



## CHAPTER ONE

# APRIL FOOLS

It was a warm spring afternoon in the Wild West Texas town of Muleshoe.

Sheriff Tuff Brunson nodded off in his rocking chair. He had just finished a delicious lunch of tacos and burritos.

As Tuff fell asleep, he heard the tiny cowboy poet singing. The song drifted in through the jailhouse window:

*Chief Black Bear's gang  
Trapped a Mountain Man  
Though the gang was small  
They had a great plan*

*'Cause the giant Mountain Men  
Have just one scare  
They fear nothing in the world  
'Cept a giant grizzly bear*

Just behind Tuff, locked inside a cell, was the meanest outlaw in the Wild West, “Big Nose” George Parrot. Big Nose George was sound asleep too.

“BAM!” “SLAM!” “KERPOW!” came a pounding on the door to the jailhouse.

“What the -?” Tuff said as his eyes struggled open.

“What made that noise?” he said to Deputy Dan, his assistant jailer. “Open the door and let’s have a look.”

Deputy Dan let out a loud “SNORE!” and stayed fast asleep in his own rocking chair. Deputy Dan always ate twice as many tacos and burritos as Tuff. His snore was soon followed by a loud “BURP!”

*Amazing. He even burps in his sleep,* thought Tuff.

“You’re impossible to wake up,” Tuff said to Deputy Dan. “Sadie!” he yelled.

Deputy Sadie Marcus ran into the room from her jailhouse office.

“Did you hear that noise?” Tuff asked her.

“Of course I did,” said Sadie. “Someone, or something, was pounding on the door. Let’s have a look outside and see what’s going on.”

“Is your bullwhip ready?” Tuff asked.

“Yep,” Sadie said as her fingers curled around the handle of her whip.

Tuff checked the leather bullwhip hanging from his belt before he carefully cracked the door open. He and Sadie peeped outside.

“Good afternoon,” said a voice from somewhere near the door. “Would you like to buy some cakes today?”

“No, we don’t want any cakes,” Tuff said, looking around.



Peggy Parrot, the youngest member of the outlaw Parrot Gang. “Nah, nah, ha, ha, Happy April Fools’ Day, ’cept we’re not your friends and we don’t care if you’re happy.”

“Listen, you pretty Parrots,” said Tuff. “Get this net off us right now or you’ll spend the rest of your lives eating bird food, locked up inside the jail with your smelly brother.”

“We’ll see who’s gonna be locked up, Sheriff,” said Little Nose George. “Peggy, grab the keys off Deputy Dan and let’s do a jail cell switcheroo. Big Nose George out, the two Dep-u-ties in.”

“Wake up, Deputy Dan,” Tuff yelled. “We need your help.”

“SNORE!” came the reply from Deputy Dan’s rocking chair. “BURP!”

Peggy and Little Nose George headed into the jailhouse.

“I don’t know, Sadie,” Tuff said. “Even an explosion couldn’t wake up Deputy Dan!”

*Wait. Explosion.* Tuff remembered something very important. He smiled to himself.

“Hang on, Little Nose Peggy-Bird brain,” Tuff said. “Deputy Dan doesn’t have the keys. They’re in my desk drawer.”

Tuff grinned as Tiny Nose Peggy and Little Nose George jumped over to the desk and yanked the drawer open.

“POP!” A booby trap exploded, spraying sleeping gas in the two outlaws’ faces. They quickly fell to the ground, fast asleep from the gas.

“What the -?” said Deputy Dan as he leapt out of his chair. “Tuff, why are you and Sadie wrapped up in a net?” he asked, rubbing his eyes.

“You were wrong, Tuff.” Sadie smiled. “An explosion *did* wake up Deputy Dan.”

“Get this net off us, Deputy Dan,” Tuff said. “Let’s tie up those two clipped Parrots before they fly around causing more of a ruckus.”