

FREE INSIDE—GRAND COLOURED AERO PLATE!



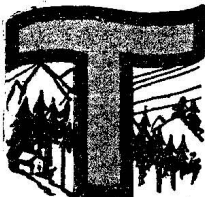
A THRILL-A-SECOND IN OUR
WILD WEST SERIAL STORY!

The OUTLAW KID!

*It takes more than a bullet-proof
Ghost to scare the Rio Kid!*



The Foreman of the Bar-T!



HERE was a scornful smile on the face of the Rio Kid as he leaned in the saddle and gazed at the ruins of the Mexican rancho.

"Haunted! Hum!"

The Kid, outlawed for a crime he had never committed had met trouble in the shape of over zealous sheriffs and evil gunmen, but he had yet to meet a real live ghost.

He had heard of the legend of the haunted ranch from Texas Dave, a sturdy puncher who had taken a liking to him and was now escorting the Kid to the Bar-T ranch where there was a likelihood of the Kid puncher securing a job.

Texas Dave had spurred on when the ruins of the haunted ranch hove in sight. The Kid had lingered for but a few brief moments to give it the once over and then he followed Dave.

"Say, who does this land belong to?" he asked, when he joined the puncher.

"It belongs to some Fernandez," answered Texas. "But he ain't never seen here—he or she. Some guys allows old Fernandez had a daughter, and if he had, I guess the ranch is hern. If it wasn't haunted, I'll say it would have been jumped long ago. But nobody in the Red Dog country ain't honing to cinch that rancho."

The Kid was thoughtful as he rode on. He had a hunch that he would like to horn into the haunted ranch, and see the ghost for himself. But that would keep. Just at present, the Kid was anxious to get on the pay-roll of a cattle outfit: partly because he was a puncher from the toes up, and liked his old work; partly because as a member of a bunch

he would be less likely to be suspected of being anything else.

Only a few miles from the haunted ranch the Bar-T came in sight. Several horsemen passed them on the prairie and nodded to Texas Dave, and glanced curiously at the Kid. They rode in at a wide-open gateway, and Texas threw himself off his horse outside the bunk-house.

"Say, Ginger!" he called out; and a red-headed horse-wrangler looked round from the corral gate.

"Hallo, you back?" said Ginger. "Anything going on in Red Dog?"

"Euchre Dick's been shot up." "Great gophers!" ejaculated Ginger. "Who was it—a rustler? I heard that Euchre was riding in the marshal's posse after rustlers."

"Nope! Nary rustler," grinned Texas. "We ain't seen nothing of the rustlers. It was this here kid puncher." "Can it!" answered the horse-wrangler.

"It's the goods!" said Texas. "Euchre

won't be able to handle a gun agin for a month of Sundays, and I'm telling you, it was this kid shot him up. Is Black Alec around?"

"In the bunk-house."

A man came out of the bunk-house as the horse-wrangler was speaking. The Kid had dismounted now and he glanced at the foreman of the Bar-T and lifted his Stetson politely.

"You Mr. Black?" he asked.

"Yep! What you want?" The foreman of the Bar-T eyed the Kid sharply. He was a powerfully-built man, with a dark, tanned face and black hair, and moustache, hard features and grim, hard eyes.

"I reckon you might be wanting a good man to punch cows on this here ranch,"

said the Kid, pleasantly. "Hooky Jones allowed you might. I guess I'm a handy man with a rope, or a cayuse, and with a gun if it comes to that—and I've heard you've got rustlers around."

"I guess you wouldn't cut a lot of ice with the rustlers," grunted Black Alec. "Wait till you grow up."

"Say, this here kid shot up Euchre Dick last night in Red Dog!" said Texas Dave. "I'll say he can handle a gun." The foreman started.

"What you giving me?" he snapped.

"There ain't a guy in Red Dog dare pull a gun on Euchre Dick!"

"It's the goods," persisted Texas Dave. "I tell you, I seen him, and Euchre's laid up for repairs now, with his fin in a sling, and cursin' the air blue. They can hear him for a mile round Red Dog. I'll tell a man!"

