

CAPTAIN JUSTICE ON THE RUNAWAY PLANET!

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TRIALS OF THE EXETER TRIAL!—See centre pages

Just Like a Movie!

The film-makers of Hollywood don't have to think out new thrills when the Rio Kid's around. He hands them out . . . red-hot!

The Masked Man!

"STICK 'em up!"
The Rio Kid just stated.
In his own country, the boy outlaw of the Rio Grande was always prepared to hear just such a command, and to pull a six-gun by way of answer to it. But the Kid was far now from Texas trails. It was days since he had pulled out of Hollywood, glad to get away from towns, streets, and autos, but he was not, perhaps, sixty miles from the film town.

He had time to kill, and he was in no hurry. He was in California chiefly to ride clear while the hunt was so hot for him in his own country. He was not looking for trouble, or expecting trouble.

True, he had had a spot of trouble in Hollywood, but he was not expecting to hear any more from Spanish John and his gang. He had last seen Spanish John led away by a detective, with handcuffs on his wrists, and he reckoned that he was done with the gangster.

Now he was riding up a mountain road, with vast hills soaring to the blue sky on every hand, and glimpses of the sea every now and then through openings of the hills.

The road was narrow, rugged, winding. For the last two or three hours, he had not seen a soul. He might have been riding a trail in the heart of the Staked Plain for all the signs he could see of human habitation.

Ahead of him, the hills drew together, shutting in the road in a deep canyon. Beyond was a glimpse of a sunny valley. The Kid was figuring that he would camp in that valley, when suddenly a masked man stepped from behind one of the huge boulders strewn along the roadside and covered him.

"Stick 'em up, puncher!" repeated the masked man, as the Kid, in surprise, sat in the saddle and stared at him.

The mask was a scarf, tied across a bearded face, the gunman's eyes gleaming from slits in it. They gleamed a deadly threat, and the Kid lifted his hands over his silex, smiling. He guessed that if this hold-up man backed on going through him the man was booked for a surprise and a disappointment.

"Say, feller, you sure do surprise me some!" said the Kid cheerfully. "They been telling me that there ain't any more road agents in this here State of California."

"Road agents nothing!" growled the masked man. "You figure that I'm after the dollar and a quarter they paid you for punching cows? Forget it, you big stiff!"

The Kid grinned. In his grouchin

shape and stetson and gambel he looked a puncher—and he was! But he had a handsome roll, all the same, if the hold-up man had only been wise to it. But from what the huncher said, this was not a hold-up for robbery.

The masked man stepped a little nearer. He stared at the walnut butt of the Kid's gun, in the low-slung holsters. Then, keeping the Kid covered with the Colt in his right, he drew the two guns from the holsters and dropped them in the road.

"Two-gun man?" he grinned. "You're sure loaded, puncher!"

"Sure!" agreed the Kid. "Through it ain't a lot of use to me, with you pepping up so sudden-like and getting the drop. Say, if you ain't after that dollar and a quarter, what you want with this baby? You just dropped me on the trail to chew the rag a piece?"

"Get off'n that loss!"

Now that the Kid was disarmed, he was allowed to put his hands down. He dismounted quietly, but with a gleam in his eyes. If this huncher was a horse-thief, with his eye on Side-Kicker, he had an emphatic kick coming, so soon as the Kid saw a ghost of a chance. He would rather have parted with his roll than with his Mustang.

But he was soon made aware that horse-stealing was not the game.

"Get that critter off'n the road—and walk quick!" ordered the man.

Taking Side-Kicker's bridle, the Kid led the Mustang off the road, picking a way among the great rocks that numbered the mountainside. The masked man walked with him, his gun lowered now. But it was ready for use, if wanted; and, with his own guns lying on the ground behind him, the Kid had to be wary.

A horse's length from the road, he was ordered to halt. More and more puzzled to know what it could all mean, the Kid did so.

"The up that critter!"

The Kid tethered his Mustang to a stunted pine growing among the rocks, then the masked man made a gesture towards the coiled ruts at the Kid's saddle.

"Get that rope loose!"

The masked Kid uncoiled the lasso. "Put the slip round your, your arms down!" said the masked man. "I guess I'll pull it tight enough when you're ready, puncher."

***** By *****

RALPH REDWAY

"Feller," said the Kid, "you got me guessing! What's the big idea in stopping a guy on the trail and fixing him up this-a-way?"

