

“Well, I say, bring ‘em on. I’m feeling fully armed and lucky,” said Terry as he reloaded. He packed two full-loaded clips into the butts of his dual pistols. Then he tossed a loaded Uzi at his partner, Carlton, which passed right through him and clamored to the ground, passing right through him. Terry had forgotten for a second that his partner was a ghost.

“Terry, quit goofing around. You’re gonna need cover there’s...” Carlton disappeared. Terry frowned, but he shook it off. He grabbed the urine- and blood-soaked gurney and rolled it down the hallway. Then he tossed his duffle bag down the hallway after it. A piece of paper came fluttering out of the open top of the duffle bag, landing at Terry’s feet. He bent over and picked it up, unfolding it for the first time. Then he saw it. It was his birth certificate. It made him think back to his childhood. He had spent most of it in foster homes. His father may have left when he was three, but his mother had died while giving turtle birth to him. He had never known either of his parents, nor had he even known what they looked like. He found it odd that he’d be so drawn to this sheet of paper here in this hosp-

There it was. The hospital where Terry had been born was Sacred Heart. He was standing in the very hospital within which his mother had given birth to him and death to herself. Terry felt overcome with emotion. He was even nearly in the very maternity ward where she had lain the egg that would eventually produce a little Terry Turtle. He looked at the certificate and noticed something odd. Something he couldn’t quite place.

“Twenty-five!” shouted Carlton, reappearing at Terry’s side. “Why aren’t you covering? There’s twenty-five guys coming! That’s what I went to go do when I disappeared. Why are you still standing here like a dolt?”

“A dolt?” answered Terry, pocketing the piece of paper. “Tons, the nineteen fifties called and they want their insult back.” But this was no time for humor. It was time to bring the pain, in a bullet kind of way. I cocked all of the weapons, including the ones I wasn’t planning on needing, in case I needed them. I flipped the gurney over, padding toward the direction the twenty-five deadlies were coming from. Then I crouched down behind it and waited.

“Terry, I’m not sure you can make it out of this one alive,” Carlton said,

floating near me. He was making a sad Raccoon face, with his bottom lip quivering and his eyes glassing over.

“Hey, I’ve never been dead before, and I don’t plan on becoming such, as yet,” I answered, wishing I hadn’t given up smoking today. I narrowed my eyes and concentrated. I had to come out of this alive. I promised Suzanne, if she still remembered. My mind started to wander back to the orphanage where I had first met her, years ago, and made that promise.

Then Carlton said, “They’re here.”

“Shoo, ‘coon. I don’t need you obfuscating my view finder. I’ll let you know when it’s safe for the kids to come out and play,” I said, in a cool, condescending manner usually reserved for murder witnesses. I had to be hard on Tonnie. He didn’t understand being a ghost yet. He still thought he was my partner.

“Terry! Come on out and fight like a tiny, shelled woman that you are!”

I stood and turned, taking in the situation. Facing me, all with machine guns, were twelve armored men with visors. Their guns all had laser sights on them, and the thick red dots found their way to my chest and my forehead. “Careful, ladies. You’ll put someone’s eyes out,” I quipped. As I did so, I fired off both pistols, the bullets finding their way through the visors of the two endest gun-men and straight into their brain. The men collapsed into two separate dead guy heaps. Then I used my foot to flip up the gurney. It landed in front of me, standing vertical, an effective barrier between me and the bullets. Then all hell broke loose.

All the rest of the men began opening fire, the bullets shredding parts of the mattress of the gurney. I heard exclamations of “How did he do that?” and “That’s one dead turtle!” and “He’s really good at gun fights!” and “I’m making turtle soup tonight!” which I hear way too often as a butt-kicking ninja Matrix turtle detective commando. Then, all at once, the firing stopped, and I heard them all reloading at the same time. Big mistake.

