

# RANSOM



By MILES OVERHOLT

*We ain't sot over it yet. Two-faced Joe rustled a city-bred yearlin'. Big Lip Barlow tried to shoot 'im loose. And me and Doug Turner was in the middle.*

**I**T was a nice, peaceable day. Doug Turner had just wiggled hisself around the outside of two fingers of George Chichester's kill-'em-quick elixir and unrolled some words.

"A toast, gents and cow hands," he said.

"Make mine liver an' onions," busted in Pete Howard.

But Doug was busy at his toasting.

"Here's to a temperance dinner,  
With water in glasses tall,  
And coffee and tea at the end—and me  
Not there at all!"

Which made it time by the Bull-thrasher Watch Company for us to shudder down another modicum of panther milk. And yet another'n.

And it was just like Sheriff Jim

Caywood, the dang joy annihilator, to send a stuttering messenger to tell Doug and me, Hap Hazard, to dangle over to his office and bring our sensibilities with us, at that serious stage of the afternoon. Which is carrying an order too far. But we shoved our way over, Jim Caywood being a feller you pay attention to, owing to his ornery disposition and other mirthful characteristics.

The peace architect was lying all warped and twisted up on the cot in his office trying to get an injunction to stop his rheumatism from raiding his joints. He didn't get up and bow politely when company came anyhow.

"I sent for yuh two wuthless rannies because I need a coupla sober men to run a little errand for me," he said, grinning sourcastically among his rheumatics, and then saying "Ouch!" to kinda take the curse off.

“Yuh didn’t do anything of the kind,” said Doug, “because yuh know dang well no sober man would be seen with yuh.”

“I *am* kinda particular thataway,” said Caywood. “That’s why I want yuh fellers to tackle this job alone.”

“What job?” we would like to be pleasantly informed.

“Read that.” And the high sheriff passed over a yellow telegram, which Doug read aloud. Me, I never did like telegrams, anyway. They are nearly always yellow.

The message read:

Sheriff,  
Rye Patch, Nev.

Search train No. 43, Coast Flyer, for kidnaped boy, aged 8, son of C. Hamilton Levering, Montclair, N. J. Believed in hands of two gangsters, and woman known as Platinum Sadie. Boy is blond, blue eyes, and is named Thomas. Reward of five thousand dollars offered by his father for his safe return. Arrest and hold kidnapers.

HENNESY,

*Chief of Police.*

“Me, I can’t walk none,” the sheriff gritted with what few teeth that would grit. “I’m deputizin’ yuh ornery buzzards to board that dang train, due in about a hour, an’ get that kid.”

“Where at is yore deputy?” Doug wondered, doing my wondering with the same breath.

“Abe’s over to Gait,” said Jim. “Won’t be back for a coupla days.”

“Any doubt about ’em being on the train?” I asked, then.

“I reckon they’re pretty dang shore of it,” said Caywood. “Them high-class Eastern officers don’t make many mistakes. Anyways, none that gets into print.”

“An’ for this lil’ chore—” said Doug, grinning from ’ere to there.

“Yuh get half the reeward money,” said Caywood. “Ain’t that enough?”

“Uh-huh,” we said. And then we went back to George Chichester’s place to find out how many swallows it takes to make a summer, and spent that twenty-five hundred dollars six consecutive times. But the doggoned train whistled just as we had got settled down to our important research work.

So, without comment or other forms of advertising our business at the deepot, we went over and met the Coast Flyer, waving our hands to it like it was an old friend.

“Yuh get on the rear coach, Hap,” Doug said. “I’ll come through the train from the smokin’ car. If’n yuh find ’em, don’t do anything till I come along. I’ll do the same at my end.”

Which was the sense of the meeting, only that wasn’t the way it worked out. Because we didn’t have to do no such thing. For, just as the train stopped all outa breath, why, the dang kid hisself busted down the steps of a Pull and made a dash and a coupla hyphens acrost the track tor’ds the deepot.

He was running right at us, and I reached out and grabbed at his whereabouts. “Hi, that yuh, Tommy?” I inquired, personal. He answered the description on all counts.

“And not a moving picture,” the kid yelped as he dodged and went right on past me.

WELL, just then a big crooked-faced feller leaped down the steps and come a-diggin’ after the kidnaped boy, like a Sunday after a wild Saturday night.

“Stop him!” he yodeled at us. “He’s running away! Tommy, come back here!”