"Maybe you'll guess, in a month of Sundays," answered the hold-up man, grinning under the masking scarf. "You got to stop here a piece, puncher, but I guess you can ride at sundown. What the thunder you come riding up here for? You ain't lost a cow in these byer mountains, I reckon? You're sure the first book I've struck since I been watching. But maybe you won't be the last, and I got to keep tabs on that road—so beadle, and make it snappy."

The Kid got a line on it, then. Something was going on, he reckoned, in the valley ahead, and this guy was posted on the road to stop any gambol from breaking in where he was not wanted.

"You jumping to it?" demanded the hold-up man, with a threatening gesture.

"You're the doctor, feller!" said the Kid. "I never was a guy to argue with the man holding the gun."

He heaped the lasso round himself. It needed only a pull to tighten it, fastening his arms down to his sides. He was to be left tied up there to keep him out of the way—that was the game! But the Kid was not tied up yet!

With the gun in his right, the hold-up man grasped the rope with his left, to perk it tight. The next moment, with the swiftness of lightning, a riding-boot flashed up. The man, taken utterly by surprise, staggered back from the sudden kick, with a howl of agony.

The howl had hardly left his lips when the Kid's fist smashed on his jaw. He went down like a felled ox, and the gun was kicked from his hand.

It was in the Kid's hand the next second. The muzzle was jammed firmly in the masked face as the man strove to rise.

"You lose, feller!" said the Kid amiably. "Stick 'em up!"

And the hold-up man, cursing volubly, put his hands over his hat and sat blinking at the Rio Kid.

"You sure are a good little man, and know how to do-like you're told, feller," the Kid said approvingly. "Now I'm going to give your friends—the once-over, though I guess it ain't worth looking at no ways!"

He jerked the masking scarf away, revealing a hard, stabbly, scowling face—one that the Kid had never seen before.

"Now," said the Kid quietly, "I want to know why you've been posted on that road yonder to stop any guy going that-a-way! What's going on that you don't want a guy to see?"



Putting Side-Kicker to the gallop, the Kid tore down on the gangsters, a flying gut in either hand.

"You gotta guess!" granted the hold-up man.

"I ain't guessing!" snarled the Kid. "You're telling me. I sure want to know what I'm riding into when I hit the trail again. You spilling it?"

"None!" snarled the gunman. "And I'm telling you that if you burn powder, there's a heap will hear the shot, and you won't live to ride that mounting out of these hills!"

"Lie down on them rocks, face down, hands behind! Alive or dead, just as you want!" said the Kid grimly.

The gunman gave him a savage look—and lay down as bidden. The Kid took the lead rope from his Mustang, and bound the wrists behind the gunman. Then he cut a length from the cord and bound his ankles. The gunman rolled over and stared up at him. The Kid smiled down at him.

"You spilling what I want to know?" he asked. "You got a minute—just as long as it takes me to put a rope round your neck, you dog-goned gack!"

The Kid whipped the loop of his lariat round the ball-neck of the gunman, and threw the other end over a high rock.

"Last time of asking!" he snapped. "Once I pull on this rope, you won't show the rag again!"

"Let up!" gasped the gunman. His stubble face was white. "I guess I'm spilling it. Dog-gone you, I guess I'll be glad if you ride on to Bucking Bronco—Spanish John sure will give you yours!"

"Bucking Bronco!" repeated the Kid blankly. He stared at the scowling ruffian. "I'll say I ain't wise to this section. You allow that it's Bucking Bronco ahead? That's sure the spot where the Gorgeous Figure guys go on location—according to what Mr. Cyrus Peck allowed, when I was chewing the rag with him, back in Hollywood!"

The Kid whistled. He had almost

forgotten Mr. Peck's offer to him to play a part on the film—the part, of all others, of the Kid himself, in a thrilling Western film!

His little trouble with Brian Bennett, the star of Gorgeous Pictures, in the studio at Hollywood, had caused Mr. Peck to blow off his mouth at him, and the Kid had thrown down that offer and hit the trail. But he remembered that Cyrus Peck had told him that the Gorgeous Company was going "on location" in the mountains, at a place called Bucking Bronco.