I stepped around the gurney with my Uzi, and I pointed it at them. “Someone should call the EPA because I’m about to use lead-based paint,” I said as I pulled the trigger. I aimed for the visors because their armor was

tank-proof, and my gun's bullets could never penetrate it, but their face was their weak point. I used my expert pin-point skills of accuracy to find my bullets' best path to deathville. All remaining ten men dropped like ten flies.

"There. All cleaned up," I said, as I started to clean up my guns. Just then twelve more guys jumped into view. They all had acid-lined swords with poison tips and they wore cloth ninja outfits. It's a good thing I stretched today, I thought.

"Now time for the trim," I said and I bent down to peer into my bag for anything I could use. Unfortunately, I hadn't packed my ninja sword. I did, however, have a curling iron. I was going to have to make due. I used the cord of the curling iron to attach my pistol to the curling iron so that when I hit something with the curling iron it would fire the gun. "Well, now it's fair at least."

The ninja-looking guys surrounded me in the hallway, all moving their swords around in a threatening manner. I tried to make eye contact with each of them. I like to look people in the eyes before I kill them. It makes me want to kill them more. I stretched out a little, and then I waited for them to make the first move.

One guy stepped out of the circle and brought his sword down at me from behind. I quickly turned and blocked it with the iron. Then I used my foot to push him away. He was about to jab his poison-tipped sword into my gut when the gun went off. He stumbled back, and he collapsed. Then two more guys stepped out, again behind me, and I quickly turned and blocked both of their swords with the iron. The guy on the right tried to hit me again, bringing his sword around to my right side. I blocked it again, and then I shot him in the face. The other guy tried to over-the-head cut me and I blocked him again and again and again, then I hit him in the face with my hand and shot him in the chest.

Then, getting tired of the fight, I just shot the rest of the guys point blank. They all fell back, against the walls, and collapsed. Then, the first guy I shot suddenly screamed at me and charged with his sword. I waited until he was going full speed ahead, then I leapt straight into the air. I did a tuck and a flip and I landed on the other side of him. I turned and watched as his sword went

full speed into the wall. He was running so fast the the sword actually came out his back the reverse way, so the handle was sticking way out of his back, bouncing slightly. I grabbed the sword, and his body slunk to the ground. "This might come in handy."

I checked the barrel of my curling-iron-gun and I was out of bullets. I ejected the empty clip. Then I started to gather up my things again. As I reached for a new clip, a knife came soaring through the air and stuck into it, inches from my hand. I turned around to see another armored guy. This one had a huge machine gun with a trail of shells behind him. He had wrapped the shells around his shoulder like a tunic. When I met his gaze, he just smiled at me. Then he pulled the trigger.

The bullets began flying out of the gun like a stream of water from a hose. They ate away at the walls and tiles all around me. I had no shelter. I started to run toward the gurney that had been my salvation at first, but he saw this and he used his big machine gun to obliterate it. The gurney disintegrated into a puff of feathers and a twisted corpse of metal. Then he stopped. In my confusion I stopped, too, just staring at him. I didn't know what I was going to do. I just stared at him.

"3... 2... 1..." he said. Then he pulled the trigger again. Instead of running I just stood there, and time suddenly slowed down. I saw the individual bullets come out of the gun and rocket towards me. I began to lean back, my arms windmilling around me and the bullets soared above me. I had entered some sort of bullet-based time. With the sword still in my hand, I swung as hard as I could at one of the bullets. I split the bullet in half, perfectly, which then caught fire and caused the sword to catch fire. Then I flung it at the gun-man.

Normal time resumed, and the bullets stopped. The gun-man staggered for a second, looking around in confusion, then he fell over. Behind him, the sword was sticking out of the wall. Carlton reappeared. "Holy crizzapp, Terry. How did you defeat twenty-five guys single-handedly?"

"Let's just say that I'm motivated. Now, dry your eyes, little girl. We're going to find my mommy," I said, and I grabbed the duffle bag and walked the way the bad guys came. Who ever said that turtles don't swim upstream?