

OUR ROARING TALE OF WESTERN ADVENTURE, STARRING THE RIO KID, BOY OUTLAW!

# SAVED *by an* OUTLAW!



The Rio Kid is no quitter. Once he makes up his mind to do a thing, nothing will turn him from his purpose. And in "sticking to his guns" the Kid brings down upon his devoted head perils thick and fast.

## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

### The Mirage in the Desert!

"THUNDER!"

The Rio Kid pulled in his mustang with a startled ejaculation.

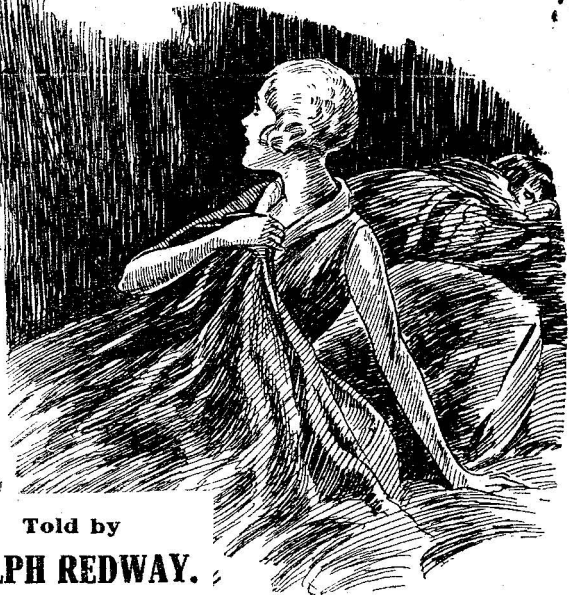
There was amazement in his face.

He stared blankly at the scene before him, like a man in a dream. Indeed, it seemed like the vision of a dream to the startled Kid.

Through the long, hot hours of the morning the Kid had been riding across the dusty plains of the Sonora Desert. Barren, arid, baking in the Mexican sun, the desert stretched far and wide, the dreary flats broken only by gaunt cactus and clumps of dusty sage. In the hard, stony soil it was difficult for even the Kid's keen eyes to read sign of the trail he was following, though it was but a few hours old. Ahead of him, but far out of sight, was the bunch he was trailing into the heart of the desert. As far as the eye could reach, nothing met the gaze but dusty plains, scrubby sage, cactus, rocky ridges, and stony, dried-up arroyos. Not a living thing, save here and there a lizard, that crawled in the sunshine, or a twittering cicada.

And suddenly, as if by the wave of a magician's wand, a strange vision burst on the Kid's amazed eyes. Not a hundred yards from him, where, a moment before, desert had stretched, bare and untenanted, rode a numerous cavalcade. Thirty men, at least, with horses and pack mules—swarthy, dark-browed Mexicans, armed to the teeth. So near that the Kid could discern their swarthy features, could see one man brushing the sweat from his dusky brow, under his sombrero, and another slapping wearily at a buzzing insect. Yet close as they were no sound reached the Kid's ears—not a jingle of bridle or stirrup, not a murmur of a voice, though he could see that some of them were speaking. He drew in his mustang and sat motionless in the saddle, staring at the strange vision that passed before his eyes, like a procession of silent phantoms.

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Told by

**RALPH REDWAY.**

"Gee whiz!" murmured the Kid. His hand had gone to a gun, but he released the walnut butt at once. Sitting in the saddle, he stared blankly.

It was strange, it was eerie, to watch that silent procession of riders. For that they were a bodiless vision was clear from their silence. The figures that passed under the Kid's eyes had no real existence, though he could read the features on the dusky faces, watch the motion of the lips that were speaking words he could not hear.

"Dog-gone it!" A smile broke over the face of the boy puncher from Texas. "It's a pesky mirage! It sure made me jump."

More than once had the Kid witnessed that strange phenomenon of the desert, the mirage that pictured a scene far away. But never had it seemed so strange and startling to his eyes.

Somewhere in the desert—perhaps five miles, perhaps fifty—from the lonely spot where he sat his mustang, that outfit was riding, pictured there by some strange refraction. For the moment the Kid had been startled, as if a procession of ghosts had crossed his path. Now he sat and watched, with keen interest. At the head of the party rode two men, side by side, one of them a hard-featured American, with a square jaw and keen, flinty-looking eyes under shaggy grey brows, the other a Mexican, old, and fat, and greasy-featured. Behind them the horsemen rode, and a dozen pack-mules trod on with drooping heads, urged on by cries and blows by the muleteers—cries and blows that must have sounded to a distance, but which the Kid did not hear. Silent as spectres, they passed before the Kid's wondering eyes.

