

THE BLAZING TRAIL OF THE WILD WEST

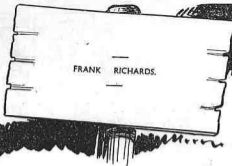
# ACE HIGH

WESTERN COMIC N°6



FAMOUS  
**FRANK RICHARDS**  
WRITES ANOTHER TERRIFIC YARN  
ABOUT *SLIM DEXTER!*





## RUN ON THE ROPE

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"Say, Slick!"

Slick Dexter was saddling-up his broncho, Kicker, in the corral at the Circle-Bar, when Barney Cash looked in over the rail, and called.

Slick's boyish face was bright and cheery. He was booked to ride over to the Lazy-O that morning, with a message from the boss, which was a change from punching cows on the ranges. He glanced round at the foreman's call.

"Shoot!" he said.

"I guess you want to watch out, at the Lazy-O, Slick!" said Barney. "They're a rough crowd—rough and tough—and Yucca Bill their foreman, is the roughest and toughest in the bunch. You being a kid, and looking a tenderfoot, I allow that crowd might figure on having some fun with you."

Slick laughed.

"Sure I'm rising sixteen, Barney, which ain't exactly a kid," he answered. "And if I look tender, I guess I'd be tough to chew."

"Mebbe," said Barney, with a shake of the head. "But I savvy that Lazy-O bunch, Slick. You walk careful and speak soft when you see Yucca Bill. We've had trouble with that bunch, feeding their cattle on our ranges, and they don't love us a whole lot. Mebbe you'd like to ask Mr. Poindexter to send a growed man over, Slick, instead of you."

Slick's smiling face set grimly.

"Forget it," he said. "If I ain't a growed man, I guess I can keep my end up with any growed man in Texas. I've seen that guy Yucca on Main Street at Bullwhacker, and I allow he looks some bulldozer. But he ain't got me scared, Barney."

"You got to see him," said the Circle-Bar foreman. "His boss is away most times at Austin, and Yucca runs that ranch like it was his own. And I'll say that Mr. Poindexter's letter won't please him any, seeing that it's a warning to keep his herds off'n our ranges. I guess his dander will be riz. Why, I wouldn't put it past that guy to take a quirt to a kid like you. Slick's jaw squared.

"If that guy takes a quirt to me, Barney, I guess he will find out sudden that I pack a punch that will hurt him a few," he said. "Don't you worry any, old-timer; I'll tell a man, they won't eat me alive on the Lazy-O."

Barney Cash nodded, and said no more. But he shook his head, as Slick led out his broncho at the corral gate, and mounted to ride. As the boy puncher from Panhandle cantered away on the ten-mile trail to the Lazy-O ranch, Barney, and Red, and half-a-dozen other Circle-Bar punchers, watched him go, till his Stetson disappeared beyond the waving grass. But if Barney was worried, Slick was not; his sunburnt face was cheery as he rode under the Texas sun-blaze.

### II

SLICK DEXTER rode up to the Lazy-O, stared at by three or four cow-men lounging by the door of the bunk-house. He made a handsome figure, in his blue shirt, goatskin chaps, and neckscarf fixed with a gold pin, clean and neat from head to foot; a contrast to the Lazy-O men who were watching him ride up. Slick's keen eyes ran over them, and he guessed that he had never seen a rougher bunch in all Texas. But rough looks had no terrors for the boy puncher. He drew rein, and swept off his Stetson in polite salute.

"Say, yos'uns, is the boss around?" he asked.

"Who'd you be, and how come your schoolmarm let you out?" asked one of the Lazy-O punchers, and there was a laugh from the others. Slick's sunburnt face remained good-humoured.

"I'll say I'm Slick Dexter, from the Circle-Bar," he answered, "And I got a note from Mr. Poindexter to your boss, is he's around, and if he ain't, I'm asking to see your foreman."

There was a lowering of brows, at the mention of the Circle-Bar.

"Wal, I guess you'll have to ride as far as Austin, if you want to see the boss, but Yucca sure is around," said the Lazy-O puncher. He put his head in at the bunkhouse doorway, and called, "Say, Yucca, hyer's a baby puncher from the Circle-Bar with a billy-doo from Old Man Poindexter. I guess its some more from him about the ranges."

A deep growling voice answered from within.

