IN THIS ISSUE:
THE RODEO SWINDLER!

HOPALONG CASSIDY  SMILEY BURNETTE  ROCKY LANE
HEE, LAMEBRAIN, WHAT ARE YUH DOING IN TOWN THIS TIME OF DAY? HOW COME YO'RE NOT AT THE RANCH?

I LEFT THAR!

HUH? YUH LEFT YORE JOB AT THE RANCH?

THAT'S RIGHT!

RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE DAY?

YES, SIREE!

I RECKON YORE BOSS WAS SHORE SURPRISED WHEN HE KNEW YUH WERE LEAVING!

NAW---

--- HE KNEW IT BEFORE I DID!
FROM THAT SMILE ON YOUR FACE, SAM, I'P SAY YOU JUST RECEIVED GOOD NEWS!

I'VE HEARD OF RODEO FOLKS WHO WERE SO OUTSTANDING THAT THEY BECAME THE STARS OF THEIR SHOWS, BUT I NEVER HEARD OF ANYONE BUYING TOP BILLING!

MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT, HOPALONG, BUT BOB'S MY ONLY SON AND IF I CAN MAKE HIM HAPPY, I AIM TO SEND THE MONEY TO HIM!

A WEEK LATER --- HOWDY, SAM! HAS YOUR SON BECOME STAR OF THE RODEO YET?

NOT YET, HOPALONG! THE MANAGER, HAMILTON, THOUGH, TELLS HIM IT'LL BE ANY DAY NOW!

MEANWHILE, AT THE DORSET CITY RODEO ---

FOR THE LAST TIME, SANDOWN, I'M TELLING YUH TO STOP PESTERING ME! IF YUH WANT TO KNOW THE TRUTH, YOU'RE NEVER GOING TO BECOME THE STAR!

THE MANAGER SAYS:

DORSET CITY RODEO
THE SHOWS, ALL BIG PRIZES

IN THAT CASE, I'M GOING TO TELL THE LOCAL SHERIFF ABOUT THIS!

YOU'VE NO PROOF THAT YUH GAVE ME FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS! IT'S A CASE OF YORE WORD AGAINST MINE!

YOU'RE RIGHT ABOUT THAT, HAMILTON! BUT DON'T THINK I'M GOING TO LET YUH MAKE A FOOL OUT OF ME!

YOU'LL EITHER RETURN MY MONEY OR I'LL BREAK YORE NECK!

YOURE NOT BREAKING ANYBODY'S NECK!

OOh!!
IT LOOKS AS IF I KILLED THE CRITTER! WHEN IT GETS DARK, I'LL DRAG HIM OUT OF HYAR AND BURY HIM!

ACCUSING SOMEONE OF MURDER IS A MIGHTY SERIOUS THING, SAM. I HOPE YOU HAVEN'T MENTIONED THIS TO ANYONE ELSE!

WEEKS LATER, IN TWIN RIVER —

— AND WHEN I HADN'T HEARD FROM BOB IN OVER A WEEK, I GOT WORRIED AND RODE OVER TO DORSET CITY! HAMILTON, THE MANAGER OF THE RODEO, TOLD ME BOB DIED OF SMALLPOX!

THAT'S TOO BAD! YOU HAVE MY DEEPEST SYMPATHY!

NO, HOPALONG, I DIDN'T! WHEN I MENTIONED THE FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS TO HAMILTON, HE DENIED THAT BOB EVER GAVE IT TO HIM! THAT'S WHAT MAKES ME SO SURE I'M RIGHT! GOSH, HOPALONG, YOU'VE GOT TO HELP ME FIND OUT THE TRUTH!

I'LL DO MY BEST, SAM!

MY HUNCH IS THAT HAMILTON NEVER INTENDED TO MAKE HIM A STAR AND THAT HE KILLED BOB WHEN HE DEMANDED THE MONEY!

ACCUSING SOMEONE OF MURDER IS A MIGHTY SERIOUS THING, SAM. I HOPE YOU HAVEN'T MENTIONED THIS TO ANYONE ELSE!

NO, HOPALONG, I DIDN'T! WHEN I MENTIONED THE FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS TO HAMILTON, HE DENIED THAT BOB EVER GAVE IT TO HIM! THAT'S WHAT MAKES ME SO SURE I'M RIGHT! GOSH, HOPALONG, YOU'VE GOT TO HELP ME FIND OUT THE TRUTH!

I'LL DO MY BEST, SAM!

HIT THE TRAIL, TOPPER! WE'RE HEADING FOR DORSET CITY!

THE FIRST THING WE'RE GOING TO DO WHEN WE HIT DORSET IS VISIT THE LOCAL DOCTOR!

I'VE DOUBLE-CHECKED MY RECORDS! I HAVEN'T HAD A SMALLPOX CASE IN YEARS!

WELL, WOULDN'T IT BE ODD IF SOMEONE AROUND HERE HAD SMALLPOX AND YOU WEREN'T CALLED IN — ESPECIALLY SINCE YOU'RE THE ONLY DOCTOR IN TOWN?
DEFINITELY! I CAN'T SEE HOW ANYONE COULD EVEN BE SURE IT WAS SMALLPOX UNLESS THEY CALLED ME IN!

THERE REALLY IS SOMETHING TO SAM SONDOWNS HUNCH! IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT BOB COULD HAVE DIED OF SMALLPOX WITHOUT THE DOCTOR BEING CALLED IN!

