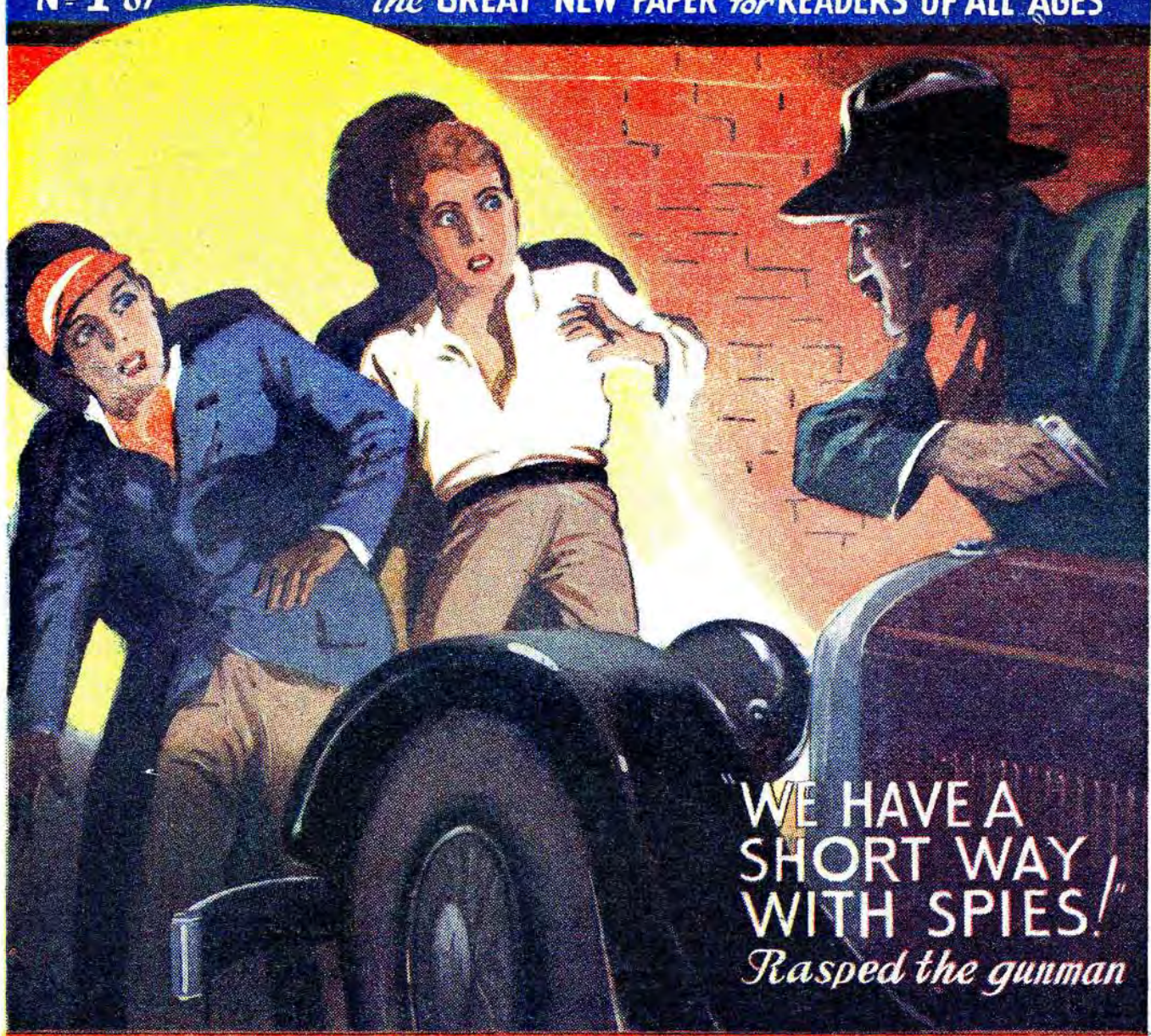


**5 GRAND GIFTS-4** *100 PAGE BOOK OF FOOTBALL*  
*COLOURED PORTRAIT CARDS*  
*OF FOOTER STARS*

# *The* **PILOT** 2<sup>D</sup>

**No 1 of** *the GREAT NEW PAPER for READERS OF ALL AGES*

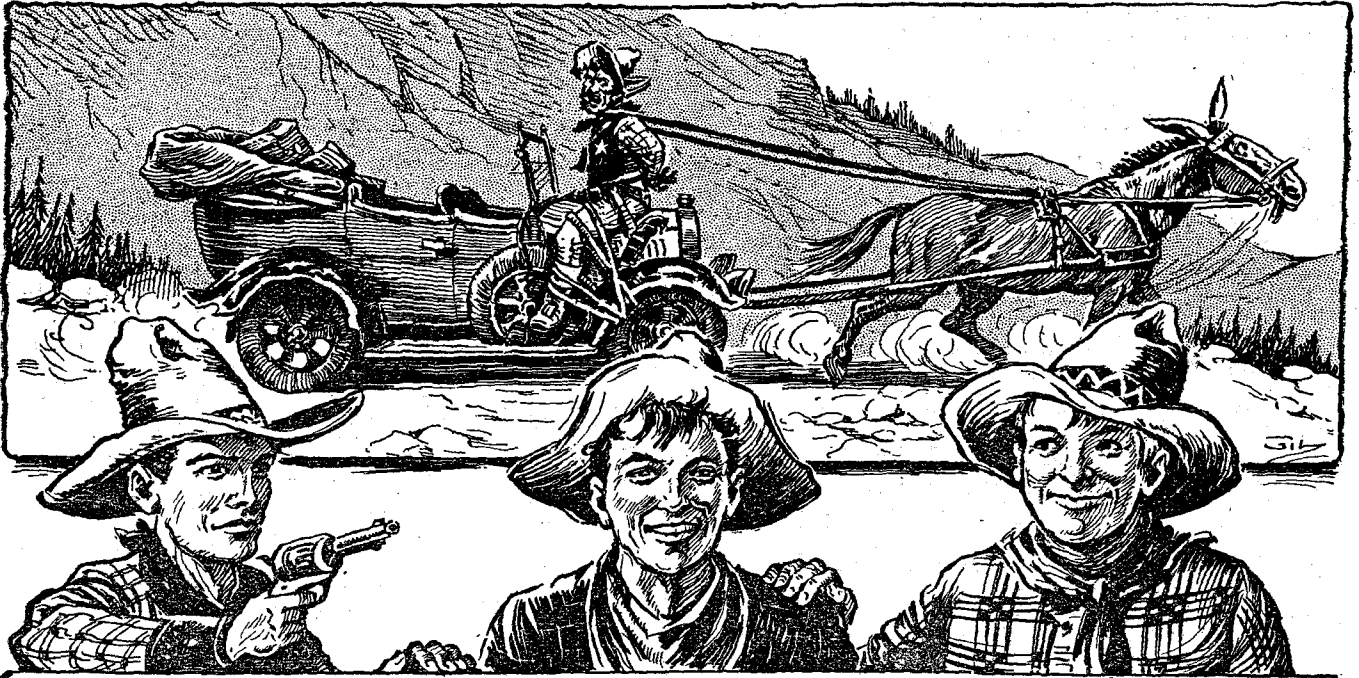


**WE HAVE A  
SHORT WAY  
WITH SPIES!**  
*Rasped the gunman*

*The* **BOYS WHO  
KNEW TOO MUCH**



**KID, RED and DAN — THERE WASN'T ANY HARM IN THE BUNCH OF THEM, BUT FATE TURNED THEM INTO OUTLAWS. HERE IS THE THRILLING STORY OF HOW THEY BECAME—**



# The Outlawed Three

**"T**HAT doggoned marshal agin!" growled old Sam Oak.

There was a rattle of wheels on the sun-baked trail. The old rancher pushed back his stetson, drew his horny hand across his perspiring forehead, and stared grimly at the ramshackle remains of a motorcar which was crawling up the trail from Bullwhacker.

He frowned at the sight of Hardfist Hall, marshal of Bullwhacker, who was seated at the wheel. But Dan and Kid and Red grinned.

Dan Oak, Kid Byrne, and Tom Redway were rubbing down horses in front of the dilapidated old rancho on the bank of the Rio Rojo, under the blaze of the Arizona sun.

For miles along the river, and up the rocky slopes of the Mesa Mountains, old Sam's land extended—most of it barren rock and sagebrush. Sam and his three nephews scraped a bare living out of it. It was only affection for the old man, who had cared for them from childhood, that kept the three boys there. The place ached with poverty. The old rancho, patched and repaired times out of number, was almost a ruin. There was little feed for cattle, and very few cattle to feed, for Sam's stock was limited to a few cows and a bunch of broncos. Whenever he sold a horse to a puncher in a ranch outfit there was a brief period of plenty at Rojo. Between whiles there were lean times.

"I'll say Hardfist is a sticker!" remarked Dan. "How many times has he offered to buy the ranch, nunk?"

"More'n I can remember!" grunted Sam.

"And why won't you sell, you old bonehead, you?" asked Kid, with a wink at Dan and Red, who grinned.

"Ain't I told you, heap times, that there's gold on this land?" grunted the old man. "Ain't you prospected for it, you 'uns, since you was big enough to carry a miner's pick?"

"We sure have!" grinned Red. "But we ain't raised any, nunk. I guess your old popper was dreaming when he fancied he potted pay-dirt up in the mesa."

"Bill Hall don't reckon he was dreaming!" rumbled Sam. "He sure don't want to buy this land to feed cattle. He's offered to buy me

out a heap times, and now hyer he comes to say it all over agin."

Bill Hall stopped his ancient car before the rancho, and old Sam, leaving the boys, walked across to meet him.

Dan and Kid and Red watched him rather curiously. For years they had been used to old Sam's belief that the barren lands of Rojo were rich in gold—if only it could be found. Many and many a time they had gone searching in the rocky arroyos and draws of the mesa; but never a gleam of the yellow metal had rewarded them. They had lost all faith in it. Yet it was a standing puzzle to them why Marshal Hall wanted to buy the ranch.

"Mornin', marshal!" grunted old Sam. "But I guess you can pack up afore you begin chewing the rag. I ain't selling, like I've told you twenty times already. You're wasting your time."

A grim smile came over the marshal's hard face.

## No. 1 of a GRAND SERIES

"I guess that ain't the business that's brought me here this time, Sam Oak," he said. "But the offer's still open, if you want to trade. I'll put up a thousand dollars for the ranch."

"Forget it!" said Sam.

"Aw, you doggoned obstinate old geek!" growled Hall. "You're getting old, Sam Oak, and you sure won't last long, and I guess you ought to be thinking of the boys. What's this patch of desert worth to them? Yet you could give them a start with a thousand bucks—"

"Pack it up, marshal!" said old Sam tersely. "If you got business hyer, shoot! If not, I guess I'm busy."

"You said it!" agreed Hall. "I got business here. I guess I'll put it plain. Last

week you sold a brone to a man at Pack Mule. Mustang Dave, at Bullwhacker, allows that that cayuse is his'n, and was rustled from his corral three months ago. What you got to say to that?"

The old rancher trembled with rage.

"I got this to say!" he gasped. "Mustang Dave is your side-kicker, as every galoot in the county knows, and if he says that the cayuse was his'n, he's a liar, Marshal Hall, and you're another liar, and worse! You've framed this up just because I won't sell out to you!"

Sam had slipped his quirt under his arm. Now he slid it down into his hand. He brandished it before the marshal's face.

"Git off my land!" he roared. "Beat it, you lobo-wolf! Beat it pronto, afore I quirt you a few!"

Hall's eyes glittered under his knitted brows.

"Can it!" he snarled. "I'm telling you—"

He broke off, with a yell of rage, as the quirt lashed him. Dan and Kid and Red looked on breathlessly. In his rage, old Sam Oak struck, and struck again. Hall reeled to right and left, but he could not dodge the furious rain of blows.

"Gee-whiz!" breathed Dan. "There's sure going to be trouble!"

"I'm telling you to beat it!" roared Sam. "Git that iron bedstead of yours moving, you doggoned coyote! By the great horned toad, I'll sure quirt you a few more if you don't beat it pronto!"

The marshal of Bullwhacker staggered out of the car. He stood panting, crimson with fury, and dragged at the six-gun in his belt. In a moment more the gun would have been out, and the old rancher would have dropped with a bullet through his body. But in that moment, Dan Oak grabbed up the bucket of water he had been using to wash down the horses. He jerked it forward, and the water streamed in the marshal's face.

Hall staggered back, drenched, and blind for the moment. Red was on him in a second, tearing the revolver from his grasp. He flung it into the air, and it dropped with a splash into the river.

The marshal dashed the water from his eyes. Mad with rage, he made a jump at Red. But Dan was rushing at him, with the bucket in his grasp. He slammed it down on the marshal's head, and it fairly bonneted him, the rim crashing on his broad shoulders. Hardfist Hall went staggering wildly away, while the three pals roared with laughter.

"I guess you want to beat it, marshal!" grinned old Sam. "Boot him out, you 'uns!" "I'll say we will!" grinned Dan. "And we'll fix him in such a way that he sure won't come up here visitin' any more."

And Dan and his pals went about that task in their own mischievous way. They roped the marshal to the bonnet of his flivver before they took the bucket from his head. Then they harnessed an old mule to the front axle of the ramshackle car.

"Hyer! You can't do this thing to me!" howled Hall, struggling furiously. "Your mistake, feller!" chuckled Dan. "It's happened."

With that he touched up the mule with a quirt, and started the animal off down the trail to Bullwhacker. Behind the mule rolled the ancient car, with the helpless marshal yelling blue murder.

"Explain that lot off when you git into town!" yelled Dan, after the rocking car.

And it took Marshal Hall quite a lot of explaining when he did arrive in Bullwhacker.

PICK on shoulder, Kid Byrne stared up the rocky, steep arroyo, down which the water came tumbling, with showers of spray. High up in the mesa, the Rio Rojo was a mountain torrent, leaping from rock to rock, cascade to cascade. It was not easy to climb the steep bank between the tumbling water, and the rugged side of the ravine. But Kid, slim though he was, was hard as nails. He slung his pick over his shoulder, jammed his stetson firmly on his curly head, and started up the rugged path.

Dan and Red were left behind in the lower canyon. The three boys were prospecting in the mesa—hunting for old Sam's mythical gold-mine. Hundreds of times they had prospected, but luck had never come their way. There was gold in the section—only ten miles from the old rancho was the mining-camp of Pack-Mule, where the great stampmills roared with incessant din. But on old Sam's land they had never found a speck of pay-dirt so far. It was rather to humour the old man than for any other reason that they kept up the quest; though there was always the lingering hope of "striking it rich."

"Hokey! It's not!" murmured Kid, stopping to rest and fan his burning face with his stetson.

There was a footstep on the rocks, and he spun round, surprised.

"You!" he exclaimed.

He stared at Hardfist Hall. The meeting in that solitary untrodden ravine in the heart of the mesa, surprised him—and he could see that the marshal of Bullwhacker was equally startled.

"What are you doing here, Hall?" demanded Kid. He stared at the hard-featured, black-bearded face of the marshal with grim suspicion.

Hall's hand flew for one moment to the butt of the six-gun in his belt. It was some days since his visit to the Rojo ranch, and his black look told that he had not forgotten what had happened there. But he released his gun-butt the next moment.

"You've no right to prospect on my uncle's land, Bill Hall!" snapped Kid.

"Who's prospecting?" grunted Hall.

Kid's lip curled.

"I guess you never came up here to look for lost cows! Your best move is to get back to your ranch at Bullwhacker, Bill Hall! If there's gold on Sam Oak's land, it's not for you to raise."

Hardfist looked at him quietly and grimly. "There's gold on old Sam's land!" he said. "His father picked nuggets out of the Rojo years and years ago, and where there was some I'll say there's more! I guess if the land belonged to me I'd raise it fast enough."

"The land don't belong to you, and never will!" retorted Kid. "What's more, you sure ain't prospecting here. You're going—and I'm

seeing you go!" He pointed down the rugged bank of the stream. "That's your way, marshal, and I'm starting you."

Hardfist laughed defiantly. Kid's pick was in his hands, but he had no other weapon.

As the boy advanced on him, grim and determined, his hand flew to the six-gun again. This time he pulled.

But even as the revolver left its holster, Kid lashed out with the pick. There was a crash as it struck the gun from the marshal's hand, and the weapon whirled through the air and splashed into the fall of the Rojo.

A yell of rage broke from the marshal of Bullwhacker. With the spring of a tiger, he hurled himself at Kid.

Kid Byrne dropped the pick and grappled with him.

On the rugged rock, almost on the verge of the waterfall, they wrestled and struggled.

The marshal was a powerful man, but Kid was a match for him. The cowboy was strong and sturdy, wiry and tough, active as a cat. In muscle he was no match for the black-bearded man, but he held his own.

Suddenly, he hooked Hall's leg and the marshal, slipping on the wet rock, went crashing over.

He lay panting. Kid stood over him panting, too. His eyes gleamed down at the marshal of Bullwhacker.

"You'll git!" he said between his teeth. "Or, by hokey, I'll paste you to glory! Git off old Sam's land."

Hall leaped to his feet. The marshal's face was crimson with rage; his eyes burning. He rushed at the boy, driving him back by sheer weight.

Back went Kid—and back! He would have rallied in a moment or two—and renewed the fight. But the wet rock, slippery from the spray of the Rojo, was his undoing. He slipped and staggered, and for a second received the crashing fists of the marshal full on his chest. A second more and he went backwards over the bank of the torrent, falling head-long into the rushing water.

A cry broke from Kid as he plunged under. He had an instant's glimpse of the hard, black-bearded face staring after him. Then he was under water, torn away helplessly by the rushing torrent.

His head came up in a whirl of foam, a roar of waters. Kid could swim well—but in that torrent he tossed like a cork. He struggled frantically, but still went rushing down the stream. The fall was below—where the

Rojo dropped thirty feet over an edge of rock, to a lower level of the ravine. If he was swept over that fall—

He fought madly for his life. Once his fingers touched the rocky bank, and he clutched, but he was torn away again.

A deafening roar was in his ears. Whirled over and over like a log of driftwood, he was rushed under the fall. Water, in crashing tons, thundered on his head. Down—and down—and down—his senses whirling and spinning. Down—to terrible death on the sharp rocks and whirling waters below!

KID wondered if he was dreaming.

The roar of the waters was still in his ears; spray was falling on him.

The rocks echoed with thundering sound. Where was he—what had happened?

He was in water—shallow water, almost calm under the thunder of the falls. He dragged himself to his feet, standing with water swishing round his shoulders, and staring dazedly about him.

For the first few moments it seemed quite dark to Kid's dizzy eyes. Then he could see—in a dim twilight! Water was rushing past him from above—a screen of water that shut off the daylight. He realised he was behind the fall in a hollow of the cliff over which it tumbled. A hundred times he had clambered up and down the Rojo ravine and never dreamed that there was anything but solid rock under the waterfall. Now he found himself in a deep, dusky cavern, extending far back into the earth.

He had dropped through the waterfall, not to be dashed among the rocks of the lower stream, but into the pool in the cavern under the fall. He stared round him and swam and waded till he dragged himself from the water.

The pool extended twenty feet or more into the cavern. Beyond, the ground was higher, and he was able to crawl out. Round him was dimness, but as his eyes became accustomed to the gloom he could make out his surroundings. Glinting sunlight came through the screen of dropping water at the cavern's mouth.

Kid grinned breathlessly.

"Gee! I guess Hall figures that I'm gone!" he muttered. "By the great horn spoon, I guess I ought to be—but I ain't—I sure ain't!"

There was no doubt that the marshal of Bullwhacker must believe him dead. But Kid was very much alive, and little the worse for his ducking when he had recovered his breath.

"Kid, old-timer, I guess you want to beat it out of this!" he said to himself.

He found a narrow, rocky ledge a foot or more above the pool at the side of the cavern. By stepping along it he could reach the opening under the falling torrent. He was about to try his luck when he stopped suddenly—and stood staring—with blank, astonished, almost unbelieving eyes.

On the rocky floor of the cavern, almost at his feet, lay an object that, familiar enough to his eyes elsewhere, was amazing to see in that hidden cavern under the waterfall.

It was an old rusted miner's pick!

The wooden handle was almost rotted away. The iron head was deeply bitten with rust. For years, evidently—many a long, long year—it had lain there! Kid's heart gave a mighty jump.

That cavern under the waterfall, which he had thought utterly unknown to any other, had been trodden by human feet before! Some lonely prospector had penetrated there in search of gold—the miner's pick was proof of that!

Kid caught his breath. He hardly dared believe what flashed into his mind. Old Sam's tale of gold in the mesa—was it true? Old Sam's father had found gold, long years ago, but he had died under a rustler's bullet, and his secret had died with him. That was the tale that old Sam had always told. Had old Sam, after all, got it right? Was this the hidden place where that old miner, in the early days of Arizona, had dug out nuggets?

Leaving the rotted pick where it lay, Kid searched along the cavern. He was accustomed to the gloom now; the twilight did not trouble his keen eyes. He gave a sudden



Bonneted by the water-bucket, the marshal of Bullwhacker staggered wildly away, leaving Dan, Kid, and Red roaring with laughter. But they didn't know to what lengths Hardfist Hall would go to get his vengeance on them!

cry. He had stumbled on the rotted remains of a miner's leather sack.

Through the gloom came a gleam—a faint gleam of yellow! Falling on his knees, Kid groped in the rotten sack. The fragments fell from his fingers—which closed on a rugged lump! Even in the gloom of the cavern, it gleamed and glistened.

Trembling, Kid carried it back towards the clearer light under the fall. In the sunlight glimmering through the screen of water he stared at it—gold!

It was a nugget—a nugget of almost pure gold weighing, he calculated, over a pound! Over a pound of gold—with gold at over thirty dollars an ounce! That one lump in his hand was worth five hundred dollars!

"Gee!" breathed Kid.

Eager as he was to find more gold, he was still more eager to carry the great news to his comrades—to carry it to old Sam at the rancho. He crammed the nugget into his pocket. Then he stepped along the ledge at the side of the cavern to reach the opening.

The way was easier than he had counted on. Perhaps it had been made easier by a miner's pick, for he knew now that old Abe Oak, Sam's father, must have entered and left many a time in those old days when he had worked the claim for gold.

The end of the ledge projected through the dripping water. Standing in falling spray, Kid could see that ledges and points of rock gave handhold and foothold, so that he could climb up the rugged bank beside the waterfall.

Drenched to the skin, but heedless of soaking spray, Kid clambered out, and in a few minutes stood on the high bank in the ravine. Shaking the water in great drops from his clothes, he started down the arroyo at a run for the lower canyon.

"**S**AY, whose cayuse?" exclaimed Red. Big Dan Oak stopped and stared at the tethered bronco tied up under the shade of a rock by the river. Since Kid had left them and gone up the ravine by the torrent, Dan and Red had been working along the bank of the Rojo, broader and slower in the wide canyon. They had come suddenly on the black bronco. At the second glance, Dan Oak recognised the animal.

"I guess that's Marshal Hall's cayuse!" he said.

"You said it!" agreed Red. He glanced round quickly. "That means that Hall's here—on our land! What's his game?" "Fossicking, same as we are!" grunted Dan. "Looking for sign of old Sam's goldmine, I reckon, the pizen skunk. He wouldn't want anything else up here in the mesa. Say—"

He broke off suddenly. Something that whirled and spun in the river, borne down from the torrent in the ravine, caught his eye. It was a stetson hat. Dan's eyes fixed on the whirling hat in the water, and he gave a cry:

"Kid's stetson!"

He plunged waist-deep in the river and grabbed the hat as it whirled past on the current. Red watched him as he came scrambling back to the bank, the soaked and crumpled stetson in his hand.

Red found his voice. He spoke huskily.

"It's durned dangerous up the ravine! But Kid ain't the guy to take a tumble into the water—he sure ain't—"

Dan shut his teeth hard.

"Bill Hall's around," he said. "Here's his cayuse, and Hall himself sure ain't far off. If there's been foul play—"

"Listen!" breathed Red.

A clatter of hurrying feet sounded on the rocks of the canyon from the direction of the ravine.

The two boys looked round and sighted a man in the distance. A minute later they recognised Hardfist Hall—hurrying breathlessly towards the spot where they stood. The marshal of Bullwhacker was coming back for his horse—coming at a hurrying run, his face white and strained. And he came from the arroyo, whence Kid's hat had whirled down on the torrent a few minutes ago.

He did not see the boys till he was close on them. Then he stopped, his hand shooting to his belt. But the gun he had carried was gone.

Dan's eyes met Red's. There had been foul play in the ravine up by the torrent; they both felt that.

Hardfist Hall came on towards his horse. Dan stepped into his way, his jaw set grimly.

"Where's Kid Byrne, marshal?" he asked. "What you done to Kid?"

Hall pulled himself together.

"Kid Byrne?" he repeated. "What'd I know about him? I guess I ain't met up with him."

"That's a durned lie!" said Dan between his teeth. "Kid went up the arroyo, and he must have passed you—unless you stopped him! You've sure seen him. What you done to Kid, you lobo-wolf?"

He held up the drenched hat. Hall stared at it with starting eyes.

"You've lost your gun!" said Dan. "I guess you lost it about the same time that Kid lost his hat! You met up with him, up the ravine—and you sure pulled on him—and him unarmed! What you done to him? Spill it, you hound."

Hall, setting his teeth, made a spring towards the bronco. Dan's grasp was on him the same moment.

With all his strength, the marshal of Bullwhacker strove to tear himself loose. But Red's grasp was added to Dan's, and he was dragged over on the rocky earth. They pinned him down on the rocks.

"Let up!" panted the marshal. "Let up! I'll sure have you in the calaboose at Bullwhacker for this—"

Dan shook him savagely.

"I guess you won't see Bullwhacker agin, marshal, if Kid has passed in his chips! Red, get that rope off'n his cayuse, and hogtie the galoot while I keep him cinched."

There was a coiled lasso at the marshal's saddle-bow. Red snatched it and cut a length from it, while the marshal struggled wildly on his back, pinned down by Dan's sinewy knee. Hard and savagely he struggled, but Big Dan kept him pinned, while Red dragged his wrists together and pinned them.

Then the marshal was allowed to rise to his feet, his face burning with fury, his hands tied behind his back. He stood panting, wrenching fiercely at his bonds. Dan's eyes gleamed at him.

"Stick him on his cayuse, Red!"

Red lent a hand, without asking questions. The burly marshal was slammed into the saddle, and Dan cast loose the black bronco.

"Bring that rope along!" he snapped, as he led the horse away.

Red followed him, lasso in hand.

At a little distance, where there was a fertile

patch on the bank of the Rojo, like an oasis in the barren canyon, a tall cottonwood grew. Dan halted the bronco under its great branches.

He made a sign to Red, who threw the lasso over a branch directly over the rider's head. The noose came dangling down, and Dan slipped it round the neck of the marshal of Bullwhacker.

Hall's face was deathly white now. With his hands bound, he could make no resistance. Dan fastened the end of the rope to a rock. A touch on the horse now, and it would pass on from under the marshal of Bullwhacker, leaving him swinging on the rope.

Hall stared wildly at the boys. But their faces were hard, set, and merciless.

"Now you going to spill it?" snarled Dan Oak. "What you done with Kid?"

"You pulled on him up in the arroyo?" muttered Red.

Bill Hall gasped.

"I'll swear I never shot him up!" he panted huskily. "He ordered me off the ranch, and—and—he went over the fall of the Rojo! I never meant—"

"You dog-goned coyote!" Dan gritted, between his teeth. "What was you doing on our land? Kid's gone down in the fall of the Rojo, and I guess he'll never come out of it alive—you murderer!"

"Kid—dead!" muttered Red, and his face worked. "Dan, that dog-goned murderer ain't going to ride back to Bullwhacker, leaving our pard dead in the mesa! I'm telling you—"

"That murderer's going to hang at the end of his own rope!" said Dan fiercely.

"Ride me to Bullwhacker!" breathed Hall. "I'm ready to face a trial!"

"Where all your gang would pull guns to see you through!" said Dan. "I guess if we rode you into Bullwhacker, you pizen skunk, and charged you with murder, it would be the last thing we'd do this side of Jordan! Make the most of the five minutes you've got left, Hall! You're a hard man, and a bad one, and I guess you got plenty on your conscience! You've shot up better men than yourself and got away with it! But you ain't getting away with this! Five minutes, and you swing!"

He grasped the marshal's own quirt, holding it ready to lash the waiting bronco. There was no mercy in his tanned, lean face, or in Red's. A life for a life was the law of the mountains!

The marshal of Bullwhacker sat in the saddle, the sweat pouring down his hard face in great drops. He panted huskily.

"You'd never dare—"

"Time's going!" said Dan grimly. "Don't waste it!"

The marshal's eyes swept wildly over the solitary canyon. There was no help, no hope! For mile on mile the Rio Rojo rolled—a barren, mountainous country, seldom ridden. No sign of a human being; no sign of life at all, save the lizards crawling on the hot rocks and a black vulture, high up, winging in the blue! Silence and solitude—and the grim shadow of death! He licked his dry lips.

"Time's up!" said Dan curtly.

A cry broke from the doomed man, sitting bound on his horse, as Dan raised the whip to lash. It was a husky, incoherent cry. As if in answer to it came a shout, ringing and echoing down the rocky canyon.

Hall started convulsively. Dan dropped his arm, the quirt sagging in his hand. Red leaped almost clear of the ground. Then, with a bound, he was at the horse's head, grasping the bridle. For the shout that rang and echoed down the canyon was the voice of Kid Byrne!

**K**ID, hatless, still wet from the waters of the Rojo, came panting down the rugged canyon. As he came, he shouted—and shouted again. The golden nugget was in his hand now, gleaming and glistening in the sun. The great rocks hid the group under the cottonwood from his eyes. But he knew that Dan and Red were somewhere in the Rojo canyon, and he shouted again and again, his joyous call ringing and echoing far and wide.

"Say, Dan! Red! I've struck it!" came Kid's yell.

(Continued on page 27.)

## HE KNEW!



"Mention any two great National figures, Johnnie—quick!"  
"1,500 metres and 261.1 metres, sir."



tree-trunk and the explorer counted, roughly, eighty sleeping forms.

"Go back, Sammy!" whispered Richards. "Awake the others—silently. Bring them within a hundred paces. Tell Baas Wilson to have many rifles fired and make much noise to alarm these sleepers. Many will flee, and maybe I'll catch one that we can make talk. Hurry!"

Nearly half an hour elapsed. The sentry dozed on. Richards kept a sharp look out, but the M'Bela slept soundly.

Then pandemonium broke out!

Wild and fierce yells rent the air, the jungle echoed to the crack of rifle and revolver shots.

The M'Bela sprang to their feet. This kind of attack was new to them. With wild shrieks they broke and ran, many of them leaving their weapons behind them.

Then Garry Richards had the shock of his life.

He saw Jack Scotton!

The young leader of the fighting men had scrambled to his feet. Panic had not seized him. He was not scared, but mystified.

Garry Richards leaped forward and faced Jack Scotton.

"Don't kill! I am a friend!" cried the explorer in the M'Bela dialect.

Wilson and Ambrose Scotton came hurrying forward now. The white boy stared.

These were men of his own race—men whose white faces stirred almost forgotten memories.

He dropped his hands, looked round, and saw that his M'Bela fighting men had vanished. His head then dropped in surrender.

He expected death at the hands of his captors and waited submissively for the end with all the courage of a jungle warrior. Yet the hand of death never reached out at him; his jujus—those certificates and the wedding-ring his dead and gone mother had pressed into his keeping—set the white men talking and arguing eagerly, once they had pried into the little goatskin bag he carried at his waist.

Wilson came towards him, his face alive with excitement, his hand outstretched.

"My lord," he said gravely, "we have come far to find the lost Earl of Claremont, and you are he. These documents you carry and your mother's wedding-ring prove that beyond all doubt."

The eyes of She-ack flickered; his heart began to beat wildly. His mother's words came back to him in a flood:

"Some day they will find you and take you back where you belong—"

Wilson was speaking again and She-ack listened to him gravely.

"We must break camp, return to the coast, and take ship to England without delay."

"England?" echoed She-ack.

Wilson smiled.

"That is the country to which you belong. There you will be sent to a great school. You will forget that you are a warrior of the M'Bela. From this day forth you will be known as Jack Scotton, Earl of Claremont."

*To She-ack, Earl of Claremont, this is the beginning of a new world. His heart recoils at the thought of leaving the wild life of the jungle behind. But his destiny is as unalterable as the stars. In this far-away England he will go to school; he will make friends; he will make enemies. Already the evil mind of Ambrose Scotton, the uncle who never thought to see him alive, is plotting, scheming to dispossess the young cannibal of the title which is his birthright. In next week's chapters of this epic story you will see She-ack, the World's Wildest Boy, at Britain's Poshest School.*

## BILL PLAYED FOR THE BOOKIES!

(Continued from page 20.)

to the agreement—I only wanted to get my hands on proof of their crookedness."

"Why didn't you come straight away to us? It would have been the easiest course," Mr. Deane said gently.

"I know, sir," Bill's frank eyes met the manager's challengingly. "But not the best course. There was a spy in the camp, you see, sir. Creech! If I'd come to you and blown the gaff, the gang would have been warned, would have escaped, and the racket would have gone on."

The superintendent nodded slowly. Mr. Deane pursed his lips.

"It might have been worth it but for this robbery, Randall," the manager said. "A fraction harder blow and poor Capel would have been dead."

"I didn't know he was going to be attacked, sir. My only instructions were to take the bag and carry it to the car. You can see that on the paper they gave me."

"Take the bag from whom, Randall?" the super asked.

"From that fellow they call Domino. He was under the stand, waiting around, with a steward's badge on. When I took the bag I'd no idea he'd downed poor Mr. Capel."

"And when you got to the car?"

"Steinberg was in it, and Gleve. They were all right for a bit. It was when they got to the house they turned on me. They seemed afraid of me and gagged me, putting me in a straight jacket in that room where Mac and Jack found me. In some way they must have got word that—"

"They did," Jack sprang forward eagerly. "Creech found your letter to Mr. Deane and opened it. He dashed to the telephone and rang up Steinberg. I know, because he got me to get the number."

Mac Renfrew confirmed Jack's words.

"Is that all right, then, sir?" Jack went on. "Are you quite satisfied now—about Bill?"

"All right, my boy!" exclaimed Mr. Deane warmly. "I should think it is. It would have been worth losing a score of matches to rout out this nest of scoundrels. And don't worry about your brother being ordered off," he added, smiling. "I'll see that a private report goes to the proper quarter, without delay."

It was a happy trio who later came out of the Rovers' office and hailed a taxi.

"We thought Bill was playing for the bookies," Jack said happily, "and all the while he was playing with them. He beat them all in the end, didn't he, Mac?"

Mac grinned in his slow way as he swung into the cab beside them.

"Ay," he said. "Bill beat 'em down and I beat 'em up!"

It was the only joke he'd ever been known to make!

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## THE OUTLAWED THREE

(Continued from page 10.)

"Kid" yelled Red. "This way—goldam my boots!"

There was a trampling of running feet, and Kid came in sight.

"I've struck it!" he yelled, breathless, his eyes dancing. "Say, you guys, look! I'll tell all Arizona old Sam wasn't dreaming—or, if he was, his dream's come true! I've struck it, and struck it rich!"

Dan and Red rushed to meet him. They blinked at the shining nugget in his hand.

"Gold!" panted Red.

"Don't I keep on telling you I've struck it?" grinned Kid. "Say, I reckon old Sam will smile a few when he gives this the once-over! I guess—"

He broke off, and stared at the marshal of Bullwhacker. Hall's eyes were blazing at the nugget in his hand. "Say, what you got him fixed up that a-way for?"

Dan explained.

"Forget it!" grinned the Kid. "I'll tell you—"

He checked himself. "I guess I ain't chewing the rag for that lobo-wolf to hear—nope! It sure ain't no thanks to him that I'm still alive, old-timer! But I guess I'm still kicking, and you can let that lobo-wolf beat it!"

Dan Oak went back to the horse. With a slash of his knife, he cut the cords that bound the marshal's hands, and threw off the lasso.

"Beat it, you!" snapped Dan. "I reckon you'll never be nearer to going up the flume, marshal, than you've been to-day; and I'll tell you your best guess is to ride clear of Sam Oak's land and of our bunch! Beat it!"

Dan struck the marshal's horse a sharp blow on the flank, and the horse jumped and shied, and broke into a gallop. Once Hall looked back, and the Kid, with a grin, waved the gleaming nugget at him in farewell.

With eager faces, the boys examined the nugget. It was success—success after all these years! Fortune had favoured them at last!

"And I guess Bill Hall helped some, though he never meant, and ain't wise to it!" grinned Kid. "He put me on to it by pitching me into the fall of the Rojo! Say, you 'uns, I guess we want to beat it for the ranch, pronto!"

The three started for home, swinging down the rocky canyon with rapid strides. As they came out of the canyon, down the steep slopes of the Mesa, Dan shaded his eyes with his hand and stared across the plain stretching at the foot of the hills. Far in the distance, a spot on the plain, lay the Rojo ranch. But nearer at hand was a moving speck on the plain, tiny in the distance, but clearly visible in the sunlight—a horseman riding hard.

Dan's eyes gleamed.

"That's Hall—and he ain't heading for Bullwhacker! He's heading for the ranch! He knows we've struck gold, and I guess his game is to put it across Sam before old Sam knows!"

"Put it on!" snapped Dan.

They raced down the rugged hillside. But far ahead of them, heading for the ranch, the marshal of Bullwhacker was riding like the wind.

Marshal Hall is riding hell-for-leather for the Rojo Ranch. If he can get old Sam Oak's signature to a deed selling his land, the villainous marshal will become the owner of the gold mine Kid has discovered. It's a gamble for a fortune—with the dice heavily loaded against the three young punchers. The finish of the race is vividly told in next week's thrilling chapters of this live Western. WHO WINS?

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THEY'D FOUND A GOLD-MINE—And they defended it against roaring guns and flying lead!



**H**ARDFIST HALL, marshal of Bullwhacker, rode down the bank of the Rio Rojo at a clattering gallop. He swung his horse in at the open gateway of the Rojo Ranch and pulled up the sweating bronco in front of the veranda.

Old Sam Oak, the ranch-owner, sat up in his rocker and stared at him. He could see that Bill Hall had ridden hard. His horse was lathered with foam. His hard, black-bearded face was red and clotted with perspiration under his stetson hat. Old Sam noted, too, that the pistol-holder at the marshal's belt was empty. Bill Hall always packed a gun, but he had no gun now. The rancher's tanned face wrinkled in a grin. It looked to him as if the bully of Bullwhacker had been hitting trouble.

Bill Hall did not, for the moment, pay any attention to the old rancher. As he pulled in the black bronco his keen eyes swept back the way he had come—over the barren, sun-baked plain, dotted with sage brush, towards the slopes of the Mesa Mountains. Far away, on the rocky hillside, he picked out three moving specks. His eyes gleamed as he fixed on them. But the three pursuers on foot were too far off to trouble him; on his bronco he had beaten them easily to the ranch.

He slipped from the saddle, threw his reins over a post, and strode up to the ranch. The crazy old wooden veranda creaked under his heavy boots as he strode on it. Old Sam did not rise from his rocker, but he gave the marshal of Bullwhacker a nod.

"I guess you been burning the wind, raarshal!" said the old rancher, with a grin. "Where'd you lose your gun? Been biting off more trouble than you could chew?"

Bill Hall stood looking down at him with knitted brows. Old Sam did not know that it was with Dan, Kid, and Red, the rancher's three nephews, that the marshal had found trouble up in the Mesa. And Hardfist did not intend him to know.

"I guess I ran into the Jadson gang in the hills," he answered. "I sure had to light out, as there was the whole bunch of them."

He dropped into a rocker, facing the old rancher.

"All alone?" he asked casually.

"Yep. Dan and Kid and Red are up in the Mesa."

"Prospecting again?" asked the marshal, with a curt laugh. "You still figuring that you'll find gold on your land up in the Mesa, Sam?"

Old Sam did not answer. His fixed belief that there was gold on his ranch was a stand-

ing joke in Tontine County, Arizona. His three nephews had been hunting for it almost ever since they could walk. Every day that they could be spared from work on the ranch they went up in the Mesa, and every time they went old Sam hoped to hear on their return that they had struck pay-dirt. But they had never yet brought him that news, and he little knew that they were now on their way to tell him they had at last found the mine.

"I guess," said Hall, "that old Abe Oak, your father, was dreaming when he figured that he picked nuggets out of the head-waters of the Rojo forty years ago."

"Mebbe!" grunted Sam, shrugging his shoulders. "And mebbe that's why you're so set on buying my land, marshal!"

"Your land runs with mine for miles along the Rojo," said Hall. "I guess I want to round off my ranch, old-timer. I'm getting more cows, and I want more room. It's poor feed here, but there's plenty of water, and that's what I want. I've offered you a thousand dollars—"

"Keep it!" broke in old Sam.

"I want that land," continued Bill Hall, unheeding the interruption. "I've a big herd coming down from Tombstone way, and this ain't the old days, when a rancher had the run of the open country for his herds. I got to have the Rojo land, and if you'll name a reasonable figure, I'll go up to it."

Old Sam shook his head.

"Doggone you, you obstinate old longhorn!" burst out the marshal of Bullwhacker. "You're getting plumb old, Sam Oak, and you got nothing to leave the boys, except a barren ranch, a bunch of brones, and a tale of a gold-mine that's been lost for forty years. I guess they'd do better with a few thousand dollars each when the time comes."

Old Sam sat up.

"A few thousand—each?" he repeated. "How'd that come out of the thousand you been offering me?"

"Waal, since you wouldn't take my offer, I guess I'll go up to your figure, if you make it reasonable!" rapped the marshal. "I'm getting on to big business in beef and I've got to have the room for my herds. I'll put up six thousand dollars for the Rojo!"

The old rancher gave a whistle of surprise. Six thousand dollars was a large sum—two or three times as much as the Rojo ranch was worth, considered as ranch-land. Certainly there was the chance of discovering a gold-mine—but it seemed a very slim chance.

"Think of the boys!" urged Hall. "How long they been rooting up in the canyons and

arroyos in the Mesa after that gold-mine of yourn? Have they ever struck an ounce of the yellow yet?"

"Nope!" said old Sam. "But the gold's there, marshal! I'll tell a man! My pop took gold out of the Rojo up in the Mesa when I was a kid, an' it's still there!"

"Aw, can it!" said Bill Hall. "You're keeping your nephews wasting their lives on this patch of desert, jest because of that dream of yours about striking gold in the Mesa. They'd do better getting a job riding with a ranch outfit at Bullwhacker, or working in the stamp-mills over at Mule-Pack. I tell you, Sam Oak, they're sticking it jest to humour you, and you're wasting their time, when they ought to be starting in life."

Old Sam winced.

"Six thousand dollars would give them a start," said the marshal. "I guess you ain't going to live for ever, Sam Oak, and you got to think of them."

The old rancher sat silent, thinking. It was evident that Bill Hall's new offer had moved him. He did not need the marshal to tell him to think of his nephews—all his thoughts were for them.

Hall watched him impatiently. He, too, was thinking of Sam's nephews—those three specks on the hillside, coming nearer. This was his last chance—if he did not get the Rojo ranch before Dan, Kid, and Red brought in the news of their strike in the Mesa, his game was up. Minutes were precious now, but he didn't want to make the old rancher suspicious by a show of eagerness.

Old Sam spoke at last.

"I guess you ain't fooling me any, Bill Hall," he said slowly. "Mebbe you want the land for your cows, like you say, but I guess you're banking on hitting pay-dirt in the Mesa. You been after my land for years, and that was the reason. Bit I'm sure getting old, and the boys ain't had no luck—and—" He paused. It was a wrench to him. But he went on again evenly. "I guess they would figure that I was plumb loco to refuse six thousand dollars for the ranch. I got to think of them!"

"It's a trade?" breathed the marshal.

"It's a trade!" said Sam Oak.

Bill Hall's eyes glittered. He rose from his chair.

"Saddle up and beat it to Bullwhacker with me," he said briskly. "I guess we'll put it through right now. I've got the greenbacks in my office at Bullwhacker, Sam, and you can sign the papers there, with Lawyer Hook to see that it's a square deal."

"You said it!" said old Sam. He suppressed a sigh and stood up. He was parting with his life's dream, but it was for the sake of his nephews, who had stood by him through thick and thin, through hard work and hard times.

Slowly he followed the marshal down from the veranda and went to the corral for his horse. Hardfist's eyes turned to the distant hillside and the three specks showing clear in the sunlight. They were nearer now. Toy-like in the distance, he could see that they were running. He breathed hard. Did they suspect that he had beaten them to the ranch to make a last effort to wring the land from old Sam, before they could make known their discovery? It looked like it by the way they ran and scrambled down the rough hillside in the broiling Arizona sun.

To the marshal's intense relief old Sam did not even glance towards the Mesa. He did not expect the boys back till sundown, some hours distant yet. And the old rancher was deep in painful thought. He was going to part at last, but it was a bitter wrench to him.

Hull watched him, hardly able to control his impatience, as Sam saddled and bridled a grey bronco. But without a glance towards the Mesa the old rancher mounted and rode out of the gateway with the marshal of Bullwhacker. It would not have mattered then; he would not have seen Dan, Kid, and Red—they were down on the plain, and were hidden by the sage-brush. Bill Hall knew that they were running for the ranch, and he dreaded every moment to hear shouting voices ringing over the plain.

If they got in with the news that they had struck a rich gold-mine, Sam would not sign. But only Hall knew of that discovered mine, and he was certainly not going to speak. Once old Sam had signed the papers at Bullwhacker they could tell him as soon as they liked that gold had been struck in the Mesa! But if Sam got the news before the papers were signed—"Hump it, old-timer!" muttered the marshal.

He spurred the black bronco. Old Sam gave his grey a touch of the quirt and rode after him. With a clatter of hoofs they rode down the sun-baked trail to the cow town.

**W**ELL ahead of the others, Dan Oak panted up to the rancho. Big, rugged Dan was hard as hickory, but that race down from the Mesa had told on him. Streaming with perspiration and panting for breath, he almost reeled across the yard.

"Sam, old-timer!" panted Dan. His voice came in a harsh croak, as he staggered up the steps of the old wooden veranda.

But Sam Oak was not there.

Dan leaned on the corral bar, panting for breath, waiting for his comrades to reach him. He had feared it, and now he knew it. From the high slopes of the Mesa he had seen Bill Hall riding at top speed for the ranch, and he knew what the marshal's game was. He did not need telling that!

Had the marshal succeeded at long last in putting it across Sam, and getting hold of the Rojo? Had the secret mine been discovered, only for the benefit of the hard-fisted marshal of Bullwhacker? Dan ground his teeth at the thought.

Kid and Red came panting up.

"Sam here?" panted Kid.

"Gone!" muttered Dan.

Tom Redway pushed back his stetson and wiped his steaming brow. His face was crimson with exertion and heat.

"Sam wouldn't sell!" he panted. "Dan, old hoss, Sam's refused to sell every time that doggoned marshal has put it up to him—"

Kid cut him short.

"I guess Hardfist knowed we'd hit the ranch as fast as we could, and he sure got Sam away pronto. They ain't near Bullwhacker yet, and we're sure rounding them up, if hoss-flesh can do it."

"You said it!" breathed Dan.

There were half a dozen broncos in the corral, and they were all good beasts. They picked out the best three from the bunch, saddled and bridled them in double quick time, and rode out down the stony trail to Bullwhacker at a wild gallop.

The trail, wild and rugged, wound along the base of the hills. Ten miles away lay the cow town of Bullwhacker, out of sight across

the plain. Hardfist Hall and old Sam had a start—how long a start the riders did not know. But they knew that Hardfist would push on as fast as he could get old Sam to ride.

The miles flew under the thudding hoofs. Half-way to the cow town the trail turned from the hills and ran through rolling prairie, dotted with herds of cattle. Bullwhacker was in sight in the far distance now, its corrugated iron roofs glimmering in the blazing sun. Dan, rising in his stirrups, pointed with his quirt.

Far ahead, moving dots on the plain, were two horsemen, riding for the cow town. One rode a black, the other a grey bronco.

"We'll get 'em!" breathed Dan. "They'll beat us to Bullwhacker, but we'll sure horn in before they can put the deal through. Ride, fellers!"

They were riding on Bill Hall's land now. From the Rojo ranch to the cow town the marshal's land stretched mile on mile. The Hall outfit was the roughest and toughest in Arizona, and, backed by that outfit, Hardfist had most of Tontine County in the hollow of his hand. Old Sam's nephews gave no thought to the range-riders in the distance, as they spurred fiercely on the trail, but it would have helped them if they had.

They were still two or three miles out of the town when a horseman pushed out of a clump of timber, and halted in the trail ahead of them. It was Mustang Dave, right-hand man of the marshal of Bullwhacker. The sun glinted on the levelled barrel of a six-gun in his hand.

"Hold your hosses!" he bawled.

Dan and Kid and Red glared at him without pulling rein. They were not taking orders from one of Hall's men at a time like this.

Crack! The roughneck's six-gun roared as they dashed on, and the bullet jerked the stetson on Dan's head.

"Hold on, there!" roared the marshal's man. "By the great horned toad, you get yours if you don't pull in."

The boys dragged on their reins. They packed no guns, and Mustang had them covered with the smoking Colt, and he would shoot to kill next time. Dan, as he pulled in with his reins bunched in his left hand, slid his right towards the coiled lasso that hung at his saddle-horn. But he did not touch it. Mustang's hawk-like face was grim over the smoking revolver, and he meant all that he said.

"You pizen polecat!" Dan choked with rage. "What you stopping us on the trail for? Is this a hold-up?"

"Hold-up nothing!" snapped Mustang. "Git off'n them cayuses, and git off quick, or you'll hear this gun talk!"

With gritted teeth the three boys dismounted. Mustang watched them like a cat.

"The marshal's fixed this up!" breathed Dan. "He met up with you on the trail, and left you to watch for us. Look here, Mustang,

we got to hit Bullwhacker! My Uncle, Sam Oak—"

"Quit chewing the rag!" drawled Mustang. "I guess there's a suspicion that all the critters in old Sam Oak's corral don't belong to the Rojo ranch. I guess I got to give them cayuses the once-over, and I'm sure taking them, and you, to the Hall ranch. Walk them hosses along in front of me, and don't forget that I'm keeping a finger on the trigger."

"You pesky piecan!" roared Kid. "What are you trying to do—make out that we're hoss thieves?"

"If them hosses don't belong to the Hall outfit, I guess you can ride away on 'em as soon as you want—after the outfit's given them the once-over!" answered Mustang insolently.

"Look here—" began Red hotly.

"Aw, pack it up, Red!" said Dan wearily. "Ain't you wise to it that Bill Hall's fixed this up to keep us back while he gets through with old Sam at Bullwhacker?"

Kid and Red glared at him. If they walked the horses to the Hall ranch, miles across the prairie, there was no hope of reaching Bullwhacker before sundown afterwards.

"Look here, Dan—" Red and Kid yelled together.

"Pack it up, I'm telling you, and hoof it!" snapped Dan, and he set the example, leading his horse away from the trail.

Red and Kid breathed fury. But they were used to following Dan's lead, and they followed him, leading their horses. Mustang Dave, grinning, set his bronco in motion, and rode at a walking pace after them. The gun was still in his hand, but it rested now on his saddle-bow. He had the three where he wanted them. That six-gun was ready to lift if they made an attempt to mount or to scatter.

Dan's horse suddenly stumbled, its foot in a gopher-hole. He dragged at the reins and lashed furiously with the quirt.

"Aw, come up, you critter!" he yelled.

Red and Kid stared at him in blank amazement. Dan was the last fellow in the wide world to ill-use a horse, but it seemed as if his temper had broken out of all control. He dragged and lashed; the horse squealed and reared, striving to break loose.

"Dan, you gone loco?" shouted Red angrily. "Let up on the critter! I'm telling you, let up!"

The almost frantic horse reared and plunged at the end of the dragging reins. Prancing wildly, it bumped into Mustang Dave's bronco, and the gunman, with an oath, pulled his mount aside. As he did so the quirt in Dan's hand lashed savagely—not at his horse, but at the roughneck! It smashed across his tough face, and Mustang reeled from the saddle to crash to the earth.

Kid gave a yell of glee.

He was on Mustang Dave with the spring of a panther before the gunman had fairly hit the earth. The revolver was kicked from the roughneck's grip, and Kid's knee dropped



"Sign, you obstinate old fool!" gritted the marshal. Under the threat of that levelled gun, the old ranch-owner had no choice but to obey!



into his ribs, crushing him to the earth and driving the wind out of him.

Mustang panted and struggled under Kid's gripping knee. Dan reached him, the quirt reversed in his hand. His eyes gleamed like cold steel as he brought down the heavy metal butt on Mustang's head. Crash it came, and crash again, and Mustang Dave, with a groan, sank, stunned and senseless, in the grass.

Dan panted. "I guess that bulldozer won't stop us none," he snapped. He picked up Dave's fallen six-gun and shoved it into his hip pocket. "Mount, you guys, and ride!"

And, leaving the roughneck senseless in the grass, the three punchers remounted their broncos and rode madly for Bullwhacker.

**H**ARDFIST HALL dipped the pen in the ink and handed it to old Sam. There was a smile on his hard face and a glimmer of deep satisfaction in his eyes. They were seated in the marshal's office on Main Street, Bullwhacker, and through the open doorway came the red glare of sunset and the sounds of the cow town. Every now and then a shadow darkened the doorway as some puncher rode by up Main Street.

"Sign, old-timer!" said Hall genially. He could feel genial now. The Rojo riders would be too late now—Mustang Dave would see to that. Old Sam had suspected nothing when the marshal stopped on the trail across the ranchland to speak a few words to his man there.

A little man, in a rusty black coat and derby hat, sat in the office—a man with thin, foxy features and cunning, deep-set eyes. Lawyer Hook was the only man in Bullwhacker who wore store clothes and a derby hat. He was watching old Sam's wrinkled, troubled face under the brim of the tattered stetson as Hall handed the old rancher the pen. Slowly Sam took the pen in his horny hand.

But he hesitated. "Come, Mr. Oak," said Lawyer Hook, "I've read the papers to you—they are drawn up fair and square and regular! You've only to sign, and receive 6,000 dollars from the marshal."

Something in the tone of the lawyer's voice struck a warning note in old Sam. He hesitated with the pen in his fist.

"There's something mighty queer about all this," he said. "For two pins I wouldn't—"

He broke off with a gasp. Hall, thinking that the ranch was slipping out of his grasp, resorted to stern measures. His gun flashed from its holster and was viciously jabbed into the old man's ribs.

"Sign, you obstinate old fool!" he grated. "Sign, or I'll fill you full of lead!"

Old Sam was helpless. There was nothing that he could do under the threat of that gun except sign. Slowly he lowered the pen to the paper. To lose his ranch this way galled the old man, but better that than lose his life.

The pen touched paper—but that long pause had dried the ink, and the pen scratched without leaving a mark!

Hardfist uttered an impatient oath, grabbed the pen from the old man's hand, and dipped it in the ink again. He handed it back to Sam Oak.

"Put it through!" he grunted, and again the gun prodded into the old man's ribs.

Sam put pen to paper again. As he did so there was a crash of hoofs, a clatter of bridles and stirrups outside. Shadows blotted the bright sunshine at the open doorway.

