

**THE SOUTHWESTERNER**  
**A NOVEL OF NEW MEXICO, 1829-1847**

---

**WILLIAM HARRISON**

THE SOUTHWESTERNER

A Novel of New Mexico, 1829-1847

by

William Harrison

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Division

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement

For the Degree of Master of Arts

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

THE MUNICIPAL UNIVERSITY OF WICHITA

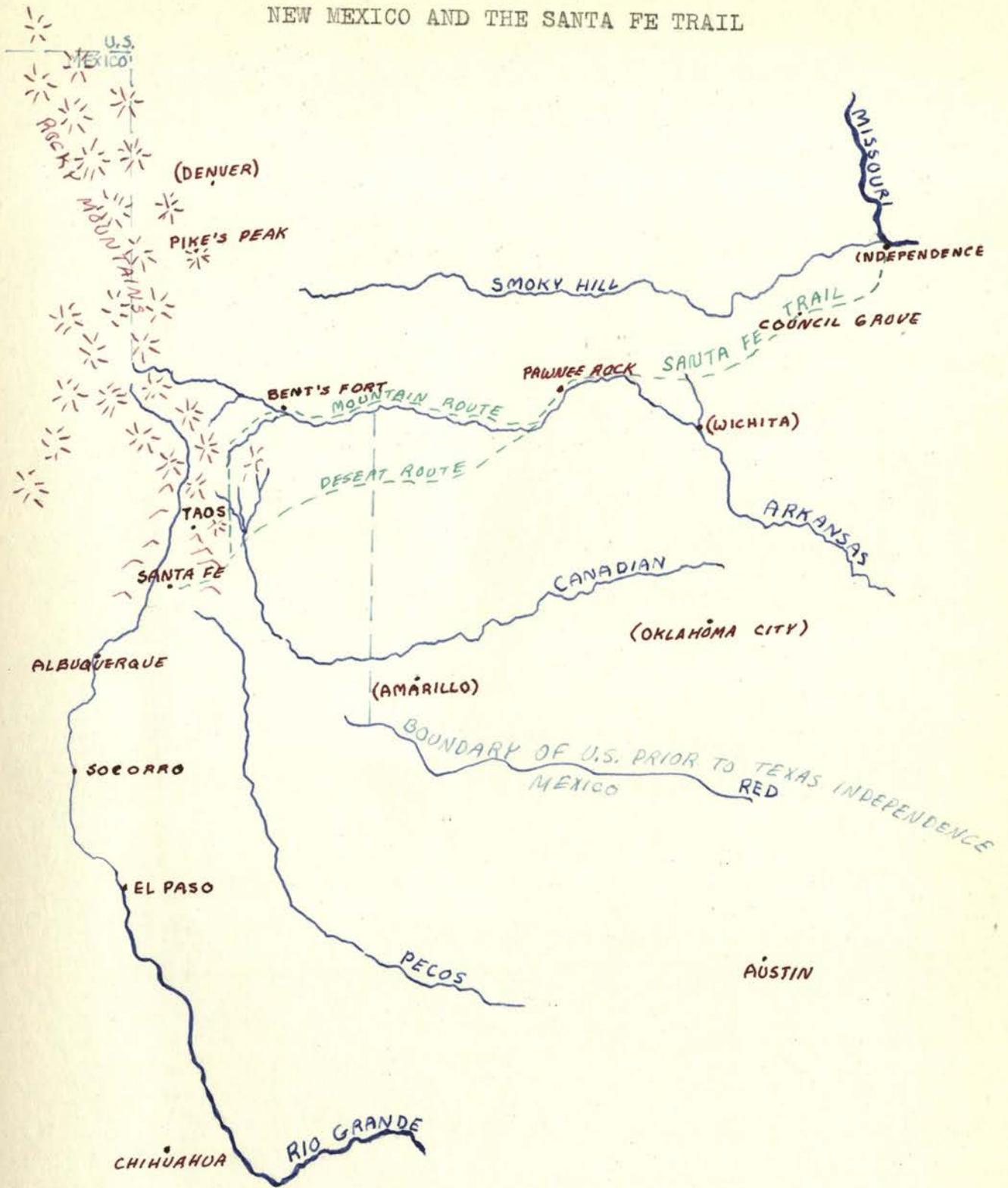
WICHITA, KANSAS

MAY, 1954

DR128

MAY 6 1954

# NEW MEXICO AND THE SANTA FE TRAIL



## CHAPTER ONE

Don Antonio had been awake for the better part of an hour. He lay on his back, cradling his head in his arms, and watched the sky come slowly afire. Behind him, two of the peones huddled together to hold all the warmth they could find. Deer had been coming down to drink at the stream for some time, and in the east a hawk had spied its breakfast and was making a graceful sweep to earth.

Don Antonio got up and kicked life into his legs before walking to the stream. He sipped the water slowly, lolling it in his mouth until it was warm enough to swallow. He looked back over his shoulder at the sleeping men and watched Cristo's huge stomach rise and fall in supreme contentment. It was Cristo who had claimed an ear so delicate that sentries for the night were unnecessary.

At least in part Cristo had not been wrong. There was little danger at night when the Indian feared the dark and the demons it held more than the threat of invasion. Had the Arapahoe been tracking them, Don Antonio knew, a surprise attack was most likely to come during the first moments of the new day. He had picked his camp with an eye to its seclusion. Although he occupied a defensible position as well, with access to water and game, he could not hope to ward off an attack indefinitely or fight his way back to Taos. His friends had been almost hysterical in their warnings of the dangers that lay in the mountains.

But so far he had seen nothing of the Indian. There was no reason to believe that the Arapahoe was tracking him now.

Don Antonio rolled a cigarette and poked in the heap of ashes until he came up with a live coal. He sat down on a boulder and watched the water race over the rocks, down into the valley where it wound across the plain as the beginning of a great river.

All land west of the river back to the peaks on the north, almost as far as he could see, was a grant from the King of Spain to his father's father. Neither his father nor his grandfather had visited the grant during their lifetimes, although both of them had consumed many hours during long winter evenings in discussing the journey they would take when summer came. When these conversations began their natural turn to the Arapahoe, both men had sworn in the names of the Virgin and the King that they feared nothing on earth. But in the summer their discussions shifted to crops and sheep and politics. The parchment which gave them title to the land was stored in a chest with other family treasures.

Don Antonio was twenty when he first asked his father's permission to visit the grant, and afterward he occasionally made the request, only to have it brushed aside, whether he stood before his father as a boy of twenty or a man of thirty-five. The grant had finally come into Don Antonio's

possession in 1827. In respect to his father's memory, he had waited slightly over a year to see with his own eyes the empire which for so long had been held without profit by the Molano family.

Holding the parchment on his knees, Don Antonio looked out over the country before him and picked out the landmarks that prescribed the boundaries of the grant. In the future he could see sheep and cattle grazing on the slopes, and the rich yield of corn and wheat in the valley which could nurture a variety of new crops as well. Behind him, he could hear axes biting into the endless forest and the miner's pick digging deep into the land of hidden wealth. Here were land and resources enough to make twenty men richer than the richest man in Santa Fe. And the land on which he stood and nearly all of what he could see was his. Molano was eager to rouse the men for the trip into the valley, but the pride within him of seeing it whole from one point was too great to be shared for the moment. It was too early, too wonderful to be shared with Cristo and the peons who would look over his shoulder and see nothing but wilderness and an Arapahoe crouched in every shadow.

As a boy, Molano had liked to believe that the King had bestowed the grant on his family for a deed of valor to the Empire. He had tried to picture his grandfather on a horse, swinging a heavy sword of the kind he had seen

officers carry, slashing down rebellious Indians by the hundreds until New Spain was free to breathe in honor and safety. Yet the picture was never too clear. His grandfather was a clumsy rider who tired even on the shortest rides, and always at the first sign of Indian unrest he would rush his family into the safety of the hills nearby. In time Don Antonio had come to know what it meant to be a rico, to be so rich that a man by a loan to a fading Empire could make the King himself bow before him and hand over a part of his kingdom. Once the lesson was learned, Don Antonio never forgot it. The richest man among his fellows was always the bravest, the wisest, the most pious, the most desirable in the eyes of a woman. Although Don Antonio by his forty-second year was not the richest man in Santa Fe, he bowed to no more than three men, and the governor was one of them.

His journey had been designed solely to ease his curiosity. Not for a moment had he dreamed of surveying the land one summer so he could drive sheep to it the next. But now that he had seen its magnificence, he bitterly regretted having to return home and put all thought of its conquest out of his mind. Yet the wealth before him and the parchment with its legal phrases and royal signature meant nothing so long as the Arapahoe controlled the grant. He was a landlord locked out by a non-paying tenant, under the threat of death if he ever tried to collect that which

by birth was rightfully his. It would take twenty years or more to subdue the Arapahoe, and then perhaps it would take men like the americanos who were greedy and foolish enough to risk their lives. In twenty years he would be too old to undertake a task fashioned for the strongest of young men. He tried to think of a son among the ricos who could endure hardship and outwit and outlast the Arapahoe. But there was not such a young man in Santa Fe. They were all soft and spoiled by years of luxury and indolence. He had wished too many years for a son of his own to feel that pain any longer. But had he had a son, he promised himself, the boy would have been trained from the moment of his birth for his destiny.

A movement just beyond the river caught his attention. A thread of smoke from an aspen grove was rising straight up into a still, cloudless sky. It was nothing more alarming than a trapper preparing breakfast, he was sure, for the country was often traveled by trappers and other americanos who seldom had to face the savagery which the Arapahoe normally reserved for the Mexican. But he had to be ready to meet any new situation. He reached to his feet and picked up several stones and flung them at his men.

They got up quickly.

Cristo was especially embarrassed to find Molano already up and waiting. When his most elaborate apology was ignored by the Don, Cristo immediately countered with the

suspicion that he had been drugged by the Arapahoe. The peons stopped to listen to his explanation and looked wide-eyed at one another. His recitation gained such momentum that Don Antonio had to order him to be still.

The silence was short-lived. No sooner had he quieted his mayordomo than the aspen grove filled with the shrieking of the Arapahoe. The peons fumbled with the unfamiliar rifles, and one man, his arms and legs almost shaking out of control, had to be pushed into his position by Cristo.

Don Antonio watched the column of smoke grow. Between the trees and the river he could see the Arapahoe rush into the grove from the concealment along the brush of the river bank. A heavy burst of flame shot above the trees and hung there until its fuel was exhausted.

Then the Arapahoe came out of the grove and crossed the stream, heading out at leisure away from where Molano stood looking down at him.

2

The peones started to dig into the soft earth away from the trees.

"Keep your digging within the grove," Don Antonio instructed them. "Someday this land will be under cultivation."

Cristo kneeled at the side of the man and shook his head. "There is nothing to identify him, senor."

The man had been struck down at the spot where he had been chopping firewood, by an arrow Don Antonio imagined had been fired as a signal to initiate the attack. But the Arapahoe had made sure, scalping and mutilating him beyond human recognition.

"He was very fortunate," Cristo said, pointing to the charred remains of the woman who lay on the floor of the gutted cabin. "He did not have to live to see her die."

Molano missed the point of sentiment. He was filled with admiration for a man who would come into Arapahoe country with a woman and build a home and settle down to the business of conquering the land. His livelihood could have been none too prosperous. He had neither flocks nor land under cultivation, except for a small vegetable garden. His living had had to come from hunting, which could have provided no more than meat for his table and skins for his back. Perhaps the man had been marking time, Don Antonio thought, pacifying the Arapahoe's dread of settlement until he could win favor and bring up a flock of sheep from Taos. The man had been both a fool and brave beyond description, but Don Antonio thought he could have admired him, even if he had squatted on his land across the river.

While the peons under Cristo's direction dug a double grave behind the one remaining wall of the cabin, Don Antonio inspected the grove. He had watched the Arapahoe lead away the man's horse and two burros. Only a crude

chest was left behind. He found it empty and cast it aside. Against the lower limbs of a pine, however, he found a wad of discarded papers. But before he could unfold them, Cristo came running to him, out of breath and shouting.

"Come quickly!" he said. "I have found something."

Don Antonio followed him around the wall. The peons had stopped digging. They were on their knees, jabbering excitedly and pointing to the ground. Molano pushed his way into the center.

"It's a miracle," Cristo said. "He should be dead."

Don Antonio guessed the boy's age to be near two years. He lay where he had been found, unconscious, a few feet from the grave. Molano put his ear to the soft, warm body and found the heartbeat strong. He could not understand how the child had survived. Doubtless the Arapahoe had at first decided to take the boy, and discarding this idea, turned and hurled him toward the rock chimney. Only a limb of the aspen could have saved him, though it cut his face badly and bruised the upper part of his body.

"Get water and clean his cuts thoroughly," Molano said to Cristo. Then turning to the peons he raised his voice. "If we stay long enough for the Indians to come back, it will be your own grave you dig."

The peons dug into the soft loam with their fingers, scooping the earth between their legs with such speed that

the grave soon met his specifications.

In a chivalric gesture, the peons began to lower the woman first."

"What are we going to wrap them with?" Cristo asked, looking up from the boy.

"They have nothing," Molano replied. "The fire took what the Indians discarded."

"They can be wrapped in my serape." Cristo started for his horse.

Don Antonio ordered him to come back. "If you give up your serape, how will you keep warm tonite?"

Cristo shrugged his shoulders. "I shall be warm enough, senor. I can stand the cold of the mountains better than most men."

"You can catch fever and die if you please, but some other time. You cannot be spared now."

Cristo pinched a roll of fat around his middle. "I could live all winter in the mountains with nothing else."

Don Antonio motioned the peons to continue with their work.

The grave was packed level with the ground before the boy opened his eyes. Don Antonio knew that all the fear he had known in a lifetime was no match for what he saw in the eyes of the child. His fingers went over the boy's limbs without finding a fracture or a spot sore enough to draw the child's attention away from his fright.

"Had I been born with such a face," Cristo said, "I would not have to wake up and look at the same woman every morning." Cristo thought it very sad that the child was too frightened to cry. "Pobrecita," he said, stroking the child's head, "poor little thing, what is to become of you?"

"He is alive," said a peon. "That is enough to be thankful for."

Another peon, a man who never smiled, shook his head.

"If no one wants him, he can come to live with Pepa and me," Cristo said to Don Antonio. "He can replace our Ana and Miguel."

"But you have eight children living," said Don Antonio, dumfounded. "Surely it would be better if you tried to dispose of one or two."

Cristo looked down at the boy. "If you have no other plans for him, we shall take him, senor."

Don Antonio turned away. He went down to the river, stopping now and then to dig his fingers into the soil and test its fertility.

"The boy will wish someday that he had burned with his mother," the sour peon said. "He will curse his father for being a light sleeper."

"You are a fool, Guido," Cristo snapped back at him. "Among all the sickness and death and the times when there is no hope at all, maybe this boy would like to live--to

eat Pepa's tacos or dance with a pretty senorita and make love to her or watch the moon on a night in the spring while he tends his flocks. There is time enough to die."

Don Antonio returned to them mounted on his horse.

"It would be safer if he rode at first with me. I can give him the gentlest ride."

Reluctantly, Cristo handed the child up to him.

Molano felt his inexperience keenly. He made it a practice in life never to undertake a thing unless he could excell at it. Now his face grew hot when he failed to make what he thought to be the perfect figure of a man holding a child. To make him appear even more foolish in the eyes of his men, the boy burst out with a loud wail. He reasoned with the child to be quiet, but when he saw the peons smile at this, he returned the boy to Cristo.

The child did not cease to cry, but his wails took on a more comforted tone when he was pressed up against Cristo. Cristo wiped away the tears and made the same comical gestures and sweet promises that always soothed his ninos at home, but the tears flowed without stopping against his cheek.

Soon he was crying with the boy.

"I cannot help it, senor," he said apologetically.

"I feel very sorry for him."

There were offers from the peons every hour or so to share in the caring for the child on the homeward journey.

"He is happy where he is," Cristo would say. Then looking at Don Antonio he would add, "If only he ate better."

The Don had forbidden a rifle to be fired in Arapahoe country, except by his order, and his stand was not compromised when Cristo begged to shoot fresh meat. He had sacrificed precious time already in waiting for Cristo to gain success with his bow.

"A little broth will make him strong," Cristo kept repeating. "The rough stuff we eat is no good for his little stomach."

Molano thought it unnecessary to remind Cristo again that five lives could not be endangered for the sake of one. But Cristo kept to the point, making sure he talked loud enough for the Don to hear. Frequently he used Biblical examples of charity and talked of the saints who had given their lives for the sake of little children.

Finally, on the third day, Molano ordered camp to be made early. He took his rifle and walked up the slope. In an hour he was back with a young deer.

For the first time the child smiled.

"He's a handsome boy," Cristo said proudly. "With a smile like that he will win every heart in Santa Fe. He will have a happy life. All the women will love him."

From where he sat a short distance removed from Cristo, puffing thoughtfully on a corn-husk cigarette, Don Antonio

had to give his reluctant agreement. The child was handsome. No woman capable of love would be able to resist the urge to take the boy up in her arms and beg to keep him. And the thought bothered him. The Dona Adela Molano was very much capable of love.

with Don Tomas... the leadership of the... alone, as a man, if...

Antonio... approval... minded... fingers... He had unwittingly... appearing... Don Tomas...

"Your... confidence... Antonio laughed... care if he didn't believe in himself."

Antonio breathed... and could not... before he could... again.

She was amused with his... dull afternoon, she continued to watch him...

## CHAPTER TWO

The Dona Adela was fourteen when the course of business brought Don Ramon Molano and his son Antonio to her house.

As a young man of twenty-two just beginning to feel his importance, Antonio had been eager to sit in council with Don Tomas Canales and his father to discuss the coming sheep drive to Chihuahua. Don Ramon had promised him the leadership of the drive and a chance to visit Chihuahua alone, as a man, if Don Tomas agreed.

Antonio squirmed miserably at the harsh look of disapproval cast by his father when he answered an absent-minded "si" to a question from Don Tomas. Antonio ran his fingers nervously over the rim of the hammered-silver mug. He had unwittingly committed the unpardonable blunder of appearing conceitful. Only the matchless good manners of Don Tomas saved him from further disgrace.

"Your son has confidence in himself, Don Ramon," Canales laughed. "I could never entrust my flocks to his care if he didn't believe in himself."

Antonio breathed freer when he saw his father pacified and vowed not to risk his displeasure another time. But before he could check himself, he was looking at Adela again.

She was amused with his discomfort, and to enliven a dull afternoon, she continued to watch him, smiling coquet-

tishly when their eyes would meet. She found him good to look at, with a strong face and a tall, well-proportioned body. Of all the young men who had come to chocolate in the afternoons, Adela believed Antonio to be the handsomest. She had fallen in love with all of them, watching with delight when her beauty led them into the embarrassment Antonio was painfully experiencing. But by the time Don Ramon and his son rose to leave, she wished that only Antonio among all the young men would come to chocolate in the future. When the Molanos had arrived she gave no more thought than her brothers to the welcoming embrace. But on their leaving she waited impatiently for her turn to hold and be held a moment by the blushing Antonio.

Antonio, facing the grim silence of his father as they rode home, thought of nothing but Adela. Even the winning of Don Tomas' approval and the prospects of Chihuahua's pleasures seemed small and insignificant beside her.

Further business affairs with Don Tomas brought him back to the Canales home. Adela would run across the sala and embrace him with more enthusiasm than the custom required. Once when Don Tomas was late in appearing, Antonio was able to speak with Adela and her mother. Adela's good manners and gentle laughter completed his captivation. She loved to talk on a variety of subjects, some of them dull to Antonio, but nonetheless he pretended to understand all she said. In a few years he knew she would be the most

gracious woman in Santa Fe, a treasure to be coveted by any man. And during his visits there were other young men, some from families as rich as his. They talked with her and her mother and sometimes sang silly verses of their own making to the music of a guitar, while he had to talk of sheep with Don Tomas.

Antonio waited two painful weeks, time enough to let his father forget Adela's beauty, before approaching him.

"Oh, yes--the pretty one," his father said. "I imagine she has many suitors."

Antonio was distressed to have his father mention Adela. It was an unfavorable omen coming from a man who valued property above all else.

"For a child she is attractive--and a child is all she is," Antonio said. "Someday she might develop into a sensible woman." It was the answer he thought his father wanted.

"What you say is absolutely true, my son. I saw her shameful flirtations."

Antonio had always known that his wife would be chosen for him, without his opinion being sought. His father would choose with care a woman of the gente fina. In addition to coming from the fine people, she would have to be rich, attractive enough to escape ridicule, and above all else, her blood would have to be free from Indian ancestry to breed an heir with the pure Molano strain. He

was in agreement with all of these points. Had a single ancestor of Adela's mixed her blood, he would have dropped his suit immediately. But Adela was a candidate who met all of the qualifications that Don Ramon would demand.

"You are too much in a hurry, Antonio. Be thankful your father has not pushed you into marriage and enjoy yourself. There is a lot you have to get out of your system. Once you saddle yourself with a bride, my son, time hangs heavy on your hands."

Antonio thought the remark wholly out of keeping with his father's practice of matrimony. Don Ramon had not been especially careful to keep secret his many affairs, ranging from the wives of the most noted men to the Indian slaves he met sometimes in the garden at night.

"I am not anxious to lose my freedom, senor, but I have a very great responsibility as your heir," Antonio said, leaning forward to catch his father's reaction.

"Many times you have said that the blood of the Canales is pure. Pure Spanish families grow rarer every day, senor. And there might be some advantage in joining together two of the largest herds in New Mexico. In the future, if politics continue to grow more turbulent, Don Tomas is in an excellent position, should we ever be denied access to free water."

Don Ramon was impressed but again he brought up the youthfulness of Adela.

"Don Tomas evidently does not think her too young for marriage. Each time I have been there other men have come to see her."

Don Ramon clapped his hands together in annoyance. "Yes, you are right, Antonio. It would definitely be to our advantage, if only she were older."

"The contract could be made now, senor, even if you do not plan an immediate marriage. She could be sent by Don Tomas to a convent and there she could learn so she could teach your grandsons in the arts of writing and reading so they could be leaders among men as you have been. Don Tomas will see the advantage to the match. He will comply with such a condition. And when you think she is old enough, she can be sent for."

The Canales house was in great excitement. Although no mention of it had been made to her, Adela knew a marriage letter had come. Her older male relations had gathered to confer with Don Tomas, and from their smiles and good cheer Adela knew the match had been confirmed. She was in constant prayer, vowing to be an eternal servant to the Virgin and a loving and honorable wife to her husband--if only he were Antonio. And when her father gave her a sweet roll to soften her for the news that someday she would become the bride of Don Ramon's son, Adela wept for joy.

Antonio made it his first business in Chihuahua to buy

an Indian girl for Adela.

The Apache traders complained bitterly of a poor season, and in accordance with demand, the bidding went high. Two young ricos who had accompanied Antonio to buy slaves for their fiances entered into a lively competition with him for a fair skinned Navajo.

"The other women are just as strong and serviceable," said one of the ricos, winking at him. "But it is a long trip back to Santa Fe."

Antonio was forced to pay the price of a good horse for the Navajo. He did not look forward to an accounting with Don Ramon for the extravagance.

The first night out of Chihuahua their camp was made at a spring surrounded by tall cottonwoods. The evening was cool. There was just enough of a breeze to move the glossy leaves overhead. The men smoked and drank the mellow El Paso brandy and watched the Indian women bathe naked by moonlight.

His companions were so enthusiastic in their praise of Adela's girl that Antonio gave no more thought to his father's avarice.

The Navajo rose up between the laughing women and waved to him. She was a slender, full bosomed girl--no older than Adela, he imagined. She smiled when he waved back to her. After the Apache, a lifetime in the service of a Mexican family did not seem unbearable to her.

When his friends took away their slaves for the night, she came to sit cross-legged next to him, drying her hair against the warmth of the fire. When giggles rose from the brush behind them, the Navajo smiled.

Antonio motioned her to the blanket he had prepared for her. The girl seemed puzzled and disappointed, he thought. Walking slowly away, she looked back over her shoulder at him. He lay down and wrapped his blanket around him and gave his thoughts over to Adela.