IT COULD MEAN THAT HAMILTON KILLED HIM TO COVER UP THE FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS HE SWINDLED! OF COURSE, THIS IS PURELY CIRCUMSTANTIALLY EVIDENCE, BUT IT IS STRIKE ONE AGAINST HAMILTON! NOW TO VISIT THE GAMBLING CASINO!

NOW WHAT I NEED IS SOME CONCRETE EVIDENCE SO I CAN PUT THE FINAL STRIKE ON HAMILTON! HE DOESN'T KNOW ME — MAYBE, IF I REMOVE THIS BADGE, I CAN GET A JOB AT HIS RODEO!

GAMBLING IS ONE OF THE BIGGEST TROUBLES IN THESE PARTS! THIS MAKES TWO STRIKES AGAINST HAMILTON!

AT THE GAMBLING CASINO

THAT'S RIGHT! HAMILTON DID OWE ME A LOT OF MONEY FOR HIS GAMBLING DEBTS! A THOUSAND DOLLARS, TO BE EXACT! HE GAVE ME FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS JUST A FEW WEEKS AGO!

THERE'S ONLY ONE REASON WHY A MAN WHO HAS A GOOD JOB RUNNING A RODEO WOULD TRY TO SWINDLE SOMEONE OUT OF FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS! BECAUSE HE'S IN TROUBLE — AND

HE STILL OWES A FIVE-HUNDRED-DOLLAR GAMBLING DEBT, SO HE MAY TRY THE SAME TRICK ON ME!

AT THE RODEO

SO YUH WANT TO JOIN THE RODEO, STRANGER? WELL —

LET ME SEE YUH BULLDOZE THAT STEER!

LET'S GO, TOPPER!

WELCOME TO THE RODEO!
LATE THAT NIGHT, WHEN EVERYONE'S ASLEEP ---

IT'S A LITTLE LATE FOR VISITING, BUT WE'VE GOT TO WAKE UP THE LOCAL BANKER! IF HE'LL GIVE ME FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS IN MARKED BILLS ---

BUT AS HOPALONG MAKES HIS WAY TO THE BANKER'S HOME, HE DOESN'T REALIZE HE'S BEING FOLLOWED ---

OF COURSE I'LL BE GLAD TO LEND YOU FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS IN MARKED BILLS, HOPALONG CASSIDY! YOU'RE THE FAMOUS SHERIFF FROM TWIN RIVER! IF YOU'LL JUST WAIT TILL I SLIP SOME CLOTHES ON, I'LL GO RIGHT OVER TO THE BANK AND GET IT FOR YOU!

HOPALONG CASSIDY! IT'S A LUCKY THING I GOT SUSPICIOUS ABOUT WHERE A STRANGER COULD GET FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS OVERNIGHT OR I'D NEVER HAVE FOLLOWED HIM!

TWIN RIVER! THAT'S WHERE BOB SONDOWN CAME FROM! HE'S OUT TO TRAP ME! WELL, WE'LL SEE WHO GETS TRAPPED!

AFTER HOPALONG GETS THE MARKED MONEY FROM THE BANKER, HE HURRIES BACK TO THE RODEO ---

NOW TO SNEAK BACK INTO MY BUNK BEFORE ANYONE REALIZES I'VE BEEN GONE! THEN IN THE MORNING I'LL HAND THE MARKED MONEY OVER TO HAMILTON!

FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS? I DON'T HAVE IT WITH ME, BUT I COULD GET IT BY TOMORROW MORNING!

OKAY! IN THE MEANWHILE YOH CAN BUNK WITH THE REST OF THE PERFORMERS IN THAT SHACK!

WOW! YOU'RE GOOD, MISTER! IF YUH HAD FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS, I COULD MAKE YUH THE STAR OF THIS THIS HYAR RODEO!
BUT AS HE TRIES TO CLIMB INSIDE...

OHHH!

CONK!

WHERE DID HE PUT THE MARKED MONEY?

HYAR IT IS, IN HIS POCKET!

I'LL TOSS HIM DOWN THE WELL SO HE'LL DROWN!

IT WOULDN'T BE SAFE TO TRY TO USE THIS MARKED MONEY IN THIS TOWN, BUT WITH HOPALONG OUT OF THE WAY...

...THERE'S NOTHING TO STOP ME FROM TAKING IT TO THE NEXT TOWN AND EXCHANGING IT FOR UNMARKED BILLS!

SPLASH!

BUT INSTEAD OF DROWNING HOPALONG, THE WATER REVIVES HIM...

HAMILTON MUST HAVE GOTT WISE TO MY SCHEME! I MUST CATCH HIM BEFORE HE EXCHANGES THOSE BILLS OR MY WHOLE PLAN WILL COLLAPSE! IF I CAN ONLY REACH THAT BUCKET...

MADE IT!
NOW TO CLIMB UP THIS ROPE!

HAMILTON COULDN'T HAVE GOTTEN TOO FAR AWAY IN THIS SHORT TIME!

THERE HE IS NOW!

SIX GUN HEROES

LET'S GO, TOPPER! THAT RAT DIDN'T BITE FOR THE BAIT IN OUR TRAP, BUT WE'VE STILL GOT TO CATCH HIM!