Old Sam jerked back the pen, staring round in amazement. Hardfist Hall looked up, with a yell of rage, while Lawyer Hook, squealing with terror, backed into the farther corner of the room. Right in at the doorway, trampling on the pine planks of the floor, rode a horse-man—Dan Oak from the Rojo Ranch! Dan dragged in the sweating bronc just short of the

marshal's desk, foam from the dilated nostrils spattering over the papers old Sam had been about to sign. The timber building rattled and shook to the clattering hoofs.

Behind Dan, outside the doorway, Kid and Red reined in.

Dan took in the whole scene at a glance. "You've not signed! Uncle, tell me you've not signed!" he roared.

"Nope! I'm jest signing—"

"You doggoned young roughneck!" roared Hardfist, mad with rage. "Beat it out of my office! You figure you can ride a bronc into a town marshal's office like you was a puncher shooting up the Yellow Dog Saloon!"

"You pizen thief!" roared Dan. "I'll say we're on time to put paid to you! Sam, we've struck it! That pizen lobo-wolf knowed—he sure saw the nugget in Kid's hand up in the Mesa—"

Sam Oak sprang to his feet.

"You've struck gold in the Mesa?" he yelled. "And then some!" shouted Kid. "Look! Give that the once-over, old Sam! Ain't that a sight for sore eyes?"

Kid dragged the nugget from his pocket. It gleamed and glistened in the sun as he waved it in the doorway.

Old Sam's eyes almost started from his tanned face.

"Gold!" he stuttered. "Gold! And you knew about it, Hall!"

Hardfist Hall pulled himself together. His rage was so intense that he trembled from head to foot. Mustang had failed to stop them—they were there on time—how he did not know; but he wasn't giving up yet.

Again the gun was prodded viciously into the old man's ribs. Hall's hate-filled eyes swept the others.

"An' you keep off!" he warned the others. "At the first move from any of you, he gets it!" Another jab with the gun. "Sign, darn you, sign!"

His glare swung to the old man, and in that fraction of time Dan acted.

His hand slid into his hip-pocket, where he had packed Mustang's gun. His eyes blazed as he whipped it out. Before the marshal knew what was coming, before he even knew that the boy was armed, the revolver roared, and the marshal's gun, shot from his hand, clattered on the floor.

**O**LD Sam Oak stood staring dazedly. Hardfist Hall staggered back with a scream of rage and pain, clapping his numbed right hand with his left. A stream of blood ran through his fingers—a strip of skin had gone with the gun that had been shot from his grip. Dan, still sitting the panting horse, covered the enraged marshal with the smoking revolver.

"Stick 'em up, Bill Hall!" he grated. "You doggoned coyote, stick 'em up before I let daylight through you."

## FRIDAY IS "The PILOT" DAY— THE DAY OF THE WEEK!

The marshal of Bullwhacker gave Dan one look, a look of concentrated hate and rage, then his hands went up over his stetson.

"By hokey!" The marshal's voice came harsh and hoarse, broken with fury. "You figure you'll get by with this—holding up a town marshal in his own office! I'm telling you, my men will string you up on the first cottonwood—"

"Your deputies ain't here, marshal, and I guess you ain't getting word to them," said Dan coolly. "Keep your hands up, or you get yours, sudden! Red, look that door!"

"Doggone you!" breathed the marshal. "You got the drop now, but I guess you won't get far when you step out of this office!"

"You pizen skunk!" said old Sam. "What right you got to stop them, or me, either?"

Hardfist gave a scoffing laugh.

"I've sure offered you a square deal, and the offer's still open," he said. "Six thousand dollars for the Rojo ranch. Sign, you old fool, sign! And tell that bonehead to pack his gun, or you won't ride out of Bullwhacker alive!"

"You ain't got word to your bulldozers yet, Bill Hall!" said Dan. "And if you sing out it will sure be the last yelp you'll ever make! Keep your paws up, you piccan, and pack up your bully-beef trap!"

"I guess—"

"Pack it up, I'm telling you!" rapped Dan. "Now, you lawyer-wolf, you tear up them papers into little pieces—pronto!"

"I—I protest!" gasped Lawyer Hook.

"Give him a wallop, Kid, and set him going!"

"It's O.K. with me!" grinned Kid. With a swing of his sinewy arm, he jerked the Bullwhacker lawyer to the marshal's desk.

Crack! Lawyer Hook's head struck the desk, in Kid's lefty grip, and his yell rang through the marshal's office. Heedless of his employer's rage, he grabbed up the legal papers and tore them into strips. The marshal breathed fury as the deed of conveyance was scattered in small pieces on his office floor.

Dan smiled grimly.

"You're sure a good little man, Lawyer Hook, and know how to do as you're told!" he said. "Say, boys, I guess we'll be quitting. You ready to ride, old Sam?"

Old Sam Oak gave him a troubled look. The marshal of Bullwhacker was helpless at the moment, but the instant the six-gun no longer threatened him he would fulfill the threats he had made.

"Boys," said old Sam, "I guess I'd rather sign away the ranch and the gold-mine, too, than see you shot up on the street of Bullwhacker! I guess—"

"Guess again, old-timer!" grinned Dan. "Kid, stick that lawyer-wolf with his back to the marshal's. Red, hook that lariat off my saddle and hog-tie them rubes back to back."

"You said it!" chuckled Red.

He uncoiled the lasso. Lawyer Hook swung unresisting in Kid's grasp, but the marshal, mad with rage, seemed about to take the risk of the levelled gun. He knew now that he was not to have a chance of calling on his gunmen before the Rojo punchers rode out of Bullwhacker. He made a movement, and Dan's eyes glittered over the gun.

"Better not!" he said quietly.

And the marshal realised that he had better not. Shaking with rage, he stood back to back with the lawyer, while Red uncoiled the lasso and proceeded to bind them, coiling the rope round and round them, and knotting it hard and fast. In a couple of minutes neither of them could stir a limb. Old Sam grinned on at the scene. He burst into a chuckle as Red jerked off the marshal's neck scarf, and bound it tightly round the two heads, covering the mouths and securely gagging them. Dan nodded with a grin.

"I guess that puts paid to you, Bill Hall!" he remarked. "We'll be far enough out of Bullwhacker by the time you get word to your gang. Beat it, boys!"

Red unlocked the door. Old Sam, grinning, waved farewell to the speechless, enraged marshal, and went out to his bronco. Dan, Kid, and Red followed him. Red slipped the key into the outside of the door, turned it, and then threw it across the street. Then they rode out of the cow town, out on the prairie, at a gallop, heading for the Rojo ranch.

How long the marshal of Bullwhacker and his lawyer remained tied up in the office, struggling with ropes and gags, before they were found and released, the Rojo riders did not know—and did not care! It was long enough to give them plenty of time to ride clear, and under the last glimmer of the sunset they galloped up to the old rancho in a joyous bunch.

**The Rojo outfit have the whip-hand over Hardfist Hall—but the rascally marshal is not yet giving up his fight for old Sam's gold mine. In next week's story, he makes his last, desperate master-stroke—and it succeeds! Ruthlessly, relentlessly, Hal has planned his vengeance; the vengeance that is to make Kid, Red, and Dan notorious as "The OUTLAWED THREE!"**

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# The PILOT<sup>2D</sup>

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Every Friday.  
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The GREAT NEW PAPER FOR READERS OF ALL AGES





RUTHLESSLY, RELENTLESSLY, THE RASCALLY MARSHAL OF BULLWHACKER PLANS HIS VENGEANCE . . . THE VENGEANCE THAT IS TO MAKE KID, RED, AND DAN NOTORIOUS AS—

# The Outlawed THREE



DAN OAK stirred uneasily in his sleep, and awakened.

The hot Arizona day had been followed by a windy night. The ancient timbers of the crazy, old Rojo ranch-house creaked and rattled in the wind that whistled down from the Mesa Mountains. Dan had been sleeping uneasily, his dreams haunted by the hard, black-bearded face of Hardfist Hall, the marshal of Bullwhacker.

He sat up in his blankets and peered through the darkness about him. Kid Byrne and Tom Redway, his fellow cowpunchers on the ranch, were sleeping soundly. The room had a window opening on to the veranda, and a creaking old shutter swung loose in the wind, letting in a glimmer of starlight. Dan could make out the plump face of Red—and the handsome features of Kid, which wore a smile as he slept. He was dreaming, perhaps, of the rich gold-mine which the boys had found two days ago on their uncle's ranch, up in the mesa—and perhaps he was dreaming, too, of the way the punchers had put paid to the rascally schemes of Marshal Hall, who had tried to get that gold-mine for himself.

For years old Sam Oak, the owner of the Rojo rancho, had talked of a lost mine on his land, and for years he and his three nephews had searched for it. Hardfist Hall had searched, too!

It had been through a fight between Hall and the Kid that the Kid, thrown headlong into the Rio Rojo waterfall, had discovered the lost mine in a cave under the fall itself, and Hall, mad with rage, had tried to force old Sam to sign a deed selling his ranch at the point of the gun. But Dan, Kid, and Red had put paid to that scheme, and the last they had seen of Hall had been when, earlier that night, they had left him bound and helpless in his own office, swearing vengeance.

Dan sat up in bed and listened. Something had awakened him, and he knew instinctively it was not the wind.

There was a stirring in the adjoining room, where old Sam Oak, the cowboys' uncle, slept. Dan could hear the old rancher moving; and a sound on the wall told him that Sam was taking down his shotgun from its hook. Then another sound came—a creak from the crazy wooden veranda in front of the rancho. Dan caught his breath. It was a footstep!

A glimmer of light came under the door; Sam had lighted a candle in the next room. Evidently the old rancher had also heard the creeping footsteps outside, and had taken the alarm.

Dan slipped from his bed. He hurried on a few clothes, stepped to the door, and opened it. In the candle-light he saw old Sam, half-dressed, loading the shotgun, with a grim expression on his wrinkled, tanned visage. The old rancher gave a start as he saw the boy in the doorway.

"I heard some guy on the veranda, Sam!" said Big Dan, in a low voice. "I guess it's Marshal Hall—he's been mighty sore since we handed him in his office at Bullwhacker. But—"

Sam Oak shook his grizzled head.

"It wouldn't be the marshal," he answered. "What'd the marshal be doin', creeping round like a hoss-thief in the dark?"

**GOLD was the lure that turned the law-abiding marshal of a Western State into as big a crook as any he had ever hunted.**

There was another loud creak from the dry, old timber of the veranda. This time it came from the wooden steps that led down to the yard. Old Sam grinned.

"I guess that guy's spotted the candle-light, Dan, and he's beating it! Mebbe it's the Jadson gang after the hosses—they're sure the durndest hoss-thieves in Tontine County. Open the door, boy."

The door from Sam's room gave on to the veranda. Dan lifted down the bar and threw it open.

Old Sam, with the shotgun in his horny hands, stepped out, the planks creaking under his feet. Dan followed him, taking a six-gun in his hand.

Outside, the windy night was clear. Bright stars glittered down from a dark blue sky. Away to the north the high ridges of the Mesa Mountains barred the starlit plain. Down from the mesa, like a silvery streak, ran the murmuring waters of the River Rojo. Old Sam moved to the rail, and stood staring across the yard to the corral. There were half a dozen broncos in the corral; but they were not stirring, and he could see that the corral bar was still in place.

Dan joined his uncle at the veranda rail. His keen eyes swept over the starlit yard. Where the starshine fell, all was clear to the view; but there were black shadows under the corral wall, and the shadow of the fence lay in elongated black bars. No one was to be seen—but anyone might have been skulking in cover of the black shadows.

"I guess I'll give the yard the once-over," said Dan.

He went down the steps, leaving old Sam watching, with his shotgun resting on the rail. The yard ran twice a lasso's length to the fence, and Dan disappeared from his uncle's sight among the shadows. With the Colt gripped in his hand, Dan hunted along the fence.

He caught his breath suddenly. A glint of starlight under the shadowy fence gleamed on his eyes. Between two of the posts a six-gun was pushed through from outside.

Dan could not see the hand that held it—but the glint of the barrel flashed on his sight. It was not aimed towards him; it was likely that the man outside the fence did not know that he was there, as he came quietly along. It was

aimed at the veranda where old Sam stood clear in the starlight at the rail.

Dan gave a cry and leaped forward. Even as he moved, the shot rang.

*Crack!* He was so close to the gun, that he felt the wind of the bullet as it passed. The sudden roar of the revolver, in the silence of the night, was almost like thunder. It was followed by a loud, terrible cry from the veranda and a heavy fall.

Dan spun round, his face white. He heard the clatter of the ranch-owner's shotgun as it fell—he heard the crash of old Sam's falling body on the planks.

For an instant Dan was spellbound. Then he raced back across the yard to the house. Whether another shot might strike him down as he ran, he neither knew nor cared; all his thought was for old Sam. But no shot came; no sound from the man with the six-gun, till a sudden clatter of horse's hoofs rang through the night. The murderer was fleeing.

But Dan gave him no thought. He leaped on the veranda and ran to the old rancher.

"Kid! Red!" he shouted.

The shot had awakened his comrades; he heard their voices within as he threw himself on his knees beside old Sam, his face white with horror. Crumpled on the planks, the old rancher lay, his tanned face colourless, his eyes closed, his shirt soaked crimson from the blood that ran from the wound, where the treacherous bullet had struck him fairly in the chest. Dead or dying, the old rancher lay still, while the man who had shot him down rode away into the night.

**"SHOT!"**  
"Old Sam!"

Kid and Red stammered the words as they reached the spot where Dan knelt by the old rancher.

"Who—" panted Kid.

Dan choked.

"I saw the gun—through the fence—too late! I never saw the doggoned lobo-wolf that pulled trigger! Help me into the house with him! He's not dead—not dead—he can't be dead! Help me."

Old Sam uttered no sound, not the faintest moan, as the horrified punchers raised him and carried him back into his room.

They laid him on his bed, a still, ghastly figure. Red was speechless, aghast. Kid, set



"Stop him, boys!" roared the leader of the hold-up gang. "Let him have it!" The Kid's answer was to urge his horse to even greater speed, and he thundered down on the rustlers like a whirlwind. His best friend lay dying, and nobody was going to stop him fetching a doctor!

and grim, held the candle, while Dan, forcing himself to be cool, examined the old rancher's wound.

It was a terrible one, and the bullet was buried deep. All that Dan could do was to staunch the flow of blood and bind up the wound. There was a haunting terror in his heart that it was useless—that the kindly old man had been struck to death—a death that had been deliberately planned! But he detected a faint flutter of life.

"There's a chance—a chance!" he muttered. "We got to get the doctor to him. Doc Baker—" He groaned aloud. There was no doctor nearer than Doc Baker, at Parkville—thirty miles away across the plains. A ride of thirty miles—and old Sam lying in the shadow of death!

Kid shut his teeth hard. "We got to do it, Dan! You and Red stay with him—I'll ride for the doctor."

Dan nodded. The slim, light Kid was the best rider of the three. Kid Byrne could do it in the quickest time.

"Get to it, Kid!" he breathed. "Say, if that guy's still hanging about—" muttered Red.

"He's gone!" said Dan. "I heard his hoss—he lit out pronto after firing the shot! He came here to get old Sam—and he sure got him—and he beat it after! Get to it, Kid."

Caring little for the chance that the assassin might still be lurking in the shadows, Kid Byrne ran down into the yard and across to the corral.

Swiftly he picked out the fastest pony in the bunch, saddled and bridled the bronc and led him out at the gate. In hardly more than a minute the thudding of hoofs told Dan and Red, as they watched by the unconscious old rancher, that Kid was gone.

Kid could ride! He had carried off the prize at the rodeo at Parkville, riding against the punchers from all the surrounding ranches. But never, even at the rodeo, had Kid ridden as he rode now.

With his left hand hard on the reins, he whipped with the quirt in his right. Very rarely did the Kid use a quirt on horseflesh—but he used it now! His mount, swift and wiry as any pony in Arizona, seemed hardly to touch the earth with its lashing hoofs.

In an hour he was riding through a timber belt, and he knew the distance he had covered was already fifteen miles from Rojo. His horse was sweating even in the sharp wind—but the Kid did not let the bronc slacken.

Under the spreading branches of great cottonwood-trees that shut out the stars, the trail ran deep and dusky. But the Kid rode as hard as before.

He knew the Tontine trails like a book. It was yet an hour to dawn. He would reach Parkville soon after sun-up, and root Doc Baker out of his bed. Fast through the shadows he rode, then—

There was a clattering of hoofs, a jingling of bridles and spurs. Horsemen loomed in the

deep shadows on the timber trail. Kid Byrne stared round him. Who were these riders of the night? Not punchers from the ranches—

"Halt!" came a hoarse shout from the gloom. A rope whizzed in the air, and the Kid instinctively ducked to his pony's mane. So that the lasso slid over the back of his neck.

He gritted his teeth with rage. Time was precious—there was not a split second to spare, if old Sam's life was to be saved, and he had run into a gang of rustlers! A flash came from the darkness, the roar of a six-gun, and a bullet crashed among branches.

"Halt, you!" came the hoarse roar. Horsemen were riding round him—dim shadows looming. A hand clutched at his reins—the Kid brought down his quirt, hard and heavy and savage, and there was a yell of agony as a wrist cracked under the blow.

Another shot—missing wide in the dark. Teeth set, the Kid rode on madly! Rustlers—horse-thieves—if they got his horse from him, old Sam was a dead man!

He glimpsed a burly horseman, a bulldog jaw and a scarred face under a stetson! It was Jad Jadson—boss of the Jadson gang, the night-riders of Tontine County. Even in the dark the Kid knew Jad's scarred face and bulldog jaw. And it flashed into his mind that it could not have been the Jadsons who had shot up old Sam at Rojo—it was not possible, as he had ridden into the gang in the timber, fifteen miles from the ranch!

"Get him!" came Jad's savage shout. A horseman was riding on either side of the Kid—Jad Jadson on one side, one of his gang on the other.

But the Kid at that moment would have fought every horse-thief from the Rio Colorado to the Mexican frontier, rather than have yielded. A revolver almost touched him, in the grip of Jad Jadson, but he lashed out with his quirt, full across the scarred face, and Jad reeled in his saddle. The shot burned the Kid's shirt as the six-gun exploded, but it missed and pitched him—and the rider on his left pitched him—long from his horse, thudding to the ground, with Jad's bullet through his body.

The Kid galloped on. He was through! Jad, yelling with rage, was pumping bullets after him from his gun, but the Kid bent low in the saddle as he galloped, and the darkness and the shadows saved him.

Shot on shot, ringing from the darkness—thudding hoofs and yelling voices! But he was through the Jadson gang—he had left them behind. With whip and spur he drove his horse on; and the firing died away, the shouting and trampling sank in the silence of the night. The Kid had beaten them all!

He panted as he dashed out of the timber trail out on to the open prairie again.

The stars were the open prairie again. Up from the east, from the mountains of New Mexico, came a glimmer of the rising sun.

Caked with sweat and dust, his horse lathered under him, the Kid rode—his face set, his eyes fixed.

The sun was up—the day gleamed down on the streets of Parkville, as the weary, dusty rider clattered into the town. He drew rein at long last at the door of Doc Baker's shack—threw himself staggering from the saddle and struck ringing blow after blow on the door with the heavy butt of his quirt.

DAN turned from the truckle-bed, from watching the wax-like face of the old rancher, still as death, as Red touched his arm. Red, the youngest of the three Rojo cowboys, plump and cheery, generally had a cheery grin on his ruddy face, a merry gleam in his eyes. But he was pale now, pale and worn.

He had brought Dan a can of steaming-hot coffee from the kitchen. Dan shook his head; then, to humour Red, he took the coffee and drank it, and he had to admit that it did him good.

The sun was up over the Rio Rojo, over the plains, and the Mesa Mountains. That morning the comrades had planned to start for the mesa, taking old Sam, to show him the spot where gold had been struck—to lay plans for the digging. But now they were not thinking of the gold that lay hidden in the river-cave up in the mesa. They would have given all the gold in the world to see old Sam on his feet again. Kid had been gone for hours—but it was thirty miles to ride to Parkville—thirty miles for the town doctor to drive back in his buckboard. They could not expect to see him yet.

Old Sam still lived! He lay like a log, senseless, scarcely breathing. But he breathed—he lived! There was hope in the boys' hearts—a faint hope.

Dan set the can on the table and looked at Red. The latter had gone to the door and was staring out into the morning sunlight. Dan's ears caught the sound of distant hoofs.

"It's the marshal from Bullwhacker, Dan!" said Red over his shoulder. "And he's got his bunch with him."

"I guess I'll be glad to see Hardfist Hall for once!" said Dan quietly. "It's up to him as town marshal to bring in the lobo wolf that shot up old Sam last night."

Red looked at him. "You don't figure—" he began, and stopped.

"It was in my mind," admitted Dan. "I guess I thought of Bill Hall first shot! But I—"

"I wouldn't put it past him!" muttered Red. "You said it! But I don't rightly see how it'd pay him, shooting up old Sam! He couldn't get the ranch that-a-way," said Dan slowly. "And Sam had enemies among the horse thieves of the section. Anyhow, Bill Hall's head of the law in Bullwhacker, and we got to put it up to him."

Red nodded, and turned to the doorway again.



From the direction of Bullwhacker came a bunch of riders—headed by black-bearded Marshal Hall. With him came his two cronies, Mustang Dave and Jake Sanders, and three other men—roughnecks of Bullwhacker who were sworn in as deputies. It could not have been the shooting of old Sam that brought the marshal there—unless, indeed, he had a guilty knowledge of it—for the news of the shooting was not yet out. But the marshal's posse looked as if they were riding on grim business. Every man in the bunch packed a Colt and had a rifle in the leather scabbard buckled to his saddle.

They came splashing through the ford of the Rojo and in at the gateway, clattering in the yard. Red and Dan stepped out on the veranda—and Dan's hand was near his hip-pocket where he packed a gun. They looked down at Hardist Hall's grim, bearded face as the Bullwhacker posse clattered to a halt.

"What you want here, Hall?" rapped Dan. "I guess you don't want to ask," said the marshal of Bullwhacker grimly. "Yesterday you assaulted me in my office on Main Street and hog-tied me along with my lawyer, Hook. You reckon you're getting by with that?"

Dan's eyes gleamed. "You got no kick coming, marshal!" he said evenly. "You had my uncle, old Sam, there, and you was aiming to make him sign away his land with a six-gun looking him in the eye. I guess no court in Tontine County is going to worry us any for roping you in."

His eyes were sharply on the marshal. Black suspicion was running in his mind. He could not help figuring that the marshal's explanation was only an excuse—that he had other reasons for coming to Rojo. Did he know of the shooting of old Sam—was that why he was there? But he could not know, unless it was by his hand, or his order, that the deadly shot had been fired!

"Where's Sam Oak?" barked the marshal. "I guess I ain't chewing the rag with you! Tell old Sam to show up."

"Old Sam lies in his bed, marshal, with a bullet through him!" said Dan quietly. "Step in and see him—but step soft! I guess I got to put you wise what happened here last night—it's your job to run down the durned skunk that shot up my uncle."

Hardist gave a start. "Old Sam shot up! Dead?" he exclaimed. He looked startled and surprised; but to Dan and Red, watching him, it did not seem that the surprise was genuine. Did he know already?

"He ain't dead!" said Dan quietly. "But he's sure near it—terrible near it—and he ain't opened his eyes, nor spoke, since he was hit. Step in soft, marshal."

The marshal of Bullwhacker dismounted and came up the steps. At a sign from him Mustang Dave and Sanders followed. The other three deputies sat in their saddles, exchanging glances and muttered words. They, at all events, were startled by the tragic news that had met them at the Rojo Ranch.

Bill Hall tramped in heavily. Mustang and Sanders remained at the doorway. The marshal of Bullwhacker stood looking down on old Sam. His hard face wore a strange expression that it was difficult to read. Some trace of compunction, perhaps, showed there for a moment. For a long minute he stood staring at the waxen face of the unconscious man. His brow knitted as he turned to the boys.

"That's murder!" he rapped. "You said it, marshal!" muttered Red. "And it's sure your business to rope in the skunk that did it."

"I'll say I'm the man to do it, too!" announced Hardist Hall. "I sure was plumb mad with old Sam, along of his being such an obstinate old geek—but he was as good a man as any guy in Tontine County, and I'll tell all Arizona that the galoot that shot him up will swing at the end of a rope! If I don't get him inside the calaboose at Bullwhacker inside of twenty-four hours my name ain't Bill Hall!"

"Good for you, marshal!" said Dan; and for once he felt cordial towards the bullying marshal. Suspicion faded to the back of his mind. Hall spoke with grim intensity. Could he have spoken thus if his had been the hand that pulled the trigger?

"I mean it, every word!" said Hall. "Now, you young guys, you put me wise what

happened here last night. I ain't saying yet that you're under suspicion!"

Dan started as if an adder had stung him. Red stared open-eyed, open-mouthed, at the marshal.

"Under suspicion—us!" panted Dan Oak. "You're plumb loco, Bill Hall! You dare to say any guy would figure that we—we—" He choked with rage.

"Clamp it down!" said the marshal coolly. "I ain't said so yet! But I guess you got to tell a straight story. According to what you was telling yesterday, gold's been struck up in the mesa—"

"That's true—" "On old Sam's land!" said the marshal. "You allowed that it was a big strike—a rich strike! Waal, gold's been struck on old Sam's land—and the same night old Sam is shot up here in this lonely place with only you boys around. Who gets the Rojo land and the gold on it if old Sam passes in his checks? Answer me that!"

Dan trembled with rage. "Liar!" he panted. "You dare—" "I guess I want to know! I'm marshal of Bullwhacker—I run the law in this section! Give me your yarn of what's happened."

Dan Oak controlled his rage. The marshal was within his rights there. Forcing himself to speak calmly, Dan told of what had happened. Bill Hall listened quietly—Sanders and Mustang, at the doorway, exchanging significant glances. The other three deputies had come up on the veranda, and were standing bunched outside, listening.

"That the lot?" asked Hall, when Dan had finished.

"Sure!" "You was out in the yard, with the other two boys fast asleep in bed, when old Sam was shot from the yard?"

"From outside the yard through the fence, marshal."

"That's your say-so!" scoffed Hardist. "You packing a gun? I guess you had a gun in my office yesterday, Dan Oak." His eyes gleamed. "You had a gun last night—"

"Sure!" "Show it up!"

Dan hesitated. He suspected a trick to disarm him. There was a swift sign from the marshal, and Mustang and Sanders pulled their revolvers and covered the two boys.

"Hands up!" said the marshal of Bullwhacker grimly. "I guess I may have to arrest you on a charge of murder—Hands up! Shoot if they kick, you uns!"

"You bet, marshal!" said Mustang. Dan's hand was on the six-gun in his hip-pocket. But he did not draw it. Setting his teeth, he lifted his hands above his head, and Red followed his example.

"KEEP 'em up!" said Hardist Hall grimly.

He stepped towards Dan Oak and jerked the six-gun from his hip-pocket. Stepping to the door, he examined it in the sunlight.

"Colt .45," he said, "and one shot fired! You allow that old Sam Oak was shot up by a Colt—through the fence last night? I'll say I've found the Colt that shot him up, and I'll say it was in your fist, you young coyote. One cartridge burned—"

"Sure thing, marshal," said Mustang, with a nod.

Dan's eyes glittered at Hall. "You lying hound!" he breathed. "I guess you know when that cartridge was fired. I shot the gun from your hand yesterday, when you were holding up old Sam in your office!"

"You can tell a judge and jury that!" said Hardist, with a shrug of his burly shoulders. "I ain't saying you're guilty, though I'll say the evidence is pretty strong. You got a fair trial coming to you."

"Trial?" said Dan, between his teeth. "I guess I'm taking you into custody here and now, in suspicion of having shot Sam Oak last night," said Hardist coolly, "and this Colt is evidence agin you. Whether you was playing a lone hand, or whether your side-kickers was in the game with you, has got to be proved! But I'll tell all Arizona I figure that I've got the guy that shot up Sam Oak, and the gun that he did it with."

Red gave Dan a look of hopeless horror. With their uncle's life hanging in the balance they were to stand a charge of murder! Hall called to his men outside.

"Bring a rope hyer, you uns! I guess these guys have got to be hog-tied, to keep them safe."

One of the deputies tramped back to the horses in the yard, for a lasso. Dan and Red stood with their hands up, under cover of the levelled revolvers held by Mustang and Sanders. Red's brain was in a whirl. Big, rugged Dan was cool—he had to be cool. Old Sam lay there on his bed—perhaps his death-bed.

"Bill Hall"—Dan mastered himself and spoke quietly—"you can't get away with this. You're a hard man, Bill Hall; but you can't take us away, with the old man lying there wanting our care. You can't, Bill Hall!"

"I guess old Sam will be looked to," said the marshal carelessly. "I got you, and I'm keeping you! Where's the other guy?"

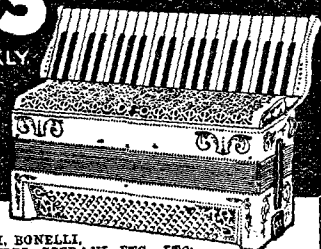
Dan did not answer that question, and as Red looked at him, he made a swift sign to be silent. Kid, at least, was out of reach of the bully of Bullwhacker.

Minute by minute Dan had been longing, praying, to see the Kid ride back with the doctor from Parksville. But now he hoped that the Kid would not ride in till the marshal's posse was gone. Two of the trio were powerless prisoners; but with the Kid free, old Sam's life might yet be saved. Hall eyed him threateningly, and made a motion with the Colt.

(Continued on page 84.)

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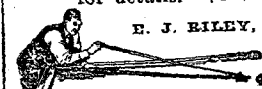
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## THE OUTLAWED THREE!

(Continued from page 81.)

"Where's Kid Byrne?" he rapped.  
"Find out, you pesky polecats!" said Dan, between his teeth.

"You, Euchre!" Hall snarled to the man who came in with the lasso. "Hog-tie them two young geeks, and make 'em safe, and then the rest of you give the shebang the once-over. I guess we got to rope in the whole outfit while we're about it."

Dan trembled from head to foot with rage.  
"What's to come to old Sam, with us taken away?" he muttered.

"What'd you care, when it was you shot him up?" sneered Hall.

Dan gave a roar of rage and sprang at him. He forgot the levelled guns as he hurled himself at the marshal of Bullwhacker. Mustang pulled trigger, but so swift was Dan's leap that the bullet missed him by a foot, as he fastened his grasp on the marshal's throat, and bore him backwards to the floor.

Hall crashed on the pinewood planks. Dan, over him, with blazing eyes, gripped his throat. The marshal choked and gurgled.

Red was springing to his comrade's aid; but Euchre and another roughneck grasped him and bore him to the floor, planting a sinewy knee on him. Euchre grinned down at the struggling cowboy.

"Forget it!" he grinned. And Red, struggling and resisting vainly, was twisted over, and his arms were bound with the lasso.

Mustang and Sanders, and the other two deputies, were rushing to the marshal's aid. But he did not need them. Choking and gasping under Dan's fierce grip, Bill Hall struck with the Colt in his hand, and the heavy barrel crashed on Dan's forehead.

He sagged over, and rolled off the marshal. Almost, stunned by the crashing blow, Dan hardly stirred, as he was grasped, and a length of lasso bound round him, securing his arms to his sides.

Hall staggered to his feet.  
His hand went to his throat, and he gasped for breath, his face red with fury.

"Take 'em away!" he panted. "Take them out, and stick them on their cayuses, to ride into Bullwhacker. Hustle!"

Dan and Red, bound and helpless, were dragged out of the doorway, clattering down the veranda steps, to the yard. Mustang and

Euchre led a couple of ponies from the corral and saddled them. The two boys were slammed into the saddles, and their feet tied together under the brones. Euchre remained guarding them in the yard, while the rest joined the marshal in searching the rancho.

But the search only made Bill Hall sure of what he knew already—that Kid Byrne was not there. It was clear that he had planned to cinch all three of the Rojo boys, and his rage was intense; as he strode out of the rancho and stood scanning the plain in the glare of the sunlight.

Dan's eyes, as he sat bound on the brone, followed the marshal's savage, searching stare. He was thankful that the Kid was not in sight yet. If only Hall was gone before the Kid returned!

Hall strode up to him with a black brow.  
"Your goldarned young geek!" he hissed through his gritted teeth. "I'm telling you, I want the whole bunch! Where's Kid Byrne?"

Dan shut his lips.  
"Has he gone into the mesa after the gold-mine?" snarled Hall.

"I guess you can ride there and look for him, if you want!" answered Dan. "You'll get nothing from me, you skunk!"

"You putting me wise where to find the Kid?" demanded Hall.

"Nope!" answered Dan briefly.  
He reeled on the brone as Hardfist's clenched hand struck him in the face. Only the rope that tied him kept him from falling out of the saddle.

"That's one more on the score, Hardfist Hall, when my turn comes!" breathed Dan.

Hardfist turned from him with an oath. Once more his keen eyes swept the banks of the Rojo, and the undulating plain, as far as the rocky slopes of the mesa. But there was no one to be seen. The Kid, wherever he was, was far away. Hall breathed hard with savage disappointment. One of the Rojo boys free spelled danger to his schemes—danger to himself! But the Kid was not there!

He stepped to his black bronco at last, and mounted. Dan's heart beat faster. The marshal and his posse were about to ride—with the two prisoners. If only the coast was left clear for the Kid when he came back with Doc Baker—Dan asked no more than that. But that much was not to be granted him. Bill Hall, as he gathered up his reins, rapped an order to his men.

"You, Sanders, Mustang, Euchre! Stop here and watch out for Kid Byrne! I guess he'll hit home soon. Watch out for him and get him—dead or alive! He's charged with

murder, along with his side-pardners—and if you let him slip, I guess I'll talk to you a few!"

"Well sure get him, marshal, if he hits Rojo to-day!" answered Jake Sanders.

"Watch out you do!" snapped the marshal. And he rode out at the gate, followed by two of the deputies leading the prisoners' horses, and hit the trail for Bullwhacker.

Dan and Red looked back as they went. The three roughnecks remained in the veranda, their horses bitched in the yard. And Kid would come riding back with the doctor from Parksville—suspecting nothing! Dan wrenched madly at his bonds. But the tough cowhide rope held him fast, and he gave it up, with a groan of misery.

Not a word was spoken during that ride to the cow town. Hardfist rode ahead, close behind him came his two men with the prisoners. The sun was high in the heavens when they clattered into Main Street, Bullwhacker, and halted before the timber calaboose. A curious crowd gathered to stare, as the prisoners were lifted from the brones to be taken into the cow town gaol. A score of voices called to the marshal, asking questions. Bill Hall's answer was curt:

"Murder! Old Sam Oak's been shot up at Rojo—and the boys did it, for his gold-mine!"

"It's a lie!" roared Dan. "And Hall knows it better'n any other man in Arizona! You men of Bullwhacker, I'm telling you, I believe it was Hall himself who shot-up old Sam, and—"

"That's enough from you!" snarled Hall, as he grasped Dan and hurled him headlong in at the door of the calaboose. Red was dragged in after him.

There was a roar of excitement in Main Street. The news that old Sam Oak had been shot-up, and that his nephews were accused of the crime, ran like wildfire through the cow town.

Dan and Red, flung into a cell, with the pinewood door barred on them, listened with haggard faces to the roar that rose and echoed round the calaboose. Louder and louder it grew, as the crowd thickened, and two terrible words came, again and again, clearly through the roar:

"Lynch them!"

Only Kid Byrne is left to rescue Dan and Red from their plight, and for him Hardfist Hall has laid a trap which cannot fail! What is to be the end of it all—will the marshal triumph at last? You must read next week's thrilling story of "THE OUTLAWED THREE!"



Colleges ride the modern football side—a Cup-tie team taking sun-ray treatment to keep them fit.

## All the Soccer League Forecasts for Saturday, October 19th, 1935

(Home teams are given first. Those in capital letters are selected by our experts to win; both teams in non-capitals signifies a forecasted draw.)

ENGLISH LEAGUE.	
DIVISION I.	
ASTON VILLA	v. West Brom. Albion
BOLTON W.	v. Liverpool
BRENTFORD	v. Stoke City
DERBY COUNTY	v. Blackburn Rovers
EVERTON	v. Chelsea
HUDDERSFIELD	v. Grimsby Town
Middlesbrough	v. Leeds United
Preston M.C.	v. Arsenal
Sheffield N.E.	v. MANCHESTER C.
SHEFFIELD W.	v. Birmingham
Wolverhampton W.	v. SUNDERLAND

DIVISION II.	
BARNESLEY	v. Bury
Bradford C.	v. Swansea T.

DIVISION III (NORTHERN).	
ACCINGTON S.	v. Hartlepool U.
BARROW	v. Darlington
CHESTER	v. Rotherham U.
Chesterfield	v. Tranmere R.
CREWE A.	v. Carlisle U.
Lincoln C.	v. Wrexham
NEW BRIGHTON	v. Gateshead
Rochdale	v. OLDHAM A.
SOUTHPORT	v. Mansfield T.
STOCKPORT CO.	v. WALSLEY
York C.	v. HALIFAX T.

DIVISION III (SOUTHERN).	
BOURNEMOUTH	v. Exeter C.
BRIGHTON R.	v. Watford
Cardiff C.	v. COVENTRY C.
Clapton Orient	v. Bristol C.
CRYSTAL PAL.	v. Aldershot

GILLINGHAM	v. Newport Co.
LUTON TOWN	v. Brighton
Northampton	v. Torquay U.
NOTTS COUNTY	v. Queen's Park R.
READING	v. Swindon T.
SOUTHEND U.	v. Millwall

### SCOTTISH LEAGUE.

DIVISION I.	
ABERDEEN	v. Queen's Park
ALBION ROVERS	v. Queen of the South
AYR UNITED	v. Partick Thistle
CELTIC	v. Airdrie
Dunfermline A.	v. MOTHERWELL
HAMILTON A.	v. Kilmarnock
Hibernians	v. Dundee
RANGERS	v. Hearts
ST. JOHNSTONE	v. Clyde
Third Lanark	v. Ayrroath

DIVISION II.	
ALLOA	v. Brechin City
Dumbarton	v. Forfar Ath.
DUNDEE U.	v. East Fife
FALKIRK	v. Edinburgh C.
King's Park	v. Cowdenbeath
Montrose	v. East Stirling
Morton	v. St. Mirren
RAITH ROVERS	v. Leith Ath.
ST. BERNARDS	v. Stenhousemuir

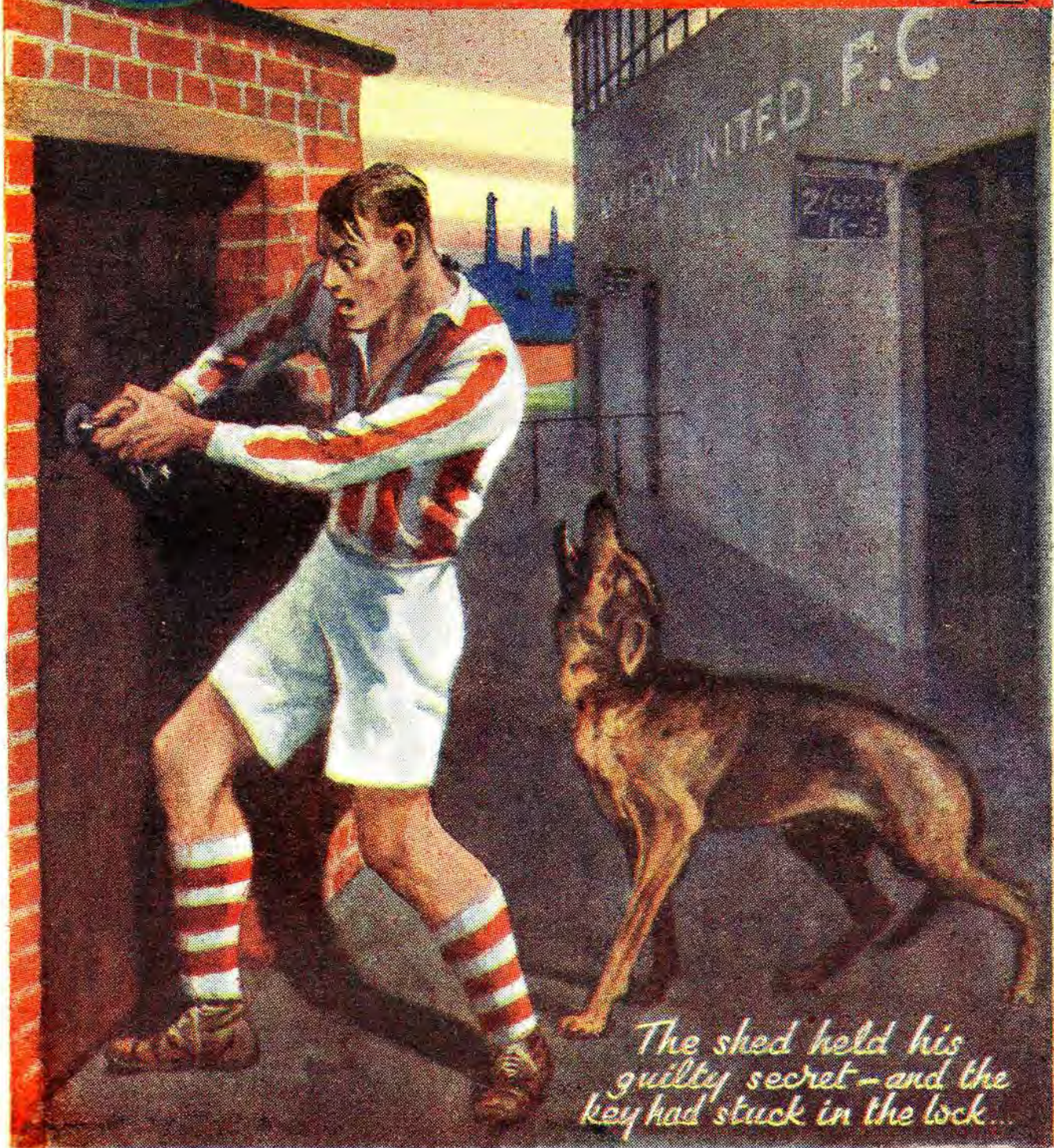


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# *The* PILOT <sup>2D</sup>



*The shed held his  
guilty secret - and the  
key had stuck in the lock...*



They were three hard-riding, clean-hitting young cowboys—but they fell foul of the crookedest marshal in the West, and he forced them to become . . .

# The Outlawed THREE

"LYNCH 'em!"

That deep-throated roar echoed in Dan Oak's ears as he stood looking out of the little barred window of Bullwhacker's gaol-house, his rugged face dark and set. Tom Redway sat on the edge of a bunk, idly swinging his legs.

"Are they coming, Dan?" he muttered.

Big Dan Oak shook his head. In front of the calaboose was a yard, fenced off from the street. Outside the fence, a crowd had gathered, not a dozen yards from the little building. On a bench in the yard sat Yuba Bill, the gaoler, with a shotgun across his knees. He chewed tobacco and ejected streams of tobacco juice, unmoved by the clamour.

"Not yet, Red!" answered Dan, over his shoulder. "And I guess there won't be any lynching unless the marshal gives the word. Marshal Hall has got this town in his pocket."

He tried to keep his voice even, but the anger within him made it sound rasping. At thought of the marshal of Bullwhacker, his fists clenched. If only he had given the ruffian all he had asked for when he had had the man in his power only a few hours before!

That had been when, together with Kid and Red, his companions at the Rojo Ranch, owned by the cowboys' uncle, old Sam Oak, they had burst in on the bullying marshal just as he was forcing Sam to sell him the ranch at the point of the gun.

Dan gritted his teeth. Ever since Kid had found a goldmine, up in the mesa territory on old Sam's ranges, Hall had been after the ranch. He had tried to trick Sam into selling it, then, when that failed, he had planned to take it by force. Last night, a gunman—whom the cowboys shrewdly suspected to be either Hall or one of his men—had skulked up to the ranch and shot down the old ranch-owner in cold blood. While Kid Byrne had set off on a thirty-miles dash to the nearest doctor, Dan and Red had stayed behind to tend the wounded man. And then Marshal Hall had struck!

Riding at the head of his posse, he had come to the ranch and arrested Dan and Red for the attempted murder. And now old Sam lay a-dying, while Hall's men waited for Kid's return to the ranch, and Dan and Red raged in their cell at the gaol-house, listening to the roar of the lynch-mad crowd.

"I—I guess I don't care a heap, if only Kid keeps clear, and looks after old Sam and pulls him through!" muttered Red.

"You said it!" agreed Dan.

A big cowman, in a stetson hat and goatskin chaps, stood by the gate and brandished a six-gun in the air.

"Lynch 'em!" he roared. "You hear me, you galoots? You know what them young firebugs have done—shot up old Sam Oak, their own uncle, at the Rojo Ranch! Have 'em out and string 'em up!"

A roar came back from twenty throats, and there was a surge of the rough crowd at the gate.

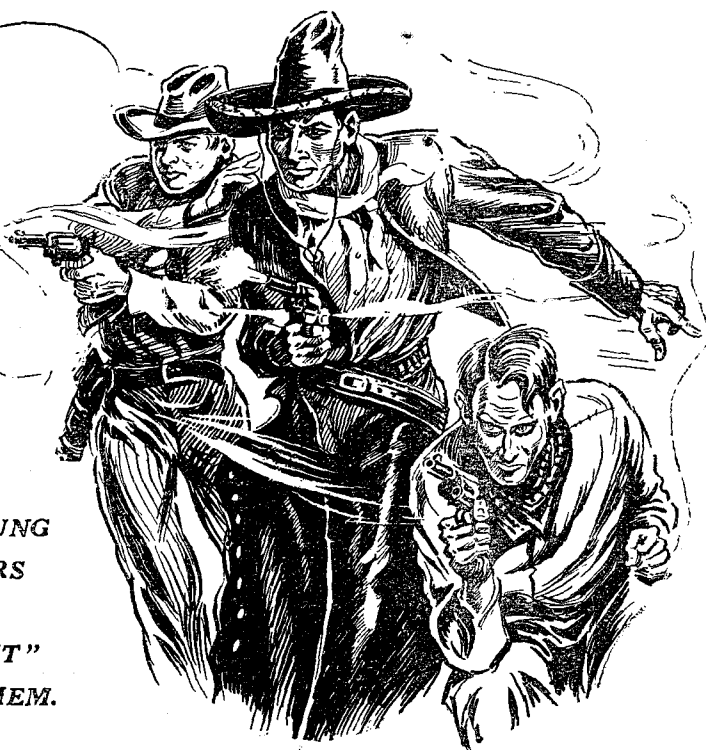
"Open this gate, Yuba!" shouted the big puncher.

Yuba Bill squirted tobacco-juice and shook his head.

"Forget it, old-timer!" he answered. "I guess there ain't going to be no lynching here. Them young firebugs is gaoled here to be taken over to Parksville for trial, and I'll say that the marshal won't stand for no lynching!"

A deep growl from the mob outside

## THREE YOUNG 'PUNCHERS WITH THE "WEST" AGAINST THEM.



answered. There was a clatter of hoofs along the street, and the crowd made way for a horseman who rode up. It was Hardfist Hall, marshal of Bullwhacker.

He pulled in at the gate, and Yuba rose at once from the bench to admit him. Hardfist rode into the yard, and there was a surge of the mob after him.

The tall, black-bearded marshal of Bullwhacker swung round at them. His hand dropped on the butt of a six-gun at his belt.

"Beat it, you 'uns!" he rapped tersely. "Shut the gate, Yuba!"

Unwillingly, growling, and grumbling, the Bullwhacker crowd backed out again. Yuba shut and bolted the gate. The marshal threw his reins over a post and strode to the door of the timber building. Yuba produced a long, iron key and unlocked the door.

The gaol at Bullwhacker was a rough-and-ready building. It had four strong walls of pinewood, a roof of corrugated iron, a plank floor, and only one cell; the gaoler's cabin standing separate. The door that was now flung open, gave admittance to the cell where Dan Oak and Tom Redway were imprisoned.

As the sunlight streamed in, and the tall figure of the marshal appeared in the doorway, Dan turned from the window, and Red jumped up from the bunk. Both the boys clenched their hands, their eyes gleaming at Hardfist Hall. But if they had thought for a second of making a desperate dash to escape, they forgot it the next moment. Behind the marshal, Yuba had his shotgun ready—and outside the gate the mob murmured and surged. Hardfist smiled grimly.

"I guess you're safer inside!" he said. "If them guys get a hold on you, you'll go up so quick to the branch of a cottonwood it sure will make your heads swim."

Dan and Red made no answer. They eyed the marshal of Bullwhacker warily as he stepped into the cell. Yuba, at a sign from him, shut the door, and then went back to his bench, where he resumed chewing tobacco and watching the crowd outside the gate.

Hardfist Hall stood leaning on the door, regarding the two boys with an intent gaze under his knitted, black brows. They returned his steady gaze defiantly.

"I guess I've come here to talk turkey!" said Hardfist, breaking the silence suddenly. "I got you two cinched; and I guess it won't

be long before Kid Byrne is juggled along with you. I've left three men at the Rojo Ranch to watch for him, and they'll sure get him. The three of you are booked to be taken to Parksville, to stand trial for the murder of old Sam Oak!"

"You doggoned coyote!" said Dan. "You figure that any jury in Arizona will listen to that? Old Sam is our uncle, and—"

"And you stand to get the ranch when he passes in his checks!" sneered Hardfist. "And from what I hear, gold has been found on the Rojo Ranch at last. I'll say it's a clear case."

"Old Sam ain't dead yet, neither!" said Red. "He's sure hard hit by that skulking coyote that shot him up in the dark last night, but he ain't dead, by long chalks, and if the doctor gets to him, I guess he'll pull him through."

Hardfist laughed.

"You can forget that, Red!" said Dan Oak quietly. "That lobo-wolf don't mean the doc to get to old Sam, if he can stop it! He figures that he's got his claws on old Sam's land at last."

"Now you're shouting!" said Hardfist Hall coolly. "I tried to buy the ranch from old Sam, fair and square, and he wouldn't sell! But I'll tell all Arizona I'm getting the Rojo Ranch and the gold strike in the mesa—and that's what I've come here to talk about. One of you—I reckon it was Kid Byrne—struck gold up in the mesa—the old mine that's been lost for forty years—"

"And I guess it's likely to stay lost for another forty, Hardfist, before you get your hands on it!" said Dan.

"That's what I'm coming to!" said the marshal of Bullwhacker. "Old Sam has got his, and the ranch comes to you three boys. I guess it won't help you a whole heap when you're found guilty of shooting-up your uncle—"

"No jury would find us guilty, and you know it!" snapped Dan.

Hardfist laughed again.

"Judge Lynch's jury don't wait for a lot of evidence," he said significantly. "I guess I'll put my cards on the table. I'm holding back that mob outside. Put me wise where to lay my hands on the gold in the mesa, and I'll see you safe to Parksville to stand a fair trial. Keep your mouths shut, and I stand aside and let Judge Lynch go ahead! How long do you

reckon that mob will take to pull this calaboose down when they know that I've ridden out of town with my men to look for the Jadson gang?"

Red breathed hard.

"So that's the game?" he said.

"That's the game!" said Hardfist. "I'm going to have that mine in the mesa. Old Sam's gone—and I guess that mob outside will put paid to his three nephews. Who's going to stop me?"

Dan Oak trembled with suppressed rage.

"I've got you cinched," went on Hardfist coolly. "You better come across while you got the breath to talk! Put me wise about the goldmine, and I'll ride you safe to Parksville. Keep it close, and at sundown this very day I'll let all Bullwhacker know that I'm taking the trail of the Jadson gang—and as soon as I've ridden out of town, you know what will happen here. Take your choice. I'm telling you that's my last word!"

"You doggoned thief!" said Dan. "It was you that shot up old Sam, I'm figgering, and I'd hang on the highest cottonwood in Arizona afore I'd let you get your thieving hands on old Sam's mine."

"Me, too!" said Red.

Hardfist held up his hand.

"Listen!" he said.

From the street came a deep roar:

"Have 'em out! Lynch 'em!"

Red shivered slightly, and the marshal smiled grimly as he noted it. Dan's eyes were on the marshal, almost wolfishly. If he only had a weapon! He clenched his hands convulsively.

"You got a few hours to chew it over!" said Hardfist Hall. "Make up your minds by sundown, or—"

He broke off as Big Dan, with flaming eyes, made a spring. Instantly he whipped the six-gun from his belt.

But Red grasped his comrade by the arm and dragged him back in time.

Hardfist's eyes were gleaming over the lifted gun. But he lowered it, with a curt laugh, as Red dragged the enraged Dan back.

"Chew on it!" he said, and threw open the door and slouched out.

The door slammed. Yuba turned the key in the lock. The boys were left alone again.

"He's got us!" muttered Red. "He's sure got us by the short hairs, the doggoned lobo-wolf!"

"He ain't got Kid yet!" muttered Dan.

Red nodded. There was still a gleam of hope in that. In silence they listened to the deep, threatening murmur of the mob outside the calaboose.

KID BYRNE rose in his stirrups, shaded his eyes from the sun-glare with the brim of his stetson, and gazed across the barren plain. He was riding by the side of the doctor's buckboard, clattering and bumping over the rough trail. Doc Baker, in a red shirt, hat on the back of his untidy head, unshaven chin, and a pipe in the corner of his mouth, did not look much like a medical man. But he was a good doctor, and the only one for thirty miles around Bullwhacker.

Doc Baker was driving at a good speed; but, to the Kid's impatience, the buckboard seemed

to crawl at a snail's pace. Now, looking across the barren, sun-baked plain, he could see the Rojo ranch-house in the far distance—a speck against the dark mass of the Mesa Mountains.

"I guess I'll ride on, doc, and put them wise that you're coming," said the Kid.

Doc Baker nodded.

"Sure!" he assented. "And I won't be long after you, Kid. We've sure been burning the wind, and I guess Red and Dan will be surprised some to see you back so soon."

Kid gave his bronco a touch of the quirt, and dashed ahead of the buckboard.

Swiftly as the doc was driving, the clatter of the buckboard soon died away in silence behind the Kid. Weary to the bone himself, he drove on his flagging steed with unsparring hand. In a cloud of dust, he galloped on. But as he reached the Rio Rojo, and rode up the river-bank to the ranch, he was surprised to see no sign of Dan or Red.

Surely they were not sleeping; they could not be sleeping, with old Sam lying at death's door, while they waited for him to ride back with the doctor from Parksville. Yet there was no sign of them; no eager faces looking from the veranda of the rancho. As he drew nearer to the building he knew that anyone inside must hear the clatter of his horse's hoofs and know that he was coming. Yet neither Dan nor Red looked out to greet him.

Puzzled, the Kid dashed up to the ranch and pulled in his weary bronco. He slipped from the saddle, threw the reins over a post, and tramped up the steps of the veranda.

"Dan!" he called. "Red!"

There was no answer. The door of old Sam's room, opening from the veranda, stood wide, the sunlight shining in.

Kid Byrne strode in, his eyes fixed on the still figure on the bunk. There lay old Sam Oak as he had left him the night before—bandaged, white, unconscious. The old rancher had not stirred through the long hours. But where was Dan? Where was Red? Why had they left him? What had happened at the Rojo Ranch during his ride to Parksville for the doc?

The Kid caught his breath. Something had happened. Dan and Red would not have left the old rancher if they could have helped it. His thoughts ran to Hardfist Hall, the man he suspected of having fired that murderous shot in the dark.

"Dan!" the cowboy called again in a choking voice. "Red!"

But only the echo of his voice answered him. He paused a moment to look down on the old rancher, lying there so white and still. Then he turned, and as he turned a sharp command fell on his startled ears:

"Stick 'em up!"