The foreman looked at the Kid with a new interest. But there was no liking in his look at the handsome, sunburnt face.

"I guess I'll be useful sir," said the Kid, cheerily. "Texas here allows that the boys don't like riding the haunted ranch range. I reckon ghosts don't worry me a whole lot, and I'll sure ride that range as soon as any other."

"You blow off your mouth a lot, for a kid!" grunted the foreman. "What's your name?"

"Santa Fe Smith."

"Waal, I guess you can take the home-trail to Santa Fe. And stay there," added Black Alec.

The Kid laughed cheerfully.

"If you don't want me in this bunch, Mr. Black, I guess I'll scare up another, 'long ways this side of Santa Fe," he answered. "But I'll say I'd be a useful man. I hear you've got rustlers around the Bar-T, and I'm telling you I'm death on rustlers. I'd jest hone to get after a cow-thief with a gat in my grip."

The foreman eyed him grimly.

"I guess if you spotted a rustler you'd hit the high spots so sudden a guy wouldn't see your cayuse for dust!" he grunted.

"Aw, can it!" snapped the Kid. "If you don't want me in your outfit, I'll ride. And jest to show you you're talking foolish, Mister Black, I'll take a look-see round for them rustlers. Say, if I tote a rustler in at the end of a gun, is it a cinch for a place in the outfit?"

Black knitted his brows.

"Say, that's a good offer," grinned Texas. "The boss would be powerful pleased if them rustlers was rounded up, sir."

"You figure you could trail out them rustlers, Mister Santa Fe Smith?" grunted the foreman.

"I guess I'll try," said the Kid.

"Aw, I reckon I'll give you a job to save your life then," said Black Alec. "I don't want you shot up on the Bar-T ranges. I'll sign you on for a week on trial."

"That goes," said the Kid. "I'll sure try to satisfy you, Mr. Black. You'll find me a good man with a cayuse and a rope and with cows."

"I guess I've found you a good man at chewing the rag already," said the foreman. "I'll give you a trial, like I said, and I guess I'll make you play up to your chin-wag. You'll take on the Fernandez range."

"Sure!"

"You'll camp out in the old Fernandez rancho," added the foreman with a grim look at the Kid.

"Suits me," said the Kid coolly.

Black Alec gave a grunt and walked on. The Kid glanced after him with a smile. He did not like the foreman of the Bar-T, and he had seen that the foreman did not like him.

But that didn't worry the Kid any. He was still smiling when he turned his mustang into the corral and joined the Bar-T men at dinner in the bunk-house.

In the Haunted Rancho!

THREE punchers rode with the Kid when he started from the Bar-T that afternoon, to take over the range assigned to him by the foreman.

After a short ride the quartette pulled rein on the slope above the Fernandez rancho.

"This is where I leave you," said the Kid cheerily. "So long!"

And with a wave of the hand to the Bar-T men, he rode down the slope to the deserted rancho.

Texas Dave and his two companions remained sitting their horses on the rise, watching him. They doubted even

now whether the Kid would venture to carry out the foreman's orders.

But the boy puncher rode direct to the rancho, and they saw him dismount outside the door, and throw his reins over a post.

They saw him standing at the door for a few moments, then the door was open and the Kid had passed into the building.



With a sudden and desperate wrench, the Rio Kid swung the table off the ground and crashed it at the oncoming ruffian.

and it burned with a red and cheery glow.

The Kid watched the glow with sleepy eyes—eyes that soon closed.

He slept.

What it was that awakened him, at last, the Kid did not know. But he woke suddenly, with all his senses on the alert.

He did not stir from his bed. He lay with his eyes

open watching the dusky shadows round him.

The fire had burned low in the rusty old stove; there was only a faint red glow from the dying embers.

What had awakened him?

Silently, he stretched out his hand to his gun-belt and grasped a walnut butt, and drew the Colt from the holster.

