



A New Sheriff in Town

Chapter 1

By Drake Koefoed

Kevin Rayburn had asked his landlord about a break on leaving early, and he said no. The same landlord who had not painted, replaced the carpets, or the electrical cover plates as he had promised 10 years before.

Danny ate his burger slowly. “You might as well go stay with me in Rabbit, Texas. He will never give your security deposit back, and you know all that. It’s not like there is work here.”

Kevin took the hint, and had a yard sale. He sold his stuff down to what would fit in the pickup. A working man’s life savings. He drove all day and night, and arrived at Danny’s place. He went to sleep on the couch. In the morning, he went to ask about a job at the feed store. They told him the job was already filled. Kevin left, and started walking to the grocery store. They were not advertising, but he could do with something to eat anyway.

He was just about to the store when he heard a shriek, and saw a girl of about 14 being grabbed by a fat guy of 40 or so. He ran over.

“Let go of her.”

“I’ll do whatever I like to a Mexican, whoever you are.”

“You’re under arrest for assault.” Kevin took the guy to the ground.

A police car drove up, and the Chief of Police was driving. He arrested Kevin. The fat guy was the Chief’s brother, and he was let go. Kevin was taken to the jail. In the morning, he appeared in court on a charge of disturbing the peace. The courtroom was packed, and the average color of the crowd was brown. Aaron Shapiro, of the Southern Poverty Law Center, appearing pro bono, was able to get the Court of Rabbit, Texas, to release Kevin on his own recognizance. Kevin left in the company of Danny, Aaron, and another man unknown to him, Juan Rodrigues. They went to a disused farm on the outskirts of town. Juan unlocked the gate, and they drove up to the old farmhouse.

“Kevin, I am Juan Rodrigues. I own this farm. It is a small one, only 80 acres. May I show it to you? I wish to offer it for sale.”

“Sure.”

They drove around the perimeter. The land was mostly rolling plains with mesquite and prickly pear. They toured the outbuildings. A large barn built long ago, and a workshop of modern construction, metal walls and roof,

with some tools and machines in it. The house was very old, and showed signs of roof leakage. The kitchen had a refrigerator, from which they got a bottle each of Dos Equis. The water ran in the sink, and the lights worked. The house had three bedrooms, two micro bedrooms, and two bathrooms. They adjourned to the living room. “Kevin, would you like to buy this farm?”

“I don’t have the money, I don’t think.”

Juan put a stainless Smith and Wesson L frame revolver with a Hogue grip on the table. It was chambered for .44 S&W Mag. Alongside it, he put a holster and a concealed carry permit, issued by Sheriff Gonzales. “This gun is a gift to you, as a token of my appreciation for protecting my grand daughter, Lucinda. If you want the farm, you can buy it for \$30,000, no interest, and pay \$300 a month. I doubt you will get a job with the Chief of Police as an enemy, but I will pay you \$10 an hour to work for me, or my family. There is one more requirement. You must run for Chief of Police.”

“I would not be anyone’s Chief. I would arrest Hispanics just as soon as anyone.”

“Sergeant Rayburn, we don’t want a black Chief. We don’t want a hispanic Chief. We don’t want an anglo Chief. We want an honest Chief.”

“I thought Chief of Police was selected by city councils.”

“It is elected here in Rabbit.”

“You knew I was an MP.”

“I kind of think a guy who can arrest a soldier and take his M-16 can enforce the law here in Rabbit.”

“I think that’s right.”

* * *

Friends of Juan brought furniture, appliances, and everything else you could imagine to the farm house. Things Kevin did not think needed painting were painted. Things Kevin thought were clean were cleaned. The house was brought into conformance with a standard Kevin would not be able to understand. Kevin was chased out so needed work could be done. A Jewish mother could not have done better.

* * *

Kevin took to the streets in the morning. He began with the stores.

“Ma’am, I am Kevin Rayburn. I’m running for Chief of Police. Do you have a moment?”

“Yes, Sir. I have supported Chief Robin Jackson for a very long time, and do not wish to change.”

He got quite a few of those, and it did seem that it was on racial boundaries.

He put the issue in the open with some, and was able to get people to say they were not against Hispanics, but against illegal aliens, for instance, which most Hispanic Texans are also against.