He spun round, to face a levelled six-gun, with the face of Jake Sanders, the marshal's man, grinning over it.

Kid clenched his hands.

Sanders had stepped out of the doorway of the adjoining room, gun in hand.

"Jake Sanders!" breathed the Kid.

"You said it!" grinned Jake. "Keep 'em up! I guess I ain't honing to spill your juice, Kid Byrne; but the marshal's orders is to take you, dead or alive!"

From the doorway of the rancho kitchen two more burly figures appeared—Mustang Dave and Euchre, each with a six-gun in his hand.

Kid gritted his teeth as he realised the trap into which he had fallen. They had heard his horse, they had seen him coming, and they had backed out of sight to let him walk fairly into their hands.

Slowly the Kid raised his hands above his head. His eyes burned at the marshal's men.

"Where's Dan Oak and Red?" he muttered thickly.

"Where you'll soon see them," grinned Jake, "and that's in the gaol-house at Bullwhacker!"

"In gaol!" The Kid stared blankly. "What for?"

"You don't know a thing!" jeered Jake. "I guess there ain't much doubt that you and your pals shot up old Sam last night—"

"What!" panted the Kid, amazed.

"You're charged with murder, the whole bunch of you!" said the marshal's man. "Old Sam ain't passed in his chips yet, but I guess he ain't fur off it. The marshal got Dan and Red early, and he left us here to watch out for you, Kid Byrne, and I reckon we got you, too! You're going to Bullwhacker, tied on your cayuse, to join your two side-kicks! Keep 'em up!" he added threateningly, as the Kid made a movement.

"It's a frame-up!" said the Kid in a choking voice. "Bill Hall's hand is in this! It's the goldmine in the mesa that the doggoned coyote is after—"

"Quit chewing the rag!" said Jake curtly.

"Take him by the arms, you 'uns, and walk him out to his cayuse! I guess the marshal will be plumb glad to see him when we ride him into Bullwhacker!"

"You said it!" grinned Mustang.

Held on either side by the two roughnecks, Kid Byrne was marched out on the veranda and down the steps into the yard. Jake following behind, gun in hand. The Kid was choking with rage. Mustang and Euchre lifted him to the saddle of the bronco. They roped his hands behind his back, and roped his feet under the horse. Then Jake Sanders holstered his gun.

"I'll get the hosses from the corral—" he said. He broke off, and stared round at a sound of clattering on the trail. "Search me! That's Doc Baker's buckboard from Parksville! Say, is that where you was gone when we missed you from the ranch, Kid Byrne—to get the Doc from Parksville to old Sam?"

Mustang whistled.

"I guess the marshal ain't honing for old Sam to get no doctoring!" he muttered, and the three roughnecks exchanged significant glances.

Kid's eyes flashed.

"You doggoned polecats!" he panted. "You ain't stopping the doc from getting to old Sam—and him next door to death—"

"Shut up, you!" snarled Jake. "I guess no doc ain't wanted here, not without the marshal says so. Hold on, you 'uns—I guess we got to send that doc on the home trail afore we beat it."

With a rattle and a clatter in a cloud of dust, Doc Baker drove through the gateway and pulled up in the yard.

Doc Baker stepped down from the buckboard. He pushed back his stetson and wiped sweat and dust from his brow. Then, as his eyes took in the scene in the yard, the doc stared blankly—at Kid Byrne roped in the saddle of his bronco and the three roughnecks of Bullwhacker standing round the Kid, but eying the doc furtively.

"Say, what's this game?" asked doc. "What you got Kid Byrne hog-tied that a-way for, you guys?"

"Marshal's orders, doc!" said Jake Sanders. "Him and his two pardners is charged with shooting up old Sam Oak last night, and they're arrested—"

Doc Baker drew a long, sharp breath. For an instant his keen steel-grey eyes shot a glance at the bound Kid. The Kid almost choked.

"Doc! You wouldn't believe that!" he stammered. "You wouldn't believe that Dan or Red or me'd lift a finger agin the old man



'SN(ICE)

TO  
MEET  
YOU!

"Lucky you've  
got them whiskers,  
Bill—he thinks  
you're one of his  
pals!"



what's looked after us since we could walk—that we'd have died for—"

"Believe it!" snapped Doc Baker. "Believe nothing! Ain't you rode thirty miles to Parksville, and thirty back, to bring me to the old man? I guess that don't follow up shooting him none. Jake Sanders, you lying gopher, where'd you get that story from? You know it ain't true."

"I know they're charged with murder and booked for the gaol-house," answered Jake sullenly. "You ain't standing agin the orders of the town marshal, I reckon!"

Kid's eyes were on the doc. Doc Baker was a medical man—but in Tontine County, Arizona, any man was likely to pack a gun and to know how to use it. And well the Kid knew that the doc did pack a gun and was as swift and sudden on the draw as any puncher or roughneck in the section!

"You said murder!" said Doc slowly. "But old Sam ain't dead—Kid's brought me here to tend him—"

"I guess he's as good as gone up the flume, doc!" said Mustang. "You don't want to worry any about him."

"And just why don't I want to worry any about my patient, and me a medical man, come thirty miles to tend him?" said the doc grimly.

He glanced at the Kid again.

"I'm powerful sorry to see you fixed that way, Kid! But you can bank on it you'll come through—no jury in Arizona is going to hurt you."

"I guess I can take what's coming to me," said Kid Byrne. "So long as you tend old Sam and pull him through—"

"Leave that to me."

The doc made a stride towards the veranda steps. Jake Sanders and his associates exchanged a quick look, and jumped into his path, taking up positions one on either side of the door. The doc halted, his eyes glinting at them.

"Stand aside!" he rapped. "Are you letting me go in to my patient?"

"Not so's you'd notice it, doc!" drawled Sanders. "Your best guess is to beat it, and beat it pronto. There's your backboard—jump in and hit the horizon."

"Marshal's orders!" grunted the doc. "Why, you dirty skunk, I wouldn't let the President of the United States stand between me and my patient. Get out of my way, you!"

Jake's gun slid into his hand.

"I'd sure be sorry to burn powder on you, doc, and you the only medical man in the section," he said ominously. "But you got to beat it."

Doc Baker stood with one hand driven deep in his trousers pocket, facing the marshal's men. The Kid, bound on the bronc, looked on breathlessly. The doc was still cool, though his eyes were glittering.

"Put it plain!" said Doc Baker crisply. "You're keeping me away from my patient—that's agin the law."

Jake kept the gun at a level.

"You uns cinch him and put him in his backboard," he said. "Tie him down to the seat, and set the cayuse going! I guess he'll find his way back to Parksville soon or late. You lift a finger, doc, and—"

Bang!

The sudden roar of a six-gun interrupted the marshal's man. Jake Sanders gave a fearful yell and staggered back, the revolver falling from his hand. For a moment he staggered helplessly, then he collapsed on the ground.

The doc's left hand was still in his pocket. But in that hand was the six-gun he had fired—through the cloth. It was not the first time that Doc Baker had shot from the pocket. But the next second the gun whipped out into sight, and was aimed at Mustang and Euchre. "Stick 'em up, you!" snarled the doc.

Euchre reached for his gun. The doc fired without an instant's hesitation, and the marshal's man staggered back with a bullet in his right arm.

"You want yours, Mustang?" snapped the doc. His smoking gun looked the roughneck in the face. Mustang Dave's hands shot up above his stetson.

Doc Baker glanced down at Jake. He lay senseless. Euchre was staggering against the veranda, white as chalk, his right arm hanging helpless.



"Stand back, Doc Baker!" rapped one of the roughnecks guarding the door. "I guess Sam Oak don't need no doctor where he's going!"

They meant to make sure old Sam died so that the gold-mine on his ranch could be seized by their rascally boss!

"I guess," said Doc Baker, "that no guy in Arizona is keeping a medical man away from his patient! Nope."

"Doc!" gasped the Kid breathlessly. "Doc, you're sure a white man! I'll say you're a whole team, and a cross dog under the wagon! I'll tell a man!"

"You, Mustang! Let that boy loose!" rapped the doc.

"Agin the marshal's orders—" stuttered Mustang. But at the gleam in the doc's eyes over the gun, he jumped to obey.

Kid Byrne was cast loose. He slid from the bronc, panting with relief. He was free again—free to help his comrades.

"Hog-tie that guy!" said the doc, and the Kid, with a grin, took the rope and bound Mustang to the fence. The marshal's man did not resist.

Doc Baker slid his gun back into his pocket.

"You'll keep a medical man away from his patient will you?" he said grimly. "I guess not—I sure guess not! Kid, I reckon your best guess is to beat it while the going's good."

"You said it, doc! But—old Sam—" faltered the Kid.

"I reckon you can leave him to me! I'll sure get him moved to my house at Parksville, as soon as I can fix it!" said Doc Baker. "He ain't safe here with the marshal's bulldozers cavorting around. I got three patients now instead of one." The doc grinned. "But I'll sure see to old Sam first."

Doc Baker tramped up the veranda steps and went into old Sam's room. Euchre sagged down against the wall, groaning. Jake Sanders had not stirred. Kid Byrne followed the doc and stood waiting at the doorway. He was free again, and he was thinking of his comrades in the gaol-house at Bullwhacker. But he had to know about old Sam.

It seemed an age to him before the doc came back to the door. His face was grave.

"Don't say he's gone up?" muttered Kid huskily.

"Gone up nothing! I guess he's hard hit—plumb hard, but he's as tough as hickory. He ain't going to get on his feet agin for months to come, but if I get him to Parksville, where I can tend him, he's going to pull through. And that's what I'm going to do, Kid!"

Kid Byrne grasped his hand. "Pull him through, doc! That's all I ask! That's all that Dan and Red would ask! And, look here, doc, there ain't a lot of dollars at the Rojo Ranch, as I guess you know, but—"

"Aw, can it!" snarled the doc. "Who's talking about dollars, you young gink?"

"I guess, doc, that you get more work than pay," said Kid, with a grin. "And I sure know you don't squeal none. But I'm telling you, we've struck it rich on old Sam's land, and if we ain't got dollars, we've got what's as good. Look at that, doc, and take it back to Parksville with you."

Doc Baker stared at the gleaming nugget that the Kid jerked from his pocket—the nugget he had found in the river-cave up in the mesa.

"Carry me home to die!" ejaculated the doc. "You've struck gold on the Rojo Ranch at last!"

"You said it—and I guess that's what Hardfist Hall is after," said the Kid. "And there's a heap more where I raised that nugget, doc, and I want you to take it to pay for old Sam. I'm telling you it's the richest strike in Tontine County, and we're sure raising big money when we get through with Hardfist."

He forced the nugget into doc's hand. Doc Baker nodded and slipped it into his pocket.

The Kid stepped into the room and gave the old rancher, still unconscious, a last look. Then he went back to the yard. He was free to think of his comrades now. He picked up the gun that Jake Sanders had dropped. The doc was already bending over Jake, giving him the attention he sorely needed. He was too busy to give the Kid more than a brief nod as he mounted and rode away on a fresh horse picked from the corral. The Kid was weary—wearied to the bone—but he was hardly conscious of it. Old Sam was left in good hands; that was a weight off his mind. His thoughts were concentrated now on his comrades, in the grip of Hardfist Hall. He was going to help them out—if he could. With a hard, set face, the Kid galloped away on the trail to Bullwhacker.

**H**ARDFIST HALL leaped to his feet with a gasp of astonishment. The marshal of Bullwhacker could scarcely believe his eyes as he saw Kid riding up Main Street. From the open doorway of his office the marshal watched the rider in amazement. He had left three men at the Rojo to watch and wait for the Kid, and he had had no doubt that they would get him when he came back to the ranch. And here he was, riding up Main Street in Bullwhacker—riding into his enemy's hands!

From the direction of the calaboose, at a distance down the street, a deep murmur came. The crowd was still there, and increasing in numbers, as the afternoon waned. But it was to the marshal's office that Kid Byrne was riding, and he pulled rein outside. Sitting in the saddle, he met the marshal's grim stare. And, as other eyes fell on him,

(Continued overleaf.)

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there was a shout along the street, and men began to gather round, eyeing the Kid as he sat in the saddle, amazed to see him there.

The Kid was cool as ice. He knew, only too well, that he was taking his life in his hands in riding into the cow town. But his comrades were there, and he had come. And he was packing a gun now.

"I guess I've moseyed in to chew the rag with you, marshal," said the Kid evenly. "You've got my side-kickers, Dan and Red, in the gaol-house, haven't you?"

"You said it!" agreed the marshal.

He gave a glance round at the gathering crowd. Some of them were his own range-riders—the toughest bunch in Arizona. Some of them were his official deputies. And they were all round the Kid, sitting so calmly on his bronc in front of the marshal's office.

"What's the charge agin my friends?" asked the Kid quietly.

"Murder!" rapped the marshal.

"You can wash that out," said the Kid, almost casually. "First of all, it's a dog-goned lie that Dan or Red shot-up old Sam, and no guy knows it better'n you. Second to that, old Sam ain't dead, and Doc Baker, of Parksville, says that he's going to pull through."

The marshal's eyes snapped.

"So you got the doc to him?"

"Sure!"

"You been back to the ranch, then?"

The Kid nodded coolly.

Hardfist stared at him, puzzled.

"I left three men there——" muttered the marshal.

"I guess you'll find them there, if you look," drawled the Kid. "But I ain't come to chew the rag about that. I'm after my friends. You got them corralled on a charge of murder—and there ain't no murder. Old Sam's in a good man's hands, and he's going to live. I want to see my friends, Hardfist."

"You're sure going to see them, Kid Byrne!" said the marshal of Bullwhacker grimly. "You can put your last cent on that. Light down from that cayuse and give your-self up to the law!"

Kid's teeth clicked shut.

"And what's the charge agin me?" he asked.

"Same as agin your side-kickers. I reckon you was all in it," said Hardfist. "You getting off'n that cayuse?"

"Not so's you'd notice it," said the Kid.

There were more than twenty men around the rider now. The marshal made a sign to them.

"Seize that guy!" he barked. "He's arrested in the name of the law!"

The Kid laughed again.

"The law?" he said. "I guess you got the law in your pocket in this burg, Bill Hall!" The Kid's eyes flashed round at grim faces. "I guess there's plenty of time for a rookus if you're honing for one. You listen to me, Bill Hall. You got my friends, and you aim to get me, too; and I guess you're banking on a rope and a branch to see you clear to old Sam's mine up in the mesa. I'm telling you to forget it. I'm asking you, Bill Hall, to mosey along to the gaol with me, here and now, and let my friends out, and I'm saying it will be a good thing for you."

Hardfist gave a harsh laugh. Some of the roughnecks gathered round the Kid grinned; others stared at him. Hands were already dropping on the butts of guns.

"I'm putting it to you, fair and square, Bill Hall," the Kid went on evenly. "Let up on this game, Hardfist! If you want me and my friends for a fair trial, I guess you know where to find us. We ain't beating it off the Rojo land now we struck a goldmine there. We'll ride into Parksville and give ourselves up to

the sheriff, if he wants. But you ain't getting by with a lynch game! I'm jest asking you, will you mosey along to the gaol and let my friends out to ride with me for Rojo?"

The Kid spoke calmly, casually, but his hand was on Jake Sanders' six-gun in his pocket.

"I guess you've said your piece, Kid," said Hardfist Hall, "and now you can pack it up. It's you for the gaol-house!"

"That your last word?" asked the Kid.

"Sure!"

"Then—that's mine!"

And, swift as lightning, Kid Byrne whipped the gun from his pocket and fired point-blank at the marshal of Bullwhacker.

Bang!

The roar of the six-gun was followed by a startled roar from the roughneck crowd. There was a surge forward, but the Kid's smoking gun swayed round, and there was a backwards surge. Hardfist Hall went over backwards and crashed on the floor of his office.

"Back, you coyotes!" snarled the Kid, as the mob roared round him.

He dashed the spurs into his horse's flanks, and the bronco reared and cavorted. The crowd scrambled back from lashing hoofs. The marshal of Bullwhacker raised himself on an elbow, and his voice came shrieking: "Seize him! Shoot him down! Shoot!"

With a jingle of bridle and spurs, a crash of hoofs, the Kid rode down the street. His reins were bunched in his left hand, the six-gun smoked in his right. Hands grasped at his bridle—grasped at his horse—grasped at the Kid. Over the gun, his eyes blazed.

Three times roared the six-gun. It was neck-or-nothing now, for the Kid, and he fired fast as he spurred his bronc.

Twice more he fired. Yelling men reeled to right and left from the tearing bullets and the lashing hoofs. Guns roared, fired wildly. But the crowd parted before the galloping horse and the roaring six-gun, and Kid Byrne dashed at mad speed out of the cow town, out on the open prairie trail. He rode hard, riding for his life, leaving Bullwhacker in a maddened roar behind him!

*On Kid alone depend his two pals' hopes of rescue—and Kid is a hunted man, liable to be shot on sight by any who set eyes on him! Read next week how he returns to Bullwhacker—a lone cowboy against a town of gunmen—and fights against overwhelming odds to help his comrades in distress.*



Nothing Doing!

## Fixtures and Forecasts for all the Soccer Leagues, Saturday, October 26th

Home teams are named first. Teams in capital letters are those selected by our experts to win; both teams in small letters indicates a forecasted draw.

### ENGLISH LEAGUE.

#### DIVISION I.

ARSENAL v. Preston North End.  
Birmingham v. Portsmouth.  
BLACKBURN v. Everton.  
CHELSEA v. Bolton Wanderers.  
Grimsby Town v. MIDDLESBROUGH.  
Leeds United v. Aston Villa.  
Liverpool v. Huddersfield Town.  
MANCHESTER CITY v. Brentford.  
Stoke City v. Derby County.  
SUNDERLAND v. Sheffield Wednesday.  
WEST BROMWICH v. Wolverhampton W.

#### DIVISION II.

BLACKPOOL v. Hull City.  
Bradford v. MANCHESTER UNITED.  
BURY v. Plymouth Argyle.  
DONCASTER ROVERS v. Barnsley.  
Leicester City v. Tottenham Hotspur.  
NORWICH CITY v. Burnley.  
Nottingham Forest v. Charlton Athletic.  
SHEFFIELD UNITED v. Port Vale.  
Southampton v. Fulham.  
SWANSEA v. Newcastle United.  
WEST HAM UNITED v. Bradford City.

### DIVISION III. (NORTHERN).

CARLISLE v. Accrington.  
DARLINGTON v. New Brighton.  
Gateshead v. Chesterfield.  
HALIFAX v. Barrow.  
HARTLEPOOLS v. Southport.  
Mansfield v. CHESTER.  
OLDHAM v. York.  
Rotherham v. LINCOLN.  
TRANMERE v. Stockport County.  
WALSALL v. Crewe Alexandra.  
WREXHAM v. Rochdale.

### DIVISION III. (SOUTHERN).

Aldershot v. READING.  
BRIGHTON v. Notts County.  
BRISTOL CITY v. Southend United.  
COVENTRY CITY v. Gillingham.  
Exeter City v. Luton Town.  
MILLWALL v. Northampton.  
Newport County v. Bournemouth.  
QUEEN'S PARK RANGERS v. Bristol Rovers.  
SWINDON v. Cardiff City.  
Torquay v. CRYSTAL PALACE.  
WATFORD v. Clapton Orient.

### SCOTTISH LEAGUE.

#### DIVISION I.

AIRDRIEONIANS v. Third Lanark.  
Arbroath v. DUNFERMLINE.  
Clyde v. RANGERS.  
DUNDEE v. Ayr United.  
HEARTS v. Albion Rovers.  
Kilmarnock v. ABERDEEN.  
Motherwell v. Celtic.  
PARTICK THISTLE v. Hibernians.  
Queen's Park v. St. Johnstone.  
Queen of the South v. Hamilton.

#### DIVISION II.

Brechin City v. St. Bernards.  
Cowdenbeath v. DUNDEE UNITED.  
EAST FIFE v. East Stirling.  
Edinburgh City v. MONTROSE.  
FALKIRK v. Alloa.  
FORFAR ATHLETIC v. Stenhousemuir.  
King's Park v. MORTON.  
LEITH ATHLETIC v. Dumbarton.  
ST. MIRREN v. Raith Rovers.



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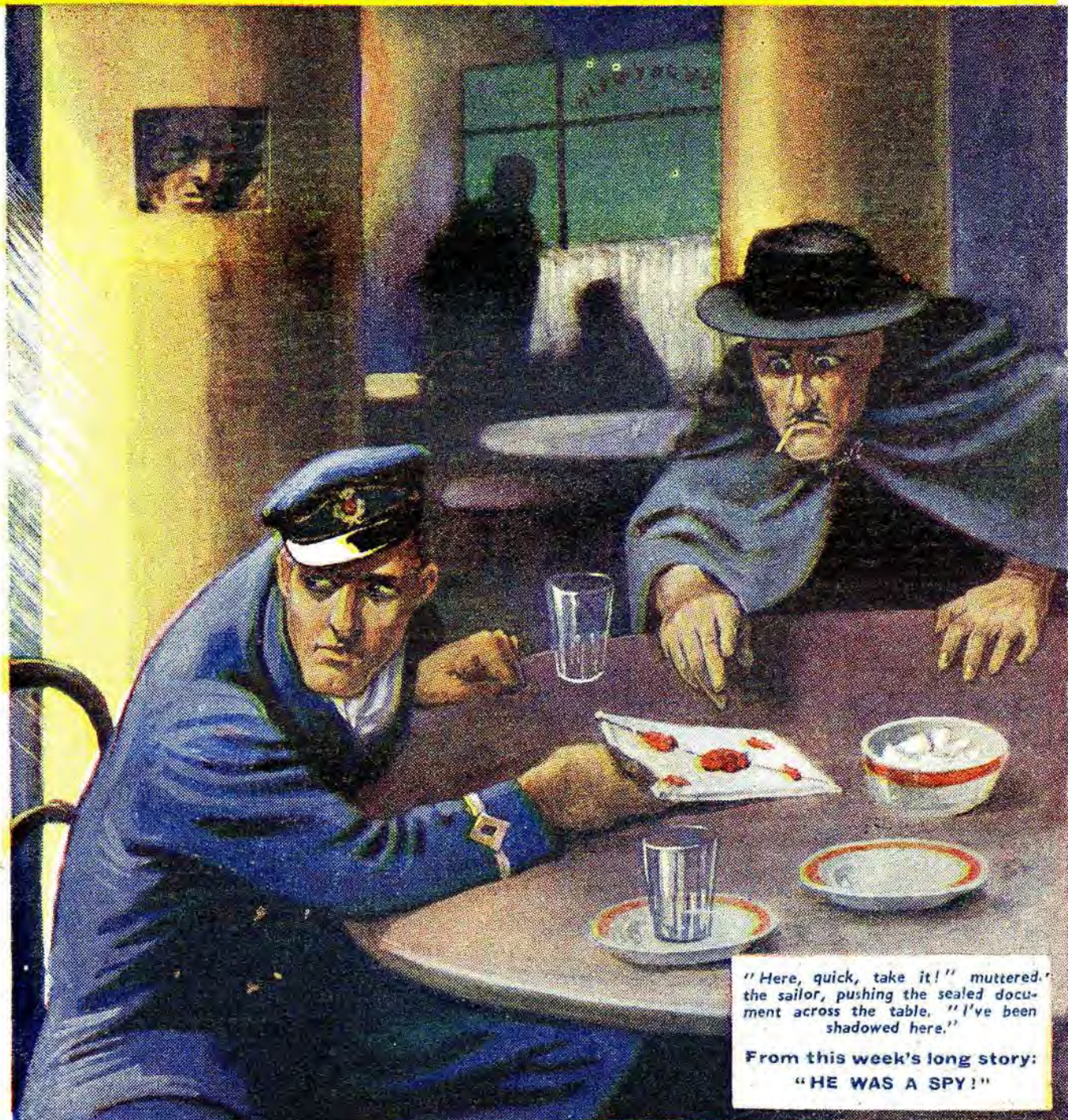
# *The* PILOT 2<sup>D</sup>

No. 5. Vol. 1.

EVERY FRIDAY.

Week Ending  
November 2nd, 1935.

*The* GREAT NEW STORY PAPER for READERS OF ALL AGES



"Here, quick, take it!" muttered the sailor, pushing the sealed document across the table. "I've been shadowed here."

From this week's long story:  
"HE WAS A SPY!"



**A CROOKED MARSHAL WAS USING THE LAW AGAINST THEM, SO THEY MADE A JUSTICE OF THEIR OWN—WITH ROARING SIX-GUNS!**

# The Outlawed THREE



**INSIDE the gaolhouse cell were two innocent young cowpunchers...**

**OUTSIDE was a raging, lynch-mad mob...**

**AND riding hell-for-leather along the trail to their rescue thundered a lone rider...**

**WOULD HE BE IN TIME?**

"**W**ON'T it ever be dark?" muttered Kid Byrne savagely.

He scowled at the western sky, where the red sun was dipping beyond the desert. He stood on the edge of a clump of timber, a mile out of the cow town of Bullwhacker, the reins of his bronco looped over his arm.

Shadows were lengthening in the timber, and, far off, in Bullwhacker, naphtha lamps were beginning to gleam. But it was not yet dark—and it seemed to the impatient Kid that the day was endless. He was waiting for darkness—for until it was dark he could make no attempt to rescue his comrades, Dan and Red, in the cow town calaboose.

The Kid had ridden out of Bullwhacker under a rain of bullets. To ride back while daylight lasted was to ask for sudden death. That would not have helped Hardfist Hall's prisoners in the cow town gaol. The Kid groaned with impatience as the leaden minutes crawled by.

His eyes on the distant cow town, he was unaware of slinking, shadowy figures in the cottonwoods; of stealthy footsteps in the grass. But he knew nothing—till suddenly the muzzle of a six-gun was pressed against his back from behind, and a hoarse voice rapped:

"Stick 'em up, big boy!"

The Kid slowly turned his head. He saw the bulldog jaw and scarred cheeks of Jad Jadson, and knew into whose hands he had fallen. The rustler had him at his mercy.

Five other figures came out of the shadowy timber. They gathered round Kid Byrne, grinning. The Kid was not easy to catch napping; but in his anxiety for his comrades in the cow town gaol, he had been taken completely off his guard.

"I guess I said stick 'em up, Kid Byrne," drawled the rustler. "You ain't getting away like you did last time."

Kid did not lift his hands. He knew that it was his horse Jad was after.

"Forget it, Jad!" he said quietly. "Listen to me! Hardfist Hall has got my side-kickers in the calaboose at Bullwhacker, and I got to get them out. I guess there ain't no love lost between you and the marshal: he's been after you with a rope long enough. Give me a chance to help my friends."

Jadson eyed him curiously.

"I guess I've heard there's a lynch mob out in Bullwhacker," he said. "I'll say they'll have your partners out of the jug and strung up afore midnight. You can't help them none."

"I'm going to try," said Kid Byrne, in the same quiet tone. "If Dan and Red go up, I'm going up along with them—I guess we've

stood together ever since we could walk, and I ain't letting them down now, even if I've got to fight it out with you!"

The gang of horse-thieves peered at him in the thickening dusk.

The Jadsons, outlaws and horse-thieves and hold-up men, were the toughest gang in Arizona. But the Kid's appeal was not lost, even on that savage gang. Standing in the very shadow of death, he was cool and calm, and thinking only of his friends.

One of the ruffians muttered:

"Say, Jad, give the kid a chance!"

Jadson knitted his rugged brows in thought.

"We lost a man last night," he said. "I guess he was at the wrong end of a gun! You like to sit in his saddle, Kid Byrne?"

Kid started

"Me—join up with hoss-thieves!" he exclaimed. "What do you think I am?"

"I guess if you got any friends in Tontine County, they're on the wrong side of the law!" grinned Jad. "Where are you now? You and your partners are accused of shooting-up old Sam Oak at the Rojo Ranch—you're wanted on a charge of murder! This very day you rode into Bullwhacker and shot up the marshal. I guess every guy in the section has heard about it already. You got to ride and hide, you young geek—if you get through this night alive! You're an outlaw already!"

Kid Byrne caught his breath.

What the horse-thief said was true. Hardfist Hall, marshal of Bullwhacker, was a villain—but he stood for the law. Standing against him, the Rojo pals stood against the law. The Kid was as much an outlaw as any of the shaggy-bearded ruffians standing round him in the gloom.

"I guess I'll give you a chance!" said Jad coolly. "If you get through, you'll want a hide-out, I reckon—you won't dare be seen at the Rojo Ranch agin. Ride with this bunch, Kid—I guess you're as good a man as I could want—and I guess there's room for your side-kickers, if you get them out. And we'll sure help you through."

The Kid drew a long, deep breath. He was outlawed already—and if he saved Dan and Red, what did anything else matter? Help from a gang of horse-thieves was better than no help, with all the chances against him.

"That goes," he said. "Help me save Dan and Red, and I'm your man, and I'll ride with you as far as a sheriff's rope."

Jad Jadson holstered his gun. "It's a cinch," he said. "But I'm telling you that your best guess is to ride clear of Bullwhacker."

"Forget it!" said the Kid briefly.

He glanced round over the darkening plain. The sun had dipped beyond the desert towards far-off California. It was dark, and growing darker. It was time for action.

"Listen to me, then!" said Jad. "Get to it, Kid, and good luck to you! I'll say you've got heaps of sand! We'll ride round to the other side of the town—and when you hear guns, you'll know that we're shooting up the burg! That'll give you a chance!"

The Kid held out his hand.

"You're a tough guy, Jad!" he said. "But you help me through to-night, and I'm your man!"

In silence the horse-thieves watched him mount his bronco and ride away through the gloom towards Bullwhacker.

The Kid had thrown in his lot with the toughest gang of outlaws in the West. He did not regret it—if only he could save Dan and Red! And that wild night he was going to save them or die with them!

"**T**HEY'RE coming, Red!" muttered Dan Oak.

Night had fallen. The naphtha lamps outside the Yellow Dog saloon on Main Street in Bullwhacker were flaring against the stars. With the fall of darkness the lynch mob outside the gaol increased in numbers and its threatening roar deepened.

"Lynch 'em!"

"Have 'em out! String 'em up!"

The mob was working itself up to the right pitch. Yuba Bill, the gaoler, was in the yard, thoughtfully chewing tobacco. During the day he had been on guard with a shotgun. Dan noticed now that the shotgun had disappeared. Yuba had no intention of resisting the mob when they came.

Red joined Dan at the little window. His plump face was pale, but he was cool. Looking between the bars, the boys could see the crowd thickening at the gate. They were coming! Dan called to the gaoler.

"You leaving us here for that crowd to get?"



called Dan. "I guess if you unlocked that door, Yuba—"

Yuba grinned. "I reckon not! They'd string me up if I did! I guess I'm sorry—I'd hold you if I could. But you got it coming to you! I'm telling you, they're plumb mad because of the marshal being shot-up in his office. That pardner of yours, Kid Byrne, shot him up under the eyes of twenty galoots and got away with it! I reckon he wasn't shooting to kill, or Hardfist would be over the range now. But he sure shot him up, and the marshal's jest a bundle of bandages in his bunk, and you can bank on it that he won't be hornin' into this rookus none."

"It's Hardfist's doing!" snapped Dan savagely. "The doggoned thief's after the goldmine on the Rojo land, and I'm certain that it was Hall who shot up old Sam Oak at Rojo. He set this lynch mob going, and I guess the Kid shot him up to stop it!"

Yuba shrugged his shoulders and turned away from the barred window. He went across the yard to the gate where the boys could see him gesturing and expostulating with the threatening crowd outside.

Dan grasped the thick pinewood bars, as if to make a desperate effort to wrench them loose. As he did so, a shadow moved in the gloom outside.

Dan stood still, staring. He wondered if he was dreaming. Or was it Kid Byrne's face that was pressed to the space between the bars?

"Kid!" breathed Dan Oak.

"Kid!" muttered Red, in wonder. "You here, Kid?"

It was the Kid! His voice came in a low whisper.

"They're all in front! I guess I got into the yard at the back—there ain't nobody watching there. I been waiting for dark to try it on."

"Beat it, Kid, beat it!" muttered Red. "You can't help us none, and they're coming—they'll get you, too!"

"I guess I'm packing a gun and they won't get me easy!" said Kid, quietly. "I'm with you to the finish. Who's got the key of this shebang?"

"Yuba! He's chewing the rag with them at the gate!"

The Kid stared round him, straining his eyes in the gloom. Save at the gate, where there was a glimmer of light in the street, all was dark. So far, the Kid had found his enterprise, desperate as it was, easy going.

He had left his bronc tied up outside the town, crept in under cover of darkness, and reached the back fence behind the calaboose. To climb it and drop within was easy work for the active Kid. The shadows screened him from all eyes, and he had crept round to the front of the gaol unseen and reached the window. But what now?

The bars at the little window were thick and strong. The door, of massive pinewood, was locked. To get hold of the key had been the vague plan working in the Kid's mind. But he could not approach Yuba without betraying himself to a swarm of eyes—and when Yuba quitted the gate the surging mob would be at his heels.

Suddenly, there came a sudden outburst of gun-fire from the other end of the long street of Bullwhacker. Judson's gang had come.

The roaring of six-guns, the thunder of galloping hooves, rang through the cow town from end to end. Wild shouts and yells came from the street.

"The Jadson gang!" came a yell from the street.

"They're shooting up the town! "

There was a rushing and trampling of feet. All along Main Street, six-guns were ringing out in reply to the reckless fire of the outlaws. And the lynch mob, their attention turned to a new focus by the raid, went rushing up the street, guns in hands, yelling with rage, firing wildly. Yuba was left standing at the gate alone.

He knew that it would not last—the Jadson raid would be driven off in a matter of minutes. Then the mob would come pouring back. Yuba leaned on the gate, staring into a deserted street.

"Don't squeak!" A soft voice spoke in his



Elder Brother: "Hey, you can't go out in my overcoat, you young imp!"

Younger Brother: "All right. I only took it to make sure I didn't get your suit wet!"

ear, and he felt the muzzle of a revolver grinding into the back of his neck. "Jest one squeak, Yuba, and you get yours."

Yuba gave one gasp. But he did not utter a syllable. He knew Kid Byrne's voice, and he knew better than to argue with a six-gun pressed to his neck.

The Kid stuck the gun in his ribs and drove him across the yard. He stopped at the locked door of the calaboose.

"I've come for my pals!" Kid said. "Get that door open!"

Yuba hesitated one second. Then he grabbed the long iron key from his pocket, jammed it into the lock and turned it. The door flew open.

"Dan!" breathed Kid, "Red!"

**B**ANG, bang, bang! The roar of six-guns came booming along Main Street.

But the firing was already dying out.

The Jadson gang had ridden in, firing right and left—"shooting up the town." But Bullwhacker was a tough town, where every man packed a gun; and after the first few minutes of surprise, the raiders had had a hot reception.

Already they were riding for the prairie faster than they came. But Jad, as he had promised, had made a diversion, drawing off the mob to give the Kid a chance—and Kid Byrne had made the most of it. Already a crowd of the lynchers were swarming back towards the calaboose. There was no time to lose.

"Quick!" breathed the Kid.

With a twist of his arm he sent Yuba staggering headlong into the cell, as Dan and Red joined him in the open air. Yuba crashed on the floor, yelling. Before he could gain his feet, the Kid had slammed the door again and turned the key on the outside.

Kid grasped Red by the arm and led him away. Behind the gaol the yard was in darkness, and the Rojo pals disappeared into it—hearing, as they went, the gate go with a crash. Hurrying footsteps and shouting voices filled the yard with din.

Back of the gaol there was a ten-foot fence, and behind it waste land that ran to the open plain. Panting, the Rojo pals reached the back fence.

The Kid leaped, and grasped the top of the pine fence. Hanging there, he leaned down to give Red a hand. Big Dan grasped Red and heaved him up, and the Kid pulled. Red, panting, clambered over and dropped outside the fence.

"Pronto, Dan!" hissed the Kid. From the top of the fence he could see the lynch mob come swarming round on both sides of the pine-wood gaol. They were hunting through the yard for the escaped prisoners.

Dan clambered desperately.

He joined the Kid and they dropped together outside the fence. But as they dropped, a yell,

and the barking of a gun, told that they had been seen.

Some of the lynchers rushed across to the fence to clamber in pursuit. Others streamed out at the gate.

"Beat it!" muttered Dan.

Hard and desperately they ran, and reached the cottonwood standing black against the stars on the plain.

"Get the bronc, Dan!" snapped Kid.

In the starlight on the open plain, they had been seen. Some of the lynchers had mounted horses, and now they came thundering down on the fugitives in a bunch. The Kid lifted his revolver. There was no help for it. With a cool eye and a steady hand, he fired into the thick of the bunch of riders, and fearful yells answered the shots.

A horse rolled over—a man went down—and another; wounded or killed the Kid did not know, and little cared at that wild moment. With a crash of hoofs and a jingle and bridles and spurs, the rest dragged in their broncos. But more and more of the lynch mob were streaming out of the cow town, some on foot, some on horseback, and the firing guided them to the spot.

Dan dragged the bronc loose under the shadowy cottonwood.

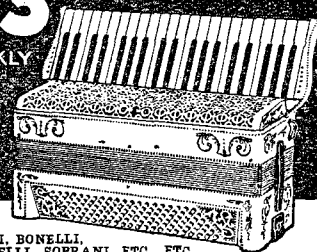
"Get on, Red!"

"But—," panted Red.

Big Dan did not wait for "buts." He grasped Red in his powerful arms and flung him into the saddle. Taking the bridle, he led the horse and ran. The Kid, gun in hand, panted after them.

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Bullets screamed through the air; but the spring was wide and wild. Galloping hoofs thudded and echoed—hoarse voices yelled and shouted through the gloom. The lynch mob, savagely disappointed at the escape of their prey, hunted them fiercely in the shadows of the prairie. But the shadows were thick; the rugged folds of the plain and straggling patches of post-oaks gave the fugitives cover.

A mile from the cow town, Dan dragged the bronc to a halt in the darkness of the timber island where Kid had met up with the Jadson gang at sunset. Dan and Kid panted with bursting lungs after that desperate run. With thumping hearts they listened.

Far away in the night, horses were galloping, and random shots echoing. But the hunters had lost them, and for the moment, at least, they were safe!

**D**AWN was glimmering on the prairie. The Rojo Rancho was dark and deserted, on the bank of the river. The three cowboys had reached it, after their escape, to find it deserted. The marshal's men had long gone, and Doc Baker had taken old Sam Oak back with him to Parksville. It was the one comfort the boys had, that old Sam was safe in good hands, out of reach of the bitter enmity of the marshal of Bullwhacker.

The Kid had told his comrades about his contract with the Jadson gang. As he explained the position, there were strong objections from his pals. Kid tried to point out that there was no other way out, if they were to try to solve the mystery of the shooting of old Sam, and, still arguing, he crossed to the open door and looked out. He stood there for a few minutes, then suddenly wheeled round.

"You had better make up your minds," he said. "The marshal's bunch is coming up the trail, and if they find us here, I'll say we ain't going to live long enough to find out who shot up old Sam!"

Dan and Red joined him at the veranda door. Far away across the Rio Rojo there was a cloud of dust on the trail in the direction of Bullwhacker. The marshal's men were already riding out to Rojo.

Big Dan stood staring. He was not so swift on the uptake as the quick-witted Kid, and the true position dawned more slowly on him. Dan drew a hard breath.

"Let's go!" he said.

It was like the taciturn Dan, having made up his mind, to say no more on the subject. The three pals lost no more time. They had had a rest and snatched a hasty meal. Now they hastily packed a few possessions to take with them—camping outfit, packed in their

slicker packs; old Sam's rifle, food, and clothes.

They picked the three best of the bunch of broncos and saddled. There were half a dozen others, and Dan put them in a string for leading.

By the time they rode out at the gate, the cloud of dust on the Bullwhacker trail was very near. A dozen armed men were riding hard for the ford of the Rojo. The three pals headed up the bank of the river for the Mesa Mountains. Once in the hills, they could defy all the marshal's men to hunt them down.

But it was evident at once that they had been spotted. Leaving the marked trail, the marshal's men cut across the plain, with the obvious intention of intercepting them. The crack of a rifle came from the midst of the dust cloud, and the whizz of a bullet fanning his cheek told Dan that they were within easy range.

"Burn the wind!" snapped Dan.

The punchers quitted their broncos to a gallop. The barren plain, dotted with sage brush, flew under the lashing hoofs. Still at a distance the Bullwhacker posse came splashing through the muddy waters of the Rojo, and took up the pursuit on the other side.

Before the three fugitives was the opening of the great canyon that split the steep side of the mesa. But the canyon was still half a mile distant, when a scream came from one of the led horses. A bullet had struck the animal, and it rolled over, kicking wildly, and throwing the whole string into confusion.

"Doggone it!" panted Dan, through his clenched teeth. He checked his bronc, but the Kid shouted to him:

"Ride, you geck! Ride!"

There was no time to cut loose the injured horse. Dan threw the end of the rope from his saddle, casting loose the whole string.

Hard and fast behind them came the marshal's posse. Bullets were falling closer. The ground was rising to the hills, and the going was heavy and hard. The pursuers, not yet on the rise, were drawing closer—the range was narrowing. Shot after shot rang, and the Kid compressed his lips as a bullet bit his ear in passing, taking a strip of skin. He spurred on fiercely.

Out of the blaze of sunshine they dashed into the deep canyon at last, hoofs ringing loud and sharp on rocky earth. There was a sudden squeal from Red's bronc as it was hit by a bullet. The animal pitched forward on its forelegs, sending Red with a crash over its head.

Red, half-stunned by the fall, sprawled on the rocks. The Kid and Dan drew rein

instantly. They leaped from the saddle, grasped Red, and lifted him to his feet.

"Look after him, Kid! I guess I'm going to stop those rubes!" gritted Dan, between his teeth.

He grasped old Sam's rifle, and dropped on his knee behind a boulder, his eye gleaming along the barrel. Kid half-led, half-carried Red into the cover of a rock, and left him there. The two horses went scampering up the canyon. The loss of Red's horse cut short the flight, and the fugitives had to stand at bay. Kid, revolver in grip, joined Dan behind the boulder, looking down the trail.

Up from the plain, clattering into the wide opening of the great canyon, came the Bullwhacker posse, riding hard. They knew that a horse had gone down under their fire, and they were looking to ride down the fugitives.

In a galloping, shouting bunch they came on, eyes gleaming under stetson hats. And as they came, Dan's rifle barked from behind the boulder, and the leading rider went backwards over the tail of his horse, crashing to the earth.

Crack, crack, crack, crack! The Kid's six-gun sprayed bullets while Dan reloaded. With wild yells and howls the Bullwhacker crowd scattered from the fire, leaping from their horses, and hunting cover.

"I guess we stopped them!" breathed Dan.

The Kid nodded.

But he knew they were not stopped for long. The marshal's men were tough guys, used to hard riding and hard fighting. They were not going to ride to death—but Kid knew that already they would be creeping up the canyon, taking cover behind every rock and clump of scrub pines, coming every minute nearer to close quarters. And when they were close enough, there would be a rush and a hand-to-hand grapple against overwhelming odds. It was the finish, and Kid Byrne knew it, if Dan did not.

There was a grinding of heavy boots on the rocks as the rush came. Leaping from cover, blazing six-guns as they came, the Bullwhacker posse rushed. Dan and Kid fired together—and a roughneck reeled to the right and another to the left. The next minute they would have been mixed.

But at that moment there came a sudden outburst of rifle-fire from higher up the rocky canyon.

Who was burning powder, neither the Rojo pals nor the Bullwhacker crowd knew. But they knew that a tearing volley of lead smashed into the marshal's posse as they rushed on—sending three or four men dead to the ground, and the rest running back like rabbits. Shot after shot came from the unseen rifles, and what were left of the Bullwhacker crowd ran for their lives.

Dan and Kid stared round blankly.

That sudden fire had saved them—it would all have been over in a minute more. Suddenly snatched from death, they stared round. A burly ruffian with a bulldog jaw and a scarred face came striding down the canyon towards them, a smoking rifle in his hand. Following him came the rest of the Jadson gang.

Jad grinned at the Rojo punchers.

"I guess we heard your shooting and humped along, big boys," he said. "I'll say we was on time. I'll tell a man I'm glad to meet up with you."

"I'll say the same, Jad," said the Kid quietly. "You sure horned in when you was wanted bad."

Dan did not speak. Red, rubbing his aching head, joined his comrades, and he, too, stood silent. The Kid looked at them very quietly.

"Chew on it," he said. "We ain't in no position to choose our friends now. It's riding with Jad, or the rope at Bullwhacker! And Jad's stood for us like a white man."

Dan nodded slowly. The die was cast. It was with the Jadson gang, members now of the toughest and wildest gang of outlaws and rustlers in Arizona, that the Rojo riders went into the mesa.

*The die has been cast—Kid, Dan, and Red, now ride with the outlaw gang. Don't miss next week's great story of how the Rojo riders take part in their first cattle raid, and also strike another great blow at Hardfist Hall, the marshal, whose scoundrelly schemes have made them into outlaws.*



"I've come for my pals!" Kid told the jailer. "Get that door open!" With the outlaw's gun jabbed against his back, the jailer had no choice but to obey.

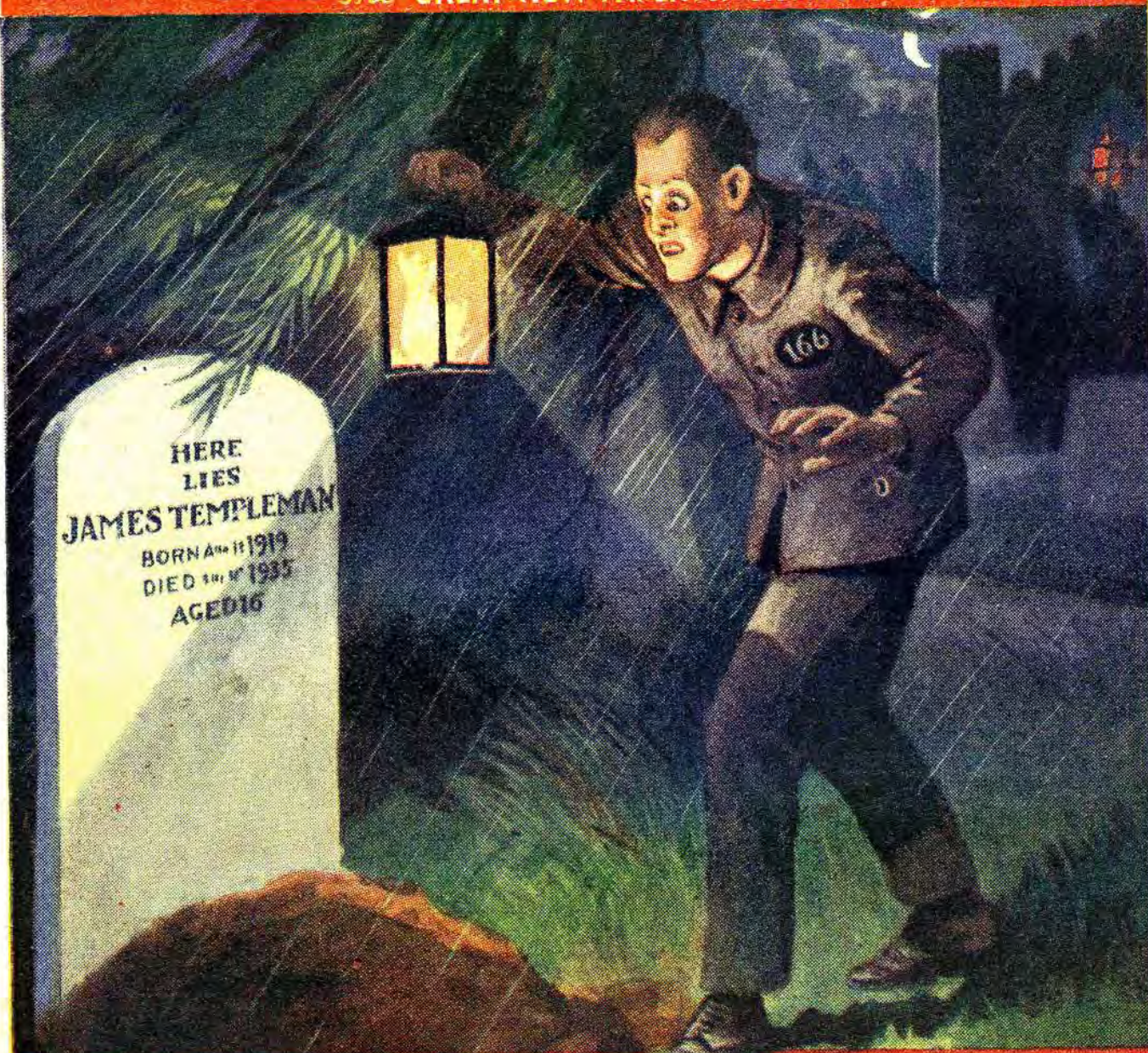


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**OUTLAWS, WITH A PRICE ON THEIR HEADS, KID, DAN AND RED FIGHT BACK AGAINST THE RASCALLY MARSHAL WHO IS TRYING TO CHEAT THEM OF THE GOLD-MINE THEY'VE DISCOVERED!**

# The Outlawed THREE



**"RUSTLING cows!"**

Big Dan Oak's eyes glinted under his knitted brows, and his jaw squared. He looked as if he would dash his clenched fist into the scarred, bearded face of the man before him. Jad Jadson's eyes glinted, too, and his hand slid down to the six-gun in his belt. But Kid Byrne dropped a hand on Dan's arm.

"Don't be a mutt, Dan!" he said quietly. "We're outlaws now, same as the Jadsons—we've got no kick coming."

Jad Jadson grinned.

"You said it, Kid!" he agreed.

Dan Oak stood silent, his chest heaving. It was true—Dan and Kid and Red, the cowboys of the Rojo Ranch, were outlaws now—outlawed by the treachery of Hardfist Hall, marshal of Bullwhacker. They were hunted by the marshal's men, and were liable to be strung up to the nearest tree if they were captured. In the day of the Jadson gang, high up in the Mesa Mountains of Arizona, they had found a refuge—but only on the terms that they joined up with the bunch of rustlers. Dan knew it as well as his comrades knew it—bitter as it was to know. Yet his anger flamed up at the mention of rustling cows.

Red, his plump face clouded, looked from the handsome Kid to big, wiry, rugged Dan, and back again. His heart was with Dan, but he knew that the Kid was right. The Rojo boys could not ride and hide with the outlaws without joining in their lawless ways—and the Jadsons lived by plunder—by running cows from the ranches of Bullwhacker, looting the miners of Pack-Mule, and hold-ups on the prairie trails.

There were six of the Jadsons. All were of the same family and name, and all desperate outcasts long wanted by the law. They camped in a hidden gulch high up the mesa, where a group of rough pinewood shacks stood by a trickling stream. This was a head-water of the Rio Rojo, which lower down ran by old Sam Oak's land, where the three boys had dwelt with old Sam till the fatal night when an unknown hand had shot him down. There they were safe from Hardfist Hall, and, so far, they had no been called on to join in the Jadson raids. But the time had come now, as the Kid knew that it must come.

"Sure—rustling cows!" said Jad, squirting a stream of tobacco juice over the rocks. "You figure that you've joined this bunch to sit around and chew up the cats? Forget it! We're riding to-night—and I guess you guys are riding with us!"

"We got to ride, Dan!" said the Kid.

Dan breathed hard.

"What'd old Sam say if he heard of us rustling cows?" he muttered. "We're outlaws, Kid, by no fault of our own. But a guy who rustles cows—"

"Hardfist's cows!" grinned Jad.

Dan started, and his face cleared. If the raid was planned on the Hall Ranch, that was a different matter. It was war to the knife—war to the death—between Hardfist Hall and the Rojo boys. He had driven them into outlawry in his fierce determination to get hold of the secret gold-mine on the Rojo land. Every chance of a blow back at their enemy was welcome to the outlawed trio.

**With every man's hand against them, the Outlawed Three ride the ranges on their trail of vengeance!**

"Now you're talking!" said Red and Dan in the same breath. The Kid's handsome face lighted up.

"Jad, old-timer, you've spilled a hatful!" he said. "Bank on us, Jad. We'll ride with you and shoot with you. We'll even face a necktie party with you if it's up agin Hardfist Hall."

Jad nodded, grinning.

"Hardfist's knocked out," he said. "You gave him a bullet in the shoulder, Kid, that day you got him in Bullwhacker. I guess he ain't got over it yet by long chalks. And I'd sure rather rustle his cows while he's laid up in his bunk, for he's a bad man to crowd when he's up with a gun in his hand."

"I guess I'll crowd him, if we meet up with him to-night!" said the Kid briefly.

"Saddle up at sundown!" said Jad, and, with a nod to the Rojo boys, the chief of the Jadson gang turned and slouched away. The sun was already sinking over the summits of the mesa.

"You'll stop in camp, Red!" said Dan Oak. "Stop nothing!" snapped Red.

"The Kid and me'll ride with the Jadsons! Jad don't want the whole pesky family along!" growled Dan. "I'm telling you, you stop in camp!"

The Kid nodded. His thought was the same as Dan's. Tom Redway was the youngest of the three. To keep him clear of lawlessness, even while consorting with the wildest and toughest gang in Arizona, was the thought in the mind of the elder punchers. Red looked rebellious.

"Dan's right!" said Kid Byrne. "You stop in camp, Red! Now, don't you chew the rag about it—jest pack it up and stand pat!"

Red opened his mouth as if to argue, and closed it again.

The Jadsons were preparing their horses and examining rifles and six-guns, ready to take the trail when the sun dipped. Dan and Kid did the same. Red watched them, but to the relief of his two comrades he did not argue the matter.

In the glimmer of the sunset, the six border ruffians and the two cowpunchers mounted their broncos and rode down the rugged gulch to the lower canyons that lead to the plain. Jad Jadson rode in the lead, his followers bunched behind him. The sun was gone, and darkness thickened over the mesa. Through the thickening gloom the jingle of bridles and stirrups, the clattering of hoofs on hard rocks, echoed and echoed. By gulch and rocky

canyon they rode, till they emerged on the open, sage-dotted plain at the foot of the mesa.

More silent now, with grass under the thudding hoofs, they rode, heading for the ford of the Rojo River, which had to be crossed to reach the Hall Ranch. Jad Jadson suddenly pulled in his bronco, his eyes glittering under the shadow of his stetson.

"Halt!" he growled. "I guess we're being trailed."

The bunch of riders drew rein, and heads were bent to listen. From the rocky canyon they had left came the ringing clatter of hoofs on rocks. A horseman was riding hard in their rear.

The look of savage ferocity that came over Jad's scarred face sickened the Kid as he caught it in the dusk. The outlaw jerked the six-gun from his belt, and, wheeling his horse, he waited in the shadows for the pursuing rider to draw nearer. Who that rider of the night was, no one in the gang knew or cared—but he was following them, and that spelled death to him when he came under Jad's gun. The Jadson gang rode the trails with ropes round their necks, and it was not their way to spare an enemy.

Kid Byrne pushed his horse a little nearer Jad. Dan, farther off in the gloom, did not see the outlaw's gun in his hand. But the Kid saw it, and knew! His thoughts raced. He was riding with outlaws—an outlaw himself; he couldn't afford to be any more squeamish than the other outlaws. Yet—

A dim figure of a horseman loomed up in the shadows on the plain. Little could be seen of him save a stetson hat and the tossing head of a horse. Jad's bearded lips snarled over his set teeth, as his gun went up and he pulled trigger.