“Oh, yeah!” snickered Tommy, slipping outa other hands and pushing hisself tor’ds the beckoning hence.

“Grab that hombre,” ordered Doug,

turning hisself loose after the departing kid.

So I hauled off and grabbed Mister Gangster, Esq., by something loose and entangling, and brought him down to household size.

“Lemme go!” he screeched, trying to biff me on some good biffing spot. “The boy’s running away!”

“Yuh don’t mean to tell me!” I said, hanging onto him vociferously. “Outsmarted yuh, didn’t he, yuh dang kidnaper!”

“The little devil!” the gangster growled, trying to break away. “Lemme go! The train’s starting!”

Then I heard a kinda shrill whistle, which wasn’t made by the train, because trains don’t whistle through their teeth, and I knew that Doug had got his man—or boy.

But the big walloper I had been adhering myself to played a dirty trick on me. When I half-way turned my head to see where at was Doug, why, he up and kicked me in the shins, and I had to leave go of him to take care of my cussing.

Then he lathered hisself around the corner of the deepot, and the train, having nothing better to do, pulled out.

There we were.

I heard a shout and the clatter of hoofs, and there was Doug Turner and Tommy, the kidnapee, shagging outa town, while the crooked-faced gangster was throwing hunks of red-hot fatality at ’em with an automatic. Then, seeing Doug easing hisself outa range, the fightin’ kidnaper climbed aboard a hawse belonging to some waddy or other and took after him.

Which seemed to be the proper moment of time for me to act as a kinda chaser for the afternoon’s cocktail, so I went and got my mustang and joined the peerade.

But I lost the gunman somewheres, or he lost hisself, or something, and Doug wasn’t nowheres in sight.

I learned later that the gangster’s

hawse got good and tired of all that foolishness, and turned acrost the hills and run back to town, taking his passenger with him.

I RODE back to town, too, but Doug hadn’t been there or anywheres else, and Caywood didn’t know what had happened. So I told him and he said it was good work, only it was all wrong, and for me to go find Doug and snag him back.

So then I rode over to the 7L7 ranch where Doug Turner and I make a mild pretense of earning our wages, but he hadn’t been there none, either.

Then I got me an idea, and it took me by the hand and led me over tor’ds the cabin which Doug and I owned over on Flowering Mesa.

But before I reached the cabin along came Doug and Tommy.

We reined in to chin some.

“I was just coming ...” Doug started to say, but nine, ten puncture berries came along and put a row of periods after the fourth word, and we unbuttoned our broncs and slashed back up the hill to the cabin quicker’n yuh could say grace.

Because there was a posse of about twenty men making the outlook discouraging for us, and we didn’t want to stop and stage no deebate over any topics of the day. Not with bullets for gestures, we didn’t.

By the time we got inside the cabin yuh’d a thought it was raining lead pencils. And was that kidnaped kid scared!

Say, he was grinning on all parts of his face, and hollering, “Whoopee! Let’s kill ’em and scalp ’em!”

But we didn’t do no shooting. Because why? Because we recognized dang near all them fellers, and they was cow hands and citizens from Rye Patch, headed by that dang crooked-faced gangster. He had gone and got him a posse somehow and was aiming to get back that kid.

We couldn't figger out how he had persuaded them roughnecks to come along and irritate us thataway, but there they was in all their pristine beauty.

"Aw, lemme have a gun, will you, Doug," Tommy begged. "I betcha I can knock some of those guys off their horses."

"Shore, yuh could," said Doug, "only we don't really wanta kill any of 'em, if we can help it. Yuh see, Tommy, ol' hoss, most of them fellers are friends of ours."

"Friends—yeah? I didn't know friends shot at you," said the kid, wondering.

"Well, these kind do. I guess they're kinda mistook," Doug explained. "Soon's they know we're rescuin' yuh, they'll lay off'n us."

"Is that one of yore kidnapers—that crooked-faced gent which chased yuh?" I asked the lad.

"Yeah, he's a kidnaper, all right," Tommy answered, grinning about something. "That's Joe Mix. I don't like him."

"I should think not," I said.

But we didn't have much time for conversation and discussion of interesting situations, because them rannies was encircling the cabin and pretty soon now somebody was going to start making history.

But Doug Turner had some kinda idea and was unwrapping it, and the first thing we knew he was waving a white handkerchief out the window like mebbe it was a dove or an olive branch.

The shooting came to a comma, or pause, and somebody yelled:

"Whatcha want?"

