

## Runner

By RJ McDerment

Running, I always seem to be running.

Since the organization went down, always running.

It's been a decade and a little now it seems, time is running out on my life, and I'm still running. I like to run, though.

I'm old now; I can barely run half as fast as I was once able to, but I'm still faster than those clowns! I can thank the organization for that.

Do I regret what I did for the organization? No, not for a second. Mainly because I can't remember most of what I did there. Could be amnesia, could be from taking a few hits, could be the side effects, the doctor said there would be side effects, I don't remember what they were, that's funny.

I do remember my better memories, I need to keep those so I remember what I'm running for. I sometimes lose them and forget to run, but I only run faster when I remember them. The one I always think of when I need to remember is the one whe-

"SIR! SIR! Your coffee! Hello!"

"Oh, so sorry ma'am, just reminiscing," I always say that when I black out. "Thank you."

I turn around and walk outside. Chilly day, hope they find me. I always run better in the cold.

I would get my wish.

When I was about halfway done my coffee, two black cars with tinted windows pulled up to the gas stop. I nearly dropped my cup with excitement.

The usual two big guys with guns got out of one car followed by a smaller guy. Not small, just smaller than the other two. The smaller one then took out a tablet and checked something and then announced something to the big guys. The other car then opened up and out came three more big guys.

Amazing how they are so much bigger than me, but I would bash their heads in a fight. Sure, I run because of that but running is fun, even if I'm older.

I'm getting impatient, so I decide I am going to instigate the conflict myself. I walk over to one of the big guys and trip him. The others look up at me and there is a moment of awkward, stunned looks from the big guys, but nothing from the smaller guy. In fact, he might have even smiled.

I then kick the big guy to my left and he falls, hard too. Might have broken his leg, I then take his gun, shoot the one I tripped in the leg, dodge a punch from a big guy and return with a blow to his head, stunning him. I then knock him out with a quick kick to the chest followed by a knee to the face. Half of them are already gone and not even a fight. The last two big guys then try to team tackle me, which I easily dodge, all while stealing the keys to one of the cars.

I jump in and fire a warning shot above the last two big guys' heads for good measure and drive away.

When I say I run, I don't mean I am actually running on foot. It's the thrill of the chase I enjoy. Winning every time is fun, too.

I've been driving for about 25 minutes, and I take a breather. I disabled the tracker on the car, so they shouldn't be able to find me. I pull over and take a nap in the backseat.

I dream of my first day with the organization. Aleksandr and I were young and perky soldiers back then, ready to serve the country.

I was never afraid of needles, but I still have nightmares about *that* needle. I wa-

"Sir. Hello sir!"

I woke up with a jolt. I looked up. A local man had noticed me in my car.

"We're gonna be closing soon, legally I can't let you stay in the lot past 11:00, there's a motel 'bout a 35 to 40 minutes drive east down the road. You can probably bunk there for the night." the kind man said.

I merely grunted and nodded my head. I wasn't happy about being woken.

I made the drive to the motel easily under 20 minutes because no one is on the road at this time of night. I pull into the driveway and turn off the car.

I consider not even checking out a room and just falling asleep in the back like I did earlier, but I decide against it.

I get up and open the door to the reception and waiting for me is the smaller agent.

He gives me a punch that no regular man could have given me, and I am propelled into a dream.

Aleksandr and I were in quarantine with each other and were getting bored. We tuned in to watch some sports and Alek got mad at something that I can't remember and nearly brought the house down with a punch to the wall.

Literally, the whole house shook.

We were both stunned. The serum wasn't supposed to have affected us until the quarantine was finished. We were excited.

Alek had a sudden burst of energy and started to randomly swing his fists around.

My adrenaline was spiking too, but before I could do anything to test my abilities, our commanding officer walked through the door and yelled at the top of his voice.

All of my energy seeped away, but clearly, Alek's did not.

He continued to swing at random until one of his punches hit the sergeant. He was knocked backwards into the door, and you could hear the crack of bone.

Everyone was stunned. Alek opened his mouth in shock. He had never been so reckless.

I forget what happened next, I always blank out at that moment. I never saw Alek again.

I woke up with another jolt. I was looking up at the smaller agent who was winding up for a punch that also seemed to come in slow motion. I attempted to block it, but I was unsuccessful, and I was thrown back into a dream.

This time I dreamed of my last mission with the organization. It was just after the Cold War had ended. The organization was determined to continue to attack through warnings. We were going to strike an American Armada off the coast of Neah Bay, Oregon.

I was skeptical about the mission but the commander only answered my questions with more questions.

We carried out the mission quietly and quickly with no casualties but it went south from there, fast.

The main ship of the Armada randomly combusted immediately alerting the U.N.

If we were discovered to still be active after the war, we would be hunted down and everything we sacrificed would be for nothing.

That day was a blur from there. Half of the team was killed in action and another quarter was captured. From what I know, I'm the only one who got out.

Something from the inside got us. We were too powerful to be taken down loudly, it came swift and fas-

I wake up from my dream with a bag on my head. In only a few seconds the bag was pulled away from my head.

I am in a warehouse, all the lights seem to be so bright; I can barely open my eyes without them burning like hell.

When I adjust to the light, I notice a black shape on my forehead, that black shape was connected to an arm, connected to a torso, connected to a face.

That black shape was obviously a gun.

I look up to see the fleeting image of my friend and then my lights go out.

Now, I run no longer.