He found it more difficult to think of Adela on the second night out of Chihuahua. On the third night he did not think of her at all.

## 2

In the weeks following their marriage, however, Antonio did not think he could ever forget Adela again. Don Ramon excused him from all his duties and every moment was spent with her.

Adela more than met the requirements Antonio expected of a wife. He was loved and coddled with the affection of a dozen mothers. No whim of his was too insignificant to be ignored. When Don Ramon fumed because of some mistake, she could calm him as well as restore Antonio's dreams of increasing the Molano flocks.

Don Ramon for his part was immensely pleased with the maturity she had developed at sixteen. When visitors came, she was conducted into the sala for an exhibition of her

charm. The grandees were shocked at first to hear Don Ramon ask her opinion of the affairs of government, but later they laughed without restraint at her wit and directed questions of their own to her. Antonio's views were ignored by the visitors. He sat back proudly, watching Adela hold their attention.

From Spain Don Ramon imported a mirror larger than any in New Mexico. "How is a woman to be beautiful to others if she isn't aware of the fact herself?" he asked Antonio. On the day the americanos and their wagons came to town, Don Ramon bought most of their silks and many of their trinkets for Adela.

"With his girl's sharp wits and my son's practical knowledge of affairs," Don Ramon boasted, "look for my grandsons to sit at the head of every council in New Mexico."

But there had been no grandchildren. By the time of his death Don Ramon had come to suspect that Adela was not all he had imagined. Antonio, however, could not wholeheartedly agree. For no matter how much he wished to believe it, the truth remained that none of his mistresses had ever been inconvenienced because of his visits. It was a curse. The hand of God mocking him for his foolishness.

From a detached viewpoint, Don Antonio knew she was still a desirable woman, more attractive in many respects

than the mistresses he had known. Among women her age, Adela had escaped the doubling and trebling of chins, the sagging breasts that bended shoulders, and the eternal swelling of their stomachs that made them old and ugly before they were thirty.

Don Antonio could not recall when he first realized that he could no longer tolerate his wife's company. His father had chided him for his jealousy of Adela's wit and learning. Had it not been his father, Antonio would have argued that Adela was incapable of managing the hacienda for even a day, let alone the complete assumption of his duties. Had the man persisted in the point, Antonio would have killed him.

In the beginning of their estrangement he ordered the portero to keep a careful accounting of the coming and going of visitors. But when it became obvious that the precaution against his wife's chastity was unnecessary, he fell into long periods of despondency. She was always the same, devoted, loyal, unchanging in her affections and unquestioning in his. If only she had been more human, had she taken a lover or developed a nasty temper or grown into a ball of fat, there would have been something for him to forgive and he could love and possess her again.

The sole victory he experienced came at the time of the Mexican revolt against Spain. By an enormous bribe demanded by the authorities he was able to play down his

loyalist sympathies and escape the confiscation of his lands. Don Tomas Canales, however, in his panic to prove his ties with the new regime, denounced his purity and claimed a common ancestor of Indian blood with a Mexican general. Adela was a half-breed, the daughter of a liar. With this good news Don Antonio did not feel his financial loss quite so greatly.

God was good in other ways. Don Antonio's flocks grew to a million and a half and more. Lands he acquired along the creek bottom as a part of Adela's dowry brought forth abundant crops. Every investment proved to be sound and multiplied his wealth. His advice was sought on governmental matters and he sat in the highest lay councils of the Church. When the Indians rose up to threaten the community, Santa Fe looked to Don Antonio for leadership.

The number of his enemies grew with his name. Conservative ricos sipped their aguardiente and wondered if it were wise to raise a radical to such prominence. They were sure that Molano had an insatiable greed for money and power, and brought forth damning evidence against him.

Was he not preparing for a grab of power, by pitting class against class? Out of his own funds Don Antonio paid the fees of baptism, marriage and burial for his peons. The blessings of Heaven! On the day he would summon them, every peon in the land would fall in behind him, for they knew no servant of his was ever cut loose when

he became too old or too ill to be of service. It was madness, these ricos claimed. To follow his example would bankrupt them. And had not Don Antonio Molano said that the government was effeminate? Many of them had heard him predict that the future lay in a new government which would adopt a virile policy toward the Indian. It was true, they admitted, the Indian was a scourge to every land owner, but behind Don Antonio's desire to see the savages exterminated was his extensive land holdings to the north. If the Indian could be driven away, Don Antonio would become the richest man in the New World.

They sipped their aguardiente and commended him to the authorities as a man who bore watching. When Don Antonio left Santa Fe on his journey to the grant, more than one of these ricos hoped he would find his match in the Arapahoe.

## 3

After evening prayers, Maria came in quietly and lighted the tapers without being asked, in itself a distressing sign, the Dona Adela thought. The sullen Navajo would not have come soon, unless it was her way of showing sorrow for her newly-widowed mistress.

Spreading rapidly over Santa Fe was the rumor from Taos that trappers coming in from Arapahoe country had seen nothing of Don Antonio. The Dona's friends had hurried to her side to assure her that she would see her husband again-- in Heaven. The priest had been more comforting, with his

belief that Antonio had taken the precaution of evading the established mountain trails.

The long hall was quiet and the tapers flickering to life penetrated little of its darkness. Adela tried to begin a conversation with Maria, but the Navajo folded her hands across her puffy, overgrown stomach and said nothing. She seemed angered at the delay. In the twenty years Maria had been in her service, Adela had given the Navajo special gifts and favors but still she had not won her confidence. On the rare times when Maria would look directly at her, Adela could not misread the hatred she saw in her eyes. She dismissed Maria and finished lighting the candles herself.

For a week preparations had been made for the Don's homecoming. Adela had shut her ears to the rumors and made special plans. Flowers were cut daily to brighten his table in the event he should arrive during the night. The sala was filled with the odor of roses and lilies and tuberose. The table would hold a feast such as the Don had never seen before. She hoped he would notice that the sala had been redecorated. A new layer of mud had been laid on the floor and a fresh coating of gypsum spread over the walls. For this occasion she had used their finest blankets to cover the mattresses. Everything was ready for his return. The Dona sat and waited.

She had given what comfort she could to Pepa and the

other wives. But these distraught women found little comfort in knowing that their husbands could have remained safely at home. The Don had had to pick the men he wanted from a group of eleven volunteers. There had been no doubt on the part of the men but that he was capable of bringing them back again. The Dona wanted to tell Pepa and the others how lucky they were to have children, but she knew they would never understand. With one exception, Pepa had carried a baby every year since marrying Cristo. No, she thought, these women could never understand the loneliness she suffered every day of the year, whether her husband were home or not, the awful silence of the sala where children were meant to sing and laugh and be the delight of a loving mother.

Regardless of what happened, she was glad she had not begged him to stay home. In her prayers for his safety she added the hope that his restlessness would now come to an end. She remembered the nights he lay awake talking with boyish enthusiasm of the land he would visit someday. Although she dreaded the time when he would set off for the grant, not a word of fear or discouragement had fallen from her lips.

A dog barked. She rose quickly and then slumped back into her chair again. There had been too many false alarms.

But now, above the barking of the dogs in the courtyard, she could hear the voice of the portero sing out a

greeting as the gate swung open. She could hear Cristo's hoarse yelling for Pepa. The placita was filled with the sounds of running feet and happy voices.

She wanted to run into the courtyard with the others, to throw her arms around him and kiss him and tell him how much he had been missed. But it would have embarrassed the Don or made him angry. She waited in the sala, nervously clapping her hands for Maria. The Navajo did not come until she raised her voice.

The Don walked past her, not speaking until he took his seat at the table.

"Good evening, Adela," he said.

"The servants have prepared a wonderful dinner for you, Antonio--in honor of your homecoming."

"Why the bother? I have not been gone long."

"Was the grant everything you hoped it would be?"

"It was satisfactory, yes." He turned to Maria. "I shall need a lot of wine."

The coldness of the Don's greeting was eased somewhat when Cristo entered with the boy. She fed the child while Cristo gave an excited explanation, complete with a vivid description of the corpses.

When Don Antonio asked him to leave, without the child, Cristo held back a moment.

"I shall wait outside my house, senor," he said.

The Dona held the boy on her lap and played with him

while the Don finished his meal in silence.

"I have never seen such a beautiful child," she said.

"Is it true what Cristo said?"

"I have never had the occasion to doubt his word,"  
the Don replied.

The child began to whimper when he saw that Cristo had gone. The Dona drew him up closer and sang softly to him:

I am old, if it's old to be ninety--  
Ninety years since to walk I began  
Not a kiss will the silly girls give me,  
Not a dance will they give the old man!

It pleased her to feel the boy's arms tighten around her neck. She kissed him. Soon he was quiet.

"Of course, we shall have to look for his relatives," she said.

The Don nodded.

"They will be happy to have him. He'll bring laughter and music to their house and they will never be lonely again."

"He might not be wanted," Don Antonio said, unimpressed. "There are some things a civilized man wants in his family besides a handsome face."

"Oh, but he's bright, Antonio. I can tell. Watch his face when I sing." She turned the boy toward Molano and began to sing again.

They all say I'm a useless old fellow,  
But I know not by what they can score;

For I find myself merry and mellow  
And quite fit for three marriages more.

Don Antonio forced a yawn. "He smiles at your squeaking. He is too young to follow the words."

She tried the boy for names. Camilo...Andres...Pio...Fedro...Jorge...Juan...Dario...Jose...Diego.... The boy smiled at all of them and fell fast asleep against her breast before she reached the end of the list.

Don Antonio drank his wine and watched her roll down a mattress from the wall. She laid the boy down and covered him with a blanket. She leaned over and kissed him lightly and for a long time stood over him, watching him as he slept.

She turned quickly to the Don, her eyes sparkling with excitement. "Tomorrow I shall have him bathed and a bed and clothes made for him. He will be fed until he is fat and soft to hold, and I shall hold him every minute of the day."

"The boy is to stay with Cristo," the Don said. "Pepa will care for him."

The Don got up from the table and walked out to the porch and called for Cristo.

Adela followed him. She put her hands on his shoulders. "Antonio, if the grandparents cannot be found--"

The Don shook her hands loose. "The child may be the son of a liar," he said.

### CHAPTER THREE

The Don had gone south for two weeks. On his return he took the boy to Padre Montoya and had him baptised into the holy faith as Julio.

"Julio Bargas," Cristo said, trying the names for sound. "They fit very well together."

"I said nothing of the sort," Don Antonio replied. "I did not give him your name."

It hurt Cristo that the Don would take the boy on such a sacred mission without him, or anyone, and now that Julio had been denied his surname, it pained him all the more.

"You are right," he replied sadly. "My name would do him no good. Julio Bargas! He could do just as well with a millstone about his neck and a whore for a mother." He turned his head but still kept an eye on Don Antonio. "I thank God, senor, that you were generous enough to give him your great name."

Molano pulled nervously at his fingers, rapidly losing patience with the overseer. "You insist on distorting everything I say. Let me be clear. The boy is to be called Julio. Children are not called by their surnames."

Although the legal technicality of parenthood had been denied him, Cristo was not long in finding an even stronger claim on the boy. He paced the dirt floor of his dark little hut and waved his fist at an empty corner, as if he had the Don at bay.

"Our Julio could be nameless forever or have a hundred names," he told Pepa, "but if he should ever be asked who loves him, he will say, 'Cristo Bargas loves me.' So long as we love him and he loves us, his name is Bargas to everybody. The Don knows sheep and Indians and is clever in many ways, but he is a fool when it comes to children. He does not know that children respect only the law of love. When Julio cries or is hungry or is wet, he will run not to the lawyers or the priests. He will run to us, Senora Bargas!"

Although Julio in no way resembled their coarse-featured, dark-skinned flock, he was their son all the same and took his place as the ninth Bargas child. He was more than just cared for during his infant helplessness. He was loved along with the others. No distinction of favor was ever given to one child more than another, unless it was given to Julio. He cried often during the first year, and Pepa predicted a nasty temperament for him. But he was picked up and hugged and kissed and tickled on his bare feet until he was laughing again. The other children were not jealous of their new brother. They remembered that as babies they had also had their day of glory. With their mother's stomach rising once again, the older children knew Julio's day of glory would be even briefer than theirs.

Cristo was away months at a time supervising the men who tended the Molano flocks. These were miserable days

for him. The boredom was broken only by Apache raids and the frustration of losing sheep and always a peon or two without gaining revenge on the slippery poachers. Under the stars at night, Cristo lay among his men and thought of his own flock and the addition he had just made and the one that would come while he was away. "I have no sheep, no cow, no horse," he would tell his men. "But I have two goats and nearly ten head of the most beautiful ninos God ever sent to earth."

When he came home there was one child in Pepa's lap and nine trying to climb into his, all at once, to hear how he had clubbed, strangled and shot with his bow hundreds of savages bent on stealing his sheep.

"Are they all to grow up to be liars?" Pepa asked when she had him alone. "Does our Father in Heaven want a kingdom of liars?"

Cristo's chest disappeared into his stomach. "God knows I shall have nothing to leave them but a good reputation and the knowledge that the same bravery flows in their blood."

"And little Julio? How is he to benefit?"

"He will absorb it from me like the marigolds soaking up a summer rain."

"Oh, God, that he will pick it up I have no doubt-- but it will be more like sparrows following a wagon train."

Now that Pepa was busy with a new baby, Julio's tears not always moved his brothers to consolation. From them he learned that a real man like their father never cried. The penalty for forgetting was a pinch on the ear from Luis and a kick from Goyo. As he grew older he could defend himself from their attacks and put up a battle against Nicolas, who came to the aid of his younger brothers, until the three of them had him down.

Several times he pounced on Goyo, striking him with his fists, for teasing him about his light skin. Goyo would bite into his arm and keep repeating, "You cannot grow big and strong like Father because you are not his son!" Pepa would run from the house and separate them and learn from the other children that Julio had struck the first blow. She jerked at his arm until he thought it would pop off like a cock's head. "You have the manners of an americano!" she cried. "You have the blood of a coyote or a devil in you!" Her words would have brought tears, had he not known her to use even stronger language on the other Bargas children.

The boys fought together as brothers, however, if one was attacked by a gang of peon brothers from another house. When there were no battles to be fought with real enemies, the boys roamed over the Molano estate, throwing clods of dirt at imaginary savages. In the early summer they waited for the sheep to be driven down from the mountains and

watched proudly as Cristo directed the shearing. Other times they strayed far from Pepa's protection, going down to the fields where they jumped from one irrigation ditch to another, until one of them would lose his footing and fall into the muddy waters. Then under Pepa's direction they were set to playing the more peaceful games of children.

A favorite pastime was a raid on the Molano oven that sat just outside the big house. Originally it had been Julio's idea. His brothers held back at first, fearful of the Don and the awful punishment he handed out to peons who were caught stealing from him. But the aroma of fresh sweet rolls soon overcame their fears. When the servants returned to the house, the boys would run from the outbuilding where they hid to the oven and stuff their stomachs with sopapillas and tortillas.

One day Julio looked up from his sweet roll to find Don Antonio staring down at him. The Don with his tall body clothed in black was always a terrifying sight to the boys. Julio saw the shining silver buttons move toward him, and he tried to put the sopapilla back into the oven. But the Don grabbed him up in his powerful hands and shook him until he was dizzy. He was dropped to the ground and slapped hard across the buttocks.

Julio forgot his practical lesson in manliness. He ran across the courtyard screaming for Pepa. The Don

made a start for the others and they joined in the flight, reaching the comfort of Pepa's skirts before Julio.

There was little sympathy from Pepa. They had done wrong and had to be punished further. There was no room in the Kingdom of Heaven for thieves.

"Your father will teach you a lesson you will remember forever," she threatened.

On his return home, Cristo looked sadly at each of the boys. "Yes, muchachos, I am going to teach you something you will profit by and remember forever," he said gravely. "Never go near the oven when the Don is home. It is very easy. Look first to see if his horse is gone."

Tears began to swell in Pepa's eyes. "You care nothing for their souls," she said, beginning to whimper. "You will be happy if they have full stomachs."

Cristo tried to comfort her, but she wiggled out of his arms. When his words had no effect on her sniffing, he reluctantly took the boys across his knee and whacked them until their howling drowned hers.

"Be happy now, Pepa," he shouted above the yelling. "Their souls and their behinds are both prepared for the Kingdom of Heaven."

So long as Julio knew the Don's horse to be at home, he never again strayed far from Pepa without being afraid. Julio was sure that the Don could be no smaller or any less fierce than the Texans Pepa always talked about.

"If you lie or steal or do not mind me," Pepa warned the boys, "the tejanos will come and eat you up."

Julio had never seen a Texan but he imagined the monster to be something like Molano. He was sorry for the pretty woman who had to live with the Don. Many times she came to Cristo's house with food and held him on her lap. She would sing funny songs to him until she heard the portero go to the gate. If he ever saw her while the Don was home, she would pay no attention to him, and the Don would snap his fingers until he ran out of their sight. But after the Don rode out again through the zaguan, even bigger and blacker when mounted on his black horse, she would return to Cristo's house and hold him.

When the Dona Adela held Julio on her lap, she found it hard to smile with him. A hurried glance around the overseer's house told her that there would be no lasting happiness for the boy. Pepa and Cristo were burdened enough to care for five children at the most. As soon as a child could walk without falling he was sent out-of-doors with his older brothers and sisters to roam the countryside. There were not enough hours in the day, the Dona knew, for Pepa to do her many household chores and care adequately for the children. Their dirty clothes only half covered their dirty bodies, and worse as far as the Dona was concerned, their innocent minds were subject to the filth and easy morals of the peons, who gave no

thought to cheating or robbing the Don or protecting the virtue of their daughters. Cristo was barely removed from the lowest form of peonage himself. He would be unable to save his children from debt and the bondage which inevitably followed. But when the Dona Adela sadly reviewed the plight of the Bargas children, she thought only of Julio.

It pleased her to see Julio grow tall and sturdy. He had a good, straight nose and lips that were full without being thick. His skin was not a shade darker than hers or the Don's. His only trait in common with his brothers was a matted, filthy head of black hair. And more than his attractiveness, the Dona loved him because he was bright and quick to laugh. She longed to take him into her house and teach him all she knew, so he could read and write and work with numbers. But she never dared to suggest it to the Don. He refused to discuss the boy with her.

"Julio is a wonderful boy, don't you think?" she said to Pepa one day.

Pepa had put up with the calls only because the visitor was the Dona. Another woman who would have come to hold Julio and ignore the other children clustered at her feet would have been chased away long ago. And strangers found Pepa's house no less courteous than the house of any other Mexican. If they were hungry, they were fed; and if they had no place to sleep for the night, they slept where she and Cristo usually slept; and if they were in danger of

starving when they started out the next day, they were given food that could hardly be spared. But the conduct of the Dona worked under her skin, fermenting gradually to a point where a mother's pride could no longer stand it.

Pepa slammed down the bowl she had been using. "I cannot agree, senora. The other children are no less wonderful to me, though they are too ugly and awkward to be taken into your arms." Pepa got up and went to the door. "If you must love one more than the others, take him out of their sight. If you cannot do this, please go, senora, for it hurts too much."

The Dona looked up with surprise and anger. No woman had ever spoken to her with such rudeness. But she left the house without a word. And without Julio.

Late the next afternoon, however, after the Don had gone out, Pepa glanced up to see the Dona standing quietly in the doorway. She seemed hesitant, even a little afraid.

The Dona regained her composure. She looked directly at Pepa and said, "I shall have Julio in my house this afternoon."

The little house was quiet, except for the sucking of the youngest at Pepa's breast.

Julio looked to Pepa.

She motioned him to go with the Dona.

At first Julio did not like leaving Pepa in the after-

noons to go with the Dona. But once the strangeness of her house and the fear of meeting the Don had passed, he dreaded the afternoons when the Don stayed at home and he could not go into the house with windows.

Besides the mica windows in the Don's house there were many other wonders. The walls were whitewashed and to a height of five feet covered with bright colored fabrics. When the Dona gave him chocolate and sopapillas they sat on chairs at a table and drank from hammered silver mugs. They stood on a rough woolen carpet and made faces into a large glass that made faces back at them. But the greatest marvel of all was the Dona. She read and sang and told stories to him and was never too busy to listen to him.

In the evenings, back at Cristo's, he sat on the floor by the fireplace and dipped his fingers into the chile with his brothers and thought of the wonderful house. Cristo had no windows, no furniture, no bright fabrics. The floor had gone months without a fresh coating of mud and was crumbling into dust. The walls were dingy and, with the exception of one small crucifix, bare. Everywhere there was noise and crying and the smell of children who needed changing, and above the tumult the arguing of Pepa and Cristo. Julio missed the cool darkness of the sala where the Dona spent every moment she could with him, talking, laughing and singing in her soothing voice.

He had to admit there were some disadvantages to the visits. At least once a week the Dona stood over Maria until the Indian had scrubbed him clean. And always there were lessons to be learned. If he did not recite the answers correctly, the number of sweet rolls he could have with his chocolate was reduced. He did not think he could ever learn to figure how many brothers he would have left if two or three were eaten up by the tejanos. But learning to write and to read out of books held his attention like the tricks of magic Cristo performed. Some of the stories the Dona told him were dull and his mind slipped away to follow the noises his brothers made at play in the courtyard. Other stories, like the one about the comical knight who charged windmills, he asked to be told again and again.

His mind became troubled with new questions. Why did it rain in the summer and not in the winter? Why was the Don rich and Cristo poor? Why did the Don have so many sheep and no children? Where did the ninos come from?

The Dona laughed at the last question. She gave what answer she could. "Cristo is much more of an authority than I on such matters," she added.

Julio went to Cristo. With Pepa's stomach on the rise again, Cristo had been giving some thought to the question himself.

"The Dona says an angel slips in at night with the nino."

"The Dona is a wise woman, Julio," Cristo said, picking thoughtfully at his nose. "Someone does slip in at night, but unfortunately the angel I am acquainted with spends most of his nights with the sheep."

Julio asked him again about his father and mother. He wanted to know if his father was as brave as Cristo and his mother as pretty as the Dona. Cristo assured him that they were.

It made him proud to know that his father was so brave that God had had to take him back, to help Him fight the devils coming out of Hell. And God realized His mistake of letting such a beautiful woman out of Heaven in the first place. So He had taken them back, Cristo said, leaving Julio with him, who next to his father was the bravest man on earth. Julio liked to hear how Cristo had ridden into the midst of the Arapahoes and broken the neck of the Indian who was about to kill him. Sometimes the story was varied to include an account of how the Don had hidden behind a rock while Cristo avenged the killing of his mother and father.

From the preparations and the excitement going on in the great house, Julio knew the Don was leaving again, this time for a long period. He was taking many of the peons

with him, to drive back the flocks he was going to acquire in the south.

Julio spent every afternoon and most of the mornings with the Dona, after Molano left, often going back to his house only to sleep. More and more he found he was saving his choicest secrets not for Pepa or Cristo but for the Dona, who thought every statement to be remarkable. He was learning to read whole paragraphs out of the three books the Dona owned, and numbers were coming easier for him. He discovered to his surprise that the tejanos came not from Hell but from a land to the east. And to the northeast there was another strange people, the gringos.

One day the Dona had Cristo drive her and Julio into Santa Fe so Julio could see these americanos and their wagons that had come from the strange country of Missouri.

They sat in the cart a short distance off and watched the gringos sell their wares. The Dona put her arm around Julio and pulled him close.

"If God is merciful I shall not live to see them come, a million gringos on horses," she said. "They will come just as sure as our Lord in Heaven will come again. Do not be afraid, Julio. So long as there are men like the Don you do not have to be afraid."

Julio looked up at her. It was the first good word he had heard about the Don.

"And Cristo?" he said. "Do not forget Cristo."

Cristo grinned sheepishly at her and turned away to watch a Pueblo girl come up from the creek with a jar balanced on her head.

## 3

Instead of being told to go back to Cristo's one evening, a mattress was rolled out for him in the sala, and Maria was sent to tell Pepa that he would not be home. He was puzzled by the change in routine, but the Dona looked too worried for him to question her. After the Navajo had undressed him, the Dona held him a little tighter and a little longer than usual. She insisted on a prayer and knelt beside him.

