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## The Asp

Joe Cirino  
*Nova Southeastern University*

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## **The Asp**

*Joe Cirino*

Horace Evans had finally realized what it meant to be free. Freedom was not a sandy beach, nor was it a mall and a fat wallet. Freedom was being cut off from man and society, alone with nothing but the roar of a V9 turbo-steam motorcycle in your ears and not a care in the world for laws and papers. Summer vacation was a glorious fruit and Horace Evans had found its juice too sweet to taste of but once.

No more would his professors lecture and drone on and on until the clock slowed to a standstill. Out here, the hypnotizing, arrow-straight road occupied his vision and gave him peace from all the chaos of law school.

The asphalt went on ahead of Horace, curving not once and straying never from its singular direction. The roar of his motorcycle, a Harley Demon Model IV, must have been heard for miles around. The sun slowly hit the horizon behind him as the cold New Mexico air rushed past, and in that moment Horace felt truly free.

Of course, leaving a life of torts and contracts and stuffy rooms with ailing witnesses and geriatric judges was preferable to what was about to happen, yet the budding lawyer did not know this. The desert rang with his fun, an unnatural sound, as deserts are meant by their definition to be quiet.

The bump in the road was sudden and jolting. One minute it was a smooth ride across perfect black, and the next Horace's world has turned upside down. He felt more than heard a crunch as his body hit the road, the dust kicked up by the capsizing motorcycle blinding him as his leather ripped and tore in his streaking slide.

With time, Horace regained consciousness enough to find the sun no lower than it had been previously, his motorcycle a twisted wreck a ways down the road from him.

As Horace attempted to rise to his feet, he slipped and fell to the pavement, beads of sweat dropping from his bald brow. He looked down in horror to the realization that his right leg was no more: torn, ripped, and warped flesh and muscle were all that shone through the crumpled

leather of his riding pants. A pale Citroen logo hung down over the worst of the abrasion, and as he wondered over the absence of pain, he collapsed to his back.

As he screamed in agony to the empty space of the world, that New Mexico desert where no man walks, Horace's back arched and the feeling of fleshy loss echoed through his form. His life fluid drained out onto the pavement, and a curious being came closer. Horace held out his hand as if to grasp the road for support as he cried out wordless dirges in the deafening cacophony of a dying man.

The thing drew closer, a small detachment of the road itself, its hide was black and peppered with redness as if it wept bloody tears for the man. Out in the desert and empty space, the sun was setting on Horace's life, a shining orb looking down mercilessly on the burning sands and glorious desolation.

The watcher unseen slithered closer, and licked the man's fluids. Ascertaining his condition, it raised its head to confer with the sun. Screams and yells of all the world's agonies and sorrows met its questioning stare. The sun cast a silent glare upon the scene as it sunk below the horizon fully.

So the asp relented, and bore down on the man's flesh. And the screams stopped. And the desert was quiet once more, as all deserts should be.