"I'll say I've heard enough from him about that, Colorado. Tell the guy to take it back to Old Man Poindexter, and tell him, from me, that he can go to the hot place and shake himself. I got to ride over to Mesquite, and I ain't got no time to burn, chewing the rag with a Circle-Bar gink."

Colorado grinned at Slick.

"You heard that?" he said.

"I sure ain't deaf!" assented Slick, "But I got to hand over this hyer note, and I'll wait till your foreman comes out."

"You better ride while you're in one piece!" grinned Colorado.

"I guess I'll stay in one piece anyhow," said Slick; and he sat in the saddle, waiting for the foreman of the Lazy-O to appear. He did not figure that he would have to wait long, if the foreman was about to start for Mesquite; and neither had he. There was a tramp of heavy boots, and a big, brawny cow-man came out at the doorway. His beetling brows were contracted in a frown. He stared at Slick, no doubt surprised by his boyish looks. Slick gave him a cheery nod, and held out the rancher's letter.

"I got to take an answer," he said.

Yucca Bill had a lasso swinging over his arm. He looked, for the moment, more disposed to give the boy puncher a lash with it, than to take the letter. Slick's eyes narrowed, and he was warily on his guard. However, the Lazy-O foreman stretched out a hand and took the note.

He tore it open, and glanced at the contents. The frown deepened on his rugged brow. He stared at Slick again.

"Mebbe you know what's in this!" he snapped.

"The boss sure ain't told me," answered Slick.

"I'll tell you, then!" growled Yucca Bill, "Your dog-goned boss is grousing agin about the feeding ranges. If he appears an answer, hyer it is; tell him we don't give a continental red cent for him, and that if he sends a guy over here agin, we'll sure quit that guy back to the Circle-Bar."

Slick breathed hard. But he controlled the hot words that rose to his lips. He had come to the ranch as a messenger, not to hunt trouble. He answered quietly:

"Feller, if you want that kinda answer to go to my boss, I guess you got to take it yourself; I ain't repeating your sass to Mr. Poindexter."

"That's all from you!" growled the Lazy-O foreman, "Ride, you young gink, afore I lift you off'n that bronc, and spank you like you was back with your schoolmarm."

Slick's eyes flashed. But again he kept his temper in control. Without a word more he wheeled Kicker to ride away.

Whiz!

There was a roar of laughter from the Lazy-O rough-necks, as Yucca Bill's arm rose, and his lasso uncurled in the air. The next instant the noose had dropped over Slick Dexter's shoulders from behind, and he was struggling at the end of a fifty-foot rope.

"Oh, shucks!" gasped Slick.

Not often was the Panhandle puncher taken by surprise. But he had not guessed that Yucca was only waiting for him, to turn his back, before he handled the riata. He remembered,—too late!—Barney's warning that the rough crowd at the Lazy-O might figure on having fun with a kid tenderfoot. He gave a fierce wrench at the tightening noose, but he had no chance. A rough drag on the rope from Yucca Bill's end hooked him bodily out of the saddle, over his broncho's tail, and he crashed heavily on the earth.

He sprawled there on his back, breathless and shaken. Kicker whirled round, and stood looking down at him. The punchers at the bunk-house yelled with laughter.

Slick struggled to his feet, wrenching savagely at the gripping noose that pinned his arms. But as he struggled, another jerk on the rope hooked him off his feet, and he crashed again, amid fresh yells of merriment from the Lazy-O crowd.

Again, and again, he struggled up; and each time, the rope toppled him over, sprawling and panting. Yucca Bill was grinning from ear to ear, as he gave jerk after jerk at the riata. This was fun to the Lazy-O rough necks, and they were enjoying it.

"Run him on the rope, Yucca!" chuckled Colorado.

"I'll sure run him, like he was a dog-goned fish in the Rio Pollo!" grinned Yucca, "I guess I'll make them jaspers at the Circle-Bar savvy that it ain't healthy to tote Old Man Poindexter's grousches to this ranch. Sure thing!"

Up struggled Slick again, and again the rope jerked him over, and he rolled headlong on the ground. The noose, tightened by the jerking, almost bit into his aching arms. He was utterly at the mercy of the Lazy-O foreman, so long as he chose to carry on with the rough game. He was breathless, dizzy, and had an ache in every bone in his body. Could he have got a hand loose, he would have pulled his gun; but he had no chance of getting a hand loose. He could only grit his teeth, and endure it so long as it lasted.