"Gee whiz!" he murmured again. Never before had the Kid's eyes fallen

on any man in that outfit. But he could figure who they were.

"I guess that fat Greaser is the alcalde of Pajito!" the Kid murmured to himself. "And that Yank riding beside him will be Job Manderson, the guardian of that Texas girl that Alvaro Alvarado has taken into the desert. They're sure the bunch that's hunting Alvarado. They sure are! But where are they this pesky minute? If a galoot knew where to put a hand on them—"

He broke off.

"Shucks! They're going!"

The Kid's eyes had gone to the tail of the column, where the muleteers were driving on the weary mules with cracking whips—cracks that did not reach the Kid. Now he glanced towards the head of the column again, just in time to see it disappearing.

It was strange to see.

The two horsemen—the hard-featured Yankee and the fat Mexican—seemed to ride into space. One moment they were under the eyes of the watching Kid, the next, they had ridden on and vanished, gone from his gaze like vanishing ghosts.

After them the rest of the party rode, disappearing as they reached the spot where the leaders had disappeared.

The Kid watched, fascinated by the uncanny sight.

At last only the mules in the rear were left; with the sweating muleteers driving them on. One by one they passed the point where the mirage ended, and vanished.

Empty space lay once more before the eyes of the Texas puncher.

"Thunder!" murmured the Kid.

He rubbed his eyes and looked again.

But where that pictured scene had been stretched now only the barren

plain—dusty, stony, baking in the torrid blaze of the sun.

The mirage had vanished as suddenly as it had come, leaving the Rio Kid alone in the desert.

For some minutes the Kid remained where he was, scanning the desert on all sides. But there was nothing to be seen. The outfit, whose semblance had passed so strangely before his sight, was far away—many a long mile away—in what direction the Kid could not even surmise.

He rode on again at last, with a thoughtful brow.

The Kid was trailing Alvaro Alvarado, seeking the Texas girl whom the young Mexican rancho had carried into the desert. He knew that Alvarado looked for pursuit from the alcalde of Pajito and Joan's guardian, and he had no doubt he had looked on the alcalde and Mr. Manderson, pictured on the mirage. Somewhere in the wide spaces of the Sonora Desert they were riding—seeking the same goal as the Rio Kid. They had force enough to deal easily with Alvarado's bunch of vaqueros, if they came up with them.

But wherever the horsemen of the mirage were riding, they were not on the trail of Alvarado's bunch—the Kid knew that. But they were seeking him, and if they struck his trail, as was likely enough in the long run, the Kid's intervention would not be needed. That was what the Kid was thinking now.

He had no hunch to pull a gun on Alvarado, and he knew that the rancho would never allow Joan Valence to be taken from his camp, if he could help it, without gun-play. Willingly enough, the Kid would have left the task to others. For although, to all seeming, Alvarado was a kidnapper of a woman, reckless and lawless, the Kid somehow could not believe evil of him. The young Mexican had saved the Kid from a panther in the desert; he was brave, generous, and he seemed frank and loyal, and although the Texan girl was a prisoner in his camp, she was treated with as much respect as a princess. It was sorely against his own wish that the Kid found himself in the position of an enemy to the man he could not help liking. If that outfit that he had seen in the mirage came on Alvarado's bunch, the matter would be settled without his help, and the Kid was tempted to turn from the trail and avoid all possibility of a deadly encounter with the man who had saved his life.

But he shook his head.

The appeal the Texan girl had made to him was still in his ears. The pursuing outfit might never hit the right trail. He had said that he would stand by the girl from his own country, who was a prisoner in the hands of Greasers, and the Kid was a man of his word.

He rode onward.

Through the long, hot hours, under the blazing sun, he rode, tireless. The trail was one that only an Apache or the Rio Kid could have picked up, but the Kid never failed. And when the sun sank at last and the shadows of night enveloped the desert, the Kid knew that he was near to the bunch he sought, and that the stars, coming out in the dark sky, would look down on the rescue of the Texan girl, or his own death in a fight against fearful odds.

**THE SECOND CHAPTER.**

**Kidnapper or Knight Errant ?**

**R**AMON, the guide, lifted his quirt and pointed across the desert.

"Mira, senior!"