But even as he pulled, the Kid's quirt came up, knocking the six-gun upward. The bullet whizzed skyward as the six-gun roared. Outlaw or not, the Kid could not stand for shooting a man down without a chance for his life.

Jad yelled a fierce oath, and as if in answer came a call from the horseman.

"Say, you guys, don't burn powder—it's me, Red!"

"Red!" yelled the Kid.

"You doggoned young gink!" panted Dan.

Red rode up, grinning, and Jad, staring at him, lowered the smoking revolver. The



Kid was white as chalk. That merciful impulse to save, as he supposed, a stranger's, perhaps an enemy's, life, had saved the life of Tom Redway. But for the prompt lash of the Kid's quirt at the six-gun, Jad's bullet would have crashed into Red and rolled him dead from his saddle.

"Say, you guys figure you was leaving me behind?" grinned Red. "I'll say you got another guess coming! Where you ride, I'm riding, if it's straight to the rope of Judge Lynch."

Jad Jadsen thrust the six-gun into his holster.

"Get on!" he snapped.

The bunch of riders dashed on again, across the darkened prairie, Red riding with Dan and Kid.

The stars were coming out in the velvety sky, and the pals had a glimpse of the deserted Rojo Rancho, where they lived with old Sam, as they rode up to the ford. It was lost to sight again as they splashed through the ford with the outlaws and rode at a gallop for the Hall Ranch.

**H**ARDFIST HALL, marshal of Bullwhacker, leaned back in his rocker in the living-room of the Hall Ranch, and fixed his deep-set eyes on the man before him—Doc Baker, of Parkville. The short, squat man in his red shirt and stetson and cowman's boots, and a six-gun packed at his hip, hardly looked the medical man he was. Doc Baker was the only doctor in Tontine County, and little as he liked the bullying marshal of Bullwhacker, he had driven thirty miles in his buckboard to visit him. But his visit was as brief as he could make it.

"You're mending, Hall!" he said, in his jerky tones. "I guess young Byrne never meant to make it last sickness for you—he's sure a handy lad with a gun when he wants. But I'm warning you, Hardfist, don't give him another chance. After what you've done, I guess he wouldn't leave nothing for me to mend next time."

The marshal of Bullwhacker scowled.

"Let him wait till I can back a bronc again," he gritted, "and he won't have to wait long."

"Aw, can it!" snapped the doc. "You're making me sorry I've tended you, Hall. I guess if it wasn't a medical man's duty to mend sinners as well as saints, you'd never have seen me here. Waal, I got to go!"

"Hold your hosses!" snapped Hardfist. "I got something to say afore you beat it, doc." "Spill it, and make it snappy!" said the doc. "I sure do hate to be in the same room with you, Hardfist."

"You got old Sam Oak at your shebang in Parkville," muttered Hall. "How's he going on?"

"Mending!" said the doc briefly.

"I guess he'd mend sooner, if he was back at the Rojo Rancho, and I'd sure see that he had care! And I ain't a mean guy, doc. I'd stand any sum in reason for your expenses."

Doc Baker stood before the black-bearded marshal, his eyes gleaming at the man in the rocker. For a moment or two he did not speak. His hand strayed to the six-gun at his hip. Hall, hard and determined as he was, shrank from the look on the medical man's face.

"You doggoned skunk!" breathed the doc, at last. "Nobody knows who shot-up old Sam, but I got a good guess coming. Hardfist, knowing who was after his land, and the gold-mine his boys found on it. You packed them boys in the calaboose at Bullwhacker on a charge of murder—but I'll say you could tell them the name of the pesky skunk that pulled the trigger! And now you're asking me to put the old rancher in your grip! By the great horn spoon, if you wasn't my patient, and me bound to see you through, I'd pull on you and finish what the Kid began."

"You don't want to go off on your ear, doc," said Hardfist coolly. "There was plenty of evidence against the Rojo boys, and they've broke gaol. They're riding with the Jadsens and they've shot up my men who trailed them to the Mesa—"

"And who set a lynch mob on them when

they was in the calaboose?" demanded the doc fiercely. "Who made outlaws of them, Hardfist Hall? Pack it up, you skunk, or you'll sure make me forget that I'm a doctor! I'll tell a man I'd rather fix you up for a funeral than mend you."

Doc Baker stamped out of the room. The marshal of Bullwhacker called after him as he went, but the doc did not turn his head. Scowling, the marshal heard the buckboard rattle and clatter away on the trail under the stars.

Hardfist rose from the rocker and tramped out on to the veranda. Dusky night lay on the prairie. Far in the distance a glimmer against the velvety sky told where the town of Bullwhacker lay—the town of which he was marshal. Leaning on the rail, Bill Hall stared down the dusky trail and listened to the sound of the doctor's buckboard dying away in the distance. He was still feeling the effects of his wound, but it would not be long before he would be able to sit in the saddle again—and ride in search of the Rojo riders. They had put themselves utterly outside the pale of the law by joining up with the Jadsen gang, and he had them where he wanted them now. They had discovered the gold-mine in the mesa, which had been lost for forty years, but it would profit them little now that they were outlawed and hunted for their lives. His greedy grasp would yet close on the gold of the mesa, when Dan and Kid and Red were out of the way. The sound of the buckboard died away in the distance.

Doc Baker drove fast through the starry



"Would you mind fetching me a taxi, sonny?"

"What! And leave you to pinch my barrow? Nothing doing!"

night, his teeth clamped on an unlighted Mexican cheroot. Only his duty, as the only medical man available, had taken him to Hardfist's ranch, and he was glad to get away. Mile after mile ran under the rattling wheels as he headed for the ford of the Rojo, to get back to distant Parkville. Here and there, by the dark trail, massive figures loomed in the grass, and drowsy heads were raised as steers were startled from slumber by the rattling wheels. Once a voice called a greeting to him as he passed—the voice of one of the Hall punchers. They were a rough and tough bunch on the Hall Ranch, but the six-gun doctor was liked and respected even by that rough, gun-slinging crowd.

Suddenly, from the darkness of the prairie at a distance from the trail, came a flash—the flash of a gun. The following report boomed dully through the night, and Doc Baker pulled in his horse and listened. A cry came from the darkness—the cry of a stricken man.

The doc's eyes gleamed under his bent brows. "Rustlers!"

The word dropped sharply from his lips. In the velvety darkness he could see nothing. But he knew that a range rider had been shot down as he guarded his herd, and he knew that

rustlers were riding in the dark night. There was a sudden thudding of hoofs. A riderless horse, with dangling stirrups, dashed out of the dark, shied at the sudden sight of the halted buckboard on the trail, and dashed off into the night again. Following came a hoarse shout.

"Rope that bronc, Bull! If that cayuse hits the ranch, we'll have the whole outfit down to see what's going on! Shoot the critter if you have to!"

Flash on flash came from the dark. Doc Baker gathered his reins in his left hand and his six-gun leaped into his right. The Jadsen gang were riding that night, he knew, because Bull Jadsen, Jad's brother, was one of the desperate gang. A shadowy horseman raced across the trail, riding at a fierce gallop after the riderless horse, firing as he rode. He passed within six feet of the buckboard, failing to see it in the dark and his wild haste. But two following horsemen checked their Broncos as they spotted the vehicle there, and heard the grind of the wheels as the doc whirled in round on the trail.

Shaking his reins, the doc drove back towards the ranch to give the alarm. He loathed Hardfist Hall, but Hardfist was a rancher, his herds in danger from rustlers, and the doc had to give him warning. With a rattle and clatter, the buckboard rocked and thundered back along the dark trail, and a thunder of hoofs and a popping of six-guns told the doc that he was pursued.

A bullet thudded into the back of the vehicle. With glinting eyes, the doc turned and fired back into the dark at shadowy horsemen. Shot after shot came from his six-gun, and a fearful cry floated back from the night. One of the Jadsens had gone down under his fire.

The horse, wildly excited, tore madly along. Doc Baker packed his gun and gripped the reins with both hands. It was all he could do now to keep the rocking buckboard from overturning, and with set teeth he drove on. Thudding hoofs rang on the grass, and a single rider drew closer and closer behind. A stetson hat loomed up—but the rider was not firing. He rode harder and harder, and came along by the side of the rocking buckboard, and the stars gleamed on the lifted barrel of his revolver.

"Pull in!" came his shout. "You locoed geek, I've got you covered! Pull in that cayuse, or you get yours."

Doc Baker jumped in his seat. He knew that voice.

"Kid!" he yelled.

Kid Byrne, riding dangerously close to the jumping buckboard, peered at him in the dark. His gun-arm dropped.

"Doc! Is that Doc Baker?"

"You said it, you doggoned young fool!" roared the doc. "And you're the Kid—riding with rustlers! Shoot, if you want—shoot, you young scoundrel—shoot!"

But the Kid did not shoot. He holstered his gun, checked his bronc, and dropped behind in the darkness. The doc drove on, and clattered wildly up to the Hall ranch-house, where Hardfist, leaning on the rail, stared at him in blank astonishment.

"You, doc! What the great horned toad do you—"

"Rustlers!" snarled the doc. "They've shot-up one of your riders, and I guess they're driving your cows." He panted. "And doggoned pizen polecat as you are, Hardfist, if you want a man to ride with your outfit, I guess I can ride as well as drive, and I've got a gun—"

Hardfist, with a bound, was down from the veranda.

**J**AD JADSON swore luridly. The scarred face of the outlaw was black with rage. The riderless horse, pursued by Bull Jadsen, had been shot, and excepting for the escape of Doc Baker in the buckboard, there would have been no danger of alarm at the ranch. On the pasture by the banks of the Rojo a bunch of three hundred cows fed, which had been in charge of a puncher who now lay in the grass a six-gun still gripped in his hand, his set face upturned to the stars.

Back along the trail the Kid came riding,

and when he told with a brief word that the buckboard had got clear, Jad swore long and hard. His men were already driving three hundred cows, but a cattle-drive was slow work, and it was miles to the security of the hills, where they would be safe from trailing. Two or three hours would have seen the ranch raiders safe and clear, and but for the chance of Doc Baker coming down the trail, and his escape, Jad would have had the two or three hours he wanted. Now it was time for hard riding, with small chance of getting away with the rustled cows. They knew Hardfist Hall. At a word of alarm—wounded though he was—he would be in the saddle, riding with his outfit.

Again Jadson swore. And had the outlaw known that the man in the buckboard was Doc, and that the Kid had had him at his mercy and spared him, the scarred ruffian would have turned his gun, as well as his savage words, on Kid Byrne. But of that the Kid said no word.

Jad roared at the Kid savagely for letting the man in the buckboard get away alive, but still the Kid answered no word. He was an outlaw, riding with rustlers, but he would have laughed at the idea of burning powder on the man who was standing by old Sam, saving him from the marshal of Bullwhacker. But the Kid had joined up with Jad, and he was as loyal as he could be. He rode with the rustled cows, cracking his quirt, helping to keep the bunch together as they headed for the ford of the Rio Rojo. Somewhere in the darkness Dan and Red were riding, too, among the sea of tossing heads and horns.

But the Kid's face was dark and sombre. The words the doc had flung at him from the buckboard rang in his ears and rankled in his heart. The doc had always been his friend, and was caring for old Sam; but he despised him for what he was doing, and if he pulled a gun that night it would be on the side of Hardfist Hall. Yet the Kid asked himself bitterly, what choice had he? Hardfist had driven him and his comrades into outlawry, and with whom were they to ride but outlaws? It was unjust, bitterly unjust, and yet the Kid knew in his heart that this night was his last ride with the Jadson gang.

Thumping hoofs, tossing horns, bellowing and squealing! Hard-driven by the rustlers and the Rojo boys, the Hall herd strove again and again to break loose in a stampede. Cow after cow escaped from the herd and ran loose in the prairie. There was no time to round-up stragglers. Jad was content if he kept most of the herd together—if he got even half of them as far as the ford. But long before the Rio Rojo was sighted he knew that Hardfist Hall and his outfit would be riding hard on the trail—that there would be no escape without gun-play.

There came a thunder of hoofs from the dark prairie behind. Jad glared round in the saddle and loosed off his gun at random in the direction of the sound.

"They're coming!" he gritted.

Shots rang from the dark. Hardfist and his range-riders were coming. Every man in the Hall bunkhouse had turned out, packed a gun, and mounted a bronc, at the alarm given by Doc Baker. And the galloping brones gained fast on the driven herd; but hard as they were driven with savage lashes from the quirts, the herd went slow. The Rojo was still at a distance, when the cowpunchers were close behind. Jad spurred on his horse and shouted to the Kid.

"You, Kid!"

Kid Byrne checked his bronc, for that night he was Jad's man, ready to carry out his orders—all the more because he had failed him in letting Doc Baker get away alive to give the alarm.

"Shoot!" he snapped.

"Stand back and stall off them punchers!" ordered Jad. "We got to gain time, and I guess it's you that's let us down. It's up to you, Kid Byrne."

The Kid gave a reckless laugh.

"You said it!" he answered.

He swung round his bronc. The herd lumbered on, bellowing under the cracking quirts of the Jadsons. Dan and Red went with them, not even knowing, in the dark, that the Kid was left behind. And Kid was glad that they could not know it.

"Come on, Jad!" Kid shouted—and swung the outlaw up behind him. Even with the marshal's men in hot pursuit, Kid was giving his horse a double load to carry in order to save the cattle-rustler from his fate.

For that night he was Jad's man, and Jad's order was law to him; but he knew that he was the only man in the gang who would have obeyed that order. He knew he was going back to almost certain death to gain time for the outlaws to escape with their plunder. But Jad had helped him save his comrades from the rope, and he owed it to Jad. And the handsome Kid was the man to pay his debts.

Behind the lumbering herd bellowing off into the darkness towards the ford, the Kid, grim and tight-lipped, turned back, gun in hand. He rode back down the trampled trail to meet the horsemen coming on in the gloom. He halted and sat his horse, listening to the approaching thunder of many hoofs. Hardfist was coming, and twenty men or more were riding with him—hard-bitten men, reder with a shot than a word. And at a glimpse of stetson hats in the shadows, the Kid lifted his six-gun, and blazed away. Hardfist was his enemy; his punchers were enemies who had joined the lynch mob that had roared round the calaboose in Bullwhacker, a few days ago, for the lives of Dan and Red. Foes all, they could take what was coming to them.

Bang, bang, bang! roared the Kid's six-gun, pitching bullets at the riders as they came thundering on. Hoarse shouts told that two at least of the shots had gone home, and two of the thundering brones had lost their riders. There was a clattering of bridles and stirrups as the outfit from Hall's ranch pulled in. Shot after shot rang out in reply, but the Kid had halted in the shadow of a clump of post-oaks, and the Hall punchers could see nothing of him.

Bang, bang, bang! roared the Kid's gun again, echoing through the night. He had stopped them. That sudden outburst of firing had given Hardfist's outfit the impression that the rustlers had turned at bay, as the Kid hoped it would. He heard enraged voices shouting from the dark, but the punchers did not ride on, fearing an ambush and a volley. Behind the Kid the bellowing of the lumbering herd died down towards the Rojo. He crammed cartridges into his gun.

He was getting away with it. Every minute gained was a big gain, and gave Jad another chance of pulling clear. He loosed off shots again, pumping lead into the dark. The voice of Hardfist Hall came in a yell:

"Ride on! They're getting clear! Follow me!" The marshal of Bullwhacker rode on, and the Kid, his gun empty again, gritted his teeth. He knew that Hardfist had tumbled to the trick—he had detected that there was only one gun loosing off those rapid shots, and knew that one man had stayed back to stall him off while the rest drove on the herd. Three or four minutes had been gained, but now the punchers were sweeping on—sweeping down on the Kid, an empty gun in his hand and no time to reload.

Horsemen thundered round him in the black shadow of the post-oaks, and the Kid, struck by a sudden inspiration, wheeled and rode with them. One more shadowy figure among twenty or more drew no glance, and the Kid grinned under his stetson hat, riding stirrup to stirrup with men who would have shot him to pieces had they known. But in the dark no face could be seen under the shady stetsons, and the Hall outfit had no suspicion that they had gathered up the man who had been shooting into their own bunch. The Kid rode in their midst, safe for the moment amongst men who were his foes.



He spurred on his bronc. To the riders round him he was only one of themselves, eager to overtake the rustlers.

He drew ahead of the outfit, falling in beside the leading rider. He had a glimpse of an iron face and a black beard, and a thrill ran through the Kid. He was riding by the side of Hardfist Hall, and his eyes blazed as he gripped his gun. A week ago he had shot up the marshal of Bullwhacker in his own office on Main Street in the cow town, but he had

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not been an outlaw then, and he had not shot to kill. Now, had there been a cartridge left in his gun he would have shot down the black-bearded man riding by his side as coolly as he would have shot down a panther in the chaparral. But his gun was empty, and the Kid, gripping it, rode closer to the marshal of Bullwhacker, his eyes burning.

Hall shouted back to his men.

"Burn the wind, you 'uns! They're making for the ford! Ride!"

He spurred his bronc savagely. The horse-man at his side was almost touching him, and Hall stared round at him, edging clearer. The Kid's arm went up, his six-gun in his hand, and the long, heavy barrel of the Colt descended on Hardfist Hall, crushing down his Stetson, crashing on the head under it. One groan, cut short, escaped Hardfist, as he pitched headlong from the saddle and thudded in the grass.

His horse, with empty saddle, thundered on beside the galloping Kid.

A confused shouting rose behind him. Some of the punchers were riding on, unaware of what had happened in the gloom; others had pulled in their horses round their fallen leader. Amid the outbreak of surprised shouting and yelling the Kid heard a voice calling Doc Baker. Riding with his knees, Kid had reloaded his gun, and he had been about to turn and loose off bullets. But at the sound of the doc's name he holstered his gun and grasped his reins again, and galloped on hard and fast.

The pursuit had been checked—and the Kid dashed on and overtook the rustlers, where the rustled herd was trampling and splashing through the ford of the Rojo.

"**D**RIVE 'em!" snarled Jad Jadson. Half the rustled herd had passed the ford, and if it hadn't been for the alarm given at the ranch, three hundred cows would have been driven off into the hills. But in the wild haste of the drive half of them had escaped on the prairie, or along the bank of the Rojo. On the farther side of the river the cracking quirts of the outlaws drove the bellowing beasts on, and Jad sat his bronc, in the lapping water, staring back with glinting eyes.

A rider came dashing through the ford, and he half-raised his gun. Then he knew that it was Kid Byrne.

The Kid pulled in his bronc by Jad's side.

"You stopped them, Kid?" muttered Jad.

"I guess they're delayed some—Hardfist's

down, with his cabeza cracked. But they won't be long! You got to hold the ford!" said the Kid.

"Sure!"

The delay had enabled the rustlers to get half the rustled herd across the river, but it was long miles yet to the hills and safety. Hall's hard riders would be upon their tracks long before the distance was covered by the lumbering cattle unless they could be stopped at the ford. Jad had already determined on that.

"You, Dan Oak—Red—and you, Bull, ride with the cows!" he roared, his voice ringing over the trampling and bellowing of the herd. "You others stop with me—we got to stand off them hombres."

Hardfist's fall had delayed the pursuit, but it was coming on again. Jad and his men dismounted and unslung their rifles from their saddles, posting themselves along the bank to fire on the ford when the punchers came. Only at the ford could the Rojo be crossed, unless the pursuers took the chance of swimming deep waters in the dark. Five rifles covering the ford would put paid to the pursuit, Jad reckoned. Kneeling in thick grass, rifle to shoulder, finger on trigger, the outlaws waited, with grim, desperate faces—the Kid's face as grim as any.

Out of the darkness across the glimmering view came a bunch of hard-riding horse-men, splashing into the shallows of the ford. Jad's scarred face wrinkled in a savage grin.

"Let them have it!" he gritted.

They were unseen, crouching in thick grass. Every now and then they loosed off a shot at a dim figure of a horseman on the other side. The pursuit was stopped, and the rustled cows were lumbering off towards the hills, driven by Dan and Red and Bull. The trampling and the bellowing died away in the night towards the mesa.

"I guess they're close on the hills now!" muttered Jad at last. He was holding the ford, but he was anxious to ride. There was danger every moment of some reckless rider swimming the river, above or below the ford. And a moment after he had spoken, a flash and a report on their own side of the Rojo, told the outlaws that at least one man had got across.

Jad swore fiercely as the bullet hummed by a foot from his scarred face. One man had swum the river and crept down the bank towards the outlaws bunched at the ford. A six-gun blazed at close range, and the bullets splattered among the crouching rustlers.

"Mount and ride!" hissed Jad. He fired at the flash of the six-gun, and ran for his horse, his followers at his heels. The outlaws threw themselves into the saddle and spurred.

Horsemen came splashing across the ford, undeterred now; but the Jadsons were riding fast. With whip and spur they drove their brones to a mad gallop for the hills, followed by a hail of bullets. There was a sudden squeal from a stricken horse, and Jad's bronc went headlong in the grass, throwing the outlaw leader heavily to the earth.

The Kid checked his horse.

Jad staggered up. He was dazed by the fall. The other riders had vanished in the night, but the Kid pulled in close by him.

Jad, for a second, stared at him. His own men were gone, but the Kid had stayed to save him. The next second he was springing up behind the Kid, and Kid Byrne was dashing on again, spurring and quirting the double-loaded bronc. Fast behind came the thunder of hoofs.

Hard the Kid rode, getting every ounce out of his horse. But the double load told heavily on the bronc, and the thundering hoofs behind grew closer and closer. Whizzing bullets, that whistled close, told that they were seen against the stars. But the mesa was close now—and the Kid rode for it, riding for his life. Foaming and sweating, the hard-driven bronc clattered up into the canyon at last, and the shadowy rocks and pines hid them from the pursuing outfit.

"We're through, Jad!"

"You said it!" muttered Jad.

"And after this, Jad, I guess I ain't riding with your bunch no more, nor my side-kickers ain't!" said Kid Byrne quietly. "We've stood by you, Jad, and you won't say we haven't—I'll say you'd be crows' meat now if I hadn't been riding with you. We'll part friends, Jad, at sun-up!"

Jad Jadson gave the Kid a look, and there was a strange glitter in his eyes. But he made no answer, and in silence they tramped on into the hills after the rustled herd.

*Kid's debt to Jad Jadson is wiped off—but in throwing over the rustlers' gang the Outlawed Three have added new troubles to their plight, and have yet to find that Jad can be an enemy even more ruthless than the villainous Marshal Hall. Don't miss next week's gripping chapters of this super-Western.*

## All Soccer League Forecasts for Saturday, November 9th, 1935

[Home teams are given first. Those in capital letters are selected by our experts to win; both teams in non-capitals signifies a forecasted draw.]

### ENGLISH LEAGUE.

#### DIV. I.

ARSENAL v. Derby County  
Birmingham v. Brentford  
Blackburn Rovers v. Huddersfield Town  
Chelsea v. Middlesbrough  
GRIMSBY TOWN v. Wolverhampton W.  
Leeds United v. Sheffield Wednesday  
LIVERPOOL v. Aston Villa  
MANCHESTER CITY v. Everton  
STOKE CITY v. Bolton Wanderers  
SUNDERLAND v. Preston North End  
West Bromwich Albion v. Portsmouth

#### DIV. II.

BLACKPOOL v. Plymouth Argyle.  
BRADFORD v. Fulham  
BURY v. Newcastle United  
DONCASTER ROVERS v. Bradford City  
LEICESTER CITY v. Port Vale  
NORWICH CITY v. Hull City  
NOTTINGHAM FOREST v. Barnsley  
SHEFFIELD UNITED v. Burnley  
Southampton v. Charlton  
Swansea Town v. Manchester United  
West Ham United v. Tottenham Hotspur

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### DIV. III. (Northern).

Carlisle v. Chester  
Darlington v. STOCKPORT COUNTY  
GATESHEAD v. Crewe Alexandra  
Halifax v. Chesterfield  
Hartlepool v. LINCOLN CITY  
MANSFIELD v. Rochdale  
OLDHAM v. New Brighton  
ROTHERHAM v. York City  
TRANMERE v. Accrington  
WALSALL v. Southport  
WREXHAM v. Barrow

### DIV. III. (Southern).

Aldershot v. Southend United  
BRIGHTON v. Gillingham  
BRISTOL CITY v. Notts County  
COVENTRY CITY v. Crystal Palace  
Exeter City v. CARDIFF CITY  
MILLWALL v. Bristol Rovers  
NEWPORT COUNTY v. Reading  
Queen's Park Rangers v. BOURNEMOUTH  
SWINDON TOWN v. Northampton Town  
TORQUAY UNITED v. Clapton Orient  
WATFORD v. Luton Town

### SCOTTISH LEAGUE.

#### DIV. I.

AIRDRIEONIANS v. Ayr United  
CLYDE v. Albion Rovers  
DUNDEE v. Dunfermline Athletic  
Hibernians v. CELTIC  
Kilmarnock v. Hearts  
MOTHERWELL v. Arbroath  
PARTICK THISTLE v. Third Lanark  
Queen's Park v. Hamilton Academicals  
Queen of the South v. RANGERS  
St. Johnstone v. Aberdeen

#### DIV. II.

COWDENBEATH v. Stenhousemuir  
Dumbarton v. MORTON  
EAST FIFE v. Leith Athletic  
Falkirk v. Dundee United  
FORFAR ATHLETIC v. East Stirling  
King's Park v. Brechin City  
MONTROSE v. Edinburgh City  
St. Bernards v. Raith Rovers  
ST. MIRREN v. Alloa

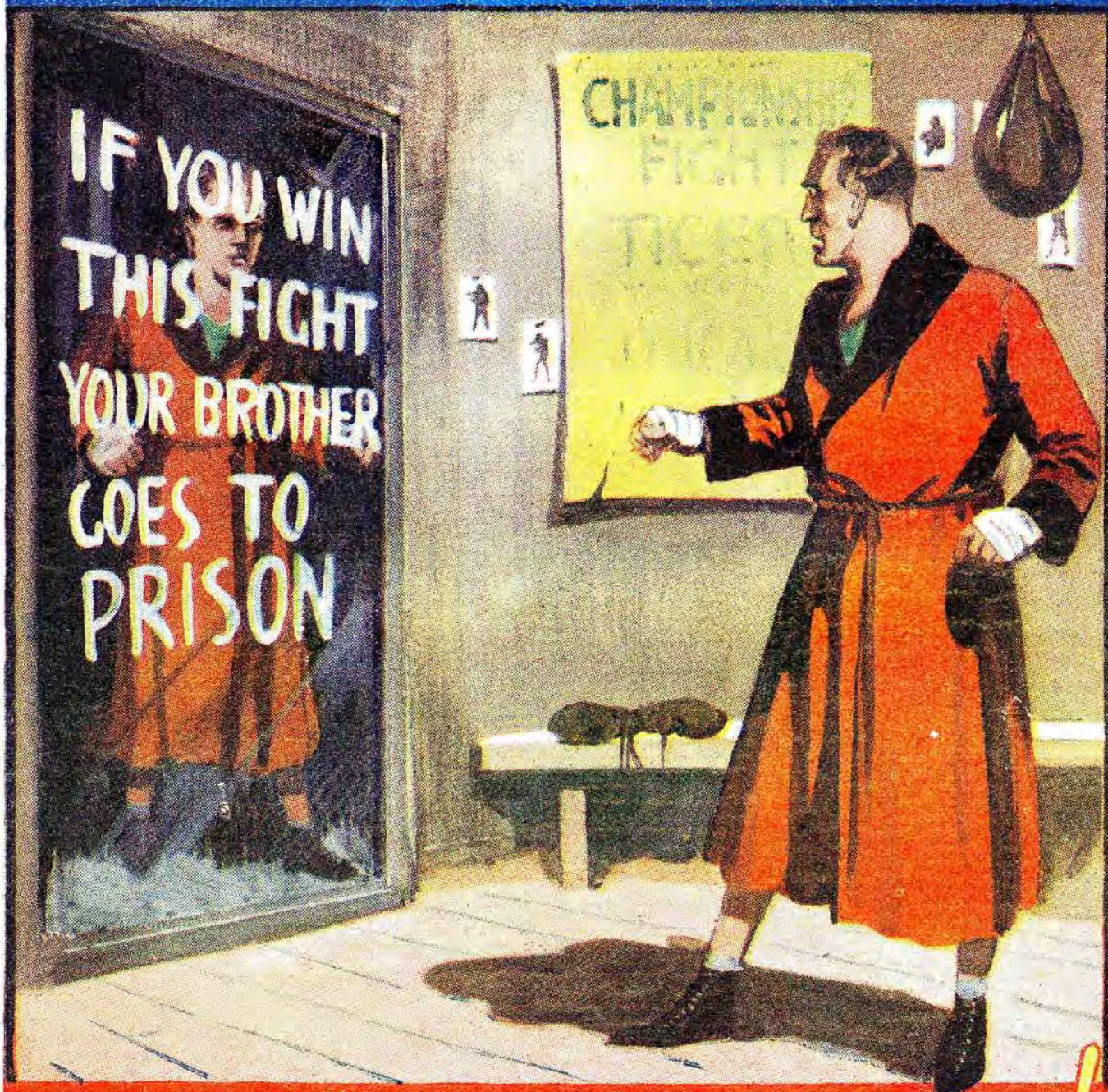


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# The Outlawed THREE



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"RECKON we're outlaws now, you fellers!" muttered Kid Byrne, his handsome face dark and sombre.

"But we ain't cattle thieves, nor ever will be," said big Dan Oak quietly.

"I'll stand for raiding Hardfist Hall," put in Tom Redway, giving his stetson a tilt, "but that's all. The pesky marshal drove us outside the law, an' I guess he deservs all he gets coming to him."

The Outlawed Three stood outside a rough shack built high up in the Mesa Mountains of Arizona. A blazing sun poured down heat into the rocky gulch where the Jadson gang had their lair.

The previous night, Kid, Red, and Dan had helped the Jadsos to rustle a herd of cattle from the ranch owned by Hardfist Hall, marshal of Bullwhacker. Hardfist was their enemy—the man who had made them outlaws—and the three pards had been glad to get in a blow against the rascally marshal. But to ride with the Jadson gang in all their lawless raids, to join a bunch of cutthroats who killed and plundered—that went against the grain with Red and Dan.

"I got to ride with the Jadsos!" said the Kid stubbornly. "When Hardfist had you uns in the calaboose at Bullwhacker, and a lynch mob howling for your blood, Jad stood by me, and helped me get you out—and I said then that I'd be his man, and ride with him as far as a sheriff's rope! And I got to keep my word."

"But—" muttered Red.

"Aw, can it!" snapped the Kid. "I guess I'm going to speak to Jad!"

He strode across to where the leader of the Jadson gang sat on a boulder. Jad looked up at him, a grim smile on his scarred face. He laid down the rifle he was cleaning, and, as if by accident, shifted his gun-belt a little, bringing the butt of his Colt a little nearer to his grasp. The Kid noted the action, and he smiled sourly.

"You won't ride your gun, Jad!" he said. "I'm your man, and standing to your orders so long as you hold me to the word I gave you. Seeing as I saved your life last night, when Doc Baker shot your cayuse, and Hardfist's riders nearly cinched you, I reckoned you might—"

"Forget it!" snapped Jadson.

"It's your say-so!" said the Kid quietly. "I ain't never broke my word yet, and I ain't going to begin by breaking it to the man that helped me get my side-kickers out of gaol! I'm your man, Jad, so long as you want me. But Dan and Red—they ain't standing for it, and I don't want them to, neither. It sure will hit me hard to part with them—but that's what I got to do if I ride with your bunch, Jad. I'm staying—but they're going."

"Forget it!" repeated Jad.

The Kid's eyes smouldered. But he kept cool. He loathed this man—the most ruthless and savage outcast in all Arizona—a man wanted by the law for a dozen killings. The mere sight of Jad's evil, scarred face got the Kid's goat. But Jad had stood by him to save Dan and Red from the lynch mob, and the Kid had to remember that.

"I don't rightly get you, Jad!" said the Kid. "You got no call to keep Dan Oak and Tom Redway here agin their will. They ain't

promised you nothing and they're free to ride when they want."

Jad shrugged his brawny shoulders.

The other Jadsos, who had been idly sprawling, were on their feet now. They exchanged glances, as if scenting trouble in the air. Bull Jadson and Hank Jadson moved off towards the shack where Dan and Red were standing. Pike and Wolf Jadson, the other two, drew a little nearer to their leader, sitting on the rocky boulder. Jad's evil eyes were fixed on the Kid.

"I guess I said forget it, Kid Byrne!" said Jad slowly. "No guy ain't riding out of my bunch without my leave. I guess I want you."

Kid Byrne breathed hard.

"It won't do, Jad!" he said. "I'm telling you, Dan and Red have got to quit. I'm your man, Jad, so long as you treat me white; but I'm saying right out that if you aim to keep Dan and Red here, I'm agin you, tooth and toenail!"

Jad laughed harshly.

"You want me to let them ride? And I guess they'd be scooping the gold out of the big strike you've made somewhere up in the mesa! Forget it."

Kid Byrne started. For the first time it flashed into his mind that Jad had other motives, of which he had known nothing, for getting the Rojo boys into his bunch. The Kid's jaw set squarely, and a glitter came into his eyes.

"That strike in the mesa ain't nothing to do with you, Jad!" he said evenly. "That strike was made on old Sam Oak's land—the mine that was lost for forty years after his father found it. It belongs to old Sam, who's lying wounded now at Doc Baker's at Parksville—and when he gets on his feet agin, he's going to have it—us being outlaws won't make no difference to that! The lost mine of the mesa is our secret, Jad, not yours."

"You loosed young gink!" said Jad, with savage scorn. "Did you figure that I roped you into my bunch jest to ride and shoot? Once you'd rode with the Jadson gang you'd never get on the right side of the law agin—and I'll tell you that's what I aimed for. That gold mine belongs to us—and I guess you'll stand in with the rest of the bunch."

The Kid almost choked.

"So that was the game?" he muttered thickly. "While I was keeping my word to

you, Jad, you was playing it low-down on me—stringing me along (thataway! Why, you pizen polecat, I'll see you strung up by Hardfist Hall afore I'll let you put a paw on old Sam's mine. And now you've shown your teeth, you pesky picean, I take back my word—you can't keep me in your gang against my will!"

The Kid's hand dropped on the gun in his belt as he rapped out the angry words. He was ready for Jad to draw.

But he was not ready for what came. Even as he dropped his hand to his gun, Pike and Wolf Jadson whipped out their Colts and covered him. On either side of the Kid, the muzzles of their six-guns almost touched him. "Stick 'em up, you!" barked Pike.

The Kid's fingers closed almost convulsively on the butt of his gun.

But he did not pull. He would have been riddled with lead before it left his holster, and he knew it. Jad, not troubling to touch a weapon, grinned.

"You pizen skunk!" choked the Kid. "You had this fixed ready after what I said to you last night about quitting—"

"You said it!" agreed Jad coolly. "Hands up, Kid Byrne, or you get yours sudden!"

Slowly the Kid's hands went up over his stetson.

He looked round towards the shack. Bull and Hank had acted as promptly as the others. Their Colts covered Dan and Red.

With their hands up, the two boys stepped out of the shack. Jad Jadson rose to his feet with a grim laugh. He stepped to one after another of the three Rojo boys and disarmed them. The Kid's face was white with rage. He had kept faith with the scarred outlaw—for this! The treacherous rascal had been deceiving him all along!

"I guess you're going to point out the gold strike, Kid!" said Jad. "Hardfist Hall ain't getting his claws on it—but I'll say that Jad Jadson is!"

"Never!" breathed the Kid. "You doggoned thief, you double-crossing pizen polecat, fill me with lead, if you like, but you ain't getting a word from me, no more than Hardfist Hall."

"You got another guess coming!" grinned Jad. "Fix them up, fellers, and stick them in the shack. I guess they'll talk when I want."

With strong rawhide rope, Kid and Dan and Red were bound, hand and foot, and pitched into the shack by the grinning Jadsos. While

the outlaws were preparing for the cattle drive into Mexico, the Rojo boys lay there, bound and helpless, as the sun went down on the mesa.

**W**ITH the dark the Jadsons were gone. Dan and Kid and Red lay in the shack, staring out at the glimmer of the camp-fire flickering against the dark rocks, gleaming on the tumbling stream; listening to the trampling and grunting of the stolen herd, driven away by mountain paths.

Only one of the gang remained in charge of the camp and the prisoners—Bull Jadson, sitting on a log by the camp-fire, smoking and yawning.

The sounds of the cattle-drive died away into silence. Jad and his men were gone. It was likely to be a couple of days before they came back, after getting rid of the rustled cows. And then—

Kid Byrne gritted his teeth in helpless rage as he thought of it. He knew the ways of the Jadsons. They would not stand on ceremony in wringing a secret of gold from their prisoners.

And there was no help—no escape! Bull Jadson rose at last, knocked out his pipe, and stepped towards the shack. He was going to turn into his blankets, but he was going to give the prisoners the once-over first, though he knew that they were safe. He leaned into the shack, groping over the knotted rawhide.

"I guess you'uns will keep," grinned the ruffian.

"You ain't letting us loose for cats?" muttered the Kid.

On the earthen floor stood a large can of water, and beside it lay a hunk of Mexican maize bread. That was the rough fare of the prisoners—and by that time they would have been glad of it. But Bull grinned and shook his head.

"I guess I ain't risking it none," he answered. "Jad would sure be plumb mad if he came back and found you had skipped."

And, having satisfied himself that the knotted rawhide was safe, Bull left the shack.

With grim faces the Rojo boys watched him roll in his blanket, his feet to the fire. The day had been blazing; but night was cold in the Arizona uplands. In a few minutes Bull was sleeping; though he slept like a cougar, ready to wake at a sound.

Kid and Dan strained at the rawhide. Red sat motionless with wrinkled brow. Dan gave it up at last, sweating and panting. He rolled over, dipped in the open top of the can, and drank.

The Kid lay watching the sleeping outlaw by the fire with burning eyes. None of them thought of sleep. Red stirred at last.

"I reckon that bulldozer is fast asleep," whispered the youngest of the Rojo boys, in the faintest of whispers.

"Sure!"

Kid glanced curiously at his friend. Something was working in Red's mind. Red moved, and drank from the water in the open can as Dan had done. Kid did not trouble about it. In his rage and bitterness he seemed indifferent to hunger and thirst. But he stared at Red, squatting by the can, plunged his bound wrists into the water.

"I guess it hurts a few, Red," muttered the Kid.

He figured that Red was seeking to relieve the pain in his wrists, caused by the cruel grip of the knotted rawhide.

"Quiet, Kid!" breathed Red. "I guess that hombre ain't hard to wake."

Even Bull Jadson, the Kid reckoned, would not have cared if he had seen Red relieve the pain in his bound wrists by holding them in the water. But he said no more. He lay quiet, with his own black and bitter thoughts. Red sat silent and motionless, his hands under water.

Dan Oak fell into an uneasy doze at last. The Kid's thoughts began to grow dimmer as the night grew old. But Red's eyes were open and unwinking, and every now and then he strained silently at the rawhide.

"By the great horn spoon!" he breathed.

The Kid raised his head. "Quiet!" breathed Red. "It's a cinch, Kid! It's a cinch! But quiet!"

"I don't get you," muttered the Kid, in amazement. "What—"

Red grinned. "Ain't you never knowed a rawhide rope stretch when it was wet, Kid?" he whispered.

Kid Byrne's heart gave a great bound. With steady patience Red had sat there for hours, with his hands steeped in the chill of the water. It was a chance—a slim chance. Red had not banked on it, but he had hoped. And his hope was coming round.

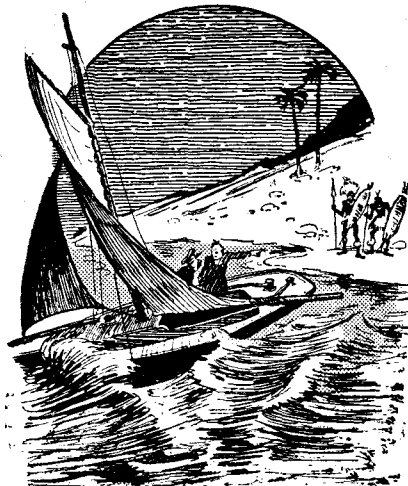
Dan had caught the whispering, and sat up. Both the elder boys fixed their eyes on Red, dim in the shadows. They scarcely breathed. Once free of their bonds—The Kid's eyes danced at that thought.

Red drew his hands from the water. The perspiration started out on his brow as he strained at his wrists; and the wet rawhide gave.

A long, long effort that cost Red the exertion of every ounce of his strength—and his hands slipped free. The knotted rawhide dropped, and Red rubbed his chafed wrists.

It was some time before Red could use his numbed fingers. Then he rolled over to Dan and started to work on the rawhide

## "SINK ME——!"



"There you are, you silly mutt. I told you that we were past the mouth of the Thames!"

knots at his wrists. In ten minutes Dan Oak's hands were free, and he rolled over to the Kid, and began to unknott his bonds.

No sound or movement came from Bull Jadson, fast asleep in his blanket by the dying fire. But far off in the east there was an almost imperceptible paling of the dark. Dawn was coming. With sunrise the ruffian would stir.

With feverish energy the Rojo boys worked at the knotted ropes on their legs. They were free at last. Had the Kid had a weapon, he would have stepped out and called Bull Jadson to account on the spot. But he had no weapon; and there was a six-gun in the outlaw's belt, close to his hand as he slept.

"We got to beat it without that bulldozer getting wise," breathed the Kid. "He will sure throw lead at the first sound."

He stepped silently from the shack, Dan and Red following after him. Up from the east came a glimmer over the summits of the hills. Their way lay down the gulch, and they had to pass within a dozen feet of the outlaw slumbering by the smouldering embers of the fire. With beating hearts they trod softly.

Click!

Red's foot struck a loose fragment of rock, and it rolled and clinked. The sound was slight, but it was enough to wake the outlaw.

Bull Jadson's blanket rolled back, and his head was lifted. The three boys stopped, their hearts almost ceasing to beat. They were not six yards from him, and if he looked in their direction—

Silently the Kid stooped and gripped the jagged fragment on which Red's foot had struck. They saw the outlaw glance round. He gave a convulsive start as he spotted three half-crouching figures against the pale glimmer of dawn, and then he was on his feet in a split second, his hand on his gun.

Up went the Kid's arm. The fragment of rock whizzed through the air like a bullet, and crashed into the bearded face of the outlaw.

With a yell, his gun half-drawn, the burly ruffian staggered back, blood streaming from his face, and fell on his blanket.

"Burn the wind!" panted the Kid.

Like startled antelopes the Rojo boys fled down the rocky gulch. Behind them they heard the enraged roar of the rustler. Bull Jadson scrambled to his feet, tugging at his gun.

Hot lead spattered on the rocks round the Rojo boys as they ran. But they had a start, and they vanished among the rocky boulders down the gulch, while Bull Jadson, spitting oaths, loosed off shot after shot.

**H**ARDFIST HALL scowled in the bright sunrise.

In the great canyon of the mesa, through which the Rio Rojo rolled down to the plain, the marshal of Bullwhacker and his men were camped. Under his stetson the marshal's head was bandaged—it still throbbed from the blow the Kid had dealt him in the night raid on the Hall Ranch.

For a whole day he had ridden the wild trails in the mesa, with a dozen punchers from his ranch, armed to the teeth, in search of the Jadson gang and the stolen steers—and still more keenly in search of the Rojo boys.

At night the outfit had camped in the canyon, after a day of weary and futile trailing, and now a new day had dawned, and Hardfist was figuring whether it was worth while to ride longer in quest of the elusive rustlers or whether to send his men back to the ranch and ride for Bullwhacker. He hated to give up the trail, and he had a hunch that, as the first gleam of the sun came up over the mesa, he had heard an echo of distant firing, somewhere in the hills—which might, or might not, be a clue to the gang he was hunting.

His men were still in their blankets, the tethered horses sleeping in the grass by the water, when Bill Hall strode out of the camp, his keen eyes searching the high, rugged sides of the great canyon.

"By the great horn spoon!" breathed Hall suddenly.

On a ridge of rock, up the rugged slopes of the canyon, a figure appeared in the sunrise—a slim figure that the marshal knew.

Kid Byrne looked small in the distance—but the marshal knew him, and his eyes gleamed. Standing on the ridge, the Kid was looking up the rugged slope—not down towards the marshal. He looked like a man who feared pursuit—watching for a pursuer.

Bill Hall half-drew the gun—but paused and watched. As if satisfied, the Kid waved his arm in sign to others, and two more figures clambered over the rocky ridge. The marshal knew them—Dan Oak and Red.

He side-stepped into the cover of a pine and watched. He could see that none of the three was armed, and he gave a savage grin of satisfaction as he noted it. With a gun in his hand, the three cowboys were at his mercy.

They clambered over the ridge and dropped on the other side, disappearing from his eyes. Instantly the marshal was hurrying on.

He sighted them again. Kid Byrne was moving ahead—Dan following him, and helping Red, who was clearly the weariest of the weary three. They were winding among the rocks, heading down towards the river, apparently with the intention of crossing it to put it between themselves and pursuit.



Bill Hall quickened pace, closing in on the three.

His hard, black-bearded face was merciless. Under his gun, if they gave in, he would drive them back to his camp—to be gaoled again in the calaboose at Bullwhacker, there to choose between the rope of Judge Lynch or revealing the secret of the lost goldmine of the mesa. But if they gave trouble—the slightest spot of trouble—his gun would talk. One of them would be enough to tell the secret!

Burly and heavy as he was, the marshal of Bullwhacker was used to trails, and he trod lightly. As yet, the Rojo cowboys had not heard him or seen him. But the Kid's keen glance, sweeping back for a sign of Bull Jadson, suddenly picked up the setson on the bandaged head, the hard, black-bearded face under it. He gave a sharp cry of surprise. Dan and Red looked back. He was seen now and Bill Hall leaped forward at a rapid run, his gun half-raised.

Crack!

From higher up the rugged canyon came the roar of a gun, and the setson spun on the marshal's bandaged head.

He gave a yell of surprise and spun round, glaring for his enemy.

The shot did not come from the Rojo cowboys—they were unarmed, and ahead of the marshal, near the river. It came from high up the canyon behind, and it flashed into Bill Hall's mind that it came from the unseen pursuer of the three. The gun roared again, and a bullet gashed along the marshal's tanned, bearded cheek.

His lips snarled over his gritted teeth; his finger was on the trigger of his Colt. But he saw nothing but rock and pine and trickling water. He knew he must be clear to the view of the man high up in the rocks, but of the marksman himself he had no glimpse.

Twice the gun roared again, and Hardfist Hall bounded back. One bullet grazed his shoulder—the other clipped his ear as he leaped. He panted with rage.

He had no chance. He had to break away or be riddled with lead by the gunman he could not see. He leaped away among the rocks, running for his life, and as he ran, Bull Jadson stood up among the boulders, high up the hillside, and pumped bullets after him. Lead crashed on the rocks and splattered round the running marshal of Bullwhacker. Winding and dodging like a coyote he ran, and vanished down the canyon like a hunted deer.

Not till he was in sight of his camp did the marshal of Bullwhacker pause to take breath and stare back with burning eyes. He had escaped—but three gashes from the bullets bled red on his face and shoulder. He was not pursued—he reckoned that the Jadson had gone on after the Rojo boys. He panted and panted for breath, mad with rage, as he tramped on to his camp—to call his men to the trail of Bull Jadson.

"QUICK!" panted the Kid.

He grabbed Red by one arm—Dan had him by the other. They plunged into the waters of the Rojo. For the moment, as they sighted the black-bearded face of the marshal of Bullwhacker in the distance, the Rojo boys had reckoned that all was lost. They had escaped one enemy to fall to another. Then came the burst of firing from the high rocks, and Bill Hall ran. And they panted on breathlessly to the river—saved from that sudden danger by the desperado who was pursuing them.

It was a respite, though a brief one. Once across the river, the Kid knew of the safest hide-out in all Arizona—the cave of the secret goldmine, hidden from all eyes by the screen of falling water in the arroyo. Minutes, even seconds, were precious now. The marshal of Bullwhacker was gone—and Bull Jadson had been delayed in his pursuit.

They plunged recklessly into the rushing waters of the Rojo at a place where it was possible to ford the mountain stream neck-deep. Red's feet did not touch bottom, but his comrades supported him on either side.

There was a sudden splash in the water, a foot from the Kid's head. He flashed round a glance, as the report of a Colt rolled on



"You dirty, pizen polecat!" grated Kid, his hand dropping to his gun-butt. "You can't keep me in your gang against my will!" But before he could draw, two of the Jadson gang were at either side of him, their levelled Colts almost touching his!

the air. Bull Jadson, still high up in the rocks, had sighted them in the water, and he was shooting. The Kid spotted the brawny outlaw, black against the sunrise, the six-gun in his hand spitting smoke and flame.

Splash, splash! came again. There was a sharp cry from Dan Oak, and a crimson tinge floated down the rushing water.

"Dan!" panted Red.

"Jest a scratch—get on!" snapped Dan.

"You'uns get on and let me go!" gasped Red.

"I guess—"

"Can it, you!" barked the Kid.

Splash, splash! The outlaw was throwing lead fast. It seemed a miracle to the Kid that he found himself alive at the farther bank, and dragged Red out of the water.

Dan followed, the blood running down his arm from a gash where a bullet had cut the skin. The six-gun roared again, and a bullet chipped rock at their feet as they clambered up the bank.

But they hunted cover now; the great boulders, wildly strewn, hid them as they struggled on up the rugged, western side of the Rojo canyon.

The Kid panted with relief as he led the way into the narrow, steep arroyo, down which the torrent came tumbling in a series of cascades.

High up that steep ravine was the hidden cave of the gold-mine; and if they could reach it unseen they were saved.

"Burn the wind!" hissed the Kid.

But the way was steep—their limbs were weary. Haste, haste, was what was needed, with every second precious; but the ascent of the arroyo, by the rugged, rocky bank of the tumbling torrent, was slow. It seemed an age to the Kid before they reached the spot, half-way up the ravine, where the waterfall roared down in sheets of water and spray and foam.

Looking at it, the Kid would never have guessed, any more than his comrades, that a deep cave was hidden in the rock behind the sheet of falling water. But he knew—and he did not hesitate a moment.

Lower down the arroyo, behind them, trampling boots rang on the rocks. Bull Jadson was close on their tracks, and at any second he might come into sight, and the six-gun would roar again, at close range. Only the winding course of the mountain torrent had saved them, so far. Kid Byrne gripped Red by the arm.

"Follow on, Dan!" he panted.

"You bet!"

It seemed like death to Dan and Red, to plunge into the roar of the falling torrent,

sweeping madly down the steep ravine to join the Rojo in the canyon below. But they knew what the Kid knew, and they trusted to his guidance.

Deafened by the roaring water, blinded by the spray, Kid Byrne ducked under the edge of the torrent and plunged on, dragging Red—and Dan Oak followed, with shut teeth.

For a long moment they were blind and deaf in a cauldron of foaming waters; the next, they were through, standing on the rocky shelf by the pool in the cavern, in a deep twilight.

Drenched to the skin, panting for breath, they peered about them in the gloom, the thundering torrent, falling past the mouth of the cave, only a few feet from them.

Dan Oak drew a deep, quivering breath.

"And this is the place, Kid?" he muttered.

"Sure! This is where I picked up the nugget, and found the workings left by old Sam's father forty years ago!" said the Kid. "I guess it will come home to old Sam, even if Hardfist Hall gets us three and strings us up, as he aims to do."

"He won't get us easy!" said Red. "I'll say Hardfist won't spot this hide-out if he hunts till the cows come home."

"You said it!" agreed the Kid.

Crack! came the roar of a six-gun close at hand. Bull Jadson was tramping on the rocky bank, where two or three minutes ago the Rojo boys had been standing. They had only been in time, and they wondered, with throbbing hearts, whether they had been in time.

If the pursuing rustler had been near enough to see them plunge under the falling water, he might guess—he would guess. They had had to take the chance of that.

Had the bullet come through the screen of falling water, it would have told that he knew. But it was not fired into the cave. The rustler was losing off a random shot up the arroyo. So near was he, that they could hear his heavy boots grinding on the rocks; but the trampling footsteps passed on, clambering higher up the ravine. He did not know!

The Outlawed Three waited and listened. With their ears accustomed to the roar of the torrent, other sounds came clear. Minutes—long minutes of anxiety—passed, and then came the sound of heavy, trampling boots again. Bull Jadson was coming back down the steep arroyo.

They heard him halt on the rocky bank beside the foot of the waterfall. Somewhere

(Continued on back page.)

With beating heart the young tramp suddenly started to creep closer, gripping his stick tightly.

But scarcely had he moved when the other men returned. Over the wall they came, with the same silent speed as they had departed. Only this time they brought something else with them—something wrapped untidily in a blanket that lay in one of the men's armpits, and, as the fellow dropped to the ground, Peter caught the sound of a faint whimpering cry. It was instantly stifled, yet it told him all he wanted to know. Those men were kidnappers, and the captive in the blanket was a child!

**P**ETER GREVILLE went into action then with a bang! He realised now that he should have raised the alarm earlier. However, this was no time for vain regrets. It was up to him to make amends.

Out of the darkness he sprang, just as the men thrust their small victim into the car. They whirled on him, too late.

"Crack! Thwack! Two sizzling blows of his stick knocked the wall-climbers senseless. And so enthusiastically did Peter lash out that the second stroke snapped his stout ashplant. He snorted fiercely, cast the useless stump away. Then he slammed into the third man—the leader of the gang.

Utterly surprised by the smashing attack, the fellow had shrunk back helplessly as his confederates were beaten down. But now, as Peter hurled himself forward, the man recovered with a vicious snarl. Blued steel glinted in his hand. There came a sudden jet of flame, followed by a deafening report.

"Go-osh!" Peter reeled in his stride. Something had happened to his ribs—they were on fire! A wave of agony tore through him.

But instead of dropping him in his tracks, the wound sent him berserk.

"You scum!" he gritted, and pounced tigerishly, grabbing the man's gun wrist as a second report shattered the stillness.

Next moment the pair were fighting like fiends.

The crook was strong, desperate, and as dirty a fighter as ever used knives and boot. Yet there was no stopping young Peter Greville then. Heedless of savage punishment, he wrenched the kidnapper's gun away, and sent the man staggering with a blow to the body. Then, with all his beef, he unhooked a last right uppercut—and that was that!

"Crack!" The man went down flat on his

## TIME WILL TELL!



"Garn! Your hands are dirtier than mine!" "Well, I'm two years older than you, ain't I?"

back, falling with arms outstretched, and face upturned.

Peter bent over him, rummaged his pocket until he found a box of matches. He struck one, and peered at the fellow's lean features.

"I knew it! I thought I recognised you, Ferguson, you rat!" Peter burst out.

And then as the match died away, there in the rain-swept darkness, with three senseless crooks sprawled out around him, he flung back his head and laughed and laughed till the tears ran down his face.

Blood was streaming from his bullet wound, too, but he never even noticed it.

"Wax in his hands, was I? Oh, gosh! But I've given him the last twisting!" he gurgled weakly.

And Peter was still languing when two of Lord Cleaver's gamekeepers, attracted by the shots, came rushing down the lane.

By the time young Greville had told his story, he was in a state of collapse through loss of blood and exhaustion. Nor did he fully recover his faculties until two days later, when he revived sufficiently to discover that he was an invalid, and an honoured guest in Lord Cleaver's country mansion.

Naturally the attempted kidnapping of his

lordship's son and heir had been splashed in all the newspapers, and Peter, babbling in delirium, had given away his own identity. Almost the first person he recognised was his father, old Cedric, who had been sent for immediately by Lord Cleaver.

