

Marshall Swain (A Tale from the Margin)
Mikala Ash

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In the wild frontier on the Margin, even love needs the protection of the law.

Marshall Swain

The lanky, dust covered lawman sauntered into the lobby of the Handy Hotel. He set his saddle bag on the Hotel's front counter, and hit the bell with the palm of his hand.

Marguerite Handy bobbed up from behind the counter, tilted her head prettily, and batted her eyelids. "Howdy, Marshall."

Marguerite's mother appeared from a back room and shooed her flirtatious daughter away. "Morgan Swain. Well, I'll be."

"Howdy, Ruby."

"Let me look at you. How long has it been?"

"Way too long."

"What brings you to town?"

"Business, I'm afraid."

"Well, your favourite room is free. Marguerite, take the Marshall's bag to room 101."

Marguerite grabbed the key from its hook, and adroitly brushed the Marshall's arm with her left breast as she lifted the saddlebag off the counter. "Follow me," she said with a wide smile, those eyelids batting up a storm.

"First I have to visit with Sheriff Dole for a spell," he said.

"Well, every job has its dirty side," Ruby patted his shoulder in commiseration. "Get it over quick, and there'll be a big plate of Yurk steak and gravy waiting."

He laughed. "See you in a little bit."

The Spaceport township of Hubton was the terminus of three rail lines which serviced the heavy metal mines. It was the most prosperous settlement this side of the Great Divide, the mountain range that split the southern continent neatly in two.

Though curiously without a jail, the town boasted two saloons, a whorehouse, a steakhouse, and a bathhouse for the miners who descended on the town every Friday night, and a general store for the farmers. The worship house stood at one end of town, catering to the variety of religious faiths represented in the district, and the Sheriff's Office was at the other end, devoted to corruption and shady dealing.

It was as if they were poles of a magnet, the Marshall reflected, both sides of the human condition, diametrically opposed, and never able to touch.

Sheriff Dole was an odious little man; full of bluster and venom, and as crooked as a grit worm. He was re-elected every year by virtue of bought votes and the 'services' he provided to the mining companies. It would take the town time to rid itself of the likes, when the population grew too big to be bought.

A decade at least, the Marshall mused, and spat into the orange dirt. He'd just stepped onto the Sheriff office's porch when a slim, attractive woman, her face red with rage, burst from the office and barrelled into him.

"Eva!"

"Morgan?"

Deputy Anders was hot on her heels. "Stop where you are, Eva!"

The Marshall fixed Anders with a baleful glare. "What's going on?"

"Not your concern, Marshall."

Swain wrapped his arms protectively around her. "Let me be the judge."

The deputy, his hand resting on the butt of his gun, stepped onto the street. Marshall Swain pushed Eva away. "Wait over there, darlin'. Looks like the good deputy wishes to make a point."

"Morgan, no."

"Do as I say, Eva. It won't take long."

The two men glared at each other. Swain's hooded eyes betraying no emotion. Ander's cheek twitched. Towners quickly scrambled for safety off the street.

“Well, deputy? I haven’t all day.”

Deputy Anders swallowed hard under the Marshall’s unfaltering gaze. “Why Marshall,” Sheriff Dole called from his door. “Welcome to town.”

“I was on my way to see you,” Swain replied, not taking his eyes off Anders. “But your deputy here has something on his mind.”

“Anders, get your ass out to paradise like I told you.”

The deputy scowled petulantly and spat in the dirt before stomping off to his hoverbike. Marshall Swain watched him as he sped out of town leaving a trail of dust. Then he turned to Dole. “I’ll escort Eva home,” he said. “Then I’ll be back.”

Dole frowned. “I’ll look forward to it.”

They didn’t speak on the way to Eva’s bordello; The Saucy Sandworm. She led him straight up the stairs to her room. The first kiss was hard and hungry. So were the next dozen. The long absence had fuelled his desire, but Eva’s response bore the heavy weight of guilt and shame.

