

Logline: *In the Fall of 1865, a sharp-shooting twelve-year-old Black American with Down Syndrome saves his father from a lynching.*

Whilst developing a character with a ‘disability’ in a re-telling of the legend of Swiss hero William Tell and his son Walter, I saw the market potential for an off-beat comedy, featuring a Black American father and his very able Down Syndrome son in the American West; a scenario conducive to the sub-textual treatment of contemporary social issues, such as BLM, prejudice, and inclusivity.

The Legend of Willie Telberg and Son, written with the works of Mel Brooks and the Coen Bros in mind, irreverently serves to underscore the fact that even the so-called ‘disabled’ are indeed able.

The War’s over. And ex-Union soldier with a reputation, the widowed free settler Black American farmer Willie Telberg is tasked with raising and educating his twelve-year-old Down Syndrome son, Waldo. Together they eke out a living on a small property near the fictional Kansas township of “Lauraville”, supplementing their livelihood by servicing the needs of the frustrated white women folk (there being a paucity of capable men due to the war), regularly satisfying their appetite ...

... supplying them with the meat they crave ... in the form of freshly shot rabbits ... until one day they ride into town with their wares and encounter a small gang of ex-Confederate misfits looting and terrorising the citizens.

The rabble are not evil per se, just a little misguided. And disparate: one, a loser regardless of which side he’s on; another, just plain dim-witted; and there’s the naïve teenager who’s simply ‘lost his way’. When their leader, the dispirited ex-Confederate engineer, Captain Albert Greaser, hears of Willie’s reputation as a marksman with the Kansas Colored Infantry, he strikes a deal – to save the town, Willie must use an ancient Confederate muzzle loader to shoot Waldo’s pet guinea pig from his head from thirty paces, *a la William Tell*. “Inhumane!” protest the citizens. Relenting, Greaser settles for a cabbage (a miniature one at that), which Willie safely dispatches.

Honoring the deal, Greaser vacates the town, taking the gentle giant Willie hostage on Waldo’s little pony Abe. Confident his resourceful father’s absence will be short-lived, Waldo returns home with the cart drawn by Willie’s huge old work horse MacDuff to prepare for more rabbit hunting in the morrow. The hapless women, however, determined not to give up on the only real man in their midst, organize a ‘delegation’ to seek help from the neighboring town – a problematic adventure in its own right.

That night, Waldo, attends to his chores and completes his reading lessons before toying with Willie’s beloved Spencer lever action rifle. He prays for his father’s swift return and for guidance in his hunt for bunnies next day, unaware that in the rebels’ camp, an altercation over the character of Willie’s late wife inflames the drunken gang’s prejudices, resulting in their captive being ‘sentenced’ to a good ol’ fashioned lynching come sun-up.

Pre-dawn, armed with his own ancient muzzle loader, and Willie's repeater rifle, the diminutive Waldo saddles up and mounts the gigantic MacDuff – no mean feat given the horse is nearly seventeen hands! – and sets out on his quest for rabbits.

In the darkness of the camp, Willie, hands still bound, and desperate to return to his son, manages to steal away from the non-compos rabble only to have his liberty thwarted when confronted with a hungry mountain lion. Paradoxically, before he can devise an escape, he is 'saved' by the gang – let's face it, they won't be denied their lynching. As the sun rises, and, having consumed the last of the whisky looted from the Lauraville Hotel, they work themselves up to the deed – a pity no-one actually knows how to tie a proper hanging noose! But that don't stop them going through the motion.

As the new day unfolds, Waldo's mission is wrested from him by an independent-minded MacDuff, the horse taking him to a strategic ridge, giving him a panoramic view of all the activity unfolding. Time for Waldo to test his shooting skills.

A shot rings out, but it ain't a rabbit in Waldo's sights; instead, the bullet strikes the branch above Willie's head, barely grazing the lynching rope. Abe rears, threatening to do Willie in. But the flimsy knot finally unravels and, responding to Waldo's call, the pony trots the precariously mounted Willie safely away.

Waldo continues firing the lever action rifle, constantly changing position, the volley confounding the inebriated gang. Their spooked horses flee, while the liberated Willie joins his son and, taking up the old muzzle loader, enters the fray.

Defeated, disarmed and disarrayed, the gang, tied and tethered, trudge back into Lauraville to the waiting Sheriff Thorpe and his posse from the neighboring town, cajoled by the women's delegation into helping them in their plight.

Following a unanimous vote, Willie is duly appointed the first sheriff of Lauraville. Official business over, Sheriff Thorpe departs – but most of the posse remain, seduced by the prospect of a willing mate. Seems the town now has all it needs: a new lawman, capable men, and contented women. But they don't have themselves a jail. However, with a ready supply of labor, Greaser and his cohort are ordered by Sheriff Willie to pay their dues in kind, by helping to build the structures the town lacks – the jail, the school, the city hall – in what could be the first ever sentence of "community service" designed to rehabilitate the miscreants into respectable citizens of Lauraville.

That done, Sheriff Willie Telberg and son begin their new lives ... keeping law and order ... and occasionally supplying the women folk with the other fresh meat ...

Or so the legend goes ...