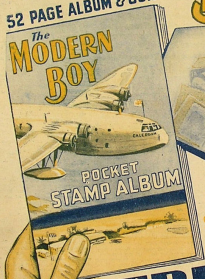


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*The*  
**MODERN BOY**

EVERY SATURDAY  
WEEK ENDING SEPT 25/1937  
NO 503 VOL 20

**52 PAGE ALBUM & GUIDE**



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# The Rio Kid Rides Again!

There's a price on the head of the Boy Outlaw—  
every Sheriff in Texas is after him . . . and  
only his mustang and deadly six-shooters stand  
between him and captivity!

\*\*\*\*\* By \*\*\*\*\*

Shooting-up Lariat

THAT he was asking for it, the Rio Kid knew—knew only too well. If ever a guy needed to ride clear of unnecessary trouble, the Kid was that guy. But there was a strain of wild recklessness in him, and it got his gut to see that notice stuck on the trunk of the cottonwood, staring him in the face as he rode into Lariat.

He was a good hundred miles from his own country—the Rio country, where he had been raised on the old Double-Bar Ranch, and where a false charge had made an outlaw of him. Up and down the Rio, up and down the Pecos and the Rio Grande, he was known, and at the sight of the land-some sunburnt face under the shade of the wide-brimmed stetson, any man would have reached for his gun as a matter of course.

But in this remote corner of Texas, in a little cowtown lost among the grasslands of the Lariat River, the Kid had reckoned that his name and fame would hardly be known, that he could pull in the black-muzzled grey mustang at the timber hotel and slight there for beans and beans as freely and securely as any other cowpuncher.

Indeed the Kid, as he rode the hot, dusty trail into Lariat, was figuring that in this new country, where he had never ridden before, there was a healthy chance of throwing his wild reputation behind him; quitting heady trails in the dusky chaparral and hide-outs in the sierra, ranging once more with some bunch, on a ranch where they had never heard of the boy outlaw of the Rio Grande.

That was a happy thought to the puncher who a mistaken charge had made an outlaw, and who was wanted by half the sheriffs in Texas. There was a smile on his face as he rode into Lariat, but it faded away as he drew rein and stared at the notice on the tree:

"THE RIO KID!

ONE THOUSAND DOLLARS  
REWARD!"

The Kid's hand dropped to a gun in the low-dung holster. Grindly he set in the saddle, staring at it.

RALPH REDWAY

\*\*\*\*\*

The cottonwood stood in the plaza, opposite the timber hotel. There, five or six horses were hitched. Three or four men, in rockers on the piazza, had their feet on the rail. They glanced curiously at the horseman halted under the cottonwood. All they saw was a handsome young puncher mounted on a magnificent mustang—and their glances turned more on the horse than the rider. A cowpuncher, in Lariat, attracted no second glance; but every man in the cow-country had an eye for a cayuse.

One of them, however, a young man in natty riding-clothes, rather unusual in Lariat, sat up and took notice. His keen eyes fixed on the Kid, dawning recognition in them. Had the Kid been looking at him, he would have realized that there was at least one galoot in Lariat who had seen the boy outlaw of the Rio Grande before. But the Kid was looking at the bill on the tree, and his grip was closing hard on the walnut butt of his gun.

"Shucks!" muttered the Kid. "Ain't there a spot in this lousy State of Texas where a guy can ride without seeing his monicker stuck up on a tree or a dead wall? I'll tell a man!"

It was asking for it, and he knew it. But he did not care! The six-gun whipped out of the holster, and the Kid was firing.

Bang, bang, bang! roared the six-gun, the bullets tattooing the bill on the tree to rags. Bang, bang, bang!

There was a shout from the piazza of the timber hotel. Every man there leaped to his feet, staring at the sudden outbreak of gun-play. The man in riding-breeches shouted:

"It's the Kid! The Rio Kid!"

The Rio Kid glanced round, waved the smoking six-gun, and rode on down the rugged street at a gallop. He laughed as he rode. Down the steps from the piazza came men rushing for their horses. Up and down the rugged street of Lariat rang startled shouts. From framehouse and shack,

street, and guns were leaping into hands.

"The Rio Kid!"

The name was on every tongue. Bullets whizzed in the air. One that came close span the Kid's stetson on his head. Men whose horses were at hand mounted in hot haste and clustered in pursuit. A minute ago Lariat had seemed half-asleep in the hot Texas afternoon. Now it roared from end to end.