Quite a happy reconciliation followed. Nevertheless, old Cedric could not shake off his crustiness—or maybe he clung to it just to disguise his real feelings.

"Well, Peter, my lad, you've done something at last to make me proud of you!" he growled. "Though don't run away with the idea that you've acted the shrewd man's part in this affair. If you'd been really shrewd, my son, you'd have gone for help at once, instead of waiting to tackle those three fellows by yourself, and getting two ribs broken by a bullet. But—at last the old man's expression genuinely softened—"but, shrewd or not, son, you've at last proved yourself a man. You'll come home again with me as soon as you're fit to travel, and—maybe we can settle down to the old law-business together at last."

"Oh, but wait!" smiled Lord Cleaver, who was present. "Law business sounds very dry to me, Mr. Greville—too dry for such a young man as your son. I can do with a young man myself of grit and character. In fact, I've already made up my mind to offer Peter the post of my personal secretary."

Peter, white-faced and thin, chuckled.

"Thanks, both of you; but after what I've been through for the past months, I don't think the prospect of any sort of office job would interest me, if you don't mind, my saying so. As a matter of fact, I've been thinking things over while I've been lying here, and I know the sort of job I'd like to get, if you are willing to help me. I want to go into the Army. Will you help me get an officer's commission?"

"It took a lot of persuasion before Lord Cleaver and Peter's father saw things in Peter's light, but, true to their word in the end, they helped him, and got him his commission.

After that Peter never looked back. He rose to be a major, and when he retired the authorities decided he was still too fine a man to leave in idleness. And a good job they did, say I, for he's now the best boss a man ever had.

How do I know? Because they made him governor of Blackmoor Prison, and he's governor there still.

Another grand yarn from **Warder Strong** next week—the story of an amazing friendship that put a crook on the straight path and an honest man behind prison bars!

## THE OUTLAWED THREE!

(Continued from page 151)

there, he knew, they were hiding—he knew that they could not be far. He was not ten feet away; but the screen of falling water was between, and of the secret cave he knew and suspected nothing. But would he guess when he had searched among the rocks and found no trace of them?

His rough, savage voice came to their ears, growling oaths. He was beaten and perplexed, but not dreaming, for a moment, of giving up the hunt.

He dared not face Jad Jadsen, when the gang-leader came back from the Mexican border, and tell him that the prisoners had escaped, and with them the secret of the lost mine.

Then suddenly came another sound—another voice ringing up the ravine—a voice whose hard, metallic tones the Rojo boys knew well.

"The marshal!" breathed Kid.

"Hands up, Jadsen!" came the shout of the marshal of Bullwhacker. "We got you covered, you lobo-wolf! Hands up, or you get yours!"

The boys heard a roar of rage from Bull Jadsen, immediately followed by the crack of a gun. He had not known, any more than

the Rojo boys, that the marshal's outfit was camped down the Rojo canyon; he had reckoned, as they had reckoned, that the last had been seen of Hardfist, when he ran from the whizzing bullets. But Bull Jadsen knew better now, as the ravine below him swarmed with armed men—grim-faced punchers, with lifted revolvers in their grip.

They had him covered; but surrender was not in the ruffian's thoughts—surrender to a rope!

He threw up his revolver and fired, even as the marshal of Bullwhacker shouted—and there was a roar from a dozen six-guns. Silent, white-faced, the Rojo boys heard a heavy fall on the rocks—a trampling of feet as the Hall outfit rushed up; a groan and a curse from the wounded rustler as the grasp of many hands closed on him. They heard the voice of Hardfist Hall again.

"That's Bull Jadsen, and I guess we cinched him! You doggoned cow thief, I got the marks of your lead on me; but I'll tell all Arizona you won't throw lead again! Tote him along, you uns! I guess there's a cottonwood down in the canyon that will suit him fine!"

Another groan—a gasping curse—a trampling of feet—as the captured rustler was dragged away down the ravine.

The sounds died away, and only the boom

of the falling waters sounded in the ears of the boys hidden in the river-cave.

They peered at one another in the gloom—silent. The same thought was in all their minds—Bull Jadsen, if he suspected their hide-out, would never find it now, and would never tell what he suspected!

Bull Jadsen, shot-up by the Hall punchers, dvagged away to the nearest tree, had gone to the sudden end of his savage life-trail.

Outlawed and hunted, the Rojo boys were safe in their hide-out—where they trod with a golden fortune under their feet.

Under cover of another night, the Jadsen gang rode back from the Mexican border to their lair in the mesa; but Jad looked in vain for his prisoners, and in vain for the man he had left to guard them.

It was not for two or three days that he learned what had become of Bull Jadsen—and he learned it when, in the Rojo canyon, he came to a figure that swung in the wind from a rope on the branch of a cottonwood!

**Kid, Dan and Red have escaped their pursuers—but next week they carry the war into their enemies' camp! Read how Kid Byrne, disguised as a Mexican, goes after the reward that Hardfist Hall has placed on the heads of the Outlawed Three!**

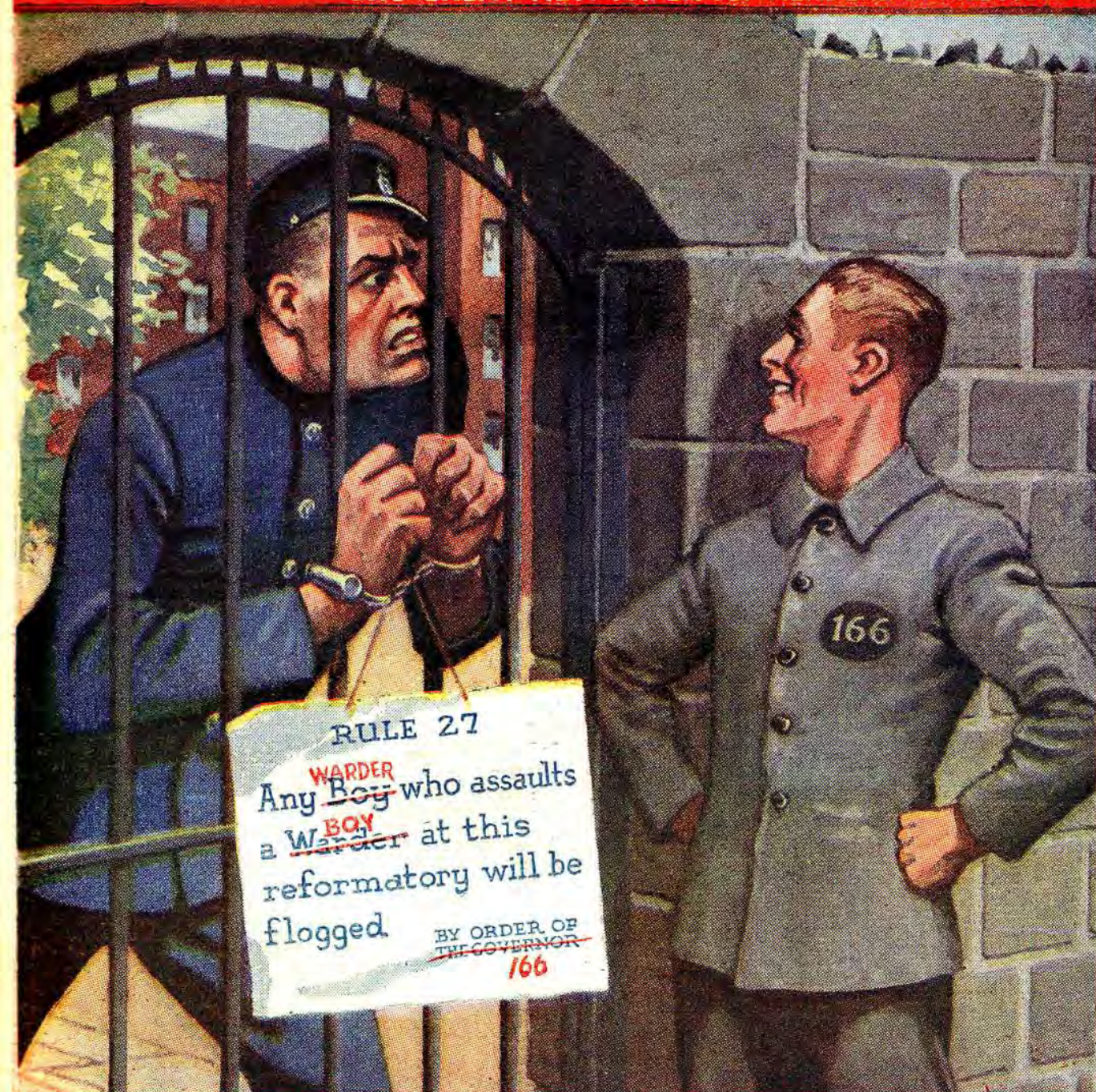


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FROM BEING HUNTED, THE OUTLAWED THREE BECOME THE HUNTERS, LURING HARDFIST HALL, THE RASCALLY MARSHAL, INTO A TRAP WHERE THEY'VE GOT HIM COLD!

# The Outlawed THREE

A BULLET zipped through the air a yard above Kid Byrne's head, and the cowboy dropped flat into the high grass by the bank of the Rio Rojo. From the veranda of the ranch-house on the river-bank a spurt of smoke drifted, but of the marksman who had fired the shot there was no sign.

"The dirty pizen-skunk!" muttered the Kid. He did not stir. Whoever was firing from the rancho was shooting with deadly purpose, and the Kid, unarmed, had no wish to argue with a loaded gun. He waited for another shot. Long minutes passed.

On hands and knees, the Kid began to crawl through the tall grass. Hardly a stirring of the leaves showed the way he went as, inch by inch, he wormed his way to a bunch of shrubs, where he could lift his head in cover and survey the rancho.

There was no sign of the man with the gun; the Kid guessed he must still be keeping out of sight, with his sights trained on the spot where the Kid had flopped down into the grass.

The young outlaw smiled grimly. Keeping his head low, taking advantage of every bush, fence, and hillock, he crept towards the back of the rancho. Every inch of the ground was familiar to him, for this was the place where he had lived ever since he could walk, until the day Sam Oak, his uncle, had been shot by an unknown hand, and Kid and his two side-kickers, Dan Oak and Tom Redway, accused of the shooting, had had to flee from their fellow-men.

Who the unknown gunman was the Kid could not guess. It was weeks since old Sam Oak, the owner of the Rojo Rancho, had been shot-up, by an unknown hand, and taken to Doc Baker's shack at Parksville.

Since then the old rancho had lain deserted. The Rojo cowboys, outlawed and hunted, were in hiding in the Mesa Mountains. The kid wondered whether Hardfist Hall, the marshal of Bullwhacker, might have left one of his roughnecks on the watch, in case Dan or Red or Kid revisited their old home.

More likely it was some rustler—perhaps one of the Jadson gang. Whoever he was, the Kid had made up his mind that he was going to handle him, gun and all.

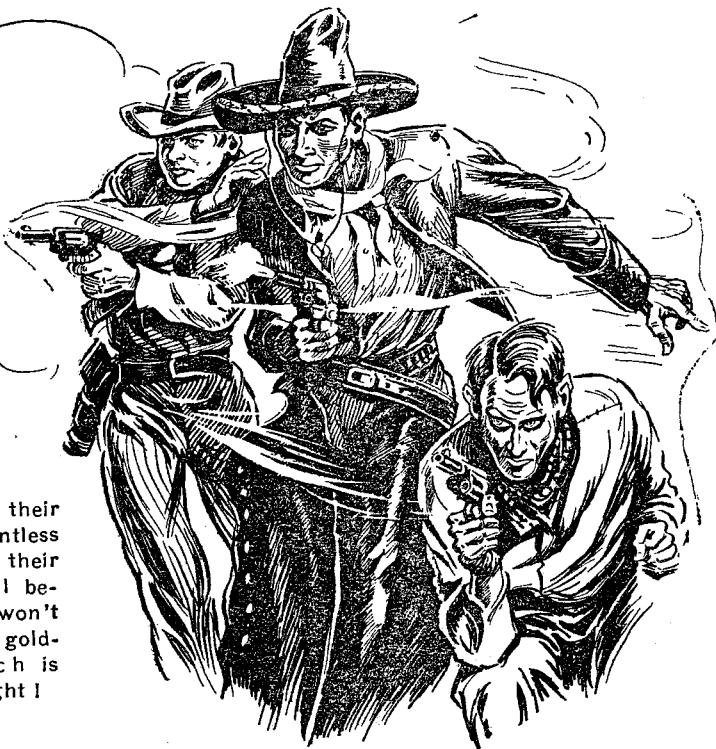
The kitchen door at the back stood open. Kid Byrne, stepping silently in, noted at a glance the signs of camping—red embers in the rusty old stove, dirty platters on the trestle table.

Soft-footed as a cat, the Kid stepped through the rancho. He passed through old Sam Oak's room, that had a door opening on to the veranda in front.

The door stood wide, and the Kid, stopping there, looked out. His face was grim; but it broke into a grin at what he saw.

Bunched against the veranda rail, not ten feet from him, was a figure in velveteen jacket and bell trousers, red sash, and spurred boots, and high-crowned sombrero—evidently a Mexican. The sunlight glimmered on silver ear-rings in the man's dusky ears. He had his back to the Kid. He was watching the grass by the river, plainly without a suspicion that the Kid had left the spot where he had dropped into cover.

Rewards on their heads, relentless pursuers on their heels—and all because they won't give up the gold-mine which is theirs by right!



A gun was gripped in the man's hand, ready for a pot-shot. And the Kid grinned at the bandit's unconscious back. Pausing, he glanced round the room, and picking up a heavy, three-legged stool by one leg, aimed carefully, and flung the missile with all the strength of his sinewy arm.

It whizzed across the veranda and crashed fairly on the Mexican's back. A yell of surprise and agony burst from the bandit as the heavy pinewood struck. Almost paralysed by the crash, the greaser rolled over on the planks—and the Kid reached him with a bound.

A swift kick knocked the revolver from the relaxed, dusky fingers, and then the Kid's fist, with all his weight behind it, crashed into the Mexican's face. He sprawled on his back, and in a second more the Kid had grabbed up the revolver, his finger was on the trigger, and the bandit's own gun was looking him in the face.

"If you move, this is where you get yours!" said Kid Byrne grimly.

The Mexican, sprawling at his feet, stared up at him, the savage ferocity in his face changing to terror as he found himself looking into the barrel of his own revolver.

"Senor, senor, hold your fire!" he panted.

"Shut up, you doggoned, pesky piecan!" snapped the Kid. "And get on your feet, you pizen-skunk, and stick your paws over your cabeza!"

"Si, senor, si!" snapped the bandillero.

He crawled to his feet, wriggling with pain, his mouth running red from the crash of the Kid's fist. His sombrero had fallen off, and he lifted his hands over his mop of black, greasy hair. He stood unsteadily, eyeing the Kid with mingled hate and terror.

Kid Byrne stepped up to him, and, with his left hand, removed a long cuchillo knife from his belt. Then he eyed the man thoughtfully. The Kid had visited his old home at Rojo to collect some things for the Outlawed Three's hide-out in the mesa; but finding the Mexican bandit there had put other thoughts into his mind.

"I guess," said the Kid at last, "that I sure ought to wipe you out! You pizen-pole-cat, pulling your gun at sight on a guy!

But I guess I'll let you skip. But just what's your name?"

"Domingo Gomez, senor," muttered the Mexican.

"I guess I've heard of you," said the Kid, "and you sure are wanted bad by the marshals on the other side of the border. You got a horse here?"

Gomez nodded.

"I'm borrowing that critter," drawled the Kid. "I'll say I'm borrowing your whole outfit. You get away with a whole skin, so you can figure yourself a lucky greaser. Get out of them rags I'll fix you up with a blanket."

The bandit stared at him in utter astonishment. He was not surprised that the man who had beaten him should take his gun and his knife and his horse. But what the Kid wanted with his clothes was a mystery to him.

"Senor—" he gasped.

"I guess," said the Kid grimly, "that I ain't telling you twice. Mr. Domingo Gomez! Hop into that room and strip, and fix yourself up with a blanket!"

Under the muzzle of the gun the Kid drove the bandit into the rancho. There the bandit stripped off his Mexican attire, and, stuttering with rage, belted on a blanket.

The Kid grinned at the sight of him in that strange guise, heedless of the fury and ferocity in the dusky face and the glittering black eyes.

"Now I guess you can beat it!" drawled the Kid. "Make it snappy! I'm goin' to shoot if you ain't out of range in three shakes of a possum's tail!"

He lifted the revolver. Domingo Gomez lost no time. With a leap he was across the veranda; with another leap he was down the steps. Then the Mexican was running for the plains.

Kid Byrne watched him, over the rail, and, as he paused at a distance to shake an infuriated fist back, fired a warning shot.

The bullet cut a strip from the blanket, and the bandit, with a yell, darted away at top speed.

The Kid grinned as he vanished. He reckoned that he had made Domingo Gomez, bandillero of Mexico, tired of Arizona as a health resort!



But Kid Byrne lost no time. Sam Oak's ranch was too near the Hall ranch and the cow town of Bullwhacker for the Kid to linger there. A quarter of an hour later he was riding away on the Mexican bandit's horse, with the bandit's clothes rolled up in a bundle, to rejoin Dan and Red at the hide-out in the mesa.

**H**ARDFIST HALL, marshal of Bullwhacker, scowled at the horseman riding up Main Street. The rider was in velvet jacket and calzoneros, red sash, and high-crowned sombrero, his face dark almost as an Indian's. There was nothing about that Spanish-looking rider to call for special attention from the town marshal of Bullwhacker.

Mexican vaqueros came up the Bullwhacker trail often enough; there were always two or three greasers to be seen about the cow town.

But Bill Hall scowled at the horseman, because he was in a mood to scowl at anybody or anything; and he had no use for greasers, anyway.

Standing in the doorway of his office on Main Street, Hardfist viewed the world with a jaundiced eye. The gold of the mesa—the secret mine found on Sam Oak's land by Kid, Red, and Dan—was as far off from his greedy clutches as ever. Like old Sam, Hardfist had clutches as ever. Like old Sam, Hardfist had always believed in that mine; and he was last.

He had driven the three into outlawry—they were hunted for their lives—and Hardfist Hall had counted on roping them in and forcing the secret from them. But days lengthened into weeks, and the hunt had slackened at last, and Dan and Kid and Red were still free.

On every wall in and around Bullwhacker, bills were posted offering five hundred dollars reward for the Outlawed Three. But no one had yet come in to claim the reward. Bill Hall was beginning to wonder whether the Rojo boys had pulled up stakes and quit westward into California, or eastward into New Mexico, or even south into Mexico proper. But he did not reckon so. He reckoned that they would stick by the mine they'd found in the mesa.

But where was it, and where were they? Hardfist would have given much to know. Scowling, the marshal looked out into the sunny street, hoping to see one of his riders come in with news of the hunted outlaws.

All he saw was the slim, dark-faced Mexican, who pulled in his horse opposite the marshal's office, and stared at a bill posted on the wall—one of the many notices giving the description of the wanted men.

The black-bearded marshal ceased to scowl as he noted the interest with which the swarthy man read the reward bill. There seemed to him something vaguely familiar in the Mexican's face. He had never, so far as he knew, seen this greaser before; but the cut of the man's features seemed somehow familiar. Probably he had seen the man on the cattle-trails at some time or other, and forgotten him. If he knew anything of the Outlawed Three, Bill Hall was glad to see him, and it was clear that he was keenly interested in the reward bill.

"Five hundred dollars!" he heard the man mutter.

The Mexican slipped from his saddle, glanced round him, and then came towards the marshal standing in his doorway. He made him a graceful Spanish bow, but without removing the big shady sombrero.

"Senor the marshal?" he asked.

"You said it!" grunted Big Hall.

The hard-bitten marshal of Bullwhacker had no more use for Spanish courtesy than for greasers generally.

The Mexican pointed to the reward bill.

"The three—I have seen them!" he said.

Hardfist's eyes glittered under his stetson. He had guessed as much as he watched the swarthy man carefully spelling through the description of the Rojo boys. This greaser was hunting the reward!

"Step right in!" said Bill Hall.

The Mexican entered the marshal's office. Hardfist waved him to a seat, and questioned him eagerly. The swarthy man's tale was soon told.

He had been chased in the mesa by the Jadsen gang, whom he had narrowly escaped. Seeking hiding from the Jadsens, he had skulked in a deep, dried-up water-course, and there he had seen three young cowpunchers camped in an old shack. They had not seen him; he had been careful to keep out of sight, guessing that they were outlaws, camped in that solitary, hidden spot. But he was sure—he was prepared to swear by all the saints he knew—that they answered the description in the reward bill.

Bill Hall breathed hard and deep as he listened. Three cowboys, camped in a remote recess of the mesa. Who could they be but

the Outlawed Three! And the Mexican's description was accurate. One of them was big and burly—that was Dan Oak; another slim and quick in his movements, like a panther—Kid Byrne; the third, short and plump—that was Red!

No wonder his riders had failed to trail them if they were camped at the bottom of some ravine in the heart of the hills. By sheer chance he had gained the information he wanted.

"And the reward, senor?"

"I guess you'll finger it, greaser, when them young fire-bugs are roped in!" said Hardfist Hall. "You figure you can spot the place again?"

"Easy, senor!" said the Mexican. "I will ride with you and your men, if you wish. And afterwards, the reward—"

"Bank on that when I get my grip on the Rojo boys!" said Hardfist.

Leaving the Mexican seated in his office, the marshal called to Jake Sanders, his right-hand man, and gave him quick orders. Inside ten minutes six men were in the saddle, clattering outside the office in Main Street.

Bill Hall mounted his bronco, his black-bearded face grim, his eyes glinting. The Mexican remounted his shaggy mustang, and rode with the marshal's bunch down the street. Many eyes followed them as they rode out of the cow town, the news spreading through Bullwhacker that the marshal and his posse were on the trail of the Rojo cowboys.

"Burn the wind!" growled Bill Hall, as they reached the prairie trail. And the bunch of riders broke into a swift gallop, heading across the wide ranges of the Hall ranch for the Rio Rojo.

In an hour they were splashing through the ford, passing in sight of the deserted rancho where old Sam Oak and his three nephews had bred horses for a living. The Mexican's eyes, under his big sombrero, turned on the old rancho, as if he knew the place. But in a few minutes it was lost to sight again as the bunch galloped on for the mesa.

Under the burning sun of Arizona the broncos were driven on with quirt and spur. Bill Hall set the pace, riding hard, mile on mile, without drawing rein, and the bunch swept after him in a cloud of dust.

They came clattering at last into the great canyon of the Rojo, that split the high mesa deep and wide. There, in spite of his fierce impatience, Hardfist had to slacken. Once in the rugged hills the going was steep and hard.

At last the Mexican pointed with his quirt to a shadowy gulch that opened in the canyon-side. Hardfist rapped out an order to his men to dismount. Farther going had to be on foot. The horses were left tethered out of sight in a rocky draw, and the marshal and his men tramped on over rugged rocks, amid scattered boulders and ridges of lava, into the gulch, guided by the Mexican.

Between rugged walls of rocks, dotted here and there by stunted pines, they tramped on till they were stopped on the edge of a deep, wide gulf that split the floor of the gulch from side to side, and made further progress impossible.

Hardfist gave the Mexican a sharp stare.

"This the place?" he barked.

"Si, senor! There is a way down, if you will follow me!"

"Get to it!" grunted Hardfist. "Guns ready, and shoot on sight if they don't stick 'em up pronto!"

"You said it, marshal!" said Jake Sanders.

The marshal stared down for a moment or two into the deep, wide abyss that yawned at his feet. If that was the hide-out of the Rojo boys, it was no wonder they had never been trailed. But once cornered in that chasm, twenty feet deep, with almost perpendicular sides, there was no escape for them. He had them where he wanted them now!

The marshal's look was gloating as he followed his guide.

At one end of the abyss a steep, winding path, almost a natural staircase in the rock, led down. The Mexican descended it nimbly; the heavier, less active roughnecks clambering down after him. They stood at length in a bunch at the bottom, and Hardfist stared round him with eager eyes.



Marshal Hall stared hard at the Mexican who had reined in his horse outside his office and was studying the reward bill for the arrest of the Outlawed Three. There was something familiar about the horseman's face, thought Hall—but he never guessed it was Kid Byrne in disguise!

The Mexican touched his arm, and pointed. At a distance was a rough shack, built of rocks and branches. From a hole in the roof a thin spiral of smoke floated.

"They're at home, marshal!" muttered Jake Sanders, with a nod towards the wisp of smoke.

Hardfist nodded. "Sure!" he breathed. "I guess we've got them by the short hairs! Follow on—and shoot if they lift a finger!"

Gun in hand, the marshal of Bullwhacker led the way, his men at his heels. He needed no guide now, and he hardly noticed that the Mexican dropped back. The swarthy man stood watching them till they were at a distance, and had almost reached the shack. Then, swift as a mountain antelope, he clambered up the rocky path by which they had descended, and in a few moments had vanished. Unheeding—in fact, unaware of his going—Hardfist Hall and his men tramped on, their guns half-raised as they closed in on the shack.

"KID!" breathed Dan.

The Mexican, breathing hard from the steep climb, clambered out of the gulch into which he had led Hall and his men. From a bunch of scrubby pines, two figures emerged to meet him—Dan and Red.

Dan's rugged, tanned face was wrinkled in a grin; Red was chuckling. Hardfist Hall, had he seen that meeting, would have been enraged to see the Mexican throw off the big sombrero—revealing, not the dark head of a greaser, but the fair hair of the Kid.

The Kid grinned. "I guess Hardfist was powerful keen to get on our trail," he said, "and he was mighty glad to see a guy after the reward. I'll say Hardfist won't be honing to pay me that reward none. I sure have fooled that guy like he was a born bonehead. He won't cinch the Rojo outfit in that shack—but I'll say that the Rojo outfit are going to cinch him there!"

"You said it!" grinned Red. "I thought you was plumb loco, Kid, when you said you'd ride into Bullwhacker in the clothes you got from that greaser at the rancho. But you done pulled it off."

The Kid nodded. "Surest thing you know!" he said. He stooped over a rain-pool in a hollow of the rock, dipped his neckscarf in the water, and rubbed the swarthy stain from his face.

Meanwhile, big Dan Oak rolled a heavy boulder to the summit of the steep path that led down into the ravine. Hardfist Hall had gone down easily enough into the chasm; he would not find it so easy to come up again. It was war to the knife between the Outlawed Three and the plotting marshal who had made them outlaws. And it was Hardfist now who was coming out at the little end of the horn.

He did not know it yet. Below, the Bullwhacker posse had surrounded the shack, and Hardfist, gun in hand, stepped in at the doorway.

His finger was on the trigger of his gun, his eyes glittering over it. He was ready to

shoot at sight—and had the Rojo boys been in the shack, as he fully expected, they would have been at his mercy. But he stared blankly round an empty hut.

A fire smoldered on a hearth of rocks in the middle of the shack. Two or three cooking utensils and other articles lay about—proof of recent occupation. But the little building was untenanted. The marshal muttered a curse as he gave it the once-over. The sight of the wisp of smoke from the roof had made him sure that the hunted trio were at home in their hide-out. But he was cheered by the thought that, if they had taken the alarm at his approach and fled, they could not have escaped from the gulch; there was no way up, save by the steep path by which the Bullwhacker bunch had descended. Jake Sanders looked in over the marshal's burly shoulder.

"They've beat it!" he exclaimed. Hardfist gritted his teeth.

"I guess they ain't far!" he snarled. "That fire would have burned out if it hadn't been tended. They must have been here not long ago."

"You said it!" agreed Jake. "They skulked out of the shack when they heard us coming, and I guess we'll find them hiding!" "Search!" snapped the marshal.

As he tramped savagely out of the shack, one of his roughnecks called to him:

"Say, marshal, that greaser's beat it!"

"Doggone the greaser!" snarled Hardfist. "I guess we're through with him, now we've got the hide-out. I guess he's skipped to keep clear of the shooting. Hunt out them young fire-bugs—they're sure not far away!"

There were innumerable nooks and crannies along the steep sides of the gulch—steep almost as the walls of a house, but broken in many places by crevices and cracks and fissures. Hardfist did not doubt that he would find his quarry hiding in some shadowy recess, and he searched, his eyes glinting—his finger on the trigger of his gun. His men scattered up and down, hunting among the rocks. Hardfist did not look up—he did not think of looking upward, till a voice called from above—and at the sound of that voice the marshal of Bullwhacker threw back his head wildly. For it was the voice of Kid Byrne.

"Say, Hardfist, you hunting for me?"

"This way, marshal!" yelled Red.

Hardfist's eyes almost started from their sockets. He fixed them on the figure standing at the summit of the steep path up from the gulch. The Kid's clear and ringing tones came echoing down. And if the marshal had doubted the evidence of his amazed eyes, he had proof that the Mexican was the Kid—for on either side of him, at the summit of the rocks, stood Dan and Red. The Outlawed Three, whom he sought, stood twenty feet over his head, looking down at him—the Kid with a gun in his hand and a deadly smile on his face.

"The greaser!" yelled Jake Sanders. "Doggone my cats, he ain't no greaser—it's Kid Byrne!"

"Kid Byrne!" breathed the marshal.

"Keep your gun down, marshal!" rang the Kid's voice. "Shooting won't buy you anything, Bill Hall! We got you, you doggoned

coyote—got you trapped like the lobo-wolf you are, you murderer!"

The marshal stood as if transfixed. He knew now how he had been trapped. The shack and its contents had been fixed up to meet his eyes when he came—to keep him busy while the disguised Kid got away to his partners. They had no hide-out in the gulch; Dan and Red had been in cover up in the gulch, and had watched him and his men descend into a death-trap from which there was no escape. They had him—had him hard and fast—and he stood at the mercy of the boys he had driven outside the law—round whose necks he had placed the rope!

In mad fury he threw up his gun-arm. But Jake Sanders grabbed it, and dragged it down.

"Forget it, Bill Hall!" he muttered. "They got us—got us where the hair is short! Burning powder won't buy you a thing!"

The Rojo cowboys stood looking down. They were ready to back into cover at sight of a lifted gun. But Jake waved a hand.

"Say, you got us!" he called out. "You sure have got us salted down, Kid! I guess this bunch is ready to talk turkey!" "Turkey nothing!" snapped the Kid. "You was after us with gats in your grip, and if we wipe out the whole bunch, I guess you ain't got no kick coming. But I'll say it's Hardfist we want!"

"And what'll you want with me?" hissed the marshal of Bullwhacker through his gritting teeth.

"What did you want us for?" asked the Kid grimly. "You framed it up agin us and made us outlaws, and you trailed us with a rope. I'll tell all Arizona, Bill Hall, it's you for the rope! You shot up old Sam Oak, you pizen polecat, and aimed to put it on us, that'd have died for him. When you crawl out of that hole, Hardfist, you're going up on your own rope."

Hardfist's eyes blazed. He wrenched his arm loose from Sanders, threw up his gun, and fired. But the Rojo cowboys stepped back, and the steep edge of the gulch hid them. The bullet crashed away among the rocks, and Hardfist Hall glared savagely round at his men.

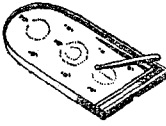
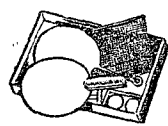
"Follow me!" he gritted. With desperate determination, he rushed up the steep path. And his Bullwhacker posse, guns in their hands, followed him in the rush.

KID BYRNE laughed—a grim, hard laugh, that was not pleasant to hear. He had the Bullwhacker bunch where he wanted them. The gun he had taken from the Mexican at the rancho was in his grip. Dan and Red were unarmed, but the Kid reckoned that one gun would stop the rush. And Dan and Red stood braced against a big rock, ready to topple it over the edge.

Up from the depths of the gulch, scrambling and clattering on the rough rock, came the Bullwhacker bunch, led by Hardfist Hall. Loose stones clinked and clattered from their feet as they came. The Kid, half crouched, his eyes glinting over his gun, waited. A stetson hat came into view, and he fired at sight of it.

(Continued on page 224.)

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after that the C.I.D. were looking for him once more, and the "wanted" man had to keep dodging.

Two days later Sam bumped straight into Tex Bailey again—at Charing Cross Railway Station, London!

Sam Foster, lounging furtively along, suddenly stopped and stared like one who sees a ghost. There before him was Tex Bailey himself, unmistakable, even in a city suit, and with that old steady, solemn look shining in his grey eyes.

"Sam—pardner! Aw, gosh, I've found you at last!" cried Sam's pard.

Tex had worked his way across the Atlantic on a cattle boat to search for his pal, and he sprang forward, hand outstretched.

But the reunion ended there. Even as Tex moved, another hand fell on Sam's shoulder—the hand of a watchful C.I.D. man! Right under Tex Bailey's nose, his pard was "picked up" and arrested on the spot.

Two constables had to fight Tex as Sam was hustled off to Cannon Row. But the youngster who had spent four months and travelled thousands of miles to find his old pard wasn't to be kept away, and he was there in court on the morning Sam came up for trial. Five years' penal servitude was the sentence, and at the finish Tex Bailey stood up straight.

"Don't forget, pardner! Any time, anywhere, I'm still your man!" he cried; and he snorted in the ushers' faces as they pitched him out of court.

Sam Foster came to Blackmoor. Meanwhile, Tex Bailey got a job as a trick-ride in some travelling circus. For the first three months of his sentence Sam worked inside the prison, as is the custom. Then he was put into the quarry gang. Finally, when he'd given proof of being a "good" prisoner, he went into one of the squads that were taken out farther on to the moors to cut peat.

And it was on his fourth day out there when Tex Bailey bobbed up again! The afternoon was misty, and again, for a moment, Sam thought he was seeing a ghost. There, on that open expanse of peat-turf, was Tex Bailey, guns in hand! How the young

trapper had got there only Sam, who had seen him at work in Montana, could guess.

The two petrified warders certainly couldn't. They took one look at the youthful apparition, another at his levelled Colts, and, brave as they were, they reached for the sky.

Tex spoke softly: "That's right, buddies! Now git right back. You other convicts can please yourselves what you do, though I ain't here to help you, 'cos I don't like crooks. But you, Sam—come on, pard, follow me!"

He was off in a moment, Sam following at his heels, as the rest of the squad covered their getaway by swarming all over the warders.

But the fugitives didn't have it all their own way. Those warders were real fighting men, and, smashing aside his attackers, one of them grabbed up his rifle and fired. Tex pitched forward suddenly.

Sam halted, his face working strangely. "Tex—pard! You're hit?" he gasped. And then relief flooded his face as Tex scrambled up.

"Hit, nothing! I just tripped. I always said English guys can't shoot." Tex grinned tightly, and ran on, pointing. "Pronto, Sam! I got two fine horses hidden behind them rocks, yonder. Circus horses—saddled and ready. Run, pard!"

The horses were there, all right—two wiry hacks. But Sam, knowing English warders better than Tex Bailey, bit his lip, even as he was bunked into a saddle.

"Kid, you're a sport, but we'll never do it this way!" he panted. "They'll track us down—"

"Shucks!" The youngster's face was oddly white as he mounted, but he spoke decisively. "Listen, pard! I've been ranging these moors for a week, waitin' my chance, an' I know 'em backwards. No one ain't gonna track me! I've already found a safe hide-out, too, and—"

Tex suddenly flopped off his galloping horse. With the promise of safety on his lips, Sam's pard came off in a heap—and Sam forgot all about escaping then. He was down beside the youngster next moment.

And for the first time he saw the blood that was flowing from Tex's left arm.

The wounded man's lips were twisted with pain. But his solemn eyes were half-open, and grief shone in them.

"Sorry, pard! Guess English guys can shoot a bit!" he muttered. "Yeah, that warden got me—plumb through the old arm. But you—git going, pard! Beat it!"

Sam stayed. Instead of riding on, he gathered his wounded pard up and started back—to Blackmoor. Before he had gone ten strides, however, two battered and infuriated warders charged to meet him. Sam was taken back to gaol, and Tex Bailey, crook hater, and convict's accomplice, went with him.

Sam had to start his five-years' sentence all over again; then. And Tex himself came in for a year as punishment for planning a prison-break! But by the kindness of the Blackmoor governor the English lag was allowed to spend a few minutes with his pard as the latter lay in the sick bay. The words he spoke amply repaid Tex for what he had done.

"Son," he said gruffly, "you've finished me. I never really knew there were blokes like you in the world till now—and I'm through with being a crook! Listen, Tex! When you come out of here, get back to your own ranges, and, honest, I'll join you there for keeps the moment I can."

Tex Bailey's eyes were as solemn as ever—and they were misty, too.

"Any time, anywhere, Sam!" he gulped—and he kept his word.

"So did Sam Foster, I'm mighty glad to say," concluded Warden Strong. "He's out in Montana, with his pard, now. I reckon, and you couldn't tempt Sam away again with a barrel-load of gold dust."

"In fact, Sam wrote me once," chuckled the veteran warden, "and the only thing he and Tex Bailey squabble about is—whether English guys can shoot!"

*Next week Warden Strong will give you another real-life story from his experiences.*

*The veteran warden's revelations are creating a sensation—have you told your pals about them?*

## THE OUTLAWED THREE!

(Continued from page 219)

Through the stetson, through the head it covered, the bullet crashed, and a dead man went crashing back into the gulch. But it was not Hardfist who had fallen, for his savage voice was heard the next moment:

"Get to it! Follow me!"

Dan Oak gave the big boulder a heave, and the others shoved with all their strength. It rolled over, and crashed over, thundering on the steep path that led downward—the path up which the Bullwhacker bunch were savagely crowding.

Crash came on crash, as the heavy boulder thundered down. One burly roughneck, struck fair and square, was hurled away to his death; the rest of the bunch, with yells of terror, scrambled wildly away, lost their footing, and rolled. With a final terrific crash, the rock landed at the bottom, and round it sprawled Hardfist Hall and his men, swept from the steep path like flies. The echoes died away like rolling thunder in the hills.

Shouts of rage and fury rose. The Rojo boys listened—the Kid finger on trigger. If the rush came again, they were ready.

Bruised and battered, shaken and breathless, the marshal of Bullwhacker scrambled to his feet, amid a shower of loose stones dislodged by the crashing rock. He panted for breath, and, throwing up his gun-arm, fired again and again up the steep path. But he was wasting his lead, and he knew it; from below, nothing could be seen of the Outlawed Three, keeping well back from the range of fire. At his feet lay the man who had stopped the Kid's bullet; and near him the one crushed by the falling rock. But Hardfist hardly gave them a glance.

He had lost two of his bunch; but if the remaining four backed him, he had a desperate hope yet of getting through.

"Try again!" he panted, husky with rage. Jake Sanders answered with an angry oath. "Aw, can it, marshal! There ain't a dog's chance! Forget it!"

Hardfist Hall panted with rage.

His men were tough, hard-bitten ruffians, ready for any desperate affray. But they would not follow him to certain death. And it was certain death to charge up the steep path. The bullying marshal of Bullwhacker had to realise it at last. The Kid had laid his plans well—he had his enemy where he wanted him. Hardfist gritted his teeth with helpless rage as he thought of it. Fooled—trapped like a wolf—and the rope with which he had threatened them dangling for his own neck!

The sun was sinking behind the western summits of the mountains. Shadows were lengthening, and at the bottom of the deep gulch the darkness thickened.

Jake Sanders and the rest, gathered at the shack, were muttering together, every now and then glancing surlily and savagely towards the marshal standing at the foot of the steep path. But the thickening gloom hid him from their eyes at last.

They did not know what was in his mind. One desperate hope remained to him—of clambering unseen out of the death-trap under cover of the darkness; but that was an attempt better made alone.

Not till it had been dark a good hour did the marshal stir. He would have left it still later, but he knew that later the moon would be up.

Big and heavy man as he was, he trod lightly, moving with the caution of a creeping panther. His gun was in its holster at his

belt—he needed both hands to grope and feel his way.

He was out of it. He stepped from the steep path and stood on the verge of the gulch. His hand dropped on his gun—he would need that now!

And even as his hand touched the butt of the Colt, hands touched him in the darkness on either side—hands that gripped his arms, and pinned them to his sides. He gave a choked cry—they had been watching, they had seen him—they had seized him! With a desperate effort, he wrenched out his gun. But the hands that grasped him flung him forward on his face to the hard rock; a sinewy knee was planted in his back, pinning him down, and the Kid's voice spoke tensely:

"I reckoned you'd try that game, Hardfist!"

The marshal of Bullwhacker choked with rage and despair. Three shadowy figures gathered round him, and he was led away, with a gun in his ribs, to the Rojo canyon. He muttered savage curses as he went. The Kid's voice came quietly to his ears again:

"Pack it up, Hardfist! Cussin' won't help you, and I guess that ain't the talk for your last night on earth! You got till morning, Hardfist—one hour after sun-up you go up on the branch of a cottonwood! Make the most of it—and stop cussin'!"

The moon came up over the mesa, glimmering through the pines. It gleamed on the fierce, enraged face of the marshal of Bullwhacker—stumbling along with bound hands, led away to his doom!

*The Outlawed Three have suffered untold misery at the hands of the rascally marshal—and now they have him where they want him! Watch out for next week's chapters of this great Western story!*



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# The Outlawed THREE



**A WESTERN STORY  
OF  
SMOKING GUNS  
AND  
THE LURE OF GOLD**

**"STICK 'em up, doc!"** Doc Baker, the six-gun doctor of Arizona, pulled in his horse as a burly, bearded figure suddenly rose into view behind a rugged boulder, with levelled gun and sharp challenge. But he did not lift his hands, although he recognised Pike Jadson, outlaw and rustler, and one of the toughest ruffians in the notorious Jadson gang.

"You doggoned piccan!" growled the doc. "Pack up your hardware and quit. I guess I got no time to lose on you. I got to see a patient on the other side of the mesa, and I got twenty miles to ride yet—after thirty out from Parksville!"

"Then I'll say your cayuse can do with a rest," grinned Pike. "You're finishing the trail on foot! That's a good critter you got, and I guess he's worth a hundred dollars!"

The grin faded from the outlaw's face, and it set grim and savage.

"I said stick 'em up, Doc Baker, and I'm not waiting!"

Slowly the doc's hands went up over his setson. His face was white with rage. Doc Baker's medical rounds led him over dangerous trails, and he packed a gun at his hip, which he had used often enough. But he had no chance to pull it now.

Pike Jadson stepped from behind the boulder, his gun still covering the doctor. The doc's eyes flashed round in a swift glance. He had thought for a moment that he had ridden into the Jadson gang, and he knew that Kid Byrne, Dan Oak, and Tom Redway, the cowboys from the Rojo Ranch, were riding with the bunch. They would not have stood for this. It was only the scheming of Hardfist Hall, marshal of Bullwhacker, that had made them turn outlaws, and they were not hold-up men.

But now the doc saw that Pike was alone; the rest of the Jadsons were not on hand. The outlaw had been camped for the night in the canyon, and the sound of the doc's horse had turned him out of his blankets.

"Lissen, you," said the doc, between closed lips, staring grimly over his horse's ears at the outlaw. "I got friends in the Jadson gang now, Pike, since the Rojo cowboys joined up with Jad. I got their uncle, old Sam Oak, at my shack at Parksville, and I reckon I saved his life. I tell you, Dan and Kid and Red will make you pay for it when they find you rustled my horse and stopped me on the way to see a patient."

Pike grinned derisively. "That cuts no ice, doc! The Rojo outfit ain't riding with the Jadsons no more. I guess if Jad met up with them it would be shooting on sight."

Doc Baker started. It was news to him—good news—that the Outlawed Three were not hitched up with the rustlers any longer. But it washed out his last hope of riding on his way.

A desperate gleam came into the doc's eyes. The savage-faced rustler was ready to pull trigger at the first sign of resistance, but a sick man was waiting for the doc twenty miles away, and when on the path of duty, Doc Baker was the man to take desperate chances.

"Keep 'em up, doc!" said Pike, stepping nearer.

The next moment he gave a yell. The doc, still with his hands above his head, his reins loose on the horse's neck, suddenly jabbed his spurs into the bronco's flanks.

The startled animal leaped forward with a squeal, tossing its head. Only a swift bound aside, saved Pike Jadson from being hurled over by the leaping bronco.

But even as he sprang aside he fired, and the roar of his gun echoed down the canyon to the plains. The hurried shot missed Doc Baker by a foot, and the excited horse charged wildly on, clattering furiously up the rocky canyon.

Bending low in the saddle, grasping the reins, spurring fiercely, Doc Baker rode madly. He had taken a long chance—the longest of chances—but so swiftly and suddenly had he acted that he looked like getting away with it.

But only for a moment! The enraged outlaw was pumping bullets after him. A scream of agony came from the bounding bronco, and it pitched forward on its forelegs and rolled over, flinging the doc over its head.

That fall on the rocky earth jarred every bone in the doc's body; but it probably saved his life, for bullet after bullet whizzed over him as he sprawled.

The doc's eyes blazed. Even as he rolled on the earth he whipped his gun out of its holster. Without rising, he glared back at the outlaw.

Pike Jadson was coming on at a run, smoking Colt lifted in his hand. He fired again as he came, and the bullet chipped the rock by the doctor's elbow. Then Doc Baker's revolver roared in answer, and Pike went over backwards with a crash, shot through the heart.

The doc sprang to his feet. He ran towards the fallen rustler, his gun ready for another shot. But it was not needed. Pike Jadson, crumpled on the rocks, did not stir again.

Only one glance the doc gave him, then he turned to his horse. His face set savagely as he looked down at the dead bronco. He had beaten the outlaw to it, but he had lost his cayuse.

"Doggoned him!" growled the doc. "Dog-gone the pesky hoss thief!"

The doc wasted no time. The sun was up over the mesa now; a new day waking on the mountains of Arizona. He was weary from the long night-ride; but he did not think of that.

He unstrapped his bag from the saddle and slung it over his shoulder. Then, with a grim face, he started tramping up the rugged canyon on foot, and slowly but surely the long, steep

miles passed under his feet, till suddenly, as he came round a bend of the canyon, where a tall cottonwood-tree grew close beside the river, Doc Baker halted, staring blankly at the strange and unexpected sight that met his startled eyes!

**H**ARDFIST HALL, marshal of Bullwhacker, stood in the very shadow of death.

Only the day before he had ridden out of the cow town, where he ruled as marshal, at the head of his men, to hunt Dan, Kid, and Red, the Rojo cowboys now outlawed in the heart of the mesa—to hunt them down ruthlessly to their death. He had driven them into outlawry by a false charge, and the rope was ready for them when they were rounded up. And now—

Now he stood, a bound prisoner, in their hands, with a rope ready for his own neck!

His haggard eyes looked from face to face of the Outlawed Three, seeking a sign of mercy, and finding none. Dan Oak's tanned face was hard and grim; Kid Byrne's features set in pitiless determination. Only in Red's plump face was there a trace, perhaps, of wavering.

Red, the youngest of the three, perhaps had a touch of pity for the hard-fisted marshal of Bullwhacker, bitter and relentless enemy as he had been to him and his comrades. But Red did not speak. It was for the others to decide—and Hardfist's hour had come.

"You dare not!" Bill Hall muttered huskily, though he knew the words were idle. "You'll be hunted down like wolves and strung up for this! Doggone you, you dare not swing me on that rope!"

"Hunted down like wolves!" said the Kid bitterly. "Aw, you're sure forgetting, marshal! Ain't we hunted like wolves already—on the charge of shooting old Sam Oak, the man that cared for us when we was little kids, and that we'd have died for willing? Ain't you got us outside the law, and ain't every man's hand agin us already?"

Then Dan Oak broke in grimly:

"Quit chewing the rag, marshal! You've worked this, and it's come home to you. You wasn't trailing us for shooting up old Sam—you knowed we never did that—but you wanted to find us to get at the secret of the lost

gold mine of the mesa. I'll tell all Arizona it was you that shot-up old Sam, after you couldn't bluff him into selling his land with the gold-strike on it!"

Bill Hall's black-bearded face grew white. He looked down the vast canyon, his eyes following the course of the Rio Rojo, streaming and rippling away to the lower plains.

Somewhere in that wilderness of rock and pine lay the gold-mine—lost for forty years—which the Rojo cowboys had struck. His eyes would never fall on it now.

"String him up, boys!" snapped Kid. "He may be the marshal, but he's nothing but a low-down, double-crossing skunk!"

Dan Oak swung a rope over a high, horizontal branch of the great cottonwood under which they stood. The loop came down, dangling within a few feet of the marshal's despairing face. He shivered.

Where were his men? Miles away in the ravine where the Rojo cowboys had trapped them. There was no help—no rescue!

Dan held the end of the rope. Kid took the noose, and with steady hands passed it round the neck of the marshal of Bullwhacker.

Hall's voice broke out, hoarse and husky. "Let up! I guess I'm ready to talk turkey, and I reckon that's what you want! I'll stand for anything you say. I'll withdraw the charge agin you and see you clear. I'll let up on the mine!"

"It's too late, Bill Hall!" said the Kid quietly. "If you'd stood for that a few weeks ago, you wouldn't be there now with a rope round your neck. We was peaceable in the old Rojo Ranch with old Sam; we never wanted trouble with you or with any other guy. We're outlaws now. But the Rojo mine will make old Sam rich when Doc Baker's pulled him through; and I'll say that old Sam would never raise an ounce of dust from it if you was around to rob him. You got to get yours, Bill Hall. I'd trust you no more'n a lobo-wolf!"

Dan drew a deep breath.

"Pull!" he said curtly. The Outlawed Three dragged on the rope together with all their strength. Heavy and bulky as he was, the marshal of Bullwhacker swung off his feet, swinging up towards the high branch, his feet a couple of yards clear of the ground.

Dan took a turn of the rope-end round the trunk of the cottonwood, and knotted it. Red, with pale lips, turned his face away. Dan and Kid stared grimly at the marshal as he swung.

None of them saw a stetson hat that appeared among the rocks down the bend of the canyon. A few moments more—

Crack, crack, crack, crack! The sudden roar of a six-gun awoke a thousand echoes, rolling back like thunder from the rocks. Dan and Kid and Red started. They stared round, for the moment figuring that they were under fire. But none of the whizzing bullets came near them.

There was a heavy thump. The swinging marshal dropped heavily to the ground. Four shots, fired so swiftly that they blended into one, had cut clean through the rope!

**T**HERE was a roar of rage from the Kid. He gripped his gun and swung round towards the figure that came running up the canyon. His gun was half-raised when he recognised Doc Baker.

"The doc!" panted Kid.

"Doc Baker!" breathed Red.

A flash of relief came over Red's plump face. He stood in with his comrades; but his heart was not in that deed of grim and ruthless justice.

Dan's rugged, tanned face set hard. Doc Baker, the smoking revolver in his hand, came panting up. On the ground lay Hardfist Hall, struggling.

"Doc! You'll stand by a guy!" His voice came husky and cracked. "You ain't standing for this, doc! You got to stand by the law—"

"Aw, pack it up, you!" snarled the doc. "You make use of the law when you want. Hardfist; but other times, I guess you don't give a continental red cent for all the law in Arizona! I guess I'm thinking more of the boys than of your neck! But you ain't going up on that rope!"

"Stand clear, doc!" The Kid's voice was husky with rage. "We got no trouble with you, and don't want none. But"—he raised his revolver—"it's you or me, doc, if you chip in here!"

"Kid!" panted Red. Kid Byrne did not heed him. His eyes, over his gun, gleamed at the doctor. He was ready for gun-play, and all Tontine County knew how quick the six-gun doctor was with a Colt. The marshal, haggard and panting, lay between them, hope mingled with despair in his bearded face. He had been snatched back from death, but the shadow still hovered over him.

The doc did not lift his revolver. Quietly he pushed it back into his hip pocket. He stood unarmed, facing the Kid's Colt.

"Shoot, if you want, Kid!" he said. "Shoot the man that's been your friend since you stood no higher than my stirrup—the man that's tending old Sam and saving his life. If you want old Sam to hear that I've been shot-up by one of his boys, pull trigger, you young pie-can! What's stopping you?"

"Doc!" muttered the Kid hoarsely. The gun swayed in his hand. Had the doc lifted his revolver it would have been shooting—and one or both would have gone down on the rocks of the mesa. But the doc had packed his gun.

"Shoot, doggone you!" growled the doc.

But the Kid's hand sank down, with the gun in it. Doc Baker stooped to the marshal. He jerked the throttling noose from Hardfist's neck, and then, with a knife, slashed through the rope that fastened his arms and legs. Bill Hall staggered to his feet, a free man.

Again the Kid half-lifted his gun.

"Will you step out of this, doc?" he growled.

"Nope!" was the brief answer.

"You figure that you're getting that dog-goned lobo-wolf away from us, after we've cinched him and got him where we want him?"

"You pesky young goob!" said the doc. "I figure that I'm keeping you from breaking the law so's it can't be mended! And if you've got a hoss, I'll ask you to lend it to me—I got a sick man waiting for me on the other side of the mesa, and one of the Jadsos shot-up my cayuse."

"I got a hoss that I rustled from a Mexican bandit," said the Kid, "and you're welcome

to the critter—if you'll put your leg over the saddle, pronto, and ride clear."

The doc grinned.

"I guess I'll ride hell-for-leather, when I see the last of Hardfist," he said. "You ain't stringing up no marshals, you uns! I allow you're outside the law now, but you got to leave yourselves a hole to crawl back sometime. You get me?"

Hardfist stood breathing deep. He was calculating the chances of a spring to cover among the rocks. Bullets would be flying when he stirred—but he was ready to take chances.

"That cayuse is tied up in some post-oaks, up the canyon, doc!" said the Kid softly. "You'll hit the spot in ten minutes on the hoof. And you want to start right now."

"Guess again!" said Doc Baker.

"Then stick up your hands, doggone you, and we'll sure hog-tie you while we string up that lobo-wolf!" yelled the Kid savagely, and his gun flashed up and looked the doctor in the face.

"You're loco, Kid, plumb loco!" panted Red, and he jumped at the Kid, caught his arm, and dragged it down.

The Kid wrenched savagely at his arm.

"Cinch that young goob, Dan!" he roared. And Dan Oak, grasping Red with his powerful hands, dragged him forcibly away from Kid Byrne.

It was at that moment that Hardfist took his chance. The Kid's gun was down at his side—Dan was grasping Red; and it was a chance. The marshal of Bullwhacker made a swift, backward leap that covered six feet—and plunged among the boulders by the bank of the Rojo.

Up swept the Kid's arm, and his finger tightened on the trigger. The gun roared, but it missed Bill Hall by inches, as he hunted cover in the rocks. Kid Byrne leaped in pursuit of the fleeing marshal, Doc Baker forgotten now. The ring of his revolver came echoing back after he had disappeared from sight among the rocks.

Dan gave the doc a dark, bitter look, and without a word hurried away after Kid Byrne. Red stood hesitating, then he followed his comrades.

Doc Baker stood looking after them, but only for a moment. Then he turned from the spot and went tramping up the canyon. Duty to his patient came first with the six-gun doctor; and a sick man was waiting for him on the northern side of the mesa.

He found the horse tethered in the post-oaks, mounted it, and rode on his way; and as he went, the ringing of distant shouts told that the Rojo cowboys were still hunting the marshal of Bullwhacker like a wolf among the rocks.

**H**ARDFIST HALL shut his teeth on a groan. The hard-fisted marshal of Bullwhacker was very near despair.

Under the blazing sun of Arizona, he sweated and panted among the rugged rocks that were hot to the touch. By a miracle, almost, he had been saved from the rope; and it seemed to be by a series of miracles that he had, so far, escaped the fierce search of the Outlawed Three.