In the morning he woke to hear Maria and the Dona talking.

"It has already come to Cristo's house, senora," the Indian was saying. "Goyo and Juana are full of fever and cannot get up this morning."

Julio did not have to question them. Small pox was mentioned often by Cristo. An epidemic in his youth, he told the children, was responsible for the scars on his face and the absence of aunts and uncles. Julio never heard Cristo pray aloud without adding a supplication that his house be spared from the disease.

Three days later Julio stood on the porch and watched the young girls go by, carrying the body of Juana, coffin-

less, on a platform, to the lively music of the musicians who followed them.

On the fifth day it was Luis. On the sixth, Goyo.

Julio wanted to run to the weeping Pepa and throw his arms around her and say that he was sorry for fighting with Goyo. But the Dona held him back. It was Cristo, however, with his heavy body shaking in grief, that turned Julio away from the mourners, into the comforting folds of the Dona's dress.

The Dona busied him with twice the number of lessons so he would forget. Listening to his recitations also kept her from thinking of the Don, who was sure to return before the epidemic could spend itself. Her nights had been restless. She lay awake and wondered what she could do to prevent the Don from ordering Julio back to Cristo's, to an almost certain death. Her worry was so great that she could no longer enjoy having Julio with her.

It came almost as a relief when the Don appeared in the sala one morning, while she and Julio were taking their breakfast.

Julio was told to go to the porch and stay there until he was sent for.

"You will have to forgive me, Antonio," she said. "I could not stand by and see him die."

Molano took Julio's place at the table. "You have a large heart, Adela. But not large enough for the others.

Why didn't you bring the entire Bargas herd into my house?"

"It would have been impossible," she said, wishing to overlook his sarcasm. "And since you left, Antonio, Julio has not been exposed much to the--"

Molano smiled at her embarrassment. "So the moment I left, you had the boy come in and live with you?"

"I missed you so much, Antonio. I had to have some-one."

"It is pleasing to know that I have been missed so much that a peon's boy can take my place." He watched her closely. "But I have a forgiving nature. Because it has happened only this one time, I can forgive you, Adela.

"You have never had this boy in before, have you?"

The Dona got up and went to the fireplace. It angered him all the more to see tears in her eyes, she knew.

"Well, Adela?"

She did not answer.

"I thought so! I am neither quite so blind nor quite so ignorant as you think, Adela. The boy has been here many times during past years, in the afternoons when I was gone. Is that not correct?"

She nodded.

The faint smile on Maria's lips when she came in with the Don's breakfast made no secret of the service she had performed.

"But if you send him back now, you send him to die,"

Adela said, turning to him. "You cannot do it, Antonio. It will kill more than the boy if you do."

He held up his hand defensively. "Please, your hysterics remind me too much of the governor."

"Julio is bright, Antonio. And he will grow big, with wide shoulders and a handsome face no darker than your own. When he becomes a man, you will be proud to call him your son."

"God has willed that I have no sons, and I swear in the name of God that I shall have none."

"Give him your protection at least," she pleaded.

"Give him a chance to live, and give me the chance to live with him and have something to live for."

The Don finished his breakfast of mutton and hot bread without further comment. Later, while drinking his coffee, he said, "Let me see if he is bright."

Maria was sent to bring Julio into the sala.

Julio felt his hands grow cold and his knees begin to tremble when he faced the Don. He turned to the Dona for support. She was unable to conceal her own nervousness.

"The Dona tells me you are a bright boy. Is this correct?"

The answer stuck in his throat. He had to shake his head.

The Dona was pleased. She motioned for him to speak up.

"Let us begin with an easy question. Suppose you tell me the birth date of Francisco Vasquez Coronado."

Julio stared down at his feet. When he looked up, his eyes were moist.

"Antonio, that is unfair!" the Dona cried. "Not even his teacher could answer that question."

"She should. Every person claiming any wit at all should know the complete histories of the men who explored our country."

"Ask him when Coronado returned from Quivera."

"If he knows, there is no point in asking." He faced Julio again. "Suppose I have acquired ten sheep. I give two away and buy twelve more. Then I buy sixteen and sell eleven. Now, how many sheep do I have?"

"Twenty-five, senor."

The Don went back to his coffee. "The boy is no good at all in history," he said to his wife.

The Dona had to smile at this, for the Don, although he was remarkable in many ways, could not read or write more than his name.

"Tell me, Julio," the Don asked, "do you think it is right that you should stay here while your brothers get sick and die?"

The Dona jumped up, horrified. She was waved back into her chair.

"After all, they are not protected. Do you think it

right that you should escape their suffering?"

"No, senor," Julio said. "I shall go back to Cristo."

The Don threw back his head and laughed. "You see, Adela, he is not at all bright. How old are you, Julio?"

"Eight, senor."

Don Antonio rose from the table. "Then, Julio, it is time you were learning. However, you shall stay in my house only until the fever ends. Then you go back at night to sleep with Pepa."

When Molano left the room, the Dona Adela came to Julio and embraced him. And Julio wondered what he had said to cause the Dona to cry.

## CHAPTER FOUR

The Don, methodical in all that he did, set up a regular schedule in the beginning. Julio came at an appointed hour each afternoon for his lessons with the Dona and was sent away at sundown. But when the Dona insisted that his table manners were in need of improvement, Molano agreed to allow Julio an extra hour so he could take his evening meal under her supervision. The Don never asked for a return to the old schedule. In fact, he did not object as Julio began to spend the evenings in the company of the Dona. For the first years he was strict in sending Julio back to Cristo's house to sleep. Later he left the decision up to the Dona provided he were not going to be home. In time, however, as Julio's absorption into his house neared its completion, he did not care one way or the other, and Julio often was invited to remain by the Don himself.

Julio cared less and less to go back to his old home. At Cristo's there was too much noise and dirt for his taste. Although Cristo had had his flock reduced by three, he had managed to add one more.

The Don had outfitted him as a rico, in buckskin dyed black, with an embroidered vest and silver buttons running down the side of his trousers and a red sash around his waist. Over his shoulder he carried a bright colored serape. In such finery he did not care to return to Cristo's, for it embarrassed him to command the respect Pepa and

Cristo thought they owed him. It was no longer possible to talk with Nicolas as a brother. He was a stranger in his own house. To put them at ease he doffed his sombrero and bowed low to them in jest, but it made little difference to a peon family. He was treated like a visiting don.

There was another reason why he no longer wanted to go back, a reason he was not ready to admit to himself. Cristo's lies had begun to bore him. He thought he saw Cristo for what he really was, a lying buffoon who would run like a rabbit if an Indian threatened him. Alongside the Dona, Pepa was homely and coarse and completely lacking in wit. The nights he had to spend with them were tedious. He could not wait for morning and the excitement and the pleasures he would have in the Molano house.

Julio's lessons under the Dona ended when he was eleven. Thereafter the Don became his tutor. He had never stopped fearing the Don. Molano was a stern teacher, a perfectionist, quick to find fault and quick to punish if he showed laziness or slowness in learning. But his respect for the Don was limitless, even if he could not like him. To the amusement of the Dona he had begun to adopt many of the Don's mannerisms.

Horsemanship was the most important of the practical studies offered by the Don. In Julio he found an apt pupil. He could ride his horse at full speed, bend low and snatch up a twig from the ground, and do all the other feats of

horsemanship that the Don required of him.

His first real test came in his fifteenth year, when late in the fall he accompanied Molano east over the mountains to the buffalo ranges.

Many ricos went together each year on the hunt, which to Molano was one of the high spots of the season. Many more peons followed them to skin and butcher the kill and hang it up to dry.

"To kill a buffalo is easy," the Don said, explaining the use of the lance to Julio. "Ride close, take good aim, plunge the lance into the heart and out again, without catching it between the ribs. You must be quick. Do you understand?"

Julio took the lance and smiled. Everything came easy for him.

They rode fast over the level grassland and in a moment, true to Molano's prediction, a black mass appeared on the horizon. Soon they were among the buffalo and the slaughter began.

Julio chose the fastest bull on the field. He rode his mount close up against him, until he could hear the labored breathing of the beast rise above the beating of hooves. He cradled the lance in his left arm and took aim. He gave a powerful thrust. The blade went deep.

A sharp sting caught him in the chest. His feet shot up over his head and he looked into the sun a moment, until

he landed on his back, in darkness.

He woke to laughter and grinning faces. Not to be different, he laughed along with them, until he happened to see that Don Antonio regarded his inept thrust as anything but laughable.

He was sore and dizzy but he disregarded advice that he wait until morning to try his luck. He picked a slower animal this time, an aged cow. His jab was so quick that he thought he had been over cautious. But the cow ran a few steps more and then dropped dead.

Before the day ended he had four buffalo to his credit. Around the fire that night he sat alone and nursed his bruises and hoped that the Don was not too disgusted with him. He was too young to join the Don's group in singing. And the young ricos who gathered away from their fathers to tell stories ignored him. Loneliness was not new to him. The young ricos had never accepted him as anything but a peon's son.

Part of this, he knew, was jealousy. He was their superior in horsemanship and all their games. Yet there was an awareness of something he could not grasp. The Don's popularity with many ricos had not risen for taking a peon boy into the society of the gente fina. When he was younger and his companions were not yet bound by the strict courtesy of their fathers, these same ricos' sons had pointed to his light skin and blue eyes and cried, "Gringo's

bastard!"

In the language of the New Mexican nothing was more biting. He had run to the Dona, brokenhearted, to be assured they were envious of his physical attractiveness and strength. She took him to the big mirror in the sala and told him that the skin of a gringo, so much unlike his, was almost as pale as the gypsum painted walls. And that the hair of the americano was not black like his, but brown or sometimes as yellow as ripened corn. Blue eyes were rare, she admitted, but she had seen them in the best Spanish families. He remembered the traders she had taken him to see. He knew she spoke the truth. Thereafter, he struck out with his fists when the charge was made, but only if the Don was not present. Molano would have thrashed him soundly for this unpardonable conduct. A man who used his fists acted like a gringo, the Don always said, and Julio was very careful to avoid such a charge from a member of his house. As the boys grew older their animosity was buried under the elaborate courtesy of their elders; but it was there all the same, and though they greeted Julio with open arms when they met, little was said to him afterward.

The next day he had downed two buffalo in the morning and was removing his lance from his third of the afternoon when young Valente rode up and claimed the kill.

"See, in his flank, he carries my broken lance," the young rico said. "You cannot claim an animal that drops

dead at your feet."

Julio tried to check his anger. There was no question of individual honors. Their beef hungry families would share the meat in common. Nevertheless, he offered his apology.

"I see your blade, Valente. The animal is yours."

"You have used fraud to gain your success," Valente said loudly, to attract attention. "You are no sportsman."

He guessed Valente's motive. Some of the older ricos had praised his good riding. He had killed twice the animals the young ricos were able to claim.

Several hunters rode up and asked the nature of the trouble.

"He claims the animal I killed," Valente explained to them. "He stuck the carcass after it was down."

"That is not true! I rode him down like the others."

"The others? Doubtless you used fraud to claim them." Valente went to the carcass and pointed to his blade. "Is this not difficult to deny?"

"I have not denied it. I brought the bull down after you had struck a very feeble blow."

Valente's hands trembled in rage. He looked at the other hunters and then whirled on Julio.

"Gringo's bastard!" he spat at him.

Julio lunged for him. But he was caught by the arm and spun around. He faced Don Antonio.

The Don slapped him hard across the mouth.

"Go to my peons and say that you are to help them," Molano said. "You are not fit to hunt with gentlemen. If you want to brawl, go back to Santa Fe and brawl with the gringo traders."

Julio smarted under the eyes of the hunters. He heard a snicker from a young rico, as he walked away.

Julio went to the peons, following far behind the hunt, and helped them cut the meat into strips for drying. No appeal could be made, he knew, for a don ruled his family without question as long as he lived, even when his sons grew old themselves. Yet the belief that someday he would have the same privileges was of some consolation to him.

Cristo had put the idea into his head.

"What will he do with his wealth if he doesn't fatten up one of his mistresses?" Cristo had said. "He has relatives in Taos--but no sons. He has no one to leave it to, unless he should choose some young man to take his place. Be a good boy, Julio, do everything he says and act the part of a son. You will not be sorry." Cristo had pointed to a group of peons hard at work. "You would be far sorer to fall into this. It is easier than you think, Julio. You work for a man like the Don. He does not give you enough to live on, and you borrow from him so your family does not have to starve. But you can never pay him back,

and on it goes year after year, more and more in debt to him, until you can never get out and be free again. You are a slave and you die a slave. Your children are slaves because of their father's debts. If a woman has a good face and a good body she can always take up whoring. But what of us handsome men? Ha! We work, Julio, on our feet, until God takes pity on us and strikes us dead. The Don would not take you into his house if you were not just such a boy as he is looking for. The rest is up to you."

After this, Julio had observed the Don closely, weighing everything he said and did against Cristo's words. It did not appear that Cristo was wrong.

The Don, no longer sensitive about Julio's presence in his house, introduced him to visitors and allowed him to stay for chocolate. There were lessons other than horsemanship that the Don thought important to his education. He learned the manners of the ricos and sat in their company. The Don taught him the management of a hacienda and the care and breeding of sheep. On every affair of business he accompanied Don Antonio and was made to listen carefully. Molano took particular care in pointing out the methods of irrigation and the growing of row crops, though this was a small part of his holdings.

But there were also moments of doubt. "You are learning as well as a boy of your background possibly can," the

Don said once. "You show a talent for management from a saddle, but can you do it with your hands?" There were other times, when he was slow at learning or made a slip of conduct such as on the buffalo hunt, when the Don was completely exasperated with him and shouted: "You are a fool! And I am a fool to dress a peon in the garb of the gente fina!"

But Cristo was always at hand to pump new life into the dream. "What about your missing surname?" Cristo asked. "He gave you his, I believe, and is just waiting for the right time, when he can be proud of you, to announce it to the whole world." Then the picture would reverse itself and the Don would take him on a sheep drive or a wild mustang hunt and showed some signs of pride when other dons complimented him on the strength and agility of his ward. During these times Julio had no doubt that he was being raised as a rico, learning their customs and their way of life so he could take his place someday as one of them.

Although he lived in the house of a rico and enjoyed many of their privileges, the Don permitted him none of the vices that went with a life of ease and wealth. While the other young men played monte or spent their time in the cock pits or pursued girls of a slightly darker skin, Julio was made to stay at home with the Dona after his daily lessons ended.

"If a man gets soft and spoiled, he can live only by the labors of others," the Don said, when Julio would watch enviously as the young men made ready for a night of revelry.

Then the Don changed into his most elegant dress and went out to join them.

"See, there is an advantage in being rich and handsome," Cristo would say when the Don left. "His life is woven into an exciting fabric. By day he and Don Arrio do business together, and by night they separate, Don Antonio sometimes going to Don Arrio's wife if he can find nothing more exciting, and Don Arrio going somewhere else. It is a pity the Dona cannot fit into the pattern, Julio. She is missing much in life."

Every evening, now that he was no longer sent back to Cristo's, Julio sat in the heavy silence of the sala and watched tears come into the Dona's eyes. She would not speak for an hour or more, and sometimes she had to excuse herself and leave, but the sound of her weeping carried to his ears nevertheless.

Julio had discovered early in his relationship with the Don that the gap between respecting him and liking him could not be bridged. He respected the Don for his strength and his leadership and the numberless things he could do better than most men. He was never ashamed to ride beside Molano in the fields or the ranges; yet, at home, when he

looked into the Dona's face and saw the record of sorrow and neglect, he was ashamed for aspiring to be his son. He loved the Dona above everything. For years he watched her cry, and as a boy when he did not understand and tried to cheer her, she had told him it was nothing more alarming than illness. He had never heard a word from her against the Don, or had he seen her look at him with anything but love and admiration. It was an illness, he agreed, now that he could understand, but nothing so simple as the Dona wanted him to believe. He wished that she could learn to hate him, to save herself, but this she could never do, and so Julio took it upon himself to do her disliking for her. He could not help but wish that the Don would hurry and adopt him and then have the decency to die so the Dona could live in the happiness he would provide for her. He would have a baile and a dinner every night to cheer her. He would bring hundreds of laughing people into the sala, and the Dona would be happy. The Don would rest in consecrated ground and the Dona would know she had him at last all to herself.

For a reason he could not account for, the Don had tried to set him against the Dona, a few years after he had come into the Molano house.

Mexican rule of New Mexico had reached its effeminate worst, in the Don's estimation, with its direct taxation for the establishment of public education. Although the

Don had never discussed political matters with the Dona, one night at dinner he asked her opinion of the tax.

The Dona sidestepped his question by saying that her opinion would sound foolish to someone of his knowledge of affairs.

"No, that will not do," Molano said firmly. "I want your opinion."

"It will cost little, Antonio," she began timidly. "And it will do so much good. Our country needs knowledge, and the little money we spend on it will return to us a hundred times over."

The Don turned to Julio. "I have asked this question to show you how little a woman's opinion should be valued. The Dona would have us bankrupt ourselves to educate her fellow Indians."

Julio noticed the Dona's shoulders slump, as if she had taken the blow on her neck.

"In the affairs of government the Dona knows nothing, does she, Julio?"

Julio sipped the red wine to ease the tightening in his throat. He said nothing.

"Julio, I asked you a question!"

He faced the Don squarely. "The Dona is a wonderful lady nevertheless, senor."

Don Antonio was furious. "I ask you again, Julio, if the Dona is not a fool in politics."

The Dona Adela looked up at Julio and motioned for him to agree.

"Yes, senor," Julio said, barely loud enough to be heard. "But she is still a wonderful lady."

He expected to be sent back to Cristo's or at least to be beaten for his impudence, but the Don ate the rest of his meal in silence.

"Well, I shall stand for none of his nonsense," the Don said, after he had finished. "Governor Perez must go, and if the current flows to my liking, I shall throw in with the revolutionary party. I am not a fool!"

To Julio's surprise, the Dona immediately jumped up and went to Molano, putting her arms around him and begging him not to risk his life.

"You should know I never back the losing side," the Don said. "But one way or the other, Perez must go."

The success of the Texas revolt had encouraged him to hope that New Mexico also could rid herself of Mexican rule. He was for any change, any stable government that would take the offensive against the Indians and make his holdings secure, any government that would guarantee to preserve the interests of the gente fina. But neither was he to be numbered among the zealots who were ready to risk their lives and property on a goal which might exist only in dreams.

When ancient grievances and new ambitions began to

squirm restlessly in the late summer of 1837, he weighed the chances for success of both factions--and promptly set off for Chihuahua. The revolution, no matter how much he wished to see it succeed, had to go on without him.

When the revolutionists stormed and took Santa Fe, it appeared that he had made his first political blunder.

Cristo returned from the city and told Julio how the Indian mobs had beheaded Perez, while another mob cut off the hands and feet of Don Santiago Abreu and waved them in his face. Then they had pulled out his tongue and eyes. Cristo enjoyed telling it and often added embellishments of his own making.

But the Don was far away, unable to enjoy the anguish of his enemies. But the blunder apparently went deeper.

One day a mob came to the hacienda to sieze his property, as they had done with other dons who had not given them support. They were poorly led and soon fell into confusion. If the Don was not at home, they argued, how could they tell which side he had taken?

They went away, to argue the question more fully in the comfort of a saloon.

However, the mob could not be pacified for long. Either the Don had to come home and take his allegiance with them or suffer the penalty of being a loyalist.

Cristo tried his best to keep the Dona and Julio from

becoming frightened at each appearance of the mob. "I was born under the flag of Spain and lived to see the Mexican flag fly over the Palace of the Governors," he said to Julio. "Spanish, Mexican or a new one, what difference does it make? Tomorrow I shall wake up and look at the same old woman and have breakfast and go to my sheep, and then in the middle of the morning my bowels will rumble. My bowels respect no flag, Julio. Even in Heaven I am sure my bowels will rumble."

The Dona was even more grieved with the Don out of the way. Her unhappiness was twice as bitter, Julio believed, for she had lived to see Don Antonio make a political blunder. If the Don ever came back to New Mexico he would be hanged or beheaded or tortured to death. And Julio knew the Dona would spend too much on his funeral and give a generous donation to the poor in his memory. Julio made plans how he would care for the Dona. For it was certain that he would have to care for her.

But on the day the Mexican troops rode up from Chihuahua to annihilate the rebels, Don Antonio was riding with them, smiling as happily as any of the supporters of Governor Perez.

## CHAPTER FIVE

There were new menaces to occupy the Don's time as the years passed. Since his return home he had become an ardent defender of the regime, largely by default; for only Mexico, he believed, was strong enough to defend Santa Fe against its new perils, the tejanos to the east and the gringos to the north. It disturbed him that Santa Fe could take calmly the increasing number of traders that came down over the Trail with their gringo ideas of superiority.

The American traders rode into town firing their guns and yelling obscene remarks at Mexican women. At night they got drunk and fought and showed no respect whatever for an American civilization older than their own. They danced and brawled at Mexican fandangos and sometimes a Mexican was shot for refusing to allow his woman to dance with them. But no one cared enough to stop them. The Americans brought goods that were converted into new wealth by Mexican merchants, and the purses of the officials were growing fat with gringo bribes. Don Antonio had lived too many years to be surprised at the power of money. But the conduct of Mexican women sickened him. At the first sight of the wagons, the girls scrubbed their faces clean of the alegria that kept their faces from burning dark in the summer sun. Then they ran to the wagons and several of them would beg for the same man, so

great was the appeal of the blond giants. They embraced the gringos openly on the streets, while Mexicans held back, jealous, but not knowing what to do. A gringo could stay a month and boast afterward that he had slept with a different woman every night. The Americans swelled their chests and walked down the streets of Santa Fe, pushing Mexicans out of their way. Their laughter echoed from the mud houses when the Mexican would step aside in habitual courtesy.

In Mexico, Santa Ana was preparing to restrict the Santa Fe Trade, a move Don Antonio knew would bring the gringo army to protect the gringo dollar. If trade restrictions did not bring war, Don Antonio was sure the Texas problem would.

In Texas, his former dream had been converted into another gringo enterprise. The gringos claimed sole credit in what had been a common struggle for freedom with their Mexican allies. But now the Mexican natives of Texas were being pushed from the land and were losing their voice in government. To aggravate Molano further, Texas had given gringo war veterans head rights to a quarter section of land--that lay not in Texas but in New Mexico. Old families in Socorro that had been on the soil for centuries were forced out and their sheep driven from cliffs if they disputed the Texans' claims.

The people of New Mexico looked upon Texas as a land

of fools, for the ambitious Texans claimed without foundation all land which lay east of the Rio Grande, including Santa Fe.

In June of 1841 the government in Austin dispatched a task force to claim the new empire.

The slow and backward people of New Mexico, armed with bows and lances and a few ancient rifles, waited behind the desert for the restless, ambitious warriors of the new nation.

It was a long wait.

Not even the Texans believed it was possible for an army to become lost.

## 2

Julio rode out with Don Antonio and Cristo to see the Texas captives pass by on the road that would take them into Mexico.

The earth was soft and the color of rusted iron. Small puddles of water stood in the road, reflecting the brilliance of the morning. A rain the night before had made the grass green again and put freshness into the air. A single cloud, white and billowy, moved slowly across a deep blue sky.

The combination of a refreshing rain and the humbled Texans brought out a new vitality in the people who lined the road. It had become a festive occasion. They jeered

and laughed and shouted insults at the men who had tried to conquer them.

Molano did not share the cheery optimism of his countrymen who had come to taunt the captives in the belief that a war had been won. This handful of men, he realized, was but a token force, a piece of gringo foolishness which was not likely to be repeated.

Julio was disappointed. He did not know exactly what he had prepared himself for, but the men who stumbled along under the watchful eyes of the Mexican soldiers did not measure up to Pepa's warnings of his childhood. They were a haggard lot, emaciated and weary from the privations of the desert, where the forces of Governor Armijo had found them, bewildered and lost.

Cristo, however, entered into the festivities with enthusiasm. His stomach shook as he laughed at a small boy who picked up a stone and glanced it off the neck of a tejano. The Texan was too miserable to feel its sting. "Coyotes!" Cristo hollered at the captives, shaking his fist. "Killers of women and ninos!"

