

Scene- day time, Teddy Bow a young boy about 11 years old is sitting under the sycamore tree singing *Oh Susannah*. He is shaking the tail of a rattlesnake as he sings. The rattlesnake wears a patch over one eye and is peacefully wound up next to Teddy. On the other side of the boy and snake is a large dog curled up against the tree. When the crowd stops at the site, the snake starts to rattle its tail faster and faster. The young boy turns and notices the crowd and begins his story.

Teddy Bow

Hi folks, my name is Teddy Bow and this here snake is Misery and this is my dog Cap, short for Captain. You must be wondering why Misery is wearing a patch over his eye. Well, truth be told he lost his eye in a scuffle with me and it serves him right seeing as he had just bit me and was aiming to get Cap too. But let me slow down and start from the beginning

It was the day of Judgement, or so my Pa liked to say. The day that Judge Wilson was to pass sentence on the outlaw Gentleman Jack. The jury had found Jack guilty, and the folks around here for twenty mile wide were gathering to hear the Judge restore some peace of mind to us all. You see, the ranchers, farmers, heck, all of us were tired of Gentlemen Jack and his gang riding loose in the county – stealing, burning, fighting and shooting our livestock out of meanness- pure meanness! Most folks had come West to find some peace and start over. My family had come from Virginia –or what was left of Virginia. Pa, you best call him Mr. Bow, had been a Lieutenant in the Confederate Army -a true southerner from a fancy family. But nothing fancy was left after the war –the big house, tobacco fields, china, silver -everything gone, burned, stolen or sold to keep body and soul together. Pa refused to go north to start over with Ma’s family -in Yankee territory.

Ma, Mrs. Bow to you, was a back woods country girl and didn’t come from a fancy family. Pa met her on a hunting trip into the deep woods of Maine and paid no mind to her country ways, he likes to say he fell in love with Jeannie Connery the moment she spoke in her soft Irish voice. Well, us kids, baby Rob and Barbara Ann, don’t get to hear a soft voice until Ma says her prayers over us as we fall asleep. From sunup to sundown ma barks and herds us, even pa, around the farm. And Amen to that because pa is not a farmer and working with his hands has comes hard. Heck, Ma is even a better shot than Pa -you didn’t hear that from me folks! Pa is a dreamer, mostly dreaming of the far past- that war almost took the dreaming heart out of him- until he heard of California. It wasn’t gold he was after; it was what came to be known as the Golden State – fields and fields that weren’t blown to pieces but filled with rows of fruit trees, flowers and crops -the sight of those green fields gave Pa his dreaming heart back. And gave the rest of us a full day of chores, before school and after school!

Well, speaking of school and why I had to stay home from the gathering, missing all the fun. Not many of us farm kids had much time to spend learning with all the work at home -some say farm work is never done and us kids were plum tired of schooling ANDworking the farms. This past winter some kids at school came down with scarlet fever (*long pause*) the angels came for Sally Monroe and Randy Brown. So you can see why ma and pa got scared when I came down with a cough that was coming and going but not going away. Ma took to looking at me with her long look – the look Ma’s give when they want to read your mind! Her long look

always made me stop coughing, more like stop breathing but not for long and so she said it was time to call out Doc King. Pa fussed a little until she gave him the long look too! Pa could never get past that look, especially if she used her soft voice –he said she should have fought for the South!