Charon Of The West

By : Jonathen Baker

Mixing Greek mythology with western action for this short story about Charon Of the West in a small town in Death Valley.

Published on
Booksie

booksie.com/Jonathen Baker

Copyright © Jonathen Baker, 2015
Publish your writing on Booksie.com.

Charon Of The West

The sound of trotting echoed through the empty plane. Alone, amidst the harsh climate a horse and her rider slowly moved through the desert. The hooves made a dull thud as they each hit the swollen cracked ground with a thud. The horse carried almost no burden. The saddle and the rider were all that belabored this once free soul. A warm wind blew down through the desert, with a fierce force that threatened to whip the ten-gallon headwear off the rider. He held onto it gently, squeezing his eyes shut as he did. The wind carried with it sand. Sand that, when whipped became needles to the face. Most of the riders face was concealed by a brown handkerchief. What little that remained was protected by the long bits of black shaggy hair that clung to his face with the sweat on his forehead. The wind died, and again the intense heat rose. What little breeze that was offered had now blown away. The sun was hot. An intense heat that not only killed all living creatures within miles of the area but also moved to kill any cowboys riding through. Thus was Death Valley.

The rider picked up his chin and looked into the distance. The vague body of water that drifted on his thoughts lingered at the edge. Looking further he saw what appeared to be a small dot on the land. Thatâ s where he was headed. The only town within miles. The edge of the valley. The rider smiled to himself. Humored by the valley of death

â I shall fear no evilâ he muttered before laying his head down again. He felt the heat, physically and mentally it barraged him. Slowly he felt himself slip into unconsciousness.

Joey was brought back to attention with a swift slap in the back of the head. There he was again, daydreaming about heroes and good guys again. He should know better then that. No, there was no hero and the good guys were everyone who managed to stay alive. All his life Joey had struggled to survive. He lived in a small town on the edge of death valley. Life was hard. Days were long and hot, nights were freezing. It was as if the weather was always confused. Never made up its mind. Not here anyways. Life was made even harder due to the fact that his town was a hideout for the gang â The Rustlersâ nasty men, they were what really kept the town running. Sad as it was, their leader, Terrie Jones was the closest thing the town had to a mayor. The gang founded the town about ten years prior as a hideout, since then it had grown and about one hundred people called it their home. Other then that, none really dared to come by, and they were so close to death valley that they rarely had visitors. The gang wasnâ t so bad really, as long as you stayed on their good side. Of course Joey was rarely on their good side. He was only ten after all, the youngest kid in the town, and he heard it all the time. In his short lifetime, Joey had more guns pulled on him then the rest of the town combined. It was a miracle he stayed alive. The reason was due to the fact that his father ran the only working water well, and without him the town would just as soon dry up. Currently Joey was at work, digging deep into the ground for any hope of finding water. This was his fifth hole today and so far he had no luck, but his father was determined, and if the smack was any reminded he had better get back to it. His eyes focused on shoveling the dirt. Hot, hard ground, h drove the shovel as deep as he could, and with all of his strength pulled out all the dirt he could muster. As he did this he heard a low thudding sound. As if something was approaching. He pushed it away, probably just one of the rustlers on their way back from a trip. Something about this caught his attention though. IT wasâ ¦slow and singular. The Rustlers never ran alone. He looked out to the distance and could just barely make out a figure, slowly making its way out of death valley. He dropped his shovel.

â Papa!â he cried out â Itâ s a man!â

â I said you need to stop daydreaming Joey, get back to work. If we donâ t find another well soon weâ ll be out of water.â

â I aint daydreaming papa! Look!â

Joeyâ s father looked up at the horizon. His eyes caught the figure and his ears heard the horse. â We may have some company.â He turned to joey â Go get your mother, tell her to ready an extra cot and cook extra for dinner. We have a guest this evening.â

The rider awoke. Barely conscious he felt hands grabbing him and lifting him off the horse. He felt weightless, someone strong was supporting all his weight, and then softness. Like floating on a cloud. He closed his eyes, ready to embrace the darkness of sleep.

â Oh no you donâ t.â a voice spoke to him â not until you got yourself some waterâ then he felt something on his lips, it was clold compared to the heat he had just endured. The water trickled down his tongue and hit the back of his throat. Immediately his throat burned. The rider sat up, and spit the water out, the sensation in his neck, that of fire burning him.

â Now donâ t go wasting it allâ the voice said again. He recognized it now as a feminine voice.
â Letâ s try this againâ

The water was once again lowered to his lips. As it trickled down his tongue he readied himself for the burning sensation but it did not come. Instead his body relaxed, as if these few drops were all it craved. He laid back down, opening his eyes for the first time. Over him stood a beautiful redheaded woman, and next to hear a very pretty young redheaded girl. The woman looked to be in her mid-forties with striking green eyes. The girl in her early twenties, also with green eyes, but these were not the same. The same color yes, but these were not striking, these were eyes that held pain. Looking into them the rider felt pity, pity that they did not sparkle like he knew they could.

