd be  
home so lets start early.

Mike nods "yes" and looks down at his sandwich but doesn't eat. James settles down on the bed and watches the game.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

Mike pours two cups of coffee from the rooms coffee maker.

EXT. DESERT MOTEL PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

James has his head under the hood of a Cadillac sedan. Mike walks out and hands James a cup of coffee.

JAMES

It should fire up now.

Mike walks to the passenger side door and digs through the cars glove box, pulling out a road map of California.

He sits on the edge of the passenger seat, feet outside the car and searches over the map.

Mike's POV: Mike's finger scans the map. He can't find a spot.

James shuts the hood puts a tool box in the back. He pats Mike's leg and Mike slides over to the driver side.

JAMES (CONT'D)

You drive.

INT. CADILLAC SEDAN - CONTINUOUS

Mike keeps looking at the map.

JAMES

You know where you're going right?

MIKE

Yeah. I was there awhile back.

JAMES

You didn't write down the name?

Mike throws the map in the glove-box and starts the car. He moves to put the car in drive but stops and looks at James.

MIKE

How ya been?

JAMES

Uh, good, man.

There's an awkward moment of silence.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
Lets go. I want to get home.

Mike drives.

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - DAY

The Cadillac pulls onto the open road.

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - MONTAGE

The car drives in the desert. Mike scans the desert landscape and roads for a deserted empty place.

INT. CAR - DAY

They drive down a dirt road. Mike looks around and sees that the desert is empty all around them. He see's a lone tree.

MIKE  
This is the spot. Under that tree.

EXT. DESERT FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Mike and James get out and pull two shovels from the trunk.

They walk toward the tree.

Mike adjusts a pistol that's in his waste band.

He's uncomfortable.

Mike falls behind James and fidgets with the gun in his belt.

He experiments with the shovel handle, gripping it like a baseball bat.

JAMES  
So damn pretty out here.

James waits for Mike to catch up.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
How come I never been out here with you?

MIKE  
I dunno. We get different jobs sometimes.

JAMES  
Hot ass desert, you'd never think  
it would be so beautiful.

They keep walking toward the tree.

EXT. UNDER THE DESERT TREE - DAY

Mike and James stop and survey the area under the tree.

MIKE  
Ronnie said it was ten feet from  
the trunk between the tree and the  
road. Here.

JAMES  
Awright. Seems weird but lets get  
it over with.

James jumps to it, picks out the spot and starts digging.

MIKE  
Hey I'll start.

Mike pulls away James and starts to dig.

EXT. UNDER THE DESERT TREE - MONTAGE

Time passes. Dirt begins to pile up. The hole gets deeper.

Mike is sweaty. He sets down his shovel and James helps him  
out of the hole.

James starts digging now.

EXT. UNDER THE DESERT TREE - LATER

Mike stands watching James dig. The hole is bigger now,  
rectangular and about four feet deep. It resembles a shallow  
grave.

JAMES  
You sure this is the place?

Mike doesn't answer and James keeps digging. Mike stares at  
James for a moment.

Mike pulls his gun from his belt.

He points the gun at James. His arm starts to shake. Mike's  
finger caresses the guns trigger.

Mike jumps as James's shovel makes a loud clinking sound, different from the previous digging sounds.

Mike drops his gun but picks up his gun quickly.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
I think we found it.

Mike is confused.

James clears dirt and reveals a wooden crate buried in the dirt, about the size of a travel trunk.

James pops off the lid with his shovel.

There's stacks and stacks of one-hundred dollar bills sealed in plastic. The box is full.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
That's a lot of fucking cash.

They both step back and look at it. Mike did not expect this.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
Grab a side.

Mike takes a moment.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
Come on. I hope it fits.

Mike snaps too and jumps down into the hole and grabs on.

The box takes both of them to lift.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

They put the box in the trunk and get in the car.

Mike doesn't immediately drive. He tries to get a grip on what's just happened.

MIKE  
Can we get lunch first? There's  
that diner off of 17.

JAMES  
Sure, I'm starved. On the boss?

James gestures to the trunk of money in the back.

MIKE  
I'll get you.

EXT. DESERT DINER FRONT - DAY

Mike and James get out of the car.