Don Antonio nudged Julio. "Cristo does not care for the tejanos," he said, above the noise of the crowd.

"Yes, he is very brave when the tejanos are bound."

Molano turned to him sharply. "Do you accuse Cristo of cowardice?"

"No, senor."

"But you said Cristo was brave only because the captives were bound."

"I meant that sometimes he exaggerates his bravery," Julio replied uneasily. "That is what I mean, senor."

"Then you call your father a liar?"

It had been many years since the Don had referred to Cristo as his father. Julio's stomach turned sick at the word. He had dreamed so long of becoming Molano's heir that it had become real and he had forgotten the alternative. A look at Don Antonio, his face flushing scarlet in anger, told him it was not a slip of the tongue.

"You have accused your father of both cowardice and falsehood," the Don said angrily. "Ride ahead of us and go back to your work. I do not wish to be seen with a man who does not honor his father."

The ride home was slower and not so happy as the trip out to see the Texans. Julio was too humiliated himself to remember and take any delight in having seen the humiliation of his country's enemies. He could think of nothing but his fall from the Don's favor. There was only one thing to be thankful for. Cristo had been too busy yelling at the Texans to hear him. It would have pained him no less to have hurt the Dona.

Julio was nearing sixteen and had grown as tall as the Don. He knew he could not be kept much longer in the Molano house as a boy who had simply caught the fancy of

the Dona Adela. Either he had to be claimed as a son or be cut loose, to find his own way; and without a father of wealth, to lapse into peonage, to work all his days in the service of a man like Molano, without fine clothes, a horse, maybe not even enough food to keep him from hunger. Julio was bitter and depressed as he began his short-cut to the hacienda.

The Don had given him duties of his own to perform, and from his tours of inspecting the maze of irrigation ditches and riding to the outposts where the peons tended their sheep, he had learned the country well enough to make good time over a route of his own that cut through the corn fields.

He was so lost in his depression that he would have missed the frantic crawling of two men, had a rabbit not jumped up in front of them.

They came to a stop and hugged the ground closely. But when it became obvious to the blond gringo that they had not escaped notice, he got to his feet and came to Julio.

"We were tired and lay down to rest," the gringo said, in nearly perfect Spanish. "We are traders from Missouri. We are on our way back to our wagons in Santa Fe."

Julio looked them over closely. Their clothes were muddy and torn and barely covered their skinny bodies. The

face of the blond was obscured by grime and a thick growth of pink whiskers, though it appeared he normally was clean shaven. The other gringo had hair as black as his, and a mustache that once had been used to trimming. He was older than the blond and kept looking nervously over his shoulder.

"You are headed in the wrong direction," Julio said.

"Are you lost?"

The gringos looked at each other. The lower lip of the older American twisted nervously.

"We are not lost, amigo," the blond said. "Please don't worry about us."

"Nevertheless, senor, I am concerned. You have not eaten for a long time."

"We americanos are a skinny people."

"Tonight you will eat with Don Antonio Molano. He would never forgive me if I found hungry strangers on his land and did not invite them to his table." Julio thought it ironical that he should invite two gringos to accompany him when he was not sure if he would be received at the Don's table.

The dark gringo shook his head.

"Very well. Then let me show you the way to your wagons."

The two men stood silently in indecision. The dark gringo shook his head again.

Julio reached for his rifle, only to remember that he

had not carried it. "But I insist on helping you," he said, forcing his voice to remain steady and unafraid. "It will not trouble me at all." A single thought kept racing through his mind. If he were to capture the escaped tejanos the Don would be very proud of him, and the Dona would call him the bravest man in New Mexico.

"Please, senor," the blond said irritably. "Leave us alone. We know what we are doing."

"Come with me," Julio said. "I shall take you to the road and leave you there."

The excited talking of the tejanos in their own tongue was ended abruptly by the sound of voices from another part of the field.

The blond came closer to Julio. His face was distorted by fear.

"Be a good compadre and tell them you have seen no one," the gringo pleaded. "We'll be grateful for life. For God's sake don't let them find us. They'll kill us like they killed the others." When he saw his words had no effect on Julio, he fumbled in his pockets and came up with a silver coin. "It's all I got. Do this for us and we'll be back someday with more. I swear it to God, senor. We'll come back and make you rich." He pushed the silver dollar into Julio's hand.

They looked at him anxiously as the voices grew louder.

Julio threw the coin aside. He leaped from his horse and brought the blond gringo to the ground. He tried to get a hold around the man's neck. But the gringo was too clever. He rolled free, out of Julio's grasp and got to his feet.

He turned and ran--into the muzzles held by two Mexican soldiers. Don Antonio and Cristo stood behind the soldiers.

Julio picked up the dollar and faced the soldiers proudly. The Don could not have come at a better moment.

The blond gringo spun around to Julio. "I'll be back, greaser, with a million more like me. And don't expect mercy. I'll break your goddam greasy neck if I have to die for--"

Molano grabbed a rifle from a soldier and slammed the butt against the Texan's head. He fell unconscious.

Julio was told to keep the dollar as a souvenir.

## 3

At dinner Julio had to recount at least three times his adventure of the afternoon for the Dona.

"I am afraid I should have run for my life," she said, largely for the benefit of the Don. "You were very brave."

The Don had not commented on the affair. Julio knew he would wait until they were alone. Julio had never felt so good. Cristo had praised him without limit, and the

soldiers had said that he did more fighting with the Texans than the entire army sent out to meet them. Julio knew the Don had to be proud of him. Everybody else was praising his bravery.

"And the other man?" the Dona asked. "Was he captured, too?"

"Of course," Molano said. "He was also surrounded by soldiers."

After the meal, Don Antonio asked the Dona to leave so he could be alone with Julio. For once, Julio looked forward to being alone with Don Antonio.

Molano rolled a cigarette slowly, without speaking. Julio went to the fireplace and came back with a coal. The smoke smelled sweet and good to him, but no Mexican son ever smoked in the presence of the head of the household, not even when he grew aged himself.

"I suppose you are proud," the Don said at last.

"No, senor," Julio replied modestly. "I am not."

"Why not? The soldiers, Cristo, the Dona, they all think you have done some great service to New Mexico."

"The soldiers deserve the credit."

Don Antonio took a swallow of wine. "I am pleased to know you have the sense to realize it. Actually, you did nothing at all."

Julio was hard hit by the remark. But he had to agree.

"I cannot be proud of you, Julio. The tejano got away from you. Admit it! Don't let people make you believe you were holding him when you were not. He got away from you. You were defeated!"

"Yes, senor," Julio replied weakly. "I did not hold him."

"Do you realize that the tejano had not eaten for five days and his last solid meal came more than a month ago? He was weakened by starvation and fatigue. You were rested and well fed. Probably too well fed. I was ashamed that a man of your size could not take care of himself, bitterly ashamed that the soldiers had to come to your rescue. What would you do up against this man if he were in condition? He would do exactly what he said he would do. He would break your neck."

Julio wanted to tell the Don that the tejano had not mastered him in strength but in quickness. But even this, he knew, would provoke the Don to laughter. Nor would it do to say that the tejano was four or five years older.

"The Dona and I have tried to give you all the training we can, and still you are soft. And spoiled also, I might add--though the Dona will have to accept credit for that. Many times I have had to defend myself against enemies both here at home and in the wilderness. How do you think you would measure up to a savage who spends all

his time out-of-doors working hard with his hands? Do you think you could survive? Of course not! You are tall but weak. Intelligent but slow. You can neither defend yourself nor earn your living with your hands."

Hands. It was an evil omen. Don Antonio talked often about a man working with his hands. Yet neither he nor his fellow ricos worked with their hands. They drank and played but never worked. Why should they work when there were scores of peon hands on every hacienda to do their work for them?

"You have become soft and spoiled from being a toy for the Dona. It appears that there is nothing more I can do for you. I shall turn you back to Cristo. He may be a liar and a coward, as I heard you say, but he will make a man out of you. This is your last night in my house, Julio. In the morning you will report for work to Cristo. I shall leave instructions with him. You are not to take your clothes. Cristo will provide you with something to wear. You are not to come to my house unless I order you to come to me."

Julio drank his wine slowly after the Don left. He ran his fingers caressingly over the hammered silver mug and looked about him, at the richness of the sala.

When he went again to the buffalo ranges, he did not

ride even at the beginning of the hunt with Don Antonio. Together with Nicolas and the other Molano peons he was in the rear, skinning and butchering. This was a welcomed diversion, however, better than the monotony of tending sheep on barren mountains and seeing nothing but the sterile contours of the country below.

During the solitary hours he spent with his sheep, Julio began to think more deeply of the life he had been born into. He could not understand how God could make some men dons and others peons, as the Dona had told him. If that were true, God did not love the peon, as Padre Montoya said. God could not love the peon and make a slave out of him. If God really loved the peon He would give him windows and an extra room for his house. He could not make the peon work all day, almost without pay, while He let the rico play at games and stuff his belly with food and wine. If it were God's wish, a peon could be born into the service of a don not so generous as Molano, to be denied baptism because his father could not afford the fee; and when he died, ten or twenty years before a don of his age, his immortal soul was consigned to hell, because his sons in turn could not afford the fees of the holy faith. Was it God who made the daughters of the ricos donas and the daughters of the poor, prostitutes? One to have the blessings of Heaven and the other to burn in Hell forever? No. Julio credited God with more love

than that. God was not responsible, he knew. These rules were invented by man for his own convenience, to keep the dons at leisure and the peons working without complaint until they died. Julio vowed he would not die without complaint.

It had been nearly two years since he had seen the Dona. Either he was away with the sheep or working somewhere on the hacienda where they could not possibly meet. From Maria he learned that she no longer came out to walk in the courtyard or took the cart into Santa Fe to do her shopping. Only rarely did she go to church. But the visits of Padre Montoya had increased.

The last rain of the fall was unusually heavy, damaging the buildings severely. He spent most of his time in making adobe brick and repairing walls. It was while he was patching on the outside wall of the sala that he saw the Dona through the opened door.

She motioned for him to come to her.

He was shocked to see how pale and old she had grown.

"You can stay but a moment, Julio. But I must see you." She kissed him lightly on the cheek and took hold of his hands. "Pobrecita, how I hate to see them grow hard and rough. Are you well? Do you eat enough?"

Julio assured her that he was well. But it surprised him to look into the large mirror and find his face thinner and darker.

"I pray constantly to the Virgin that you might be allowed to come home again, Julio. Do not be angry with the Don. He is a good man. If Heaven wills it, you will come back to me."

It was obvious to Julio that the Don had been clear in his orders that he was not to be admitted to the house. The Dona kissed him again and told him to leave. He carried away, under his clothing, two sweet rolls.

The prestige he commanded formerly at Cristo's had vanished almost at once. When he no longer wore the garb of a rico, it was easy for Pepa to nag him freely along with the others, though too many years had gone by for her to think of him as one of her ninos. But in Cristo's eyes he was still his son, and Julio believed his return home had pained Cristo more than himself. Don Antonio had to keep reminding him that Julio was not to be spared from the most arduous tasks. Nicolas, however, took a great delight in opening the wound. He would bow low in mockery and call him Don Julio, and run before Julio could collar him.

Julio was slower to adapt himself to their company. Cristo's house like all peon houses had but a single room, where the family lived and ate and slept, and if necessary, quartered their few head of goats. It was difficult after the luxury of the sala for Julio to stand at the

pot over the fireplace and eat his meal with his fingers. Above everything he missed the chance to breathe clean air and talk with the Dona. He lay awake at night and thought of the Dona and how pale and drawn her face had become. His conscience had not permitted him to hate the Don for turning him back to Cristo, for the years he had spent in the Molano house was something he would not have received, had it not been for the generosity of the Don. But when he thought of the Dona, alone and ill, he could not work up a hate great enough to satisfy him.

He began to ponder means of escape. The Don often had talked of the wealth that lay to the north in Arapahoe country, where he had been found. If his father had been brave enough to squat on the grants, so was he, and he made plans to escape.

But his plans changed abruptly when he saw how run-away peons were punished. The law was strict. A don had the power of life and death over peons who ran away while still in debt to him.

It was in the middle of the afternoon when the thought came to him. When had he fallen into the debt of Molano? He had borrowed nothing, taken nothing unless it was given to him. His father had not been in the service of Molano. In the eyes of the law, Don Antonio could not hold him.

Armed with this knowledge, he strutted across the courtyard with his wide shoulders pushed back and his chest

out. He was a free man, free to go where he chose. Even though it was siesta time, he thought nothing of rousing Maria to go tell the Don that he had a visitor. Maria smiled at him, as if she could foretell the result without bothering Don Antonio.

Julio was a little disappointed that the Don was not angry for the way he barged in. He wanted to have the Don enraged so his deflation would be all the greater. The Don, however, listened to him patiently, interrupting him only to yawn sleepily.

"The way I have it figured," Julio said, winding up his case, "you owe me a slight sum for my services."

The Don stared at him a moment before bursting into one of his cynical laughs.

"I want to get this matter clear, on a strictly business basis," he said. "You mean I should pay you something and then let you go?"

"Yes, senor. According to the law, you cannot hold me."

"Tell me, where do you plan to go and what will you do to earn your living?"

"I may go north and trap. There are many things I can do."

"And fight Arapahoes?"

"If it is necessary, senor, I shall fight Arapahoes. I shall do anything to have my freedom."

"Are you sure you have no debts?"

"I owe you nothing, senor, although I am grateful for the care you have given me."

"The Dona would be very unhappy to have you killed by an Arapahoe."

"I shall miss the Dona very much." He was angered that Molano would have him consider the Dona, when he never gave a thought to her welfare. "I shall remember her always as a wonderful lady who deserved more than Heaven saw fit to give her."

The Don's eyes narrowed to a squint. "How much do I owe you?"

"You be the judge of that, senor."

"I have been figuring in my head while you talked. In another year I believe you will have worked long enough to pay for the serapes I furnished you. In ten years, maybe, you will have paid for all the other things." Molano took him by the arm and led him to the door. "You may go back to your work. I shall notify you when you are no longer subject to my service."

The door shut in Julio's face.

## CHAPTER SIX

Instructions came in the morning from Don Antonio that ordered Julio to the range fartherest from Santa Fe.

Although the protection of Cristo, who seldom visited the distant ranges, was to be denied him, the new life appealed to Julio. Exile would have its compensations. He would not have to see Don Antonio again until June, when the sheep would be brought down for shearing. And Apache raids would make sheep tending not half so boring as he had found it on the closer ranges. Even Indians were better than the monotony that sometimes drove shepherds mad.

His new life, however, soon ran into a pattern of tedium. There was no comradeship to be had with the men who worked with him. They were unable to forget that he had lived once in the Don's house and rode in a saddle trimmed in silver. They regarded his presence with suspicion. The Don might have sent a spy among them, they reasoned, to see if they were doing everything possible to guard the sheep from Apache attacks.

Although they avoided his company as much as possible, their conduct toward him was courteous, and even the mayordomo did not ask him to do anything without the elaborate courtesy which the peon reserved for his betters. But when they grouped together at night for song and story telling, the approach of Julio would silence them. Not even with his encouragement would they speak longer than

politeness demanded.

The camp was set in a grove, where skins stretched over poles gave them shelter. On the floor of the tent, cedar branches and more skins were heaped together to make a comfortable, spongy mattress. Not so comforting was the odor of stale perspiration and sour clothing. As the men packed together for the night, it was strong enough to make Julio wish he were back among the foul smelling sheep. Nor were the meals comforting. They were invariably the same--atole, a mush of unbolted flour--unless someone was fortunate enough to kill a deer or an antelope with his bow.

Cristo had given Julio a rifle to carry with him, and instructions not to waste his ammunition on game. He knew the men sometimes grumbled behind his back, when they were unsuccessful with their bows, but Julio remembered Cristo's advice and waited for the Apache, though a week might pass without meat.

The Indian was more than a menace to life. He gripped the land like a winepress, squeezing out his needs at the expense of the Mexican. To the north, the Arapahoe and Ute ruled the high mountain country. The Navajo controlled the west. But most bothersome of all was the Apache to the south and east. Travel into Mexico or anywhere was a danger. Worse, however, in the estimation of the landowners, the Indian was a great financial burden. Thousands of

sheep were lost each year. But the Indian was too clever to take all the sheep in a herd. Some had to be left behind for seed, so the Indian could return again and make his harvest. With a minimum of effort he grew fat from the labor of the Mexican. To the peon guarding the herds, the threat of losing his scalp to the dreaded Apache helped him forget the worry of the dons who danced at the bailes in Santa Fe.

The first Apache raid came and went without Julio's being aware of it.

During the night the Apache crept in and reduced one of the flocks by a tenth without detection. It was all the more embarrassing to Julio, for he had been one of the watchmen. By morning, when an accounting had not been made for the missing animals, Julio was sure Don Antonio already had the news at his breakfast table. Although it no longer made a difference whether he pleased the Don or not, Julio did not want Molano to have the satisfaction of seeing him fail as a sheep herder. He began to plan for the next attack.

His proposal to the mayordomo that the Apache be brought out into the open was met with the horrified shaking of heads.

"No, for God's sake, no, senor," the mayordomo said.

"It would be throwing stones at a hornet's nest."

"The Indian must live, too," said a peon. "Let him have what he wants if he means no harm to us."

"After all, Senor Molano has lost no more to the Apache than he would give to one of his mistresses," said another. "You have not fought Apaches, have you, senor?"

Julio could not blame the peons. Don Antonio talked a great deal about clearing the ranges of Indians, but he never said he intended to do it himself. He sat in the safety of his house and said that it was a job for an aggressive government. Julio noticed that the farther away he was removed from Santa Fe, the less he heard rancheros talk of how they were going to clear the country of savages. The peons were unafraid to tell him plainly that they did not intend to do it.

A week later, shortly after noon, a party of six Apaches rode out of a thicket into a herd, where the mayor-domo had gone to look after a limping ewe.

The overseer turned back to camp, running frantically ahead of them, trying to reach an area of safety where he could be defended. But before he could come within range of Julio's rifle, an Apache rode up behind him and put an arrow through his neck. He fell into a cloud of dust and the echoing of his screaming died away.

The loss of the mayordomo threw the peons into confusion. Some threw aside their bows and ran higher into

the mountains, while others crawled into the tent and prayed loud enough to drown out the cries of the retreating Apaches. When Julio finally succeeded in bringing them under control again, they were asking him what should be done. He was their leader.

Taking several peons with him, Julio went out to the mayordomo. He had not seen death so close before. Cristo had told him that no man dies until he is sick of life, that he welcomes it then like a desert traveler coming upon a water hole. But not the mayordomo. His hands clutched at the shaft behind his neck in one last frantic struggle with death. His face was hideously misshapen by pain and fear, the kind of fear a small boy experiences when he must travel a dark road without company. The great birds of the desert rose up, flapping their wings raucously, each vying with the other to be closest to the feast when the men went away. Julio had the mayordomo carried back near the tent for burial.

To the herders it would have been some consolation to take scalp for scalp. But the Mexican usually lost his without gaining revenge. Apache trophies were extremely rare. The man who claimed one was justly proud. Governor Armijo paid a bounty on Apache ears. Strung on a string they decorated the Palace of the Governors.

Julio argued his point with the peons for several

days. If only they fought back, he told them, the Apache soon would go elsewhere for his sheep and their lives would be more secure. At length they gave in to him.

Julio's plan called for him and five peons with bows to go into the herds far from camp. They had to go at night so the Apache would not receive warning. Each man would tie his lazo to a sheep until a protective ring was drawn around them.

Lying on their backs, they waited throughout the day with a hot sun shining down. Julio felt the scorching of his flesh as it stretched taut over his face. His mouth burned with thirst. He longed to jump up and exercise his cramped arms and legs. Even though the Indian did not come they had to wait until darkness before returning to the camp.

Two more days they lay in the sun, choking from thirst and the stench of the animals held close to them, and the Apache did not come. Julio was ready to give up after another try, and agree with Cristo that a dog could not lift its leg in this country without the Apache knowing it.

On the third day, near sundown, a dozen Apaches swarmed down on them. Julio had the peons wait until the last possible moment before releasing the sheep.

Julio fired first, bringing down the lead brave. An

arrow ripped into the stomach of the rider behind him and he rolled from his mount. The other bowmen were not so successful. The Apaches whirled around, not stopping to take count of the enemy, and rode away into the hills.

One rider stayed behind and jumped from his horse to pick up the Indian that had been struck with the arrow. It was the worst sort of degradation for an Indian to have his body fall into the hands of his enemy, and Julio figured the rider to be very close to the brave, maybe a brother. He had no delight in raising his rifle once more, to hit the rider just as he mounted his horse with his burden. Both of them fell to the ground and lay still.

The peons were jubilant and came running from the camp. Julio believed if their shooting had not been successful, at least their shouting was loud enough to scare away the Apache for several days. Soon an argument sprang up that he had to settle. He ruled that the five who were brave enough to accompany him should have the honor of scalping and removing the ears. His ruling was accepted without further argument.

The peons lengthened his name. Don Julio, el mayor-domo. He had gone so many years without a surname that the jumbled title could not be repeated too often for his ears. The peons began to wait on him like servants and asked how soon it would be before he allowed them to hunt Apaches again.

A similiar ruse a month later brought six more Apache ears back to camp. Then the boredom of unbroken routine settled over the range. Julio had done his job too well. The Apache had moved on to other, easier flocks.

But loneliness no longer bothered him. He was too occupied with his new duties to miss the comradeship of men, and during his walks alone through the mountains he came to realize that this life suited him better than any other. Here it made no difference if he were don or peon. In this country the man who could fight back and win against nature was free. He spent much of his time dreaming of the high mountain country north of Taos, where his father had squatted on the Spanish land grants, and promised himself to make the trip someday.

At first he worried that Don Antonio would send out a replacement after hearing that his mayordomo had been killed. When word did not come from the Don, he was anxious for the safety of the messenger he had sent back to Santa Fe. So long as he had to serve Molano, he hoped it could be in his present capacity where he had all the freedom and privileges that the Don enjoyed at home.

But as June came on, he woke to his responsibilities. He had been with the Don and Cristo on many sheep drives. The dangers and work envolved in driving sheep called for a mayordomo who had spent all his life with the herds. Julio almost wished that the Don had sent a replacement.

And as time drew short, he waited eagerly for instructions.

The last possible day for beginning the move arrived, without word from Don Antonio.

Julio gave the command.

A hundred thousand sheep began moving down into the valley, lifting a giant cloud of dust made red by the rising sun. The peons darted in and out among them, shouting and striking with their lazos at the sheep which did not want to cooperate with the new mayordomo. And there was so great a roaring in the valley that Julio feared the ancient stone cliffs would shatter to bits. He pulled the serape up to his nose and fought for breath in the dust and stink. The animals stretched out before him like an endless rope, twisting and turning. And Julio was reminded of the small boy in Santa Fe who burned the church to ruins, because he liked to watch fire.

## 2

The shearing of sheep was a community affair, and everyone turned out to mix work with one of the year's festive occasions.

Julio was mentioned everywhere. Peon children crowded around him to hear how he had slain the Apache raiders. Their elders listened, too, and respectfully called him Don Julio.

Proudest of all was Cristo. He mingled through the crowd and seeing a stranger would lead him over to meet his

son. Cristo said that not even he had driven sheep with such little loss, and though everybody knew this to be false, he kept repeating the claim loudly. No one within earshot could have doubted that his son was the marvel of all New Mexico. However, Julio's reputation had already been made with the Molano peons, when the messenger came and presented to Don Antonio the first three trophies and the news of the mayordomo's death. But with Julio's arrival in the latter part of June with the sheep and a string of twelve Apache ears, his name was mentioned in salas and peon quarters all over Santa Fe.

Late in the afternoon Cristo came to him carrying a bundle. "A long time ago," he said, "something happened that you do not know."

Julio stood up straight. He was almost afraid to speak.

"The Dona?"

Cristo laughed. "No, the Dona is the same as ever, sadly underloved, but no worse. It is about the gringo. The blond tejano you captured for the soldiers. Do you know the family of Don Arrio Parra?"

"No. But the Don used to visit Parra's wife in his younger days."