HOPALONG CASSIDY! HOW DID HE ESCAPE? GIDDAP! HE'S CATCHING UP TO ME!

YOU MEAN "CAUGHT UP"!

I'LL TWIST YORE FOOT TILL IT BREAKS!

I PREFER FIGHTING TO WRESTLING, BUT --
SIX GUN HEROES

--- IF IT'S WRESTLING YOU WANT, I KNOW A FEW TRICKS MYSELF!

NOW GET ON YOUR FEET, HAMILTON! I'VE GOT A FEW QUESTIONS I WANT TO ASK YOU!

--- AND IT MAKES ME FEEL BETTER TO KNOW THAT MY SON'S MURDERER DIDN'T GET AWAY WITH HIS CRIME, THAT HE'S IN JAIL!

LATER IN TWIN RIVER...

YOU'RE ALWAYS COURTING TROUBLE WHEN YOU TRY TO BUY YOUR WAY TO THE TOP! THAT'S ONE POSITION THAT CAN BE OBTAINED ONLY BY HARD WORK!

YOU WIN, HOPALONG! I CONFESS I KILLED BOB SONDOWN!

SEE HOW MANY YOU CAN ANSWER CORRECTLY!
SCORE YOURSELF AS FOLLOWS:
5 CORRECT, EXCELLENT; 4 CORRECT, GOOD;
3 CORRECT, FAIR; 2 CORRECT, POOR.

1. THE OFFICIAL COLORS OF THE U.S. MARINE CORPS ARE BLUE AND GOLD.
TRUE _____ FALSE _____

2. ANDREW JACKSON WAS BORN IN 1767.
TRUE _____ FALSE _____

3. A JOURNEYMAN IS A SKILLED WORKER.
TRUE _____ FALSE _____

4. MAINE WAS THE 40TH STATE ADMITTED TO THE UNION.
TRUE _____ FALSE _____

5. THE BATTLES OF LEXINGTON AND CONCORD TOOK PLACE ON APRIL 19, 1775.
TRUE _____ FALSE _____

ANSWERS
1. TRUE; 2. FALSE; 3. TRUE; 4. FALSE; 5. TRUE.

THE COLORS ARE BLUE AND GOLD.

?!!??! QUIZ
SIX GUN HEROES

Tumbleweed Jr.

“Rock-A-Pie, Baby!”

(SNiff, SNIFF) Yum, yum! Maw is baking pies! Me loveum pies! Me go get some! Er, me hope maw let me have piece! Sometime she no let me eat before dinner! She say it spoil appetite!

Ah, me in luck! Maw put pies out to cool! Me take when she go inside! No take chance! She say me no can have pie now!

Maw go back in tepee! Now me tiptoe up and take!

Yum, yum! Me can taste delicious pie in mouth already!

Pie smell so good, my mouth water! Yum, yum!

Me go to woods and have heap big party eating pie! Yum, yum!
WHERE YOU THINK YOU GO WITH PIE?

(GULP) IT'S MAW!

ME TAKE BACK! YOU BAD BOY TO TAKE IT WITHOUT PERMISSION! ME PUNISH YOU! NOW ME NO GIVE YOU PIE AT DINNER!

WHERE YOU THINK YOU GO WITH PIE?

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WHERE YOU THINK YOU GO WITH PIE?
I'M BLINDED! I CAN'T SEE!

HOORAY! THAT'S WHAT ME HOPE FOR! (GULP) BUT PIES SQUASHED! ME NO HOPE FOR THAT!

SQUASH!

ME THOUGHT ME FIND YOU HERE, BAD BOY! ME GIVE YOU HEAP BIG SPANKING FOR EATING ALL PIES!

(GULP) BUT...

ME KNOCK HIM OUT BY HITTING IN FACE SO HE RUN INTO TREE! HE BAD MAN! STEAL MAW'S PIES!

Huh? He take pies?

YO'RE RIGHT, SON, HE'S A BAD MAN! BUT HE'S STOLEN MORE THAN PIES IN HIS DAY!

At that moment...

LOOK, MEN! THAT'S CACTUS CAULFIELD! YEAH! AND HE'S KNOCKED OUT!

CACTUS CAULFIELD IS ONE OF THE WORST BANDITS IN THESE PARTS AND HYAR'S THE REWARD FER CATCHING HIM! GOOD WORK, SON!

ME NO WANT TO HEAR ABOUT "BUTS"! ... HUH?

ME GIVE MONEY TO MAW!

ME SORRY ME THINK YOU TOOK PIES! FROM NOW ON, YOU HAVE ALL PIES YOU WANT, LITTLE HERO!

HUH? HE TAKE PIES?

ME FPRUD OF SON!

YUM, YUM! THIS BEST REWARD OF ALL!

Later...
One minute before, in the town barbershop...

Shave! And if you so much as nick me, I'll slice your head off!

Y-y-yes, s-s-sir.

The nervous barber starts to apply lather...

And another thing...

Glub!

You -- floo-p! Floo-off!

One minute later...

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Meanwhile, Smiley decides to investigate the shooting...

I reckon we might as well see what's making all the noise, Ring Eye!

Hey! This stage doesn't stop here!

Good! I don't want to stop here, either!

A moment later...

Hurricane?

Nup!

Tornado!
TORNADO TOM! HE CAME HERE FOR A SHAVE!