It was just as well for Slick, that Yucca Bill was scheduled to ride over to Mesquite that morning. Otherwise the rough game might have lasted longer. The Lazy-O foreman remembered that he had no time to burn. Grinning, he coiled in the riata, dragging the boy puncher along the ground. Then Slick was released from the rope. He lay breathless and dizzy, too utterly spent to lift a finger. Yucca Bill grinned down at him.

"Git on your cayuse, and beat it!" he snapped, "Stir him with your spirts, boys."

Somehow, Slick scrambled up, and scrambled on his broncho, as the quirts cracked round him. He dashed away at a gallop, followed by a roar of laughter from the Lazy-O. For a couple of miles, Kicker galloped on the trail to Circle-Bar. But by that time, Slick had recovered a little. And instead of keeping on for the Circle-Bar, he turned from the home-trail, and dashed away at a gallop in the direction of the cow-town of Mesquite. Yucca Bill had no doubt that he was through with the boy puncher. But he was not quite through with Slick Dexter yet.

"WHA, KICKER!" murmured Slick.

### III

The broncho came to a halt.

For six or seven miles, Slick Dexter had ridden as fast as Kicker could gallop. Now he pulled the broncho to a halt, in a thicket of post-oaks and mesquite that bordered a trail marked by hoofs and wheel-ruts. It was the trail that led to the cow-town of Mesquite, several miles further on. Hidden in the thicket, on the edge of the trail, Slick uncoiled the riata that hung looped at his saddle-bow. He was still aching sorely from the rough usage at the Lazy-O, but the boy puncher from Panhandle was as tough as hickory, and he was ready for action now. And there was a grim look on his sunburnt face, as he sat his broncho in the post-oaks, and watched the trail.

He knew that the Lazy-O foreman was riding to Mesquite that morning; and he knew that he was ahead of him; well ahead, from the pace at which he had covered the ground. Now he was in ambush for Yucca Bill, when he came riding up the trail. The Lazy-O foreman had had his fun with a rope. There was some more fun waiting for him, on the Mesquite

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and he was going to learn that a Panhandle puncher could handle a riata as effectively as any hombre on the Lazy-O. Lasso in hand, Slick Dexter waited and watched.

There was a sound of hoof-beats at last. In the distance, a Stetson hat bobbed against the blue of the Texas sky. Slick, with a gleam in his eyes, watched the ten-gallon hat as it drew nearer and nearer, and a few minutes later he made out the rugged features of Yucca Bill under it. The Lazy-O foreman came riding on at a trot, never dreaming of what awaited him in the thicket bordering the trail. Slick watched him, in silence, till he was well within a lasso-cast.

Then, suddenly, he pushed out from the thicket, and his riata flew. Before Yucca Bill even saw him, the noose settled down over the Stetson hat, over the broad shoulders, and a sharp jerk tightened it, pinning the cow-man's brawny arms to his sides, as Slick's had been pinned at the Lazy-O. A startled yell came from Yucca Bill. The next moment, the drag of the rope hooked him heading out of the saddle, and he crashed.

His startled horse squealed, whirled round, and dashed away, with an empty saddle. Slick gave it no heed. He leaped down from his broncho, and ran towards the sprawling cow-man, rapidly coiling in the rope as he ran. Yucca Bill, struggling in the lasso, stared up at him with blazing eyes.

"You!" he gasped, "You! Why, you dog-goned tenderfoot, if I don't make coyotes' meat of you—!" He struggled to get a hand to his gun. If Yucca Bill could have pulled a six-gun at that moment, the Circle-Bar bunch would never have seen the boy puncher from Panhandle again. But Yucca had no chance of pulling a gun. The taut rope held him like iron manacles. Slick stooped over him, and jerked the six-gun from its holster.

"I guess you won't be wanting your hardware, feller!" drawled Slick, and he tossed the revolver away among the mesquite.

Yucca Bill writhed in the gripping rope.

"You dog-goned young geek!" he said, hoarsely, "You figure you can rope me in like I was a steer? I'll sure break you up when I get loose."

"You ain't getting loose yet a piece!" said Slick, "You've had your fun with me, Yucca, and now I reckon I'm having mine with you. You're coming on a little paseo with this baby, Yucca. Any objections?"