With a gun in his hand he would not have feared them—even the three of them together. But he had no weapon; and they were hunting him, to shoot on sight.

Now he lay panting on the summit of a high bluff, round the base of which, twenty feet below, the Rio Rojo whirled and foamed.

The desperate thought was in his mind of flinging himself into the river if they trailed him there. Spent with his exertions, he lay hidden by the inequalities of the rugged summit of the bluff, panting for breath, and listening—listening with cocked ears, like the hunted wolf he was.

They were hot on his track—the sound of a shout came to his ears from a little distance. He heard the clinking of loose stones under tramping feet.

A shadow fell across the marshal's desperate face, blotting out the burning blaze of the sun. His heart seemed to miss a beat. A few more steps—and he would be seen! A voice called—the deep tones of big Dan Oak.

"I reckon we're close on that coyote! You see him, Red?"



"String him up, boys!" snapped Kid. "He may be the marshal, but he's nothing but a low-down, double-crossing skunk!"



"Nope!" called back Red. It was Red, the marshal knew now, who was standing so near that his shadow fell on him.

Hall hardly breathed. Red had clambered on top of the bluff overlooking the Rojo—Dan was farther behind; the Kid, he reckoned, had gone on to make sure of cutting him off from the plains. The shadow stirred; Red's footsteps were audible as he moved. Bill Hall could have groaned aloud with the bitter suspense. But no sound came through his shut teeth.

He heard a quick intake of breath. Red stood almost over him, staring down at him as he lay crouched in the rocks. Bill Hall's eyes, looking up, met Red's staring down. He read the startled surprise in the boy's plump face as so suddenly coming on his quarry.

Red's lips opened for a call. The blackness of despair settled on the crouching man. Dan Oak was only a lasso's length away—revolver in hand. One word from Red—

To his amazement that word was not uttered. Red's lips closed again without a sound. Bill Hall's eyes were glued to his—doubting, questioning. Something in that hunted, haggard, despairing face had gone to the boy's heart; there was hesitation, pity, in the plump, ruddy face.

For a long, long moment, Red looked down at him; then, still silent, he turned away as if he had seen nothing.

Hardfist drew a long, quivering breath. He was spared—Red had spared him. He had no such mercy to look for from Dan or Kid—they were hunting him with hearts as ruthless as his own.

Red went tramping over the summit of the bluff, as if still in search. Dan's voice called again from the canyon.

"You, Red! You got any sign of that lobo-wolf?"

Hall trembled as he waited for Red's answer. Instead of answering, the boy went clattering down the slope into the canyon and joined Dan there. Then his voice came to the marshal.

"I guess we better get after Kid, Dan!"

"I don't reckon Hardfist got past this!" came Dan's deep growl. "Kid's watching the river—he might take to the Rojo. He'll get him, sure, if he does! I guess I'll give that bluff the once-over."

"Aw, come on, Dan—you're sure wasting time."

"You young pican! What you giving me?" There was a fierce note of suspicion in Dan's voice. "You seen that lobo-wolf, and you letting down your side-kickers, Red?"

Bill Hall heard every word, and his heart almost ceased to beat. Something in Red's looks had made Dan suspicious. He heard the younger boy's faltering reply.

"Dan, ol'-timer, I reckon Doc Baker was right! I guess—"

"Can it!" snarled Dan. "You seen sign of him!"

Dan's burly figure loomed on the summit of the high, rocky bluff. There was plenty of cover for the hidden man, so long as the searchers were at a little distance. But close at hand they could not fail to spot him. Hardfist heard the tramping of Dan's boots on the rock, quartering the ground like a hunting dog, searching. It was a matter of minutes now—To leap from the bluff into the Rojo below and take his chance—such as it was—was all that was left. But the Kid, gun in hand, was watching the lower river—Hardfist knew that now. He would be riddled with lead as he went down with the current.

Hardfist half-rose—and sank back again. There was no chance—no chance. Doc had saved him—Red had spared him—but in a few moments more Dan's gun would be blazing death.

Tramp, came the heavy boots, past the

Anybody looking for a really first-class game? Three new ones have recently come on to the market, which promise to liven things up, considerably this Christmas. They are "Mappa Mundi," which costs 3/6 and includes a jag-saw puzzle big enough to cover a fair sized table; "Bob's y'r Uncle," and "Alfa Cubes." "Bob's y'r Uncle," incidentally costs 1/6, and "Alfa Cubes," 1/-. I have played them all, so I can personally vouch for their excellence. Get 'em from your local toy-shop or stationers and prepare for a first-class laugh.

Gibbering with fear, Hardfist Hall crouched back in his hiding place among the rocks while Red stared grimly down at him. One shout from Red, and the hunted marshal would be in his enemies' hands—but Hall's pleading eyes brought a pang to the cowboy's heart!



crevice in which Hall lay crouched. Looking up, he saw Dan's brawny shoulder. A second more, and Dan would have seen Hardfist, and the gun would have been turned on him. In that second, Bill Hall gathered all his strength and made a desperate spring.

His grasp fastened on Dan Oak, even as Dan saw him. But he dragged down the gun-arm, and the shot that was instantly fired missed him and splattered on the bluff. Then, in Hardfist's desperate grasp, Dan Oak was struggling, the marshal's muscular grip pinning his gun-arm down to his side.

A hiss of rage came through Dan's shut teeth. Big and strong as he was, he was not so powerful as the six-foot marshal of Bullwhacker. They struggled fiercely, staggering to and fro, locked in a deadly grip, almost on the verge of the bluff, where it dropped steep as a wall to the foaming waters of the Rojo.

"Red!" yelled Dan.

Red came racing across the top of the bluff. Hardfist felt rather than saw him coming. Red's outstretched hand was almost touching him, as he rushed to the help of his comrade, when Hardfist, with a last fierce effort, bore Dan Oak backward.

But Dan Oak's grasp did not relax, and as he fell, the marshal of Bullwhacker fell with him. They reeled together on the edge of the bluff, and Red gave a cry of horror, grasping at them too late. Still locked in a desperate grasp, Dan Oak and the marshal of Bullwhacker pitched headlong over the rocky verge into space.

"Dan!" shrieked Red.

With a face white as chalk, he threw himself down on the edge of the bluff and stared down at the river roaring twenty feet below. He saw the two whirling figures, still savagely grasping, strike the water where it boiled and foamed among the rocks at the foot of the bluff.

"Dan!" shrieked Red again.

Round the base of the bluff the Rojo roared with the force of a torrent. Dan and the marshal plunged deep, disappearing from the horrified eyes of Red above.

Deep in the foaming waters the desperate grasp was unloosed. Red saw the marshal rise from the water, to be whirled away at once by the rushing current. But where was Dan?

Another head appeared—a hand was flung up. Dan Oak was swimming—or striving to swim. But he had been less fortunate than his enemy; his head had struck on a rock in the river, and he was dazed, half-stunned. Only for a moment Red glimpsed him, then he was swept away after the marshal, whirling in the rushing waters of the Rojo.

Red scrambled to his feet, to dash down from the bluff and race along the bank in the hope of yet helping his comrade. But he knew that he could not help him; there was only one hope—the Kid was watching the river below.

Kid Byrne was watching!

He was watching like a cat, gun in hand, ready for the hunted man, whether he came creeping among the rocks or desperately swimming the Rojo. And it was in the river that he spotted him—the dark, tanned face, the black beard suddenly appearing in the shining, rushing water.

Grimly the Kid's handsome face set, and his gun came sharply up, his eye gleaming along the barrel. Perhaps the glimmer of the levelled gun in the sunshine caught Hardfist's eyes, for he ducked under, even as the Kid pulled trigger, and the bullet splashed the water over his head.

The Kid ran down to the bank, ruthlessly ready for another shot as soon as the dark head appeared—and Hardfist Hall's life could have been counted in seconds. Then the Kid's startled eyes spotted another head in the water—a head that dipped, and dipped again, as the swimmer struggled in vain for life in the rushing waters.

"Dan!" yelled the Kid.

He forgot Hardfist Hall. He jammed the revolver into his holster and plunged headlong into the Rojo. With powerful strokes he drove out from the bank, exerting every ounce of strength to reach the struggling form before it was whirled past and out of his reach.

Dan, half-senseless, was still feebly struggling when the Kid's grasp fastened on him and dragged him up. Holding him with one hand, keeping his face above the water, the Kid swam with the other. The river rushed them on, the Kid striving to reach the bank. But the fierce waters tugged, and he was dragged on and on.

Twice he reached the rocky bank and clutched, but his grasp was swept away again. Then a third time he reached it, grasped desperately at a jutting rock, and held. Where was Red? He held on for his life, and Dan's life, and tried to shout, but only a husky gasp came. The rushing water whirled and dragged and tugged.

There was a shout on the rocky bank, a clatter of running feet.

Even as the Kid's grasp was slipping, Red reached him, gripped him and dragged him up the steep bank. At the very end of his tether the Kid wrenched Dan from the hungry waters, and sank down beside him on the rocks.

A mile away down the river, where it ran between grassy banks on the plain, Hardfist Hall dragged himself from the Rojo, and lay exhausted in the grass for a long hour before he was able to gain his feet and stagger away.

"I guess it was my fault!" muttered Red.

Dan, sitting on a boulder, rubbed the bruise on his head. The Kid was quietly cleaning his six-gun. Red looked from one to the other.

"My fault!" he mumbled.

Dan grunted—the Kid smiled.

"Aw, can it!" they said together.

By a cruel stroke of fate the Outlawed Three have been robbed of victory at the very moment when it was within their grasp. Marshal Hall is free to bound down his victims once more—and now he has an added reason for silence—'their mouths for ever, provided he can once learn the secret of the gold mine in the Mesa Mountains. Does he succeed?—for the answer, read next week's great story!



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*The*

**PILOT**

**2<sup>D</sup>**

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*The* **GREAT NEW PAPER** *for* **READERS OF ALL AGES**





# The Outlawed THREE

"COVER!" breathed Kid Byrne.

He caught Tom Redway by the arm as he spoke, and dragged him back into the thickets. Dan Oak followed immediately after.

In a split second the three Rojo cowboys were in cover amid the thick trees.

Through the wood ran the hoof-marked trail which led from the cow town of Bullwhacker to the Rio Rojo. It was the sound of a distant hoofbeat that had caught Kid Byrne's quick ear and given him the alarm. Neither Dan nor Red had heard it, but they followed the Kid's lead without question.

"If that ain't a rider coming up the trail, I'll eat my stetson!" breathed the Kid.

Dan's eyes glittered.

"Hardfist!" he muttered.

"Mebbe!" But if it ain't, I guess we don't want to show up. It ain't healthy for outlaws here!"

The Kid spoke bitterly, for it was a bitter fact that he and his pards were now hunted outlaws, driven against the law by Hardfist Hall, the scheming marshal of Bullwhacker.

The Outlawed Three listened intently as the staccato beat of hoofs drew nearer on the hard, sun-baked trail. A horseman was riding swiftly from the direction of Bullwhacker.

From the open, sunlit plain the rider dashed into the trail under the high, over-arching boughs of great ceiba-trees, walled by tangled thickets. And the three cowboys, peering from cover, watched for him to come abreast of where they stood, and Kid and Dan were grasping their guns.

For if the rider was Hardfist Hall, he was their game. The rascally marshal had made them outlaws, and they would act as such when it came to dealing with their enemy.

With a jingle of bridle and spurs, the horseman reined in his bronco almost opposite the spot where the Rojo cowboys stood in cover. But it was not Hardfist Hall, and Kid and Dan relinquished their guns.

They were not hunting trouble with Jad Jadson, and it was upon the scarred face of the leader of the Jadson gang that they were looking from the foliage.

It was clear that the rustler had no suspicion of their presence. He leaped from the saddle and backed his bronco into the thickets, hardly a couple of yards from the hidden three. The horse was quickly out of sight, tethered to a branch, and then Jad stepped back into the trail with a six-gun in his hand.

He stood looking back the way he had come—his head bent to listen. There was a fierce, savage grin on the scarred face.

"I guess I'm getting him!" muttered the bearded rustler.

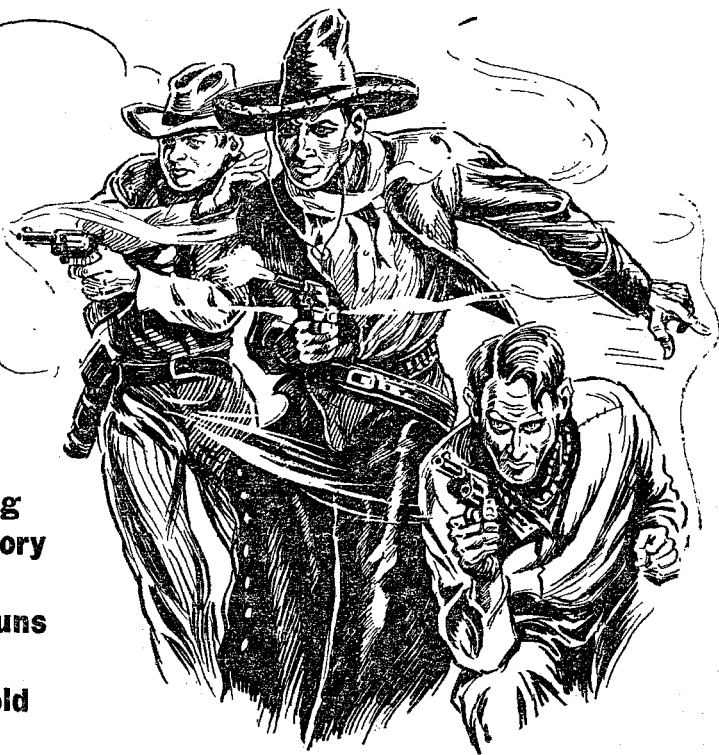
Faintly from afar came the echo of a horse's hoofs. Another rider was coming up the trail—not at a fierce gallop, as Jad had done, but at an easy trot.

Jad's sunken eyes glittered. He backed out of the trail into cover, exactly as the Rojo cowboys had done, and Red barely repressed an exclamation as the lianas swayed over him, stirred by the bulky form of the rustler. But he was silent, and Dan and Kid were silent, though if the rustler had looked round he must have seen them now, for he was hardly six feet from them.

But Jad did not look round. All his attention was concentrated on the trail, his eyes glittering over the gun that was half-raised, his finger on the trigger.

Nearer came the sound of the trotting horse

## A Thrilling Western Story of Smoking Guns and the Lure of Gold



—of the rider who was coming to certain death, for there was no doubt of Jad's intentions. Who the second rider was the Rojo cowboys could not tell.

Perhaps it was Hardfist Hall, their enemy, the man who had driven them into outlawry. Perhaps one of the Hall punchers riding home to the ranch. Perhaps Doc Baker, on his round, or perhaps some unsuspicious traveller who packed a "roll."

Jad was the most ruthless and merciless ruffian in Arizona. He had killed more men than he had fingers and toes. Shooting down a man from cover was nothing to the scarred outlaw. This victim would not be the first by many a one!

Red's plump face was full of appeal as he looked at Kid Byrne.

But the Kid's handsome face was hard. The Rojo cowboys were outlaws themselves now, and every man's hand in Tontine County was against them. What call had they to horn in?

They were hunted by the law, even as Jad was hunted. Hardfist Hall had framed them, and the law was on the side of the marshal of Bullwhacker. It was not, the Kid thought bitterly, for outlaws to chip in against an outlaw.

Dan's eyes sought his. Dan's impulse, like Red's, was to chip in and put paid to the murderous ruffian watching the trail only a few feet from them. But the Kid shook his head. Let Jad get on with it.

But as the trotting hoofs came closer, the Kid's expression changed.

The coming rider had entered the wood. They could not see him, but they could hear. In a couple of minutes he would be riding unsuspiciously past the spot where Jad crouched, gun in hand, finger on trigger, murderous eyes gleaming over the barrel. And it was borne in on the Kid's mind that he could not stand for anything like that.

Outlaw or not, he was still at heart the cowboy who had worked on the Rojo Ranch with old Sam Oak. And the thought of old Sam came into his mind—old Sam, lying at death's door in Doc Baker's cabin at Parksville. He knew that he could not stand for this.

Dan gave a nod, and Red grinned faintly as Kid Byrne silently drew the gun from the holster at his belt. Silently, without even the rustle of a leaf, the Kid aimed—not at Jad, for shooting a man in the back, even a human

wolf like Jad, was impossible to the Kid, but at the gun in Jad's hand.

Over the head of the crouching rustler the Kid aimed, and as a jingle of stirrups told that the newcomer was close at hand, Kid pulled trigger.

Jad Jadson gave a sudden leap as the gun was smashed from his hand by the bullet, and the roar of the Kid's gun thundered behind him. Utterly startled and unnerved, with the blood spurting from his numbed hand, the rustler rolled out headlong into the trail, yelling wildly.

**H**ARDFIST HALL checked his bronco, his reins in his left hand, his right whipping to his gun.

It was Bill Hall, marshal of Bullwhacker, who was riding the trail. It was the life of the bitter, relentless enemy of the Rojo cowboys that the Kid had saved.

Hardfist's jaw shut hard under his black beard, and his eyes gleamed at the yelling rustler who sprawled on the trail in front of his horse.

What was happening, the marshal of Bullwhacker hardly knew. The shot that roared through the trees had not come from Jad—he knew that much. Who had fired, and why, he did not know. But he knew the scarred outlaw at a glance; he knew that there were others in the trees, and he acted promptly.

Only for a second he checked his bronco, then, gun in hand, he spurred and dashed on. He fired at Jad, the hurried shot cutting a strip of skin from the scarred face, then his bronco was trampling over the sprawling rustler, and he was past. He bent low in the saddle as he rode, nothing doubting that the rest of the Jadson gang were around, and that bullets were coming.

At a mad burst of speed he dashed down the trail, leaving Jad sprawling behind, bruised, battered, half-stunned by the crashing hoofs of the bronco.

So sudden and swift was his flight that the Outlawed Three had only a glimpse of him as he flew past. But that glimpse was enough, and the Kid gave a roar of rage:

"Hardfist!"

He leaped up into the trail, gun in hand. Up went the gun, the Kid's eyes flashing over it. It roared, and roared again. The stetson spun from Hardfist's head as he spurred madly to escape.

Bareheaded, he raced on, and the next moment the trees gave him cover on the winding trail. But Bill Hall did not pause a second—he dashed on at full speed for the open plain. "Hardfist!" repeated the Kid, with savage rage. "By the great horn spoon, he ain't getting clear!"

The Rojo cowboys had no horses. But Jad's horse was at hand. Taking no heed of the rustler groaning in the grass, Kid Byrne rushed for Jad's tethered bronc, and dragged it loose. He leaped into the saddle, and dashed up the trail in fierce pursuit of the marshal of Bullwhacker.

"Kid!" panted Red.

The Kid did not even hear him. He disappeared at a mad gallop, and Dan and Red followed on foot at a run.

Jad's bronc was a good horse. Jad, the cunningest horse-thief in Arizona, was always well mounted. And the Kid got every ounce of speed out of the animal. He dashed into the open sunlight of the prairie, and sighted Hardfist Hall on the plain.

Bareheaded in the sun-glare, the marshal of Bullwhacker was riding hard, heading for the Hall Ranch. But the ranch lay ten miles distant across the plain, and the Kid, with gritting teeth, told himself that he would get Hardfist before he reached it.

Jad's horse bounded under him, its flying hoofs seeming scarcely to touch the ground. Closer and closer the Kid drew to the hard-riding marshal. Up went his gun, and a bullet whizzed by a foot from the marshal of Bullwhacker.

Bill Hall's head turned, and as he saw that there was only a single rider in pursuit, and that that rider was Kid Byrne, Hardfist checked his wild flight. He had reckoned that the Jadson gang were gunning after him; but Hardfist was not the man to flee from a single foe.

His eyes glittered fiercely as he wheeled his foaming horse. Man to man, and gun to gun, Hardfist feared no man that ever backed a bronc.

Crack! roared the Kid's gun, as he came galloping on. Hardfist's gun-arm was up; he was pulling trigger when a bullet scored along his arm.

With a yell of agony the marshal of Bullwhacker dropped his arm, the revolver falling from his relaxed fingers into the grass.

The Kid's voice came down the wind in a fierce yell:

"You doggoned lobo-wolf. I sure got you! You're sure getting yours, Bill Hall!"

The marshal of Bullwhacker wheeled his horse again and dashed on for the ranch. Fast behind him rode the Kid, his gun half raised; but he was not firing now.

Only one bullet remained in the weapon, and the Kid was keeping it till he came close enough for a sure shot—the shot that would avenge old Sam Oak and blot out the bitter enemy of the Outlawed Three.

He was gaining—madly as the marshal rode, the Kid was gaining on him.

Over a fold of the prairie suddenly three stetson hats came in sight, ahead of the galloping marshal. A yell burst from Hardfist Hall at the sight of three punchers from his ranch.

The Kid gave a cry of rage.

His enemy was almost in his grasp. But they were riding on Hall's land. From Bullwhacker as far as the Rojo River the pastures of the Hall Ranch extended. Every moment Hardfist had hoped to sight some of his outfit, and his luck was in. He yelled frantically to the startled punchers as he dashed on towards them.

They stared at him blankly for a second, and then came spurring to meet him. Their guns were out as they came.

The Kid checked his horse. Hall's fierce yell came to his ears:

"It's Kid Byrne! Get him! Five hundred dollars if you get him!"

"You said it, boss!" yelled back Mustang Dave, and he dashed on with the other two punchers, riding right at the Kid.

Crack! roared Kid Byrne's gun—his last shot. The bullet fanned Hardfist's cheek as he stared savagely back.

Crack, crack, crack! roared the guns in the

grip of the punchers, as they rode for the Kid.

He wheeled his bronc and dashed away.

But he did not head back to the wood. Dan and Red were behind him, though left far out of sight in the wild chase.

The Kid dashed away in another direction, leading the pursuing punchers across the prairie down the Rio Rojo.

It was well for him that Jad's horse was one of the fastest broncos in Arizona, for the pursuers rode him hard, and whizzing bullets narrowly missed the Kid as he galloped.

But he drew farther and farther ahead, and disappeared at last from their sight on the rolling prairie. The punchers, sweating and weary, gave it up at last and rode back to the ranch, to be greeted by a torrent of oaths from the disappointed and enraged marshal of Bullwhacker.

**T**HE great cottonwood-tree, sixty feet high, stood near the bank of the Rio Rojo, in sight of the old rancho where Sam Oak had lived. It stood alone, in a fertile patch by the river, with no other timber at hand.

The weary ruffian, who tramped, and limped, and staggered under the blazing sun of Arizona, gave a groan of relief as he tottered at last into the shade of its wide-spreading branches.

Spent, exhausted, at the end of his tether, Jad Jadson sank down to rest in the ragged bushes that grew round the tall cottonwood.

The leader of the Jadson gang was in hard case. How he had dragged himself thus far from the wood on the Bullwhacker trail he hardly knew. He had lost his horse and his gun, his right hand was gashed and stiff, he was covered with bruises from the trampling hoofs of Hardfist's bronc.

He expected to be hunted after Hardfist's escape, and his one thought was to get to the hills, back to the hidden den of the Jadson gang up in the mesa. But, exhausted now, he could go no farther. Had an enemy sighted him then, Jad Jadson, the most desperate gunman and rustler in Arizona, would have been helpless to resist or to escape.

But the prairie was lonely. He heard no sound save the incessant buzzing of the flies in the hot bushes. Like a log he lay, waiting for his strength to revive. Suddenly, after he had lain long hours, the ruffian lifted his head, like an alert wolf, and listened to a sound from the prairie.

It was the sound of wheels on hard-baked earth, and he knew that some vehicle was coming up the trail that led to the ford of the Rojo—midway between the lone cottonwood and old Sam Oak's rancho. He sank back again, with a groan and a curse.

Few vehicles drove on that hard, rough trail. Most likely it was Doc Baker, of Parksville, on his round-heading, perhaps, for the Hall Ranch. Jad cared little who it was, so long as no eye fell on him in his lair in the bushes.

The clatter of wheels came to a sudden stop. Then Jad lifted his head again. Looking from the bushes, he recognised Doc Baker's buckboard, and the red-shirted six-gun doctor, who had stepped down. Jad shut his teeth hard.

Why had the doc stopped before reaching the ford? Had he seen some sign that warned him that a desperate man lay in cover in the bushes by the tall cottonwood?

Jad saw the doc tether his horse to a stump by the trail. Then Doc Baker turned his back on the buckboard and came across the rugged plain, directly towards where the rustler lay.

Like a hunted wolf hunted to its lair, Jad watched him. Unless the doc knew that he was there, why was he coming? Yet he could read no sign of suspicion, of alertness, in the tanned face under the stetson hat.

There was a rustling in the thorny bush at a little distance from him. The doc was pushing through the massive trunk of the great cottonwood-tree.

He passed, at the distance of a dozen feet, the spot where Jad lay crouched; and it was borne in on the rustler's mind that Doc Baker did not know, or suspect, that he was there. It was for some other reason, unconnected with him, that the doc came.

Sure of that, but more than ever puzzled and

mystified, Jad moved a little so that he could watch the doc through the bushes.

Doc Baker had stopped close by the great trunk. He had taken out a pocket-book, and was scribbling with a pencil on one of the leaves. In deeper amazement, the rustler watched.

Having scribbled a few lines, the doc tore out the written leaf and folded it. He stepped closer to the tree, and thrust the folded paper into a crevice of the massive trunk.

That, it seemed, was all that the six-gun doctor had come for. He turned away, tramped back through the bushes, and strode towards the buckboard tethered on the trail. From his cover, Jad still watched with glittering eyes.

He saw the doc cast the horse loose, jump into the buckboard, and drive on down the trail. A few minutes more and he was splashing through the ford of the Rojo, and disappeared from Jad's eyes on the farther bank.

"Search me!" breathed Jad.

He knew what it meant now. The doc had left a written message in the crevice in the tree-trunk. For whom? Jad had no doubt of the answer to that. Outlaws as they now were, Doc Baker was still a friend of the Rojo cowboys. That hidden message was left for Dan and Kid and Red—the rustler knew it.

With the Outlawed Three, hunted and in hiding, the doc could have no direct communication. But they would be anxious to have news of old Sam, lying wounded almost to death at Parksville, in the doctor's care. Jad reckoned that he could see it all.

He crept through the bushes to the cottonwood.

With a snarling grin, he thrust his hand into the crevice in the tree-trunk, groped for the folded paper, and found it.

He grinned as he read the hurriedly pencilled scrawl. For it was as he had figured; a message left by the doctor to be picked up by the Rojo cowboys.

"Sam still weak, but going on well. He will live.—Doc."

"By the great horned toad!" breathed Jad. He forgot that he was bruised and battered, and could hardly drag one aching limb after another. His eyes blazed over the pencilled note; and he grinned savagely as he put it in his belt.

Sooner or later—that very night perhaps—the Rojo cowboys would come to look for a message. They would not find a message—they would find the Jadson gang—watching and waiting, and they would come to their destruction. They should pay dearly for what had happened that day in the wood on the Bullwhacker trail!

The rustler was still aching and weary; but his rest under the cottonwood had restored his strength a little. After scanning the plain with watchful eyes, he left the spot at last and tramped on towards the mesa.

He came at last into the great canyon of the Rojo, where the river flowed between walls of high rock. A little more, and he would be safe—lost in the rocky wilderness of the mesa. But even as he breathed more freely, with that thought in his mind, there was a clatter of hoofs, and a bunch of horsemen rode out of a gulch into the canyon.

They sighted Jad even as he sighted them. Jake Sanders, the marshal's man, rode at their head—it was the marshal's posse from Bullwhacker. Gun in hand, the riders swooped down on the rustler—and circled round him, as he stood glaring with rage and despair.

"Hands up, you!" barked Sanders.

Slowly, his bearded, scarred face convulsed with rage, the chief of the Jadson gang raised his hands above his head. Armed, he would have fought desperately for his life, even against the odds—for he knew what to expect when he was taken. His life was a dozen times forfeit to the law he had defied for long and desperate years.

But half a dozen guns covered him, and he surrendered without resistance. Jake dropped from the saddle, and grasped his lasso.

"Jad Jadson, by the great horn spoon!" chuckled Sanders. "I guess the marshal will be hoppin' glad to see you, Jad! Keep him



covered, boys, while I fix him—and fill him with lead if he moves a finger."

"Doggone you!" breathed Jad. "If I had a gun—"

"Can it!" grinned the marshal's man. "We got you, Jad—we sure got you by the short hairs! I guess we're toting you to Hardfist at the ranch—and you can bank on it that you're going up on a rope, like Bull Jadson when the marshal cinched him!"

He knotted the rope round the rustler's brawny wrists. Jad was lifted to the bronco's back behind one of the punchers, and Jake kept hold of the end of the rope.

With his chin sunk on his breast, his scarred face haggard with despair, Jad Jadson rode, a prisoner, in the midst of the marshal's posse—his black thoughts of vengeance on the Rojo cowboys driven from his mind by the grim knowledge of what was coming to him.

**H**ARDFIST HALL stood on the veranda of his ranch, his right arm in a sling, his black-bearded face savage as a wolf's.

Hardly a man was left at the ranch—every available puncher in the Hall outfit had been ordered to ride in the hunt for the Rojo cowboys. But long, long hours had passed, and the marshal of Bullwhacker had little hope that they would be successful. By that time the Outlawed Three were probably safe in their hide-out in the mesa; lying low till the hunt died down.

Where that hide-out was, Hardfist had never been able to discover. Again and again he had combed the mesa, without being able to track them down. But failure after failure only made the hard-fisted marshal more savagely determined to cinch them, and wrest from them the secret of the lost goldmine of the mesa, which they had located before he had forced them to turn outlaws.

Suddenly he gave a start, and drew a quick, eager breath, as a bunch of horsemen came in sight against the red of the sunset. It was Jake Sanders' bunch, and in their midst one man was riding double—which meant that they were bringing in a prisoner.

A prisoner—Dan or Kid or Red?

Bill Hall breathed hard and deep. But as the bunch came nearer, he discerned that the prisoner was not one of the Outlawed Three—not one of the Rojo cowboys—and the secret of the goldmine in the mesa was as far off as ever.

But there came a grim satisfaction into the marshal's face, as he recognised Jad Jadson. It was the chief of the Jadson gang—the rustler who had waylaid him on the Bullwhacker trail that morning.

Hardfist descended the steps of the veranda to meet the horsemen as they rode clattering up.

Jake Sanders grinned at him.

"We got him, marshal—we got Jad! I reckon he lost his cayuse and his gun, and we got him, hoofing it in the mesa—and rounded him up as easy as a runaway cow! I'll tell a man!"

Hardfist smiled grimly.

"Put that rope over a branch!" he snapped. The riders dismounted, and Jad was dragged down. His sunken eyes glared hate at the marshal of Bullwhacker. A lasso was thrown over the branch of a tree that stood by the ranch-house. Jad Jadson was led under it, and the loop passed round his neck.

Jake Sanders fastened the end of the rope to his saddle. It needed only a touch of the spur on his bronco's flank to drag the burly outlaw up on the rope. He waited for the marshal's order.

Hardfist's face was grim and merciless. He stood for the law, as town-marshal of Bullwhacker—and Jad was the most desperate law-breaker and killer in Arizona. Bill Hall, when it suited him, had little enough regard for the law for which he stood. But he was going to execute it now with pitiless rigour.

Jad licked his dry lips.

The shadow of grim death was on him; but he was cool. He reckoned that he had a chance yet. Hardfist wanted him—but he wanted the Rojo cowboys still more! And Jad remembered the doc's paper in his belt.



At the very moment that the hidden gunman prepared to shoot down the horseman he had ambushed, the roar of Kid's gun thundered behind him, and, with his weapon flying from his hand, the rustler rolled out of his hiding-place into the trail, yelling wildly.

That pencilled scrawl might yet stand between him and the fate he merited.

"Go slow, marshal!" said Jad coolly. "You got me—but I reckon you'd rather see Kid Byrne standing under this branch."

His eyes were keenly on the marshal's face. It was his last chance of life, and he was not sure of it. But he was cool, with a desperate coolness. And his heart beat as Hall, about to raise his hand as a signal to Sanders, lowered it again.

"Kid Byrne!" repeated Hardfist.

"Sure!"

Hall's eyes glinted at him.

"You're lying—lying to save your neck, you doggoned horse-thief. You can't hand over the Kid!"

"Guess again, marshal! I'm telling you, I can put you wise how to lay your hands on the three of them. I reckon you can cinch them this very night, if you want."

"You got a line on their hide-out in the mesa?" Hall's look and tone were grimly doubtful.

Jad shook his head.

"Nope! I guess when they're in the mesa, they hide in a hole, and pull it in after them! But I'm telling you, one of them, at least, will come down from the mesa to-night, and I'll say he would have found me watching for him, if your bunch hadn't roped me in."

Hardfist Hall looked at him searchingly. Then he made a sign to his men to stand back out of hearing.

"Now put it plain, Jad!" he snapped. "If I get Kid Byrne, you save your neck. I guess I'd let all the rustlers in Arizona run loose to get a cinch on the Rojo cowboys. You know that Bill Hall's a man of his word! Put your cards on the table."

"There's a paper in my holster!" said Jad. "I guess you'll know Doc Baker's fist when you see it."

Hall stared at him blankly for a second. Then he dipped into the pistol-holster at the outlaw's belt. He drew out the folded paper, unfolded it, and read it. Hurriedly as the six-gun doctor had scribbled it, Hardfist knew the hand.

"Where'd you get this?" he snapped.

Jad told him.

Hardfist Hall stood silent for a long minute, thinking hard. Jad watched him. He could read the savage, triumphant thoughts in the marshal's mind; and he knew that he had bought his life by betraying the Outlawed Three to their bitter enemy.

The marshal of Bullwhacker spoke at last in a low voice.

"You cinch it, Jad! I guess I got to keep you parked; but I'll sure see that you rustle a cayuse before dawn and make your getaway! You've bought it."

He turned to his men.

"You, Sanders, pack that rustler in a shed and bar the door on him!"

Wondering, the roughnecks led Jad Jadson away. Hardfist Hall went back to his veranda. He stood there, staring into the deepening sunset towards the Rio Rojo. It would be dark in an hour, and then the ambush would be laid.

Under cover of dark, the Rojo cowboys, or one of them, at least, would come to the lone cottonwood for the doctor's message. Once in his grip, they would speak—he would know how to make them speak.

The secret of the lost gold-mine was in his grasp at last!

"**W**AIT here!" said the Kid briefly.

On the rocky bank of the Rojo, where it tumbled down from the mesa, the darkness was thick, broken only by a pale gleam from the stars. It was nearly midnight; and for a long hour the Rojo cowboys had waited there, watching and listening.

In the distance, black against the stars, the mighty mass of the tall cottonwood barred the sky.

Leaving his comrades in the rocks by the river, the Kid stepped softly into the dark and disappeared from their eyes.

The dry bushes rustled round him as he trod by the great tree. The Kid stopped for a moment, his heart beating. It seemed to him, for one anxious second, that the rustle had not been made entirely by his own movements—that something had stirred in the darkness.

It was a rustle that came to him—a rustle made by no movement of his—and the Kid, in a flash, knew that he was not alone. His hand shot to his gun.

Even as he gripped it, outstretched hands touched him in the darkness.

He struggled madly, but now he was down—down on his back, with burly roughnecks piling on him. Once more he fired, then the revolver was wrenched from him, and Kid Byrne lay helpless in grasping hands. Still feebly resisting, he felt a rope passed round him and knotted.

The Kid was dragged away. At a distance on the trail, horses were waiting. The Kid was flung across a bronco. He heard the hard, jeering laugh of Hardfist Hall as he was led away in the midst of a trampling bunch of horsemen.

*The Kid in Marshal Hall's power, gone far from the help of his comrades! But Dan and Red, waiting for their comrade's return, have heard the sound of shooting as Kid was captured, and next week they make a desperate bid to rescue him!*



GRAND FREE GIFT AND 7 STAR STORIES INSIDE!

# *The* PILOT 2<sup>D</sup>

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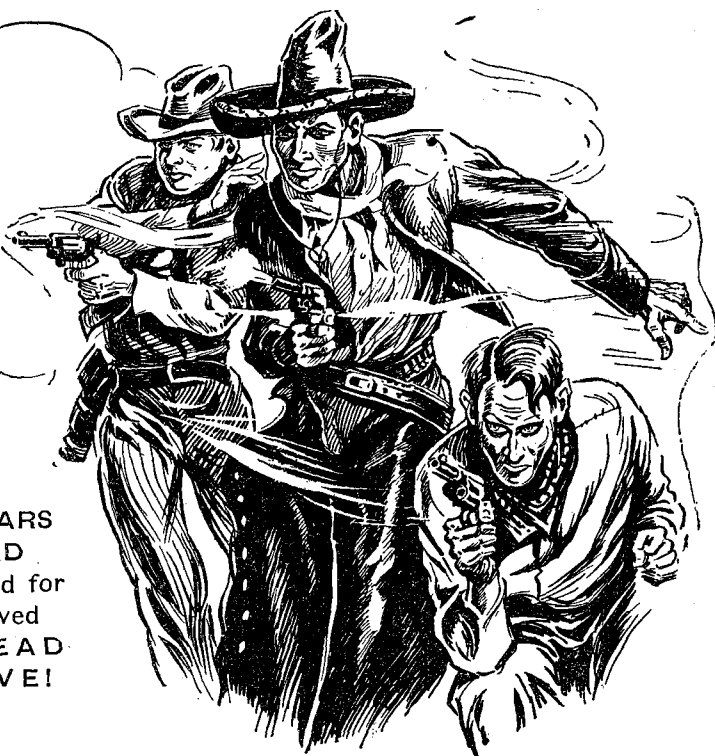
*"You will know  
him by the scar  
on his back...."*

A DRAMATIC INCIDENT FROM:

## A SPY BY NIGHT!



# The Outlawed THREE



**500 DOLLARS  
REWARD  
Will Be Paid for  
the Outlawed  
Three — DEAD  
OR ALIVE!**

**"H**ALT!" rapped Hardfist Hall, marshal of Bullwhacker.

Kid Byrne was glad to hear the word. Thrown across a horse, tied there with a lariat, the Kid ached in every limb, as he rocked and swung to the bronco's gallop.

Round him, under the midnight stars, rode Hardfist and his men—dim shapes in the gloom. There were six of them—and there had been more when they had seized Kid Byrne under the cottonwood-tree by the bank of the Rio Rojo. It was a grim satisfaction to the Kid to know that his gun had claimed one, at least, in that last desperate fight under the dark branches.

But they had him—they had him fast—bound to the back of the bronco, and the Kid reckoned that his jig was up. And he was glad that they had caught him alone—that Dan Oak and Tom Redway, waiting for him in the rocks by the river, had escaped that deadly ambush which Hardfist had prepared for the Outlawed Three.

Outlaws the Kid, Dan, and Red certainly were—not of their own free will, but driven to it by the scheming marshal.

Hardfist was their enemy. Knowing that the three cowboys had discovered a gold-mine somewhere on old Sam Oak's land, he had tried, to learn its secret.

So far, the location of the mine was still a secret. But now the Kid was a prisoner; and why Hardfist had captured him the Rojo cowboy had no doubts.

The bunch of horsemen clattered to a halt. Kid Byrne lifted his head and peered round him. The halt was welcome, but it surprised him. He had figured that Hardfist was heading for the cow town of Bullwhacker, to lodge him in the calaboose there, or else for the Hall Ranch. But they were nowhere near the cow town; they were still far from the ranch. The dusky prairie surrounded them, stretching silent and lonely.

"Say, boss, ain't you getting the guy to the calaboose at Bullwhacker?" asked Jake Sanders.

"Nope!" rapped Hall. He pulled his horse from the trail, into a bridle-track on the open prairie. His reins were in his left hand; his right arm was in a sling. That arm had been deeply scored by a bullet, and the marshal of Bullwhacker could not use it. "You, Sanders, follow me and lead that guy's cayuse. The rest of you hit the ranch."

The Kid saw the roughnecks exchange surprised looks. But they obeyed the marshal's order without a word. The outfit clattered on again, disappearing in the direction of the distant ranch.

Hardfist Hall rode by the bridle track, cutting off at right angles from the regular trail. Jake Sanders followed him, leading the bronco to which the Kid was bound. Hardfist rode in silence, at an easy trot, and the Kid wondered. Muttered ejaculations from Jake told that the marshal's man was wondering, too.

Half a mile off the trail they came to a stockman's hut—dark and deserted. It was only occupied when a herd was feeding on the Rojo range; and at present that range was vacant. Why Hardfist had made for this deserted shack on the prairie was a mystery to the Kid. But he knew that it meant no good to him.

Hardfist Hall swung himself down and hitched his horse.

"Light down, you Sanders, and get that guy inside!" he rapped.

Jake dismounted and unloosed the rope that fastened the Kid to the bronco's back.

Kid Byrne slid to the ground, where he lay helpless in the grass. His hands and ankles were tightly bound, and he could not stir a limb. Jake Sanders lifted him in his brawny arms and swung him towards the shack. Hardfist flung open the door. The Kid heard a match scratch, and there was a flicker of candle-light. Jake dragged him in after the marshal and pitched him down on the pine-plank floor.

The Kid glanced round him in the flickering candle-light.

It was the usual stockman's hut on a cattle range—a single room, with a wooden bunk, a rough table and bench, a stove, with an iron chimney-pipe passing through the slanting roof, and a kerosene lamp clamped on the wall. The candle that Hall had lighted spluttered on the table.

In one corner of the hut stood a drum of kerosene, for feeding the lamp. An old buffalo-robe lay on the bunk, but there was no other bedding. The cupboard, with its front of perforated zinc, was empty; the embers in the rusty stove dead and cold. It was weeks since there had been cattle on that range, and the stockman's hut had long been unoccupied.

Hardfist's black-bearded face, in the glimmer of the candle, was dark and grim. What was it that the hard-fisted marshal of Bullwhacker intended? Why had the prisoner been brought to that lonely hut, lost in the boundless prairie?

The Kid, as he lay on the muddy planks of the floor, wrenched with fierce strength at his bonds. But there was nothing to it. He had been too securely tied to have a chance.

Jake Sanders stood looking at his master. Ruffian and roughneck as he was, the expression of Hardfist's grim face seemed to make him a little uneasy. Like the Kid, he was wondering what was to come.

Hardfist gave him a glance.

"I guess you can beat it!" he snapped.

"You stopping, marshal?" asked the wondering Jake.

"Quit chewing the rag, and beat it! You can wait for me at the fork of the trail."

Jake asked no more questions. He gave the

Kid a look—and it seemed to Kid Byrne that there was a glimpse of compassion in it. He tramped out of the stockman's hut, and the Kid heard him mount and ride away.

Not till the last sound of Jake's horse had died away did the marshal of Bullwhacker move. Then he closed the door and dropped the pine bars into place in the sockets. Under his knitted brows his eyes glinted down at the bound Kid. The cowboy's eyes met them unflinchingly. The marshal's voice came in low, tense tones.

"I got you cinched, Kid Byrne! I'll say your side-kickers can't help you now. I'll get them, too. I guess I'll find your hide-out up in the mesa, if I have to comb the hills with a small comb! But they'll keep!"

Kid made no answer. Evidently, the marshal did not know that Dan and Red had been anywhere near at hand when he got the Kid under the cottonwood by the river. And the Kid did not intend to put him wise.

"They'll keep!" repeated Hardfist. "But I got you, Kid Byrne, and one of your bunch is enough for what I want. You're an outlaw, and I guess I could string you up, and no questions asked. And there's only one reason why you ain't swinging on a branch now—and I guess you're wise to it! You're going to tell me where to lay my hands on the lost mine of the mesa—and you're going to tell me quick!"

**K**ID BYRNE did not speak.

He lay bound and helpless at the marshal's feet—at the mercy of his enemy, in whose heart there was no more mercy than in that of a wolf on the prowl for prey. But his courage did not falter; and his look was cool, contemptuous. Hardfist Hall waited for him to speak; but only the Kid's steady, scornful stare answered him.

"Lissen, you!" There was deep menace in the marshal's voice. "I been after the mine for years. I always allowed that old Sam Oak was right, and that there was gold on his land—the mine that his father lost forty years ago. You found it. I saw a nugget in your fist. I reckon if old Sam had sold out, like I wanted, it would have saved him a heap of trouble."

"You doggoned lobo-wolf!" The Kid broke his silence. "Old Sam's lying close

to death at Doc Baker's, at Parksville, and you was the murdering bound that shot him up in the dark. And Dan and Red—and me are outlaws, because you framed us on the charge of shooting the old man that we'd have died for! Get on with it, you red-handed thief! You won't get a word from me about the mine!"

Hardfist nodded, as if that was the answer he had expected.

"That's how I figured it out," he said. "You'd sure go up on a rope, and take your secret across the Jordan with you."

"Surest thing you know," said the Kid disdainfully.

"It ain't a rope you got to watch out for, Kid Byrne. If I was aiming to string you up, I guess the cottonwood where I cinched you would have come in for that. You're here, and I guess nobody will ask what happened to an outlaw in this lone shack. You got it coming to you hard, Kid, if you don't spill the beans."

"You sure do chew the rag a whole lot, Hardfist," drawled the Kid. "I'm telling you that it won't buy you anything."

Hardfist stood looking down on him in grim silence for a long minute. Blacker and grimmer grew his hard face. And the Kid wondered what was coming to him. The outfit were back at the ranch by that time. Jake Sanders, waiting at the fork on the trail, was a good half-mile away. There were no eyes to see what happened at the lonely stockman's hut; no ears to hear. With all his courage and nerve the Kid's heart beat harder.

Hardfist turned away from him without another word. He stepped to the corner where the drum of kerosene stood.

Kid watched him as he rolled it into the middle of the hut with his left hand, and wrenched out the bung. He tilted the drum, and the kerosene, glimmering in the candle-flicker, gushed out in a stream.

It streamed over the plank flooring; it splashed on the wooden walls. The reek of it filled the hut, and stung the Kid's nostrils. His face whitened under its tan. Was that what the marshal of Bullwhacker meant? Could it be that? The Kid shut his teeth hard.

The drum was emptied. The marshal lifted the sputtering candle from the table, and Kid's heart missed a beat. The candle, dropped into the drenching kerosene, would have set the hut in a roar of flame.

Stooping, Hardfist plugged the candle in a crevice of the plank floor. Its spluttering wick burned a few inches over the glimmering kerosene. When it burned down—

In the dancing shadows the grim, black-bearded face loomed grim, hard, merciless.

"I guess you'll talk now, Kid Byrne!"

The Kid's teeth were shut.

"That candle may burn ten minutes yet," said Hardfist, in low tones. "When it burns down to the kerosene, I guess you know what next. You putting me wise to the mine in the mesa?"

"You pesky polecat!" said the Kid huskily. "Not a word! You shot-up old Sam Oak to get your claws on the mine; but you'll never get them there through me. Dan and Red'll get you yet!"

"I guess your side-kickers won't ever know what happened to you, Kid Byrne. If they're waiting at your hide-out in the mesa, I guess they'll wait long to get news of you. If a stockman's hut gets burned out on a lonely range, who's going to ask questions about it?" Hardfist gave a grim, harsh laugh. "If questions was asked, I guess I got an answer—you got loose, Kid Byrne, and knocked over the lamp in a struggle. And me, with one arm lame—how was I to help you?" He laughed again.

"You got it all out and dried, you coyote!" muttered the Kid. "But it won't buy you a thing."

Hardfist leaned over him. Slowly—for he could use only his left hand—he fastened the Kid's feet with a length of rope to the heavy pinewood bench. If the Kid had thought of rolling over to the candle and extinguishing it with his weight, he had to forget it now.

The bench was too heavy for him to drag; and Hardfist knotted the rope securely.

"Guess again!" came the menacing voice. "I'm leaving you to it; but I'll stop around for a call. Make up your mind to it, and give me a call before it's too late, or take what's coming to you."

"You won't hear me call none, you dog-goned thief and murderer!" said the Kid, between set lips.

Hardfist stepped to the door and unbarred it. He threw it open and stood there against the blackness of the night, his eyes fixed on the Kid.

"Guess again!" he repeated. "Put me wise to the mine in the mesa, and you can mount and ride—join up with your side-kickers, and ride out of Arizona and save your necks. Keep your secret, and I guess I'll get Dan Oak and Tom Redway, soon or late, and twist it out of them. You got your choice."

He waited a long moment for an answer; but no answer came. He stepped out into



Dropping into place the lock-bar that fastened the door, Hardfist Hall turned with a scowl to his bound captive. "Now!" he snarled. "You're going to tell me where to lay my hands on the lost mine of the mesa—and you're going to tell me quick! I know how to make you talk, Kid Byrne!"

the dark, and drew the door shut after him. Kid Byrne was left alone.

Alone, in the flicker of the candle, glimmering on the drenching kerosene. His eyes fixed on it, watching it burn down.

Slowly—but swiftly, to the Kid's watching eyes—it burned. It was a matter of minutes before it reached the kerosene, then—

Then the hut would flare up in a blaze of flames, with the Kid, bound and helpless, in the midst of it.

Was it only a threat to break his nerve, and force from his lips the secret of the lost mine? The Kid knew that it was not. Unless he called to Hardfist Hall, waiting in the darkness by the hut, the candle-flame would reach the kerosene, and the lonely hut would go up in flames.

But the Kid did not call. The sweat started out on his forehead in great drops; but his teeth were clamped shut.

He watched the consuming candle, burning lower and closer to the kerosene—and the sands of the Kid's life were running out as he watched!

"THEY got him!" muttered Red. His voice shook, and his plump face was pale.

Dan Oak, silent, stood under the shadowy branches of the great cottonwood by the Rojo, his rugged brows knitted, his teeth tight.

Hoofbeats had died away across the river; the Kid was gone with his captors, and a dead man that lay in the black shadow of the tree remained to show that he had fought hard to the finish—his lead had not all been wasted.

They had heard the fring—Dan and Red—but they had reached the spot too late to help the Kid. They were on foot, and the captured Kid had gone with mounted men.

Dan clenched his hands till the nails dug into the palms.

"It'll be Hardfist's bunch," he muttered at length. "They couldn't have knowed the Kid was here. Hardfist ain't wise to it that Doc Baker leaves a message for us, about old Sam, hid in the tree. They was hunting us, and just happened on Kid. They'll be making for Bullwhacker, or the ranch. We got to hoof it, Red."

He tramped down to the ford of the Rojo, Red at his heels. To overtake mounted men was impossible; but to follow was possible. To save the Kid, or to die with him, that was possible.

In silence they splashed through the ford and tramped the trail on the farther side—on Bill Hall's wide-stretching ranch lands. Red's face was pale and strained; his heart ached with fear for the Kid. Big Dan Oak shared his feelings, but his rugged, tanned face told little.

Swiftly they swung along the well-marked trail that led from the ford. The Hall Ranch lay half-way to the cow town, and Dan did not reckon on halting till the ranch was sighted. But coming up to the fork in the trail where the bridle-track branched off, Dan suddenly halted, grasped Red's arm, and drew him to a stop.

Red did not speak; he understood that caution was needed. But he looked up inquiringly at Dan's face, dim in the gloom. Dan lifted his hand and pointed.

Red peered through the dusk. He started at the sight of the dark figure of a horseman.

Dan's hand was on his gun, but he did not draw it. There was—for the moment, at least—no danger. The horseman sat motionless in the saddle, facing the bridle-track that led across the prairie.

The two boys, silent, in the shadow of the clump of post-oaks, watched him.

And as they watched, in spite of the darkness, they made him out at last, and knew that he was the marshal's man, Jake Sanders. Dan had had no doubt that it was Hardfist's outfit that had got the Kid, and the sight of Jake Sanders on the trail was as good as proof of it.

But what did his presence there mean? Why was he halted, sitting like a statue in the saddle, straining his eyes through the dark towards the distant stockman's hut, which Dan knew to be situated half a mile away, beyond range of vision? Where were the rest of the bunch? Where was Hardfist? Where was Kid Byrne?

Dan put his lips close to Red's ear and whispered:

"We got to get him! It's Jake, Hardfist's side-kicker! I don't rightly get this. I reckon the outfit's hit the ranch afore this; but that hombre's waiting for some guy—waiting and watching. I don't rightly get it, but that bullwhacker is going to tell us why they done with Kid!"

Red nodded. "You don't want to burn powder," he breathed. "Mebbe the bunch ain't far off."

"I ain't aiming to burn powder. Stick in cover, Red, and don't make a sound. I'll say this is my game."

He glided away, without another word. Red, standing under the post-oaks, his heart throbbing, watched him till he vanished in the dark.

Big and brawny as Dan Oak was, he was as wary as a cougar on the trail; no sound came



from him as he crept low in the dusky grass. The horseman still sat at the fork of the trail, motionless.

No sound—till a dark shadow rose beside the horseman in the dark, and Jake Sanders gave a sudden convulsive start as the muzzle of a gun jabbed his ribs. Then Dan's voice came, low:

"Grab the air, you galoot! Grab it quick, or you get yours!"

For a split second Jake sat without movement, too astonished to move. Then his hands went up over his stetson.

With a shiver running through his burly body, he looked down at Dan. He had a glimpse of a rugged, set face, of glinting eyes. He read death in their glint if he stirred. He sat tight.

"Red!"

It was only a whisper, but it reached the youngest of the Rojo cowboys, waiting by the post-oaks. A few seconds, and Red was at Dan's side. A breathless mutter came from the marshal's man.

"You 'uns! I reckoned you was hiding up in the mesa."

"Can it!" snarled Dan. "You, Red, cinch that guy's hardware—pronto!"

Red drew the gun from Jake's holster. In Red's hand, it covered the marshal's man.

"Light down!" Dan's voice came low and curt. "Keep your bully-beef trap clamped, Jake! I guess I don't want any of your side-kickers around! Get off'n that cayuse, dog-gone you!"

Jake Sanders slid from the saddle. He stood beside the horse, a tinge of pallor in his tanned cheeks. He was in desperate hands, and he knew it.

Time had been when the Rojo cowboys had stood for the law, as peaceable and law-abiding as any guys in Arizona. But the marshal of Bullwhacker had framed them and driven them into outlawry, and they were as ready to burn powder, in self-defence or in defence of one another, as the most desperate rustler of the sierra. Jake Sanders knew that his life hung on a thread—and a slender thread.

"Hardfist's got Kid?" muttered Dan, his eyes gleaming.

"Sure!" breathed Jake.

"Where's his bunch?"

"Gone on to the ranch!"

"And Kid?" Dan watched the marshal's man like a wolf. "I don't get this, but I'm sure goin' to get it! Why was you left here? What they done with Kid? By the great horn spoon, if Kid's got his, you get yours, Jake Sanders, and the marshal next! Spill it, you piccan—spill it afore I fill you up with lead! What's Hardfist done with Kid?"

His voice came, hoarse with anxiety and ferocity.

Jake panted.

"I'd no hand in it, feller!" he muttered. "Hardfist's got the Kid at the stockman's hut, but I'll tell a man I don't know what his game is!"

Red gave a choked cry. The outfit sent on to the ranch; Jake left to wait at the fork; the marshal alone with the Kid at that lonely hut—what did it mean? What devil's work was going on at that lonely hut on the Rojo range? Red caught at Dan Oak's arm.

"Dan, what'll be coming to the Kid, alone with Hardfist there?"

As if in answer to Red, there came from the south a sudden flash of flaming light. Dan gave a yell.