Don Alvaro Alvarado, riding beside the closed litter, seemed buried

in thought, a dark and troubled frown on his handsome, olive face. From the litter borne on the four mules, closed with carefully-drawn curtains, there came no sound, no sign of the occupant. Sometimes the young rancher's glance turned on it, and his troubled frown grew deeper. Once or twice he had spoken in a low voice through the curtain, but no answer had come. The Texan girl might have been sleeping, lulled by the regular motion of the litter as it swung on the poles. But Alvarado knew that it was scorn and bitterness that kept her silent! Joan Valence would not answer her gaoler.

Alvarado looked up as the guide spoke and pointed. Ahead of the bunch, black against the setting sun, dipping towards the far-off Gulf of California, a mass of timber showed over the arid plain. There was keen satisfaction in the faces of the dozen Mexican cowboys in the bunch at the sight of the trees which meant that there was water. They were thinking of camp, of food, and rest. But Don Alvaro's shadowed brow did not lighten.

"That is the motte, senior," said Ramon, "water, grass, and shade—all we need to camp in the desert, senior, as long as you choose."

"We may camp for many days," said Alvarado.

"Si, senior."

The guide shot him a curious glance. This expedition into the heart of the untracked desert was as great a puzzle to Don Alvaro's followers as it had been to the Rio Kid. The presence of the Texan girl in the closed litter hinted, to their minds, of some romantic love affair, but between the Mexican rancher and his captive there was only cold respect on one side, and bitter scorn and indignation on the other. What Alvarado's intentions were the vaqueros did not know, perhaps the rancho did not know himself. In the depths of the desert he was retreating from pursuit, and they had no doubt that the alcalde of Pajito and his men had been successfully shaken off. But after that? In that one fertile spot in the arid desert, known to Ramon, the guide, camping was easy and pleasant; and the vaqueros, at least, would be content to rest there, and loaf the sunny days away smoking endless cigarritos. But they wondered what was to come of it, and what their master intended.

A question trembled on Ramon's lips, but he did not utter it. The cold, grave face of the rancho did not invite questioning.

The bunch swung on, heading for the timber. That was their destination, for the present, at least. What was to come afterwards was unknown to them, unknown perhaps, to their master.

Don Alvaro glanced back. That day, riding under the hot sunshine, he had glanced back many times, thinking of the Rio Kid.

Ramon followed his glance, and grinned.

"You need not fear that the trail will be followed, senior," he said. "Santos! I have picked out every dry path, every arid tract—stones do not retain a trail, caballero. Even a Comanche or a Navajo, an Apache, or a Yaqui would follow us with difficulty. A white man, never."

"The Tejano is a cow-man, accustomed to the prairie, accustomed to following trails," said Don Alvaro.

"The desert is not the prairie, senior," answered Ramon sententiously.

"That is true."

"The Texan will never find us, senior, and—caramba!—if he should, you have but to give the word and he

is a dead man, riddled with bullets," said Ramon, shrugging his shoulders.

"He saved my life in the fight with the Apaches," muttered Don Alvaro. "I would gladly think that we shall never meet again as enemies."

"Have no doubt, senior—he will never find us, any more than will the alcalde of Pajito, and the old Yankee fox, Manderson."

"Them, at least, we have eluded," said Alvarado.

"Sin duda, senior."

Alvaro swept the plain with his keen, dark eyes again, and rode forward. Unless the Rio Kid had the skill of an Indian trailer, or more, he would never come up with the rancho's bunch. It was a relief to Alvarado to feel sure that he would not stand in deadly conflict with the man whose life he had saved, and who had saved his in turn; a Gringo, but a man whom the young Mexican would have been proud to call his comrade had circumstances permitted. He gladly shared Ramon's confidence that the Rio Kid would never follow the trail of the bunch to their halting-place, neither of them being aware that on the trail the Kid was a better man than the cunningest Apache.

The sun was on the rim of the desert when the bunch rode into the timber. The shade of the great ceiba-trees was welcome to the riders, scorched by the sun-blaze of the unshaded desert. The horses pressed forward eagerly to the water.

From some source in the earth a spring welled up, feeding a large pool, round which grew tall trees, thick creepers, juicy lianas, and rich grass, and flowing away from the pool to be lost in the sand at a distance of less than a hundred yards.

An acre, perhaps, was the extent of the timber, a mass of fertile greenery, an island in the waste of barren sand and stones.

There was no sign of a human being in the solitary place—not even the moccasined track of a wandering Indian. No human foot had trod there for weeks, months, perhaps years. More than a hundred miles of thirsty desert lay between that solitary island of timber and the nearest human habitation. It was such a refuge as Don Alvaro must have desired if he wished to lie hidden from his enemies, hidden from the outfit who were seeking the Texan girl.