â well now your upâ the woman said, moving away from him. Looking around the rider realized he was not alone. Around him sat what appeared t obe a family. I rather tall dark haired man sat in the corner observing him carefully, and a young boy sat right by his side.

â is that a pistol?â the boy asked pointing to the six shooter on his side

The rider began to speak, but the fire raged up again in his throat and he began coughing profusely.

â Drink some moreâ the girl said and she lifted the small flask to his lips, he let it pour down, soothing the pain. â Thatâ s not a good question to ask Joey!â she said giving him a look of daggers â heâ s obviously traveled a long way and he doesnâ t need you pestering him with stupid questions.â

The boy backed away, a slight pink tinge on his cheek

The rider sat up, his weary limbs barely able to support him.

â Whatâ s you name misterâ said the man in the corner â I donâ t mind you staying here, but I need to at least know your nameâ

â Clintonâ the weary rider replied â Clinton Collinsâ

â James Luther, nice to meet you Mr. Collins. Now, Lilly, why donâ t you help the poor man cool down a bit. Looks like heâ s going to pass out again any second now.

â Yes daddyâ the girl responded and left the room. She returned a moment later with a bucket of water and a washcloth. She dipped the washcloth in the water and laid it on his face â Joey, go help mom prepare dinnerâ she called over her shoulder and the small boy who had been watching ran off. She moved the washcloth to his next, and his body sighed in relief. The water sizzled hitting his skin. â You sure took quite a beating Mr. Collinsâ she said â I hope you have a damn good reason. â

â Where am i?â he muttered as she moved the washcloth down to his chest, unbuttoning his shirt as she did.

â Well this town doesnâ t officially have a nameâ she replied â Not much of a town actually. More like a hole. A pit of misery and despair.â

â What happened?â

â Itâ s a gang hideout Mr. Collins. A horrible nasty gang that does evil things because they are evil people. You see that little boy who was in here a moment ago? Heâ s that happiest person on earth, and even he canâ t lift the carpet of despair that covers this town.â

â I seeâ

There was a long pause as she moves the washcloth down to his stomach. â He thinks youâ ve come to save us you know? Joey. Heâ s daydreamed of heroes all his life.â

â Who says I havenâ t?â Clinton replied

â You aint in no fit shape to do any saving Mr. Collins. Besides, there are no heroes. Thatâ s just a fantasy.â

â How come you aint asked about my pistol ye like him?â

â I donâ t want you to be ruinedâ she replied as she laid the washcloth at his forehead â As far as Iâ m concerned , pistols are only good for one thing. Killing.â

â Couldnâ t I be using that to save you all here?

â Mr. Collins I already told you I donâ t believe in heroes.â

â What do you believe in?â

â Martyrsâ

The girl got up and walked off to the kitchen. She returned wit ha loaf of bread and a bowl full of a liquid that looked revolting. Itâ s not much, but itâ s all we gotâ she said handing it to him â Eat up, you wanna be full when you dieâ and wit that she left.

Clinton pondered on the statement for a moment. What could she mean? His eyes darted over to the doorway. A quick flash of black hair was all he saw. He kept watching, and ever slowly, two brown eyes peeked from behind the doorway

â Iâ m sorry mister, I was just trying to see if you wereâ ¦well if you were-â

â Itâ s okay.â He said â Come here.â

The boy walked over and sat on the bed next to him. Clinton broke his bread and put a piece in his mouth. â Do you know what your sister meant? About me dying full?

â Wellâ Joey thought on it for a minute â She probably meant when Mr. Jones comes back into town?â

â Mr. Jones?â

â The leader of the gang that runs this place

â ohâ

â He doesnâ t take kindly to strangers, and heâ ll probably kill you on the spot. He shouldnâ t be back until tomorrow anyways. Besides, itâ s not like he could defeat you.â

â What do you mean?

â Wellâ ¦youâ re a cowboy right? A savior come to rescue us like in all the stories mama tells me!â

â Maybe.â Clinton responded

â Why else would you have a gun?â

â Maybe Iâ m another bad guy?

â I donâ t think soâ

â And whys that?â

â Aint no one meaner then Mr. Jones. But like I said, he shouldnâ t be back until tomorrow.

Just then gun shot fire and the sound of horses entered the won. Loud yelling from men filled the quiet. The woman with red hair who Clinton had first seen rushed back into the room.

â Joey, stay here with Mr. Collins, and donâ t make a soundâ

Joey laid down next to the cot, an obvious look of fear on his face. The commotion outside died down. Clinton and Joey waited in silence for what seemed like an eternity before Lilly came into the room. â I think theyâ ve moved to the barâ she said, but then a thunderous knock came from the door. It shook the whole house and both Lilly and joey jumped. â Come on joeyâ Lilly said, grabbing his hand and ushering him out the doorway. Clinton listened hard to hear what was going on.