At the open doorway of the room, fifteen feet or so from the Kid, there was a glimmer that was not the glimmer of the fire. It was a glimmer of strange light, a phosphorescent glow, a pale, unearthly light. The Kid sat up in his blankets, his heart beating a little faster.

Dimly, but unmistakably, he could make out a figure in the doorway. It was the figure of a man—an old man with white hair and beard, glowing with faint strange light.

The Kid caught his breath.

Hooky Jones, the landlord of the timber hotel in Red Dog, had given him a description of the ghost of the haunted rancho. And this was the description. It was the ghost of old Fernandez that the Kid was staring at, or else a trickster in his guise.

"Carry me home to die!" murmured the Kid.

He lifted the revolver and aimed at his figure in the doorway.

"Say, you!" said the Kid, and his voice was clear and cool. "Say, you

The three punchers watched in silence. "I guess I hate leavin' him there," growled Texas Dave. "But there ain't no good talkin' to a locoed gink! Let's beat it."

And the punchers rode back to the Bar-T, glad to leave the haunted rancho in the thickening shadows behind them.

Meanwhile the Rio Kid in the living-room of the rancho, unpacked his belongings and settled down to prepare his supper. If danger lurked in the shadows of the haunted building the outlaw Kid did not show any sign of fear—rather he was looking forward to an encounter with the "ghost."

It did not take the Kid long to prepare and eat his meal, and as soon as he had finished he settled down to sleep, knowing he had much to do in the morning.

His slicker served him as a pillow; the butts of his guns were close to his reach in case he wanted them. His rifle he laid down beside him. He blew out the candles and turned into his blankets. He had stacked the stove with wood,

gink, you figure that you can scare me any? Not in your life-time! Put up your hands, you pesky scallywag, or I'll sure drive a bullet through you."

There was no answer from the phantom figure, no movement. It stood in the pale phosphorescent glow, motionless.

The Kid set his lips.

Bang!

The roar of the Colt filled the silent rancho with a noise like thunder.

Bang!

A second shot followed the first before it had died away.

Then the gun sagged in the hand of the Kid.

He had fired twice, point-blank, at the figure in the doorway with a hand that never missed. The worst shot could not have missed at such a range; and the Rio Kid was the best shot in Texas.

Struck Down!

THE Rio Kid sat very still. Seldom had anything like fear touched the stout heart of the boy outlaw of the Rio Grande. But now something like a chill was creeping through him, and he felt the perspiration wet on his brow.

Slowly, silently, the phantom figure glided from his sight, evidently unhurt by the shot. It passed from the Kid's view, and the doorway remained black and empty.

A shudder ran through the boy outlaw. The ghostly figure was gone; he was alone again—alone in darkness.

His teeth shut hard together.

With the revolver gripped in his hand he stepped to the doorway and looked out of the room.

The phantom figure had utterly vanished. "Carry me home to die!" muttered the Kid.

He was hopelessly beaten and puzzled. If it was a trickster who had played ghost to scare all comers away from the rancho for some reason unknown, the trickster must have been bullet-proof.

The Kid lighted the candles, and there was a glimmer in the room.

He listened, but there was no sound save the faint sigh of the wind, and a slight noise from Side-Kicker, his horse, stirring uneasily. He took a candle in his hand and looked out into the hallway.

"Thunder!" ejaculated the Kid suddenly. From somewhere in the darkness came the sound of a low groan.

He started and put down the candle, and stood with his eyes on the open doorway trying to think it out. Suddenly a glitter shot into his eyes.

"Dog-gone my cats!" he muttered. "You pesky gink, you sure are the world's prize boob!"

His bullets, to all seeming, had passed through the ghostly figure without harming it. But behind the ghostly figure in the doorway had been the wall of the room on the other side of the hallway; and the Kid realized that he had heard no sound of the bullets crashing through the wooden wall.

Then he knew!

His eyes glinted as he examined the cartridges remaining in his gun. The bullets had been removed from them.