"The Rio Kid!"

"It's the Kid, shooting up the town!"

The Kid laughed, and laughed again. His other gun was in his hand now, and he fired right and left as he galloped. Men dodged wildly for cover—for all Texas knew that the Rio Kid never missed. But the Kid was not shooting to hit—he was shooting from reckless exuberance of spirits—shooting up the town, to tell the world that the Rio Kid did not give a Continental red cent for all the sheriffs in Texas.

There were few glass windows in Lariat, but not one that the Kid passed in his wild career escaped a bullet! Right through the cow-town he rode, laughing defiance, and out on the rugged prairie trail beyond.

Side-Kicker had followed a long trail that day, but he was still full of beans, and the Kid was a rider who knew how to get every ounce out of a critter. A bunch of horsemen swept out of Lariat, plying quiet and spy in hot pursuit, losing off wild shots as they rode. But they tailed off as the Kid's mustang stretched to the gallop.

"I guess, old boss," murmured the Kid, "that there ain't no guy to Lariat that will clutch that thousand dollars for this Kid!"

He reloaded his six-guns as he rode, but he thrust them back into the holsters. He did not figure on wanting them. And the Kid, wild as his reputation was, was not the guy to spill blood if he could help it—except in the way of gay defiance. The men on his trail were cowpunchers, men he would gladly have ridden and banked with, had his fortune been other than what it was. They were hunting the Kid for his life, but he would not have hurt a hair of their heads, unless crowded to it. And the Kid calculated that while he sat Side-Kicker, there was no way in Texas that could help a guy to crowd him.

The Kid used neither quirt nor spur, but he rode like the wind. And when, after five grassy miles had flaked under the mustang's hoofs, he looked back, the pursuit had tailed off—with one exception. A man in riding-breeches, on a powerful pinto, was still keeping up the chase, while the rest were only specks in distant grass.

The Kid smiled and waved his stetson to his solitary pursuer. That was the guy who had known him, and first shouted his name—not a puncher, the Kid figured from his outfit, more likely a rancher, or a ranch foreman. He had a dandy cayuse, and rode it well. But if he knew the Kid, he did not, it seemed, know how bad a man the Kid was to crowd.

The boy outlaw chuckled at the thought of a single foe riding him



down, and figuring on getting away with it. The galoot had gall, at least; and the Kid was not the man to dislike him for it. He waved his division in good-humored mockery, and gave at last a flick of the quirt to his mustang. Slide-Kicker, who had been lightning before, was grizzled lightning now, and when the Kid glanced back over his shoulder again he was alone on the prairie.

**Raped In**

FIFTEEN miles from Lariat, the Kid had camped. Round him was the boundless prairie, barred dimly to the northward by the soaring bluffs of the Staked Plain. In the scene of glimmering grass rose, here and there, a clump of post-oaks or cottonwoods—sinker-islands in the sea of grass. It was in such an island that the Kid had camped. He had chosen it for a simple reason—his horse had scented water there.

Camped by the little spring that glimmered among the cottonwoods, the Kid rested after his ride, and considered. Through that clump of trees a trail ran, faintly marked—no trail at all to an eye less keen than a cowpuncher's—but, all the same, a trail on which, he knew, horsemen rode and cattle were driven. It ran, the Kid reckoned, to the Lary S Ranch, farther to the west, because it could hardly run anywhere else. North and south, east and west, for many a long mile, stretched the vashlands—in fact, the Kid reckoned that he was now camping on land belonging to the Lary S. And it was in the Kid's mind to ride on to the Lary S, trusting to luck that he was unknown there, and ask Rancher Hall if he were in want of a good man for his bunch. In view of

The Rio Kid waved his gun and rodded on down the rugged street. Galoots whizzed at him on the men of Lariat sprang to their horses.

which the Kid could have kicked himself for that outbreak of exuberance at Lariat, which had set the whole run-down talking of the Rio Kid.

But it was fifteen miles more, at least, to the Lary S, and, even in Texas, thirty miles was a long step. A touch of prairie, which the careful Kid kept in his saddle-bags, would change the look of the black-muzzled mustang, as well known in Texas as the Kid. For himself, he had all the names in the wide world to choose from. It was a risk, but risk was no new thing to the Kid. And the idea of bedding down in a bunk-house—of talking shop once more with a range-riding bunch—was attractive. The Kid was pondering it, when hoof-beats on the scarcely marked trail struck on his ear.