Joeyâ s whole body tightened up. He felt sweat pouring down his back. Not the heat sweat. The sweat of knowing that youâ re only chance at a hero could slip away in an instant. He winced as his mother opened the door.

â Good evening Mrs. Lutherâ said a cold, slimy voice. She opened the door further and their stood the man that made their lives miserable. He had black hair, and piercing blue eyes. He took a step into the house.

â Good evening Mr. Jones, how can I help you. Back from your trip I seeâ ¦â

â Yes, good haul.â He said glancing around â You wouldnâ t happen to have any guests would you?â

â Mr. Jones you know better then that, we donâ t get guests this far out in nowhereâ

â I am aware, but I got a disturbing report from your neighbor Mrs. Johanson that you had a guest todayâ

â You should know better than to trust the Johansons, bunch of gossipsâ James spoke out from behind his wife.â

â I am aware of that as well Mr. Luther, and I wouldnâ t tarry a second if I hadnâ t glanced upon a horse tied up behind your house. Now how do you suppose that got there?â

â It was a stray, we found it and tied it up-â Mrs. Luther started to say when the man smacked he across the face

â Donâ t you lie to me Judy! IS there or is there not a man staying in your house?â

â There isâ James replied, clutching his wife close, away from the cold hearted villain in their doorstep.

â Well you are aware of the rules correct? Four to a household. Now, unfortunately since you have adopted this new guest Iâ ll have to be commandeering one of your own.â His cold blue eyes swept the room until they met the sullen green eyes in the corner. â Ah, Lillian, you are developing into quite the beautiful young lady, why donâ t you come stay at my house for a while? Until your family getâ s things sorted out.â

â No thank you Mr. Jonesâ

â What did you say to me girl?â he growled, raising his hand towards her

â I believe the lady said noâ a low voice shot through the room. Mr. Jones looked back and beheld a man in the doorstep. He was covered in dirt, and he looked weary. An obvious cowboy type with a six-shooter on his hip.

â And who are you?â Mr. Jones said

â Clinton Collinsâ he replied, a smirk across his face.

A look of pure fear shot across his body, he instantly turned tail and booked it out of the house. Outside he began screaming for his men.

â Thank you for your hospitalityâ he said to Judy Luther â Iâ m going to repay that nowâ

Slowly he limped across the room and out the door into the town. The family was speechless, all they could do was follow and watch to see what would happen.

Outside the town was full. All one hundred people were surrounding the town center where Terrie Jones and his gang sat, pistols drawn

â I know you!â shouted one of the men as Clinton increasing in speed walked closer to the line of men.

â Collins my ass! His name is Charon!â Clinton stopped in his tracks about fifty feet from the men.

â Yes Iâ ve heard of youâ Mr. Jones said, a mixed look of confusion, fear, and hatred across his face
â Youâ re the good guy, so they say. Youâ re the heroâ

â I never said thatâ Clinton replied

â But itâ s true. Your Charon of the Westâ

â Iâ ve been called thatâ

A slow breeze blew across, the town was silently watching the scene unfold.

â Why do they call you Charon?â Jones asked

â You ever read much Greek Mr. Jones?â

â Donâ t do much reading at allâ

â Charon ferries the boat of the deadâ

â What the hellâ s that mean?â

â Meanâ s he takes people to hellâ

â You here to take me to hell?â

â Dependsâ

â On?â

â You a sinner Mr. Jones?â

In one move, Charon of the West unsheathed his pistol and fired his first shot

---

Joey was straining to see. He was behind his father, mother, AND sister. He began trying to make out the scene through words alone. He knew that Mr. Jones had four men not including himself. Also, from what he could tell, his Mr. Collins was more then just a drifter, he was a hero. Joey knew it, he had waited for him all his life and now here he was. Suddenly there was gunfire. Shots ran off in all directions. Excited, joey pushed his way through the crowd of his family. He barely made it through when the gunfire stopped. The scene he saw laid before him was not what he expected. All of Mr. Jones men had been killed, they laid face down there they previously stood, but their stood Terrie Jones. In the center, perfectly fine, and their kneeled his

hero. Blood soaking through his shirt. He screamed out in horror and ran to his fallen hero. Screaming again, Joey ripped the gun from his hands and turned it on Mr. Jones. With one well aimed shot, he hit him square in the head. He fell to the ground as did Joey. Weeping over what had just unfolded.

Lilly ran over, kneeling next to the two . She brought Joey in close as Charon fell over, onto his back, the blood now seeping through his shirt. He turned his head towards her

â You said their were no heroes, only martyrsâ

â I guess I was rightâ she replied. A bitter sad accomplishment. Tears welled up and as Clinton looked on them he could not help but smile. Her eyes sparkled. The most beautiful sight he had ever scene. This indeed was a sight he would give anything for.

As the tears fell from her cheek and onto his chest, so died Charon of the West.

Created from Booksie.com

Generated: 2015-09-04 00:48:38