He knew now what had happened. While he slept, his firearms had been tampered with, and the bullets removed from the cartridges, the guns being left in their places. They were blank cartridges that he had fired at the phantom figure in the doorway. The Kid's face set grimly. Someone, in the darkness, had been in the room while he slept; that was certain now. If it had been an enemy, he had been at that enemy's mercy. But the unknown had figured on scaring him away; and the Kid grinned rather sourly as he realized how near the unknown had come to getting away with it.

But if the Rio Kid had wanted any proof that the ghost of the rancho was human, he had it now. Phantom fingers had not played that cunning trick with his cartridges.

He picked up his cartridge-belt, re-

loaded the Colts, and buckled on his gun-belt. There was a loaded revolver in his right hand, the candle in his left, as he stepped out of the room into the hallway.

One room after another he entered, staring about him by the light of the flickering candle. But the old rancho was silent, untenanted.

He went through the kitchen at last, and looked from the open doorway at the back. A gust of wind blew out the candle in his hand.

Or was it a gust of wind? The Kid felt a sudden thrill of his nerves, and he spun round. There was a sound—

Bang! Bang!

The Kid fired twice into the darkness, at random. He could see nothing but he knew that someone was at hand. He heard the crash of the bullets on the wooden walls of the kitchen.

Then from the darkness came a sudden crashing blow, and the Rio Kid reeled.

As he reeled, a thousand lights dancing before his eyes, he heard a muttered exclamation—in Spanish.

Then the Kid went with a thump to the earthen floor, and darkness rushed on him and he knew no more.

Missing!

TEXAS DAVE came out of the bunkhouse at the Bar-T ranch, his brows corrugated under the brim of his Stetson hat.

The burly Bar-T puncher had a worried look. He was gazing in the direction of the haunted ranch—far away out of sight across the rolling plain. He had stood there for several minutes, when the sharp voice of Alexander Black, the Bar-T foreman, barked at him.

"You, Texas, what's got you? Gone to sleep standing up like a cayuse?"

Texas Dave looked round.

"Nope! I jest thinking of that kid puncher, Mister Black, what you put on the Fernandez range yesterday. I'll say I ain't easy in my mind about that guy."

The Bar-T foreman laughed gruffly.

"You got to ride over to Red Dog for the mail this morning," he said. "You can sure look in at the rancho for him, if you want. Get your cayuse and ride, you gink."

Texas Dave went to the corral and picked out his broncho, saddled up and rode away.

Texas had taken a liking to the boy puncher, Santa Fe Smith, who had joined the Bar-T outfit; little dreaming, like the rest of the bunch, that the young puncher was the Rio Kid, the boy outlaw of the Rio Grande. Texas, like every other puncher in the section, believed that the old rancho was haunted; indeed, he had seen the ghost of old Fernandez with his own eyes. He was concerned about the Kid, but he was very reluctant to take advantage of the foreman's permission to call in at the rancho and see for himself whether anything had happened in the night. He rode away from the Bar-T at a gallop. The trail to the cow town passed within sight of the old, deserted rancho; and when he came in view of it, lying in the hollow surrounded by trees, Texas slackened speed.

A deep silence brooded over the place. Only the clatter of the broncho's hoofs broke the silence as he rode down to the house. He halted at a little distance, and shouted:

"Say! You O.K., Santa Fe?"

There was no answer from the rancho, and again Texas hesitated for long minutes. But he made another effort, slipped from the saddle, hitched his horse and stepped towards the building. He had a six-gun in his grasp as he pushed open the crazy door.

"Say, Santa Fe, you hyer?" he called out, and there was a tremor in his voice.

Only the echo answered.

Texas Dave tramped in, and looked through the hallway and into the rooms on either side.

In the old living-room of the rancho he knew that the Kid had camped for the night, and there were many signs of someone having camped there. The embers in the old rusty stove were still

warm, a bucket half full of fresh water stood near it, and in a corner of the dusty floor he could see where blankets had lain. But none of the Kid's fixings were there now, and there was no sign of the Kid himself.