The Kid looked out from thick cover to see who was riding.

He had divined round many miles before hitting the western trail, and did not figure that this was any guy from Lariat still hunting him. More likely, it was some Lary S puncher on the home trail—in which case the Kid reckoned that he would ride on in company. And then, as his eyes fell on the approaching rider, he ejaculated "Shucks!" in a tone of intense annoyance, and dropped a hand to a gun.

"Deg-gone him!" breathed the Kid. "I'll say that that guy is some stunner!"

His eyes gleamed at the rider—the young man in riding-clothes on the big pinto. The Kid could have

sworn that he had thrown pursuit off the track, yet here was the guy riding him down and almost upon his camp! The pinto showed signs of weariness, and was coming on at a loping trot. The Kid watched it with darkening brow. If that guy in store clothes had frozen on to his trail all this time, he knew that he was there—and there was going to be gun-play. The Kid's grip closed like iron on a walnut butt.

But the Kid did not pull his gun. He stopped to his saddle and unhooked the rista that was coiled there. Lasso in hand, he waited, a faint smile on his face, for the rider to come within forty feet of the cottonwood behind which he was in cover. From the Rio Grande to the Colorado there was no surer hand than the Kid's with a forty-foot rope.

Whiz! The man on the pinto never knew what was happening till he crashed in the grass. If he had any impression at all, it was that a giant's hand had suddenly plucked him from the saddle and flung him down.

Breathless, dazed, he rolled in the rope, while his pinto started and shied, and stood trembling. The Kid came at a run, coiling up the slack as he came. The roped man rose dizzily on an elbow, his other hand grabbing at a gun—which the Kid kicked from his grasp as it was pulled. Then the Rio Kid's smiling eyes looked at him over a levelled barrel.

"Forget it!" grinned the Kid. "The Kid!" breathed the roped man hoarsely. A wave of pallor swept over his face, though he did not flinch. Obviously he expected the roar of the six-gun in the Kid's hand to tell the end of all things for him.

## The Rio Kid Rides Again!

But the Kid only nodded pleasantly. "Sure!" he assented. "That very identical galoot. I'll say you're a good man on a trail and you've sure ran me down. Maybe you're hoping now that you hadn't!"

"I've not trailed you!" muttered the roped man. "I lost you hours ago—I reckoned you were hitting for the Staked Plains!"

The Kid eyed him curiously. "What'll you be doing here, then, if you ain't trailing this here guy?" he asked.

"If you know this country, you'd know that this trail runs to the Lazy S. That's where I'm going!"

"Oh!" ejaculated the Kid. "That honest-to-goodness?"

The young man shrugged his shoulders.

"You've got me cinched—I guess you're going to shoot me up! But it's the truth! I'd stepped for cats at Lariat, on the way to the ranch, and after I lost you on the prairie I hit the trail for the ranch. Never reckoned I'd see hide or hair of the Rio Kid again—and dep-goned sorry to see either!"

The Kid chuckled—he could not help it! He believed the man. There was a look about him that the Kid rather liked and trusted. He was on that lonely trail because he was riding to the Lazy S—the ranch where the Kid had been thinking of homing in, hoping that he was unknown there. But for this meeting, the Kid would have homed in and found him there—to be immediately recognized in the middle of a gun-slinging bunch! That narrow escape appealed to the Kid's sense of humor, and he chuckled.

"I'll say I'm glad I met up with you here, hombre!" he remarked.

"Say, what's your big bolt at the Lazy S? You're sure no puncher?"

"I'm going there as foreman."

"Say, ain't there a foreman on the ranch?"

"There was—till a week ago. He was shot up by the rustlers, and I'm going to take his place if—"

He broke off.

"If you ain't shot up by a fire-bug called the Rio Kid, who's shot up more guys than he's got fingers and toes!" said the Kid blusteringly.

"You've said it!"

"And me wanting to hear in at the ranch and ask the foreman for a place on the pay-roll!" grinned the Kid. "I guess it ain't no use asking you, mister. What do you call yourself?"

"Dunn!"

"Waal, Mister Dunn, do you figure that you want a good man in the bunch—a good man with cows, sprog with a cowboy, handy with a rope, and all fixed slick with a gun—say?"

The Kid grinned as he asked, and the roped man stared at him blankly. The Kid laughed—a cheery laugh that rang among the cottonwoods.

