

*DIXIE: Chapter One

“Bird Begs a Reluctant Good-Bye off Grandma Emma.”*

[BIRD runs to her Grandma’s lap.]

BIRD: Did you draw that, Grandma Emma?

EMMA: No, your dad started it, but I'm fixin' it.

[DYKE'S original sketch and EMMA'S alterations, as they happen, appear on an overhead projector.]

BIRD: Did he ask you to fix it?

EMMA: No, but I'm sure he'll appreciate the effort. I found it the trunk he brought back with him.

BIRD: It looks like me, Mother, and him.

EMMA: I suppose that's what he intended it to be.

BIRD: I think it looks good the way it is.

EMMA: It could look better.

BIRD: What's that dot on Dad's face for?

EMMA: That's a beauty mark.

BIRD: (with a giggle) What's a beauty mark?

EMMA: A fungus, or sometimes just a cold sore, and if a woman doesn't come upon either of those blemishes naturally, she can pencil one in with a grease pencil.

BIRD: (not sure of the explanation) Oh. Why does Dad have one of those on his face?

EMMA: To make him beautiful.

BIRD: (genuinely, after deciding not to ask another question) Put another one on.

EMMA: I know when I'm licked.

BIRD: Why are you tryin' to make Dad look beautiful?

EMMA: Because I'm defacing him.

BIRD: What does defacing mean?

EMMA: It means rearranging the appearance of something for purposes of amusing oneself.

BIRD: Oh. (brief pause) Deface me too, Grandma!

EMMA: I'm not done defacing your dad yet. You wait your turn!

BIRD: Why are you defacing the drawing, anyway?

EMMA: Well, I'm thinkin' ahead, something your dad never does. If your act gets stale someday, you'll have to change it.

BIRD: What are you changing Dad into?

DIXIE: Yes, Grandma Emma, what?

EMMA: Uhm,... I reckon some sort of fancy female impersonator. like they always have in those Vaudeville shows that come through Denver City!

DIXIE: Oh, my!

BIRD: I don't know that Dad will like that!

EMMA: Don't underestimate this female impersonatin' boy! He's tough, and he's challenged many 'a man in trousers to drink him under the table, and you'd better believe that boy hasn't lost to a pair of trousers yet! And to make the sting of losin' worse, the man in trousers has to buy all the booze!

DIXIE: That's brilliant, Grandma Emma! Mr. Millman's shadow is a challenge! Paint him up like a lady and by doing so, throw the gauntlet at his feet! Oh, that's quite circular, indeed! When your average brutish, rough-and-tumble men sit down to out drink each other, there is much less at stake. For the one who succumbs first can always find solace in the worthiness of his adversary. But when the man in the dress challenges the man in the trousers, neither of them can afford to loose. The female impersonator's career is at stake, and his counterpart's masculinity is equally so. That's just it! No, it stinks! Mr. Millman has been never a drinker. Neither Muzzy or Bird ever said anything of him to lead me to believe to that effect. Then again, maybe his not being a drinker is what makes the scenario so perfect! Yes, I can simply show him at the few hard times in his life when he would have been most likely to cave in to the temptation of drink, as it always lurking for every man, really. And besides all that, temperance really is such a popular peeve for the period. Anyway, enough on that matter.

BIRD: Wow. Now, deface me, Grandma.

EMMA: Okay. What shall I deface you into?

DIXIE: There we go, Grandma Emma!- let Birdie decide for herself what form her shadow will take.

EMMA: Well,...

BIRD: I'm thinking.

DIXIE: (stage whisper) An elephant. An elephant.

BIRD: I do tricks on the high school horses. Deface me into a high school horse!

DIXIE: Nah.

EMMA: That's silly. I can't deface you into something you already are. I have to face you into something you're not.

[BIRD sighs as EMMA rethinks.]

EMMA: Of course, if we put "high school" on the poster, it would lead folks to think the show was educational, and sell us more tickets that way. But, no, you'll have to be defaced into something else, something totally different.

BIRD: Hm. I don't know. I guess if I had to be something totally different, I'd wanna be a...

EMMA: (hopefully) A librarian?

BIRD: No.

DIXIE: (stage whisper) An elephant?

EMMA: A school teacher?

DIXIE: No.

BIRD: No.

DIXIE: An elephant!

EMMA: A wife and mother?

BIRD: No.

DIXIE: (whispering) An elephant trainer?

BIRD: (suddenly realizing) A lion tamer!

DIXIE: What?

EMMA: A lion tamer? (shaking her head) Child, can't you come up with any occupations that don't involve your mortal end?

[BIRD thinks for a minute.]

DIXIE: Oh, well. One can't always have it one's own way. After all, I can't expect everyone to match my inexplicable fondness for elephants.