"Carry me home to die!" ejaculated the Kid. "You allow that I've struck Bucking Bronco, and me not wise to it! But what you mean about Spanish John? I seen that gubed with the iron on. I figured that he was scheduled for ten years in the can for kidnapping that guy Bennett!"

"I guess they can't hold Spanish John!" granted the gunman. "He shipped his bail under two days!"

"And what's John's game at Bucking Bronco?" asked the Kid. "If it's that gangster that don't want strangers to hear in, I guess this baby is going to surprise him a few. I sure got a big grouch agin that gangster. What's he aim to do at the picture guys' location?"

"I guess he's holding up the whole crowd, and he's got six side-kickers with him—as well as me watching the road!" granted the gunman.

The Kid whistled again. He had it now. Cyrus Peck and his picture company had gone on location at Bucking Bronco. Cyrus handled all sorts of roughnecks, road agents, and had men on the pictures; but probably he had never reckoned on the genuine article getting busy at the lonely location up in the mountains. Surely as it was, there were tele-

phone wires stretching across the hills, care on the roads. Such a hold-up was a desperate enterprise. But Spanish John was the man for it!

The Kid chuckled.

The film company was a numerous one. But he did not figure that there were a crowd of he-men in it. Brian Bennett, for instance, who did such amazing stunts on the pictures, had shown himself a soft sort of jasper in the hands of the gangsters when the Kid had rescued him—he had a big grouch against the Kid for having seen him show the white feather. Old Peck was a powerful gackee with his mouth, but the Kid did not reckon that he would pack a gun, or know how to handle it if he did! Film actors and "extras" and screen-shuffers were not likely to cut much ice, facing up to a desperate gang of gunmen. The Kid figured that if Spanish John had time to get through he would clean up that location easy and walk off with big hauls.

He laughed—the bound gunman watching him with a black scowl.

"This sure does tickle me a few!" said the Kid. "I reckoned I was never going to meet up with them film guys agin—but I sure am going to meet up with them now—and that firing Spanish John thrown in! Me for Bucking Bronco!"

He took the scarl the gunman had used as a mask and bound it carefully over the scowling ruffian's mouth. For all the Kid knew, the gang at the location might be within sound of a yell, and he was taking no chances.

"I guess you won't spill anything, feller, till I'm through!" remarked the Kid; and, leaving the gunman scowling savagely, he walked back to the road, with Side-Kicker's reins looped over his arm.

Just Like a Movie!

He picked up his walnut-buttet gun, and tossed the gunman's Colt into a deep crevice. Then he mounted Side-Kicker again, and rode up the canyon—heading for the film location at Bucking Bronco, his eyes as alert as a lynx's under the shadow of his steely hat.

Spanish John Hears In!

"THAT'll be Brian?" remarked Mr. Cyrus Peck, staring over his glasses up the road across the valley, where it ran into the canyon.

The director of Gorgoos Pictures stood outside his frame-house on the location. Mr. Chick Crow, his assistant-director, stood by his side, a cigar in his teeth. From the ragged road in the canyon a car shot into sight, coming at a rush down the road across the valley.

"That ain't Bennett's auto!" remarked Chick.

"Nops, it ain't! But I guess I ain't expecting visitors here!" said Mr. Peck. "It'll be Brian, though he sure allowed that he was riding in on that pint of his!"

The valley was shut in by high mountains, streaked by precipitous gullies. Only one road led up to Bucking Bronco, and that was ragged, winding, hardly more than a mountain track.

Wild nature surrounded the location—as wild and rugged as in the old Spanish days, before the enterprising Americans set foot in California. But Mr. Peck's more immediate surroundings were of a different kind—frame-houses for the accommodation of his staff and company, nine garages for many cars. Mr. Peck's own office, Bucking Bronco had all the modern gadgets of his office on Magnolia Boulevard, Hollywood. Without a telephone at his elbow, Cyrus would have felt as lost as the Rio Kid without a coyote. Deprived of his stenographer, he would have felt like the Kid without a gun handy.

Brian Bennett, the star of the films, was due on location, but had not yet struck Bucking Bronco. So when the car shot out of the road through the canyon, Cyrus did not doubt that it was Brian coming.

But a few minutes later, as the automobile roared nearer, he saw that it was packed with masked men. Six guys were in the car, as well as the driver—and Cyrus' eyes opened wider and wider as he scanned the swarthy face of that driver, barred by a black moustache. The face of Spanish John was well known.