He tramped through into the lean-to kitchen at the back of the rancho. His heart was beating unpleasantly. The kitchen was silent and vacant, and he threw open the creaking door and stepped to the shed at the back that was used as a stable. There the Kid had stabled his mustang, and Texas found plenty of sign of the horse but the horse was not there.

"I guess he got scared and levanted!" muttered Texas.

But there was a doubt in his mind. He had a hunch that "Santa Fe Smith" was the galoot to argue the point, even with a spook. He was wondering whether the kid puncher had burned powder, and he looked for sign of bullets.

He was not long in finding them. In the kitchen wall he found two places where lead had splattered, and the sign was fresh enough.

"By the great horned toad!" he murmured. "He sure pulled trigger on the ghost—there's been shooting here!"

He stood silent, staring round him, the silence of the place chilling his blood. What had happened to the kid puncher? Evidently he had been disturbed in the night and had fired at least twice. At what?

Texas shivered.

Not at a human foe, he was sure of that. What human foe could there have been in the deserted, desolate rancho?

The big cowman gave a sudden start. From somewhere in the silence of the deserted rancho came a low moaning sound. It died away almost immediately but it left the cowman with his flesh creeping. Texas Dave's teeth were clicking as he tramped out of the house and hurried back to his horse. Without losing a moment he remounted and dashed away from the haunted rancho at a gallop.

He did not breathe freely till he had dropped the ranch far behind, and was galloping on the trail to Red Dog, with the cow town visible in the distance.

He rode into the town and hitched his horse outside the timber hotel.

In ten minutes all Red Dog knew what had happened to the boy puncher who had defied the Fernandez ghost. It was one more wild tale added to the history of the haunted ranch.

Euchre Dick's Vengeance!

EUCHRE DICK clambered, with difficulty, into the saddle of his pinto, and rode out of Red Dog under the sinking sun. The gunman's right arm was in a sling, his right hand bandaged. It was likely to be many long weeks before Euchre Dick was able to use that hand again. He knew that the boy puncher who had shot his gun from his hand could as easily have planted the lead in his heart, had he chosen so to do; but that knowledge did not make the gunman's feelings any the softer towards "Santa Fe Smith." But he had heard news that made him hurry into the saddle and leave Red Dog. The Rio Kid had been at the haunted rancho and had met trouble. That news made him smile as he rode away at a gallop. He gave his pinto the spur all the way to the haunted ranch.

The old rancho had its usual deserted and desolate aspect when he arrived there. Euchre dismounted and turned his pinto into the shed at the back of the building.

Then he stood for several minutes, looking about him in the thickening darkness. He stirred at last, and went into the old bunkhouse. It was a heap of ruins, overgrown with thorny bush and trailing vines. But the gunman evidently knew the secret of the place for he squeezed through a mass of tangled lianas and stepped into the dark opening of a tunnel. The next moment he stopped as a rifle muzzle touched his breast in the darkness.

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weapon would have snapped like a rotten twig under the strain he put upon it.

"Heavo, big boy!" Tommy encouraged, and the next moment the boulder rolled over. Once moved, there was no stopping it.

Straight for the house and the natives it went. The blacks looked up in startled terror. Then they scattered, running wildly in all directions.

But the boulder didn't crash on the house. It crashed over a sharp ridge, bounded up in the air, and right over the house to the other side, to go bounding into the trees at the opposite edge of the clearing.

"Kimon, let's go!" the big black said, gripping his novel club tightly and bounding away down the slope.

They were among the natives before the wretches had got over the shock the boulder had given them. Tommy struck right and left with his clubbed rifle, and did good work, too. But Tombo was wonderful!

He was a roaring tornado of destruction. In less than five minutes, all those who could run had done so, and the rest were either crawling to safety or groaning and holding their heads on the ground.

Then Tommy led the way into Van Duren's house.

"Golly, the blighters were goin' to make roasted potatoes, too—out of these blacks!" he gasped, when he had entered and found four wild-eyed, thoroughly-scared black servants bound inside.

