

COW-NAPPED!

by Steph DeFerie

Box 8
Harwich, MA 02645
508-240-0193
bunrabbit99@gmail.com

Characters

Sheriff Andy, the sheriff
Miss Ellie Belle, owner of the Red Eye Saloon
Big Jim, owner of the Lazy B Ranch
The Crimson Kid, an outlaw
Miss Margaret, Big Jim's wife

Tumbleweed Gulch, a town in Texas in the mid-1800's

Sheriff Andy's Jail
A pasture on the Lazy B Ranch
The Red Eye Saloon

COW-NAPPED!

The Sheriff's office in Tumbleweed Gulch, Texas, mid-1800's. All that's needed is a desk and a chair, maybe a standing unit of a door made of vertical bars to indicate a cell door. Stuck on the front of the desk is a large wanted poster for "The Crimson Kid" with a drawing of his face - HE has a big mustache and wears a distinctive black or red hat.

AT RISE: SHERIFF ANDY is sitting in his chair at his desk cleaning his gun.

SHERIFF ANDY

Don't know why I even bother t'clean this old pistol. Things're pretty peaceful here in Tumbleweed Gulch. Oh sure, there might be a hold-up at the bank two, three times a week. And I gotta allow we do have more'n our share of gun fights on Main Street. And you might say train robberies, claim jumping and attacks on the stage coach are fairly common occurrences round these parts and you wouldn't be wrong. But other than that, Tumbleweed Gulch is a quiet, sleepy little town. It's awful boring being sheriff. (Suddenly standing and drawing and then looking at the gun) Especially since sometimes a fella likes to use his brains instead of his bullets.

Enter MISS ELLIE BELLE with a basket covered with a white napkin. The napkin bears a large black image of a cow.

MISS ELLIE BELLE

Don't shoot, Sheriff Andy! It's just me bringing your lunch!

MISS ELLIE BELLE shakes out the napkin, tucks it in under SHERIFF ANDY's chin.

SHERIFF ANDY

Beg your pardon, Miss Ellie Belle. I surely wouldn't want to put any bullets in the best cook in the territory. How's everything over at the Red Eye Saloon?

MISS ELLIE BELLE

Pretty quiet. We've only had three fights this whole morning. Hardly worth getting out of bed fer.

SHERIFF ANDY

I'm sure things'll pick up this evening once the boys start coming into town ready to spend their pay.

Enter BIG JIM, a rancher.

BIG JIM

Sheriff Andy! Thank goodness you're here! Buttercup's gone missing!

MISS ELLIE BELLE

Oh, my!

SHERIFF ANDY

Now just calm down there, Big Jim...

BIG JIM

Don't you tell me to calm down! She's missing and you've got to find her! I love her!

SHERIFF ANDY

Your spread is mighty big. Are you sure yer wife ain't just out riding the north forty?

MISS ELLIE BELLE

Sheriff, Buttercup isn't his wife. His wife's name is Miss Margaret.

SHERIFF ANDY

I just thought Buttercup might be a little pet name he had fer her. Well, I'll bet Buttercup is home right now, curled up on yer bed...

BIG JIM

I surely hope not - Buttercup is my special cow, my beautiful beloved heifer!

SHERIFF ANDY

What's so special about her?

BIG JIM

Everything! She's smart and loving and graceful and she smells mighty nice...

MISS ELLIE BELLE

Not to mention delicious-looking.

BIG JIM

Don't you go calling my Buttercup delicious-looking! She is fer pettin', not fer eatin'!

MISS ELLIE BELLE

I'm just saying...

BIG JIM gives MISS ELLIE BELLE a black look. SHE exits with his basket.

BIG JIM

You should search his saloon first thing! Miss Ellie Belle's probably got poor Buttercup tied up in her kitchen right now just waiting to be turned into dinner!

SHERIFF ANDY

Now you know if there's one thing I won't tolerate here in my town, it's a cattle rustler. That's a hanging offense and a mighty serious charge to go making against Miss Ellie Belle.

BIG JIM

I'm just saying...

SHERIFF ANDY

Where did you see Buttercup last?

BIG JIM

In her pasture in front of my house at the Lazy B Ranch last night. I polished her special engraved cow bell, fed her some apples and read her a story just like I do every night before I go to bed....(tearfully) and when I went out to give her breakfast this morning, she was gone!

SHERIFF ANDY

Someone else could have stolen his, you know. This territory is crawling with cattle thieves. (HE indicates the "Wanted" poster) The Crimson Kid, fer one.

BIG JIM

The Crimson Kid hasn't been seen in these parts fer weeks. He didn't do it.

THE CRIMSON KID enters and begins skulking around.

SHERIFF ANDY

How can you be sure?

BIG JIM

Why would a rustler steal just one cow? They'd make off with the whole herd. No, this ain't no common rustler. It's somebody else. (Taking out a wad of bills) There's a big reward in it fer ya when she's returned safe and sound but if anything's happened to her, well, I won't be responsible fer my actions.

SHERIFF ANDY

Now, don't worry - whoever's behind it, you can rest assured I'll find Buttercup. You jest get on over to the Red Eye and apologize to Miss Ellie Belle.

THE CRIMSON KID exits.