"I guess I can take the answer as read!" he remarked. "You could do worse, Mr. Dunn, but you sure don't know it, and it ain't no use telling you. I'll mention that I'm riding

clear of the Lazy S—though I sure would like to bed down with just such a bunch. It ain't no use asking you for a job on that ranch, and that's a cinch. But I ain't spilling you vinegar, feller! I reckon you can get on that cayuse of yours as soon as you like, and hit the high spots for your god-darned ranch. Maybe when you hear the guys blowing off their mouths about the Rio Kid you'll put them wise that he ain't the all-fired fire-bug that folks allow!"

The Kid jerked theariat off the ranch foreman, and Dunn, finally, came to his feet. He stared unbelievably at the Kid.

"You mean it?" he gasped at last.

"I should smile!" said the Kid.

"You ain't asking for my roll?"

"Keep your roll in them dandy riding-breeches of yours!" snapped the Kid. "You figure that you're chewing the rag with a hold-up man?"

"I'll say that all Texas figures just that!" said Dunn, staring. "You're letting me have my horse?"

The Kid's eyes glinted.

"Maybe they call me a boss-thief, along with the rest," he said. "Forget it, feller! Don't spill any more, or maybe I'll be tempted to blow your roof off. Git on that critter and clear!"

In amazed silence, the foreman remounted the pinto. The Kid picked up the gun he had dropped and held it out to him by the barrel.

"I guess you'll want that, if there's rustlers around, like you allow!" he remarked amiably. "Pack your gun, feller—pack it, and light out! Tell them at the Lazy S that they've lost a good man!"

The ranch foreman gasped as he dropped the revolver into his holster.

"I'll tell them that the Rio Kid ain't as black as he's painted," he said. "I'm sure sorry I helped to raise that rookus agin you, back in Lariat. You're a white man, Kid, outlaw or no outlaw—and I reckon I ain't going to believe much of what they say about you at every cow-camp and rodeo in Texas. You're a white man, Kid—and there's my fist."

The Kid, grinning, shook the hand that was held out to him. Then he stood watching the horseman as he rode on out of the timber, on the trail to distant Lazy S.

### The Rustlers

ANOTHER shot, and another rang echoing far in the clear air of the Texas prairie. Faintly, from afar, came the beat of galloping hoofs. And the Rio Kid, puzzled, stared into the west, where the red sun was sinking. He could see nothing but red sky and glimmering grass, and the belt of post-oks behind which the foreman of the Lazy S had ridden out of sight. The rattling shots told of trouble on the trail and the Kid wondered whether it was Dunn who had hit the trouble. Five or six guns, he calculated, were losing off, but the post-ok told him what was happening from his sight. He watched, knowing that he would see soon, for the thunder of hoofs was coming his way. If it were Dunn, he was riding back on his trail.

"So!" breathed the Kid.

From the belt of small trees, a horseman was spurting madly. It was the man who had led the Kid handily a quarter of an hour since. His steed was gone—his hair blew out in the wind; and across one cheek was a splash of blood where a bullet had gashed. His right arm hung like a broken stick—the reins hunched in his left hand. Twice, at least, he had been struck by whizzing lead; but he kept the saddle, and rode, his face white as death save where it was splashed with red. And the Kid, watching, gripped his guns, his eyes glinting.

The man had shouted out his name in Lariat, had led the hunt from the cow-town—but the Kid cared nothing for that. They had met as enemies, and parted as friends. But if the guy had been the worst stranger or enemy the Kid would have stood by him now. He reckoned he knew, too, why Dunn was spurting back to the timber-land. He was banking on a helping hand from the Kid. And the Kid was not the man to fail him.

From the straggling line of post-oks, five horsemen burst in a bunch behind Dunn, being as they came. The Kid's eyes flashed past the fugitive at the pursuers. Four of them were rough-headed, hard-bitten roughnecks—rattler and cow-thief written all over them. The fifth was dressed a second glance. What he was like—what he had been like—the eye could hardly tell, for his face was a mass of scars from the eyes to the chin. He looked, to the Kid, the leader of the bunch.

Even as the Kid stared, the scarred man fired again, and he saw the fleeing foreman reel in the saddle—but for the third time. For a moment the Kid decided that he was going down—to be ridden over by the pursuing bunch, trampled out of life and recognition. But he held on, with gripping knees, though he swayed like a drunken man. And the pinto raced on towards where the Kid stood under the cottonwoods, a gun in either hand.