BUT HE DIDN'T GET IT! THE BARBER LEFT TOWN -- FOR HIS HEALTH!

WHY DON'T YOU OPEN A BARBERSHOP, SMILEY? NO COMPETITION NOW!

SURE! YOU COULD BE A BARBER AND AN EDITOR, TOO!

SAY, THAT'S AN IDEA! I'D HAVE BUSINESS EVEN WHEN THERE'S NO NEWS! AND BESIDES, THERE'S ALWAYS LOTS OF GOSST IN A BARBERSHOP!

LATER, A NEW SIGN APPEARS ON MAIN STREET!

INSIDE, THE BARBER-EDITOR AWaits HIS FIRST CUSTOMER!

Burnette's Bugle and Barber Shop
PRINTING AND HAIRCUTTING
SHAVE AND A WANT AD 25¢

ENTER: TORNADO TOM!

A SHAVE! UNDERSTAND? NOT A HAIRCUT!

A MOMENT LATER---

HI, SMILEY! CAN WE REHEARSE NOW?

SURE! WHAT BETTER PLACE FOR A BARBER-SHOP QUARTET?
ONE MINUTE BEFORE, IN THE TOWN BARBERSHOP...

SHAVE! AND IF YOU SO MUCH AS NICK ME, I’LL SLICE YOUR HEAD OFF!

Y-Y-YES, S-S-SIR.

THE NERVOUS BARBER STARTS TO APPLY LATHER...

AND ANOTHER THING...

GLUB!

YOU -- FLOOP-- PHOOOO!

EANWHILE, SMILEY DECIDES TO INVESTIGATE THE SHOOTING...

I RECKON WE MIGHT AS WELL SEE WHAT’S MAKING ALL THE NOISE, RING EYE!

BARBER SHOP

HEY! THIS STAGE DOESN’T STOP HERE!

GOOD! I DON’T WANT TO STOP HERE, EITHER!

MEANWHILE, SMILEY DECIDES TO INVESTIGATE THE SHOOTING...

A MOMENT LATER---

HURRICANE?

NUP!

TORNADO!
TORNADO TOM!
HE CAME HERE FOR
A SHAVE!

BUT HE DIDN'T GET
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HEY, VIGORO!
TRA-LA!

ENTER: TORNADO TOM!

A SHAVE!
UNDERSTAND?
NOT A
HAIRCUT!

A MOMENT LATER ---

HI, SMILEY! CAN WE
REHEARSE NOW?

SURE! WHAT BETTER
PLACE FOR A BARBER-
SHOP QUARTET?
SIX GUN HEROES

I want a horse just like the horse that carried Deear Old Daad!

It's Tornado Tom! He hates music!

Grrrr!

He hates everything!

Now you can shave me in peace.

Yes, sir!

But another customer arrives---

Barber, how soon can you give me a haircut?

As soon as I finish with this customer!

I'll snooze while I wait! Remember, I want a haircut, not a shave!
HOWDY, SMILEY! ONE HAIRCUT -- ONE SHAVE! GOT TO REMEMBER WHICH IS WHICH... OH, HULLO, SHERIFF!

EXCUSE ME FOR NOT DISMOUNTING, BUT I'M IN A POWERFUL HURRY TO PASS OUT THESE HERE WANTED POSTERS! WILL YOU HANG ONE UP SOMEWHERE?

SURE, I... OH, OH! RUN FOR YOUR LIFE!

THAT'S T-T-TORNADO HELL KILL THAT HORSE WITH HIS B-BARE HANDS!

BUT TOM IS SLEEPING, DREAMING...

YOU'RE TOO JUMPY, SMILEY! LOOK! HE DIDN'T EVEN WAKE UP!

WHHEW! THANK GOODNESS!

WELL, HANG UP THAT HANDBILL AND IF YOU SEE THE VARMINT, LET ME KNOW! SO LONG!
SIX GUN HEROES

OH, OH! DANGEROUS KILLER! HOPE HE STEERS CLEAR OF HERE!

SMILEY IS DISTRACTED. HE LATHERS TOM...

OOH, WHAT A MEAN FACE THAT CRITTER NEWTON HAS.

WANTED!
NOTCHES NEWTON

HE'D RATHER SHOOT YOU THAN LOOK AT YOU!

WANTED!
NOTCHES NEWTON

AND THE HAIRCUT CUSTOMER, TOO!

Oh, oh! NOW WHICH ONE WANTED THE SHAVE?

GO AWAY, PUP! I'VE GOT ENOUGH TROUBLE WITHOUT YOU!

Oh! Oh! WRONG GUESS! HE'S GIVING THE HAIRCUT TO TORNADO TOM!

I RECKON THIS IS THE ONE WHO WANTED THE HAIRCUT! ANYWAY, HE NEEDS ONE!
AND HE'S SHAVING THE MAN WHO WANTED THE HAIRCUT!
I HOPE NOTCHES NEWTON DOESN'T COME IN HERE!

WITHOUT WHISKERS THIS HOMBRE LOOKS FAMILIAR! COULD HE BE? -- HE IS NOTCHES NEWTON!

HEY! SHERIFF! COME A-RUNNING! I'VE GOT HIM!

WHAT?

YUH FOOL! WHAT DID YUH DO TO MY HAIR?

I'LL TEACH YOU NOT TO GIVE ME A HAIRCUT WHEN I ORDER A SHAVE, YOU BUNGLED BOOB OF A BARBER!