She broke the kiss. “I must tell you something before you hear it from... “

He kissed her, not wanting to know anything.

“There’s been someone else. I’m sorry, Morgan.”

“We have no hold on each other,” he whispered into her mouth, just before kissing her long and deep.

“I’m ashamed of myself. I used him.”

He knew she meant the Bountyman who’d captured a war criminal, the Butcher of Husin. The bloody fiend had died escaping custody, or so the report said.

“Not now. Tell me later, and after you tell me, I’ll make love to you again.

His kiss was passionate, all consuming, and she felt herself dissolve into his arms. His mouth went to the hollow of her throat, then to the cleavage between her breasts, and then he found a nipple.

The unexpected frisson of desire spurred her to undo his belt, and pull his trousers down over his hips. She deftly fished out his prick, and stroked the length into full hardness.

His cock was fat, and heavy, and she pulled back the silky hood of flesh to expose the swollen head. She dropped to her knees, taking him between her lips, running her tongue across the spongy dome. He held her face between his hands, and with lust overcoming him, he began to fuck her mouth, her hands on his ass cheeks urging him on.

“I want to be inside you,” he groaned.

Eva pulled him down on top of her, opening her thighs wide. She rubbed the head of his cock against the wet lips of her pussy, grazing her clit, and then guided him in. She sighed in welcome relief; it was as if she was a jigsaw puzzle, not quite complete, and that he was the missing piece - a perfect fit.

Morgan pushed himself all the way, and she wrapped her legs around his waist, holding him deep. She threw her head back in the sheer pleasure of having him; she kissed his neck, and tasted the salty tang of his sweat. She felt him tense, and his straining cock swelled before releasing an eruption of liquid heat. He groaned into her mouth. Her orgasm closely followed, her pussy clenching around him, caressing his shaft with soft pulsations.

Later, he rolled on his side to gaze into her eyes. His fingers circled her nipple. “So, what does Dole have on you?”

“He threatened to arrest me for murdering The Butcher.”

“The report said it was self defence.”

“I was with the Bountyman.”

He nodded, guessing the situation. Revenge, he knew, had festered in her belly all her life, making her dead inside. Now she was free. “I know that Bountyman. I thought it odd that he’d be taken by surprise.”

“I’m so sorry.”

He kissed away her tears. "Dole has guessed the truth, and now he thinks he owns you. You'll never be free of him. Come back with me, and you'll be safe."

"I've run all my life. I'm done with it."

He smiled in admiration, and kissed her again. She rolled on top of him, straddled his hips and guided his cock into her. She rode him savagely. Working out the anger she felt at herself, and that slime of a sheriff.

Swain gazed into her eyes as she took him to orgasm. As uncommitted as their relationship had been from the start, she was the love of his life, filling the deep lonely void that had been his constant companion. If anyone harmed her, he swore, they'd pay a terrible price; their life being the least of it.

He insisted she accompany him to the sheriff's office. Dole was surprised, and suspicious.

"Sheriff, you know you didn't have the authority to process that Bountyman's payments. Yet you did it."

"The prisoner's DNA scans matched the wanted poster."

"I also hear you have doubts about the circumstances surrounding The Butcher of Husin's death."

Dole's face reddened, and his eyes flicked from the Swain to Eva. "No, none at all."

Marshall Swain smiled. "I take it that the matter is now closed?"

A pained look of resignation crossed his bloated face. "It's closed."

"Good to hear. Otherwise I'd have to set up a Marshall's office in town."

Sheriff Dole blanched at the implications. The Marshall had neither the budget, nor the personal authority to follow up on that particular threat, but Dole didn't know it.

Swain, however, had one more card up his sleeve to protect Eva. He put his hand on her shoulder. "I invite you to witness the swearing in of the new Deputy Marshall for this region."

Eva was surprised, but Sheriff Dole went apoplectic, much to Morgan Swain's delight.

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