MIKE

Go get a table I gotta call the boss. Order me a coffee too.

James goes inside and Mike dials his cellphone.

MIKE (CONT'D)

I can't do it.

BIG RONNIE

Michael. Do this and I promise it'll be worth it. It's a big promotion. I'll get you your own crew. Do it.

Michael doesn't answer.

BIG RONNIE (CONT'D)

It's you or him Michael.

MIKE

Do me then! I'm a loser, I don't have kids! Nobody'd even miss me!

BIG RONNIE

Fine! Stay fucking put then. I'm driving out there tonight. But if he's not dead when I get there I AM gonna put a bullet in your head! I'll be there in the morning.

EXT. HOTEL - DAY

The trunk slides out of the back of the Cadillac. Mike and James use all of their effort to drag it into the hotel.

INT. HOTEL - NIGHT

Two glasses are set on a desk and filled with whiskey.

Mike hands one to James who sits on his bed with the TV on.

JAMES

Thank you sweetheart.

Mike stands and looks at the trunk.

He slams his drink and pours himself another.



JAMES (CONT'D)  
That money would solve a lot of my  
problems.

Mike takes a big gulp of whiskey.

MIKE  
Big Ronnie would find us. We'd be  
fucked.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - LATER

The whiskey bottle is half empty now. James turns his pillow.

JAMES  
I'ma pass out. We better be going  
home tomorrow. This last minute  
stuff always kills me.

He rolls over and puts a pillow over his head.

Mike stays up and watches the game.

He drinks from the whiskey bottle.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - LATER

Mike paces around the now darker room. The bottle is almost  
empty. James sleeps.

Mike takes his gun from his belt and points it at James. He  
still can't do it.

Mike opens the door and pulls hard at the trunk.

He sees the Cadillac parked in the spot in front of the hotel  
and then looks back toward James sleeping in the bed.

He stops and ponders. His head drops. He pulls the trunk back  
inside and closes the door.

Mike sits on top of the trunk. He looks out the window again.

JAMES (O.S.)  
Takin' off?

Mike looks up at James, eyes open, head on his pillow.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
It's alright. I was gonna do the  
same thing.

There's a moment.

MIKE  
 You gotta get outta here James.  
 There's a hit on you. Ronnie wants  
 me to do it.

James doesn't seem shocked.

JAMES  
 I know. I was waiting.

Mike tries to gather what's going on.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
 Promotion right? Your own crew,  
 it's me or you right? Ronnie  
 offered me the same deal. But I  
 couldn't do it.

Mike puts it all together in his head. He looks at the trunk.

MIKE  
 Is this part of it?

James shakes his head "no." Mike puts his head in his hands  
 and takes a deep breath.

MIKE (CONT'D)  
 I've got a plan. But it's drastic.

James nods his head "yes."

INT. HOTEL ROOM - EARLY MORNING

The room is blue in the early morning light. There's a loud  
 KNOCK on the door. It repeats. Mike sits calmly on the now  
 made bed. He's dressed and wide awake.

James's bed is also neatly made.

The trunk is gone.

The door knocks again.

Mike stands up and walks to the door.

He opens it. BIG RONNIE stands in the doorway for a moment.  
 He's not so big but is an intimidating looking Italian man.

BIG RONNIE  
 What the fuck? Did you do it?

INT. HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ronnie pushes inside and sees that James's bed is made.

MIKE

I did it.

Big Ronnie walks toward the bathroom and sticks his head in.

BIG RONNIE

Where's the body?

MIKE

It's buried outside of town. Under a tree. I'll show you the hole.

BIG RONNIE

What the fuck yeah. Where's your Cadi?

MIKE

It broke down out there.

BIG RONNIE

Let's go then. I'll drive.

EXT. TREE IN THE DESERT - DAY

The Cadillac sits with it's hood up near the desert tree.

Ronnie's Buick pulls up behind the Cadillac. Mike and Big Ronnie get out and look toward the tree.

The hole under the tree is filled in, looking like a grave.

James hides behind the tree.

He loads bullets into his gun.

EXT. BEACH IN MEXICO - DAY

Waves crash on the beach.

James sits with his WIFE and TWO KIDS in the sand.

Mike sits down the beach alone, taking in the sun.

FADE TO BLACK