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Pulling it out of the saddlebag he yanked the action back and threw a round into the chamber, he wanted to be ready. This darkness was starting to get to him. Why didn't he just say no?! His heart was starting to beat faster now, his senses more alert.

Laying the Ruger P345 on the seat of his Harley, he pulled out his rain suit from the other side of the saddlebags and started to put it on. It helped with the cleanup afterwards, in case of any blood splatter that came with the job.

Sliding along the side of the barn, he eased over to the rear barn door, he had half expected someone to come out and greet him, but I guess they weren't in the mood tonight. Sliding the door open quickly he slipped inside, sliding to the right, keeping the door behind him, so he wouldn't be silhouetted in the doorway making an easy mark.

There was Carter and Smith, Jimmy and Turk, and Big Slim. Big Slim already looked sick, so it was Big Slim's turn tonight. At least Big Slim wasn't much of a talker so he wouldn't have to listen to a whole lot of his whining. Seeing Keach standing there with his back to the wall, with that rain suit on and that big gun in his hand, sliding in like death itself, Big Slim knew why Keach wore a rain suit in the middle of the desert. Big Slim thought that his knees were going to buckle, but he wouldn't go down that easily, he still had his pride.

"Boys..." Keach rumbled in his low deep voice... this kind of work always put him in a foul mood. They just nodded, they didn't like this any better than he did. Stepping forward, they all stepped back, away from Big Slim. Big Slim's face tightened, as his anger started to flare. Keach sensed this instantly, he'd been doing this for a long time and he said to Big Slim in a soft voice; "Let's just keep this simple..." Big Slim stepped back away from Keach into the next room. Keach followed him in quickly, swiftly like a cat, not letting him get in too far ahead of him.

Stepping into the next room he saw him down on his knees on the dirt floor. Big Slim was kneeling there next to his prize stallion, and it was easy to see that both of the big Gray's right front and right rear legs were broken. "Been suffering long?" Keach asked him in his rumbly deep voice. "About 3 hours, tried to jump the fence again to get to that filly, but in this darkness he caught the fence hard. The boys and I were able to drag him in here, and we've tried to help him, but it's no use. Do what you have to do; I don't want to see it." And Big Slim stepped from the room.

The big Gray tried to raise its head as Keach stepped closer to him and swung that big .45 into play, why couldn't he have just said no? He was the best at what he did, in all the years he'd been putting sick animals down, he had never had to fire a second round, and it seemed to bother him the least out of all the other men afterwards. As the big Gray's eyes locked onto his, he wished he were anywhere else, anywhere else but here. Back in his own home town, back in his own apartment, back in his Sally's arms, even back out riding that old Black Highway... anywhere but here.



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