HAH! NOW'S MY CHANCE TO GET THE GUN!

YOU ROOLED MY DISGUISE! IT'LL BE A PLEASURE TO MAKE YOU ANOTHER NOTCH!

NO, NO! I'M TOO PURTY TO DIE!
BESIDES, LOOK OUT FOR THE MAD DOG!

MAD DOG? WHY, THE CRITTER IS FOAMING AT THE MOUTH! I’LL PLUG HIM AFORE I PLUG YOU!

NO, YOU DON’T! THAT PUP’S MY PAL!

BANG!

HAVE A SEAT!

NOW IF YUN MOVE AN INCH, I’LL SHAVE OFF YORE ADAM’S APPLE! OH, SHERIFF!

ULP!

Later...

GOOD WORK, SMILEY! YOU CAUGHT THE CULPRIT!

YUP! BUT IT WAS A CLOSE SHAVE!

As the Sheriff takes the prisoner away...

SO, LONG, SHERIFF!

LOOK! FIRST TIME I EVER SAW IT!

ME, TOO! A BARBER WHO IS ALSO HIS OWN BARBER POLE!
SODBUSTER! The name riled young Jefferson Black so he'd bust the jaw of anyone who called him that. No matter how big. For young Jeff was strong, his fists were gigantic and his muscles were as hard as the rocks on Lost Man Ridge.

Ironically, he'd developed those muscles from sodbusting. Pitchfork, plow, rake, hoe—the tools of the farmer biting into the sun-baked earth—they had done more to develop Jeff's physical strength than could have ever been accomplished at the finest gymnasium in the world.

Jeff was forking the ground angrily, stabbing it, piercing it, jabbing it—his enemy! So intent was he on his work that he didn't hear the approach of the horse. He became aware of it only when a dark shadow loomed over him.

Jeff looked up to see a tall, hawk-nosed man with leathery skin looking down at him.

"Howdy," said Jeff.

The man failed to acknowledge the greeting. Instead he asked, "This your farm?"

"Belongs to my dad. He's laid up," said Jeff.

"Say! That's a mighty nice horse you've got, Mister."

"Yup." said the man.

"And mighty nice guns," continued Jeff.

"They look nice and they work nice," said the man. "But they don't feel so nice when you're on the wrong end of them."

"Meaning?" asked Jeff.

"Meaning I've got a message for your old man. He's got until sundown to clear out. This is cattle land and we don't aim to have nesters on it. You tell your old man if he aims to stay here he is not going to stay on the land. He's going to be six feet under it!"

"But, Mister," Jeff protested. "Dad's laid up and—"

The man cut in rudely, "Save it! I've got no time to palaver with a sodbuster!"

Jeff's eyes blazed. His leg muscles became spring steel. He leaped forward and up, his knuckles hard and white. The rider slapped at his holsters, but he was too late. It was perhaps the first time in the history of the West that a fist ever outdrew a gun!

The man rocked from the saddle and his shoulder blades plunged hard against the brown earth. He was out cold. Jeff looked him over, took certain precautionary measures, then went calmly back to his forking of the soil. He had his back to the fallen rider.

"Called me a sodbuster!" growled Jeff, as he jabbed the fork into the ground, pushed it with his flat-heeled farmer boot, turned the earth, and began over again a space away. "Sodbuster! Why couldn't I be a bronc-buster? Why'd dad have to be a farmer? Why'd he have to get laid up just when I was getting ready to go off and join a ranch? Or a round-up? Or a rodeo?

"Those cowhands, they live the life! Riding, roping, shooting, traveling! Traveling, that's the ticket! They go to Texas, Oklahoma, Missouri, Kansas, all over. They see the world! They're not stuck on a measly homestead with a few measly acres and the same drudgery day after day."

As he dreamed on about the romantic life of the cowboy, Jeff's back was turned to the man he'd knocked out. He was unaware that the latter was stirring, opening his eyes, sitting up.

The man looked at the youth. The youth who had beaten him to the draw, fist against gun. There was mad hatred in his eyes. Slowly, silently he drew his Colt. He had a bead on Jeff's broad back. He squeezed the trigger.

The hammer clicked.

"Figured you'd probably want to shoot me, Mister," Jeff drawled. "That's why I took all the cartridges out of your Colt while you were unconscious. Now if you want to fight man to man, fist to fist, without guns, I'm ready. Just say the word. And the word is, sodbuster!"

The man's lips formed an oath, but he said nothing aloud. He called his horse, mounted.
and rode away. Before he had passed out of sight, he turned and shook a fist at Jeff.

"He'll be back—with friends," thought Jeff, as he turned once more to the job of sticking the fork in the ground. "Old Hawknose will be back and I reckon that'll be the end of dad and me."

As he bent automatically to his task, his heart was filled with conflicting emotions. "If I were a cowpuncher I wouldn't be involved in all this. The cowmen hate the farmers, but they wouldn't hate me because I'd be one of them. But if they try to run dad off this farm it'll be over my dead body. Dad has always been swell to me. He can't help it if he's a farmer. They can't run him off, especially when he's laid up."

After noon, Jeff hitched up the buckboard and drove to town. He entered the general store and began ordering supplies. He noticed that Old McVay, the storekeeper, seemed nervous in waiting on him. Then he noticed also that half a dozen cowmen were loitering on the other side of the store.