Yucca Bill was not in a position to raise objections. He wrenched and wrenched at the gripping rope, but he wrenched in vain. Stooping over the infuriated roughness, Slick knotted the rope, and knotted it again; after which even Yucca realised that there was no escape for him, and he ceased his struggles. His eyes burned at Slick.

"Dog-gone you!" he breathed, "I'll sure get you, for this."

"Mebbe!" said Slick, "Just at present, I've got you, feller, and I'll tell a man, you got to dance to my tune. You're coming back to the Circle-Bar with me, to give that message of yours to Mr. Poindexter, if you want him to get it."

"You pesky bonehead, how'd I ride to the Circle-Bar, and my cayuse a mile away by this time!" spluttered the Lazy-O foreman.

"I ain't said you're going to ride! What's the matter with hoofing it?" smiled Slick. "I'm sure giving you a run on the rope, like you did me, Yucca."

"Hoof it more'n ten miles!" yelled Yucca.

"Surest thing you know."

"Dog-gone you! I——!"

"You've spilled enough, feller, and I ain't burning time, listening to you chewing the rag," said Slick; and he walked back to his waiting broncho, and fastened the end of the riata to Kicker's saddle. Then he mounted.

"Get on your feet, feller," he called out. "You gotta walk."

"You got-darned young scallywag——!"

"You gettin on them hoods of yours'!"

"Nup!" yelled Yucca Bill.

"Suit yourself!" answered Slick, and he set the broncho in motion. The rope tautened, and as Kicker moved off, the burly cow-man was dragged headlong along the rough trail.

"Let up!" yelled Yucca, "I'm telling you, let up!"

Slick did not even turn his head. And Yucca Bill, as he had either to walk or be dragged, scrambled to his feet, and walked. The walk had to quicken to a run, as Kicker trotted. Slick rode out of the thickets, turning his back on the Mesquite trail, and headed across the open prairie in the direction of the Circle-Bar. The enraged foreman of the Lazy-O panted on behind him.

He panted, he sweated, he stumbled, and he swore luridly. No cow-man goes a furling on foot if he can help it; and ten miles of rugged prairie lay ahead of Yucca Bill. He stumbled and staggered and panted on in his high-heeled boots, streaming with sweat, spitting oaths; till at length fatigue drove him to save his breath. He had given Slick a "run on the rope" at the Lazy-O; and now it was his own turn; but it was a longer run for Yucca, and by the time they reached the Circle-Bar, the brawny rough-neck was fairly doubled up and almost crawling.

#### IV

"SAY, what's this game?" gasped Barney Cash. Circle-Bar punchers came running from all quarters, as Slick rode in, with the foreman of the Lazy-O tottering behind his broncho. Mr. Poindexter came striding down from the ranch-house. Slick pulled in, and dismounted; and Yucca Bill stumbled and fell in a heap.

"You was right, Barney!" said Slick, "They sure figured on having a piece fun with me at the Lazy-O, and they gave me a run on the rope, and I'm telling you I did not like it a whole lot. I sure did not! But I guess I liked it more'n Yucca liked the run I've given him back."

"Search me!" gasped Barney.

Slick stooped, and released the foreman of the Lazy-O from the rope. Yucca sat up, dizzily, breathing in gulps. Grinning faces surrounded him. Even the stern face of Rancher Poindexter melted into a smile.

"You young gink, Slick!" he said, "You've run that hombre all the way here on the rope——!"

"Sure, sir," answered Slick, "He gave me an answer to your letter, sir, that was too sassy for me to carry; so I've run him here to hand it out himself. But he sure don't look so sassy now as he did at the Lazy-O" added Slick. "Here, you piece, if you got anything to spill to Mr. Poindexter, spill it."

But Yucca Bill had nothing to "spill". He was too far gone even to utter a "cuss-word". He could only sprawl and pant for breath.

The rancher laughed.

"Lend him a cayuse to get home on, Barney!" he said, "He sure looks all in." And he went back to the ranch-house, laughing.

But it was quite some time before Yucca Bill was even able to clamber on a lent horse to ride home. And when at length he went, he sagged in the saddle like a sack of alfalfa. Barney Cash grinned after him; but his tanned face became serious as he turned to Slick Dexter.

"That guy will sure get you, for this, Slick, if you don't watch out," he said. "He will sure be looking for you with a gun."

"Mebbe!" said Slick, carelessly.

And with that he went to the chuck-house for his dinner, wasting no more thought on the rough-neck he had run on the rope.