"Fire—fire at the hut! The Kid—"

Red, heedless of the marshal's man, started running by the bridle-track, heading for the hut. But Dan was not forgetful of him. He had no time to lose on Jake; but he had to leave him safe, although he could not shoot down an unarmed man. He swung up the heavy revolver and brought it down heavily. Jake Sanders dropped senseless into the grass.

Dan gave him not a glance after he fell. He grasped at the bronco and flung himself into the saddle. He drove the animal to a furious gallop towards that dancing flare that lighted the midnight sky, passing Red on the prairie.

"I'll ride ahead to try to save the Kid!" he yelled. "You follow on!"

**H**ARDFIST HALL waited.

The marshal of Bullwhacker stood in the darkness by the fence of the corral attached to the stockman's hut.

He leaned on the rough pine poles of the fence, listening.

From where he stood, the marshal saw the little window of the hut, glimmering faintly with candlelight. Would the call come? Would the Kid surrender?

Hardfist reckoned that he would—that the secret of the lost mine in the mesa was as good as his. Surely he would call when the guttering candle burned low to the floor.

But no call came!

The marshal stirred at last. He stepped to the little window and peered in. In the dim glimmer of the candle he could see the Kid—



Carrying his helpless comrade over his shoulder, Dan stumbled through the searing flames and smoke towards the door. Choked, blinded, tortured, he struggled on, determined to save his pard from the death-trap their enemy had set!

stretched in his bonds, unable to stir—his face, white as wax, but set and resolute.

Kid did not see the black-bearded face that looked in at the window; his gaze was fixed, never wavering, on the flame that was creeping down to the kerosene. There remained less than an inch to burn, and it burned steadily down.

If there was a stirring of compunction in the marshal's hard heart, his face did not show it as he stared in. Silently, grimly, he looked in on the doomed Kid, and then stepped back from the window and resumed his former place, leaning on the corral fence.

The Kid would call surrender; his life was worth more than old Sam's mine. Surely he would talk turkey, with terrible death creeping on him, now so close?

Hall set his teeth under his black beard. If Kid-Byrne did not, let him take what was coming to him!

Shadows wavered and danced in the hut as the candle burned lower and guttered. Still no sound from the Kid. Hardfist wiped a bead of sweat from his dark brow.

His eyes, fixed on the window, were suddenly dazzled by a gleaming of bright light. He spat out a curse. If he repented now, if compunction came, it came too late. For the death-watch was at its terrible end—the candle-flame had burned down to the kerosene, and the inflammable oil had caught.

Up from the window shot a sheet of flame.

It died down, and shot up again! There came a roar of fire—a crackling of wood. But there came no cry from the bound Kid.

Lonely as the prairie was, it seemed to Hardfist that the leaping flame must be seen from his ranch, from the town of Bullwhacker. And it was only the beginning. In a few minutes more, the whole building would be roaring in conflagration.

But he knew it was only the fancy of fear; there were no eyes to see. Jake, from the fork of the trail, would catch the flare; but Jake was a sure man. Jake's jaw would be clamped on the happenings of that night. But the marshal gave a start as he heard the sound of galloping hoofs coming across the prairie from the trail. Dim in the stars a horseman loomed, and the marshal of Bullwhacker snarled a curse. He shouted savagely to the coming rider:

"Beat it, you! Beat it, Jake, you geek! I guess I ordered you to wait at the fork, you doggoned piccan! What you doing here?"

He did not doubt for a moment that it was Jake, riding up to the hut because the flare had caught his eyes. But the next moment he knew it was not Jake.

From the horseman came a flash and a report, and a bullet struck the corral fence a foot from the marshal of Bullwhacker. In the darkness there, and the shadow of the fence, he could not be seen; but his voice had guided the shot. He gave a yell as the bullet splattered on the pinewood.

Crack! Crack! came the roar of the gun again, and twice a bullet grazed him in the dark. Without checking the speed of his horse, the rider fired fast. Hardfist grasped his gun with his left hand, amazed, alarmed, not understanding. It was not Jake; it could not be his own man firing on him as he galloped up. Then who was it?

A flare of flame momentarily lighted a rugged, fierce face, and the marshal knew Dan Oak. He threw lead as he saw him, but his left hand was uncertain, and the rider's motions rapid; the bullet missed by yards. Crack! came the roar of Dan's gun again, and the stetson spun on Bill Hall's head.

The marshal of Bullwhacker gritted his teeth. Dan Oak, whom he had believed miles away in the hide-out up in the mesa! Dan Oak on Jake's horse. He could see that it was Jake's bridle in the flare of light. Dan Oak, mad with rage, shooting to kill!

Crack! roared the gun again, and the marshal felt the blood running down his face as a strip of skin was torn away.

Only the darkness saved him from being riddled with lead, and the flare from the hut was dispelling the darkness. To get to the horse was impossible—he would be seen and shot down. Gritting his teeth with fury, the marshal of Bullwhacker stumbled away on the dark prairie, while Dan Oak, thinking only of his pard now, dashed up to the burning hut and threw himself from the horse.

"Kid!"

Dan dragged open the door. A voice was calling through the smoke—the voice of Kid Byrne.

Dan groped and struggled, blinded by smoke, licked by tongues of flame. Where was his comrade? He stumbled over a figure on the floor.

"Kid!"

He groped—he dragged. There was yet time—time to save his comrade. But he dragged in vain. The Kid was tied—tied fast!

Dan's groping hand felt a rope. His knife in his other hand now, he sawed through the rope—and it parted.

Flame was running along the floor in streaks, following the streams of the spilt kerosene—the wood was catching all round him. But he lifted the bound Kid in his sinewy arms, and stumbled for the door.

How he reached it he never knew. Smoke thickened round him; tongues of flame licked at him. Choked, blinded, tortured, he stumbled on—stumbled into the air—into the wind of the prairie.

With his last ounce of strength, he tottered beyond the reach of the licking flames, stumbled in damp, cool grass, and let the Kid fall. From somewhere, shots were ringing; but he did not hear or heed. Utterly spent, he sank in the

(Continued on page 308.)

## THE WORST BOY AT BORSTED

(Continued from page 296.)

"Tuck in, you young fools!" he grated harshly. "And don't eat too quickly. Him—"

He broke off and wiped his eye with the cuff of his sleeve, for the sight of that hungry, ravenous crowd sampling their first meal for days was too much for him.

Just a single glistening tear trickled down his leathery face. It was immediately wiped away, but those Borsted boys who saw it never forgot. From that hour onwards they had a respect for Chief Warder Samson that nothing would ever shake.

When the boys had eaten, Major Whittaker-Rigby arrived.

On the dais at the end of the hall he stood and surveyed the youngsters who had defied him. A pin could have been heard to drop.

"So you have come to your senses at last," he said acidly. "Well, you might as well know what lies before you. Every boy who took part in the mutiny will receive a flogging once a week for the next month."

He paused, and the rebels squirmed in anticipation.

"Every boy will receive the same number of strokes as his age. For instance, you, Carstairs, are seventeen years old, are you not?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then you will receive seventeen strokes of the birch. You, Marrowby, are eleven years old. I believe?"

"Yes, sir!" spoke up young Marrowby stoutly. "And I'm not afraid to take my eleven strokes four times during the month, either!" You wouldn't have got the whip-hand now unless Templeman had met with an accident—"

"Quiet, you young fool!" urged Chief Warder Samson under his breath.

"So," said the governor, dangerously calm, "you are still a rebel, eh? Well, we'll make a start with you, Marrowby, now. Let any of you other young scoundrels should be tempted to start another mutiny. Take him up, Samson."

Chief Warder Samson shook his head.

"Not me, sir! The kid can hardly stand on his legs now. I wouldn't be a party to that sort of cruelty, not even at your command, sir!"

"Take him up, Samson—" began the governor, when he became aware that the face of every rebel was blazing with wrath and a new defiance. Fists, too, he noticed, were clenched. For a moment it seemed that the rebellion would break out afresh.

"Very well!" he snapped. "Perhaps the boys are not in a physical state to stand their punishment now. Take their names, Samson—each boy will report for punishment in a month's time."

## THE OUTLAWED THREE

(Continued from page 302.)

grass beside the Kid, his dizzy brain swimming. Then a plump, anxious face bent over him in the flare of the firelight.

"Dan, ol' timer!" panted Red.

"The Kid!" muttered Dan. "Look after the Kid!"

Red's knife was already sawing through the Kid's bonds. Kid Byrne sat up in the grass, staring with dizzy eyes at the burning hut.

"I'll say you was jest on time, Dan!" said the Kid softly. "And I'll tell all Arizona, ol'-timer, that if a galoot ever had a better pardner and side-kicker than you, Dan, I'd sure like to see the colour of his hair."

"You said it, Kid!" muttered Red.

Dan grunted.

"Aw, pack it up!" he said. He stared round, remembering the marshal of Bullwhacker.

"Hardfist's beat it. The pizen skunk! I

And that was how the governor of Borsted crawled out of his difficulty. That was how the great rebellion at Borsted ended.

"Chief Warder Samson," called out the governor, when the boys had been dismissed, "I am not satisfied with your services at this institution. You are impertinent, and I fear, too lenient with the boys. I shall recommend your transfer to another reformatory at the earliest possible date."

"Thank you, sir," answered Chief Warder Samson. "With all due respect, I should like to say that I have already applied to the governing board to transfer me to another reformatory. Your methods, sir, and mine somehow don't agree. You will excuse me, sir—"

He saluted stiffly, wheeled like the well-trained ex-Army man he was, and strode off towards the prison infirmary.

For the remainder of the evening he sat by the bedside of No. 166, staring with fixed gaze at the pale, stricken face of the one boy at Borsted he really cared something about.

"You're out of place here, No. 166," he murmured softly. "You never did fit in with these other young scallawags. And whatever you've done I will say you've got guts. I wish"—Chief Warder Samson began to speak a thought that had haunted him a long time—"I wish I had a kid half as good—or half as bad, come to that—as you!"

It was getting close on prayer-time when Jim Templeman stirred in his sleep. The grim-faced nurse who tended him now came forward.

"He's recovering consciousness," she whispered, and the way she said it showed that somewhere beneath her cold, grim exterior lay a human heart that could feel another's suffering. "The poor kid's coming round—he'll pull through! Look, Mr. Samson—his eyes are opening. I must get the doctor."

Wide and full Jim Templeman's eyes opened, but they had a fixed stare in them that frightened Warder Samson, tough as he was to unpleasant sights. They swivelled in his direction, and his leathery face wrinkled into a smile. But there was no response.

"Don't you know me, Templeman—Jim—I'm Samson!"

Jim's eyes looked straight at him, through him, beyond him, seeing everything apparently, yet seeing nothing. For the second time that evening Chief Warder Samson's eyes watered. Quietly he crept away, murmuring to himself:

"He didn't recognise me! The poor kid! What have they done to him?"

**M**IDNIGHT had chimed from the clock in the tower when a grey-clad youngster, of plumpish proportions, crept into the infirmary ward. Fatty Williams had let himself out of the punishment-cell with the fixed intention of seeing his pal. Now, having waited for the nurse to disappear, he crept into the ward and bent over Jim Templeman's bed.

reckon we want to beat it afore he hits the back-trail with his outfit. Get them cayuses, Red—it's us for the mesa, and we got to burn the wind!"

Hardfist Hall, with a dozen armed punchers at his back, rode up to the smoking ruins of the stockman's hut, as the stars were paling towards dawn. He had made good time; but the Rojo cowboys were far away.

The trail of three riders was picked up, and followed to the ford of the Rio Rojo—and there lost. The rocky wilderness of the mesa had swallowed them; and Hardfist rode sullenly and savagely back to his ranch.

While in their hide-out—a cave hidden by a roaring waterfall, and actually the location of the secret goldmine—Dan, Kid, and Red were holding a council of war, vowing vengeance against the man who was their enemy.

"Say, you 'uns," said the Kid grimly, "I

No. 166 was awake. His eyes were wide and bright and troubled. Red flecks of colour on his cheek-bones gave a heightening effect to the ghastly pallor of his face. He stared at Fatty Williams' podgy, wrinkled face like a sleepwalker—unseeing.

"Hallo, Jim!" whispered Fatty, forcing a smile. "It's me—Fatty! I've come to see how you're getting on. The rebellion"—he lied bravely—"is going fine. How you feelin', old college pudding?"

But something like a sob rose in his throat when he saw that fixed, unchanged expression on the face of his stricken chum.

"Lawks, he doesn't know me! He doesn't recognise me! What have they done to you, chum?" Tears were streaming down Fatty's plump cheeks now, unchecked, unheeded.

"Speak to me, old china. I'm, Fatty Williams—don't you remember? You slobbered me under the chin so that I shouldn't stop you trying to make a break for Dunchester."

No. 166 gave no sign of recognition. He just stared—stared—stared—

The sound of light footsteps outside the room brought home to Fatty Williams realisation of his own danger. He mustn't be caught here; he was supposed to be in the punishment-cell. Swiftly he insinuated his plump body behind the screen by his chum's bedside. Through a gap between the sides of the screen he caught sight of Adolph Larcing tiptoeing up to the bedside.

The secretary glanced about him fearfully, hastily withdrew a small blue bottle from his pocket, and, picking up the glass which contained the sick-lad's next dose of medicine, tipped the contents of the poison bottle into the medicine.

Then, with burning eyes, he stared down at the bandaged figure in the bed, muttered something which sounded like a curse, and grinned in evil triumph.

"Good riddance, No. 166!" This time the muttered words came clearly to Fatty, now peering round the screen. "That'll be the last dose of medicine you'll ever need. Lost your memory, have you? Well, you've lost a fortune, too!"

With his eyes popping from his sockets, Fatty Williams watched Adolph Larcing sneak out of the ward, and heard his light footsteps fade away along the stone corridor. Then, before Fatty's numbed brain could function to meet this ghastly emergency, the nurse returned. She smiled down at the invalid, looked at her watch, and then picked up the medicine-glass.

"Come along, son. It's time for your medicine. Drink this—you'll feel much better!"

She curled an arm round Jim Templeman, supporting him, and held the medicine-glass towards his lips.

**But for the faithful Fatty, Larcing's fiendish scheme would be bound to succeed, and even now seconds are precious. Read next week's dramatic chapters!**

guess it's time Hardfist Hall got his coming to him! It's him or us in Arizona, pards—and it's sure not going to be that pesky polecat!"

"You said it!" Big Dan Oak's fist clenched over the butt of his gun. "We'll cinch the pizen skunk, Kid—we'll get him for framing us and high sending old Sam beyond Jordan!"

"Sure!" agreed Red.

There in the cave the Outlawed Three made that solemn vow. The time had come for a final showdown. With roaring guns and flaming lead, they would hound down the man who had forced them against the law!

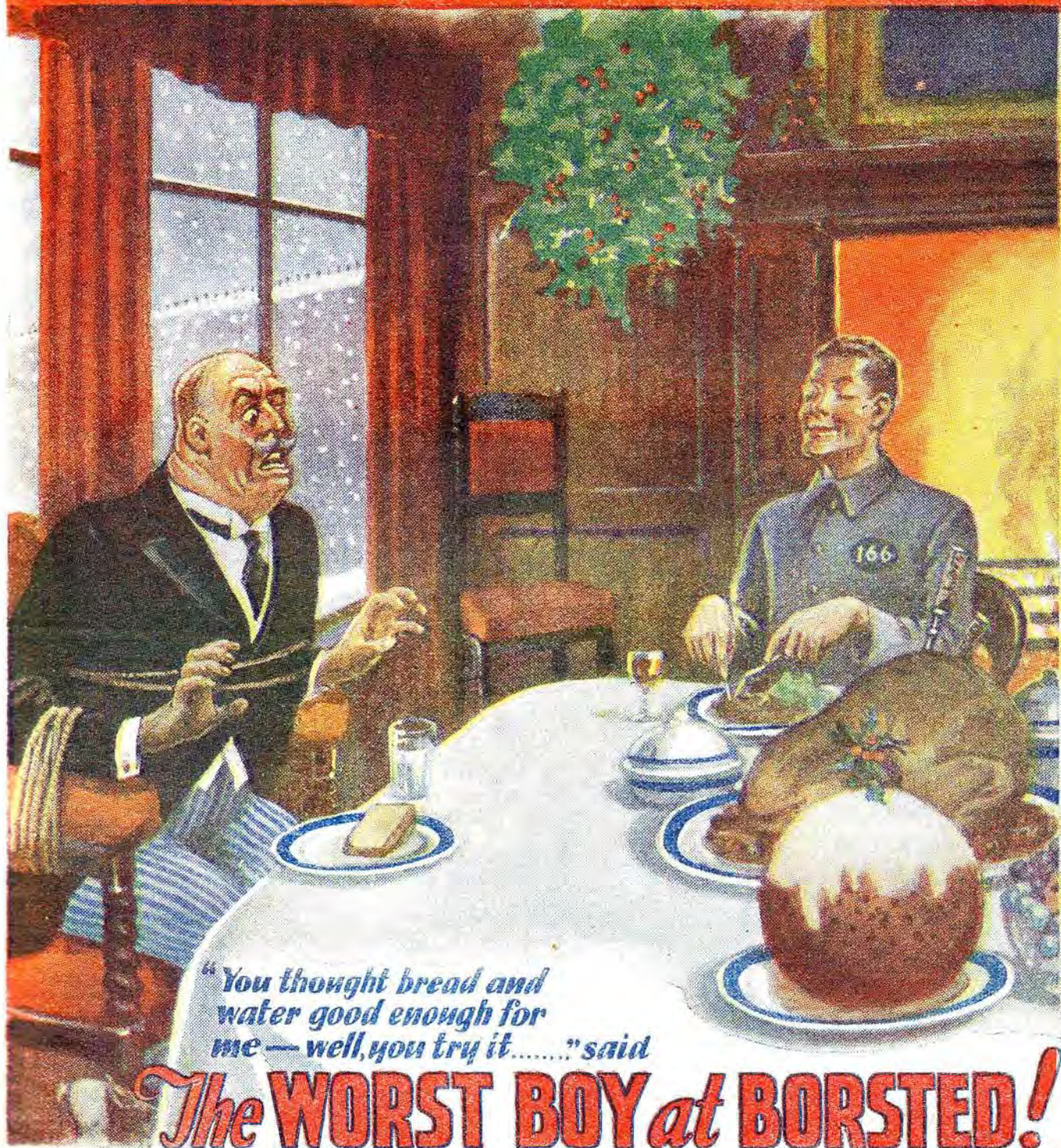
**But before that showdown can be brought to pass, Hardfist Hall has another cunning trick up his sleeve! "Sam Oak is dying!" is the message the Outlawed Three receive—and in answering that summons they plunge into a new trap! You must read next week's thrilling Western yarn of "THE OUTLAWED THREE!"**



**Grand Christmas Number!** ALSO  
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# *The* **PILOT** 2<sup>D</sup>

No. 12. Vol. 1.  
Dec. 21st, 1935.  
Every Friday.



*"You thought bread and water good enough for me — well, you try it....." said*

***The WORST BOY at BORSTED!***



# The Outlawed THREE



**H**ARDFIST HALL crossed to the door of his office on Main Street in Bullwhacker, slammed it shut, and threw a bar in position. He swung round from the door, to fix his eyes on the little man in black who stood by his desk.

Lawyer Hook eyed him with a vague uneasiness. The cow town lawyer had done plenty of work for the marshal of Bullwhacker, and much of it had been of a questionable kind. He played jackal to the big, brawny, hard-fisted marshal, and all his scruples could have been packed on a pinhead.

"Give that the once-over, hombre!" rapped the marshal, tossing a crumpled sheet of paper on the desk.

In sheer wonder, the cow town lawyer picked it up, smoothed it out, and looked at it. It was a leaf torn from a pocket-book, written on hastily in pencil, and signed "Doc."

"I guess you know that fist?" grunted Hall. "Doc Baker's, of Parksville!"

"You said it!"

Lawyer Hook read the scribbled message. "That's written to the Rojo cowboys, marshal!" he said. "It's Doc Baker's fist, and it says Sam is mending, and will live. He's got old Sam Oak up at his cabin in Parksville—he took him away after he was shot-up at the Rojo Ranch. I guess it means he's in touch with those three outlaws, Dan Oak and Kid Byrne and Tom Redway. But—"

"But what?" barked Hardfist. "You can't touch Doc Baker on it!" said Lawyer Hook, shaking his head. "Mebbe he's standing by them young firebugs, and I've sure heard him shouting that he don't believe they shot-up old Sam. But—"

"Who's aiming to get at the doc?" growled Hardfist Hall. "You listen, Hook! The Rojo cowboys have got a hide-out up in the mesa. I guess I've combed the hills for them, but they got me beat! They don't dare ride the trails, and they sure do hone for news of their uncle. How d'you figure they get news of the old man?"

He pointed to the scribbled paper. "Doc Baker left that in the trunk of the lone cottonwood near the old Rojo Ranch!" he said. "Kid Byrne came looking for the doc's message—and found me and my outfit waiting for him. His side-kickers got him away again, but— The marshal's black-bearded face set grimly. "They don't know I got that paper! They don't savvy that I'm wise to it that they use the cottonwood for a post-office! That's why I want you—now!"

Lawyer Hook looked alarmed. "What d'you mean?" he asked hoarsely. "I guess," said Hardfist, "they'll be looking for the doc's message in that cottonwood some time. They won't find what doc left for them. They're going to find a message that old Sam is dying at Parksville! They're going to find it written in the doc's fist. You get me?"

Lawyer Hook did not reply to that. The marshal's meaning, as it dawned on him, drove the colour from his thin, cunning face. "What you reckon they'll do," said Hardfist, "when they get that message? I'll say they'll saddle up and ride for Parksville to see old Sam before he passes in his checks! I'll say they'll mount and ride, even if all the sheriffs

in Arizona stood in their way handling guns!"

Lawyer Hook did not speak.

"That message," went on Hardfist grimly, "has got to be written, looking as if it came from the doc! I guess I can handle a gun with any guy in Arizona, but I sure ain't no dandy with a pen! You get me, hombre?"

"I—I can't do it, marshal!" stammered the cow town lawyer.

"Forging a man's hand, and me a lawyer—"

"You a lawyer—and I guess there's some things you've done, and been paid for, that the sheriff at Parksville would like to hear about!" growled Hardfist. "Quit chewing the rag, hombre! I guess you're the only man in Bullwhacker able to do what I want!"

"It—it's against the law—"

"I guess the law can stretch a point when it comes to roping in three outlaws that's wanted for shooting-up a rancher!" jeered Hardfist.

"Aw, can it!" snapped Hook, with a show of spirit. "You know you've framed the cowboys on that charge—"

Hardfist Hall's face went dark with rage. His hand flashed to the gun in the holster at his belt. Lawyer Hook, pale with terror as the muzzle of the Colt was thrust against his heart, sank down at the desk. Over the levelled gun Hardfist's eyes glinted at him.

"You coyote!" said Hall, through gritted teeth. "You doggoned sneaking coyote! Get on with writing that message, or you get yours! I'll shoot you up like a stray dog if you go back on me! Get to it, durn you!"

The cow town lawyer took the pencil. His skinny hand shook so much that he could hardly handle it. But he dared not disobey. In silence, white-faced, the cow town lawyer wrote at Hardfist's dictation, and copied what he had written again and again, till the marshal of Bullwhacker was satisfied that he had imitated Doc Baker's hand successfully.

"Sam dying. Hurry if you want to see him alive!"

"Doc."

Hardfist took the final copy, compared it with doc's original note, and nodded, satisfied. He jammed the gun back in his belt.

"Skip!" he snarled.

Lawyer Hook cringed from the office. Hardfist gave the false message one more look, folded the sheet, and put it in his pocket.

Five minutes later he was riding out of Bullwhacker. The false message was lodged in the crevice in the trunk of the lone cottonwood.

And Hardfist Hall rode back to Bullwhacker, savagely assured that his hour of triumph was near at hand!

**C**LINK, clink!

It was the sound of a pick on hard rock. It rang and echoed through the great cave with a hollow sound; but it did not float beyond the cave, for it was drowned by the incessant roar of a waterfall.

The scene was a strange one. Several pine-wood torches were stuck in crevices in the rocky walls of the cave, shedding wavering light. The flare glimmered on walls of rock, and on the sheet of glistening, falling water that screened the mouth of the cave.

It was no wonder that the marshal of Bullwhacker had never found the hide-out of the Outlawed Three. A dozen times, at least, had Hardfist tramped up that rocky ravine with his men, but never a suspicion had crossed his mind that a cave lay hidden behind the waterfall.

Only by chance had Kid Byrne found it—falling with the cascading water from above. And in that hidden river-cave he had found the gold-mine which had been lost forty years ago with the death of old Sam's father. Sam had hunted for the mine all his life and never found it. Kid had stumbled upon it by accident—but then had come tragedy instead of fortune.

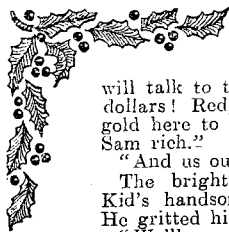
It was Kid Byrne who was handling the pick. Night lay on the Mesa Mountains—starry night. But in the river-cave the pine torches flared, and the camp of the Outlawed Three had a homely look.

A camp-fire burned, with three sticks over it, and a cooking-pot suspended. Red, his chubby face glowing from the fire, was cooking a supper for three, while the Kid clanged the pick and turned up golden nuggets. Dan was absent. He had gone down, under cover of the dark, to cinch the doc's message from the cottonwood "post-office"—if it was there.

Every time Doc Baker rode on the Bullwhacker trail, he left a note in the cottonwood, to give news of old Sam. Only once had he missed—though the Rojo cowboys did not know that, on that occasion, the note had fallen into Hardfist Hall's hands; they never dreamed that the secret was known to their bitter enemy.

Clink, clink! rang the Kid's pick. His eyes gleamed as he dislodged a thick nugget from its bed of rock. He lifted it in his hands, carried it to the fire, and held it up for Red to see.





"Look at that, old-timer!" grinned the Kid. "I'll tell a man that nugget will talk to the tune of a thousand dollars! Red, there's more'n enough gold here to make us rich, and old Sam rich."

"And us outlaws!" sighed Red. The brightness died out of the Kid's handsome face at the word. He gritted his teeth.

"We'll sure put paid to Hardfist for framing us!" he muttered. "And I don't care a continental red cent, old-timer, so long as old Sam pulls through and gets the mine! That pizen skunk Hardfist shot him up, and I reckon he meant to make it the last sickness for him—but the doc will pull him through, Red. When old Sam's up agin, he will handle this strike and be the richest old guy in Tontine County—even if we have to ride and hide."

The Kid suddenly moved along towards the mouth of the cave, where the sheet of water fell incessantly, like a fluid wall. On one side was a rocky ledge by which it was possible to pass in and out, covered by a blanket from the drenching water. That was the way Dan would come. A sound had caught the Kid's keen ear, faint, through the thunder of the waters. Dan was coming!

A figure came plunging through the falling water and joined the Kid on the ledge. Kid gave Dan Oak one look—and grasped him by the arm. Dan's tanned, rugged face was white as chalk. He was breathing in great gasps. One look at his face was enough for Kid Byrne—he knew that the news was bad!

"Dan!" he breathed. He drew his drenched comrade towards the fire. Red, about to give the cooking-pot another stir, dropped the spoon, his own plump face paling at the look on Dan's.

"Bad news?" The Kid's grip closed, unconsciously, on Dan's arm like a vice. "Dan—is it bad?"

Dan groaned. His face was streaming with water from the fall, and his eyes were wet not only from the river. His rugged features worked.

"You got a note from the doc—in the tree?" muttered Kid.

"I got it here!"

Dan drew a crumpled sheet of paper from the pocket of his shirt. The Kid caught it and read it in the firelight, Red reading it over his arm. He repeated the brief message in husky tones.

"Sam dying! Hurry, if you want to see him alive!" The Kid's handsome face whitened like chalk. "Sam—old Sam—passing in his chips—and us thirty miles away from him!" Kid's voice choked in his throat. "Old Sam, that's been a father to us three—dying!"

"I got back as fast as I could, to put you 'uns wise!" groaned Dan Oak. "We got to hit Parksville, and hit it quick! There's horses down in the canyon—we got to ride, you 'uns, hell-for-leather! Send that we may be in time to see old Sam afore—afore—" He broke off. "We got to ride!"

Kid Byrne gritted his teeth. "Hardfist shall pay for this!" he muttered. "His coyote's life shall pay for old Sam's! But we got to beat it, pronto!"

That was the one thought in the minds of the Rojo cowboys. Danger mattered nothing now. They were outlaws—they could not ride into any town in Arizona without danger of arrest. But Hardfist had calculated well. If the streets of Parksville had been packed with sheriffs' deputies, it would not have stopped the Outlawed Three.

The camp in the cavern was left as it was—fire glowing and torches flaring. The three pards plunged through the falling water, out on the rocky path down the ravine. Heedless of the dark, they scrambled down the rocks into the lower canyon, where their horses were staked out in a clump of timber by the river.

It was swift work to saddle up, and the three rode down the canyon to the plain. Thirty miles of dark and rugged prairie lay between them and Parksville—thirty miles of peril, to greater peril when they arrived. And they rode as if for their lives!

"LISSEN!" muttered Jake Sanders. His eyes, under his stetson, gleamed. "I guess—" muttered Mustang Dave.

"Lissen, you goob!" snapped the marshal's man.

Faintly, through the silence of the night, came the beat of horses' hoofs—faintly, from the distance, but growing nearer and clearer. Horsemen were riding in the night—riding fast, drawing nearer to the belt of post-oaks and pecans, through which the trail ran to Parksville.

The town lay a mile away, but riders from the north—from the Rio Rojo and the Mesa Mountains—had to follow the trail through the post-oaks, where Jake stood, with bent head, listening. Mustang stood by his side—and in the shadows, four more roughnecks were rolled in their blankets and slickers. Thud, thud, thud! came the beat of the galloping hoofs.

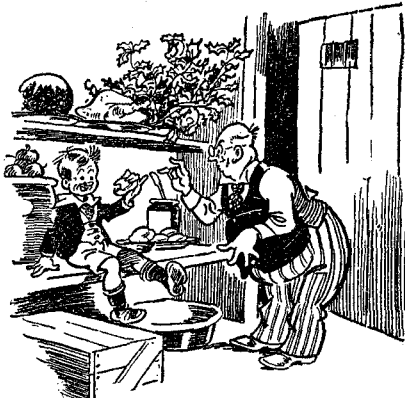
"That'll be three riders!" muttered Jake. His keen ear could pick up, from the distant sounds, the number of horses that galloped in the dark. "Wake the boys!"

Mustang kicked into wakefulness the four men who slept in the blankets. They turned out yawning and grumbling. There was a gleam of guns.

"Mebbe only a bunch of punchers riding into town!" growled Mustang, rejoining Jake, who still stood listening and watching.



## STILL GOING STRONG!



Father (discovering son in pantry eating Christmas pies): "Now then, Jimmy, what are you up to?"

Jimmy: "Up to the seventh, dad, but they're very small!"



"Mebbe!" said Jake. "But we got the marshal's orders, and no guy ain't riding into Parksville without a show-down."

The hoof-beats rang nearer. Jake Sanders strained his eyes into the gloom of the prairie, where the trail ran into the post-oaks. A crescent of moon gleamed, but such light as it gave was dim and uncertain.

Three riders were coming, and Jake reckoned that they might be the Outlawed Three, who, unless the marshal of Bullwhacker was mistaken, would be riding that trail, soon or late. But, though Hardfist was certain that they would come, he did not know when they would come; and for three days and nights his men had watched, and seen nothing of them.

Jake wanted the Outlawed Three if they came, but he did not want to have a show-down with the wrong bunch. That would be a mistake for which he would have to answer to the sheriff of Parksville.

He stared and stared into the darkness as the galloping hoofs rang nearer and nearer. He had a glimpse of three stetson hats that bobbed to the motion of the galloping horses. Three riders in desperate haste, on sweating steeds—but were they the Outlawed Three?

Six men stood in the trail, gun in hand. Capture or death awaited the Outlawed Three if they came. Jake's finger was on his trigger. He hissed an order:

"Burn powder if they don't pull in when I toot!"

"You said it, Jake!" muttered one of the roughnecks.

The thudding hoofs were close at hand now. Jake Sanders raised his gun and shouted:

"Halt!"

His fierce voice roared above the thunder of the hoofs.

"Halt! In the law's name, halt!"

There was no halt. Three riders spurred savagely at the word; three guns blazed.

Then Jake knew!

"The Rojo cowboys! Fire—fire!" he yelled. Guns roared on all sides. But three riders, in a desperate bunch, swept on madly. A man lay dead in the trail, Kid Byrne's bullet in his heart. Jake Sanders reeled from the heaving shoulder of a bronco; Mustang Dave staggered under the sweeping barrel of a Colt. Guns roared in the gloom; there was the thud of galloping hoofs.

Had the Rojo cowboys pulled rein, even for a moment, they would have been lost. But they spurred fiercely on, heedless of dark figures that surged round them, of flying bullets.

On, on, at mad and desperate speed, firing right and left as they thundered. A hand grasped Dan's rein; the next second the man who grasped was down under the thundering hoofs.

But the desperate riders were through, galloping fiercely on down the trail through the post-oaks, one of them clinging to his saddle, shutting his teeth on a groan, but riding on. Behind them, howls and yells and groans and roaring guns.

Jake Sanders staggered to his feet, and emptied his gun after the vanishing riders. Mustang lay groaning on the ground, his hands to his cracked head. Two men lay still—one with a bullet in his heart, the other smashed by thundering hoofs.

"Doggone 'em!" breathed Jake. "They was the Rojo cowboys, and they beat us to it—they sure beat us to it!"

Galloping hoofs died down the trail towards Parksville. The Outlawed Three had got through that deadly ambush, but not unscathed. Jake was sure of that.

He figured that they had taken lead with them. Neither riders nor horses could have got through the hail of bullets untouched.

While the roughnecks groaned and panted and cursed, Jake got busy. The marshal of Bullwhacker left nothing to chance. If the ambush on the trail failed, yet deadlier peril awaited the Outlawed Three ahead.

From the darkness of the post-oaks a rocket shot up, scattering sparks on the dark sky. It was a signal to Hardfist Hall that the Rojo cowboys were on the trail—that they had passed Jake's bunch, and were riding for Parksville. And in Parksville, Hardfist Hall and his men were on the watch!

"RED!" groaned Kid Byrne.

He pulled in his bronc.

The Kid's luck had held good.

Nothing had touched him in that desperate burst through the ambush in the post-oaks. But he saw that Red was sagging in the saddle.

They were out of the belt of small timber—out on the open prairie again. The post-oaks lay a dim shadow behind them. A short ride now into Parksville—if they could make the grade. But Red was wounded. No word, no groan, came from Red—he would ride till he dropped—but even as Kid ranged closer beside him, the plump figure reeled from the saddle.

Then Red spoke huskily.

"Forget it, Kid! Leave me alone, you big stiff; ride on! Beat it, I'm telling you! You got to get to old Sam!"

"Dan!" called Kid.

Dan did not need to pull in; his horse was sinking under him. There were three bullets in the bronc. Dan leaped clear as it sank into the grass. He was at Red's side in a moment.

The Kid noted that Dan was limping. Dan had been hit as well as Red. Hardfist had failed in that deadly ambush; but he had come near to pulling it off. Luck and pluck had saved them—but had it saved them? The Kid stood unhurt, holding the two horses; but Red lay like a log in the grass, and Dan's leg crumpled as he bent over him.

Even the thought of old Sam—dying, as he believed, in the doc's house at Parksville—faded from the Kid's mind for the moment. He tethered the two horses to a pecan stump by the trail. Dan's horse was dead; the others had only scratches.

Kid Byrne gave one look back along the dark trail towards the post-oaks. If the rough-necks followed on, the cowboys were at a halt now. But there was no sign of pursuit from the ambush.

He dropped on his knees in the thick grass beside Red and tore open the crimson-dripping shirt, his heart heavy with dread. In the moon-glimmer, Red's face was colourless—that face, usually so plump and ruddy and cheery, was drawn now with bitter pain!

The Kid's fingers felt for the wound. The bullet had scored deep in the boy's shoulder and passed out. Silently, with his neck-scarf, the Kid bound up the wound, to stop the flow of blood. Red's eyes met his.

"No!" muttered the Kid. "You got it hard, Red, but you ain't handing in your checks, old-timer!"

Red's colourless lips moved.

"You got to beat it, Kid! You got to get to old Sam!"

"Sure thing!" muttered the Kid wretchedly. "But—" He broke off and turned to Dan.

"You stopped one, old-timer?"

"Jest a scratch!" said Dan Oak indifferently.

"You don't want to worry none. They took a strip off'n my leg."

He bared his sinewy leg below the knee, and bound his neck-scarf over the deep score of a bullet. The Kid stood erect beside him, holding the horses' reins.

"Beat it, you 'uns!" came from Red. "You got to think of old Sam! I can't ride none—you got to leave me here, and quit."

Kid Byrne clenched his hands in desperation. Old Sam, dying in doc's cabin at Parksville, longing for the sight of his boys before his kind old eyes closed—Red lying wounded!

In the depths of his heart, Kid cursed Hardfist Hall. Greed of gold—the hard-fisted marshal's greed for the lost mine of the mesa had brought them to this.

Dan's voice came quietly:

"We can't leave Red—not both of us, Kid! One of us has got to stay and one to quit! There ain't no two ways about that."

The Kid nodded; he knew it. If old Sam yet lived, one of his boys could reach his side before the end came; but one had to stay with Red.

"You for the ride, Kid!" Dan said, in the same quiet tone. "I guess you'll make the grade better'n me, with my hurt leg. If old Sam can't see the three of us, it'll sure please him to see one—get to it, Kid!"

Kid Byrne stared back along the trail. The thought was in his mind that the bunch of bulldozers might, after all, follow on.

"Get Red off'n the trail!" he muttered. "Lay up in the Pecan Creek—you can lie doggo there till I get back to you. Mebbe I'll get doc to come out and see Red, too."

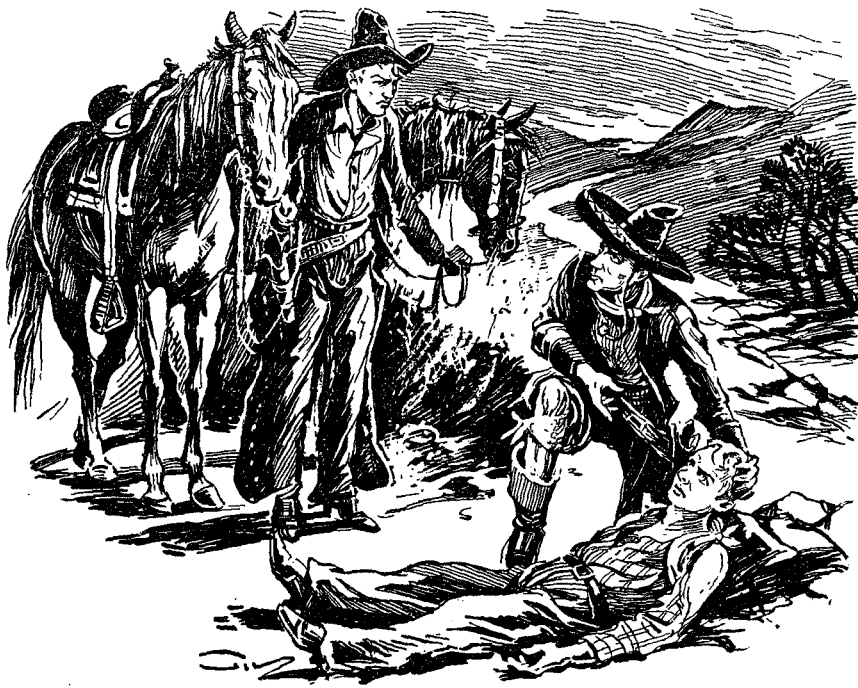
Dan nodded. They lifted Red to the saddle again. Dan, limping, held him there and led the horse off the trail to find cover in the sunken creek.

Kid Byrne went back to his horse. He mounted—but he gave another glance back before he rode. Still there was no sign of pursuit. The Kid prayed that his comrades might be safe, hidden in the hollow of the creek, while he finished that wild ride.

He gave his bronco the spur and dashed away through the dark towards Parksville.

**D**OC BAKER stirred in his bunk and opened his eyes. The doc's cabin stood alone in the straggling street of Parksville, a little distance from other buildings, surrounded by a yard and a split pine fence.

It was long past midnight; and at that hour,



"We can't leave Red—not both of us, Kid," said Dan quietly, looking up from his injured comrade. "One of us has got to stay, while the other rides to get news through to old Sam Oak!"

the latest citizen had usually gone home to bed, though sometimes a belated puncher would ride clattering through the rugged, unpaved street. It was a thud of horse's hoofs that had come to the ears of the six-gun doctor of Arizona; and he grunted and turned over to sleep again.

But the thudding hoofs stopped at the gate, and he heard the creak of rusty hinges. He sat up, with another grunt. Someone was heading for his cabin; the cow town doc was accustomed to being called at all hours.

He lighted a candle and threw on shirt and trousers, while he listened to the newcomer leading his panting horse up from the gate to the door. There was a knock, soft and subdued, in the porch. No doubt the newcomer knew that there was a sick man in the cabin. In an adjoining room, old Sam Oak lay in troubled slumber.

Doc took up the candle, slipped his six-gun into his hip pocket, and stepped into the living-room, which opened on the porch. The knock was not repeated, but he heard the sound of panting breath outside.

He took down the pinewood bar, and threw open the door with his left hand—his right was near his gun. There was no telling who might be horning in at that dead hour of the night, and the doc was ready for a hold-up. But he gave a cry of amazement at the sight of the slim figure in the doorway.

"Kid Byrne!"

The Kid lurched rather than walked in. Weary from the wild ride, covered with dust, splashed with blood, his handsome face haggard, he stood panting before the astonished eyes of Doc Baker. Hardly able to speak, he fixed his eyes in a mute question on the doc. But the doc, pushing past him, shut the door hurriedly and slammed the bar into place. Then he turned savagely to the Kid:

"Kid Byrne! You gone loco?" he rasped. "What'll you be doing here? Hardfist's in town with a bunch of his side-kickers—I've seen them around two or three days! You're loco—plumb loco to come here!"

Kid caught the doc's arm in a fierce grip. "Sam?" he breathed. "Old Sam? Give me a word of him! Is he—gone?" He choked on the word. "Doc! For mercy's sake spill it, and spill it quick! We've rode hell's miles from the mesa after getting your message. Dan and Red have hit trouble on the trail, but I've got through. Doc—tell me I'm in time to see old Sam alive!" His voice broke.

"You're sure loco!" said the doc. "What's put it into your cabeza that old Sam's worse? Ain't you got the note that I left in the cotton-wood—"

"I got it here!"

"Then how come?" snarled the doc. "I sure told you in that note that old Sam was mending!"

The Kid reeled.

"Mending? Look at it—look at your own fist! What you pulling on me, doc?"

The Kid held out the crumpled paper. Doc Baker stared at it in the candle-light.

"I never wrote that!"

"It's your fist!" panted the Kid. "I'm telling you Dan picked it out of the cottonwood, and it's your fist, and it's brought us hell-for-leather from the mesa! What you giving me, Doc Baker?"

"You've been double-crossed!" breathed the doc. "I left a note for you—but that sure ain't it! I'm telling you, old Sam's on the mend—he's going to live. In two-three weeks he'll be on his feet again! I never wrote that!"

The Kid leaned on the door, panting, almost sobbing. He had been tricked—it was a false message and a trick—but he hardly thought of that for the moment. Old Sam was not dying—old Sam was going to live! If the old rancher lived, Kid cared for little else.

Doc stared at the crumpled note. The pencilled scrawl was so like his own, he himself might have been deceived as the Out-

(Continued overleaf.)



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lawed Three had been. But he knew that he had not written it. He spat a curse through gritting teeth.

"Kid! You figured—"

"What was a guy to figure when he read that?" muttered the Kid. "If you never wrote it, doc, it's got me beat who did."

"Aw, you bonehead, guess again!" gritted the doc. "Some guy found that we was using the cottonwood for a post-office, Kid, and got my note—and put this in its place! And I'll tell a man that guy's name is Bill Hall! Ain't I telling you he's been around in Parksville the last two days with a bunch of his gun-slingers from Bullwhacker—"

The Kid bit on it. In a flash he knew. He was tricked—and trapped! Trapped—in the doc's house—that was the game!

"I guess I got it, doc!" breathed the Kid. "That's why Sanders' bunch was stacked on

the trail—they knowed we was coming when we got that note! I reckon Hardfist could bank on that, the pizen polecat! It's Hardfist's doing—and he's in town with his outfit for me."

"Mebbe there's a chance for you to beat it yet!" muttered the doc. "Mebbe—" He broke off. There were sounds without—sounds of heavy footsteps and a mutter of voices.

The Kid smiled—a bitter smile. He heard—and he knew that the building was surrounded—he had been seen to come. Hardfist and his men were at hand. The Kid's grip fastened on the butt of his gun. He was trapped—but he was not taken yet. Heavy footsteps crunched in the porch.

"Unbar the door, doc, and stand clear!" said the Kid quietly. "This ain't your funeral, doc—and me an outlaw! Nor it won't last long."

"Forget it!" snarled the doc.

He stepped to a back window and peered through a chink in the shutter. Three dim figures in stetsons loomed in the yard. They were watching for the Kid to attempt a get-away at the back. The doc turned from the window again, with clenched hands and gritted teeth. The Kid's gun was out. On the door on the porch came a heavy knock.

A harsh voice shouted:

"Open up, Doc Baker! Open up in the law's name!"

It was the voice of Hardfist Hall!

**Trapped in the cabin—with Hardfist and his roughnecks waiting outside! But Kid Byrne isn't beaten—and how he outwits his enemy is the high-spot in next week's thrilling Western yarn featuring "THE OUTLAWED THREE."**

## THE MAN AT THE END OF THE QUEUE.

(Continued from page 316.)

watch, released from his groping fingers, went flying across the room, coming into contact with the fender with a crash that split its back open. But it wasn't the damage to his watch that riveted Frank's eyes to the timepiece—it was the piece of folded paper within! Dropping to his knees, he extracted the paper and opened it with trembling fingers, eagerly reading the few lines that were printed, in tiny letters, on it, in his brother Jim's neat handwriting.

"Here's a stroke of luck, Dan!" he breathed. "This is a confession! Young Jim admits that he did the job in Brunswick Square! He says that Desmond was the brains behind the Grub Alley Mob, and that Desmond threatened to put him on the spot! Jim feared what was coming to him some day, but he didn't mean his murderers to get off scot-free! He gives the names of the mobsters, and all particulars, and— Look out!"

The warning came too late, for Desmond, a poker in his hand, was already upon his feet, a snarling figure of menace.

"I'll brain the first one who tries to stop me!" he gritted, backing towards the door.

"Let him go, Dan!" said Frank, in a quiet voice; and Dan caught the subtle note of meaning in his tone. "Go on, beat it, Desmond!"

The latter gave a wolfish snarl as he slipped out of the room and slammed the door, and no word was said until they heard him rush along the passage and let himself out of the house.

"What next?" asked Dan Sullman, puzzled. "What's the big idea?"

"We're going to find out who bumped off young Jim," announced Frank Gwynn quietly.

It was a good stretch to the Ditches, but within twenty minutes they were knocking upon the door of a disreputable hovel in Lavender Court—one of the addresses Frank had found inside his brother's watch. The door opened an inch or so in response to Frank's insistent hammering, and in that moment the footballer put his foot across the threshold and gave a mighty shove that sent the door crashing back upon its hinges.

"It's you, guv'nor!" whined the flat-faced individual who was picking himself up off the bare boards. "Come inside, then, quick!"

"Pal of yours?" asked Dan grimly.

"In a way," grinned Frank, passing into the grimy passage. "This gentleman called upon me the other day!"

"That's right, sir," said the squat man, leading them into a grubby, sparsely furnished kitchen. "What brings you here, mister? You're not sore with me because I tried to pinch your watch, are you? As I told you at the time, mister, I was only obeying my orders. A dago named Slim Carlross was going to do the job, in the first place, but he turned yeller at the last moment—the rat!"

"Then listen to me!" gritted Frank, shooting out a muscular hand and gripping the crook until he winced. "Who murdered my brother?" he demanded, through clenched teeth. "Out with it, or I'll choke the liver out of you! Who killed Jim Gwynn, eh? Who put him on the spot? Did you, you rat?"

"No, not—not me!" shrieked the crook, terror in his bulging eyes. "It was Desmond, the Big Shot! He put young Jim on the spot! He ordered Dopey Myers to rub the kid out—him and Porky Dines! Desmond would get a lifer if Dopey squealed; but he knows Dopey won't do that, for fear of his own neck."

"All the same, he's going to get it!" grated Frank, his mouth a thin, straight line. "We're going to see Desmond right now! Understand?"

"Yessir," nodded the crook. "He lives in a swell joint. I been there before."

The "swell joint" proved to be an imposing-looking residence in the best part of Sangster, and no sooner did a trim maid open the door than Frank Gwynn strode past her, pushing the little crook in front of him, and with Dan following.

"Go on!" he hissed. "Take me straight to Desmond's quarters!"

Frank did not knock before he flung open the door of Colin Desmond's study. Neither did he greet his host, unless taking a flying leap across the carpet and delivering a terrific punch that sent Desmond flying over the back of his chair can be called a greeting. In a second leap, Frank cleared the fallen chair, and, landing upon Desmond, yanked him to his feet, afterwards thrusting him back across the table and smiling grimly into the pale, scowling countenance.

"Perhaps you can guess why I'm here, Desmond?" he asked.

His thin lips curling back to bare his sharp, pointed teeth, the gang-boss shot a venomous glance at the flat-faced little gangster.

"So that lily-livered rat has squealed, has he?" he gritted.

"Yes, he's squealed!" nodded Frank Gwynn. "He's ready to swear in a court of law that you put Jim Gwynn, my kid brother, on the spot—and that makes you as much a murderer as Dopey Myers, the man who fired the fatal shots, you bound! I suppose you know that Myers is already dead, but the least sentence they'll pass on you is fifteen years penal servitude; they may even hang you! But, personally, I hope it's fifteen years, you treacherous rat! Fifteen long nightmare years in Penton Gaol! It's a living hell, Desmond—a stone tomb! Chew on that!"

Panting a little, Frank Gwynn leaned back and stared into the greyish-green, fear-stricken face of his crooked team-mate. Desmond's mouth was open, his breathing hoarse, his eyes glazing.

Watching him, Frank felt a pang of pity, even for his brother's murderer.

"What's up?" he snapped. "You ill, or just dying of fright?"

"It's my heart—old trouble—be all right soon!" gasped Desmond. "Give me that—glass—will you?"

It was Dan who handed the wine-glass from a beaten copper tray on the sideboard to Frank; and Frank, at a signal from the collapsing crook, poured in a few spoonfuls of water from a cut-glass bottle on the tray.

With an obvious effort, Desmond reached into a waistcoat pocket and withdrew a small bottle filled with white tablets, one of which he painfully dropped into the water, watching it dissolve.

"Sorry I can't ask you fellows to join me!" panted Desmond, lifting the drink to his lips. "Special medicine—not very pleasant to take!"

He drained the glass and replaced it on the floor beside him.

The drink seemed to revive him at once: his cheeks suddenly flooded with colour, and his limbs twitched.

Frank Gwynn's heart stirred within him. Because he could no longer bear to look upon the face of the man he was virtually sentencing to the horrors of gaol, he glanced around the room.

There was holly behind the pictures on the wall, and in the silence that now reigned in the room the sound of Christmas wails, singing carols in the street outside, could be heard.

Frank came to a sudden decision; stared down at Desmond again. The man was huddled in his chair, a pitiable sight.

"Listen, Desmond," said Frank, speaking with an effort, his voice choked with an emotion he fought hard to keep down. "I can't go through with it! Fifteen years in Penton—it's more than any man should have to bear, no matter what his crime! I can't do it—I can't! A sensational trial would stir up a lot of mud, and my brother's name would be clean no longer. There's mother, too."

"I'm letting you off scot-free, Desmond—on one condition. You've got to clear out of the country, d'you hear? That's your Christmas present from me—your freedom!"

A wan smile flitted across the face of the man slumped in the chair.

"You're white, Gwynn!" he whispered. "White as I'd like to have been, if only I hadn't started going the wrong way. You're wrong about going abroad, though."

"I've always dreaded that one day I'd get caught; that I'd have to do a stretch, and—well, I couldn't face it. That's why I've always carried my freedom about with me; it's in that bottle of tablets. My special medicine, it's already shown me the way out!"

A sudden shudder ran through him as he waved his limp hand towards the empty wine-glass beside him, and horror seized Frank and Dan as they realised the meaning of the man's words.

"Poison!" whispered Desmond.

And he fell back in the armchair—dead!

**Fifty thousand spectators saw Sam Mullock, Tansley Rovers' goalkeeper, murdered—yet an innocent man was accused of the crime! Read: "WHO KILLED THE GOALIE?"—next week's enthralling, long, complete footer story.**



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# *The* **PILOT** 2<sup>D</sup>

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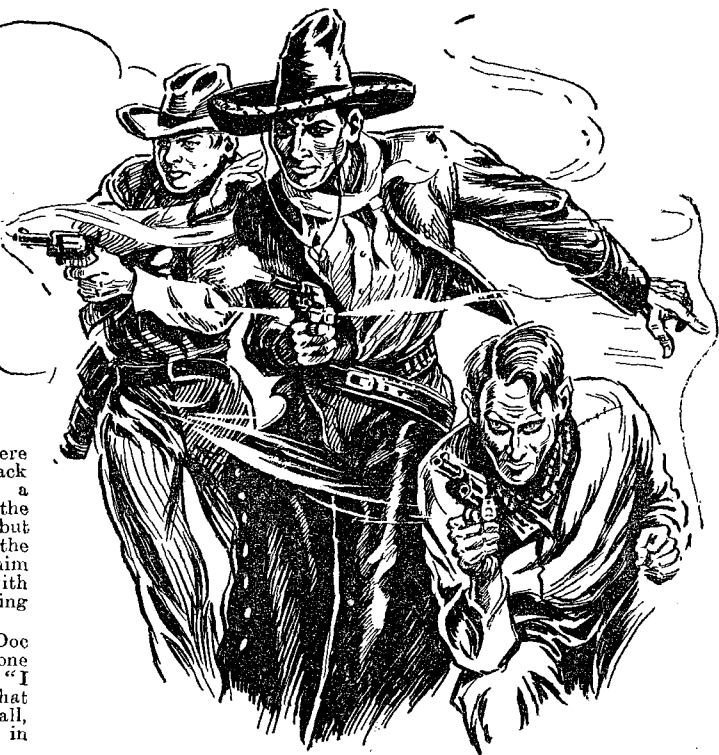


As the oxy-acetylene blow-lamp burned through the escaped prisoner's handcuffs, there came a hoarse whisper : " There's a cop coming ! "

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# The Outlawed THREE



"OPEN up in the law's name!"

Knock! Knock!

Doc Baker, the six-gun doctor of Arizona, made no attempt to answer the door. Kid Byrne stood very still, his hand on the butt of his Colt.

It was the voice of Hardfist Hall, marshal of Bullwhacker, that rasped in the porch.

The first glimmer of dawn was coming up over the prairie and the straggling street of Parksville. In the shadowy yard that surrounded the doc's cabin, dim figures lurked, stetson hats looming through the gloom. The cabin was hemmed in by Hardfist Hall and his men—and the Kid was trapped!

"By the great horn spoon!" breathed the doc.

His hand went to his hip-pocket.