"Younger days!" Cristo snorted. "The Don looks for younger women! Back to the point. Don Arrio has a young daughter whose body is so wonderful that Pepa gets jealous

every time I close my eyes."

"So the Don has taken a fancy to the second generation?"

"Let me finish. When Don Arrio got word of the tejanos coming to take Santa Fe, he rushed his daughter Felipa to the safety of the south. Parra is a very nervous man, Julio. The rattle of a sword has the same effect on him as cathartic spring water. Of course, Don Arrio will not listen to his daughter's accusers, but it is known by all the soldiers that she helped the tejano to escape."

"Why should she turn traitor to her people?"

"Julio, Julio, you have been gone too long with the sheep," Cristo said, wagging his finger. "She is a woman. The tejano is a man. Love, Julio, love! The soldiers remembered how he threatened you and they came to warn the Don."

"It was considerate of the Don to warn me," Julio said bitterly. "I might have had a chance to save my life."

Cristo patted him on the arm. "Don't be hard on the Don, Julio. He has been very good to both of us."

"Maybe he did not want me to be warned."

"No, Julio. He did not want you to worry. He had me watch for the tejano, in case the coyote should come back.

But he never came. The desert probably got him. He could not have lived without food or water. You are too hard on the Don, Julio. You do not trust him enough."

"Why should I trust him? The Don would have my pay piece by piece for the clothing I wore while under his care. I must spend my life working to pay debts I could not be responsible for. You and I and the rest of us must work out our lives so he can play. How can a man be good and live from the labor of others? No, Cristo, I have given too much thought to his injustices to agree with you."

"It is God's will that he is a don." Cristo sat down on the bundle and motioned Julio to sit beside him.

"Thinking is good sometimes, but other times it only makes a man dizzy and old and spoils his fun. God has sent me out into His courtyard to play and have fun and be reasonably good. When it is time, God will whistle, and I shall leave my playmates and go back into my Father's house. In the meantime I am to have fun and work a little and enjoy myself. I cannot enjoy myself, Julio, if I must question this and that like the winedrinker who asks his host why he uses manure to fertilize his vineyards."

"Thinking like yours makes the Don happy. You will be no bother to him or the laws that make him a god on earth. He fears the gringos because he knows he will lose

his power if they come. I hate him, Cristo. There is nothing that could happen to him that would make me sorry. Maybe the gringos have a law against murder that is committed year by year, little by little, such as the Dona suffers."

"Get rid of your gringo ideas, Julio. I have watched over you sixteen years and I have seen you don't think and act like a man of your birth is supposed to act. It can only bring sorrow to you later."

Julio ignored the advice. "Maybe the gringos have a way of preventing a man from fooling a boy into believing that the future offers him something."

Cristo smiled. "Oh, so it would be different if you were going to be a don?"

"There is no chance now. I do not even have a name that makes me legitimate in the eyes of men."

"The Don has not deprived you of a name. He assured me you were baptised by Padre Montoya into the holy faith with all the appropriate names."

"I doubt his word."

"You are a spoiled nino!" Cristo said hotly. "You have been spoiled into impatience by your love-sick friend, the Dona."

It was the first time in Julio's memory that Cristo has raised his voice to him.

Don "Cristo, there is something you know--from the time you and the Don found me. Something you have not told me."

Cristo looked away. "You need not worry, Julio. The tejano would have perished in the desert by now."

"It is my life! I have a right to know."

"I swore to God that I would not tell."

"You swore to the Don."

"I swore to God all the same. You believe the Don is a fool. Yes, Julio, he is like me and many others. He cannot read from a book like you and the Dona. But he has more brains than you credit him with. How else could he hold on to his lands through revolutions and plots of all kinds, while not a month passes but what some rico does not fall into the debt of another? No. I will do as he says, go where he tells me to go. I believe in him. You might do the same."

"He has done no more for me than you and Pepa, only he wants payment for his services. He did not even warn me about the tejano."

"You were sent from Santa Fe. You sat out with the sheep while the Don and I waited for the tejano."

"Did he tell you this?"

"No, but for a man who cannot either read or write his name, I still have some of the sense God gave me."

Julio was silent. He did not want to believe that the

Don would lift a finger for his benefit. "But he sent me out with the Apaches where I would have less of a chance," he said, remembering his last bit of evidence. "I could have been killed by the Apaches. But I showed him, Cristo. I shot Apaches and brought his sheep home and heard everybody say I was brave."

"I do not issue rifles, Julio, because I have none to issue. Your rifle came from the Don. When I wanted to go out and help you bring the sheep back, he would not hear of credit being taken away from you." Cristo got up and opened the bundle. "Here is another gift from him."

Cristo laid out the clothes. The buckskin, the embroidered vest, the silver trimmed trousers, the other garb Julio had not seen for nearly three years.

"Maybe the Don is a fool after all," Cristo said, looking down at the rico finery. "You are to eat with him tonite."

Julio picked up the clothes. He could think of nothing to say to Cristo.

"Don't be surprised to find a gringo at the Don's table," Cristo said.

## 3

Julio guessed the gringo to be about forty, nearly twenty years younger than the Don. He was much shorter than either he or the Don, a physical characteristic Julio

thought was impossible to find among Americans. The Don introduced him as Dr. Holz.

Julio's first thought was for the Dona when he learned Holz was a physician. Except for an army surgeon there was no doctor in Santa Fe. However, Don Antonio explained that Holz was not in active practice. He had lived in Santa Fe a year gathering material for a book he was going to write when he got back to the United States. Julio was relieved, whether for the sake of the Dona or that the Don had not changed enough for him to be wrong, he was not sure.

"Be on your good behavior, Julio, or we shall appear as prize oddities in Dr. Holz's book," Molano said.

Holz shook his head good-naturedly. "No, Senor Molano, I do not intend to write that sort of book. I want my people to get to know your people and country and appreciate them as I do."

Holz was completely whiskered, with a chin beard, mustache and sideburns, all a fiery red. Not a hair grew on his head. Julio was amused by the reflection of a candle that bobbed up and down on his bald head as he spoke.

Within a very short time Julio forgot Holz was a gringo. Together with Don Antonio he laughed at the doctor's subtle wit and listened intently as Holz told of his travels. Julio was surprised that Holz actually was German. It did not seem possible that a country could be

made up of men from all lands.

"Yes, I am a sort of adopted son to America. In fact, Don Antonio, we are related. My grandmother was part Spanish."

Julio was delighted to see the Don's pure blood rush into his face. He waited for the Don to retaliate beneath the courtesy he had to offer his guest.

"Tell me, Senor Holz, if the americano you picture is more real than the traders we Mexicans see, why does he not appear?"

Holz laughed. "I can very well imagine you are sick of our traders. I am embarrassed with them myself, senor. But you will have to take my word for it. They are not too representative of Americans, although it is a national characteristic that one American in a foreign land can be a gentleman, while two of them begin to look upon everyone about them as foreigners."

Julio smiled at the answer. Don Antonio rolled a cigarette in silence.

"I am anxious to see the Senora," Holz said. "She is better, I hope."

Julio was glad Holz mentioned the Dona. He had not seen her since his return. Out of custom, she could not eat with the Don's guests, but now that Holz had expressed a desire to see her, Don Antonio was obligated to produce

her. When Maria came in with more wine, Molano told her to have the Dona come into the sala.

She was thinner and seemed more tired, but the smile she wore was a reminder to Julio of the beautiful woman of earlier days. Holz evidently had become a regular visitor, for the Dona Adela came and embraced the doctor.

Then she came to Julio to hold him tightly and kiss him.

The Don, embarrassed by what he thought to be an emotional orgy, tried to turn Holz's attention to the problems of cattle raising.

"Pobrecita," the Dona said so faintly that Julio had trouble in hearing, "poor little thing, how much you have been missed. I remembered you in my prayers, and now you have not only come back to me, but come back as a hero. Tomorrow we shall laugh and sing again, Julio."

The Don could not let the scene pass without comment. "In writing your book, Senor Holz, I hope you will not assume that the foolish softness of our women is also found in our men. If that were the case, our civilization would have perished long ago."

The Dona took her cue and started to leave.

"Oh, no, senora, please stay if you wish," Holz said.

"My last visit was very pleasant because of your presence."

The Dona looked almost frantically eager to remain,

Julio thought. Don Antonio did not ask her to leave.

For this and other courtesies Holz extended to the Dona throughout the evening, he won Julio's enthusiastic approval. However, Julio found that courtesy was only partially behind the American's desire for her to remain, for it took effort for him to keep from appearing openly bored with the Don's conversation. While the Don tried in vain to move the conversation back to livestock and politics, Holz and the Dona discussed Cervantes and the history of Europe. Julio was fascinated by the range of the doctor's knowledge, and for the first time he saw the Dona's wit light up brilliantly from the spark Holz had brought into the dark boredom of her life.

Don Antonio could stand his isolation no longer.

"Senor Holz, did you say you intend to explore the entire country before returning to your home?"

"Yes, Senor Molano, already I have been to Chihuahua and I hope to go again, also to visit Sonora. Then I wish to go into the mountains north of Taos."

"About sixteen years ago I visited that country," Don Antonio said. "Of course, the real authority on Arapahoe country is Julio. He was born there."

Holz showed interest, but the Don did not go further into Julio's background.

"So if you need a guide who knows everything, I sug-

gest you take him along."

The Dona was shocked. "But, Antonio, the boy has barely escaped from the Apaches and you want to expose him to the Arapahoes!"

"From what I have heard, senora," Holz said, "it is the Indian who should fear the boy. Senor Julio has quite a reputation in Santa Fe. The governor, I know, was very happy to make an addition to his collection."

"Please, Senor Holz," the Dona pleaded. "You could not use him. He is just a boy, barely eighteen, who knows nothing of mountains. The poor little--"

Don Antonio glared her into silence.

"As I was saying, Senor Holz," the Don continued, "The season is slack and the time has come when I must reduce my working force. He is at your disposal."

Julio's feelings were divided. But the chance to travel with Holz was an exciting prospect that helped him forget that the Don still considered him as a peon who could be sent to work wherever he pleased.

"Thank you for your generous offer," Holz said. "But I shall respect the Senora's wishes."

"At least he might be some use to you in your work in this vicinity," the Don replied. "Please use him. I assure you, senor, that you would be doing the Dona and me a great honor and service."

Holz glanced uncomfortably at the Dona. "Well, I guess no harm would be done." He turned to Julio. "What do you say to it, senor? I should not like to drag you into something you have no appetite for."

Having his opinion asked for surprised Julio so much that he could hardly answer. "Yes, I should like it very much, senor."

"Very well, but I can use you only here in Santa Fe. I shall call for you in the morning."

"No," said Don Antonio. "Julio shall call at your quarters, Senor Holz."

After the visitor left and the Dona had retired, Don Antonio poured another cup of wine for Julio and gave him permission to smoke, the greatest privilege he could extend.

"Well, were you surprised to find a gringo here?" he asked.

"Yes, senor, I was."

"What do you think of him?"

"Holz is a better gringo than the traders," Julio replied guardedly.

"That is your trouble, Julio. You see and yet you see nothing. An americano is not polite out of custom but for a purpose. Holz is here to map the country for the gringo army. The officials are too stupid to know it, but a gringo

of Holz's intelligence and background would come for nothing else. Why would a doctor not be home practicing his art? The answer is obvious, Julio. Holz is a spy."

Julio was not surprised at the Don's conclusions. Molano saw intrigue in everything and planned to outmaneuver it with intrigue of his own. Yet this time Julio believed the Don had made some good observations, although he could not share his alarm.

"Holz has been invited into my house these past months not out of my growing softness for gringos, but that I might observe him and get to know the americanos. Our country has made a grave error in not getting to know the United States. One of these days, I fear, a gringo army will come down out of the north, and we will not know how to combat them, except with men and guns. If we could learn their weaknesses and strength, we should have an easier defense of our property. For this reason only--believe me, I cannot be vile enough with my countrymen who court the favor of the gringo--I have made it my special project to observe closely the man I most fear in Santa Fe. But there are certain limitations. Did you notice how cleverly he avoided the line of conversation I was trying to lead him into? He is clever all right. He comes to eat and then almost immediately he asks for the Dona that he might talk about nonsense instead of providing inform-

ation for me."

"I noticed how much the Dona enjoyed talking with Holz. It is good she has this diversion."

"For years you and the Dona have fawned over each other, paying such glowing compliments to each other that you cannot see danger or reality or what the future must bring. You have heard people say, perhaps, that the Dona is a bright woman. I know you believe it, because God knows she must have pounded it into your head enough. But does she see danger in Holz? Oh, no! She thinks he is a bright, little man who is very good at talking nonsense."

"Maybe she is also observing him."

"Julio, you are a good herder of sheep. I am afraid I can say no more for you. You are so stubborn in your love for the Dona that you cannot admit she is a fool in many respects."

"Yes, perhaps she is a fool," Julio said. Why she was a fool, he did not dare tell the Don.

"Well, so you do have some sense, at least enough to see my position? As I said, I cannot do any more with Holz. Besides, I do not care for him ever to come into my house again. I hate the man even more than his loud-mouthed countrymen. He is slick, underhanded. I do not trust him in my house. That was the reason I pushed you into his service. You can watch him and be with him constantly, with-

out the handicap I had to work under."

"I am to spy on Senor Holz?"

"Of course. I am releasing you from all your duties so you can watch him. You are to come back once a day to tell me what he has been doing. And if you have the chance, talk him into letting you go north with him. I have more land there than you have seen from one spot. It is rich country and the gringos will do anything to try to get it away from us."

Julio listened more carefully, to see if the Don had made a slip of speech.

"Work with your hands has done you good, Julio. You are ready to go north with Holz. I should not doubt but what you will have to defend him, too. You are ready for that country, Julio. Now you are ready for work. Watch him closely. Don't let him help the gringos take either the land to the north or the land here away from us."

The Don made ready to go to bed. Julio stood in his way, waiting for instructions.

"Well, go now. You have work to do in the morning."

Julio left the sala and walked across the courtyard to Cristo's. In the dark, he stepped on and woke two of the children before he could reach Pepa to tell her he was home again.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

Most of Holz's activities, Julio found, was confined to the marketing of goods his partners carried over the Santa Fe Trail from Missouri. In assisting Holz take inventory of his wagons the first time, Julio was not so sure but that he would find guns and swords and other tools of conquest.

But when Holz held up a dress to model it for him, Julio laughed, not so much at the American's antics as he did at the wild fears of Don Antonio.

The wagons were crammed with everything but what a conqueror would need. There were fabrics of calico, cambric, cotton, pongee, silk and muslin; odds and ends such as bonnet ribbons, silk shawls, handkerchiefs, women's white cotton hose, hickory shirts, satin jeans, cotton thread, hooks and eyes, ivory combs, coat buttons, needles and pins, suspenders, candlewick, brass nails, iron spoons, padlocks, tacks, hoes, spades, and an assortment of deadly pocket knives and scissors.

The remainder of Holz's time was occupied with what Don Antonio would have called laziness. He read some, and walked about the streets, dropping by to watch the Mexicans and Americans gamble at monte or in the cock pits. He took Julio with him everywhere, always finding time to tell him something he had read or an interesting story or an account

of some place he had visited. But something the Don had noted about the gringo was true. Out of the sala he dropped his fine manners. Julio was amazed to learn that a difference existed between a man who spoke and gestured good deeds and a man who actually did them. Holz treated the men who worked for him with fairness, paid them a good wage, and most surprising of all, took his meals with them. Holz never ordered Julio to work, never moved from one place to the other without asking his opinion. Moreover, after his opinion was given, the gringo gave it thought and sometimes followed his suggestion.

The day passed quickly for Julio. He had enjoyed himself immensely. Boyhood had failed to provide a man whom he could look up to in hero-worship. By the time he and Holz parted for the evening, the doctor had fulfilled this need. Julio was sure the Don's charges were false, but one way or the other, he liked the American and made up his mind to serve him.

His first impulse was to tell the Don that his fears were groundless. But he knew there was nothing he could gain from this. In the first place, the Don would resent being called an old woman. In the second place, he was having too much fun to go back to sheep herding.

"Well, what have you learned?" the Don asked eagerly, when he appeared in the sala that night.

"Holz may be all you think he is. But he is clever!

It may take months before I can win his confidence."

The Don gripped his arm warmly and gave him a cup of wine before he retired to Cristo's.

At the end of several nights of reporting, and a few fanciful bits of intelligence, the Don thought it unnecessary to send him away. He was given a mattress in the sala.

During the times when there were no caravans arriving in Santa Fe, Julio was studying. It had started with Holz's mentioning some fact and Julio's asking a question that led further into the matter, until Julio, unknowingly, was studying again, this time neither wanting nor getting rewards for a good recitation. Holz ranged over a variety of subjects, from the problems of the Santa Fe Trade to desert plant and wild life. Julio had found someone at last who could tell him why it rained and why the gringos had iron to waste while the Mexicans had so little. The American taught him a little English each day so he could talk with the traders who were too stubborn to use the native language. Julio could tell that Holz was proud of his government, from the long discourses he gave on the freedoms americanos enjoyed. In his country, Holz claimed, a man could not be jailed or forced into peonage for his debts. But Julio did not let him slip by without argument. What about the Negro in the South? Julio asked, remembering Don Antonio's favorite point. Was it not true that black

men were slaves until they died, whether they were in debt or not? Holz shifted the lesson to European geography.

There were other, more practical lessons to be learned. Tobacco could be chewed as well as smoked. In card games with americanos, it does not pay to be too trusting. If a man was too polite with gringos they will think he is effeminate. A silver coin was more than an ornament. All women were not to be respected as much as the Dona. Some women, in fact, did not like to be respected. Some women loved you. Others loved your money. It was about the same. Both kinds wanted something a man hated to part with. Now and then you could find a woman who simply liked to have a good time with a man. But they were rare. The trick is to have your eyes do the loving, without saying or writing it. American whiskey was not made to be drunk like red wine.

To the amusement of Holz, Julio found the last his most painful lesson. A messenger had to be sent to tell Don Antonio that Julio would not be home that night--for he was going to look at morning stars with the doctor. Thus Julio was saved from the humiliation of having to go home. Nothing was more degrading to the Mexican than the drunkenness which the Americans had introduced. Julio vowed not to slip again.

The Americans' greatest friend in Santa Fe was Don Arrio Parra. He helped them store and dispose of their goods. If he cheated them a little, as Holz said, it was a small price to pay for the miracles he arranged with the officials at customs.

Julio was anxious to visit Parra, not to enter into the business activity which centered in his house, but to see his daughter, the girl whom Cristo had been so enthusiastic about. If it were true, as Cristo said, that she was fond of gringos, Julio could not exactly point to himself as a more sincere patriot.

"So you are the Apache hunter!" Parra exclaimed, when Holz introduced Julio to him. "You were brave. Very, very brave. You must have some exciting stories to tell. In a moment, I shall be back to hear them." With that, he darted off to a group of Americans sitting close to the fireplace.

Parra was almost a head shorter than Holz. He flitted about the room, shaking hands with Americans and keeping their cups filled. Julio did not see him once take his seat. The Dona, on the other hand, was a shapeless heap of fat that never moved. When she opened her mouth to talk, she showed toothless gums. Julio wished Don Antonio would have had the good fortune to marry this once favored mistress of his.

Felipa Parra, however, was all Cristo had claimed.

She sat on the floor, a favorite position with the women, stretching out her long, slender legs. When a gringo passed close by, her rebozo was allowed to slip from her head so he could see her smooth features and beautiful hair. Her dark eyes would follow him until another gringo came into closer range. When Don Arrio called all the Americans together at the other end of the sala, she rolled a corn-husk cigarette to while away her boredom.

Since his arrival, Julio watched her intently. He had never before come into the society of women ricos, except for the very few who called at the Molano house. Girls from peon families, with few exceptions, had not appealed to him. They were too much Indian and had short, thick legs. If God had given them a pretty face, small pox had marred it before they matured. The prostitutes of Santa Fe were of the same class, driven to the last resort when their peon fathers died, taking with them their daughters' only respectable means of livelihood. Indian slaves did the household work for ricos, leaving but one choice for peon girls who did not marry young. Julio had seen rico daughters before, but at a distance. Their fathers guarded them severely to preserve the family honor. So great were the safeguards to preserve her virginity that the rico girl looked forward to the day of her more or less unrestricted freedom, the day when she married.

Her husband would be too busy with his mistresses to care much for the romantic attachments she made. Julio had seen an occasional pretty figure to remind him that a man could not live comfortably among sheep and horses forever. But Felipa Parra was the most fascinating woman he had ever seen. When he was sure neither she nor her mother was watching, he looked again at her legs, bare to an inch above her knees, and wished desperately for an introduction.

Felipa had finished rolling the cigarette. She rapped her knuckles on the floor in frustration because a servant did not respond immediately with a coal from the oven.

A gringo, Julio knew, would go to the oven for her, whether introduced to her formally or not. He wished to do the same. But he was not yet a gringo. The Dona Adela would have said no, except if the senorita were in distress. At the end of several minutes, when a servant had not yet appeared, Julio decided she was truly in distress. He made his way out to the oven and came back with a coal held between two pine twigs.

Leaning toward him, she exposed a gold crucifix held snugly between her fully rounded breasts. She puffed heavily until the cigarette lighted and then looked up to thank him. She had to laugh.

Her laughing abruptly drew Julio's eyes back to hers.

"Did I hear my father say you were an Apache hunter?"

"Yes, I am the one," he replied, eager to impress her.

"You have been standing behind me so I have been unable to see you." She looked him over carefully. "You have nothing to be ashamed of, senor."

Julio could think of nothing better to say. He told the mother how much he was impressed with the nice weather.

The mother dabbed at her perspiring forehead and grunted. She did not approve of either gringos or gringo manners.

"Have you been here before?" Felipa asked.

"No, Senorita Parra, this is my first visit."

"Then we can look forward to your returning again."

She smiled. "When can we expect you?"

Holz appeared just then.

"Of course, Senorita Parra, he will be back many times again. But not for awhile. He has to be my guide through Arapahoe country for the rest of the summer. You know, of course, he is a renowned Indian fighter."

Julio looked up with surprise and saw the doctor was barely able to conceal a smile.

Even the mother turned to Julio and showed interest.

"I believe I shall have the very best guide available," Holz said.

Felipa edged closer to Julio, until he could smell the fresh sweetness of her perfume.

"But aren't you afraid, senor?" she asked.

Julio was fumbling for an answer when Holz rescued him.

"Senora, senorita, a really brave man cannot answer questions of his bravery before two such beautiful ladies. Late in the summer, however, I shall have the hero with me again, and he will give in his own modest way a full account of his deeds in the north country."

Both women giggled.

Don Arrio joined the group.

"Now, Don Julio, you must tell me about those dreadful Apaches."

Julio was embarrassed with the title, even more so when an American came in and Parra introduced him as Don Julio Molano. After another prompting by Don Arrio, he began to tell of his adventures with the Apaches, directing his remarks to Parra and his eyes to Felipa.

"Oh, by the way, Holz," Parra interrupted, "did you know Don Julio here is the ward to about the richest man in the country? Wealthy beyond my imagination! Go ahead, Don Julio. Sorry to stop you."

Julio was hesitant in beginning again. The rudeness of Parra irked him. But he saw Felipa was more interested than ever. He started again--only to be stopped by an American across the room who called Don Arrio's attention to his empty cup. Parra ran away to find a servant.

"Another time, ladies, late in the summer, you will hear the continuation," Holz said, motioning Julio to follow him.

After the dark coolness of the sala the brilliance of the outside was blinding and the blast of hot air, suffocating. Julio walked beside Holz and for a long time he did not speak.

"I am very happy to go north with you, Senor Holz," Julio said at last. "But I did not know it until just a moment ago."

Holz laid a hand on his bald head to protect it from the sun. "Neither did I," he replied, winking. "But I had to give you a boost with Felipa somehow. Can you get the Don's permission and be ready in the morning?"

## 2

The Dona Adela was unhappy with the news, but when Julio told her how much he wished to go, she patted his hand and nodded her approval.

"As the Don says, senora, in a way I am going home."