Don Alvaro gave brief orders, the mules were unpacked, and a tent erected under a spreading cottonwood tree. The litter stopped before the tent, the half-breed girl, Conchita, opened the curtains and Joan Valence descended, and the flap of the tent fell behind her, hiding her from the curious eyes of the vaqueros.

By the gleaming pool a camp-fire was lighted. There was darkness on the desert now, and with the darkness came the chill. Blazing heat by day, chilly cold by night was the rule of the Mexican uplands. The camp-fire, fed by boughs and logs cut in the timber, blazed and roared, reflected in the pool with a thousand dancing gleams.

The Mexican vaqueros sprawled round the fire eating their evening meal, drinking hot coffee, and smoking cigarrettes. The peon girl, Conchita, carried food to the prisoner in the tent. While his men rested and ate or smoked, Don Alvaro, on the edge of the timber, walked to and fro wrapped in his serape, perhaps keeping watch—restless, troubled in mind, the dark frown fixed on his handsome face.

His meditations, whatever they were, THE POPULAR.—No. 549.

were interrupted by the peon girl, who came silently from the trees.

"Senor!"

"Que?"

"The senorita Tejana wishes to speak to the senor," said the half-breed girl, in Spanish.

"Tell her that I will come."

"Si, senor."

Conchita disappeared into the trees again.

More slowly the young ranchero followed her.

It was the first time since he had carried off Joan Valence from her home in Pajito that the Texan girl had ever sought to speak to him of her own accord. And the summons seemed to give the Mexican ranchero more trouble than pleasure, for the dark frown deepened on his face as he went slowly to the tent.

Conchita held the flap aside for him to enter.

Alvarado removed his sombrero and bowed with courtly Spanish grace as he entered the tent.

The peon girl would have gone, but he made her a sign to remain.

"You sent for me, senorita?" he said, speaking in English, a tongue unknown to the peon girl.

"Yes!" said Joan.

"There is something you desire?" asked the Mexican. "Anything that may be in my power, senorita, is yours; you have but to speak. If there is anything that can be done for your comfort—"

He broke off, flushing under the mocking look in the Texan girl's eyes.

"I have nothing to ask, senor, but my liberty," said Joan. "My comfort is well cared for—you treat your prisoners well, senor. But I have heard the talk of your men as we travelled to-day—and it seems that the end of this journey is now reached."

"For the present, yes, senorita."

"We remain here?"

"We remain here, senorita."

"How long?"

"I do not know."

The Texan girl raised her eyebrows.

"You are master here," she said, and you do not know?"

"I do not know, senorita," repeated Don Alvaro stubbornly. "As yet I have been able to make no plans. All that I could do was to bring you to a place of safety. That I have done. What remains to do I cannot yet decide. Here you are at least safe. No Redskins will come to this lonely spot, and—"

"And my guardian, the Senor Manderson—"

"He will never find you here."

"It is you who are safe, senor, not I," said Joan. "I should be safe if my friends could find me and save me."

"Your friends?" repeated the Mexican.

"My guardian and his friend the alcalde of Pajito, who will call out his men to come to my rescue," said Joan.

"Sin duda," said Don Alvaro, with a smile that puzzled the Texan girl, "I have no doubt that the alcalde of Pajito will leave no stone unturned to find you—to oblige his good friend Job Manderson. But it might not be for your good, senorita."

"What do you mean, Don Alvaro?" asked the girl, her eyes fixed steadily on the Mexican's handsome face.

"Nada—no es nada!" said the ranchero hastily. "But I would willingly have you believe that in acting as I have done, I have sought to serve you and save you from dangers you know nothing of."

"I am not likely to believe such a story," said the Texan girl, with a curl of the lip. "Take me back to my home at Pajito, and I may believe you to be the honourable caballero I once thought you."

"Impossible, senorita."

"What is this danger you speak of, which you fancy waits for me at Pajito?" asked Joan, her eyes curiously on the Mexican's face.

"I cannot tell you, senorita! You would not believe me—neither is it fit that I should speak of such villainy to a senorita."

"You think it better to carry me off into the desert—to keep me a prisoner in this solitude?"

"There was no other way, senorita."

The girl made an impatient gesture.

"We are wasting words," she said. "I

sent for you to ask you your intentions.

What do you intend?"

"To remain here, senorita."

"And I am to remain a prisoner—hidden from my friends!" exclaimed the girl. "A prisoner in the heart of the Sonora desert! I begin to believe that you are mad, Senor Alvarado!"

"You must believe as you please, Donna Juana."

"And that Texas puncher, who I fancied would help me—he is gone?"

