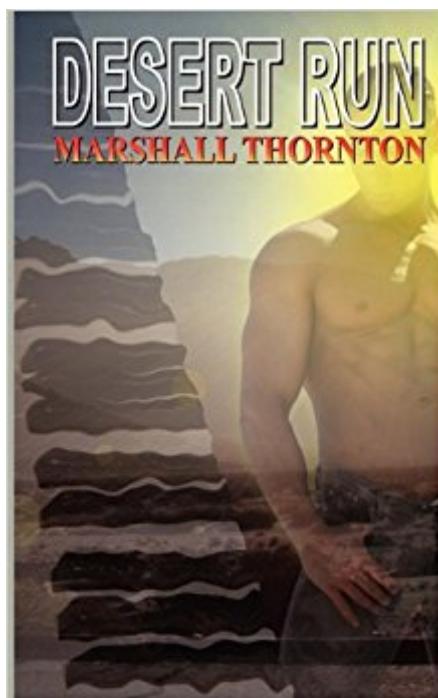


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## Desert Run



## **Synopsis**

Palm Springs, 1973. Don Harris is a piano player on the run after killing a Chicago mobster's son in a bar fight. On the lam, he meets a pretty blonde girl in town for a convention. He lets down his guard and spends the night with her only to discover she's the younger sister of his best friend all grown-up. Foolishly, she tips her brother off to Don's location, and he's on the run again, hoping to find a safe place to land. Out of money and desperate, Don accidentally walks into a gay bar where he allows a kid named Harlan to pick him up so he'll have a place to stay. As the mob chases them, Don begins to fall for the kid, putting them both in harm's way. Harlan has problems of his own, and Don knows he shouldn't get involved but he can't help but step in when Harlan gets in trouble. To save himself, Don's got to save Harlan. *Top Pick - Night Owl Reviews* *Golden Nib Award - Miz Loves Books* *Honorable Mention 2011 Rainbow Awards - Mystery/Thriller* *Honorable Mention 2011 Rainbow Awards - Best Bisexual Book*

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Awarded the Golden Nib for Books that Knock Our Socks Off!"You know when you open a book and the voice slaps you upside the head and you sit back thinking, "Yeah, this book is going to suit me!"? Well, this happened to me. The voice is friggin' great." --Miz Management - Miz Love Reviews"...I was enthralled by the fast-paced storyline...But, the main reason I loved this book is because I adored both heroes, Don and Harlan, and how their relationship developed..."

--Daisemae - Night Owl Reviews"Desert Run is a fantastic story and one that I will enjoy again."

--Kathy K at Ebook Addict"I would recommend this to those who love a more realistic

I read at least 200+ books a year. And there have been hundreds of wonderful novels among them. Then once in awhile, a book just hits all your buttons. A smart and truly decent person who seems to have answers to every problem that comes along. A former military man. The pace is fast, and the problems seem to escalate even faster. Plus, there is a surprise for our hero. Can't give that away. But, here's a hint. It's sweet and sexy. The pages will fly by. I loved this story. And what a talented writer Thornton is. It's been a pleasure.

~ \* ~ Candles, under glass with silly-looking metal hats, provided the lighting. I had to have my own piano light attached to the Steinway. They couldn't find the real thing, so they used the kind you get for an expensive oil painting. The kind you stuck on top so you could see a painting clear enough to wonder why the hell you ever bought it. ~ \* ~ I just like this passage.

That's why I included it. It's from chapter one and provides hints to our narrator's personality before much else has been revealed about him this early in the story. It also serves as a way of showing how far from this starting point Don, said narrator, ends up by the time I got to the last page of this book. He's been going through the emotional ringer most of his life and that doesn't appear to be changing any time soon. What might be changing? His outlook on it all, and his ability to continue surviving what seem to be constantly appearing pitfalls and no-win situations. Four chapters in and things are grim. I don't want to give anything away but I'll say Don is running, from his past, his mistakes, and even his (former?) best friend. He served in Viet Nam which, of course, is having lasting effects on his life back home. Guns, adrenaline, death, regrets, and hiding from all of those things take up most of his living days, and sometimes his sleeping ones. It's fascinating the way the mind works in trying to process shocks to the system. Don isn't exactly new at this but even he's surprised at some of his own reactions to the goings on around him. The way Thornton examines someone living a life like this feels all consuming while reading this. Don is feeling like there's no escape, even while running, and I felt the same way. ~ \* ~ Drank water when I was thirsty. Ate when I was hungry. Slept every so often. I even laughed at the TV shows I watched, whether they were funny or not. It surprised me that I did these things. Why not just let the pain swallow me and have done with it? But then, bigger than guilt, bigger than self-hatred, was my will to survive. I kept going. ~ \* ~ Now and then, the prose drifts into cut and dry territory, reading

more like "just the facts, ma'am, just the facts" instead of Don's showing us what was going on. This never lasted long, though, because this is Marshall Thornton and he doesn't do cut and dry anything. His characters are every-person people stuck in unusual circumstances and settings that show off just how vulnerable, hopeful, frustrated, dream-driven, and imperfect they are. This also means he doesn't shy away from the truth of any situation, and the realistic consequences resulting from them and the decisions the characters make that result in sometimes subtle but no-turning-back-now changes in the path their lives are on. All of this means I feel surrounded by the story, that inability to escape feeling. Specifically, Don had me curious the entire way through, and Harlan sprinkled me with intrigue, oh yeah. About half way through? Things took quite a turn, a quiet but definite turn, and I smiled despite the darkness and danger that still surrounded these two, and probably always would. This is a story about self-discovery wrapped in a gritty, dangerous, tenuously hopeful, frightening, packed full of surprises package, set in the 1970s with its simultaneously simple and complicated ways. The characters never wander into falsehood for the sake of moving the plot forward, which is especially fantastic since our main guys are "bad" guys who show how bad isn't one-dimensional but instead one dimension among many. The intensity pretty much never lets up and I didn't really know where things would end up. The ending is a beginning, allowing my own imagination to have its way with what comes next for Don and Harlan. The experience of reading a Marshall Thornton story is unlike any other. Book hangover, anyone?\* Originally reviewed for Prism Book Alliance

The main reason I got the book is that I live in the Palm Springs area, it takes place before I was here but many streets and locations remain. To be honest it took a few chapters for me to get into it, but I'm glad I did. Once that happened I could place a face with a name, usually a current actor - I assume many folks make a book a "movie" in their head - to me it makes it more personal, not just reading words. You definitely feel for the main characters - you may relate to one more than the other, I certainly did -- I think it is movie making worthy - good luck Mr. Thornton.

This story took me back to those films I loved. Two people on the run. One is dangerous and the other is always in danger. They have each other and make it out somehow. That's what this story was. Don, the tough guy veteran from Chicago and Harlan the kept secret lover of a Hollywood star. Don is finding out more about himself as he falls for Harlan amid murders, hitmen, and playing "My

Way" on the piano for a retired mobster.

Little Gem! This is a little gem that's rather deceiving, very complex, but wonderfully thrilling. Extremely addictive, an erotic adventure/thriller you don't see coming until it's too late - wonderful ending!

Danger, sex, gangsters and closeted movie stars in seventies Palm Springs...what's not to love? The story kind of snuck up on me when I wasn't looking and kept me in its clutches to the very end.

It was a good book to read. Not great, but good.

An enjoyable read.

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