Molano sat at the table and drew a rough sketch. "For the sake of Almighty God, Julio, do not blabber to Holz that I own this land. He knows I have a grant, but he does not know exactly where." With a heavy forefinger he pointed out the spot where he had had Julio's parents buried. "If Holz can follow any map at all, he should be able to take

you to the very spot. Also, take a good look across the river. From this place on the mountain look east and everything you see across the river is mine. But do not tell the gringo. He is going to make maps and take notes on the wealth for his American masters. I cannot stop him. But you need give him no information that will make his task any easier. On the whole, however, I believe we are getting the better part of the bargain. You will be able to capitalize on the safe passage the Arapahoe usually gives to gringos. You will be able to come back and give me two things I want to know. First, what Holz did and said. Second, how soon you think it will be before we can settle the grant."

The Don gave him his best rifle, bought from a gringo, a good knife, and allowed him to pick the horses he wanted. Don Antonio embraced him, a gesture Julio was not prepared for, and wished him well.

Then the Don went out for the night. Although he was nearing sixty, Don Antonio was not ready for a comfortable, easy night in the sala.

The Dona too, Julio thought, had not quite developed the emotions for a woman of her age. She looked over his head, as he tried to talk with her, watching the door as a young girl might, watching and waiting for the return of her amante.

"Please don't worry about my safety, senora," Julio said. "I have confidence in Senor Holz."

The Dona smiled weakly. "And so have I, Julio--both in God and Senor Holz. This must be a moment of happiness for you. Please don't let the worryings of an old woman dampen your joy. I know you are anxious to see where you lived and the resting place of your mother. God forgive me, Julio, but I have envied your mother. No, not that she died. But that she had you as a baby all to herself for two wonderful years, uninterrupted by other demands. Never feel too sorry for her, Julio, that her life was cut short, for those were two wonderful years for her, something she would not have traded for a lifetime of loneliness." The Dona paused to rest. "See, Julio, I am an old woman. I cannot talk long anymore without resting. In choosing a wife you might remember that the old women talk less. Have you ever thought of taking a wife?"

"No, senora, I have not," Julio lied. He had trouble in keeping his mind on the Dona's words, for in the dark corners of the sala he saw nothing but Felipa and the gold crucifix.

"I hope she will be a fine woman, Julio."

"When the time comes, senora, I shall have you choose for me."

"Did you notice, Julio--the way the Don talked before he left? Do not be surprised if he does the choosing. And

if he does, you will know he has plans for you. A father always takes the trouble to choose a good wife for his heir. There is one thing more I wish to say before you leave. The Don would have you do one thing with Holz, and I, another. Listen to him and learn. He is a brilliant man, Julio. There is much to be learned from him. Another man such as Holz may not come again, and if he does, you might be too old to learn. Question him, show interest in what he has to say so he will know you as a bright boy and be willing to teach you. He represents a new force in our world. The power of Spain is dead. And Mexico is dying. Face the future with brightness, Julio. Our Lord in Heaven looks after you."

The Dona was too weak to sit up any longer. Julio helped her into the corner near the fireplace where she had her mattress.

"Pobrecita," she said, holding him tightly, "do not worry when you come back. I shall pray that you will be cared for."

## 3

Julio had believed they would creep silently through Arapahoe country until the ultimate moment when they would have to fight or perish. But he was on an expedition of another kind. Holz pushed openly through the country, staying on established Indian trails and taking no precautions

whatsoever. Holz gave no outward indication of fearing this journey any more than the ride between Santa Fe and Taos.

At Taos they had searched for a guide. The only Mexican available who had any experience at all was an old man named Guido, and he had not been far back into the mountains for nearly a score of years. Holz agreed to take him nevertheless, and a younger man, Gomez, for labor.

Julio believed he had never seen a man quite so pessimistic as Guido. The old man shook his head at Holz's foolishness and prayed a great deal.

"The last man I went with was not such a fool," Julio overheard him tell Gomez. "Make your peace with God. If all goes well, we shall be in Heaven within the week."

Early one morning, before they could load their burros, Julio thought Guido's fears were about to be realized.

Six Arapahoes stood before them. Not even the cautious Guido had heard their approach.

Holz walked up to them, extending a handful of iron spoons, and asked to be conducted to the tribal chief. He looked pathetically small beside the Arapahoe braves, Julio thought. But his hands were without a tremor as he motioned his wishes.

Throughout the remainder of that day, continuing until the late afternoon of the next, they rode with the Indians,

gaining more riders as they went along, until they reached the settlement, where they were surrounded by hundreds of curious Arapahoes.

Guido took consolation in the hope of a speedy, merciful death. Gomez was too frightened to think.

So long as Holz was with him, Julio was uneasy but not afraid. Why he should have confidence in such a small, frail man, he did not know. But the time came when Holz had to leave, to confer with the chief and the tribal elders. He took with him a new Colt pistol which he concealed under his shirt.

Julio spent an anxious hour. He remembered too well Cristo's account of Arapahoe cruelty. Not even the great beauty of the mountains and the forests could distract him.

Finally, Holz returned, grinning.

"Good," Julio said. "You did not need the pistol."

"Oh, yes. An Indian is a great deal like a woman, Julio. It takes time and, unfortunately, a hell of an expensive gift."

Once peace had been made with the tribe, Holz was given the freedom of the Arapahoe nation. They headed out again, and Holz agreed to take Julio to the place he wished to see on the homeward journey.

In the distance, rising up through what appeared to be a mass of low, dark clouds, Holz spotted the great white

peak and called Julio's attention to it. They stopped a moment, in reverent tribute to its magnificence.

"If I am not wrong, that must be Lieutenant Pike's peak," Holz said.

"Lieutenant who?"

"Pike. An officer of the United States Army who discovered the peak. He explored this entire country."

"When?"

"At the beginning of the century. About forty years ago."

Julio laughed at Holz's earnestness. He could not help it.

"We Spanish people saw it over two hundred years before your Senor Pike."

Holz's face twisted into a frown, and then he burst out laughing. "To tell you the absolute truth, Julio, I even doubt if Pike climbed the mountain. But we gringos would like to find something to claim. Do not blame us for trying."

Contrary to what Julio had been told, the mountains were alive with human activity. A day seldom passed that they did not meet a gringo engaged in either trapping or prospecting for silver and gold. These gringos were a lot like the traders, wild, uncouth--and drunk whenever whiskey was available. Most of the Americans had taken Indian

women to live with them, and a very few were married. The gringos did not claim an easy life. They denied, however, that they were in any greater danger than the peons herding sheep a few miles from Taos.

One trapper had lived in the mountains for over twenty years. Julio pressed him for information about his father and mother. The trapper could not remember a Mexican ever coming into the mountains. A few of the trappers, he recalled, had married Mexican women. He was of no further help.

Julio envied the gringos. They lived free in a land where it rained often and trees grew tall, where civilization and its masters were slow to come. A man could grow rich by cultivating the valleys and grazing his flocks on the abundant grass of the mountain slopes. He realized, however, that when the land became safe enough to guarantee the lives of the dons, they would come to claim it, to work and rule over the men who had won the land with their own labor. It was not just. A man who was entitled to the land should have to come in with little or nothing, building up from the bottom the wealth he wanted to make, working with his own hands. His own, God-made, calloused hands. Hands!

"Did you say something about hands?" Holz asked.

"I must have been thinking aloud."

Julio debated whether to tell Holz. Finally, he could wait no longer. He had to have Holz's opinion on the revelation that had just come to him. He began his story in the beginning.

Holz listened carefully. And at the end of his story, the doctor took several minutes before answering.

"Yes, I suppose you have some foundation for believing you will be adopted by Don Antonio. Naturally, most of the dons or their sons are much too soft for this life. I have heard Molano say he had a grant up here somewhere. Do you know where?"

He hated to lie to Holz. It would have been much easier to lie to Don Antonio. But he shook his head and kept faith with his word.

"The more I think about it, the better your reasoning sounds. If the Don had adopted you immediately, he could not have sent you into manual tasks without breaking down rico traditions."

"And when I left, the Don said, 'Don't let them take it away from us!'"

"By 'them' he means the Americans?"

"Yes," Julio said, embarrassed for his slip.

"You need not worry, Julio. My burros are loaded enough for this trip. There are a few things you should consider, however, before you allow your hopes to rise. In the first place, I have noticed Don Antonio is proud of

his pure Spanish blood. How do you rate in this?"

"I do not have Indian features. Other than that, I do not know."

Holz suggested a scientific approach. Julio was to name all the evidence for and against his chances of adoption by Molano, and from this they would try to arrive at a solution.

Julio started with the favorable. He named several points--the slips of speech, the Don's concern for his ability to live with his hands and defend himself against Indians. He was embarrassed that they did not sound significant when repeated aloud.

"Now, let's look at the other side."

Julio believed he could have talked for the rest of the day on the evil omens. By the time he had covered just a few of the main points, he was too discouraged to carry it further.

Holz slapped him on the back.

"Oh, it's not nearly so dark as that, Julio. I should say the whole issue hinges on your blood. The Don is too sensitive about his blood to admit impurity into his family. I think we both agree on that. However, one thing is definitely in your favor. I have seen few blue eyes in Mexico, and from experience I know that dark eyes usually have a way of winning out when blood is mixed. I think you have an excellent chance. In fact, the only blue eyes

I can recall were in Spanish families. There is still another thing you have overlooked. Molano did not let you live as a peon for long, even though he had you in his debt. Do you suppose he favored you to humor the Dona?"

"I doubt it, senor. On the contrary, I believe he would do anything to hurt her."

"So I imagined. This is what I figure. Molano might be getting you ready to take over his grant up here. He was very eager for you to come with me, so you could learn the country. He could give you the grant without adopting you. He could provide for you in this way and still escape what to him must be a humiliating alternative. He does have relatives, doesn't he?"

"A brother in Taos. I have not seen Don Francisco, however. When they visit, it is always in Taos. Cristo told me that both Don Antonio and the brother are ashamed of the Dona's impurity."

"See, it ties in neatly. The brother gets all the local estates and you get the grant."

Julio had to smile. He had to restrain himself from shouting with joy. The way Holz had figured, it was very neat.

"On the other hand," Holz said to calm him, "if something goes wrong, don't worry, Julio. My government will never allow a man to claim free lands unless he works them

himself. And there are many free lands waiting for someone like you to claim them."

"But these lands are Mexico's--unless the gringos take them away. Is that what you mean, senor. I have heard many people say so. Is it true?"

Holz scratched his head and closed his eyes to think a moment. "Yes and no. A great many of your people want us to come, and a great many of my people suggest that we do. There would be a few advantages if we did, and also many, many disadvantages."

"But do you think a gringo army will come?"

"Let's talk about something more pleasant. Do you know how a captain at sea finds his way from one port to another?"

"I should prefer, senor, to know what you really think."

Holz frowned. "All right. You are intelligent enough to understand, I believe. Yes, I think a gringo army is sure to come, for a variety of insignificant reasons. Mostly because of Texas, however. If my country admits Texas as a state, Mexico is sure to object to the expansion. And if we annex Texas, we inherit all the fantastic land claims of the Texans. From such a damn mess, war is sure to follow. If one side cannot think up a good enough excuse for war, the other will. And the gringos will win, Julio, not because they are stronger or braver men. They will win because they have more iron, more guns, more horses, more men,

more money. I wish to God, Julio, that I could tell you that we shall make things better overnight, but I am not sure. We can stop peonage. But as you have reminded me, we shall bring something even more terrible with us. One thing I can assure you, however. Land will not be confiscated. And there will be land available for those who want to come up here and work their own. That is why I tell you not to fear the future, whatever it brings, for a man like yourself can win both freedom and a comfortable living. Thank Almighty God your skin is not five shades darker, Julio. You will be free."

"What would happen if I--like my father--came here and squatted now? Would I be forced off when the gringos come?"

"I don't think so, provided you were not on a land grant. The Spanish grants would be protected by treaty, I believe. But don't be so impatient, Julio. There is time yet for you to make your way in the world. I advise you to wait. You can always come here when life in Santa Fe becomes unbearable."

At night while Gomez sang to himself and Guido had nothing more sorrowful to look forward to than his return to a nagging wife, Holz and Julio were busy talking agriculture and politics and a hundred things more. In the simpler conversations, Holz insisted that Julio use English, and gradually he became fluent in the new language. Julio

followed the advice of the Dona and listened, stopping Holz only now and then for a question. Holz outlined the procedure he would adopt, if he were coming north to live on the land. Holz talked of where and how he could build a house, crops Julio had never heard of before, outlets to market, why cattle would be more important than sheep, the railroad that would come someday, the necessity of securing water rights, and all the other problems a pioneer to this country would have to solve. He stressed cooperation with gringo neighbors, the rights he would have as a citizen in a new nation, the laws he would have to respect, and what Julio thought most important of all, the comfort of a good wife.

With someone like Felipa, Julio thought, he could stay in the mountains for the rest of his life, without once returning to Taos or Santa Fe. In his dreams he had already built his house. With Felipa in his arms the long winters would pass quickly. He would not be bored. Already he wished for Holz to turn back to Santa Fe and the Parra sala. With God and Don Antonio willing, he would take Felipa back with him the next summer. Sometimes Holz woke in the middle of a cold night to find Julio's arms wrapped snugly around him, and a smile on his sleeping face. Holz would laugh until Julio woke, not to be pressed up against her full, sensous lips or the warmth of the gold crucifix, but to Holz's red beard.

By day Holz did exactly what Don Antonio said he would do. He made maps and took notes. In addition, he talked with Indians and gringos to see how they lived. He was interested even in the animals of the mountains and the trees and everything that had life. In trading stories of their troubles, Julio learned that the American was exactly what he had told Don Antonio--a writer of travel books and a dabbler in the Santa Fe Trade. His wife had died in Germany, while he was still in his twenties. He had given up his practice of medicine to come to America for a life of adventure and travel. His income for the moment was dependent upon the goods he sold, and for the future he planned to write books for adventure-hungry gringos in the East.

Had he turned out to be a spy, Julio would not have cared. He would have followed him anywhere. Nor did Julio care if a gringo army did come. So long as it would be an army of Holzes, he would welcome them.

The course of their wandering finally led them into the area covered by Don Antonio's map. Julio was impressed with the grant. It was all the Don had claimed it to be. Even Holz commented on its unusual richness, though Julio had not disclosed the owner. For a moment Julio stood where Molano had stood sixteen years before and experienced the same mixture of joy and frustration. But he was too anxious for a move across the river into the aspen grove to give more thought to it.

Although several hours of travel could have been made before dark, Holz had the burros unloaded and camp made.

Traces of the cabin still remained. Julio inspected the rock chimney Cristo had mentioned so often. He turned away from the chimney to the earth behind him and kneeled in respect to the father and mother he could not remember. He almost did not hear Guido.

"It is strange I should return to the very place," he was saying to Gomez.

"You have been here before?" Julio asked, feeling the giddiness of excitement and hope and uncertainty. "When?"

"Less than twenty years ago I dug a grave where you are standing. It was sad. Sad. Two people killed by the Arapahoes. He had been carved to bits, a very bloody mess. And she, poor woman, had burned alive, roasted tender like a young pig. It was sad indeed. But it turned out to be the only good fortune I have had in this life."

"The man you came with--was his name Molano?"

"Don Antonio Molano. I was in his service."

"How do you mean it turned out to be your good fortune?" Holz asked.

"For burying two people and moving to Taos, I was given thirty sheep and my freedom. And I have kept my freedom. But the other two who benefitted as I did were foolish and fell into peonage again. God, however, in his mercy soon lifted them from the miseries of this life."

"Why were you given sheep?" Julio asked impatiently.

Guido smiled. "I vowed not to tell, senor. I was given thirty sheep not to tell."

Julio ran to his horse and came back with the rifle Don Antonio had given him.

"Tell me, Guido, and the rifle is yours."

Guido took the rifle and inspected it carefully.

"A good rifle for such little information," Guido said, nodding to Gomez. "Really, senor, it is not worth it."

"Go on!" Holz ordered. "The rifle is yours."

"The man we buried was a gringo. That is all. His skin was as white as Senor Holz's."

## 4

Overhead, during flashes of distant lightning, they could see low, dark clouds racing in from the south. The air was heavy with the smell of rain.

Holz had wanted to push ahead, regardless of the hour they arrived. Julio was too confused to be a good companion. The return to Santa Fe and Don Antonio was a depressing prospect, and not even the thought of seeing Felipa could cheer him.

"You are sad for no good reason," Holz said. "I know it's a shock to wake up and find yourself related to such an ugly coyote. For if we aren't brothers, you know, at least we are cousins."

Julio did not reply.

"Your blood is tailor-made for the future. You are the first of a new people who will make this land great. When stock is brought into a new country, Julio, the rancher soon finds it is not adapted. So he breeds a perfect strain for the country. And the finished product is you, Julio."

"I am a gringo-greaser," Julio replied sullenly.

"No. You are a Southwesterner."

The wind picked up, blowing dust into their faces, as they parted for the night. Julio rode slowly toward the Molano hacienda, not caring greatly if it took him all night. Why he had even bothered to return, he did not know. But as soon as his chance came, he promised himself, he would go north again, alone if necessary. Santa Fe could not offer a gringo a future. Molano would be even less inclined to do so.

The hour being late, he figured the portero would be hard to rouse. But the zaguan was open.

Peon families stood silently, numbly in the courtyard, watching the sala door. Several of the women were on their knees, praying. The children, too young to respect the coming of death, looked into the sky and covered their eyes when a lightning bolt ripped out of the clouds above to make contact with the dry, powdery earth.

Maria met him on the porch.

"The Dona is dying," the Navajo said. "Padre Montoya is with her."

"And the Don?"

"Cristo has been sent for him."

Julio felt his body tremble in rage. Sorrow could come later. "Then it just happened?"

"The Dona has been dying slowly for a week, senor."

Julio went inside.

The Dona was confined to an apartment off the sala. The priest was kneeling beside her. He made room for Julio.

When Julio spoke her name, she opened her eyes, and her dry, cracked lips tried to smile. He felt her feeble effort to squeeze his hand.

"Antonio?"

"I shall get him, senora."

He bent and kissed her on the forehead.

Molano and Cristo rode through the zaguan as Julio came out on the porch. Don Antonio dismounted and walked slowly toward the house.

"I am very sorry for you," Cristo said, coming to sit beside Julio. "But for the Dona I am glad. She has lived long enough to appreciate the gift of rest and quiet."

"Rest and quiet she got in abundance from the Don," Julio said bitterly. "Where did you find him?"

"Oh, he has been very busy lately--business at all hours, Julio. I am afraid he--"

"What was her name?"

Cristo shrugged his shoulders in defeat. "Rosa."

"The Dona Rosa?"

"No. Just Rosa."

Padre Montoya joined them on the porch and announced that the Kingdom of Heaven was richer by one more. Cristo walked the padre to the gate, and joined the other peons talking in small groups. Soon they separated, going back into their homes leaving the courtyard empty and desolate.

Julio smoked alone and listened to the thunder echoing in the mountains. Then he went in, to pay his respects. But when he saw the Don sitting at the table, he turned to leave.

"Where are you going, Julio?"

"Outside. To the fresh air."

"No. Stay with me. We shall have a cup of wine together."

Julio left without excusing himself and walked to the far end of the porch, just as the first, fat raindrops hit the earth and were sucked under. Then it fell heavily, filling the courtyard with pools and rivers of running water.

From the other end of the porch, he heard the sobbing of a child. A peon child friendly with the Dona, he thought, young enough to lose his sorrow in tears. Julio stepped from behind the shelter of a pillar to go comfort him.

A flash in the sky lighted the courtyard with the bril-

liance of daylight. Julio stopped.

Standing openly in the rain, near the sala door, was Don Antonio.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

The air rose up in waves from the sun-baked earth, causing the tiny black figures on the horizon to jump and twist before Shallott's eyes. He turned and looked again. A man sometimes saw peculiar things in this country.

When the funeral procession came into view, the man beside him reached for his Colt and aimed it high over his head.

"Whee, boys!" he shouted behind him. "Lookit the goddam greasers run!"

Shallott grabbed his arm before he could fire.

"That's a funeral, for God's sake!"

Kelley squinted into the sun and watch the mourners pass in the distance, followed by a fandango band playing a lively tune. "You won't have so damn much respect for the greasers onced you've been around awhile," he said.

"I have respect for the dead."

"Respect!" Kelley hooted. "Why, they ain't even got it themselves. Look, they've come from their heathen worshipin' church where they have no respect at all for religion. They worship idols and a lot of other nonsense. See that gang of greaser musicians following 'em? I don't care if it's at their churches or at their weddings, funerals or dances, the same band plays the same tunes and at the very same speed. No, sir, the greasers have no goddam respect, not even for themselves."

"I hate greaser men as much as you, Kelley, but that's

no excuse for scaring their women at funerals."

"If you ain't been into New Mexico before, how come you hate the greasers?"

"Texas. I learned not to trust a greaser."

"But you don't want to scare their women? Texas, too?"

"Mexican women are all right."

"Sure. I'll go along with that. I can hardly wait for Santa Fe. A good-lookin' fella like yourself won't even have to give 'em a handkerchief. Someday I'm going to get my hair dyed blond to cut down on expenses."

They had had to walk alongside the wagons since leaving customs. Because the tariff was levied at a flat per wagon rate, the only sensible thing to do was to jam some of the wagons so full that the axles groaned under the strain. Shallott had enjoyed helping set fire to the other wagons, while customs officials looked on helplessly.

Kelley had a few more impatient minutes before Santa Fe came into view. He was the first to fire. Behind them more pistols and rifles were fired. From the doors of adobe buildings dark eyes peered out to see the coming of the wagons. The women rushed into their houses and washed the coating of alegria from their faces and combed their hair and put on their jewelry. In a moment they were back, surrounding the wagons.

After the overly clothed women of the States and six hundred miles of loneliness, Mexican women in their short

skirts and low-cut blouses looked good to Shallott. One of them, a voluptuous little thing, came forward to shake Kelley's hand. He removed his hat and took her hand, drawing her close up against him. He laid his cheek on hers and replaced his hat. They had met, formally.

"That's the custom!" Kelley shouted to Shallott.

"Have at it, boy!"

Two women argued for Shallott. He grabbed them both and hugged them.

"Tonight we shall have a fandango," one said. "And you will go with me, senor."

"No. He is mine!"

Shallott took out a silver dollar and explained that "heads" meant the taller one, "tails," the prettier one. He tossed the coin to the ground. "Heads." He explained it was not a fair toss since the coin had come to rest against his foot. He threw again. "Tails!" The girl agreed to meet him at the dance.

Without losing time in arguments, the taller girl ran to another gringo and entered into another competition.

"I have a brother back in St. Louis," Kelley said, shaking his head, "and he can't for the life of him see why I'd drive a wagon through six hundred miles of savages."

"What next?"

"Business."

"Then I'll have a look at the town."

"You won't see much. I'll meet you at the wagons when I come back from Parra's."

"Who?"

"Parra. Don Arrio Parra. He cheats the hell out of us, but he practically runs this show."

"Mind if I go with you?"

"No. But I thought you wanted to look around."

"You said I wouldn't see much." Shallott lighted a cigar and smiled at Kelley. "Maybe Parra will be more fun."

## 2

The Parra sala was crowded with Americans. Shallott remained in the background while Kelley joined the others crowding around Don Arrio.

A servant came and handed Shallott a cup of wine. With the confusion that reigned in the Parra household, he knew he could have come in for a drink, without having business with Parra or knowing anyone who did. Don Arrio already had shaken his hand twice, not recognizing him the second time.

Shallott had expected more luxury in a rico's house. Less than a half dozen chairs and a single table, plus a few chests for storing clothing, made up the Don's holdings in furniture. Mattresses rolled up against the wall, covered with Navajo blankets, were put down at night for beds. The few religious pictures on the walls he could not see plainly, for the mica windows were little more trans-

lucent than the adobe walls. The walls, the floor, everything but a few beams in the ceiling were made of mud. Mud had built Santa Fe.

It was a hell of a country, he thought. The Mexican was too lazy to better himself. When he was not cheating Americans, he was singing or playing or dancing. Shallott could not understand why the Mexican was satisfied with so little in life. The greasers practically looked upon money as a plague. They were lazy all right, and worthless.