He got some work at night that allowed him to campaign during the day.

He was plowing fields and such. Not cultivating, or any sort of skilled work like that.

A cigar chewing guy who sounded like he was from New Jersey came, wanting to dig a borrow pit for rock. He dug a huge hole in the low corner of the farm, put his rock in trucks, and left a huge mess. Juan's cousin trenched drainage to it with a ditching plow. When it rained, Kevin put bluegill in the pit, now a stock pond. They were a renowned variety that came from the Nowhere, Texas quarry. Legend had it that the fishes were descended from the habituates of Texas stock ponds, selected personally by the billionaire businessman Tom Hearn. If you kept on with the legend, the fishes were in some way enhanced by beautiful women who swam naked in the enormous stock pond at night. The pond was a fact. That it was larger than an Olympic swimming pool could be verified on Google Earth. The women were a plausible detail, but the fishes were a fact. They were pretty, they ate bugs like nobody's business, and they tasted great on the barbecue.

Kevin's neighbors plowed his field for him, and they lost the bills for the work. A little guy named Alberto fixed up Kevin's tractor, and charged him very little.

Kevin was threatened in the grocery store, followed on the highway, and watched at his farm. He didn't do anything about all that, and it seemed it made it slow down.

Juan Rodrigues came to visit, and brought some friends. After a while, they got started on some entertainment at the little farm. Kevin would propose an animal or something, and everyone would be asked to contribute.

“Best thing about armadillos.”

“They eat ants.”

“Born dead by the side the road.”

“They don't pee on your flowers.”

Juan brought Lucinda Rodrigues to the evenings. Luci, as they called her, seldom spoke, but she would giggle when someone said something funny.

Her mother, Rachel Rodrigues, came once in a while. Luci's father was long gone, and it seemed Juan wanted his pretty daughter to take an interest in Kevin, but she did not.

The days went by, and Kevin did little about the election but going by the houses of the people who had been against him. He pushed the issue of honest law enforcement gently, and got good comments. When the election finally came, Kevin blew Robin out of the water.

Kevin called a meeting of the 3 officers.

“Guys, the first order of business is, who is leaving?”

Nobody was.

“Is anyone going to let racial crap interfere with your enforcement of the law?”

Jessica said, “No.”

Ralph looked at Eddie. Eddie said, “As you know, I am ex Special Forces.

You were a Marine MP, and maybe we understand a few things. We’re done with the Klan thing, and all of that. I want a professional department, and I think we all do.”

Everyone raised his or her hand. Kevin nodded. “Ralph, you are maybe a little bit black?”

“I’m black, dude. There is no little bit about that.”

“Do you think there are black bigots?”

“Yep.”

“So we have a tactic here. We have our black officer criticize the black bigots, our Hispanic officer criticizes the Hispanic bigots, and us white guys criticize the white bigots.”

Jessica waved her hand. “We are rid of Robin. The racial shit is not a concern any more. What we do have is decades of lousy law enforcement, piss poor crime scene control, and such. You gonna change that?”

“You bet. I’m an old school grab the gun and put the guy on the ground MP, but we are going to move this department into a high tech sophisticated

scientific world.”

Sharon, the dispatcher, told them they had a domestic disturbance.

“Who is on?”

Jessica said, “You and Ralph. But we are all here. Let’s all go. Work together.”

“Right on.”

They came, they took the guy into custody, and that was it. Perhaps an impression being made by four cops with shotguns.

In the evening, Ralph had the duty. Jessica and Eddie came over to have dinner with Kevin. Juan Rodrigues came, too. He brought Rachel and Lucinda. They had a few beers at the pond, and talked a bit.

Juan brought a basket over to Kevin. It was full of kittens.

“They are weaned. Your mousing crew, if you want them.”

Kevin ran his hand over the little cats. Juan could see by the way he petted them that he thought them precious. “I do want them. I will take good care of them.”

When they took command of the house, they would be named. Thus they became, in time;

Males;

Grey. A pure grey tom.

Mauser. A brown tom.

Ghost. A crème white tom.

Doc, a tabby who had a propensity for licking cuts.