Don Alvaro smiled faintly.

"He is gone, senorita."

"He was from my own country, and he has abandoned me, in the hands of Mexican picaros!" said the girl bitterly.

"No man in this bunch is a picaro, senorita. My men are honest vaqueros from my rancho in the Pajito country, and I am a Mexican caballero," said Don Alvaro, flushing crimson.

"And we remain here—hidden in the desert?"

"Si, senorita."

"Until you obtain a ransom from my guardian?" asked the girl bitterly.

The Mexican's face paled.

"That is a needless insult, senorita," he said. "You are well aware that such is not my motive."

"And it is you, Don Alvaro, who told me once, under the orange-trees at Pajito, that you loved me!" said the Texan girl, in a low voice.

"I told you the truth! I love you, senorita! Yo te amo!" said Don Alvaro, his voice soft and caressing in the musical Spanish.

For the moment the girl seemed moved. Her face softened, as if the young ranchero's words found an echo in her own heart. But the next moment her look hardened again.

"Enough, senor!" she exclaimed, her voice sharp and angry. "I am a prisoner here, and there is no hope of rescue! But I will escape—I will escape out of your hands, if it is only to perish in the desert! Now go—leave me!"

"Your wishes are commands, senorita."

Don Alvaro stepped from the tent, and the flap dropped into its place behind him.

(Continued on next page.)

THIS WEEK'S LIST OF BIRTHDAY DATES.

Readers who were registered in the POPULAR Birthday Gift Club before July 27th, 1929, may claim one of the following gifts:

- Fountain Pen.
Table Tennis Set.
Drawing Set.
Hobby Annual.
Magnifying Glass and Compass Combined.
Leather Pocket Wallet.
Conjuring Outfit.
"Ever Ready" Electric Torch and Battery.
Penknife.

—if the date of their birth is the same as a date in the following list—

Table with 2 columns: Date and Gift description. Includes Jan. 15th, 1916; Feb. 4th, 1914; March 15th, 1917; April 22nd, 1915; May 20th, 1919; June 11th, 1914; July 16th, 1915; Aug. 10th, 1920; Sept. 7th, 1913; Oct. 13th, 1917; Nov. 9th, 1914; Dec. 3rd, 1911.

If you were BORN on any of these dates, fill in the CLAIMS COUPON provided on this page and send it to:

The Editor, POPULAR Birthday Gift Club, 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4,

so as to reach this address not later than August 8th, 1929. GIFTS WILL BE DISPATCHED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AFTER THIS DATE. Please write the word "CLAIM" in the top left-hand corner of your envelope.

No reader may claim a Gift unless he or she has already been registered as a member of our Birthday Gift Club.

A published date must be exactly the same in day, month, and year as that given on your registration coupon. You CANNOT CLAIM and register AT THE SAME TIME. Should your birth date happen to be published in this list and you are NOT already registered, YOU WILL NOT BE ELIGIBLE FOR A GIFT.

ANOTHER LIST OF BIRTHDAY DATES WILL APPEAR IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE.

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Name ..... Full address .....

I declare myself to have registered in your Birthday Gift Club before Saturday, July 27th, 1929, and as the date given above (here state date)..... is the date of my birth, I wish to claim a (state name of Gift you would like)..... in accordance with the rules of the club. This Coupon is only available until Aug. 8th. POPULAR. August 3rd

**THE CAPTIVE!** Alvarado removed his sombrero as he entered the tent, and bowed low to the slim Texan girl. "You sent for me, *senorita*?" he asked. "If there is anything that can be done to add to your comfort—" "I have nothing to ask, *senor*, but my liberty," said Joan. "You treat your prisoners well!" (See Chapter 2.)



**THE THIRD CHAPTER.  
The Rio Kid's Rescue!**

"OLD hoss, I guess you got to wait for me a piece, and I guess you want to keep quiet!" murmured the Rio Kid.

Darkness lay on the desert. Black against the glimmering stars rose the mass of timber where the Mexican bunch were camped.

From amid the trees came at moments a flicker from the camp-fire almost hidden by the surrounding trunks and thickets.

The Rio Kid, standing beside his mustang, watched the timber for long minutes.

It was almost midnight, and the Kid was prepared for his desperate attempt. Desperate indeed he knew it to be. A dozen armed men were in the timber, and there was no doubt that watch and ward were kept. At the first sight of an enemy lead would be flying, and the

odds were overwhelming if it came to a conflict. But danger and the Rio Kid were old acquaintances.

Either he was going to rescue the Texan girl from her strange captivity, or perish under the rifles of the vaqueros. And well the puncher knew that the chances were against him.