"One of them spoke up, "What's the matter, boy, didn't you get the message? You won't need supplies. All farmers have to be out of Lost Man's Valley by sundown."

Jeff turned slowly and eyed the men. He picked out Hawknose. He pointed. "I got the message," he said. "In fact, that man delivered it."

Hawknose snarled, "The young whelp! He's too smart for his britches! Let's all jump him, boys, and give him a lesson!"

The others looked at Hawknose curiously. He was half a head taller than the youth and was armed.

Jeff moved slowly, deliberately toward Hawknose. The man backed to the wall.

Jeff was surprised to hear himself saying, "I'm a farmer, that's true. I was born a farmer. All my life I've resented it. I wanted to be a cowman and live a real exciting life. But if this man is a prime example of a cowman, I'm glad I'm not one!"

The other cowboys waited. They expected this audacious farmer to be shot down as he stood.

Hawknose whined, "He is not armed. I can't shoot him!"

"Well," said Jeff, "if you aim to shoot my dad at sundown, you'd better shoot me now, or it won't be too healthy for you at our spread!"

Hawknose said nothing.

Jeff continued, "If you're brave enough, just say the word. You know, the word! I'll start the fight and you can say you shot me in self-defense!"

Hawknose opened his mouth. He uttered, "S-s-sodbuster..."

That's as far as he got. His breath seemed to leave him. He fled from the store. The other cowmen stood by with open mouths.

One ejaculated, "Well, I'll be a ring-tailed coyote!"

Jeff turned to the others and growled, "If any of the rest of you want to say it, I'll tell you the word. It's sodbuster!"

The cowmen were silent, their eyebrows high. The storekeeper had long since ducked behind a counter, but was now peering cautiously over it, waiting for the shooting to start.

One of the cattlemen broke the silence by unstrapping his gunbelt and dropping it to the floor. He stepped toward Jeff. He was grinning.

"Boy," he said, "you've got more nerve than a Comanche Indian! My name's Poke Masters and after you knock my head off with one of them hams you've got for fists, I hope you'll have the decency to set me up a good tombstone. You can say on it, 'He died fighting a fearless sodbuster!'"

Jeff had heard the last word. His muscles tensed, his fist drew back. Then suddenly his hands hung limp at his sides.

"Poke!" he said at last. "My name's Jeff Black. I can't hit you. Somehow, sodbuster doesn't sound like a fighting word when you say it. It sounds honorable!"

"It is," grinned Poke. "You've made it that way. If anybody tries to run you off your land, I'll be at your side, fighting to prevent it."

THE END
NO ONE JAILS CURLY BROWN WITHOUT A REASON AND GETS AWAY WITH IT—NOT EVEN ROCKY LANE! YOU'RE GOING TO SLEEP PERMANENTLY!

Undercover Marshal Rocky Lane's reputation for fairness has never been questioned! And yet, as Curly Brown proclaims, he was locked up without committing a crime! Why? For the spine-tingling answer read: Rocky Lane lends a helping hand!

At the Tornado City Jailhouse—

Hello, Sheriff Barkley! Rocky Lane told me to pass the word on to you. The three Dalton brothers were just hanged for their crimes! Thanks, Sam!

Okay, Curly Brown, now I can let yuh go. You had no right to put me behind bars in the first place.

—and if it's the last thing I do, I'm going to gun down the critter who was responsible for it, Rocky Lane!

Don't go losin' yore head, Curly! There's something yuh ought to know—
NEVERMIND. I'M FREE NOW, SO I DON'T HAVE TO LISTEN TO ANYBODY. WAIT A MINUTE!

GOODBYE. THE DURN FOOL WOULDN'T LISTEN AND I CAN'T GO AFTER HIM WITH THIS SHATTERED LEG! I'LL HAVE TO WARN ROCKY SOMEHOW.

THE CHIEF MARSHAL

SHORTLY AFTER, AT MA BROWN'S RANCH-CURRY! IT'S SURE GOOD TO SEE YOU HOME AGAIN, SON! YOU CAN THANK ROCKY LANE FOR THAT!

ARE YUH PLUMB LOCO, MOM? THE ONLY THING PER I'LL HAVE TO WARN ROCKY SOMEHOW!

THAT UNDERCOVER MARSHAL IS PUTTING ME IN THE HOOSEgow!

I AIN'T GONNA GIT EVEN WITH HIM! THE ONLY REASON I STOPPED HOME FIRST WAS TO PICK UP MY GUN! CURRY! YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND, YOU'VE GOT TO LISTEN TO ME!

I DON'T HAVE ANY TIME FOR LISTENING! SON! COME BACK! YOU'RE MAKING A TERRIBLE MISTAKE!

I'VE GOT TO WARN ROCKY! I'LL GET MY BONNET AND BE ON MY WAY!

IN HER EXCITEMENT, MA BROWN DOESN'T NOTICE THAT SHE'S KNOCKED OVER A KEROSENE LAMP---

AND AS SHE GOES UPSTAIRS TO FETCH HER BONNET---

MEANWHILE, IN THE NEARBY HILLS---

THE CHIEF MARSHAL SAID THE MOMENT THE DALTON BROTHERS WERE DEAD, WE COULD HAVE A FEW DAYS VACATION, BLACKJACK, AND I'M GOING TO START OFF BY CATCHING FORTY WINKS!
THAT'S GOING TO BE THE MOST PEACEFUL SLEEP YUH EVER TOOK, ROCKY, BECAUSE YUH'RE NEVER GOING TO WAKE UP!