"We want to talk to Ham Beall," hollered Doug. "The rest of yuh hombres stay put."

AFTER unraveling some language for a moment or two, Ham Beall, foreman for the Lazy-K, came a-riding up tor'ds the cabin.

Doug went out to meet him, after orderin' Tommy and me to stay outa sight. So

we stayed. But I heard Doug say:

"How come that kidnaper talked yuh into jumpin' us?"

"Kidnaper? Hell! Is he a kidnaper?" gasped Ham.

"Caywood deputized Hap and me to rescue this kid from three kidnapers off'n the train," Doug told him. "We done got the kid, but that gangster got away from Hap. He chased us, but we outrun him. Then he musta gone back and got yuh fellers started."

Tommy was listening clost and grinning all the while. I never saw a feller enjoy being a prisoner so much in my life.

"Yeh," Ham was talking. "The feller said yuh an' Hap had stole the kid right outa his arms. Said he was lookin' after the youngster for his folks. Said the kid was a plumb salty little rascal an' made him trouble alla time an' was jus' bein' ornery an' causin' a disturbance of some kind every time the train stopped—hoppin' off'n the train an' hidin' an' runnin' away an' raisin' hell at all four corners."

"Why wouldn't he try to get away?" demanded Doug.

"Yeah," I chimed in.

"Hell! That's a different story. Sorry, Doug. I'll go back an' grab that peckerwood an' take the boys back to town," said Ham.

A kinda wicked light come into the eyes of the kid, and a crafty sorta grin spread over his face.

"Sure, I was kidnaped," he said then. "Two-faced Joe was holding me for a big ransom."

"Yeh, we know it," I said. "But it'll be all right now."

"Yeh, but aren't we going to have any more fights?" wondered the angelic little feller.

"Yuh never can tell," I told him. "That Two-faced Joe is a bad egg, yuh can see that."

"Good!" said Tommy.

Ham Beall rode back to the waiting

posse, and we saw him flip up his gun and take Mr. Two-faced Joe into camp. He seemed to unfolding the right sorta story to the posse, because a coupla waddies clumb down and wrapped the gangster up for mailing, and then they started back to town.

IT was dusk by now and the kid was hollering for something to eat, so we put up the hawses and threwed some chuck together.

“Might as well stay here tonight,” Doug said. “Jim knows we got the kid, and he’ll slough that gunman in the clink. Then we’ll ride in early tomorrer and do us some collectin’.”

Which suited Tommy first class. His main grief was that he couldn’t kill him no possemen.

“Maybe they’ll come out in the morning, or maybe tonight, and shoot at us some more,” he said, hopeful.

“Mebbe,” grinned Doug.

“I’m glad there are no wimmen here,” said Tommy.

“Why?” I asked.

“Aw, wimmen can’t fight good,” he said.

“Yeh. This kinda party is for men only,” grinned Doug. “Yuh better hit the hay now. We got to get up early in the mornin’.”

Of course, we knew different, but we let the kid think there might be some more excitement, he seemed to be so dang fond of death and disaster, so he went right to bed—with one eye left open. So he wasn’t at all surprised—but we dang well was—when a coupla hours later about a million bullets began to scramble the cabin till you’da thought somebody wanted to wake us up or something.

“Whoever in hell is that!” barked Doug, the night being dark and full of other mysteries. Only we couldn’t go and inquire, because whatever it was out there might be contagious.

We doused the lamp and tried to peek out, but it was too dark for much success in that worthy endeavor.

Then, after another round or two had been poured into the logs, and the window had lost a coupla panes, and other misdemeanors had been foisted upon an unsuspecting public, a voice came tootering in.

“Hello, the house I’

“Hello, yoreself,” Doug answered. “What in hell’s eating on yuh guys, anyway?”

“We want that kid,” the voice answered, full of grit and grime.

“Yeah? So do we,” said Doug.

“An’ we’re gonna have him!”

“That makes it an argument,” hollered Doug. “So’re we.”

“Aw, shoot his face shut!” yelled Tommy, now plenty awake, and full of enthusiasm and blood lust.

“Who’s talkin’?” Doug wanted to know.

“None o’ yore damn’ business,” came the reply, in no gentlemanly manner. “They’s ten o’ us out hyar. We done got yore cabin surrounded on all sides. Are yuh givin’ the kid up peaceful, or do we take yuh apart?”

“What do yuh want with the kid?” Doug asked then.

“Fer the same reason yuh want him,” answered the loud speaker.