And now the Rio Kid loomed in, as the whole bunch except within range of his six-guns. He fired, and fired again, the second shot, so swift was it, blending with the first. Two of the roughnecks never knew what hit them.

Two cow-ponies went careening across the plain, as their riders crashed into the grass. The other three dragged in their cow-ponies so sharply that the cayuses almost went over on their haunches.

The sudden fire from under the cottonwoods took them completely by surprise. They could not see the Kid, deep in the shadow of heavy branches—but they were clear to his eyes, in the sunshine in the open. The three dragged in their horses, and two of them whirled round and rode madly to get out of range of the unseen marksman. Only the scarred man remained, dropping from the saddle with sudden swiftness, to use his cow-pony as a shield. He was none too swift, for the Kid's third bullet tore a hole clean through the crown of his steed as he dropped.

# The Editor Talks



Address your letters to:  
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Sheltered behind his horse, the scarred rafter fired again at the foreman, who had now nearly reached the timber. Even under the fire of an unseen enemy, the rafter was determined not to let his victim escape. The Rio Kid gritted his teeth with rage as the fleeing man swayed again, falling over his horse's neck as the bullet ploughed his shoulder.

"Bang, bang!" roared the Kid's guns. It got his goat to fire on a coyote, but there was no help for it if he was not to see Foreman Dunn fall, riddled with bullets.

The cow-pony behind which the scarred rafter sheltered went squealing over, and lay still. A steved had ducked deep in the high grass. The Kid threw his lead, but the man was ducking away, keeping low as he ran back to the post-inks.

A few more strides and Dunn's scarred pinto was plunging among the cottonwoods where the Kid stood. Heavily the Kid would have liked to burn the wind after the scarred man, but the wounded man claimed his care. The frightened pinto would have galloped on, with the half-senseless man clinging to his back, had not the Kid caught the flying reins, and dragged him to a halt.

The next moment, with the reins looped over his arm, the Kid was catching the rider as he fell.

Had the enemy come on, at that moment, the lay-out would have been badly crowded. But the rustlers were thinking of anything but that. The two mounted men were already out of sight—and the dismounted man with the scarred face was ducking through grass three feet high, in fear of his life as he hunted cover in the post-inks. And the two roughnecks who had gone down at the Kid's first fire never stirred—they would never stir again.

The Kid's strong arm bore the weight that fell on him, and he lowered the ranch foreman into the grass. The pinto was shying and backing, but the Kid kept a grip on the reins, and in a few moments had the horse tethered to a branch. One glance he shot out over the scrub plain. Nothing living was in sight but two riderless cow-ponies scattering in the far distance. The Kid knelt by the side of the fallen man. A ghastly face looked up at him—the matty riding-clothes were drenched with blood. But the man was conscious, and his voice came in a husky whisper.

"I guess I've got mine, Kid! They was laying for me in cover, and they got me before I could touch a gun—but I reckoned if I got back here, you'd stand by a man—"

"Shucks!" said the Kid. "I guess them rustlers sure don't want Rancher Hall to fix up with a foreman to run his ranch. But how'd they know you was coming, to lay for you like that on the trail?"

"You can search me!"

"I guess it's got me beat, unless they got a man in the outfit to put them wise!" muttered the Kid. "But don't you tell me that you got years, feller—I'm going to pull you through this."

Dunn did not answer; he sank back

**ONLY A BEGINNING!**—I think you will agree that the Pocket Album and Guide and packet of stamps given free in this issue fulfil the promise I made last week, and I expect many of you are already getting busy inserting the stamps in their proper places with linings.

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on the grass, his eyes half-closed. The Kid spoke hopefully, but he doubted while he spoke. The man was dead hit—there was a bullet in his arm, and another in his shoulder, and five or six slighter wounds. The rustlers had meant grim business when they opened fire on the new foreman of the Lary 8, and it

**THE BLACK ARROW.**—Moving across an illuminated globe in the control room at Station A, it shows Justice & Co. that Dargoff is speeding across the Pacific in an air-liner piloted by the hypothetical Professor Flamingol. Justice taps an order—and off they go on a chase across the world!

**THE RIO KID FIGHTS BACK.**—You look at the Rio Kid and see his guns in their holsters. Blink your eyes—and when you look again they're in his hands and blazing away if he's in a tight corner. He is in one next week in **THE LONELY HUT**. Stand clear and watch him in a hot-hot battle with rustlers.