AND ROCKY LISTENS ONCE MORE TO A FAMILIAR STORY—

AND NOW CURLY DOES NOTHING BUT HANG AROUND THE GAMBLING CASINO! HE'S ALREADY LOST ALL THE HARD-EARNED MONEY I SAVED AND SINCE HE KNOWS I CAN'T PAY ANY MORE OF HIS GAMBLING DEBTS I'M TERRIBLY WORRIED ABOUT WHAT HE MAY TRY TO DO TO GET SOME MORE MONEY!

DON'T WORRY, MRS. BROWN! CURLY'S REALLY A GOOD BOY AT HEART! ALL HE NEEDS IS SOMEONE TO STRAIGHTEN HIM OUT. I'LL HAVE A TALK WITH HIM!

HOLD ON, CURLY! IF YOURE SO DESPERATE FOR MONEY, WHY DON'T YUH JOIN UP WITH ME AND MY BROTHERS? WE COULD USE AN EXTRA HAND!

NO THANKS! I HEARD ABOUT THE DALTON BROTHERS, AND HIGHWAY ROBBERY ISN'T FOR ME! I NEVER STOLE A THING IN MY LIFE!

WELL, IF YUH CHANGE YORE MIND, I HAVE ROOM RIGHT ABOVE THE SALOON, AND REMEMBER, NO ONE'S BEEN ABLE TO PROVE ANYTHING AGAINST ME AND MY BROTHERS YET!

SORRY, JED! BUT I'M NOT INTERESTED!

BUT THE MAD DESIRE TO GAMBLE KEEPS BRINGING JED DALTON'S WORDS BACK TO CURLY'S MIND!

SHE'S ALREADY LOST ALL THE HARD-EARNED MONEY I SAVED AND SINCE HE KNOWS I CAN'T PAY ANY MORE OF HIS GAMBLING DEBTS I'M TERRIBLY WORRIED ABOUT WHAT HE MAY TRY TO DO TO GET SOME MORE MONEY!

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BUT THE MAD DESIRE TO GAMBLE KEEPS BRINGING JED DALTON'S WORDS BACK TO CURLY'S MIND!
THE HILLS WOULD BE THE BEST PLACE IN WHICH TO PULL A ROBBERY! I CAN HIDE BEHIND THE BRUSH AND ROB THE FIRST ONE TO RIDE BY.

Shortly after...

There goes someone now! I'll just put on my mask and get to work!

YOUR LIFE WILL BE SAFE IF YOU JUST HAND OVER ALL YOUR MONEY!

WHERE WOULD BE THE BEST PLACE IN WHICH TO PULL A ROBBERY? I CAN HIDE BEHIND THE BRUSH AND ROB THE FIRST ONE TO RIDE BY.

But as the Secret Marshal raises his hands...

He knocked the gun out of my hand. I'd better vamoose!

WHAM!

But before Curly can move...

Why, it's Rocky Lane!

Now stand up with your hands raised and take that mask off!

My only hope is to bluff my way out of this!

Curly Brown! I can't believe it!

Can't believe what, Rocky? Surely you don't think I actually turned bandit? Can't you take a joke?
I WOULDN'T PLAY THIS Kind OF JOKE AGAIN, CURLY! IT'S TOO DANGEROUS! YOU'RE LIABLE TO WIND UP WITH A BULLET BETWEEN YOUR EYES!

GOSH, ROCKY! YOU'RE RIGHT! I RECKON I NEVER THOUGHT OF THAT NOW I MIGHT AS WELL BE GETTING ALONG!

HOLD ON! I WANT TO HAVE A TALK WITH YOU! YOUR POOR MOTHER IS TERRIBLY WORRIED ABOUT YOUR GAMBLING! SHE'S AFRAID YOU'LL GET INTO DEBT AND DO SOMETHING RECKLESS TO RAIS MORE MONEY!

THERE'S NO NEED T'RH FRET ABOUT ME!

SQUELING'S FUN WITH ME NOT A HABIT! SO LONG NOW!

---AND SO I DECIDED TO JOIN UP WITH YOH AND YORE BROTHERS FOR JUST ONE JOB. JED! I NEED MONEY, PRONTO!

YOU'LL NEVER REGRET JOINING UP WITH US, CURLY! MEET ME AND MY BROTHERS AT POINT LOOKOUT IN AN HOUR! I'LL LEAVE FIRST SO NO ONE WILL CONNECT THE TWO OF US!

LATER IN JED DALTON'S ROOM AT THE SALOON---

LATER--

I WONDER WHY HE'S STOPPING HERE, IN THIS OUT OF THE WAY SPOT?

HE'S LEAVING THE SALOON NOW!

LET'S TAIL HIM, BLACK JACK!

AT THE SAME TIME--

THERE WAS SOMETHING ABOUT THE WAY THAT CURLY SAID HE WAS PLAYING A JOKE WHEN HE TRIED TO ROB ME THAT DIDN'T SOUND RIGHT! I'M GOING TO KEEP AN EYE ON HIM FOR A WHILE!
HE’S GOING BEHIND ONE OF
THE BOULDERS! LET’S GET
CLOSER, BLACK JACK!

