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BEN DAVIS, Jr.
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HER OLD-FASHIONED LOVE STANDS THE ACID TEST

Pretty Muzette Hawley
Forgets Herself And De-
fies the Law to Save the
Man She Loves

By DONN BRYAN

There stands to this day at the edge of Rosendale, Mo., an antiquated water mill which, notwithstanding sixty-two years of uninterrupted service to the community, is still in operation. It is a lean grey structure enveloped in a shawl of taupe with gaudy cloth tobacco signs decorating it. The weather-stained and weather beaten roof has fallen in.

The enormous wheel that dips into the river is like a rangy skeleton, having gone to staves and been repaired times too numerous to account for. On the west side of the mill is an iron wagon-bridge which spans the lazy, whispering stream, causing a sort of death-rattle in its angry protestations when a car whips across it or a lumber-wagon rumbles along the winding road.

It was in December and the river was frozen over, with a thick layer of snow on the ground, and this snow garbed the ancient building in a cloak of ermine. A display of incongruous drifts distorted the highway; and there were even a few thinly scattering flakes of white.

A wagon came rolling across the thick planks of the bridge the iron-work overhead rattling incessantly, nervously, and there was a woman in the high front seat, a pretty mulatto colored woman who was indistinguishable in appearance from a white woman, wearing a man's duck coat, heavy fur mittens and a coonskin cap. She handled the lines with a seasoned adeptness, keeping the sleek grey team in hand with admirable control.

A deputy sheriff, colored and handsome, one Leland Jerros, strode forward with an energetic movement, and called out in stern tones:

"Halt, there—"

The team pulling the heavy wagon came to an abrupt stop.

The deputy had hoisted his rifle into a threatening position.

"What's your name?" he demanded.

"Muzette Hawley," was the quiet answer.

"Where do you live?"

"Rosendale."

"Where you been?"

"Savannah."

The deputy paused.

The girl hesitated now, when about to say something more.

"What's the matter," she flung back, eying the deputy coolly.

"There's been a murder committed between here and Savannah," Jerros stated, "and the killer's slipped through the line thrown out to head him off. He's colored. Leo Gunn. You may know him. He killed Bill Abcock. We've been ordered to stop everybody comin' this way."

She laughed.

"You think," she countered mischievously, "that I'm Gunn?"

He grinned at the interrogation.

It was showing heavily now and a strong gale had risen.

"Naw," the deputy purred, "but how do I know you ain't got him in that wagon?"

She shoved back a stray wisp of hair.

"You're welcome to look," she rejoined; and her eyes were inscrutable. "I have a load of wheat."

The deputy chuckled and once more the deadly rifle reposed in the crook of his arm.

"I reckon not," he drawled. "Go 'awn, Miss. Th' road is your'n."

"Thanks." And clucking to the sleek team the wagon resumed its noisy way. It presently vanished.

No man ever made a more serious mistake than Deputy Sheriff Leland Jerros.

Muzette Hawley farmed with her brother, Ruben, married; and on the eighty-acre tract they resided in different houses. The buildings were about a quarter of a mile apart. The abode of the comely colored girl was a story and a half structure, set down in a grove of cottonwood trees.

There had been an altercation between Bill Abcock and Leo Gunn, his young hired hand, both colored.

Abcock was a stern man, a difficult employer to get on with. He had refused to pay Gunn for a week's labor. One word brought on another, and Gunn stabbed his employer with a hunting knife. He fled. The quickly formed posse could not locate him.

Gunn had at one time been employed by Rube Hawley. The plaintive love note chorded by the affair between the killer and Muzette was like that of an organ, low, soft and rather mournful.

There had been days of perfect harmony and the boy and girl had become engaged, although no one else knew it. Gunn had gone to work for better-money at Abcock's. But every Sunday night you could see his white mare hitched in front of the Hawley gate.

Muzette loved him, believed in him, dreamed dreams of happiness in which he was always present. He saved his money. When he had acquired two hundred dollars they would be married. From an advertisement in a popular colored magazine they had selected the engagement ring and the wedding ring. Their path, unwinding like a crimson satin ribbon into the sun-embellished future seemed unobstructed.

And then came this clap of thunder when the sky was clear blue and serene.

• • •

Well, the posse searched for a



The youth laughed and swung himself onto the side of the bed. "Look around you and see what you think about that," Gunn suggested. The deputy whirled around but he did not lower his pistol. "I guess you'll think twice after this before opening a woman's door and walking in," said Muzette, who stood with a drawn revolver slightly behind him. In shoving the door open he had shielded her when he entered the room.

week, day and night, in an effort to find Gunn, but without avail. They stumbled upon his white mare but there was no trace of the fugitive.

When the deputy, Jerros, stopped Muzette, the latter was on her way home from the county seat with a load of grain.

When he heard for the first time of Gunn's courtship of Muzette, he happened to recall that the wagon had been covered over with canvas. He spent a month thinking about this.

The girl attracted attention when she stayed away from the social functions in the neighborhood. Because she was popular and a favorite, people discussed freely this falling on her part to call upon them. The talk reached the ears of Jerros who, arming himself in the county seat with a pistol, made a hurried trip through a blinding snow storm to Muzette's house.

The kitchen door was open and Jerros did not knock. He slipped into the house, and finding the downstairs vacant, clambered up the creaking staircase.

A masculine voice called out from the adjoining room:

"Is that you, Muzette?"

Then the deputy knew he had his man.

Kicking open the door, with his pistol ready for instant action, he stepped through the square opening into the room, where a coal oil lamp flickered and burned dimly.

"Hands up, Gunn!"

"You're a brave man, aren't you?" said a cool voice from the bed standing across one corner, between two

windows which were thick with ice, "a brave man."

"Tumble out of that bed," Jerros ordered crisply. "No time to play."

"You might miss if you shoot," sneered the young man who opposed him. "Aren't you nervous?"

The deputy grew impatient. Such cool courage he had never witnessed before. "I've got you nailed," he declared, "and won't stand for any more of your insults. Come on now, get up."

The youth laughed and swung himself onto the side of the bed.

"Look around you and see what you think about that," Gunn suggested.

The deputy whirled round. But he did not lower his pistol.

"I guess you'll think twice after this before opening a woman's door and walking in," said Muzette, who

stood with a drawn revolver slightly behind him. In shoving the door open he had shielded her when he entered the room.

"Lay down that gun," Leo Gunn ordered.

There was nothing to do but obey and Jerros did this meekly and quickly.

They bound him hand and foot, trussed him, and shoved him under the bed. Then they fled into the night.

But the storm was too furious for travel, and they had to put up at a restaurant in the county seat. Someone tipped off the authorities—and both were arrested.

Gunn was given fifteen years for the murder of Abcock, but Muzette was paroled. She is still waiting for

(Continued on page 4)

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a mulatto nation?
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