Tommy quickly cut them loose; then, after searching around for signs of Van Duren, he questioned them about the whereabouts of their master. After a good deal of trouble he learned that the natives who had raided the place had taken their master away with them!

"That means," Tommy declared, turning to Tombo, who was lovingly balancing his propeller club between his hands, "he'll be crocodile meat, if we don't do something pretty quick!"

The Talking Croc.

BY the time Tombo and Tommy reached Sakala's village it was quite dark, but there was no darkness by the Pool of Sacrifice. There the whole scene was lit up by

numerous torches, and it was an exact replica of the scene that Tommy had been the chief actor in earlier in the day. Now, Van Duren, fat and frightened, was taking the main part.

Tommy thought a moment, and the lad could think pretty rapidly when necessary!

"Tombo, old butty," he suddenly remarked, "did I hear you say something about that there scarecrow ju-ju man having all sorts o' funny things in his hut? Come on, an' lead me to it! I want a look round!"

Cautiously they circled round, until they could enter the village from behind, and dodging around the huts, Tombo led the way to that belonging to Sakala. The big black first peered inside, then entered. Tommy quickly followed.

Tommy could see the place was covered with human bones and tufts of feathers.

"Suffering seedcake! This is worse than the Chamber of Horrors!" he murmured. "What's this? Why, if it isn't old Father Christmas' bonnet!"

Tommy picked up the grim thing. It was the young crocodile's head that Sakala had worn when Tommy was a prisoner.

"I've a great wheeze!" he said. "Sakala won't dream of getting on with the show without this I bet my boots he'll be comin' back for it any minute—and when he does, you knock him on the boko with that propeller. Get me?"

"Yuh, betcha!"

In the darkness Tombo grinned. He owed the witch-doctor one! Then he gave a hiss of warning, as a soft footfall was heard outside. Even as the chums crouched back into the gloom the curtain that was draped over the doorway parted, and Sakala stepped inside.

Then Tombo struck.

Sock! With a muffled groan Sakala crumpled up in a heap. In another minute he was bound up.

"Quick, Tombo," the youngster hissed. "Get this bonnet on, and get outside! You'd better shrivel up some way or other, then they won't recognise you, and the first chance you get out Van Duren's ropes. Here's the knife!"

Tombo cottoned on to the idea splendidly, and presently, dressed up to look

like Sakala, he left the hut. His appearance at the pool was greeted by delirious yells from the natives, and a squeal of terror from Van Duren.

Flourishing his knife, Tombo strode straight up to the bound Dutchman, and with a few slashing strokes cut his bonds—or nearly. Van Duren only needed his legs cutting free, when, with a blood-curdling yell, the natives, suddenly realising that they were being balked of their prey by Sakala, as they thought, rushed.

A moment later they got a shock, as Tombo ripped off his hideous mask, and, standing up to his full height, hit out right and left, using the dried croc's head as a weapon. In two seconds two natives were grovelling in the dirt.

Then Van Duren's eyes nearly popped out of their sockets, as a long, slimy shape crawled along the bank of the pool towards him. A crocodile! He gave a squeal, and rolled over.

"Hold on, Dutchy, you stay put a bit—you're as safe as houses!"

Van Duren stopped and stared, his eyes wide with amazement.

Suddenly the natives saw the crocodile. "The Green One!" they yelled.

Panic-stricken, they turned and fled.

It was now the big black's turn to open his eyes wide at the sight of the croc. Then a chuckle boomed in his throat as Tommy Bird crawled from inside the crocodile skin.

"Hot-doggity, cowpoke, I'll hand it ter yuh—that was one cute trick!" Tombo rumbled.

"Those savages didn't see the trick!" Tommy grinned. "They thought it was a stuffed crocodile I found in Sakala's hut come to life. They won't stop running until they drop. Now we're going to Father Christmas' hut for Tombo's propeller-club, for one thing, and for old Sakala himself for another. We're going to take the old wretch on a long journey."

Tombo chuckled. "Yuh've sed it, kid."