Nothing was making sense, and Doug was getting tired of the conversation, anyway, it being kinda hawse and hawse.

“Try an’ get him,” he said, slamming the door right on a coupla harsh words and squashing ’em.

Which was the signal for the dangest lot of shooting yuh ever met up with, and I could have got along entirely without it for years and years.

“Was that Two-faced Joe’s voice?” I asked the kid, and he said he didn’t think it was.

“I got it!” said Doug then. “I’ve been

trying to place that voice. It was Big Lip Barlow.”

“Not that outlaw!” I kinda gasped, being a fairly good gasper after sundown.

“Shore was. One of his men was in town, I betcha, and found out there was a reeward for the kid, and Big Lip decided to get in on the pay-off.”

Which made it a perfectly delightful evening. Oh, charming. Yuh must come over sometime and bring the kiddies.

“Well, we got to do somethin’ about them fellers,” I said. “Barlow doesn’t do much foolin’, He’s got a kinda one-track mind.”

WE filed the kid away under the bunk where the bullets wasn’t apt to strike, and then me and Doug went to work trying to see could we properly entertain our guests of the evening.

I took the window, and Doug found him a peep-hole where the chinking had fell out between the logs, and we shot at the flashes, but couldn’t tell about the casualties, because we didn’t have any dispatch messengers.

“Shucks, they won’t dare shoot too clost for fear of hittin’ the kid,” Doug said, after a while.

“They’ll know we got him parked outa danger,” I argued.

“I betcha they try to burn the cabin,” then said Doug. He would think of something disheartening thataway.

“Shore, to force us out,” I kinda choked, my throat being full of emotion and two scared tonsils.

But it was early springtime and everything was green and the cabin had a dirt roof on it. Still, if’n they could get clost enough. . . .

Which was the time for me to play Santa Claus in reverse. So I went and clumb up the fireplace chimblly in a aimful manner, and just in time, too.

For just as I had talked my head into

the notion of going over the top of the cobblestones—and I musta looked like Amos-’n-Andy—why, I caught a feller strikin’ a match and getting all set to light a bunch of papers right at the corner of the cabin.

I dropped a bullet down through the middle of his head, and, owing to the shooting in general, nobody but me and the feller know it. Then I ducked down and waited, holding onto where I was at by an eyebrow and a prayer.

But I could hear them outlaws speaking closter, and then, after Doug had shot hissself hoarse for a minute, I heard a kinda screech and figgered Doug had built him a corpse.

By this time another brave pilgrim had come to see what was holding up the bonfire, and I reached over and whanged him full of physical ailments.

After that there came a kinda lull and I started to wish we had gone into some other line of endeavor. But I musta wished too heavy, because I slipped and fell down that dang chimblly and nearly busted somethin’ of importance, barking my shins which had already been kicked silly by that Two-faced Joe.

Doug, I saw, was sitting on the floor holding onto hissself in a kinda determined manner, and then I knew that I had fell for some good purpose. He had been shot in the chest.

Tommy was all excited by now, he having stayed under the bunk mebbe eight seconds in all, and was trying to say something, and half crying, but I was too busy to pay him any attention. I went and bandaged up ol’ Doug and found he wasn’t killed any, but fulla sharp-notched pains and different sized groans.

I got him to the bunk, and the kid began to blubber, and the bullets rattled unhealthily about us, and I would have given eight dollars if it had been a nightmare instead

of a deep-rooted fact, which nobody can deny.

The chore of hoss-doctorin' Doug took half an hour or more. And then I smelled smoke. Even my nose had to take part in the evening's performance.

So I clumb back up the chimbly and yes sir, there was the fire eating its way modestly up the side of the cabin, only not an awful lot. But it would be plenty in a minute, and I began to think of the various other amusements I would rather be enjoying at the moment.

A feller was sneaking away through the shrubbery, so I whammed a coupla pellets of pugnacity at him, and he fell over on top of his face. Then I ducked down the chimbly like a jack-in-a-box and about seven million leaden hornets began to sting them cobblestones where I had just been at, and if that kept up, pretty soon our chimbly would be only a smoke hole.

So, just to make everything all merry and bright, I slipped and fell down the chimbly ag'in, skinning my shins all over once more, and adding to the gaiety of the evening.

QUICKER than yuh could say the Declaration of Independence backwards, I broke the broom stick off n the broom, drove a nail into the end of it and hoisted a bucket of water up the chimbly and tipped it over, not showing my head, because I would need it to think up other bright ideas before morning.

