Temptation Brown

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of 20 miles an hour and Sam Fall shouting at the n***er to slow this damned thing down. And all of a sudden, Temptation Brown stuck his shotgun out the window of that house and just peppered the side of that old car. That n***er shouts, 'Lawd have mercy,' and Mr. Sam Fall is hollering to slow down or speed up, just do something. By the time they realized what had happened, they had done passed Brown's house and all they could see was woods all 'round 'em. So, they sure didn't know what had happened or who had shot at 'em.

"About that time, Brown fires again, but it is all some 20 or 30 feet behind them, so nothing hits them that time. Well, Mr. Sam Fall and that n***er came flying into town, honking their horn and scattering women and children as they come.

"It's that darned ol' Temptation Brown, Sheriff, he's out there shooting at everything that moves!"

"Mr. Sam Fall gets out of the car and comes up to me saying, 'Some kind of idiot is out there on the highway shooting at passersby.' Well, he told me the whole story just like I've told ya'll, but he kept on vowing that there was an anarchist out there. Anyway, we used to have a constable out here – any of ya'll 'member Jake Savroy?"

"Poorest excuse to wear a badge I ever saw," nodded Mr. Caswell. "Seemed like every time you called him for something he always had an excuse not to come out. Either he was sitting up with his sick wife, or a sick cow, or he was down with the flu."

"That's him all right," the Sheriff laughed. "Seemed like he wanted to be in on everything, but he didn't want to take a chance on getting shot or nothing. About the time I was talking to McCullum, here comes Savroy running up with his hand on the butt of his pistol. He says to me, 'What's the cock and bull story I hear about someone shooting at cars out on the Barlow road?' I told him everything McCullum told me. I told McCullum, 'Well, it just so happens that we have us a man specially trained for such as this,' and I slapped Savroy on the back. I whispered to Savroy that if he didn't go out there and apprehend whoever it was shooting at cars that it would look mighty bad at election time.

"Savroy sucked in his gut when he heard that, tipped his hat, and said, 'Sheriff, you can count on me.' Well, I knew right then and there that something funny was going on out there, but I didn't know who in the world could be doing it. I figured Savroy would make as fine a sacrificial lamb as any, knowing that he wouldn't get shot. If somebody was to walk in here and start shooting and if Savroy was here, he'd be the last person to be shot and kilt."

Mr. Holloway stopped his clipping again. "That's where I came in. I went out there with the constable – me and somebody else with him just to see the fireworks. And we didn't no more know where the shooting was going on than the man in the moon, so we just started driving down that Barlow road, the windows rolled down all the way so we could hear, and it didn't take us no time before we heard all sorts of shooting. Brown was down there shooting at fence posts and animals and everything.

"The minute we pulled up, it got dead quiet around Brown's house. Savroy climbed out of the car and looked all around real careful like and then looked back at us, but we wuz both glued to our seats. The constable went up there to Brown's front gate, and it was all shattered and splintered from the buckshot. He looked toward the house and shouted, 'Orville Brown, this is the law, and I order you to cease and desist.' Brown didn't know what in the hell Savroy was talking about, because he didn't know what cease and desist meant. So he shouted back, 'What'd you just say?' Savroy kinda leans over the fence and shouted, 'I said to come out of there and give yourself up!'

"Brown understood that, if you know what I mean – understood it good and clear, and he let go with another volley from that old shotgun. Savroy jumped away from that gate, crawled on his belly back to the car, clumb in, and we wuz off to Lafayette like a bat out of hell."

The Sheriff laughed again, tossing his hands around under the striped sheet and scattering more hair about. "Yeah," he exclaimed, "I was still standing there on Main Street looking over all the damage done to Mr. McCullum's car. McCullum was telling that servant of his that if he had only been driving a little bit slower they wouldn't have come across that anarchist, and the servant was saying yassuh, yassuh, over and over.

"Then here comes Savroy and Holloway turning onto Main off that highway and damn near making the turn on two wheels. They stopped the car, and Savroy comes running up to me saying, 'It's that darned ol' Temptation Brown, Sheriff, he's out there shooting at everything that moves! Why, he shot at me, and I just barely got out of there with my life.' I knew then that we had trouble on our hands. So, I told all that crowd of people who was standing around that I needed a few good men to go out there with me to Brown's and for them to grab a gun or a pistol before we left. I then asked if anyone knew where Mrs. Brown was at, and somebody said they saw her down at the bank. I sent my deputy to go fetch her, and he come back in a few minutes with that poor ol' horse-faced woman, and it ain't no time before she is asking nineteen hundred questions. I told her, 'Now, Mrs. Brown, we are gonna do everything we can to make sure nobody gets hurt.'