BIG JIM

Aw, do I gotta?

SHERIFF ANDY

I'm afraid so.

BIG JIM exits.

SHERIFF ANDY

(Taking off the napkin) This is serious. I'd better go round up the boys and...wait a minute! All my deputies have gone over to Tombstone for the big rodeo! Darn! I can't do this alone. (To audience) I don't suppose any of you folks would like to help. (Waits for reply) Really? Say, that's swell. I better swear you all in as my deputies to make it official. Raise your right hands... your other right hands and repeat after me. "I," your name, yeah, that one never gets old, does it, "do solemnly swear... to help Sheriff Andy... in his lawful duties." Now blow a raspberry and make it legal. (HE blows a raspberry) So now I expect all of you to be on the watch for any clues and point out anything I might miss.

THE CRIMSON KID enters and begins skulking around.

SHERIFF ANDY

I'm depending on you to see the things that I don't.

A plant might start the audience shouting out that The Crimson Kid is right behind SHERIFF ANDY.

Of course, when SHERIFF ANDY turns around, THE CRIMSON KID hides. When SHERIFF ANDY turns back to the audience, THE CRIMSON KID pops up again, etc.

SHERIFF ANDY

Really? The Crimson Kid? And you saw him before? You're sure? He hasn't been around here in a while. I don't see him. Maybe you're mistaken. Where? (etc.)

Finally, THE CRIMSON KID exits.

SHERIFF ANDY

So the Crimson Kid is here in Tumbleweed Gulch, eh? He must be up to something - keep your eyes peeled and let me know if you see him again. Now, back to Buttercup. Where should we start looking? Where's the best place to begin searching for any missing thing? (Waits for answer) Right - the last place it was seen. So in this case, I guess that would be...(waits for answer)...right, Buttercup's pasture out at the Lazy B. Saddle up and I'll meet you out there.

SHERIFF ANDY puts the chair on the desk and pushes desk off as HE exits.

Buttercup's pasture. All that's required is a bush or two, maybe a bit of fencing. Caught in one of the bushes is one of MISS ELLIE BELLE's napkins - white with a black cow on it.

Enter MISS MARGARET.

MISS MARGARET

(Calling) This is Buttercup's pasture over here, Sheriff. (Pointing) She has her own barn over there and her own pond over there and that's her apple tree and that's her hay pile.

Enter SHERIFF ANDY.

SHERIFF ANDY

She sure has a good life, Miss Margaret.

MISS MARGARET

You can say that again. My husband spares no expense when it comes to Buttercup's happiness. Sometimes I think he loves that old heifer more'n me.

SHERIFF ANDY

I'm sure that's not true. I bet he loves you very much.

MISS MARGARET

Well, he used to. The first time he met me, he gave me a silver dollar with a heart carved on it. We were in a saloon and he was playing in a high-stakes poker game and he said I'd stolen his heart so he was paying me to get it back. Don't you know I still have that silver dollar?

SHERIFF ANDY

That's awful sweet.

MISS MARGARET

But ever since he got Buttercup, he spends all his free time with her. It's not fair. A woman, I can fight against but how can I compete with a cow? Stupid cow.

SHERIFF ANDY

Was anything else stolen?

MISS MARGARET

Nope. Buttercup is the only thing missing.

SHERIFF ANDY

Yer husband's in town. Maybe you should find him and let him know how you feel.

MISS MARGARET

Maybe. I'll have to think on that. I got my pride, you know.

MISS MARGARET exits.

SHERIFF ANDY

(To audience) What do you think, partners? It just looks like a regular old cow pasture to me... (HE "steps" in manure, scrapes his boot off)...and with everything you usually find in a cow pasture. P-ew!!! There are lots of prints here in the dirt but nothing out of the ordinary. Do you see any clues around here? (HE waits for audience to point out the napkin and picks it up, showing it to the audience) Whoa! What's this? This looks familiar. Where have we seen something like this before? (Waits for audience to answer) You're right - this is a napkin from Miss Ellie Belle's saloon. Do you think she stole Buttercup to make steaks and burgers out of his? (Listens to audience) So what do you think our next move should be? (Waits for audience to suggest talking to MISS ELLIE BELLE) Good idea. But if she is the culprit, I might have trouble investigating. I think I need a disguise and a couple of deputies up here to help me out. Any volunteers?

SHERIFF ANDY chooses two volunteers to come up on stage.

SHERIFF ANDY

What're your names? (Gets answer) Okay, Deputy (name) and Deputy (name), come with me. (To audience) We'll see you at the Red Eye Saloon.

SHERIFF ANDY and volunteers exit.

The Red Eye Saloon. All that's needed is a bar - a plank across two barrels or wooden crates topped with glasses and bottles. Hidden under one of the glasses is a large cowbell with "Buttercup" painted on it.

Enter MISS ELLIE BELLE. SHE stands behind the bar, polishing a glass.

MISS ELLIE BELLE

I can't believe that big dumb ox thinks I stole his big, dumb cow! Where would I even put a cow?

Enter THE CRIMSON KID. HE crosses to the bar.

THE CRIMSON KID

Sarsaparilla...and make it a double.

MISS ELLIE BELLE "pours" a glass of soda for THE CRIMSON KID who throws it back.