(What d'you think of Tombo—some "big boy" what? He has a scrap with a mad bull next week.)

THE OUTLAW KID!

(Continued from page 230.)

"Euchre!" he muttered, and the muzzle was withdrawn.

"Follow me, senior!" came a voice from the blackness, and the gunman tramped on, downward, apparently into the depths of the earth. There was a sharp turn in the tunnel, and a glimmer of light came to his eyes. He passed through a narrow doorway into a room walled with pine planks. An oil lamp was burning there. It was the old dug-out under the Fernandez rancho—constructed in the old days when savage Redskins swarmed on the prairies of Texas, and long disused and forgotten till it was turned to a "hide-out" by the rustlers of the Rio Grande.

There were several men in the room, all of them Mexicans. They saluted the gunman as he strode in.

"You got the guy who camped here last night?" he demanded.

"Si!"

Euchre Dick's eyes glittered.

"They reckon in Red Dog that he got a scare from the ghost and lit out," he said.

"He was not so easy to scare," grinned one of the Mexicans. "But he's quiet now—here!"

"And what you figure on doing with him?"

"He will live if he will ride with us, senior! But he has refused, and if he does not change his mind—" The Mexican shrugged his shoulders again.

Euchre Dick laughed harshly.

"Forget it!" he snarled. "He ain't that sort, I'll tell a man! And I guess I wouldn't give him the chance if he was. I tell you he's my game."

There was a long pause. Then, slowly, the Mexican cow-thief nodded.

"I guess it's time you was riding," continued the gunman. "There's three hundred cows on the Fernandez range, and two Bar-T punchers riding the range. You want to get them across the border before dawn."

The Mexican cow-thief threw away his cigar.

"Pronto!" he said briefly, and strode towards the tunnel by which the gunman had entered. The ruffians in the dug-out followed him.

Euchre Dick stood listening, with a bitter smile on his face, till the sounds of their departure died away.

Then he moved, at last, towards the door at the end of the long dug-out in which lay the Rio Kid.

The Upper Hand!

"SHUCKS!" murmured the Rio Kid.

The Rio Kid had regained consciousness to find himself imprisoned in what looked like an underground room. For some time he had waited impatiently to know whom his jailers were. Suddenly the sound of footsteps came outside.

Standing in the darkness, the boy puncher listened to them stop outside the pinewood door, and to the grating of the bolt as it was withdrawn. He knew who was coming for he had just overheard the words of the gunman.

The Kid's eyes gleamed in the darkness as the door was flung open.

Framed in the doorway, the glimmering light behind him, appeared the figure of the gunman, his right arm in a sling, a Colt in his left hand, half raised.

Euchre Dick peered into the room. Behind the pinewood table the Kid was

crouched. The room was dark, save for the glimmer at the doorway.

Euchre Dick stepped in through the doorway. His gun was up now, ready to shoot.

Another moment and the Kid would have been under the fire of the Colt. But in that moment the heavy pinewood table was lifted at the end with an upward swing, as if it had been as light as thistle-down, and flung towards the gunman.

Euchre Dick leaped back with a curse as the table crashed at him, barely escaping the crash. The curse was still on his lips when the Kid was on him with the spring of a cougar, and his left arm was grasped and forced upward.

Half stunned by the blow he struggled spasmodically, and a scream of pain left his lips as the Kid mercilessly twisted his wrist and forced the gun from his grasp.

The Kid's fingers closed on the butt of the Colt. His knee was on the gunman's chest.

Crash!

The heavy barrel of the Colt came thudding down on the gunman's head, and he lay stunned and senseless under the Kid.

"Shucks!" murmured the Kid.

He rose to his feet. He did not give the gunman a glance; he knew that Euchre Dick was safe now, and would not stir for hours. With the Colt gripped in his hand, he stepped to the doorway and moved into the darkness of the tunnel beyond.

(There are rustlers on the warpath and the Rio Kid's got to get out of the haunted ranch and raise the alarm! Get next week's RANGER and read how the Outlaw Kid fares in his dangerous task!)