EMMA: You're every bit your dad. You know that? Made no difference what your granddad did. 'Couldn't get a practical thought about the future into his head. 'Made him work at the store. 'Sent him to the military school. No matter. All he wanted to do was tomfoolery on his acrobatic equipment in the loft. Then he started courtin' your poor mother, who, I might respectfully add, was no help, havin' all the same predilection for monkeyin' around as he did.

BIRD: Are you gonna deface Mother too?

EMMA: Oh. I almost forgot.

BIRD: What are you gonna deface her into?

EMMA: The cigar store wooden injun I have sittin' outside the store. What else?

DIXIE: Goodness, why?

BIRD: Why that, Grandma Emma?

EMMA: She's scared to death of him! I can see it in her motions. She always tries to walk ten feet around him.

DIXIE: No, no, no. With all due respect, Grandma Emma, that's not Muzzy at all. She wouldn't be afraid of an any wooden Indian, or even any real Indian. For that matter, Muzzy would not be afraid of anybody whom she didn't believe meant to do her harm first. Why, she's put on tea for all sorts of different folks and not thought anything of it! I can't allow this gross defamation of her character to continue! Unless, of course, it's the only thing I have to go on right now, and Muzzy will always forgive me. Won't you, Muzzy, Dear? Besides that, I met Muzzy well after she had traveled the continent over. I can't account for what her view of the world was before. (rummaging through a pile of papers) Which reminds me, I think here is a good spot to add that bit of local color I dug up. Ah, here it is, "Old Mose."

EMMA: The look your mama has on her face when she passes that wooden Indian is the same look your dad had on his face when they dragged the gigantic carcass of Old Mose down Main Street.

MUSICAL NUMBER - "Old Mose from Phantom Canyon"

BIRD: Who's Old Mose?

EMMA: Who was Old Mose?

(sung)

HE WAS THE MEANEST GRISLEY BEAR THAT EVER DREW A BREATH.
THE MENTION OF HIS NAME WAS LIKE THE VERY SOUND OF DEATH.
THE MEN AROUND THE TOWN WHO ALWAYS DREAMT OF FAME AND
GLORY.
EACH ONE HAD ALMOST GOT 'IM ONCE, BUT WAIT A DAY OR TWO...
HE'D CHANGE HIS STORY.

A STRANGER RODE TO TOWN ONE DAY AND GOT AN AWFUL EAR-FULL.
WITH THEIR GORY TALES THEY TRIED TO MAKE THE STRANGER FEARFUL.
WITH LOWERED HEAD THE STRANGER SAID "THE BEAST, AT LAST, IS FELL.
AS SOON AS I PUT DOWN MY MILK AND MOUNT MY TRUSTY PONY,
OLD WHAT'S-'ER-NAME? I FORGET? OH YES!

BIRD: What?

EMMA: Daisey Bell!

BIRD: Grandma!

(Chorus)

EMMA:

SO ARMED WITH NOTHIN' MORE THAN ONE BULLWHIP AND TWO STALE
BISCUITS,
THE TWO IGNORED THE TOWNFOKS' CRIES AND DECIDED THEY WOULD
RISK IT.
THEY LEFT AT DAWN, BUT IT TOOK LONGER THAN THEY THOUGHT TO
TRACK 'IM.
OLE' DAISY BELL WAS NEARLY STARVED BY NOON.

BIRD: What about the two stale biscuits?

EMMA: Good thing they packed 'em!

AT LAST THEY SPIED SOME TRACKS. EACH ONE THE SIZE A SMALL NATION.

THEY LEAD THEM TO THE CAVE THAT HOUSE THE VARMIT THEY WERE CHASIN.'

THEY HAD TO WAIT FOR HYBERNATIN' SEASON TO EXPIRE.

SO STRANGER STRUNG HE BULLWHIP UP BETWEEN TO TREES.

BIRD: Why?

EMMA: To walk the wire. (spoken) Just like you did out back for all the neighborhood kids when you thought I wasn't looks.

BIRD: (sings chorus)

(The last verse compares Bird to the stranger.)

EMMA: ...After three days and three nights, the lumbering monster finally emerged from his slumber, peered his head outside the cave, and let out a yawn fit ta blow a train off its tracks. Then, before he knew what had happened, his eyes met Jennadean's, and he was frozen into a state of catatonic shock by her cold, mean, piercing glare. The poor little guy didn't even put up a fight. He just keeled over a died. So Jennadean strung him up to her pony, Daisy Bell, and rode inta town with 'im.

DIXIE: I thinks that's quite enough out of you, Grandma Emma!

BIRD: Grandma, you're the biggest fibber I know!