Several cups later, Felipa and her mother entered the room and embraced old friends. Felipa looked at him directly, without recognizing him, and took her seat on the floor next to her mother.

He tried to be patient, to wait for the right time, but the mother would not leave.

In desperation, waiting until the servants were out of sight, he dropped his silver cup. It could have just as well landed on iron. The men in conference at the other end of the room turned to see where the clatter had come from. But his object was fulfilled. Felipa looked for a servant, and when one did not spring to his rescue, she got up and came to him.

Both of them knelt at the same time to pick up the cup. He took her hand.

"Felipa," he whispered.

Looking back to see her mother frowning, Felipa eased

her hand out of his grip. "I shall find another cup for you, senor," she said, for her mother's ear. Then she whispered, "Jaimito...but the beard?" She resisted in time an impulse to run her fingers over his smooth face.

"Here I am, Felipa."

"I was afraid you had died on the desert."

"Not all of me," he said, smiling. "Luck was with me to find you so fast, amante."

"Not luck, Jaimito. I prayed and was good. I knew you would return to me."

He longed to hold her close to him, at least for a moment, but the mother did not once turn her eyes away from them.

"To have you back is so wonderful," she said. "But for your own sake, you should not have come."

"You saw more of me than anyone. And you did not recognize me. When can we be alone, Felipa? I have waited nearly two years."

"And so have I, Jaimito."

She turned away, looking unhappy, he thought.

"Is there someone else, Felipa?"

"No. No one will do but my Jaimito. But it is not so easy here, not like it was in the south. Father is not deaf, and as you see, my mother is more watchful than Grandfather."

It was Shallott's turn to look sad. "I won't be able

to see you again?"

"It is not so dark as that. Father would not be opposed to an American suitor, I believe. You can come for chocolate in the afternoons and talk with me. If Father approves of you, you can ask for my hand. Other girls have married americanos."

"But I can never see you alone?"

Felipa shook her head. "I do not dare, Jaimito, no matter how much I want to. We are in Santa Fe. I am still living in the house of my father. You do not understand our ways. You must come in the afternoons and talk with Mother and me."

Marriage, especially into a greaser family, was not a prospect he relished. In less than twenty years, Felipa would be as fat as her mother, and as ugly. Now she was slender and beautiful and desirable, and she would stay that way for the few years he planned to be in Santa Fe. After that, he did not care how many chins she added. He did not want to be tied down, even with an American wife. He had to be free, for a few years at least. Time enough to make the fortune that could be had for the taking, by a man who was free to come and go and take the risks as he pleased. After that he would look for a wife, in Missouri.

"Felipa, I came back only to see you. I am not a wealthy man. Surely your father has plans for you to marry into wealth. Promise at least that you will try to see

me. There is a way, if we try hard enough. In the meantime I shall come to talk with you and your mother. Is that all right?"

"Wonderful, Jaimito. I shall try."

On the way back to the wagons, Kelley warned him not to get his hopes up over rico girls.

"They're sewed up tight and their papas don't give the key away until they have them married off, either," he said. "So keep your mind on the other girls and you'll have a happy time here, Jimmy boy."

## 3

The farm in Pennsylvania was neither very rich nor very large; yet, in looking back, James Shallott could not remember a time when he had wanted for food or clothing or the other requirements of life. But that was before he was twelve.

He was twelve when his father got religion. The neighbors had said it would pass. An old "heller" like David Shallott was bound to get it sometime. Other folks had got religion and had been smitten hard, they said, but sooner or later they snapped out of it before it snapped them.

Jim Shallott watched his father snap.

He sold the farm and moved his family West, where the Lord had told him to go, to preach doom for the sinful world within a year.

In St. Louis, where he had acquired a following, his father set a date--July 16, 1830--and warned his followers to prepare. Jim Shallott had been dressed in his Sunday best for this day of days. He was thirteen and took a great pride in his father's intimacy with God. Moreover, for being the son of the man who talked with God, he enjoyed a prominence among the children of the sect and was allowed to choose the games they played. David Shallott led his flock to the banks of the Mississippi, where they could take shelter in the cool waters, when the wave of fire swept over the earth to claim the uninitiated.

Another group, not far off, had turned out to watch the miracle. They had brought along their lunches and made a picnic out of the threat of damnation. With a keg of beer in their midst for comfort, they hooted at the congregation and demanded that David Shallott set a specific time.

"What time, Isaiah?" they shouted. "We don't want to be caught with a half keg on our hands."

David Shallott turned away and warned his flock not to listen. But as the abuse grew, he had to answer them. David Shallott was a big man. Never in his life had he had to take abuse from any man or any group of men.

"By three o'clock, you heathen," he yelled back at them, "your sinnin' bodies will be roastin' in Hell!"

A man from the other group stood up with a watch in his hand and began to count off the minutes. Then the seconds.

Three o'clock. A carp splashed in front of them. Nothing more.

David Shallott stood up straight amid the laughter and flying dirt clods. His followers turned away and went to their homes, but not until Jim Shallott had heard boys his own age call his father a cheat and a fake.

By the end of the day he agreed with them. Every penny his father owned had gone into the venture. And still the painted women worked at their trade, and souls were bought and sold in the market, and the breweries and distilleries added more help to keep up with an expanding America.

Independence, Missouri was in its third year when David Shallott went to work in a mercantile firm there, clerking for fifteen dollars a week. On this wage, it might have been possible for him to support his family of six, had he not taken up drinking to get even with the Lord for the way He had let him down. Jim was hired out for farm labor at ten cents an hour. In season he made enough to keep the family eating regularly. Out of season he took whatever odd jobs he could get.

He watched his mother waste away under disgrace and

poverty. On the day she died, Jim walked out of the house and kept moving until he reached Texas.

To Shallott, who had just turned seventeen, Texas was a powerful lure. Once the land was free a man could make his fortune quickly. He vowed to let nothing interfere with his goal, not even the welfare of the sisters and brothers whom he left behind. Never again, he promised, would he taste the bitterness of poverty. He would have money, a lot of it, regardless of the effort or the risk. In Texas he would be free. He would not be the son of a drunkard. There was a chance to begin again.

He arrived in Texas too late for army service and went to work near Austin, finding no great sums of money in his five years as a ranch hand. He learned cattle and Spanish and boredom.

When he heard President Lamar was going to send an expedition to Santa Fe, Shallott had gone to the authorities and persuaded them that he was desperately needed by the group. Across the great desert of West Texas, silver and gold sometimes were found. This was a chance he could not miss.

The expedition was doomed from the beginning. A letter from Santa Fe had arrived in Texas with the optimistic report that New Mexicans would welcome annexation. On this single bit of intelligence, three hundred men began a march across unknown deserts, no one really aware of what exactly

was to be done. No one knew how to get to Santa Fe, but a Mexican by the name of Carlos agreed to lead them. After they were hopelessly lost on the desert, Carlos deserted them.

They marched on, from one water hole to the next, weaving across the desert. If a water hole did not appear when it was desperately needed, they retraced their march, back to the last water supply, though it was fifteen miles or more behind them. From this base, patrols were sent out along different routes. Sometimes they returned. Sometimes the Indians relieved their thirst. To bedevil them further, a prairie fire fed by a strong west wind swept down upon them, burning two wagons of food and ammunition, and leaving not a blade of grass for their animals. They went on half, then quarter rations, and finally lived on snakes, wild berries and terrapins. Men would fight for the possession of a tortoise. When oxen were killed, they ate the flesh, the hide, the blood and the entrails. Nothing was left for the birds that circled above them, following the advance of the column. Discipline ceased. Men foraged widely and often were lost. Pods from mesquite trees were eaten to sooth their bloating tongues. Sometimes, after a march of many miles without water, they saw a stream in the distance and raced to it, only to find the water cathartic. Yet they were thankful and drank and afterward their bowels burned for the foolishness.

The search for food and water never occupied so much of Shallott's time that he could overlook terrain that might yield wealth. Once he found a vein of quicksilver while men around him raved for water. Ever since he realized the hopeless plight of the expedition, he had wished for a speedy capture by the Mexicans. As a boy he had heard the traders in Independence talk of the hospitality of the New Mexicans. He had not joined the expedition with the wish of seeing the boundaries of Texas extended. The cause of James Shallott could be served just as well, he believed, as a captive of the New Mexicans. They would hold him awhile and then free him. He would choose to remain.

After more wandering, more privations, his wish was fulfilled. The Texans met and surrendered to Governor Armijo. They were promised fair treatment as prisoners of war.

Before the day was over, however, Shallott hated the Mexicans with all the venom he could muster. Weakened Texans who fell behind in the march were clubbed to death and their bodies allowed to rot in the sun.

The next night, Shallott joined an older Texan by the name of Downes in planning an escape, ignoring the Mexican threat of instant execution for attempts at escape. By morning, he and Downes were gone. Shallott's plan called for them to make contact with American traders who would

smuggle them out of New Mexico, when the traders started back for Missouri. They would have made it, too, he believed, had it not been for a handful of greasers who caught them in a corn field. He was captured and struck down. A few minutes later, Downes was in their custody again.

After he regained consciousness, he was compelled to watch as a Mexican placed a pistol against Downes' chest. The explosion ignited the Texan's clothing but did not kill him. He tossed and moaned on the ground, until the sport became boring, and a soldier stepped forward and gave the coup de grace with his sword.

Shallott was saved--for a bigger audience, he believed.

On the way south to join the main body of prisoners, large groups of Mexicans turned out to abuse him. His hatred swelled to a point where his spirit took hold again. He had to gain strength to escape, so he could return some day with the army that was sure to march in retaliation. His head wound had grown worse and frequently he was walking in an unconscious stupor.

With the changing of his guards, however, his fortunes reversed. Women along the way brought much needed food to him and the soldiers gave him native tobacco and corn husks. Further south he was billeted at the hacienda of an aged don. The soldiers had intended to resume the march again in the morning. But they had not counted on the hospitality of the

don, and his fine food and wines. In the morning they went to the grandee and told him that their prisoner was not yet strong enough to resume the march into Mexico.

Although they were not motivated by his welfare, their words were true. Shallott's wound needed attention.

One evening he woke to find a young girl washing and bandaging his head.

When he looked for his guards, she told him they were in the sala with her grandfather. The soldiers had said there was no need to guard a man so near death. She had brought food and wine with her. They talked until he was too ill for more of her company. In the morning she returned and found him better. They talked again, Felipa telling him about her flight from Santa Fe to avoid the Texans, and he telling about his life and the many wonders of Missouri.

Throughout the hot afternoon he waited for her evening visit but she did not come. He sat in the doorway of the outbuilding and watched the lights go out in the sala. The soldiers came singing from the don's house and went to their quarters. Shallott lay down against the soft grass of his cell and thought of Felipa. He could not understand why Mexican men should be the opposite of their tender, loving women. At times he forgot her long enough to think of escape. The soldiers could not live off the don's hospitality forever. Sooner or later they had to go

back and face the music and deliver their prisoner. He was too weak to scale the walls, he knew, and once free, he would soon collapse for lack of food. Moreover, he would not know where to turn if he were able to escape. He fell asleep thinking of Felipa.

About midnight we woke with a hot, burning pressure against his lips. Felipa was leaning over him, her dark eyes reflecting brilliantly the moonlit night. He tucked her gold crucifix back into her blouse far out of sight and drew her down to him.

"I brought you some brandy," she said. "It will make you strong."

He squeezed her until she alternately gasped for air and giggled with delight. "Do you think I am stronger? Do I need the brandy?"

"I do not need brandy," she said. "I cannot stay long, Jaimito. Grandfather often wakes during the night." She ran her fingers through his blond hair and over his beard. "Are you as pretty as I think you are, underneath?"

"Someday I shall come back and show you."

She kissed him again. "I love you, Jaimito," she said, unashamed.

She tried to say it again, but her lips were unmoving against the inflaming pressure of his.

She did not return in the morning, nor in the early

evening, but once the sala was darkened again, she came to him with food and wine, and the more precious gift of herself.

"Tonight is the last time we shall be together," she said, when they turned their attention to the food and wine. "Let us be very happy, Jaimito."

The wine stung his throat. The thought of death in Mexico, which for two days had been replaced in his mind by the exuberance of life, abruptly jumped up before him again.

She could not stand to torture him longer. She drew him to her breast. "You are not going with the soldiers, Jaimito, although they are also planning to leave in the morning. Today in the village my maid talked with a trader coming up from Chihuahua. He will meet you at the trail, in the cottonwood grove. He has friends who will keep you until the soldiers think you have died on the desert. Then a trader will take you home."

He kissed her with a joy that saddened her.

"You will be glad to leave me, Jaimito. You will not return."

"Yes. I swear I shall come back and repay you many thousand times." But as he spoke he failed to notice her arms were without the heavy silver bracelets she usually wore.

She walked him to the gate and kissed him good-bye. At her order, the portero opened the zaguan.

The trader was in the grove, as she had promised.

## 4

Shallott paid many visits to the Parra house in the afternoons and talked quietly with Felipa over chocolate. He had come enough to be regarded as a suitor, and to be aware of the coolness with which Don Arrio greeted him.

He believed that Don Arrio already had chosen the man he wanted her to marry. From the little he knew of Don Arrio, he was sure the man would have a very rich father. From many of the Don's remarks, Shallott felt he was being warned in advance not to expect favor. In principle he agreed with the Don. He did not want Parra for a father any more than Parra wanted him for a son. Yet, merely the thought of Felipa with another man churned up such a heated jealousy that it threatened to wreck all he had worked and planned for. Again it was a question of money. If he had money and power enough, Parra could be persuaded. He did not give up hope of working out an arrangement that would leave his plans intact and give him Felipa as well.

On his return to Independence, he had begun to listen to the important men of the town. Piecing together bits of information, he set forth a plan that could not be executed overnight. But patience would pay big dividends. If it were true, as these business men said, that war would come

soon with Mexico, new territory would be added to the United States. The men in the best position to grab up the wealth were the Americans already in New Mexico. To gain the capital his program called for, he divided his plan into two phases. First, he had to work and save so he could buy goods to take over the Trail to Santa Fe. Once he was there, his money would multiply with the fat profits he made from selling the goods. Time passed quickly. There were dreams other than money to make his labor and frugality a joy. Felipa's dark eyes were always before him, and with the day of conquest he would have his day of power at the expense of the Mexican. Adobe walls would be red with greaser blood.

The threat of his own death sentence was of no great concern to him. On his return to Independence, he had been unable to recognize himself in the barber's mirror. And he was free of domestic restraint. No one remembered what had become of his father. The barber thought he remembered a drunkard who had shot himself, but just what drunkard it had been, he could not recall. Shallott found no trace of his sisters and brothers. He was free. With seven hundred dollars in his pocket, he made a deal with Kelley.

One afternoon, while her mother nodded sleepily, Felipa moved closer to him. She noticed he was pale. His cup shook when he raised it to his lips.

"Has something frightened you, Jaimito?" she whispered.

"Do you think I am a weakling?" he answered irritably.

"No, but I think you are troubled."

"I can take care of myself."

"I know you can, Jaimito. But haven't I the right to share your trouble?"

"Nobody is going to hurt me, amante."

"Then whom are you going to hurt?"

He glanced up, startled that he could be read so easily. "This afternoon, on my way over here, I saw one of the men who captured Downes and me. I am frightened for what I almost did, Felipa. I followed the man. I wanted to kill him. I wanted to see him kick and toss on the ground and beg me to finish him. I kept seeing Downes beg for life and then beg even more for death."

"Jaimito, you must not become angry or full of wine or say anything that might give our secret away. There are many soldiers in Santa Fe."

"He wasn't a soldier. He was nothing more than a fat peon. But before I knew it, my hand was on my gun. He didn't see me. I don't think anybody saw me."

"Promise me, Jaimito, that you will not carry a weapon."

"Sometimes there is a feeling within me that I can't control. I want to run into the streets and kill every Mexican I see. Believe me, Felipa, nothing would have given me a greater thrill than to have felt my fingers

around this peon's neck."

"There are other, better thrills in life--if you can live long enough to enjoy them," she said, smiling.

"You're right. And I know it. There are other ways, if only I am patient."

He looked up to see Felipa staring at a young rico who had just entered the room.

"Felipa! That is one of them. Do you know him?"

Felipa turned back to him with a smile.

"No, Jaimito. I do not know him."

## CHAPTER NINE

The Parra house had not changed in Julio's absence. If anything, it had grown noisier and more crowded. He could not find Felipa immediately. Parra welcomed him cordially and addressed him as Don Julio. Instead of leaving him, as Julio hoped he would do, Parra insisted on having the details of his trip and how Don Antonio was holding up under his grief.

"I should advise him to marry again," Parra said, squeezing Julio's arm. "Marriage is much too wonderful to be without it, Don Julio. The comforts of having a wife are much too numerous for me to mention, but I am sure a lonesome young man like yourself has given marriage a great deal of thought." He turned to the doctor. "Am I not right, Holz? Marriage with a beautiful, intelligent girl from a desirable family, I mean."

"Of course, Don Arrio. But where is our young friend to find such an impossible combination?"

Parra squeezed Holz's arm with his free hand. "Who knows? Often the most desirable things in life are found under one's very nose."

Julio was both flattered and pleased with Don Arrio's salesmanship. But in marriage alliances between Mexican families, winning the favor of the girl's family was only a part of the problem, he knew, and a lesser part at that. In the end, he would have to dance to the tune Don Antonio

paid for, regardless of his own wishes in the matter.

Holz had advised him not to antagonize Molano. "If you have lived with him this long, surely you can endure a few years more until you reach your majority," the American had said. "Then if nothing happens, steal his best horse and ride like hell."

Although he had wished to leave again, to go back into the north country where the Don could not follow him, Julio kept Holz's advice. And as the weeks passed, he had found the Don easier to live with. Molano was pleased with the reports he had brought back, and for a reward Julio was given a new saddle and his freedom to do as he pleased, including the freedom to leave the hacienda at night, even when he was not engaged with Holz. Julio did not mention his meeting with Guido, nor did he abuse his new freedom. As hope gradually was restored to him, he made an adjustment in his life to account both for his gringo ancestry and Holz's persistent belief that Don Antonio was reserving the grant for him. While the Don still talked proudly of the purity of his blood, he also talked often of the important stake they had in common to the north. Often he was asked to remain at home for an evening. Some weeks the Don did not go out at all, and if he did it was not long before he returned. With these new hopes, Julio could tolerate his company.

Before leaving to see Felipa, Julio had taken care to

tell Don Antonio where he was going, and he hinted at the real purpose of visiting the Parra house. The time had come, he believed, to draw out the Don on several matters. If Molano took active interest in the choosing of his wife, he would know that the Don could not stall him much longer. But Molano had given him nothing to indicate that he would either approve or disapprove of Felipa.

"In thinking of a wife, Julio, remember several things," Don Antonio had said. "Investigate her family, for I assure you she can be no better than her father and mother and sisters and brothers. Choose a good temper, above all. Be sure she is strong. Other than this, I can give you no advice. If she happens to be pretty, good. If she is not, remember that a good wife is almost impossible to find. You can always find a pretty girl within a couple of hours."

Julio saw Felipa at last, sitting in the corner of the sala near the fireplace. She looked up at him. Then, without returning his smile, she turned back to the gringo with whom she was talking.

"You will come to my baile tomorrow evening?" Don Arrio said. "We are going to have a very good time. Everybody will be here. A wonderful chance to get acquainted."

"I hope to come, thank you, Don Arrio. But I cannot answer at this time. Sometimes I stay at home with Don Antonio."

Parra gripped his arm tighter. "If you stay at home

tomorrow evening, you will be alone. Don Antonio has promised to attend. It will be a wonderful opportunity for him to get acquainted."

"May I come, too," Holz asked, "so I can get acquainted?"

"Of course, Holz. All my American friends are welcome to come and go as they please." Parra noticed Julio was watching Felipa and the gringo. "Don't be bashful, Don Julio. Come with me. I shall introduce you."

Julio tried to hold back, but Parra had a good hold on him. The little man led him to Felipa.

"Felipa, this is Don Julio Molano. A very dear friend of mine."

Felipa mumbled a greeting but avoided looking at him. A crimson blotch rose up from her cheek. Julio sensed she was holding back her breath. He replied formally, thinking it better to pretend he had not spoken with her before, although he doubted if it were possible to embarrass Don Arrio.

The American at her side was young--about twenty-four, Julio imagined. He had a large, bony face and heavy blond hair that fell down across his forehead, where it served as a cover for an ugly, red scar. The gringo's thin lips were clamped together tightly, angrily. Don Arrio did not give Julio an introduction to the American.

"Well, Shallott, it has been nice to see you," Parra said breezily. "Feel perfectly free to come back again--the next time you come to New Mexico."

Shallott looked at Parra contemptuously. Then at Julio. He did not move.

Felipa spoke before her father could ask Shallott to leave.

"Tomorrow at the festival are you planning to enter the games, Don Julio?"

"Maybe the correr el gallo. That is all, senorita."

"But gallo is no sport for a gentleman," Don Arrio protested. "I should think a man of our wealth--"

"There are games other than money," Holz broke in. "Think how boring it must become for Don Julio to count his two million sheep every day."

Parra uttered a weak sigh. "Indeed."

Shallott rose to his feet. His eyes did not leave Julio. "Could I enter this game?"

"Oh, no, you must not do that," Parra said, waving his hands excitedly. "The object of the game is to present the rooster to your lady. And your lady, no doubt, is in Missouri. How could you possibly give her the cock? No, this is a local game. It is boring. You would not like it at all, Shallott. A man can break his neck at this sport."

"I want to try. If there is no objection, I shall be in the game."

"I have no objection," Julio replied, staring back at him. "And Santa Fe has many lovely women who would accept

your prize."

Shallott left the house, and Julio was free to talk with Felipa. But she spoke only when Parra was watching her. As soon as Don Arrio turned his back, she excused herself and left the sala.

"Having gringo trouble?" Holz asked, coming up to him.

"Maybe she is ill. That could be quite possible, you know."

"Don't worry about it. You can always break his neck tomorrow and give the rooster to Felipa. If I were a woman and my lover presented me with a bloody rooster, I would take him home with me that very night. That is exactly what I would do. Think how proud she will be when you come dragging that dead cock to her."

"Oh, shut up!" Julio snapped at him in English.

English was a language he found tailored especially for abuse. He tried to speak only in English with Holz. If he were part gringo himself, he reasoned, and someday he would live among gringos in American territory, it was time he adopted their language. As much as Don Antonio permitted, he tried to dress like an American.

"Now you sound gringo," Holz laughed. "Remember, politeness in English does not sound good. Think as a rascal and speak it in English. Then you sound like a genuine American."

When Don Arrio saw that Felipa had retired, he came

to them.

"The poor girl must be ill," he said. "But, of course, she is rarely ill. In fact, Don Julio, I cannot remember when she was ill the last time. Indeed, she is very strong. A woman of her strength should be capable of producing many strong sons. She does look strong, doesn't she, Holz?"

"Indeed. The way she looked at the gringo led me to believe that she wanted to wrestle him."

Parra slapped Holz on the back. "See, Don Julio. She almost has the strength of a man. And yet she is gentle and kind and intelligent. Have you seen such a face, such a beautiful form? Lucky, indeed, will be the man who looks upon her and says, 'This woman is mine!'"

The whole affair was confusing to Julio. He admitted jealousy of Shallott to himself; yet the combination of Parra's mawkish enthusiasm and Felipa's complete lack of it made him wonder exactly what he wanted--Felipa unconditionally or merely Don Antonio's sanction of Felipa to reassure him.

"But today, this one day among a thousand, the poor little thing became ill. But tomorrow, if you win at gallo and present the cock to her, I promise a recovery."

"I shall try to win," Julio said.

When Julio told Don Antonio that he was going to enter

the games, Molano showed special interest in the gringo competition and decided to accompany him to Santa Fe.

It was a good day for the games. The sun was bright and warm in a clear sky, and there was just enough of a breeze to cool perspiring bodies.

"I suppose you have selected a woman to present the cock to, if you should win," Molano said.

"I have, senor."

Cristo, who had been invited to ride with them, winked at Julio behind the Don's back. "That is bad. Then I am afraid you will have to marry the girl."

