



## CHAPTER ONE

# DRAW, SHERIFF

It was high noon on a boiling hot summer day in Muleshoe.

On the dusty main road, Sheriff Tuff Brunson squared his shoulders. He stood ramrod straight as he faced “Big Nose” George Parrot, the meanest outlaw in the Wild West.

Tuff stared straight into the vicious outlaw’s bloodshot eyes. “I won’t tolerate teenage gang members in this town,” Tuff said, in a voice barely above a whisper. “Drop your gun and walk away. Now.”

Big Nose George wiped the sweat from his brow. “Draw,” he growled through his black-stained yellow teeth. “Muleshoe don’t have room for the both of us.”

Tuff curled his fingers around his bullwhip, hoping he would be lucky with it again this time.

“Look out, you dirty outlaw, here comes Sheriff Tuff Brunson!” he cried as he whirled the bullwhip out.

“CRACK!” He whipped Big Nose George’s gun from its holster.

“Don’t mess with the fastest whip in the West,” Tuff said, hiding his relief.

Deputy Dan Pigeon pounced on Big Nose George and pulled his arms up tight behind his back.

“Put handcuffs on that ugly bandit then throw him in jail,” Tuff said as he waved his bullwhip in the air. “Be careful he doesn’t try anything sneaky.”

“Nice one,” said Tuff’s deputy Sadie



Marcus, as she smiled at him from beneath her wide-brimmed hat. She watched from the veranda of the Happy Days Saloon. "He didn't even get close to his six-shooters. Hey, look out, Tuff."

Tuff heard the scrape of boots on dust behind him. He whirled around. Big Nose George had tried to wrestle the handcuffs away from Deputy Dan.

"CRACK!" Tuff's whip leapt out. The whip curled and snapped as it wrapped in a knot around Big Nose George and pinned his arms to his side.

"Now that rascal is roped good and tight, cuff him up," Tuff said.

Deputy Dan yanked Big Nose George's wrists together, shoved them into the handcuffs and clicked them shut.

"Look at this," laughed Deputy Dan as he took Big Nose George's six-shooters away. "He didn't even have bullets in his guns. He forgot he was in a gunfight."

"I'm not surprised," said Sadie. "The Parrots are dumb."

"You might have got me now, Sheriff Brunson, but you won't keep me long in that chicken-pen jail of yours," hollered Big Nose George. "My sister 'Tiny Nose' Peggy has got a big surprise for you. You and your snotty-nosed dep-u-ty are gonna get what you deserve."

"It's not a chicken pen, it's a parrot pen. See ya later, Big Mouth Parrot," Tuff laughed, as he rolled up his whip and hung it on his belt.

"Crime doesn't pay, does it?" said Sadie with a grin. "Poor Big Nose George. He's not as scary as he thinks. Let's go get a sarsaparilla. Judge June will be in the saloon. She might have a job for us."

As Tuff and Sadie walked toward the saloon doors, the tiny cowboy poet appeared at the end of the veranda. "Look, Tuff, there's our little singing friend," Sadie

whispered. The little cowboy sat in his old rocking chair, his boots propped up on the rail, as he sang,

*Big Nose George will cry  
Since he's back in jail  
But the Parrots know  
It's not the end of the tale*

*An army of outlaws  
Threatens Muleshoe  
Unless help arrives  
What will the kids do?*

“Hey, cowboy –” Tuff started to say, but the tiny cowboy had disappeared.

Tuff and Sadie pushed open the batwing doors and walked into the noisy Happy Days Saloon.

The saloon was crowded with Muleshoe children eating lunch. The air smelled of *cabrito* – barbecued goat. Judge Junia “June”

Beak had one arm propped on the wooden bar as she talked with Toothless Tom, the bartender.

Tuff and Sadie weaved their way through the tables to Judge June, who raised her hand to stop them. “There’s not time for a sarsaparilla,” she said. “I have a job for you. Someone very important is coming to Muleshoe and I need to make sure he gets here safely. Let’s go over to the hut and talk. There are way too many ears listening around here.”

Tuff saw “Little Nose” George Parrot at a nearby table.

“What are you doing here, birdbrain?” Tuff said to him. “Would you like to join your big brother in the bird cage?”

Little Nose George took off his filthy black hat as he glared at Tuff. “You’re no worry to The Parrot Gang,” he snarled. “My brother will be out of jail before you can say ‘boo’. Me and my sister Tiny Nose Peggy are

about to take over this town. We've got an outlaw army."

"Oh, go jump in a lake, 'Little Brain' George," said Judge June. "C'mon kids, let's get over to the hut."