But now that the hour had come he did not hesitate.

Leaving his mustang in a hollow of the plain, at a little distance from the timber—the spot marked by a tall, solitary cactus plant—the Kid moved on, on foot, silent as a creeping Apache.

The camp-fire amid the trees had been covered with logs, and emitted only an occasional fitful gleam. But that was guide enough for the Kid to the position of the Mexican camp.

As he drew nearer to the motte, the Kid dropped on hands and knees, taking no chances of being seen in the starlight, dim as it was.

Silent as a snake, he wormed his way onward, till he was under a spreading ceiba on the edge of the motte.

There, close to the massive trunk, he rose silently to his feet, and bent his head to listen.

He could hear sounds of the horses and mules picketed among the trees, faint sounds of the Mexican vaqueros stirring in slumber as they lay rolled in their serapes round the camp-fire. But for those faint, indefinable sounds all was silent under the great dark branches.

For long minutes the Kid waited and listened. Then he moved on, slowly, silently, cautiously, approaching the camp. Through trees and bushes and masses of hanging vines, a fitful gleam from the fire showed him the tent, closed and dark, standing back at a little distance from the camp. And he altered his direction a little, to come to

the rear of the tent, where he knew the prisoner was—sleeping or waking.

Behind the tent, dim in the faint starlight that filtered through the branches, a figure wrapped in a serape moved slowly to and fro, evidently a man on guard.

The Kid watched the pacing figure, his hand on the butt of a gun. A shot would have wakened the whole camp, brought the whole bunch down on him. The Kid was not thinking of that. If luck favoured him, a blow from the heavy walnut butt would silence the sentry.

The man who paced in the dim shadows did not seem wary. His eyes were fixed on the ground as he moved slowly to and fro, and he seemed buried in thought. And the Kid, at last, and suddenly, recognised who it was. It was Don Alvaro Alvarado, keeping watch in the sleepless hours over the safety of the girl he had carried off from her home.

The Kid drew a deep breath.

Don Alvaro was the last of the bunch he had hoped to meet, and he relinquished the revolver in his belt. He had

taken his life in his hands in entering the Mexican camp, yet he was reluctant to raise a weapon against the young ranchero. The unwariness of the young Mexican gave the Kid the opportunity he needed. He knew that he could have crept on him in the darkness and stunned him from behind, without an alarm, but he did not stir. If he could help it he would not raise his hand against the man who had saved him from the panther in the desert. Most of the night was yet before him, and the Kid waited and watched, deep in cover.

It was long before there was a sound of a footstep in the shadows. Someone, unseen, passed within three feet of the Kid as he crouched in darkness amid a tangle of lianas and joined Don Alvaro. The ranchero started from his gloomy meditations and looked up.

"Ramon!"

"Si, senor."

"Sleep again, amigo. I am sleepless, and will watch," said the ranchero, in Spanish.

"It is midnight, senor," said the guide.

"Will the morning ever come?" muttered the ranchero restlessly.

"It will come the sooner if you sleep, senor."

"Perhaps!"

"I will call the senor at dawn."

"It will not be needed—I shall sleep little," said Don Alvaro. He moved away, the way Ramon had come, passing close by the hidden puncher.

His footsteps and the brushing in the thickets, died away.

All was silent again.

At a little distance from the tent, leaning against the trunk of a tree, Ramon stood rolling a cigarette. There was a gleam as he lighted it; then the darkness again, starred by the burning end of the cigarette. The Rio Kid stirred at last.

The Mexican was keeping watch, but it was a careless watch, due doubtless to his certainty that no foe could have trailed the bunch through the stony desert to their camp. But his carelessness was to cost him dear.

Silent as a creeping lynx, the Kid moved in the shadows, circling round.

*(Continued on opposite page.)*

## THE POPULAR BIRTHDAY GIFT CLUB!



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Providing your registration coupon is filled up correctly you will then be enrolled as a member of our Birthday Club, and

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Then watch carefully the list of birthday dates, which are published in this paper week by week. Should the date of YOUR BIRTH be the same as one of the published dates, you will be able to claim one of the splendid gifts in the list printed here. You can choose your own present!

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### READERS OVERSEAS!

All Overseas readers are eligible to participate in our Free Birthday Gift Club, as special time extensions are allowed in the case of readers living elsewhere than in the British Isles.

This week's list of birthday dates and special claims coupon appear on page 14.

