



## The Gunslinger, Who Is Also Named Gun Slinger

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In this experimental, humorous, and descriptive essay, Eren Hall reflects on the mysteries of dreaming through the story of Gun Slinger, an enigmatic cyborg inhabiting a surreal dream-world that is equal parts sci-fi dystopia and Wild West (with tumbleweeds—so many tumbleweeds). The essay was written for Writing I with Dr. John Bruce.

**D**REAMS PROVIDE A VIEW INTO one's own subconscious. They can reveal one's own darkest fears or greatest desires. They can be surreal or horrifyingly realistic. People dream in color and grayscale. Some dreams can be interpreted as signs, or they can be hilarious jokes to laugh at later. Recurring nightmares can keep people up at night, fearing the inevitable horror that overtakes them as the call of sleep grows stronger and stronger. Happy-go-lucky dreams of a better world beckon their viewers to hit snooze one more time. This dream that is about to be told is a story set in a fantasy world, with a twist at the end expected by no one.

Imagine the future filled to the edges with technology and cyborgs, but also with Wild West cowboys, plus an unimaginable amount of tumbleweeds. Locked away far beyond the grasp of most people's knowledge lies a school, one may call it. This school teaches

people not mathematics and history, but instead how to become immortal. The training is rumored to take decades, if not centuries, but as a reward, the students turn into a new breed of man that is nearly indestructible. They are called the Gunslingers. At the school, there is a man named Gun Slinger. Was he destined to become a Gunslinger, so his parents named him appropriately, or was his original name forgotten within the gruesome curriculum? The facts are unknown. His right arm, replaced with a robotic limb, can crush any natural or manmade substance. His torso, entrapped in an exoskeleton made of pure meteorite, is strong enough to withstand the heat of a supernova. His hair is so perfectly placed that even the gods worship him and strive for this nearly unattainable level of attractiveness. This horrifying cyborg is the first known graduate of the school, and he has an equally horrifying enemy.

The archrival of Gun Slinger, named Axel, is also a graduate of the school. In fact, he was the second. He stands seven feet tall and has strength unseen ever before from the help of his own cyborg attachments. His long black hair conceals a scar across his eye, now white and dead. This scar was given to him by Gun Slinger in an accident during training. Was this scar the reason for the rivalry? The answer is that no one actually knows. Whatever the reason for the strife, Axel is determined to make Gun Slinger pay for his grievous act. For decades, Axel had attempted to track down Gun Slinger with no avail, until March 10, 2089.

On that day, Gun Slinger was roaming the deserts that used to be ancient civilizations, as he did frequently. Axel knew from a confidential source which desert Gun Slinger would travel that day. Axel left early so he could finally see his old friend. Gun Slinger knew Axel would be there, but understood it was finally time to end this century-old conflict. They met in a valley filled nearly to the brim with tumbleweeds—so many tumbleweeds. Axel said to Gun Slinger, “You may think your training has made you immortal . . .” and before finishing, he struck forward towards Gun Slinger. Gun stood his ground, unmoving. “. . . But you cannot live . . .” Axel continued. He

sunk his sharp metallic fingers deep into the torso of Gun Slinger, who still did not flinch. He pulled apart his chest with minimal effort. “. . . Without your heart,” Axel finished. He now had Gun Slinger’s biomechanical rib cage ripped wide open, and where organs should have been was nothing. Confusion swept over Axel’s face. “Empty?” Gun Slinger laughed and reached into his chest into a secret compartment like one would find in a men’s suit jacket. He pulled out a comb and pushed it effortlessly through his hair. “That’s just where I keep my comb,” Gun Slinger said with a smirk.

This is an example of a dream filled with tension and terrifying characters who would perhaps startle anyone awake, but it ends with a laugh—a nervous, horrified laugh, but a laugh nonetheless.

Dreams have inspired people to write stories and create art ever since their origins at the dawn of human evolution. Dreams are magnificent things for humans, and I hope dogs too. Dreams will continue to bring joy and horror to their unsuspecting viewers for the rest of humanity’s existence. Whether this is something to take pleasure in or to dread is up to the individual. ►►