"Pipe that guy, Chick!" he gasped. "Who you reckon he is?"

"Spanish John," said Chick.

Mr. Peck breathed hard and sharp. "That guy kidnaped Brian, and asked fifty thousand bucks for him," he said. "If he's come up to Bucking Bronco after Brian agin, I guess he's too sly—Brian sure ain't here. Dog-gone my cats! They ran that gangster into the jug. Why couldn't they keep him?"

"I guess they'd give him bail—and

he'd skip! Is this a hold-up, or what?"

"You got a gun in your pants, Chick?" said Mr. Peck.

"I sure have," asserted Chick. "I'll lend it to you if you want, sir."

Cyrus Peck did not reply to that. He did not want to borrow the assistant-director's gun! But if he wanted Chick to handle it, he had another gun coming. Chick Crow did not see himself at gun-play with the most desperate gang in Hollywood.

The director of Gorgoos glanced round over the gathering, lolling crowd. Probably there were a good many gun among the film crowd. None were on view, however.

Wild gun-slingers at the pictures had as much for slinging guns as deadly affray with Spanish John's gang. Some of the women extras were running into the buildings, others stood looking on. Cyrus glanced over fifty faces, in none of which did he see any sign of warfare. In his own fat face there was certainly no such sign. Spanish John's gang would shoot if they were opposed—and it was a long jump from film-play to gun-play!

The car rushed up in a cloud of dust and clattered to a halt in front of Cyrus' office.

Cyrus stepped over his shoulder to his stenographer, whose scared face looked out of the doorway. She ran in to the telephone. What Cyrus wanted in the shortest possible space of time was a car packed with "cops."

Spanish John leaped down, and his crowd poured out of the car. Gunmen, every guy of them—and every one with a gun in his hand. Spanish John swept off his hat in ironical salute to the film director. His manners were always polite.

Cyrus Peck gave the handsome gangster a glare of concentrated frown.

"What you want?" he barked. "What you battin' in on my location for? You figure it will buy you anything?"

"Sure!" John was a pure-blooded native Californian, but he spoke the language of the conquerors. "I guess I've called for Brian Bennett, and I'll say that that gel-darned Texas cow-puncher won't get him away agin! Hand him over!"

Cyrus grinned sardonically.

"I been cursing that guy a few for keeping me waiting here," he said.

"He sure has got gall to keep the director of Gorgoos hanging on for him. But I'll mention that I'm glad he ain't on hand! You want that guy, you look into his fat on Magnolia Boulevard, Hollywood. Maybe you'll find him to home!"

Spanish John gave him a hard, grim look.

"I guess that don't go," he said. "That guy Bennett was due up here three days ago, and I guess he's around. Here, you, Pete Henry!

Drive that crowd in and corral them—they ain't wanted rubbering around."

"You said it," answered Pete.

With his gun half-lifted, he walked across to the Gorgoos crowd. He herded them like sheep into the frame-houses. Spanish John stood

with his jet-black eyes fixed on Cyrus.

"I guess I want Bennett!" he said.

"I guess you can want," retorted Cyrus. "Dog-gone you, I'm giving you the goods. You can ask any of the crowd whether Brian has

numbered in or not. I tell you he's still in Hollywood.

"And I'm telling you," he added, "that a call's been put through for the police, and you'll find it healthy to beat it—and beat it quick!"

Spanish John laughed.

"You figure that I'd here in here without cutting the telephone-wire?" he asked.

The stenographer's hurried call for cops was getting no farther than the transmitter in Cyrus' office! Cyrus clenched his fat hands.

"Aw, dog-gone that pesky guy Bennett!" he snapped. "I'd almost wish he was here, and you'd get him! If he hadn't picked trouble with that young guy, Coles, that puncher would be in my outfit—and I guess he's the guy to make you sit up and take notice! I'd stand a thousand bucks to have that Texas puncher around this minute!"

"I guess it wouldn't buy you anything," Cyrus, said the gangster. "That Texas hombre is sure no slouch, but I'll say there's enough of us here to cut him, body and bones! I'm telling you I'd be as glad to see him here as you, Cyrus—I got to get that puncher! But I ain't here to chew the rag; I want Brian Bennett."

He turned to his men.