### YOU CAN CHOOSE ANY OF THESE GIFTS:

Fountain Pen—Table Tennis Set—Drawing Set—Hobby Annual—Magnifying Glass and Compass Combined—Pocket Wallet—Conjuring Outfit—"Ever Ready" Electric Torch and Battery—Penknife.

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(Please write very plainly.)

Name..... Date of Birth: Day..... Month..... Year.....

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I declare that I am a reader of "THE POPULAR" and.....  
and purchase BOTH THESE PAPERS regularly from my newsagent. I have carefully read the rules of your Birthday Club Scheme, and I agree to abide by them in every particular. Will you please enrol me as a member of your FREE BIRTHDAY GIFT CLUB?

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**THIS COUPON IS ONLY AVAILABLE UNTIL AUGUST 10th, 1929.**  
**POPULAR.** **August 3rd, 1929.**

Ramon had finished his cigarrito, and was rolling together another, humming the tune of a Mexican fandango as he did so, when the Rio Kid rose silently from the black shadows behind the tree where he leaned.

The merry tune died on the lips of Ramon, as a hand from the darkness gripped his throat, choking him into silence.

Before the Mexican could lift a finger, the heavy butt of a Colt crashed on his head.

Not a sound came from Ramon.

Stunned by the sudden and terrible blow, he crumpled helplessly in the arms of the Rio Kid, who lowered him silently to the ground.

The Kid bent over him, keen watchful; the colt in his grip ready for another blow. But it was not needed. Ramon was insensible. It was likely to be long before he stirred again.

"I guess he's got his," murmured the Kid.

He dragged the insensible Mexican into a thicket, and left him there. The way was clear now to the Kid.

He stepped towards the tent.

On the other side of the tent, facing it, was the Mexican camp, ten yards from the Kid or more, within hearing of any sound of alarm, and he could guess, too, that at least one man was wakeful, and watching among the sleepers round the banked-up fire. But the Kid made no sound.

His keen bowie-knife ripped through the thick canvas of the tent. Black darkness was within as it opened before him.

The Kid paused and listened.

The half-breed girl slept in the tent, he knew, from what he had observed when he was riding with the Mexican bunch. Conchita was there as well as the Texan girl, and one cry from the peon would betray him. And the Kid could not deal with a woman as he had dealt with Ramon. So far, he had succeeded, but he knew that his peril was only beginning.

From the silence of the tent came the sound of heavy breathing. The Kid's keen ear picked up another sound—that of a soft, deep sigh. His eyes lightened. That sight told him that the captive was awake, as the deep, sonorous breathing from another quarter told him that Conchita slept.

It was neck or nothing now. The Kid had to make his presence known to the girl he had come to save, and to take the chance of a startled exclamation alarming Conchita, or reaching wakeful ears among the Mexicans. He broke his silence with a warning whisper.

"There's a friend here, miss—not a sound!"

He heard a suddenly caught breath.

But, to his intense relief, there was no other sound from the startled girl who heard that sudden, unexpected whisper from the night. For long moments there was silence. Then a faint whisper came:

"Who speaks?"

"Kid Carfax, miss—the puncher you saw riding with the Greasers. I guess I've trailed them down, and come for you," whispered the Kid. "Say is that peon girl a good sleeper, miss?"

"She sleeps like a stone."

"Muy bien!"

"You have come to save me?" breathed the Texan girl.

"That's the size of it, miss," whispered back the Kid.

"I guess I've put a galoot to sleep who was watching this side—the way's open, and I've sure got my boss out on the plain. If you can join me, without waking that peon, I reckon we can hit the horizon without burning powder. I sure ain't skeered of them Greasers, miss, but they're more'n a dozen to one, and I reckon it will be me for the long trail if it comes to a rookus."

"You will take me back to Pajito?"

"Sure! You can trust a Texas puncher to see you safe through, miss—I guess it's a white man that's speaking to you."

"I trust you—I trust you!" said the girl eagerly. "Only take me from here—take me back to my home without bloodshed—let no shot be fired. Leave me here rather than shed blood."

The Kid grinned in the darkness.

"I guess I'll be powerful glad to get you away without burning powder, miss," he answered. "But if them guys get fresh, I reckon my guns will begin to talk, and there won't be so many Greasers left in that bunch when we get through! Say, you sure that peon girl is safe?"

"Hush!"

The Kid was silent.

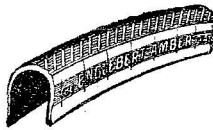
There was a sound of stirring in a corner of the tent where Conchita slept in her blankets. The murmur of

(Continued on page 26.)



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# SAVED BY AN OUTLAW!

