Chontal Stranger

By : Toni Roman

If you have read the Uranium West excerpts, then you know what is going on. If not, then consider this a mystery in installments.

Published on
Booksie

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He hitched his mount to the post, brushed past the swinging doors, and made his way to the long polished bar in search of a drink to wet his parched throat.

"Whiskey, rye or bourbon?"

"You got powdered booze? That Japanese stuff?"

"What kind?"

"London Gin."

"All out."

"Then I know you have champagne for all the high rollers that come through."

"What kind?"

"Extra Brut Naturale -- from Utah."

This saloon was a place of whiskey, whoring and wagering. He was a stranger in a strange land of lawmen, rail gun workers, electromagnetic launchers, mass drivers, and soldiers.

Surrounding a table playing faro and tempting fate were prospectors, outlaws, fortune hunters, professional gamblers, mountain men, trackers and scouts. Not the Boy Scout kind.

The unknown sat and nursed his drink.

"You's one of them foreigners, ain't ya? Born on Triton or maybe first back from Alpha Centauri."

He shrugged and said nothing.

"Whut kinda work you do?"

He finally answered. "Economist."

An audible sigh of relief went through the saloon.

"Micro or macro?"

"I'm a mesoeconomist."

Two dozen guns clicked as the owners pointed in his direction.

"Get a rope."

As they hustled the foreign devil to the scaffolding and put the hangman's noose about his neck, he protested too much. As if in explanation for their action, the lawman said: "We're the sons of Thomas Schelling and Robert J. Barro."

"Game theory is one thing but we don't believe in no damn evolutionary concepts." said a mountain man.

"It's for your own good."

"You blame me for the recession?"

"Nah, we's just funnin'."

Meetings of the Solar System Economists Society tended to be wild and initiations into the group even wilder. University schools of economics would have nothing to do with them and so to support themselves and their research, they got second jobs wherever they could find them and ended up in backwaters like Ceres, Mercury and even the moons of Uranus.

However, this was not in the Uranine Subsystem. This was Ganymede, the largest moon of the largest planet. And not the nice parts either. This was the red light district of Boomtown, where the lawless and the lawmen had an uneasy truce. The law might condone lynch mobs but lynch mobs usually hung an innocent more often than the law miscarried justice.

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