"I guess Bennett's here hunting cover, like the pesky coyote he is—off the picture. You root around and pick up that guy."

The gang scattered at once among the buildings, hunting for the film star.

Cyrus shrugged his shoulders. Spanish John did not believe him, but it was a fact that the Handsome Hombre had not yet arrived on location. The film star was given to fits of arrogance—and this time his gall, as Cyrus called it, had saved him from falling into the hands of the kidnapers. He was lounging in his elegant flat at Hollywood, while the gangsters were roving for him at Bucking Bronco.

Spanish John, a gun in his hand, stood by the car, his eye on the two directors while his men searched the buildings. He had no doubt that the star had hunted cover at the sight of them. Cyrus Peck's statement cut no ice with him.

The gangsters had no resistance to fear at the film location. The telephone was cut, and no help could come, not even by chance, as the road through the canyon was watched by a gunman. But John was in haste to get through, all the same. Holding up the Gorgoos location was a desperate act, and the sooner the gangsters were through and driving away in their car, the safer. As minutes followed minutes, the gang star grew more angrily impatient. Pete Henry came back and joined him, shrugging his burly shoulders.

"I guess Bennett ain't around.

boss!" he said. "I've sure asked a heap of guys, and they allow that he ain't come up from Hollywood yet. There ain't his wife nor hair of him around. I'll say we've come too soon for him."

Spanish John swore savagely. The priceless film star had been in his clutches once, and the Rio Kid had rescued him. He had barked on catching him at Bucking Bronco. Bennett was scheduled to go on location with the Gorgoson Company, and they had been on location for several days now. But he had to chew on it that he had missed his game.

"You got to call agin for that baby," said Cyrus Peck.

The gangster gave him a savage glare. He was not likely to call again at Bucking Bronco, after Cyrus had had time for making arrangements to deal with such a raid. The hold-up was not a game that could be played twice over. The gangster lifted his gun.

"Step into that office!" he snarled. With leveled gun he drove Cyrus Peck and Chick Chew into the office. A glare sent the stenographer scuttling out. Spanish John looked round the well-appointed office, Pete Henry standing in the doorway, gun in hand.

"I guess you got a safe here, Cyrus," said Spanish John.

"Gues agin," snarled Cyrus.

"We ain't got Bennett," said the gangster. "We're getting enough to pay for the trip. If there ain't ten thousand dollars in your safe, Cyrus, I'll whisper that I'm sorry for you! Gorgoson will want a new director, hombre! Jump to it!"

Cyrus Peck hesitated a moment. He cast a last glance at his assistant-director. Chick Chew had a "gun in his pants." Like a wise man, he left it in his pants! Not for the whole capital of Gorgoson Pictures would Chick have pulled it on Spanish John. Which was wise, for he could not have lived long enough to pull the trigger. Cyrus hesitated—but only for a moment. The gangster's gun was lifting—his black eyes gleaming. Mr. Peck did not need telling twice that if he refused to open his safe he would be shot down.

Breathing hard and deep, Cyrus Peck pushed aside a picture from the wall and revealed the iron door of a safe set therein. But his fat hand hesitated on the door.

"I ain't waiting!" said Spanish John, in a low tone of menace.

Mr. Peck, suppressing a groan of rage and dismay, clicked open the door of the safe. The gangster made a forward step.

At the same moment there came a sudden shouting from without, the clatter of horse's hoofs, and the racing of guns.

Bang! Bang! Bang!
"What the heck—" gasped Pete Henry, spinning round in the doorway.

Spanish John, regardless of the open safe, at the sound of alarm, rushed past him, gun in hand. Cyrus Peck gasped for breath. The roar of guns came like thunder.
Bang! Bang! Bang!

Game to the Face!

THE Rio Kid pulled in his Mustang where the road through the canyon opened into the valley and looked down on the film location of Bucking Bronco.

The road, lined on either side by shady trees, led direct towards the bunch of buildings in the middle of the valley. The distance was not great, and the Kid's keen eyes picked out every detail of the scene before him. From what he had learned from the gunman, he knew that Spanish John and his gang were at the location—and had been there some little time. At the sight of the empty car's standing in front of Cyrus Peck's office, he guessed how they had come. Close by the car, three masked rough-necks were looking, gun in hand. Among the buildings, he spotted two more of them. Spanish John himself he could not see—he figured that the chief of the gangsters was in one of the buildings.