I could hear a kinda sizzling, and I knew I had reached the fire. The only trouble was, there wasn't any more water. Except down in the spring. And now what?

A new bullet patter began puttering about the cabin on all four sides and, by golly, I was pretty near in a panic. Quite a serious depression, at least. I tried to hurry down the chimbly and, just to make it plumb unanimous, I slipped and fell in the same spot, skinning the same pair of shins in the same

place, and hurried over to the window to make Barlow and his gang believe I was the Army of Occupation. Which I dang well was.

They was moving in closter now, and probably the fire was making swell headway, and everything was just too cute for anything.

And then, just when I was about to tell Barlow to come in and cut hisself a piece of cake and help hisself to a kidnaped boy and a coupla crippled cow hands and whatever else he saw handy, why, there was some new kinda shooting coming from another direction, and in a minute I heard Barlow yell to his men:

"Let's get goin', fellers! That's a posse!"

So they got going, and I took me my first long breath in three hours.

Then I waited for the posse to come up and hear a dang good story about a hero which done his best in the face of heavy odds and discouragement and what-not, but no posse showed up. Which is no way for a posse to act when the hero is all set to tell it all, let the chips fall where they may.

After mebbe an hour, though, there come a kinda heavy bump on the door, and I snuck over and edged it open a mite. Nobody was there. But I could see in the starlight a kinda white something tied to a rock, and I reached forth and drug it home to papa.

Then I snuck around the corner to kick away them burning embers, only when I got there they wasn't embering. My water act had gone over, and the fire was out. That's the kind of a visiting fireman I am.

There didn't seem to be anybody in sight—outlaws, posses, dead men—nobody. So I went back into the cabin and lighted the lamp so's I could see what the dang rock had on its mind.

Doug was about one-eighth conscious, and the kid was plumb asleep alongside of him, so they didn't count.

Well, sir, there was a piece of paper tied to the rock, and the paper carried this here

knowledge:

Keep the kid for two days. Great stuff! We'll cash in plenty on the kidnaping. Idea just occurred to me this afternoon. Don't worry. I'll take care of the consequences.

Joseph F. Mix.

The son of a gun! Trying some new kinda game! He thought he would still horn in on that reeward money, I figgered. But how'd he get away from the posse? Gosh! I was too dang tired and sleepy to answer that one. So I blew out the light and fell over on the floor, skinning my shins a trifle on Doug's gun which had fell there, but I was so used to it by that time that I probably couldn't have gone to sleep if I hadn't skun 'em.

It wouldn't have made any difference if the defenders of Shanghai had moved in on us. I couldn't have done anything about it for the next four, five hours.

TOMMY, the kidnaped kid, woke me up too soon. He said he was going out and kill a coupla men for breakfast, and did I want to come along and see how slick he done it.

So I got up and bathed Doug's wound and bandaged it ag'in, and then wrangled some breakfast.

Doug was kinda deilirous and in no shape to travel, and I done me a good deal of pondering for a while, not reaching any kinda sensible conclusion, and wishing Caywood would tend to his own dang business and let me do the serious drinking. Anyway, I was tuckered out, what with one thing and another and doing night chores, and I had me a headache that was big enough to go to school.

Tommy had Doug's pistol out somewheres and was hunting him a man to shoot, so I had to go herd him back to camp, and by the time all this had took place it was afternoon.

But, shucks, Doug had to have a doctor. And I didn't dast leave him by hisself. And I couldn't leave the kid to watch him for fear Barlow, or Two-faced Joe, or somebody would come and get him. And I couldn't take him along and leave Doug alone. . . .

Figger that one out, Mr. Einstein.

I kept me an eye on the trails, hoping some cow hand or somebody not in the kidnaping industry for the moment would come along so's I could send word to Doc Gentry to come and take care of Doug, but everybody in the world seemed to be shunning our place like mebbe it was a viper.

I looked all around the outside of the cabin, but the outlaws had carried their dead men away, and me and Tommy, we didn't have a speck of fun scalping 'em.

So the best I could do was to work on Doug all I could and hope somebody'd come out and rescue us.

Doug didn't seem to be getting any worse, and his fever had kinda gone down, so we stayed over another night. Tommy wanted to stay, anyway, hoping, he said, that a band of blood-thirsty Injuns would attack us, by way of variety, so he could use Doug's gun on 'em and mebbe accumulate him a few scalps. Or somethin' equally preecarious.