Females;

Spots. A mottled brown with yellow spots

Marcie. A dainty Siamese looking cat, named for Marcie Della

Li Li. A pure black named for the legendary merc, Li Li Sondermeyer.

Kevin was very impressed with the gift of the kittens. He wanted to do something to lighten things up, and Lucinda came up with it.

“If you were an animal, what one would you be, and why?”

Rachel would be a sparrow, because they had fun.

Jessica would be an eagle, because they were so cool.

Eddie would be a meercat, because they were so funny.

Juan would be a fox, because they always had one up on you.

Kevin would be a sperm whale, diving two miles deep.

They went out to the workshop to look around. Kevin had put a few tools on the wall, but basically, it was an open space with benches. There was a little table saw, and an ancient drill press. A wood lathe stood on a metal stand. All around was junk. Juan said his brother, Pedro would tow an old station wagon over with his wrecker, and Kevin could put all the steel junk he did not want into it, before it took its final ride to the car crusher.

They went out to the pond. Juan threw a few pieces of bread into the water, and the bluegill attacked them.

“Kevin, my nephew Alvin can run an electric line out here from the house.

Put some bug lights here over the pond, set them to run when the temperature is warm and the night is dark. The bugs will fall into the pond, and your fishes will eat them.”

That got done.

As the evening deepened, they brought out lawn chairs, and watched the moon and stars. They talked about garden crops. The land was known for squash and sometimes corn. Kevin also planned ornamental sunflowers and cosmos. The obsolete wood stove would be replaced by a custom setup designed by a welder, Rudi Hernandez. Rudi would build a stove that went through the wall, with doors on the inside and outside. It would take its air from outside, but controlled from inside. It would have doors so it could be fed from either side. Stove lids would allow cooking inside the house, or outside. A small oven would allow baking in the house. There was also a wood furnace outside in a shed, that nobody knew much about.

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Chief Jackson had done almost no real work, spending his time socializing with friends.

The opinion of the officers was that the Chief did not really need to be on the street much, except for such things as backup on high risk arrests.

Kevin changed the socializing time for taking reports on minor crimes. He let his officers spend their time on the street where they wanted to be, and he took reports for every stolen bicycle and every broken window. At first, it did not seem to work. But as his knowledge of his community increased, he began to solve the little cases and his officers solved the big ones because the department knew what was going on. Kevin was quietly everywhere. People did not object to him doing things off time, because the entire department was part time, but they were a little surprised when he enrolled on the substitute teacher list.

“I am Kevin Rayburn. I am the Chief of Police, but today I am going to teach you algebra.”

“Good Morning, Mr. Kevin.”

“Good morning to y’all. Now, I see that we are doing fractions and algebraic simplification today. This is really easy stuff, and I am sure you can all do well at it. Did you want me to solve some of the problems?”

They did, and he did.

“Let’s make a harder problem. What’s the scariest thing ever?”

“Grizzly bear.”

“White Shark.”

“T. Rex.”

“All right, guys, you know what is way scarier than any of those things? A Marine heavy machine gun team. Who can be a T. Rex?”

George volunteered.

“Now we need some Marines.”

There were volunteers, as the Corps has always found. Maybe you can be one of them. Paul took a broom, and he was the gunner. Michelle got on his left with a lunch box, as the loader. Bill stood behind Paul as the assistant gunner.

“All right. Mr. Rex, if you will give us a roar, please. Great. Now, Sergeant Paul, if you will open fire, please. That’s good. Mr. Rex, at this point you die. Sorry about that. Now if everyone will take their desks, let’s see what we have.”

“The Rex was a big bad guy, but the Marines took him out. It took three of them. One to shoot, one to direct the shooter, and one to load. So we had a ratio of three Marines to a Rex. That is one third, like it says on the board.

So how many Marines do I need if there are two Rexs?”

“Six.”

“I need two machine gun teams. Right. If I have 24 eggs I need to put in boxes of a dozen, how many boxes?”

“2.”

“Everybody sees that? These things are ratios. So many of this to so many of that. That’s all a fraction is. There are three teaspoons to a tablespoon.

So that is a ratio of three. Or you could say there are one third of a tablespoon to a teaspoon. It’s the same thing.”

“Chief Rayburn, have you ever fired a heavy machine gun?”