(Continued from page 17.)

whispering had disturbed her slumbers. The Kid heard the sound of blankets thrown aside, and he gritted his teeth. But the cool, quiet voice of the Texan girl followed.

"Conchita!"

"Si, senorita!" came a sleepy voice. "I am thirsty, Conchita," said Joan, in Spanish. "I have not slept! Fetch me water, Conchita."

"There is water in the olla by the side of the senorita's couch," answered the peon girl in the same tongue.

"It is overturned, Conchita!"

The Kid grinned. He heard a faint sound which he knew now was the spilling of the water from the overturned olla. To seize the peon girl, and gag her, had been the Kid's only resource, at the risk of an alarm. But the cool, keen wit of the Texan girl had come to his aid.

He heard the peon moving in the tent. There was a glimmer of starlight, for a moment, as she raised the tent-flap, and went out with the olla.

The Texan girl's whisper came swiftly.

"Wait for me—I will join you before she returns. Two minutes—and she will be five at least!"

"You'll find me here, miss."

The Kid drew back from the gash he had cut in the tent canvas. He gave one glance towards the thicket where he had left Ramon; but the Mexican was safe for hours to come. There was no sound of alarm—no stirring in the camp. The drowsy peon girl, fetching the water in the olla, had no suspicion.

The Kid waited, eager, tense, breathless. Fortune was favouring him, as it is said to favour the brave. He was ready for the desperate conflict, if it came, but it looked now as if strategy would serve his turn.

There was a footstep close to him, he turned his head, the Texan girl stood by his side. Her face, half-hidden by the Mexican rebozo pulled over her head, was white with tense excitement, as her hand touched his arm, he could feel her trembling. But she was calm.

"Hasten!" she whispered.

"This way, miss!" said the Kid.

Taking her hand he led her through the shadows. To the Kid, whose eyes were almost like a cat's in the dark, the shadowy thickets, the tangled trees, gave little difficulty; but the Texan girl would have been hopelessly at a loss without his guidance. But led by the Kid's guiding hand, she followed him without faltering.

They were clear of the timber at last, and still there had been no sound of alarm. The alarm would come when Conchita re-entered the tent, and found the prisoner missing. There was not a second to spare—at any instant now the sleeping camp might break out in alarm.

Across the dark plain beyond the timber, the Rio Kid hurried, leading the Texan girl by the hand. The tall cactus that marked the spot where he had left his horse, loomed up in the gloom.

The Kid gave a soft, low whistle.

There was a stirring in the gloom, and

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in a moment the black-muzzled mustang was at his side.

"I guess we got to ride double, miss," said the Kid apologetically. "I'd sure have been glad to get a boss for you,

but I reckon it would have waked them Greasers if I'd gone near their remuda."

"Hark!"

From the timber came the sound of a screaming voice, followed by a shout.

Another and another shout followed. Then a shot was fired.

The girl caught her breath.

"They have found—"

"I guess they're wise to it, miss, that you've made your get-away," said the Kid coolly. "But we're sure out of the reach of them hombres now. I guess there ain't a feller in that bunch that can pick up my trail in the dark—

and Side-Kicker's a good cayuse; even if he's got to carry double. You don't want to worry now, miss."

"Let us go—let us go—let there be no bloodshed!" exclaimed the Texan girl breathlessly, anxiously. "Don Alvaro—I mean—let us go before we are discovered."

The girl was anxious for the safety of the puncher who had rescued her, but it struck the Kid, strangely enough, that she was anxious also for the safety of the man who had carried her off into the desert.

But he had no time to give thought to that. The Mexican camp was ringing with alarm—men were shouting and running—and already the beat of horses' hoofs could be heard.

The Kid lifted his companion to the back of the mustang and mounted himself. A shake of the reins, and Side-Kicker dashed off into the darkness of the plain.

The ringing hoofs of the mustang, doubtless were heard by the Mexicans, for there came a shot, and then another, and then the crash of galloping in pursuit. But the darkness swallowed up the Rio Kid, the pursuers riding wildly and at random, and in a short space of time, the only sound that broke the silence of the desert, was the beat of the mustang's hoofs, as he galloped on swiftly through the night under his double burden.

THE END.

(The Kid has accomplished the seemingly impossible. He has rescued Joan Valence from the clutches of a kidnapper. But he has not yet returned her to her friends, and whether he succeeds in doing this or not you will learn in "FALLEN AMONG TOES!"—a gripping long complete yarn of the West—next week.)

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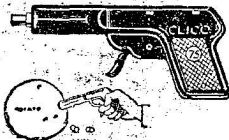
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