After supper, we barred the door and blew out the light so's not to attract no more trouble than could reasonably be expected, and I slept me a swell night full of slumber.

Doug was feeling better next morning, and managed to eat a little, but Tommy was getting restless.

"Shucks, this is no fun," he said, kinda disgusted-like. "Can't we go rob a bank, or something?"

"I was just thinkin' of that," I told him. "If'n Doug's able to travel after a while, mebbe we'll ride over to town and see if we can cut 'er."

Well, that tickled our little visitor, and he strapped on Doug's gun and got all set.

Only Doug wasn't any too able to ride, and we just sat around for a while, taking ideas apart and putting 'em together.

And then along about noon we got us a visitor. Abe Reynard, Caywood's deputy, had got back from Gait and Jim had sent him right over to our cabin. Abe held out a envelope.

"Jim said to give yuh this," said Abe, eying the kid.

It was a telegram, which read:

Sheriff, Rye Patch, Nev.

Disregard order to search Coast Flyer for kidnaped boy. He was only lost and has been returned to his parents.

HENNESSY,

Chief of Police.

And did I turn red! Embarrassed no end, that's what.

"Then, who is this tough hombre?" I asked, pointing to Tommy with a trembling finger.

"Gosh, I dunno," said Abe. "Mistake somewheres."

"Mistake! Hell, it's a holocaust!" I quavered, watching my twelve hundred and fifty dollars go slithering away on the wings of Despair.

"Looky here," I said to Tommy. "I thought yuh said yuh was kidnaped!"

"Aw, can't you take a joke?" he wanted to know, grinning and twirling Doug's six gun, which, I had seen to it, was empty.

"Who the heck are yuh?" I demanded then.

"Who, me?" grinned the kid. "I told yuh: Little Tommy Tucker. The kid that sung for his supper. You must have read about me in a book."

Which is all the sense I could get outa him.

"I'll go send Doc Gentry over to see

Doug," said Abe, then, getting up.

"What became of Caywood's prisoner, the feller which was with the kid?" I asked Abe, but he didn't know.

"Caywood didn't say a dang thing only to hustle over hyar with that tele-graft," he said.

TALK about yore crossword puzzles. I didn't have enough cross words to answer it, lemme tell yuh. But Two-faced Joe came with Doc Gentry later in the afternoon, and that helped some. In fact, it helped considerable.

"Sorry you were hurt," he said to Doug. "But it makes it all the better for me, really."

"Yeah? Well, I'm glad it was a windfall for somebody," said Doug.

"Was yuh the posse which scared them outlaws away night before last?" I asked Joe, and he answered:

"Were those outlaws? Fine! Better than ever! Yes, I was alone. Couldn't figger out who was shooting at you, but I don't know much about this country. And I wanted to leave you that note."

"Yuh shore cash in on other people's troubles," grinned Doug Turner, my partner in kidnaping and other criminal pursuits. At which Two-faced Joe only grinned, and turned to the kid. "Tommy, ol' kid, you started something, didn't you?"

"Yeah! And I'll start something else if you get funny with me," he answered, pulling Doug's gun. "Whatcha got to say about it? Huh?"

Mix grinned some more. "We're taking the train this evening," he said. "And I'm going to tie you to the seat in the car and keep you hog-tied all the way home."

"You and who else?" wondered Tommy.

So, in spite of the wild-eyed kid's protests, Tommy was put aboard Joe's pony in front, and they got all set to leave us.

“Much obliged, boys,” said Two-faced Joe. “You’ll be hearing from me. I had a talk with the sheriff. He understands everything.”

And we didn’t know whether that was a threat or a warning. But we was glad to get out of it as easy as we did—if we was out of it—for we mighta got from seven hundred years to life for that kinda crime.

We didn’t go to see Caywood. We didn’t want our feelings hurt. Besides, old man Wortham, our boss at the 7L7 made us stay on the ranch when we got there that night.

And it was more’n a week later, when I went to town after the mail, before we learned who Tommy was. A letter addressed to Doug and me explained it. The letter read:

GENTLEMEN:

I enclose company check for \$2500, the amount you would have received had you really rescued that kidnaped boy, if he had been kidnaped. The publicity Tommy Cooley received through your accidental kidnaping was worth far more than that to the Superfine Film Company. Tommy’s next picture—is to be entitled: “Kidnaped.” I hope that you get to see it.

Very truly,

JOSEPH F. Mix,

Director of Publicity.