“I did, in Iraq.”

“Did you ever kill someone?”

“If I answer that question, will all of you do your algebra homework so that Miss Allen will be pleased tomorrow?”

The class promised.

“I did.”

“How many? What’s it like?”

“You guys already got the answer we agreed on. If I sub for you again, you can buy another question. For now, we need to do your algebra for the day.

Does anyone want to tell me why algebra is probably the most important course you will take in high school?”

* * *

Juan came over one evening, and brought burritos, beer, papayas, and his nieces, Annabel and Marissa. They went out to the pond, and sat in lawn chairs. The bug lights were in operation. The tractor that had dug the post holes for the lights sat next to the post with the electric panel on it, waiting

to dig some more. One of Juan's many friends had towed over a rusted up trailer barbecue. A small fire burned in it, cooking a few vegetables and such. They sat close to it taking advantage of the warmth of the fire in the cool early spring evening.

"What matters to you, Kevin?"

"Principles."

"Cold fodder."

"I can't change that, I don't think."

"No. It may be what people like about you. They want someone to protect them, maybe not the same person they hang out with."

"You seem to have bridged the gap."

Annabel said "Nobody in the real world is a Western movie hero. Real people might like cats. They might like Spanish girls. There is no telling."

"It's possible for a Police Chief to like cats and Spanish girls, even."

They spent a nice evening sitting around the pond, which was soon to have a gravel patio with a metal roofed shade awning beside it. When the bug lights came on, the bluegill ate well.

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There were some burglaries around, and Kevin bought a fingerprint kit. It came with a book and all, and looked a little mickey mouse, but juries didn't laugh. Kevin started fingerprinting the scenes. He found upside

down fingerprints on window sills where the glass had been broken inward, indicating entry. He did not get any matches on the FBI's AFIS, Automatic Fingerprint Identification System. He got the local sporting goods store to loan him a deer camera, and was lucky enough to get a pic of the suspect.

Officer Eddie recognized the perpetrator, and from there, the burglar's fortunes took a turn for the worse. Kevin got a warrant. The burglar had things from various burglaries in his possession. Kevin had his fingerprints.

The burglar went down on several counts. He gave up several crime partners to reduce his sentence. He offered to give up his drug suppliers to Kevin, saying they were the cause of his problems. Kevin thought his own unwillingness to resist impulse was his problem, but he did take the evidence against the meth supplier and bagged that one. The ones who had sold marijuana got a little Kevin lecture about how alcohol causes more criminal behavior than all other drugs combined, marijuana was an essentially harmless herb, but someone who sold pot in Rabbit to kids would be in for some trouble. A seller of pot who considered adding white drugs to his inventory would be in for a lot of trouble.

The ground warmed in spring, and a neighbor named Ellis Williams ripped Kevin's field with a bulldozer. Kevin was going to prepare it with his own little tractor, but Juan had him get it all done with a huge tandem disc machine that was doing a lot of work in the area. That was followed by the

same machine planting 8 rows at a time, and putting in corn along the north line, and then squashes of various types, and melons nearer the house. The little tractor could cultivate. Juan could find buyers for produce. Kevin would make a little money on it all. He got connected to a network of produce and food suppliers. He no longer went to the grocery store for meat or most vegetables. His milk came from down the street a little bit. The usual gang came after dinner to hang out around the pond. Ellis, the bulldozer contractor, Juan, Annabel, and a varying group of visitors, most of whom supplied kids who ran around the stock pond until they had made a road. The cats made regular appearances, especially at the frequent barbecues. Grey and Mauser patrolled regularly. Mauser justifying his name with an incredible number of mice caught, though he had not been born in Germany. Doc and Marcie were confirmed lap cats. Li Li prowled in the darkness. Ghost startled people when they suddenly saw him in the dark. Spots developed the not so desirable ability to catch fishes off the little dock at the pond.

One day at lunch, Kevin saw a hawk hovering over the yard. Mauser was there. Kevin grabbed a shotgun and put two rounds of high load bird shot in it, and ran out into the yard. The hawk came down, Mauser came up, and grabbed the hawk out of the air. Mauser got some hydrogen peroxide out of it, the hawk became a feather collection.

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