From windows and doorways, he saw faces looking—some scared, some only mildly interested.

He saw no sign of warfare. If this was a hold-up, as it surely was, the gangsters had the film crowd feeding from their hand.

Then he set his Mustang in motion again, and the slightest touch of the spur put Side-Kicker to the gallop. With a clatter of hoofs, the Kid swept down on the location, a gun in either hand.

The Kid had a hunch to handle, and he reckoned that it was not going to be infant's play. His gun roared as he swept down on the buildings, but he threw the first two bullets over the heads of the lounging gangsters. If the sudden attack rattled them, and they ran, it was good enough for the Kid—he had no hunch to spill any guy's vinegar if he could get by without it.

That swift, wild gallop of the rushing Mustang brought the Kid almost upon the gangsters, before they knew what was happening.

But as the Kid threw head, one of the gang fired back.

The Kid wanted no more lead. He had to shoot now, or be shot up. The gun in his hands roared destruction. Hot lead tore through the bunch of gangsters.

There were five in the bunch. Three fell over under the guns that never missed, and another went shrieking under the Mustang's crashing hoofs as the Kid rode them down. One leaped away and ran for cover—and in ten seconds he would have been sniping the Kid from behind a corner wall—but in one second a bullet smashed his gun-arm as he ran, and he lurched over and fell against the wall, shrieking.

From a dozen buildings, faces stared and voices shouted.

From the doorway of Cyrus Peck's office, a swarthy man came leaping. One glare told Spanish John what had happened. He was firing the next moment, and the Kid was firing back. The roar of guns filled the air with deafening sound—mingled with shouts and screams from the frame-houses.

Back into the doorway of Cyrus

Peck's office went the gangster, staggering. He crumpled at the feet of Pete Henry, snatching after him. He gave a lousy cry to his follower:

"He's sure got me—get that puncher! Get him!"

The words were hardly off his lips when he fell back, senseless.

Pete Henry leaped out from the doorway—but he did not lift his gun. He dropped it, and shot his hands up over his Derby hat. Men spreading on the curbs, and the cackling guns in the hands of the Texas puncher, daunted him.

The Kid grinned in his Mustang. There was a streak of red on his carburetor check—Spanish John's fire had gone close.

"Keep 'em up, hombre!" he rapped.

"You're the doctor!" gasped Pete Henry. He kept them up.

Cyrus Peck tottered out of his office. He stared at the Texas puncher like a man in a dream.

"Carfax!" he stammered.

"You said it!" agreed the Kid, with a nod and a grin. "Say, that hombre is sure waiting for some guy to take his hardware off a him."

Chick Chew relieved Pete Henry of his gun.

"I was sure riding prominent when I learned into a guy, who figured that he could stop me coming on!" explained the Kid. "I got it from that guy that Spanish John's gang was holding up this place, and I kinda reckoned I better burn in it."

Cyrus Peck blinked at him, set his glasses straight, and blinked again.

"I'll tell a man!" gasped Cyrus.

"I'll sure tell a man!" Fifteen thousand dollars in that safe—and as good as handed to Spanish John! Mister Carfax, I'm telling you, you sure are a whole them, and a cross-dog under the wagon! Light down from that cayuse!"

"I guess I'm through here, Mr. Peck," he said. "I reckoned I wasn't standing for a hold-up; and I sure had a big growth agin that guy Spanish John. But I'm through here, and I'm sure riding."

"You ain't riding—set till you ride as the Rio Kid for Gorgoson Pictures!" roared Mr. Peck.

The Kid sat in the saddle, looking at him.

"I sure would like to oblige you, Mr. Peck," he said. "I ain't no big bunch for acting for the picture, but I guess I could put up a show as the Rio Kid if you aim to film that Texas firing!" He chuckled. "But I guess your pet star, Bennett, don't want me around!"

"Bennett nothing!" snarped Mr. Peck. "I guess that guy will be told where he gets off! Git out that cayuse, I keep on telling you! You got to step into my office right now, and sign on for Gorgoson."

And the Kid, at last, dismounted. With a jingle of spurs, he followed Mr. Peck into his office.

Success or failure for the Rio Kid depends on ONE THING OF THE LARIAT, in next Saturday's story—and all Hollywood is waiting to know the result!