"Now then, we all piled into whatever cars we could come up with and headed out towards Temptation Brown's – must've been three or four cars and four or five men in each one. Mrs. Brown is sitting in the front seat of my car, and the red light is rolling around on top, and the siren is going full blast. You know, those old police cars just weren't made for those red lights. Why, you could hear that old light rolling around up there, so between that noise and that siren you couldn't hear yourself think, and Mrs. Brown is saying, 'Orville must've gone crazy. He ain't never pulled nothing like this 'fore.' I was trying to listen to her and watch the road at the same time, and I was grateful to see Brown's house. I always figured a man with a loaded gun was more preferable to a woman with an overloaded mouth." The Sheriff paused to laugh at himself and watched eagerly as the other men joined in.

She finally said, 'Well, I doubt it. That man ain't been serious about anything in his whole life.'

"Getting back to my story, I motioned for them to drive their cars in front of the house, and we had us a barricade with those cars in no time. Everyone climbed out and hid behind the cars, and it was dead quiet inside the house. I raised up and looked toward the house, and I could see just a dark form standing before the door. I grabbed one of those megaphone deals, and put it to my mouth. I hollered, 'Brown, we know you're in there, and we know you ain't done a thing yet. Nobody has been shot or nothing, just drop your gun and come out here with your hands up!' I waited a long time for a response and was just about ready to try something else when he hollered back. I forgit just what he said, but the main idea was that he did not intend to surrender or anything; he wanted to kill himself and that none of us had any business there.

"I looked back down at Mrs. Brown, who was seated on the ground beside me with her legs crossed and her dress tucked under her. 'You think he's serious?' I asked her. She thought about it for a long time – seemed like an eternity she sat there, and there I was with my head sticking up over the top of the car like a rooster in a hen house fight. She finally said, 'Well, I doubt it. That man ain't been serious about anything in his whole life.'

"I told my deputy to take a couple of men and go around to the back side of the house and to wait there, and when I honked the horn to my car, for them to start shooting their guns up in the air. I told 'em that me and somebody else would storm the front door after that.

"Well, I figured it was a good idea and figured it would work so that nobody got shot. I knew we wuz gonna be taking an awful risk just storming in there and hoping that Brown would be preoccupied by all of that shooting in the back.

"They took out through the woods on the north side of Brown's house, and he never saw them as far as I know. I waited a good five minutes, opened the door to my car, clumb in, and gave that horn a good blast – a nice, long one. I got out and waited just a couple of seconds, and then all that shooting and firing started up in the back of Brown's house. I had my pistol drawn and motioned for ol' Savroy to go with me, and he drew his pistol as well. We ran out from behind those cars, crouched low to the ground, but running all the time. It seemed like that door was two miles from the road, but like I said before it was just about six feet.

"We reached the door and motioned for Savroy to get up against the wall next to the door – weren't no sign of Brown anywhere. I stood right in front of that door and kicked it like a stubborn mule – must've looked like something out of a John Wayne movie. I kicked it one time and it gave way.

"Just about the time it opened, I could hear footsteps behind me, but I didn't pay any mind to them. I figured it was somebody deciding to join us. Savroy and I jumped inside at the same time, and it took us a minute to get used to the darkness inside that house, but all of a sudden, there was Temptation Brown running up to us with that shotgun – no, it wasn't a shotgun, he had picked up a pistol, I think, and he had it drawn just like we had ours. I shouted, 'Brown, you don't want to kill us any more than we wanna kill you. Just drop it!'

"We were both standing in front of the door, and I saw him start for that trigger. Savroy seen it, too, and we both jumped for the floor. Brown fired his pistol at the door, and we heard a shriek – a blood-curdling shriek, and then Brown's face when white. Savroy and me looked back out that door – we wuz still laying on the floor mind you – and there was Mrs. Brown laying outside, shot, and bleeding. Brown just fell onto the floor, crying, and sobbing like a baby.

"Well, Mrs. Brown was shot in the chest – just missed her heart by an inch or two – but she lived through it. They declared Brown insane, and sent him off to Rusk."

The Sheriff settled back into his chair, his mouth shut tight as if signifying the end of the story.

"What happened to Mrs. Brown after all of that?" asked Mr. Caswell, still puffing leisurely on his pipe.

"Moved off, I think," Mr. Holloway said. "Moved off to Lake Charles, I believe. She never lived with Brown no more, leastways. He got his mind back and they turned him loose around 1958."

I went back to my stack of comic books, returning once again to the adventures of Batman and Spiderman and Wonder Woman.



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