IF I CLIMB TO THE TOP I’LL
BE ABLE TO GET A CLEAR
VIEW OF WHAT HE’S UP TO!

WE AIM TO HOLD UP THE STAGECOACH
THAT LEAVES TORNADO CITY IN A HALF
HOUR. WHEN IT REACHES THE FOOT OF
THE HILLS, ALL YUH HAVE TO DO, CURLY,
IS PRETEND TO BE A PASSENGER AND
FLAG IT DOWN! LEAVE THE REST TO US!

ALL RIGHT! BUT I’LL BE
NERVOUS, REMEMBER,
I NEVER DID ANYTHING
LIKE THIS BEFORE.

AND I AIM TO SEE
THAT YOU NEVER DO
IT AT ALL, CURLY!

AS FOR THE DALTON
BROTHERS, WE’VE BEEN
TRYING TO GET SOME
DEFINITE PROOF AGAINST
THEM SO I AIM TO LET
THEM ROB THE STAGE
COACH! CATCHING THEM IN
THE ACT WILL BE ALL THE
EVIDENCE WE NEED TO
PUT THEM BEHIND BARS!

WHERE’LL I
MEET YUH?

DON’T WORRY
ABOUT US! YUH
JUST GET STARTED
AND MAKE SURE
YUH DO YOUR PART!

ONCE YOU BREAK THE LAW
IT ISN’T EASY TO STOP!

LET’S GO, BLACK JACK! WE’VE GOT
TO CATCH CURLY AND MAKE SURE HE
DOESN’T JOIN THE DALTONS!
ACTUALLY, HE'S COMMITTED NO CRIME, SHERIFF, BUT I WANT TO KEEP HIM HERE TO MAKE SURE HE DOESN'T AS SOON AS HE SEES WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN TO THE DALTONS HE'LL REALIZE HOW STUPID HE WAS ACTING AND REFORM!

I SURE HOPE YOU'RE RIGHT, ROCKY! BUT NOW IF WE'RE GOING TO CATCH THOSE DALTONS, I RECKON WE'D BETTER START!

BANG! BANG! BANG!

SOON ENOUGH!

I WANT YOU TO KEEP THIS MAN UNDER LOCK AND KEY, SHERIFF BARKLEY, FOR RESISTING LAW AND ORDER!

THAT'S A LIE! I NEVER DID ANY SUCH THING!

QUIET! ROCKY'S WORD IS AS GOOD AS GOLD AROUND HYAR!

WE ARE STILL GOING TO ROB THAT STAGECOACH! FOLLOW ME!

WHOA, WHOA!
At that moment—
All right, Yuh Daltons! This time we've caught Yuh in the act!
Curly must have double-crossed us! Start shooting!

That shot hit your leg!
I'll take care of my leg! Yuh see if yuh can stop those varmints! And the driver is wounded, too!

Those bullets keep getting closer and closer! I'll have to do something about it.

He shot our guns away! Speed it up, horse!

You can make your steeds go as fast as you like, but—

That's not going to help any of you escape!

Rocky Lane returns to the sheriff with his captives!

The driver is dead, Rocky! We can hold the Daltons on a murder charge then, sheriff!

A few days later—
And we, the jury, find the Daltons guilty of murder!

I sentence them to be hung by the neck until dead tomorrow, at dawn!
That was exactly what the sheriff and Ma Brown tried to explain to Curly, but he wouldn't listen! And now --

It looks as if I made a mistake trying to reform you! If it's trouble you're looking for, I can give you all you want!

At that second--

When they reach the ranch house--

I don't know if I can reach her, but it's worth a try! Meanwhile, you round up everyone around to help get this fire under control before it spreads!

But Curly's aim is bad, and--

But before Curly can fire--

Help!

There she is! She must have fainted.
I can use this pail of water!

With her clothes soaked, there's less chance of them catching on fire! Now to pick her up and get out of here!

Splash!

Lock! It's Rocky Lane and he saved my ma!

Hurry! Get that bucket brigade going!

I just found out why yuh locked me up! The sheriff explained it all! I not only owe yuh my mother's life, but my future, too!

Months later—

And ever since that day, Curly gave up gambling and settled down! He's the best rancher in these hyar parts!

That's really good news! It proves that some people deserve a second chance!

See how many you can answer correctly!

Score yourself as follows:

5 correct, excellent
4 correct, good
3 correct, fair
2 correct, poor
1 correct, terrible

1. Henry Clay was President Andrew Jackson's Vice-President.
   True... False...

2. Walter Johnson set a record by pitching seven shutouts in opening day games.
   True... False...

3. A yeoman is a petty officer aboard ship.
   True... False...

4. When the Continental Marines captured the fortress of New Providence, Bahamas, in 1776, the first American flag over a foreign fortress was raised.
   True... False...

5. Nebraska was the 37th state admitted to the Union.
   True... False...

I'm glad yuh came along, Tex! We were jest having an argument 'bout what's the greatest invention in the world!

That's right! We each say different things!

Shucks, yuh can stop arguing! Thar's no doubt 'bout what the greatest invention in the world is!

Ohyeah, what is it?

Dynamite!

Aw, go'wan, dynamite isn't the greatest invention in the world!

Shore it is! Thar's nothing in the world--

---can hold a candle tuh dynamite! Ha, ha!
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