Kid Byrne caught his arm.

"Forget it, doc!" he whispered. "You ain't hornin' into this rookus, doc! You can't stand agin the law, I'm telling you—"

"Can it!" snarled the doc. "Guess I know you're an outlaw, same as your pards, Dan and Red, but I reckon that coyote outside drove you to it, and I'm standing by you!"

Knock! Knock!

"Say, you, doc!" came Hardfist's deep, savage voice. "I guess you better open up—and you want to do it quick! You got Kid Byrne, the outlaw, there! Open up, or, by thunder, we'll break in the door!"

"Open up, doc!" breathed the Kid. "I got to think of old Sam—"

He made a gesture towards an adjoining room, where old Sam Oak lay in slumber. Sam had been near to death's door, and Kid Byrne, Dan Oak, and Tom Redway, his nephews, had been framed by the marshal of Bullwhacker on a charge of shooting the man who had looked after them from childhood.

But the Outlawed Three knew now that it was Hardfist Hall himself who had shot old Sam, so that he could lay hands on the secret gold-mine which had been discovered on the Rojo Ranch. Now Sam was slowly mending in Doc Baker's expert care.

"You pack up your rag!" snapped the doc curtly to Kid. "I'm the guy that gives orders in this shanty!"

He seized the Kid's arm, and drew him towards a door at the back of the living-room. The Kid started and stiffened in resistance. It was the room occupied by the old negress who cooked for the doc.

"I ain't hiding behind no woman, doc!" said the Kid stubbornly.

"You doggoned young piecan, old Louie ain't there!" snapped the doc. "She's gone to see her folks at Mule Pack for three days! Get in!"

The Kid passed through the open doorway into a little room; the doc drew the door shut on him. He stood in darkness, his gun in his hand; but he did not see the use of hiding, when Hardfist and his men would search the place from end to end.

As Doc Baker crossed the living-room, the doc rang under a blow from a revolver-butt. Hardfist was impatient.

In the flicker of the candlelight, Doc Baker removed the bars from the door and threw it wide open. The burly, brawny marshal of Bullwhacker stood there; behind him, five or six roughnecks. There was a gun in every hand.

Hardfist's lips were set under his black beard. He made a forward stride as the door flew open, but halted suddenly as the doc's gun looked him full in the face, with the doc's eye glittering over it.

"Go slow!" said Doc Baker, in a low tone of deadly menace. "I guess I'll ask you what you want, Bill Hall, afore you come in here!"

Hardfist's fierce glance shot past the doc, searching the room for sign of the Kid.

"I guess we want Kid Byrne, and we're going to get him, Doc Baker!"

"You figure that the Kid's here?" drawled the doc.

"He was seen coming; we found his cayuse tied at the gate. He's here, and we want him! I'll tell you, hombre, this ain't no guesswork! Them Rojo cowboys got a message that old Sam Oak was dying here. I banked on that message bringing them down from their hide-out in the mesa—and I'll say I got by with it!"

"They been watched for on the trail to Parksville, and I got the signal from Jake Sanders that they was coming. Two of them, I reckon, never made the grade—I guess Dan Oak and young Tom Redway got shot-up. Anyhow, they never got through. But Kid Byrne was watched riding into town—and we know he's here. I'm going to search this shebang end to end, and then some!"

The gun was steady in the doc's hand. He stood like a rock in the way of the marshal and his men.

"Pack that gun, doc!" said Hardfist. "You won't be such a fool as to burn powder for an outlaw, I reckon! And I guess if you do, you'll get what's coming to you for resisting the law!"

"You pesky piecan, what you got to do with the law in this hyer burg of Parksville?" snapped the doc. "You may be the big noise at Bullwhacker, and you can throw your weight around all you want in your one-horse little cow town, but you don't cut no ice here! I'll open up this shack to the sheriff of Parksville, if he comes around asking, but no roughneck from Bullwhacker ain't putting a hoof inside—not without getting hot lead through his works!"

The marshal ground his teeth with rage. The doc was right—he had no rights outside his own territory. In Parksville it was for Sheriff West to act in the name of the law. Not that it made a whole lot of difference, so far as Hall could see.

The sheriff was a friend of the doc's—every man in Tontine County was the six-gun doctor's friend. But the sheriff would not stand for letting an outlaw escape.

"You goldarned coyote!" hissed Hardfist. "I guess you want to gain time for the Kid

to vamoose! Forget it! I got my men all round the shebang, with orders to shoot on sight! I'll tell you—"

"You sure do chew the rag a whole lot, Bill Hall!" drawled the doc. "Now you listen to me! You burn powder here, without authority of the sheriff, and you and your bunch will get wiped out so quick, it will make your heads swim! I guess all Parksville will be around as soon as the shooting starts, and, I'm telling you, it's going to start if you put a foot inside that door!"

Hardfist's eyes burned with rage. He was tempted to begin gun-play, but he paused. Muttering voices behind him warned him that his men would not stand for it—against the law!

"Say, Hardfist," muttered one of the bunch, "I guess it's O.K.—you only got to get the sheriff here."

Hardfist drew a deep, deep breath.

"Doggone you, Doc Baker!" he muttered. "You ain't getting us into a rookus with a Parksville crowd! I'll get the sheriff here, and, while he's coming, pack my men round your shebang, and if that outlaw makes a break I guess he'll be filled up with lead! I guess—"

"I ain't got up so early to listen to you chewing the rag, Bill Hall," said the doc coolly. "You can say your piece to your sidekickers." And the doc shut the door in the face of the marshal of Bullwhacker.

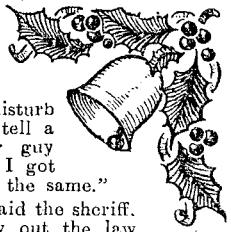
KID BYRNE looked round the door of the inner room.

He had heard every word, and wondered. The doc had gained time—a quarter of an hour, perhaps, before the sheriff could be brought on the scene. But there was no escape.

Armed men circled the cabin, ready to riddle the Kid with lead if he made a break. And when the sheriff came, the building would be searched.

"Say, doc, I don't get you!" he whispered. "What's the use? I'd sure rather handle a gun agin Hardfist than agin the sheriff. He's a man I respect. I'd sure hate to throw lead at him. But I ain't going to be taken, doc."

"You sure ain't!" said the doc. "Quit chewing the rag, you bonehead! Sheriff West ain't going to find you here."



Some plan was working in the mind of the six-gun doc, though what it was the Kid could not guess. It was death to quit the cabin—arrest to remain, and the Kid was not going to be taken alive.

The doc lifted the candle from the table and stepped into old Louie's room, pushing the Kid before him. He set the candle down and looked round him, with a faint grin breaking through the anxiety in his anxious face.

"I guess I told you, Kid, that Old Black Louie was on a visit to her folks at Mule Pack," he said.

"You sure did!" said the Kid, in wonder. "I never told you that her niece Judy was coming to cook for me while she was away, though, did I?"

The Kid could only stare. "She ain't here, doc. There ain't no coon girl about the place."

"There's going to be!" said the doc. He lifted a striped print dress from a hook on the wall. The Kid watched him blankly. He wondered for a moment whether the doc had gone loco.

"Get into that!" snapped the doc. "Put on them shoes—I guess they'll go over your boots. I got a bandanna here to put on your head instead of that stetson, and if I can't fix you up a coon complexion, it'll be because there ain't no blacking left in the bottle."

The Kid's face crimsoned. He understood now. His jaw squared and his eyes gleamed.

"Doc, I know you mean it well—I know you want to save my neck—but I ain't standing for it! I ain't hiding that-a-way from a pizen polecat like Hardfist!"

Doc Baker looked at him quietly. "You left Dan and Red wounded on the prairie when you got through," he said. "Don't you aim to get back to them and help them? You want old Sam Oak to wake up and see you being shot to pieces? I'm sure surprised at you, Kid!"

The Kid gulped. "I take it back, doc," he said humbly. "It's your play, and I'll stand for anything you durn well like."

In a few minutes the Kid was draped in striped print dress, his feet encased in sloppy shoes that easily went over his boots, his head wrapped in a coloured bandanna. Then Doc Baker got busy with a bottle of blacking, rapidly changing the outlaw's face, neck, and hands to the deepest dye of a black coon. The doc held up a mirror, and the Kid stared into it with unbelieving eyes.

Kid Byrne had disappeared from existence. The reflection in the glass was that of a young negress. A coloured shawl over his shoulders added to the effect.

"This way!" grunted the doc. He led the Kid into the lean-to kitchen at the back of the cabin. Glimmering dawn was showing through chinks in the shutter. Hardly a word was needed for the Kid now. He was quick on the uptake, and ready to play his part—a part on which his life depended. He packed pine chips into the iron stove and set it going. He handled the fry-pan and beans and bacon, as he was well used to handling them in the hide-out up in the mesa.

The doc watched him and grinned. "You ain't so bad, Kid," he said. "I guess it's even money! You're cooking when they come—"

"I see cooking, massa!" grinned the Kid. Doc chuckled as he went back into the living-room. He gave a glance into old Sam's room. The old rancher was awake now, and his eyes turned questioning on the doc.

"I sure guess I heard Hardfist's voice, doc!" mumbled old Sam. "Or was I just dreaming?"

"Yes, that guy is around," answered the doc. "But don't you worry. The sheriff's coming to give this shebang the once-over, but Hardfist ain't putting no hoof in. Hyer, you, Judy!" shouted the doc. "You come and fix up the pillows for my patient!"

Old Sam hardly glanced at the young "negress" who came in and shook out his pillows. The Kid longed to give him a word, but he was silent. He made old Sam comfortable, and hustled out of the room again. Sam Oak settled down to doze.

Doc Baker went to the door on the porch. If the Kid, in his strange guise, had passed

undetected under his uncle's eyes, the doc reckoned that he would pass muster with Sheriff West. Doc threw open the front door and looked out into the reddening dawn.

Hardfist Hall stood in the porch, and his gun half lifted as the door opened. But he lowered it again at sight of the doc. A smell of cooking bacon and beans came from the kitchen, where the doc's new cook was clattering the fry-pan. A black face, surmounted by a red bandanna, looked across the living-room from the kitchen and scanned the marshal of Bullwhacker for a moment. He paid it no heed.

"Say, have you sent word to the sheriff, Bill Hall?" grunted the doc.

"You said it!" snarled Hardfist. "He's coming right now!"

There was a clatter of hoofs in the rugged street. Sheriff West, big and burly and ruddy, dismounted at the gate, and four of his men followed him up the path to the porch. In the street a crowd was already gathering, early as it was. News was spreading of trouble at the doc's cabin, and the doc had plenty of friends in Parksville, ready and willing to back him if he wanted aid.

"Mornin', doc!" Sheriff West shook hands with the doc, and gave Hardfist a brief nod. "Say, what's this ruckus? If you figure on running the rodeo in this hyer burg, Bill Hall, like you do at Bullwhacker, you got another guess coming."

Hardfist's eyes glinted. "Kid Byrne, outlaw, is in this shack," he said, "and it's up to you, sheriff, to rope him in, seeing that it's your beat, and you'll hand him over to me to ride back to Bullwhacker."

"Sure thing, if he's here!" assented the sheriff. "Say, doc, you sure ain't harbouring outlaws from the hills, and you a doctor and a good citizen, are you?"

The doc shrugged his shoulders. "Bill Hall tries to make out that that young firebug is here," he said. "I guess he's got them Rojo cowboys on his nervous system! I ain't letting no bunch of toughs from a cow town root over my shebang, sheriff! Bullwhacker guys don't cut no ice in this burg."

"You said it!" agreed the sheriff. "But I got to search for him, doc, on what the marshal says, and I got to hand him over if he's here."



By the time Doc Baker had finished disguising Kid, the outlaw, dressed in a long cotton dress and with a bandanna wound round above his blackened face, looked a passable imitation of Judy, the darkie cook. This was the doc's scheme for defeating the plans of Hardfist Hall!

"Sure thing!" assented the doc. "Search all you want, sheriff! I'm only asking you to do it quiet, and not disturb my patient. But I'll tell a man, no Bullwhacker guy ain't hornin' in, and I got a gun here what says the same."

"That's a cinch!" said the sheriff. "I guess I can carry out the law here, Bill Hall; your help ain't wanted none. If that young firebug's here, you'll get him."

"That's all I'm asking!" snarled Hardfist. "Get to it, sheriff—he's here!" He turned to his men. "Watch out, you 'uns! If that outlaw makes a break, riddle him with lead on sight."

Sheriff West tramped heavily in, followed by his men. Hardfist stood in the porch, gun in hand, watchful as a beast of prey.

DAN OAK lifted his head and listened. The sun was high on the Arizona prairie. The Pecan creek ran low between sloping muddy banks, the water merely trickling, flats of mud and sand. Among the thickets, Red lay on a bed of leaves that Dan had gathered for him—half dozing, his face white and drawn. Dan, by his side, watched over him. And suddenly he lifted his head to the sound of hoofbeats on the prairie.

Being deep down in the hollow of the low creek, the two outlaws were below the level of the surrounding plain—out of sight, unless a rider came down to the water. And now a rider was coming, the steady strokes of the hoofs ringing nearer and nearer.

Dan's rugged, tanned face set, and he dropped his hand to his gun. That hollow creek was all the cover that he'd been able to find when he had parted from the Kid in the night, with Red helpless and wounded on his hands, after riding through the ambush of Jake Sanders and his bunch. There Dan had waited, long hour after hour, watching over Red—hoping, hoping that the Kid would come, yet dreading that he would never see Kid Byrne again in life.

Old Sam, as he believed, lay dying in the doc's cabin, and only the Kid had been able to ride on, to see the old man before his eyes closed for ever—and the Kid, outlawed and hunted, rode with his life in his hands. Would the Kid come—to help get Red back to the hide-out in the mesa—would he come?

For a moment, as he heard the hoofbeats, Dan wondered if that might mean that the Kid was coming. But the rider was not coming from Parksville; he came from the opposite direction—from the open plains. Was it some puncher riding range, and coming down to the creek to give his horse water, or some outcast of the prairie, who had been riding a night-trail?

Dan could not tell—but his face was desperate as he listened to the approaching hoofbeats. Once the rider came over the brow of the sloping bank he would be in sight—the straggling bushes gave little concealment. Dan Oak rose to his feet, dragging his leg, stiff from the gash of a bullet.

High over the bank a stetson hat showed against the sky—and a horseman came clattering down the dried mud to the shallow stream. "Jadson!" breathed Dan.

He knew the evil, scarred face under the stetson at a glance—the face of Jad Jadson, leader of the Jadson gang. Outlawed by the plotting of Hardfist Hall, the Rojo cowboys had ridden with the Jadsons for a time—only to meet with black treachery from the gang of rustlers. It was shooting on sight if they met up with the Jadsons.

Crack! Jad sighted Dan Oak as he came clattering down the slope of dried mud, and his gun roared. Dan's stetson was torn from his head by the bullet. Kneeling, with eyes blazing over his revolver, he fired back. His bullet would have crashed into the scarred rustler's broad chest, but the tossing head of the bronco stopped it; and, with a squeal, the horse rolled



over, thereby pitching Jad headlong from the saddle.

Instantly the scarred outlaw went scrambling into cover. His bronco, with a bullet in its brain, lay hunched in the mud, and Jad Jadson crouched behind the bulky body of the animal, safe from another shot.

Dan Oak gritted his teeth.

He had no cover—he could not hunt cover, and leave Red. Red's startled eyes fixed on his face. He half rose.

"Keep low!" breathed Dan. "Keep low, Red! It's that doggoned rustler, Jad Jadson! Keep low."

Red sank back. His hand sought his gun—but he was weak from loss of blood, and the weapon sagged in his feeble grasp. Dan shifted, to place himself between his wounded pard and their enemy. His hurt leg ached horribly, but he did not heed the pain.

Suddenly, swiftly, a scarred face rose to view, then a hand with a Colt in it. Crack! Dan felt the sting of a bullet that tore his cheek—the wind of another that clipped his hair. But the rustler dropped back as Dan pulled trigger, and his lead flew harmlessly over the dead broncho.

A fierce, savage, rasping laugh came from the rustler.

"I'll get you, Dan Oak! By the great horn spoon, I'll get you!"

Dan did not speak; hard-lipped, he waited. And he knew why Jad was letting him wait—to rattle his nerves. Minute followed minute—long minute after minute, bitter and tense. From the silence of the upper prairie came a sound.

Thud of hoofs again—this time from the direction of Parksville. Dan felt his heart bound. Was it—could it be—the Kid?

Then he groaned as his straining ear caught other sounds with the beat of hoofs—the clatter and grind of wheels. It was a vehicle that was coming—some buckboard driven across the rugged plain. But whoever it was, it was not the Kid.

The sounds reached the ears of Jad Jadson as he crouched in cover. To him, as to the cowboy outlaws, any comer was an enemy. Dan heard a curse from the scarred rustler.

He knew that action was coming—Jad would wait no longer now. He watched—but when the action came, it came so suddenly that he was beaten to it.

Jad rose from cover, and fired at the same moment—and Dan felt a throb of agony along his gun-arm. Jad's bullet crashed on the revolver in his hand, spinning it away, leaving his arm numbed and disabled.

Dan Oak looked on death as the scarred rustler's fierce eyes glared at him over a smoking gun. Jad rushed on him, pulling trigger as he rushed.

Crack! It was Red who fired.

Lifted on one elbow, his face white as death, Red fired at the rustler with a hand that sagged and shook. It was a desperate effort—he sank back fainting even as he pulled trigger. But the bullet gashed through the rustler's shirt and tore his shoulder—a scratch, but it jerked his arm as he fired again, and the death-shot missed Dan by inches.

Swift as a cougar, Dan Oak sprang at the rustler, grasped his gun-arm, and forced it up. Desperately he flung his weight on his enemy, and Jad crashed over backwards, and the Colt flew from his grip.

"Doggone you!" hissed the rustler.

His fierce and savage grasp fastened on Dan. The cowboy's hurt leg crumpled under him, and he rolled under the burly outlaw.

Jad was uppermost, Dan fighting fiercely to throw him off, and fighting in vain. A sinewy knee was planted on his chest, pinning him down in the dried mud of the bank. Jad groped for the knife in his belt.

The bowie-knife flashed out in the sun. Up went the murderous hand, the knife in it. A second more, and it would have been buried to the hilt.

Neither of them saw the buckboard that pulled in at the top of the high bank, or the startled face that looked down. But even as the knife flashed in the sun the sudden roar of a gun came deafening to Dan's ears—and the rustler lurched over him. The knife fell from

a relaxed hand, and Jad Jadson sank down on his victim, crumpling.

One groan came from the rustler, and no further sound—and Dan Oak, like one in a dream, knew that it was a dead man that lay across him.

For a moment he was still, stunned with amazement. Then he threw aside the body of the rustler and staggered to his feet. He passed his hand across his dizzy eyes. The buckboard stood against the sky at the top of the bank. Down the bank came, running, a man in a red shirt.

"Doc!" panted Dan. "Doc Baker!"

He stared at the six-gun doctor. Doc Baker gave Jad a glance and shrugged his shoulders. "I guess that guy has got his!" he said. "I'll say there's a good few galoots in Arizona will sleep sounder at nights when they hear that Jad Jadson has passed in his checks. Say, feller, I guess you was in luck that the Kid put me wise and I humped along here to give you a lift back to the mesa!"

Dan caught his arm.

"You seen Kid?"

"Sure!"

"And old Sam?"

"Mending fast!" Doc Baker stepped to Red. The cowboy was unconscious. "Lend me a hand to get him to the buckboard."

"Sure!" gasped Dan. "But—"

"Say, you honing to chew the rag?" snorted the doc. "You want me to be seen helping doggoned outlaws to get back to their hide-out? Pack it up till we get clear, I'm telling you! You an' Red have got to lie low under a buffalo robe till we hit the hills, and that ain't a short step! I guess I'll chew the rag all you want when we hit the mesa."

## WELL MEANT!



Convict (writing letter): "... And thank you very much for the hiking outfit that you sent for my Christmas present."

Dan said no more. With a limping leg, he helped the doc carry Red up the bank to the buckboard.

**H**ARDFIST HALL gritted his teeth with rage. Never had the hard-fisted, bullying marshal of Bullwhacker been so savagely enraged or so bitterly puzzled. Where was Kid Byrne? Where was the outlaw he had tricked and entrapped and counted upon as a certain victim?

The sun of noon blazed down hot on the street of Parksville. Hardfist and his rough-necks surrounded Doc Baker's cabin, watching. Jake Sanders had come in from the prairie and joined his leader, and he was as puzzled as Hardfist.

The Rojo cowboys had got through the ambush on the trail—Jake knew that! One of them—the Kid—had hit Parksville and reached the doc's cabin—Hardfist knew that. But where was he? It had them guessing.

In the doorway of the cabin a man sat on a bench, smoking, with a rifle across his knees. It was one of the sheriff's deputies, left in

charge. Sheriff West was gone—Doc Baker was gone. Hardfist, with burning eyes, had seen the doc drive away in his buckboard after the search was over—going off on his long medical round, heedless of the bunch watching his cabin.

"I'll say he's there!" said the marshal. "That doggoned doc has got some hide-out in the cabin, and he's got the Kid packed out of sight!"

"Aw, guess agin, marshal!" said Sanders. He shook his head. "There ain't no hide-out in that shack. The Kid's beat it."

"How'd he beat it with a dozen guys watching for him?" raved the marshal.

The marshal's eyes turned swiftly on the porch again as there was a movement. But it was only the negress coming out, with a basket on her arm. Taking no notice of the loafing, lounging rough-necks, the young negress started up the street towards the store.

"That doggoned coon'll sure know what's come to the Kid!" muttered Hardfist Hall suddenly.

"Mebbe!" drawled Jake. "But she won't spill it none."

The marshal gave him a scowl.

"Git off'n that fence, you big stiff!" he snarled. "Git on your cayuse and follow me!"

He unhitched his bronco and leaped into the saddle. Jake followed his example, and they rode with a clatter up the street.

Hardfist's eyes were glittering. He reckoned that the doc's black cook would know what had happened to the Kid, and he reckoned, too, that he could make her speak. In the blaze of noon the street was deserted. There was a wide stretch of waste land between the doc's cabin and the store.

"Black Judy" had covered half the distance when they overtook her. The head in the red bandanna turned. The eyes in the black face gleamed as the marshal and his men jumped down from their broncos.

"Pull in, you!" snarled the marshal of Bullwhacker. "I want to chew the rag with you a piece, Judy! I guess you saw Kid Byrne when he hit the doc's shack last night!"

"I see him, massa."

"You're wise to it what's come of him?"

breathed the marshal.

"Yes, massa."

"Spill it, Judy, and it's a hundred dollars for you to buy glad rags!" said Hardfist, his voice trembling with eagerness. "A hundred dollars if you put me wise, or—"

Crash!

A clenched fist, that seemed like a lump of iron, crashed full in the face of the marshal of Bullwhacker, knocking him flat on his back in the street.

Jake Sanders gave a gasp of amazement, then the iron-like fist crashed at him, and he spun across the marshal, falling heavily on Bill Hall.

A black hand caught at the reins of the marshal's brone as it ran free. In the twinkling of an eye the "negress" was in the saddle, the print dress tearing and rending and revealing cowboy's riding boots!

Up the street went the disguised Kid at a wild gallop, kicking off the floppy shoes as his feet sought the stirrups. Hardfist Hall, panting, struggling to his feet.

"The Kid!" he panted. "I'll say it's the Kid! Shoot, you geck! Shoot!"

He fired as he panted, blazing away bullets up the street after the galloping rider. But the Kid rode fast and hard, bending low in the saddle, and at a wild gallop he dashed out of Parksville on to the prairie trail.

Hardfist Hall yelled to his men. There was mounting and spurring in hot haste, and the Bullwhacker bunch swept out on the prairie in pursuit of the Kid. But Kid Byrne had a start, and he did not lose it—and though the bunch rode hell for leather they rode in vain.

Mad with rage, the marshal of Bullwhacker was still hunting him on the rolling prairie when Kid Byrne, weary with hard riding, rejoined his comrades in their hide-out high up in the rocks of the mesa.

**Hardfist tricked—mad for revenge—and then the final show-down between him and the Outlawed Three! Read all about it in next week's vivid Western yarn. Big thrills guaranteed—and big surprises, too!**



**"THE WORST BOY AT BORSTED!" —AMAZING REVELATIONS OF A REFORMATORY BOY'S LIFE—INSIDE**

# *The* **PILOT** 2<sup>D</sup>

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EVERY FRIDAY.



*"That hole in the ice," Jim heard his pursuers say;  
"he must have drowned!"*



# The Outlawed THREE

**H**ARDFIST HALL, marshal of the cow town of Bullwhacker, swore under his breath. Looking from the window of his office in Main Street, he watched a little crowd reading a notice stuck on a wall opposite. That bill was headed, in big letters:

"500 DOLLARS REWARD!"

And there followed a description of Dan Oak, Tom Redway, and Kid Byrne—the Outlawed Three.

There were plenty of roughnecks in Bullwhacker who would have been glad to rope the hundred dollars by cinching the cowboy outlaws. But Hardfist could see that those who were reading that bill were mostly grinning. A remark floated across to him from a long limbed cowman.

"Hardfist won't never catch that bunch."

"You said it!" agreed his companions; and they lounged on their way down the street.

Hall gritted his teeth under his black beard. He reckoned that the puncher was right—he would never cinch the Rojo cowboys. He had framed them on a charge of shooting their uncle, old Sam Oak, and got them outlawed; but he had never been able to find their hide-out up in the Mesa Mountains.

It was as deeply hidden as the lost gold-mine of the mesa—which they had found, and the secret of which they kept. Failure after failure had dogged the steps of the marshal of Bullwhacker—and now old Sam Oak, at Doc Baker's cabin in Parksville, was mending, and when he was up again, what was going to happen?

The Outlawed Three were hunted for their lives—but old Sam would run the mine, and it would be gone for ever from Hardfist's greedy grasp.

A burly roughneck came up the street and tramped into the office. It was Jake Sanders, the marshal's right-hand man. The marshal of Bullwhacker gave him a nod.

"Kick that door shut, Jake!" he said. He crossed the office and closed the inner door. "I guess I don't want no guys to hear the piece I got to say." He paused, leaning his elbow on his desk, and fixed his eyes on Jake. "We got to hit Parksville to-night, feller, and you want to pack a gun."

Jake looked uneasy.

"What's the lay-out, boss?" he asked.

"We got to get through," said the marshal, in a low voice. "We ain't got Dan and Red and Kid—I'll say they've beat us to it. Old Sam Oak their uncle, will be up next week from what I hear. And I'll say they've put him wise where to look for the lost mine."

"Sure!" assented Jake.

"Doc Baker's pulled him round, after that lead he stopped one night at the Rojo Ranch, months ago," said Hall, his voice still low. "I guess it was too dark that night for the guy to put his lead where he wanted it."

"And you a dead shot too, marshal!" said Jake.

Hardfist gave him a fierce look. Even to his confederate, he had never owned that he was the man who had shot up old Sam Oak that dark night at Rojo. But he let the remark pass.

"Old Sam's going to stop one to-night that the doc won't mend!" he said.

Sanders breathed hard.

"Forget it, marshal!" he said. "Shooting a sick man in his bunk, and in the doc's house, and all Parksville ready to pull guns at a word from the doc! You're sure loco!"

"You got cold feet!" sneered Hardfist. "I've given the place the once-over, and I got it all cut and dried. I'll get the doc talking at his door, while you get to old Sam's window. There ain't nobody else in the shanty except the black cook. It'll be easy."

Jake Sanders shook his head. He was the marshal's man, and had backed his play in many a desperate game. But Jake had his limit, and the marshal had reached it.

"I guess you can count me out, Bill Hall!" he said stubbornly. "They got you beat, and you got to chew on it. You're just plumb loco to figure on such a game as that!"

Hardfist's eyes blazed at him.

He was in a desperate mood—the mood of a gambler in bad luck, throwing double or quits. There was desperate risk in what he had planned, but it was the last chance for the lost mine of the mesa. He stood for the law in Bullwhacker and he had used the law to aid him in his fierce pursuit of the golden lure—he had added treachery to treachery, crime to crime—and now at the finish defeat faced him. All went for nothing if old Sam lived.

"You doggoned geck!" said Hall, between his gritted teeth. "You want to stand trial for shooting up Dave Tutt at the Red Dog? You goldarned coyote if you throw me down in this. I'll park you pronto in the calaboose—and I guess you won't quit except to go up at the end of a rope. Chew on that, you doggoned skunk!"

Jake's hand slid an inch or two towards the gun at his hip. But he did not touch it.

"You said it, marshal!" he muttered at last. "I'll say I'm ready to ride."

The sunset was red on the prairie as the marshal thudded away at a gallop on the trail to Parksville, Jake Sanders riding sullen and silent at his side. Every now and then the ruffian stole a sidelong glance at Hall's hard, savage face.

But as they rode, in deep gloom, through a belt of post-oaks, Hall became suddenly aware that his companion had dropped behind. The marshal checked his bronco.

A fierce oath left his lips. There came a thudding of hoofs—off the trail. Under cover of the darkness, Jake had deserted him, and was riding away across the prairie.

Hardfist's eyes burned. He swung round his bronco and rode furiously in pursuit. Jake, if he got clear, would never be seen in Bullwhacker again—but the marshal swore savagely that he should not get clear.



A gleam of moonlight came up over the post-oaks. It revealed a hard-riding figure, bending low in the saddle, to the marshal's savage eyes. Hardfist's gun-hand came up.

Crack, crack, crack! Three times he fired in less than as many seconds.

A yell came back from the gloom—a fall, and a groan. A riderless horse dashed away, with swinging stirrups, over the shadowy prairie. The moon was hidden again behind the clouds.

In the darkness the marshal of Bullwhacker rode on to Parksville—alone!

**O**LD Sam Oak stirred uneasily in his sleep.

It was long past midnight. All was silent in the cabin, in the straggling street of Parksville.

Doc Baker, weary from a long round, was sleeping soundly. Occasionally, through the silence, came a snore from Black Louie's room. Once or twice hoof-beats echoed from the rugged street.

Sam Oak was dreaming—a dream of old days on the Rojo Ranch, where his three nephews had worked with him, before they had found the lost mine of the mesa, which, instead of fortune had brought them tragedy.

In his dream he saw them—the handsome Kid, burly, rugged Dan, plump little Red—the three who had stood by him through thick and thin, and whom he had hoped to make rich when the long-lost mine in the mesa was found.

Then into his dreaming came the hard, grim, black-bearded face of Hardfist Hall, and the old rancher stirred in his sleep, his hand slid to the six-gun under his pillow.

He awoke!

It was partly that evil vision of his dream, perhaps; but partly a faint sound that awakened him. He lifted his head from his pillow, and stared round the shadowy room. Through the wooden shutters a bar of moonlight fell, and old Sam started and his heart beat, for he knew that meant that the shutter was opening.

For a moment Sam Oak stared and listened. Then his wrinkled hand closed hard on the butt of the six-gun. He was almost well from his wound now; in a few more days he would be up and doing. The mine—the lost mine of the mesa—would be his; and, though his

nephews were outlawed, Hardfist was defeated in his fight for the gold of the mesa.

The old rancher's tanned face set grimly as he watched the bar of moonlight widen at his window. His finger was steady on the trigger of the Colt.

The wooden shutter swung open with a creak. There was no glass in the window. The shutter open, a stetson hat was thrust in. The head under it was bent to listen.

Not a sound, not a movement, came from old Sam in the bunk. For a long minute the stetson remained motionless. Then it moved, as a long-limbed figure stepped in over the low sill. Clear moonlight fell into the room, but it did not reach so far as Sam's bunk, which lay in shadow.

Clear in the moonlight stood a brawny figure, and a hard-bitten, black-bearded face glimmered in the light. A hand, grasping a revolver, was half raised, as Hardfist Hall stared about the room—seeking!

Then old Sam stirred. His arm came up, and the moonlight caught the barrel of his six-gun. But even as the marshal of Bullwhacker saw it, the six-gun roared. The brawny figure lurched, the Colt clattered on the floor, and there was a heavy crash that shook the building as Hardfist Hall went down with a bullet through his body.

**D**OC BAKER leaped from his bed. "Doggone my cats!" gasped the six-gun doctor of Arizona. Through the silent cabin the roar of the gun rang and echoed like thunder.

Doc tore his door open. The shot had come from old Sam's room, and he leaped across the living-room to Sam Oak's door on the other side. His gun was in his hand as he rushed in.

But his gun was not needed. The flood of moonlight from the open window showed the burly figure of the marshal of Bullwhacker prone on the floor, a Colt lying a few feet from his nerveless hand. Old Sam sat up in bed, grinning over a smoking gun.

"Sam!" panted the doc. "O.K., doc!" grinned the old rancher. "I'll say that's Bill Hall, and I'll tell a man he came here to finish what he started at the Rojo Ranch, and he sure has slipped up on it a few!"

Doc Baker dropped on his knees beside the wounded man. His slim, deft fingers bared the wound, and he started a little. Hardfist Hall gave a groan. His tanned, bearded face was white in the moonlight. His voice came husky:

"Doggone that old stiff! I guess I got mine, doc!" He groaned again.

"I guess you got what you've asked for, Bill Hall!" said the doc. "If you've anything to say, you got ten minutes to cough it up!"

A deep groan from the marshal of Bullwhacker. Death he could face—he was no coward! More bitter was defeat. It had been the last throw of the dice, and it had gone against him. Twenty years of hard riding and hard fighting, to fall at last to the shooting of a sick man—shot down like a prowling coyote of the night!

He groaned. The grin died off old Sam's face.

"If you got yours, Bill Hall, I guess I got to try hard to forgive you," said the old rancher. "You been a hard man, Hall, and a bad man. You framed and outlawed three good lads what never harmed you; but you got yours, and I'll say that washes it out."

Doc Baker rose from the side of the groaning marshal. There was a strange look on his face.

"I guess I'll wake old Louie and send her to get the sheriff," he said. "Mebbe it'd ease your mind, Hall, to talk a few afore you hit the high spots."

Hardfist made no answer. He shut his teeth on a groan, and lay silent as the doc left him.

**S**HERIFF WEST stood and looked down on the marshal of Bullwhacker. There was angry scorn in his tanned face, only repressed by the thought that Bill Hall lay dying.

A candle sputtered on the table, glimmering on old Sam's wrinkled face as he sat hunched

in bed with his blankets wrapped round him. Hardfist Hall lay where he had fallen. The doc had bandaged his wound, stopping the flow of blood; he had placed a cushion under the marshal's head.

Doc's face was serious and grim. The marshal, scanning him, read no hope there. The six-gun doctor, in his red shirt and leather trousers, did not look much of a medical man; but Hardfist knew that he was as good a doctor as any in Arizona, or all the West. And he had told Hardfist that he had ten minutes if he wanted to talk, and of those ten, six or seven had already elapsed.

But the hard-fisted bully of Bullwhacker lay silent. Dared he face what was coming without easing his mind—without undoing, so far as he could, the evil he had wrought? His lips stirred.

"I'm going up, doc?"

"You stopped a .45 bullet at six-feet range, Bill Hall! What you figure?" snapped the doc. "You got time to talk if you want, and hyer's the sheriff to take it down. I guess it won't hurt you to talk none. If you lived you got to stand for breaking into this cabin to kill a man. But I'll say that if I was in your boots at this hyer minute I'd set it right about the Rojo cowboys."

"You said it!" muttered Hall. "You sure said it! I guess I'll clear my mind afore I quit!"

The sheriff dropped at a bench at the table and took pen in hand.

"You got a confession to make, I guess I'll put it down, and the doc can witness it!" he said.

Again there was a brief silence. Then the marshal of Bullwhacker's voice came low and husky:

"I framed Dan and Red and Kid! It was I shot-up old Sam Oak that night at the Rojo Rancho! I framed them on it to get them where I wanted them. They was sure innocent, and never knowed a thing till they found the old geck shot-up. I'll sure set it right all I can!"

Old Sam's face lighted up as he heard. He knew it—only too well he knew, as the doc had always believed, that it was Hardfist who had fired that shot in the dark.



The wooden shutter over the window swung open with a creak, and then a brawny figure stepped over the low sill. Old Sam Oak, lying very still in bed, made no sound, but his hand tightened on his gun—but.

Sheriff West wrote it down. He knelt beside the marshal and placed the pen in his rough hand. Bill Hall signed the confession, and his hand dropped heavily. Doc Baker, with an inscrutable face, added his signature as a witness.

"I guess that lets out the Rojo cowboys, sheriff!" said the doc.

"I'll say it does," answered Sheriff West, "and if you're wise to their hide-out, I guess you want to get them word that they ain't outlaws no longer."

"I guess I can put a letter where they'll find it," said the doc. "It won't be long afore they're put wise."

Sheriff West nodded. He folded the paper, placed it carefully in his pocket-book, and the latter in his pocket.

"I guess that goes on the records," he said. "I'll tell you, Bill Hall, if you lived, you'd be an outlaw, like you made them cowboys with your frame-up. But you got yours, and that lets you out."

The sheriff tramped heavily from the room and went out of the cabin. Hardfist turned his face on the cushion. An outlaw—as he had made the Rojo cowboys, whose outlawry was now washed out by his confession! A hunted life, if old Sam's bullet had not cut it short!

He listened to the heavy tramp of the sheriff dying away up the rugged street. Doc Baker stood listening also, a faint smile playing on his tanned face.

"Where'd you leave your cayuse, Bill Hall?" asked the doc, when there was silence again.

"Aw, doc, what'll his cayuse matter now, and him passing in his checks!" muttered old Sam.

"Passing in nothing!" grunted the doc.

Bill Hall's eyes turned on him.

"Who said the geck was passing in his checks?" snapped the doc. "I told him he had ten minutes to talk, if he wanted—and he sure had, and more! I never told him he was passing in no checks."

Hardfist gave a panting cry.

"Doc! Doggone you, you been stringing me along?" he panted.

"You been stringing yourself along!" snarled the doc. "Sam, you old geck, you sure forgotten how to shoot while you been lying here sick! You sent a bullet atween two of that piccan's ribs, and it went clean! I guess he ain't damaged a whole lot."

"Doggone you!" hissed the marshal of Bullwhacker.

"I never said you was going up! If you figured you was, it was your own funeral! If the sheriff knew, you'd go straight from here to the jug, Bill Hall, to stand trial for trying to kill a man under my roof. But that wouldn't have set the Rojo cowboys right. You got them framed—you got them outlawed—and you'd have kept your teeth clamped on the truth, you ornery piccan! Now you've confessed the truth, and the sheriff's got it at his office!"

Doc Baker shrugged his shoulders at the glare of hate and rage from the marshal of Bullwhacker.

"I'm sure letting you off light, Hall! I'm giving you a chance to burn the wind, you piccan! Get on your cayuse and hit the quickest trail out of Arizona!"

He leaned over the marshal of Bullwhacker and helped him to his feet. Hardfist stood unsteadily. There was a twinge of sharp pain from his bandaged wound. But he knew now that it was not as he had believed—he was going to live!

Relief was swallowed up in bitter rage. His shaking hand groped at his belt. Doc Baker kicked away the Colt that still lay on the floor where it had fallen.

"Forget it, Hall!" he snapped. "You dog-goned lobo-wolf, I'm giving you a chance, and I guess I'm a bonehead to do it—but that bit of writing in the sheriff's office sets Kid Byrne and his pards right—and I'll say I'll let it go at that! You can back a bronco, Bill Hall, and you got time to ride clear afore you're hunted—and if you got any hoss sense in that cabeza of yours, I guess you'll ride a straight trail after this and make good! Your game's up here."



A minute more, and the doc stood in his doorway, watching the brawny figure that tottered away in the moonlight.

Hardfist was gone! The clatter of a horse's hoofs, ringing back from the silence of the night, told that he was in the saddle, and hitting the trail.

Doc Baker slammed the door.

## "KID BYRNE!"

Kid did not hear the muttered words. He did not see the haggard, bearded face that peered at him from the rocks on the bank of the Rio Rojo, high up in the heart of the mesa.

The hot sun of Arizona blazed down on the rocky hills; on the great canyon where the Rojo River rolled down to the plain. Up the rugged canyon the Kid came, on foot; and the haggard man hidden by the rocks crouched lower, while his hand gripped convulsively the butt of the six-gun at the holster in his belt.

"The Kid!" breathed Hardfist Hall.

It was more than a day since the strange scene in old Sam's room at Doc Baker's. Hardfist Hall, once marshal of Bullwhacker, his word law in the rough cow town, was a fugitive—hunted as Dan and Kid and Red had been hunted by him and his side-kickers.

A hurried visit to his ranch for what he could carry off in haste, was all he had time for before pursuit was at his heels. He was hunted—for the sheriff of Parksville was riding the prairie in search of him; and in his own town of Bullwhacker, where he had ruled the roost so long, he could not have ridden in safety.

Hardfist had camped high up in the hills; his plans undecided. To burn the wind out of Arizona, to seek safety across the border in Mexico; that was what prudence dictated.

But it was vengeance, rather than safety, that was in the mind of the desperate man whose plotting had brought him to ruin. Vengeance on the Outlawed Three, who had baffled and beaten him—and perhaps even yet the gold of the mesa!

Luck was his way. At the sound of approaching footsteps in the silent canyon, he touched his horse with a soothing hand to keep the cayuse quiet, peered out from behind the rocks and saw—the Kid! He drew the six-gun from his belt and waited.

Up the canyon came Kid Byrne, and unless he stopped he would come within easy shooting of the rocks that hid his enemy.

Hardfist's eyes blazed over his gun!

Then, as he watched, Kid Byrne turned and swung into a narrow, steep ravine that split the high, rocky wall of the great canyon. Hardfist gritted his teeth with rage. He rose, his gun-arm lifting—but the Kid had disappeared up the rock arroyo, though the marshal could still hear his tread ringing on the stones.

He thrust the gun back into his holster and stepped from his cover. Well he knew the arroyo into which Kid Byrne was clambering. Well he remembered how, long weeks ago, he had met up with the Kid high up the ravine above the waterfall and flung him, as he believed, to his death in the falling waters.

How the Kid had escaped death then he did not know—but he had escaped, and when Hardfist had seen him again, it had been with the golden nugget in his hand; the gleaming gold that revealed that the lost mine of the mesa had been found.

Was it in that rocky ravine that the Outlawed Three had their hide-out? Hardfist had searched it again and again during his long hunt for the outlaws, and discovered—nothing! Was it in that ravine that the lost mine lay?

He had suspected it, and combed it for a sign of gold—in vain! Yet why was the handsome Kid clambering up those steep rocks? Hardfist reckoned that he was aiming for his hide-out, and with the caution of a trailing wolf, he crept in pursuit.

Twice he sighted the Kid's stetson bobbing among the rocks up the steep arroyo. Twice he was tempted to take a pot-shot. But he refrained. Once he had trailed the Kid down, it would be sure shooting—and he could not afford to take chances.

Keeping in cover of the rugged rocks, creeping like a panther, he trailed the Kid up the ravine. If the wary Kid looked back he

saw no sign of the man who trailed him. He halted at length on the steep bank, where the waterfall came thundering down. Hardfist, crouching behind a boulder, watched him from a distance—and again his gun came up.

Standing there against the glistening of the sheet of water that dropped twenty feet and more from above, the Kid was a good mark.

But even as his finger was pressing the trigger, the Kid suddenly vanished from his sight. Hardfist held back the shot, leaped to his feet and stared blankly. He could not believe his eyes. A second ago Kid Byrne had been standing in his view—now he was gone; and it was into the sheet of falling water that he had plunged and disappeared.

Hardfist stared at the rushing torrent, half-expecting to see the Kid's body come whirling down. But he saw only the glistening waters, dotted here and there with driftwood from the upper hills. Where was the Kid?

He crept on, at last, and stood on the spot where the Kid had stood, by the edge of the thundering waterfall. The truth, never suspected before, was dawning in his mind.

Twenty times, hunting for the Outlawed Three, he had traversed that rugged arroyo



Even as the marshal pressed the trigger of his gun, Red's hand jerked, and the heavy gold nugget shot across the cave and crashed in Hardfist's black-bearded face. The burly marshal staggered, his foot slipped, and then he stumbled over the slippery rock to plunge into the raging waterfall.

and passed the waterfall—never had he dreamed that a human being could plunge under it and live. But he knew now—and he knew that he had found the hide-out of the Outlawed Three.

There must be some hollow in the rocky cliff, some cavern, back of the falling water, and they had found it, and that was where they camped and hid.

Hardfist stood, with the thunder of the waterfall in his ears. And as he stood there came a sharper sound through the crash of the waters.

Clink! Clink! Clink!

It was the sound of a pick on hard rock.

Who was wielding a miner's pick in the hollow under the cliff—and why?

Hardfist knew—only too well he knew now. The lost mine—the lost mine of the mesa! It was here, hidden by the waterfall!

The Outlawed Three were mining gold—the

gold he had so long and fiercely sought. Hardfist's teeth set hard under his black beard. He wrapped his six-gun in his neck-scarf to keep in dry from the water, and ducked under the torrent as the Kid had done.

For a moment, blinding water, swamping in heavy masses; then he stood under an arch of rock on a rocky shelf. Through the sheet of falling water came a glimmer of the sun—but that was not all the light. There was a glare of a pine torch, stuck in a crevice of the cavern wall—a glow from the red embers of a camp-fire.

Dripping with water, Hardfist unwrapped his gun, and gripped it as the voice of Kid Byrne came ringing to his ears, ringing in a happy shout that woke the echoes of the cave.

"DAN! Red! Jump for joy!" roared the Kid.

Dan Oak ceased to handle the pick, and stood leaning on it. Red was scraping earth from a gleaming golden nugget, but he ceased, and his plump face was turned on the Kid.

Kid Byrne threw aside the blanket he had thrown over his head to pass under the waterfall. He waved his hand, he shouted, he brandished a slip of paper, and his comrades stared at him, amazed. The Kid, usually so quiet and cool, seemed to have gone out of his senses.

"Say, what's biting you, Kid?" asked Red.

"You gone loco, ol'-timer?" grinned Dan.

"You old piccan!" yelled the Kid. "I got the news! Look!" He waved the paper in the air. "I'll tell you, this hyer is in the doc's fist! He sure left us this billy-doo, the doc did, under the rock in the lower canyon, what we use for a post office since that lobo-wolf Hardfist got on to our post office in the old cottonwood. And what'll you guess the doc's got to spill?"

"Old Sam up agin?" asked Dan eagerly.

"Yep, old Sam's up, and next week he'll be out and riding. But that ain't all!" shouted the Kid. "Lissen, you guys! Hardfist Hall got at Sam in the doc's cabin, and old Sam threw lead at him, and the doggoned piccan, figuring that he was going up, confessed—"

"Confessed?" gasped Red.

"And I'll tell all Arizona!" roared the Kid, his voice awakening every echo of the deep cavern stretching into the cliff behind the waterfall. "I'll tell the world Sheriff West is after that lobo-wolf, and Hardfist is an outlaw now, and we're clear! You get me? Here it is in the doc's fist, and we're free to ride the trails, free to ride into Parksville—and I'll say that we're going for our hosses and hitting the trail to see old Sam, pronto!"

"Search me!" breathed Dan.

He leaned on the pick, almost overcome by the news. Red still held the nugget in his hand, but he had forgotten it. It weighed over a pound of solid gold—but he forgot it!

"And where's Hardfist now?" asked Dan, at last.

"Burning the wind for the border, I reckon," said the Kid. "He's cooked his own goose, and I reckon we're through with Hardfist."

"Forget it!" rasped a bitter voice.

The Rojo cowboys started, and spun round. Against the glimmering gleam of the waterfall stood the brawny figure of the marshal of Bullwhacker, on the rock shelf at the side of the cave entrance, the red torchlight playing on his hard, haggard, black-bearded face, gleaming on the levelled barrel of his six-gun, on the fierce, merciless eyes that blazed over the barrel.

The gun covered the Outlawed Three; Hardfist's finger was on the trigger. Only the Kid was packing a gun, but he did not attempt to pull. The death-shot would have sped instantly had his hand gone to his belt, and he had no chance. The three gazed at the startling, unexpected apparition—reading the merciless hate and vengeance in the black-bearded face.

"I got you!" went on Hardfist Hall, his voice coming like a snake's hiss from his black beard. "By the great horn spoon, I got

(Continued on back page.)

## THE BLACK MONK

(Continued from page 376.)

against the grey stone. Slowly and imperceptibly it crept up; still Chief Warden Lazenby waited for the dawn.

No one saw his figure suddenly vanish from that lofty post. No one heard the stifled cry for help that came momentarily from his lips.

With the approach of dawn, a bitter wind came creeping over the heather, sighing like a soul in torment.

Chief Warden Lazenby was a powerfully built man, but in the grip of the unseen assailant, who had seized him from behind in a ju-jitsu hold, he was helpless. He twisted his head frantically in an effort to get rid of the cold, firm hand clamped across his mouth.

Then suddenly he felt himself being swung round; had a fleeting glimpse of a cowed, cloaked dark figure with upraised fist. He saw the blow coming to him, and tried to turn his head to dodge the fist. But he was caught full on the point of the chin, and, with his head snapping back, went into unconsciousness, knocked out by that one perfectly timed upper-cut.

The Black Monk caught him before he fell, and laid him on the ground. Then, working swiftly, he bound the warden's feet and hands together with the girdle of his monkish robe, and gagged the unconscious man with a handkerchief.

When Lazenby came-to, it was to find himself staring into the dark, magnetic eyes of the monk. But gone were the monk's cloak and cowl; he was wearing now the dark blue uniform that had formerly clothed Lazenby himself. The warden's greatcoat was still on

him as a protection against the cold, but underneath he was stripped to his shirt and pants.

Fascinated, he watched the monk make up his face with the aid of the contents of a flat, oblong tin. As his senses cleared, he saw, to his amazement, that the monk was gradually building up his face into a likeness of the warden's own rubicund countenance; and when, finally, the monk added a false clipped moustache that was an imitation of Lazenby's own, the disguise was complete. In the half-light of dawn, it was an almost perfect copy of the warden's countenance.

Twenty minutes later, a police patrol at the crossroads stopped a car which appeared suddenly out of the gloom. A man in blue uniform, with a peak cap, peered through the window.

"O.K., boys! It's me, Chief Warden Lazenby. I've got James Garvin, but there won't be any hanging. I found him in the quarry crushed to death. Somebody must have parked this car for him there, ready for his getaway, but the poor devil crashed just as he was getting to it."

Instinctively the police turned their eyes to the back of the car.

"I put him in a sack I found there. He isn't exactly pretty to look at. Just telephone to the governor, will you, and tell him what's happened. Say I'll be along in ten minutes."

As one of the constables raced for the inn that stood at the crossroads to phone the message, the car swung to the right and began to climb the hill. Slowly its rear light vanished from view.

Lighter and lighter grew the dawn sky. Already the birds were beginning to stir uneasily in the trees, and their first faint twitterings could be heard. The prison gates swung open. The warden on duty stepped forward and nodded to the man at the wheel. The car went on. Then heavy gates clanked to—

Twenty minutes later, the car reappeared at the gateway. The warden on duty there hastened out.

"I've seen the governor, and he's let me off duty for the night," reported the uniformed man at the wheel. "Hurry up with those gates. I want to get home!"

The light was spreading in the east. As the sun rose over the moor and lighted up the great walled-in space of Grinstone Prison, a warden coming off duty passed the shed beneath the execution chamber. As he did so, his eyes, trained to observe every detail, noticed instantly that the doors of the shed were wide open.

He stopped and turned back. As he approached the shed, he halted, paralysed—horror-stricken.

There, from the end of a rope, something dangled—and that rope came through the open trapdoor from the gallows above!

*The Spider would send no more men to their deaths.*

The warden, recovering himself, snatched his whistle with trembling fingers from his tunic pocket and gave three long blasts. Then he went rushing into the shed.

Lying on the floor was a black cloth. Automatically the warden stooped, picked it up, and looked at it. Suddenly a cry escaped from his lips.

"The monk!" he shouted. "The Black Monk!"

In his hand was the long, black, hooded cloak that the man who had rescued James Garvin had worn.

*Two of the men on the Black Monk's list of victims have paid the penalty for their crimes . . . who will be the next? Don't miss the thrilling adventures of the Black Monk in next Friday's "PILOT."*

## THE OUTLAWED THREE

(Continued from page 386.)

you fixed! Make a move, and you won't make another!"

They stood as if transfixed. Only Red's plump fingers gripped convulsively the golden nugget in his hand.

"I got you, and I got the mine! I beaten you to it at last!" Hardfist's savage face gloated. "I guess you got yours here and now, and I guess there's enough gold here to square all the law in Arizona, and see me clear! Doggone you, you got it coming to you!"

He gloated over his triumph. The lives of the Outlawed Three were at his mercy; at long last he had them where he wanted them! In the very hour of their relief and joy, when they knew that they were no longer outlaws,

when life lay bright and unclouded before them, their enemy had hunted them down, and their lives were his to take!

His finger pressed the trigger to send forth the stream of death, and even as it rose, Red's hand jerked. The golden nugget shot like a bullet across the cave and crashed in the black-bearded face.

Hardfist staggered, and his gun jerked up, roaring as it jerked. The bullet crashed on the cavern roof, bringing down a shower of chips of rock. The burly marshal staggered on the narrow rocky shelf, and his foot slipped on the edge.

The Kid, swift on the uptake, was reaching for his gun. But his gun was not needed. One wild effort the marshal made to recover his balance as he stumbled over the edge of rock—and failed! The brawny figure splashed headlong into the water, and disappeared into the fall. One choked cry came back—

choked before it was fairly uttered—and the marshal of Bullwhacker was swept away in the thundering waters.

The Kid relinquished his gun. He passed his hand over his brow.

"Search me!" he muttered. "Red, I'll say you've saved our lives—and I'll say Hardfist has got his! He sure has got his!"

He rushed from the cave, under the curtain of falling water, Dan and Red at his heels. Out in the open, in the blazing sunlight, they scanned the rushing torrent below the water-fall. A stetson hat spun away on the waters, but of Hardfist Hall there was nothing to be seen.

Deep down in the rocky bed of the torrent was all that was left of the hard-fisted marshal of Bullwhacker—and it was a nugget of the gold that he had so long and fiercely sought that had dashed him to his death!

"SAY, old Sam!" yelled the Kid.

It was weeks later. Old Sam Oak sat in his rocker on the veranda of the Rojo Ranch and grinned happily at the three riders who dashed up from the Bullwhacker trail. Dan and Kid and Red—once the "Outlawed Three"—now carefree and happy as larks! They cavorted up to the veranda, whooping and waving their stetsons.

"What's the noos, boys?" asked old Sam, grinning down at them over the rail.

"They elected a new marshal in Bullwhacker to-day!" chuckled Dan.

"And they got a good man this time!" grinned Red.

"What's his name?" asked old Sam.

"His name," chuckled the Kid, "is Sam Oak! And I'll tell all Arizona we ain't got no trouble coming from the marshal of Bullwhacker!"

THE END.

*It's good-bye to "The Outlawed Three"—and welcome to "G-MEN OF THE RANGES," our gripping new Western story of a young ranch-owner who swears to wipe out the modern cattle-rustling rucksteers of the West!*



Flaming six-guns, the scream of hot lead, and the thunder of galloping hoofs! Who will ride the trail with Johnny Romar and the G-Men of the Ranges, sworn to stamp out the Chicago gangsters who have muscled in on the rustling racket in the cattle-country of the West? Hold your horses, everyone, and get ready for new reading thrills in . . .

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