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**SEE YOU NEXT SATURDAY—WITH MORE FINE GIFTS!**

seemed a miracle that he had been able to ride alive out of that deadly ambush. But for the Kid hearing it, he would have fallen, riddled as he fell; and if the Kid had saved him from that, he doubted whether he had saved him for keeps. But he was going to do his best.

(Continued on page 23)

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**The Rio Kid Rides Again!**

(Continued from page 21)

By wild trails in Dams and  
chapsarrat, the Rio Kid had picked up  
a rough surgery. To wash the hurts  
with clear, cool water from the  
spring, to bind them with bandages  
from his slicker pack, and stop the  
flow of blood, was in the Kid's power.  
But if Dams were to live, he had to  
bed down under a roof, with a doe to  
fit him. And when he had done all  
that he could the Rio Kid stood  
looking at him, and whistled softly.

To save this man's life—if it were  
to be saved—the Kid had to take him  
over fifteen miles of rugged prairie,  
with rattlers gunning around—to find  
himself in the midst of enemies, if  
the man, who he had saved him,  
uttered his name?

**The Kid Gets In.**

I was with mixed feelings that  
the Kid watched steeton hats  
bobbing over the distant grass.  
Miles—how many miles, he hardly  
knew—he had covered from the  
timber-land on the Larist trail—and  
the going was slow and hard. He  
would have liked to hit the ranch by  
the shortest route. But he figured  
that the scarred rutler watched in  
cover there, with ready gun, to get  
him if he came. So he made a wide  
detour when he quitted the timber-  
land, leaving it to the southward  
and keeping out of rifle-range of those  
deadly post-oks.

But it was slow going. The Kid,  
on his grey mustang, had to accom-  
modate his pace to that of the pinto.  
And, with a hard-bit man sagging in  
the saddle, the pinto had to go at  
little more than a walk. The Kid  
had taken a turn of rope round the  
ranch foreman, to keep him in his  
seat; but without the Kid's helping  
hand the man would have sagged  
over and fallen. He was unconscious;  
and a senseless burden on the Kid's  
hands.

The ranch was nowhere in sight yet.  
That he was drawing near to it, the  
Kid figured from many tracks in  
the plain, and from the herds of cows  
that he sighted here and there. And  
when three steeton hats bobbed into  
view, the Kid realized that he had  
spotted some of Mr. Hall's punchers,  
riding herd—and he was glad, yet  
doubtful. Glad to get help to tote the  
senseless rider over the last stage of  
the weary journey—doubtful because  
of the chance that one of the coming  
riders might know the Rio Kid by  
sight!

Two of them were burly, long-  
limbed range-riders. The third was a  
slighter man, of lithe and wiry build,  
with a dark, handsome face and  
shining black eyes—a dash of  
Mexican in him, the Kid guessed.  
The three came up and drew rein,  
circling the Kid and his unconscious  
companion. Their eyes searched him,  
and it seemed to the Kid that  
hostility flashed in the black eyes of  
the dark, handsome puncher.

"Say, fellers, I'm powerful glad to  
(Continued on next page)

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## The Rio Kid Rides Again!

meet up with you," said the Kid. "I figure that you belong to Hall's outfit."

"You said it," assented one of the burly punchers, "and I guess we want to know who you are, and who's that guy you're toting around, all bandaged up."

"Mebbe the guy we're looking for, Colorado," said the other long-limbed man. "He sure was due to hit the ranch this afternoon, and he never came."

"Surest thing you know, Bill Saunders!" said Colorado. "I guess I ain't seed the' guy before, but he's about the heft of the man Mister Hall's described to us."

"If the man you're looking for is Mister Dunn, your new foreman, you're sure squinting at him now!" said the Kid.

"How come he's all shot up like this, and bandaged?" demanded Colorado, with grim suspicion in his look.

"That's an easy one, Colorado!" broke in the dark, handsome puncher, his eyes gleaming hostility at the Kid. "The rustlers shot up our last foreman, and the whole bunch knows that Scar Face and his gang allowed that they would shoot up the next man when he came. And I guess we ain't far to look for the rustler what shot him up."

"I was jest thinking so, Handsome!" said Colorado, with a nod.

"Aw, can it, you geeks!" said the Kid, with a cheery grin. "If I was a rustler, and shot up Mister Dunn that-a-way, do you figure that I'd bandage him up afterwards and ride him home where he belongs? You got another guess coming."

Colorado scratched his sun-blistered nose.

"That's hoss-sense!" he admitted. "You ain't three miles from the ranch, and you're hitting right there the way you was going when we raised you on the prairie. All the same——"

"All the same, Mister Dunn's been shot up, and sure he can't spill who did it the way he is now!" said Saunders. "I guess we all knew the rustlers might be gunning after him. I want to know who this kid puncher is, and what he's doing on Hall's stamping-grounds?"

"Name of Carfax, if you're honing to know," smiled the Kid. "Fellers, you're wasting time chewing the rag—you want to had me a hand getting this guy to the ranch, where he can be looked after. I'll tell you, he's spilt a lot of juice, and there's two chunks of lead somewheres inside him this minute. I've covered a good sixteen miles getting him away from the galoot you call Scar Face."

"You're coming on to the ranch?" asked Colorado doubtfully.

"Ain't I shouting it out?" asked the Kid good-humouredly. "Take the other side of him, hombre, and burn the trail."

Colorado and Saunders exchanged glances. They were doubtful and suspicious; but the Kid's offer to ride on to the ranch with them disarmed suspicion. They nodded; but if the two Texas punchers were satisfied, the man they called "Handsome" was not. He pushed his horse a little nearer to the Kid, his eyes gleaming and his lips set.

"You pesky boneheads!" he rapped. "You letting that gol-darned rustler put it across you as easy as all that? There's our foreman, all shot up——"

"Aw, can it, Handsome!" drawled Colorado. "I guess you ain't going to put on no mourning for him. Ain't all the bunch wise to it that you put in for the foreman's place when old Jake was shot up a week ago. Now the noo man's shot up the same, I guess you'll be putting in again for it."

The dark, handsome puncher gave his companion a fierce look. Then his black eyes gleamed at the Kid again.

"There's our foreman, shot up and tied to his cayuse," he snapped. "We've got Mr. Hall's orders to shoot on sight if we raise one of Scar Face's gang."

His Colt was out, as he spoke, and the muzzle lifted towards the Rio

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kid. In another second the boy out-law of the Rio Grande would have rolled from his mustang, with a bullet through his heart. But that second was more than enough for the watchful, wary Kid. He did not lift a gun—he fired from the hip, even as the handsome man's Colt swung up—and the roar of the six-gun was followed by a yell of agony from Handsome.

The Colt went flying into the grass, smashed by the bullet. A spatter of blood went with it. The handsome man clasped his right hand with his left, yelling with pain.

"Thunder!" gasped Colorado. "Carry me home to die!" ejaculated Saunders. "Stranger, I've sure seen some guys that was sudden on the shoot, but you've got them beat to a frazzle! I'll say you've learned somewhere how to handle a six-gun."

The Rio Kid grinned. "I should smile!" he agreed. "I'll

tell a man this baby isn't hitting the Lazy S for a front seat in a funeral. Not so's you'd notice it! I guess that bulldozer you call Handsome won't be handling his hardware so spry agin for a week or two to come! Say, you uns riding on?"

"Pull on him, you skunks!" panted the handsome man hoarsely. "Pull on that pesky rustler—"

"Aw, pack it up, Handsome!" drawled Colorado derisively. "I guess if you'd got away with that dirty game we'd have booted you off'n the ranch! You've sure got what you asked for! Clew on that, you gun-slissing firebug."

He made a sign to his comrade, and they pulled in their horses on either side of the unconscious foreman. Then the Rio Kid released him, glad enough to get a rest from his burden. He rode on with the two punchers. Glancing back over his shoulder, he

grinned as he saw the handsome man leap from his horse, and, stooping, search savagely in the grass for his Colt. That guy could, the Kid figured, shoot with his left; but he did not figure that that Colt would be of much use when the enraged puncher found it.

With a cheery grin on his face, the Kid rode on with the two cowboys, and he was glad to see the ranch buildings rise into view over the prairie—glad to ride in at the gate, to turn his mustang into the corral, and to join a cheery bunch at the bunkhouse for bacon and beans!

*The Kid will be with you again in next week's Free Gift Issue. He settles down to what he hopes will be a happy life on the Lazy S, but trouble is only just round the corner. Once again his life depends on his shooting!*

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