Julio had confessed everything to Cristo, and had received his blessing. Ever since the death of the Dona, he had come to rely on Cristo for counsel in personal matters. With Holz he discussed other problems. With Don Antonio he talked as little as possible.

"Maybe the woman will not accept the cock," Molano said. "In choosing a mate I believe I should prefer a woman who would refuse such a gaudy display of affection. Yes, I should like that. A display of spirit, of resolution to go her own way. Look for a woman like this, Julio. The world is full of sheep. Select a herder. But make sure you are the mayordomo. True, Cristo?"

Julio had to smile at this, for Cristo had been more than unsuccessful in preserving patriarchal control of his household.

"God knows you speak the truth, senor," Cristo said. "I started wrong with Pepa. I wanted to be good to her. But like a fool I did not know a woman cannot appreciate goodness. The way things go now, I am afraid I shall wake up some morning and find myself pregnant."

"It would please me immensely to see the gringo fall," Don Antonio said. "New Mexico is blind. Our people cannot see the danger of coddling the americanos. They have been warned enough. Chaves brutally murdered by the Texans and his goods stolen. Our livestock stolen by the Texans and our good families to the south run from their land by the tejanos. Santa Fe overcrowded with heathen traders who are completely without respect for our traditions. If you have a chance, Julio, roll the gringo into the dust. Maybe it will give our people courage to resist them."

Everybody in Santa Fe, Julio believed, had turned out for the games. They were in a gay mood, dressed in their finest clothing, laughing and calling out to friends who passed by. Smaller groups gathered around musicians to sing and pass the wine from mouth to mouth. Through the crowd Julio caught a glimpse of Felipa talking with Shallott. Close to Felipa, guarding her closely, Parra was stretching his neck, anxiously trying to find Julio and Don Antonio. Just as he spied them, however, the game of correr el gallo was announced.

An official came through the crowd. Under his arm he

carried a rooster that jerked its head from side to side nervously. Julio could not help but make a comparison with Don Arrio's frantic bid for recognition. The cock was buried in a pit up to the neck, and the exposed part was well greased.

Shallott joined the other contestants. He was mounted on a horse of an American breed, larger and faster than Julio's animal.

Don Antonio leaned close to Julio before joining the spectators. "To me this is more than a contest between two men for the favor of a woman. It is a contest between civilizations. Do not let the gringo have the cock. Win, Julio, and I shall be generous."

Molano did not have to prompt him. His only fear was that the American would not be skilfull enough to make contact with him. The satisfaction of pulling the cock away from him would be reward enough. Julio watched Shallott's eyes leave Felipa to stare with bitterness at him, then in turn, Don Antonio and Cristo. Shallott would be seeking the same goal, he knew--to humiliate him in front of Felipa.

The first riders to make a pass at the cock brought laughter from the crowd. Their fingers were not quick enough to grasp the rooster's neck.

Shallott rode in fast, and with a skillfull swoop from his mount, brought a cry of pain from the cock. But his fingers slipped away from its greasy neck.

Julio started slowly, making his swing to the ground from the beginning to sight the target. Then he gained speed quickly. Over the yelling of the crowd he heard Holz shouting encouragement. Just as he was ready to close his fingers, the rooster ducked aside. Again there was laughter from the spectators. And the dread of failure began to gnaw at his stomach.

Several riders after him also missed. Another got his grip, only to have it slide away through the grease.

The crowd followed Shallott closely. His horsemanship had installed him as a favorite among the bettors, who reasoned that if he were not the rider to pull the cock from the pit, at least he was powerful enough and fast enough to seize the prize in the open chase.

Shallott rode in fast again, leaning close to the ground as he had done before. This time he yanked the cock part way from the pit before he lost his hold. He swung his horse past Felipa and saluted her.

The crowd applauded him.

Julio watched her return his smile. He hated the gringo on the gringo horse. His turn came next.

He swung so low to the ground that he brought a gasp from the crowd. His horse carried him ahead at full speed now. He sighted the target and made an allowance this time for a quick shift of the neck. His fingers scooped into the loose earth at the base.

The grip caught.

A furious beating of feathers rose up from the pit. He swung the cock high over his head for the crowd to see.

Their response was deafening.

Squeezing the neck tightly, he felt the bird go dead in his hand. He turned his horse for the dash to Felipa.

Shallott's big horse overtook him. Shallott swung his mount in front of Julio's and both animals reared back to avoid crashing into each other.

Shallott struck out with his fist, barely missing Julio's head.

Julio was not surprised to have him make a grab for the cock with a closed fist. The American was raving and swearing. His rage had drained his face of blood. He kept throwing his fist at Julio, for the moment ignoring the cock. The blows were difficult to duck, for the American had one hand free. Julio tried to out-manuever the gringo's horse, but his animal was no match for Shallott's.

A blow hit him on the neck, stunning him long enough for Shallott to grab the cock by the feet. Julio felt the warm, sticky blood ooze between his fingers. The flesh was tearing. Shallott had the better grip.

In desperation he rode his horse into Shallott's.

Taking advantage of the sudden slack, he gave a jerk that pulled Shallott off balance.

The gringo's feet left his stirrups. Another quick

jerk and he was falling head down.

Julio felt the loosening of the American's hold as he hit the ground. He swung the cock free, brandishing it in front of a challenger's nose.

He rode unmolested to where Felipa and her father were standing.

"Indeed, a man among men!" Parra shouted.

Julio extended the cock to her. He sucked in deeply to ease the burning in his lungs.

"It's not beautiful," he said loud enough for all to hear. "Not a beautiful prize for a beautiful girl. But I would fight again. Twice as hard. To give it to you."

Felipa, without a trace of emotion on her face, reached out and grabbed the cock. She flung it savagely into his face, and walked out where Shallott lay rubbing his head.

The giggles of those around him grew slowly at first, then spreading quickly over the field, it expanded to a roar of delight, the satisfaction of seeing the victor humbled at his proudest moment.

Holz was the first to reach him and offer his congratulations. He could not resist laughing when he saw Julio's face splattered with the blood of the rooster.

"I'm sorry, Julio, but you are a very funny sight."

Cristo, however, on joining them, saw nothing humorous in the situation.

"Please, Senor gringo, do not laugh at my boy. He was the bravest, the strongest, the most wonderful man on the field. Just because the little bitch went running off in heat is no reason for us to laugh." He held Julio's hand and pressed it. "I was very proud."

"But look at his face," Holz said.

Cristo looked into Julio's troubled face. "You worked up a sweat. You were very brave, Julio, to fight so hard."

Parra came running by, stopping to moan and run his hand over his face disconsolately. "She is ill, I tell you, gentlemen. But tonite at the baile I look for a full and satisfactory recovery." With that said, he lost himself in the crowd.

Those who had come to watch Julio's embarrassment circled around the trio, making it difficult for Don Antonio to push his way through.

He embraced Julio and promised a night of celebration. Julio could not recall a time when he had seen Molano so elated.

"A great feat of horsemanship," the Don said. "I never enjoyed a moment in my life so much as when the gringo went down."

Holz presented Don Antonio and Cristo with cigars.

"This is a big moment for all of us. Even I cheered the fall of the gringo."

Don Antonio eyed the American suspiciously. "Why,

Senor Holz? Have you no national pride?"

"In games, no. But I should like to be a pessimist for a moment. Shallott did not lose graciously. Seldom have I seen a man so incensed with defeat. The advice I am about to offer comes from a friend, not a gringo, Don Antonio. I should keep Julio safely at home until Shallott's temper is allowed to cool. I know him. He has a bitter temperament and he drinks heavily. The two in this case might be of danger to our young friend."

"Julio is no coward, senor," Molano replied curtly. "I believe he demonstrated his ability to defend himself to the satisfaction of everybody, including the gringo."

"Our Julio is a very brave man," Cristo said proudly.

"Now I must see Don Arrio," Molano said. "I have something to discuss with him."

Cristo pointed to the direction where Parra was seen last, and Don Antonio started out in search of him.

Julio stared after him, dumbfounded.

"He advised you to have a woman with spirit," Cristo moaned. "But I hope he knows where to stop."

"Holz, I've made an ass out of myself," Julio said.

"I don't want her."

"It looks as if you will have to take your choice, my boy. Felipa and the grant--or nothing."

Cristo was lost in the English conversation, but he tried to inject his bit at the right time.

"You were very brave, Julio," he said.

## 3

Julio and Cristo went with Holz to his wagon for a drink. Julio kept his eyes down, but his ears could not escape an occasional snicker. He was glad to be shut inside the wagon.

"Whom do you want to kill, Felipa or Shallott?" Holz asked, popping off the cork from a bottle of good American whiskey he saved for special events.

"I don't know."

Holz handed the bottle to Cristo.

"Then, as a doctor of medicine, I pronounce you cured. In the future I shall look for you to develop a better taste in women. Right, Cristo?"

"Very true, senor."

"Unfortunately, I am afraid your next adventure will fall beyond the boundaries of marriage."

"Poor Julio," Cristo said between gulps.

The bottle made the rounds twice. Then Holz pushed aside the flap to climb from the wagon. He stopped. He motioned Julio and Cristo to join him.

Don Antonio had cornered Parra underneath them.

"This is just as good a time as any to find the awful truth," Holz whispered.

Julio came up to the flap and listened.

"But I didn't think you wanted to see me," Parra was

saying.

"Oh, yes, Don Arrio. Sooner or later we had to get together."

"To be truthful, I did not think you would approve of my daughter's conduct. But you must remember, she is ill. Gravely ill."

"That is too bad."

"Oh, no, Don Antonio. Do not get that impression. Today is the first time she has been ill. I look for a full recovery. Tonite she will dance and be happy, true?"

"Possibly. As far as I am concerned, however, your daughter's personal feelings do not enter into the problem."

"True. True, Don Antonio. Indeed, it is a matter for the fathers to discuss."

"Exactly."

"I have been expecting a marriage letter from you any day. Julio is a fine boy. Already I love him."

"It is Julio I wish to discuss with you. I am glad you love him, for it will make easier what I have to say. If you are willing to have your daughter marry a peon, it makes no difference to me whatsoever."

Parra laughed. "Your son a peon, Don Antonio. This is very funny."

"He is not my son."

"But you have adopted him."

"I have not."

"Then you intend to adopt him."

"No. Certainly not. My family takes a great pride in its purity, Don Arrio. Not every wealthy family in Santa Fe got its start from stealing sheep."

"But you will give your property to him."

"No."

"But you have lands everywhere that you could give him."

"I have. But I am not giving them away."

"Your grant to the north--at least you could present that to him."

"Never, Don Arrio. It has been in my family too long to bestow it upon a stranger."

"Then you will give him nothing?"

"No more than his daily needs. But if you wish him to be your son-in-law, I have no objection."

"Well, to be truthful, Don Antonio, the boy is dull and has terrible manners."

"He is a bright boy," Molano snapped back at him. "I taught him the manners of a gentleman. In manners he far excels your daughter."

"See, you did object! You are telling me lies to get out of completing a contract. You have told me falsehoods, black lies so Julio would not have to marry her. I want an apology."

"You shall have none! Have you ever known me to fail

in keeping my word?"

"Go ahead, Don Antonio. I shall never be satisfied until you swear by God that you have told me the truth."

"I swear by God, Christ our Lord, the Virgin, the Holy Ghost, the saints and all the angels of Heaven that I have spoken the truth."

There was a long silence.

"You are still invited to come to my baile tonite, Don Antonio," Parra said weakly.

Holz dropped the flap.

Julio turned away. Cristo put his arm around his shoulders.

## CHAPTER TEN

Julio was too depressed to argue further with Molano. His first act of rebellion, a refusal to attend the Parra baile that evening, was so completely quashed that he decided an appeal for his freedom would only worsen his relations with the Don and put him back on the ranges that much sooner.

"If you wish, consider yourself ordered to attend the baile," Molano said at dinner. "I care even less for this half-breed mercenary, but that is no reason for us to fail in our promises. As a Spanish gentleman, I intend to keep my word. I am not gringo."

When Parra's servant rode into the courtyard ringing a bell to announce the baile, Don Antonio got an idea for brightening a dull evening. Americans would be allowed to attend without discrimination, making the dance not a baile but a fandango, where rich and poor alike had to be welcomed. To impress Parra on this social point, Don Antonio ordered Cristo and Pepa to make themselves ready to accompany him.

The four of them rode into Santa Fe together. Julio noticed Cristo's uneasiness and resented the Don's taking them along for the sole purpose of ridiculing Don Arrio's manners. But he was powerless to object, he knew, for his life as well as Pepa's and Cristo's was at the disposal of the Don, to work his fields, to tend his sheep, or simply

to give him a laugh at Parra's expense.

Julio already had promised himself, however, that his life with Molano was soon to end. In a month, if all went well, he would be in the north country, free from the Don and his injustices, building a life for himself and answering only to himself.

Many of Santa Fe's good families were in attendance. The men talked together in groups, while their women, for the most part, ignored the benches to sit on the floor.

When Pepa saw these women in bright, expensive silks, she stopped in the doorway. Her fingers ran self-consciously up and down her drab rebozo. Julio could hear her take a deep swallow. Cristo kept his eyes on the floor.

Don Antonio took them by each an arm and led them across the sala, past gaping ricos, and found a conspicuous place to seat them.

Parra was on him instantly, clutching at his arm.

"My good friend, what is the reason for this slander against my good name? Indeed, you are ruining my baile."

"I see there are americanos here."

"Of course."

"Naturally, good friend, you sent them invitations."

"Yes, I let it be known that americanos are always welcome at my home."

"Did you see each of them personally? Did you send your man on the mule to ring at each of their doors?"

"But--but it was impossible."

"Not for anything would I embarrass you, Don Arrio. But maybe you can understand my confusion. I thought you were having a fandango, since you neither invited the American guests personally nor took the time to check into the background of their families. I am terribly ashamed that I have caused you embarrassment." The Don turned to Cristo and Pepa, still not lowering his voice. "But how can I tell these poor souls to leave after I asked them to accompany me to a fandango? It would break their hearts, and I know you are too much a gentleman, good friend, to ask me to break faith with them now."

Don Arrio retreated to his American friends, muttering to himself.

The gringos had set up a keg of their whiskey at the far end of the room and began sampling it freely. To them the occasion was hardly more than a common fandango, Julio observed, for at their belts they carried their Colts and knives as usual. He doubted if any of them had bothered to change shirts or beat the dust from their hats.

Gentler refreshments were provided for Mexican guests at the opposite end of the sala, but except for the men, and a few women from the better families, all the girls were with the Americans.

Shallott, with a fresh cut over his eye, was doing most of the sampling at the keg. Felipa had put her hand

on his arm, Julio noticed, when Shallott saw him enter the room.

The orchestra--a guitar, a bandolin and a hand-drum--was in position and ready to play. To the side of the musicians a woman sat smoking a corn-husk cigarette. Once the dancing got underway she improvised verses for the couples that danced past her.

The first dance was the cuna, a cradle waltz. The candles burning in their reflectors carried little light to the center of the overcrowded floor, and the closeness of the dancers already had caused some of the gringos to sweat through their shirts. Shallott and Felipa joined the couples on the dirt floor, placing their hands around each other's waist, throwing back their shoulders, and with their tightly pressed thighs made the bottom to the cradle.

Julio felt a tap on his shoulder.

"There comes a time when a man has to look elsewhere," Holz said. "And your time definitely has come. You look like a dog that just lost his favorite tree."

"They like to dance together."

"They? First I should like to know if that is one or two people out there before I comment. The only person I know who is large enough to qualify is Senora Parra, and I doubt if she is wearing her Colt tonite."

"You were wrong--about Don Antonio and me."

"If it will comfort you any, my past failures to make the correct diagnosis have always been fatal."

"I'm leaving, Holz. Whether Don Antonio gives his permission or not, I'm leaving. I'll go north and trap and trade furs for sheep until I build a herd."

"That might not be wise, Julio. If you were under hardship, it would be different. But look at the good life you lead--good food, good clothes, a good house, time to loaf with a handsome, dashing American. No, I wouldn't be so impatient to exile myself to the mountains."

"I'm allowed to live as gente fina for a purpose. But just as soon as the job ends I'm doing now for him, I go back to sheep herding and peonage."

"What sort of work are you doing for Molano? It seems that next to me you're the biggest loafer in Santa Fe."

Julio hoped that if he would turn away to watch the Americans' clumsy efforts to do the Mexican dances, Holz would forget the question.

"I see. If you work at the same time we loaf together, the answer is obvious. So Molano has enlisted you as a spy. You have told him, of course, that I'm very dangerous."

"Yes. I invented a few lies to be able to say in his good graces."

Holz laughed so hard that the dancers stopped to look at him.

Julio was relieved of a burden. He smiled.

"I'm glad you know, Holz. I hope you haven't been hurt by my selfishness."

"Keep lying to him. Tell him I plan to blow up Santa Fe, if it will keep you in his house. If you can delay him awhile longer, maybe we'll go north together."

"Good. When can you be ready to leave?"

"Now, wait a moment. I don't plan to go until the land is open for settlement."

"After the gringos come?"

"It embarasses me more than a little to tell a Mexican that I intend to wait until my countrymen overrun his land, but nevertheless it is true. The Santa Fe Trade will suffer, leaving me without much support, I'm afraid, except for the travel books; and even these, to be sure, will have but a short life. I guess I am not too old to learn the life of a rancher. What do you think?"

"We can learn together."

"Yes, if you wish, we'll become partners."

The thought of going north again with Holz to make a new life raised Julio's spirits.

"But we must wait--a year, two years maybe--and in the meantime, Julio, you must be patient. Find something to occupy your mind."

Inadvertently, Julio turned to look at Felipa. She was still dancing with Shallott. For them every dance was a cuna.

"Granting that you might have had better luck, how long do you think she could live in the north country before she cried to go home? Do you think she could live without her servants, her chocolate, her dances, her flirtations?"

Julio looked at Felipa again. She was clapping her hands furiously for the attention of a servant. He had no doubt but what Holz was right. Yet she was beautiful enough for him to make a fool out of himself again. Holz's wisdom did not take away the aching sensation he felt when she was held in Shallott's arms.

"Now, on the other hand, we have Luisa de la Vega."

"Who is she?"

"Luisa is from a very good Spanish family. The Don would love her. Unfortunately for him, however, she is only seventeen. Her family had trouble with the Texans at Socorro and lost their holdings, I believe. She is here on a visit with relatives, although her mother lives in Taos."

Holz left him, promising an introduction when he found the girl.

Julio went to sit with Cristo while he waited for him. He was sorry for Cristo, sitting huddled up in the corner, where he had moved to escape the ricos' critical staring. Pepa sat close by him, holding his arm. Julio could not tell whether it was Cristo or Pepa who leaned on the other

for support. They sat wide-eyed and watched the dancers pass in their elegant dress. Now and then Pepa would look down at her shabby attire. But Cristo would pat her hand and she would smile, until another more beautifully dressed senora whirled past them.

"I believe you are afraid of them, Cristo," Julio said.

"Me? Oh, no, Julio. I am just being a gentleman."

"Why don't you dance?"

Cristo looked at Pepa. "Later," he said.

"Why should we put on the show," Pepa said, "while the americanos are amusing everybody so much?"

"Pepa is right, Julio. I have not seen such a performance since I was in Chihuahua at the communal baths." He pointed to Shallott and Felipa sweeping by, still locked tightly together. "Of course, this is an old sight to a man who has tended sheep during the breeding season."

Julio went to the table at the end of the sala and came back with wine for them. Pepa did not drink for a long time. She ran her calloused fingers over the hammered silver and tried to catch the glitter of the candles. It was the first time in her forty-one years, Julio knew, that her hands had touched a silver mug. Cristo, however, drank his wine down before admiring the silver.

"I am very sorry for what you learned this afternoon," Cristo said. "It is good to drink from silver and go to bailes. It will be hard to go without this life. Pepa and

I are not used to the ways of a rico and so we are happy with nothing. But you were brave on the field this afternoon, Julio. That is something that cannot be taken away from you. The richest man in the world cannot buy bravery. I have had many experiences when I was brave and the ricos turned and ran. I felt many times richer than those cowards in their bright serapes and silver buttons."

Julio was glad when Holz came back to take him away from another of Cristo's stories.

## 2

Luisa de la Vega was sitting with her aged duena. Already she was commanding the attention of the Americans, and had it not been for the fierce scowling of her chaperone, Julio believed the gringos would be swarming over her. But Luisa seemed no more anxious for the company of the gringos than her duena.

Julio nudged Holz. "She is pretty, all right, but look at her shy away from men," he whispered. "This is a waste of time."

"Take a better look. It's gringos she doesn't care for. You've been drooling over Felipa so long that you've forgotten what a real lady is like."

Holz was right. Once they were introduced, she smiled warmly and talked freely with him. He was reminded of the Dona Adela, for Luisa had the charm and wit of the Dona and much of her stately beauty. She was smaller than Felipa,

and for the first few minutes not quite so attractive, he thought.

But as they danced together, he saw that Felipa had lost her place of honor among the men. All eyes were on Luisa. And even more convincing, the wives of the men were plainly jealous. They ran their eyes over her, eagerly trying to spot a flaw that could be pointed out to their entranced spouses.

Julio looked again at Felipa. There was a ripeness about her that forecast a quick bloom into the proportions of her mother, but even with this many years away, it surprised him that he could watch her dance with Shallott and no longer feel the pangs of jealousy.

He held Luisa a little closer.

Luisa's quiet manner had made it possible for her to be ignored during the early part of the evening. But now that the men had become bored enough to take a second glance around the sala, they watched anxiously for her next turn around the floor.

What Julio feared soon happened. A young rico came along and engaged her for the next dance.

"Your taste in women has changed for the better," Don Antonio said, coming up to him. "I approve. Luisa is a very pretty girl."

"You know her?"

"I knew her father, Don Pascual, very well. The tejanos

were responsible for his untimely death, as well as for leaving Luisa and her mother to live on the charity of friends. I doubt if her mother will be able to arrange a suitable marriage for her. Luisa is absolutely incapable of bringing any new wealth into a family. It is a pity."

Don Antonio thought her charming enough to whisk her away for the next dance, even before Julio had a chance to speak.

He watched her smile and laugh with the Don. Had Molano been forty years younger, Julio believed he could be capable of working up a fit of jealousy. He had danced with her but twice. Yet he felt possessive toward her. If what the Don said was true, Luisa was facing a future as uncertain as his. But before he had time to feel too sorry for her, he realized she would not be restricted in choosing the husband she wanted. No one could push her into an advantageous marriage. No father of wealth would permit his son to marry her. Julio worked his way back to the duena, where Don Antonio was sure to leave her.

Another elderly don was waiting his turn, but Julio stepped in and took off with Luisa before he could protest.

"I thought I would never get you back," he said.

"You wanted to?"

"Very much."

"Good."

"But now I am afraid I shall lose you again."

"Then don't take me back to my duena."

"You don't mind?"

"Of course not."

They danced awhile without speaking. Julio thought it unnecessary. With Felipa he felt that unless he talked at every pause she would jump up and run away in boredom.

"But what about the other girl?" Luisa asked. "The one you gave the cock to this afternoon? Aren't you going to dance with her?"

At first he was pleased that she had been thinking of him. Then he held her closer so she could not see his face blush with shame. "Did you see it?"

"Yes. And I thought you were very good. Anyone else would have taken your trophy, Don Julio."

"I am not a don, Luisa," he said, for the first time willing to drop his masquerade as a rico. "I am living with Don Antonio Molano just for the present."

"Then what are you going to do--when you leave him?"

"I am going into Arapahoe country."

"If I were a man that is where I would go."

"The Indians do not have bailes, Luisa."

"Maybe not. But there is opportunity in a new land. I think it sounds exciting. Will you be alone?"

"No. I am going with my partner, Senor Holz."

"But Holz never told us that he had a young partner."

"Have you known him--before tonite?"

"For a number of years. He used to visit at our home in Socorro. Holz was the only americano my father allowed in the sala."

"Then you don't like gringos?"

"Only troublesome gringos, Julio."

They danced longer than he had believed possible.

Luisa skillfully manuevered him past the duena and a throng of young ricos who were waiting to dance with her. Finally, however, he lost her again, and she went out of sight.

He went to the table for a cup of wine. While he was there, a rico standing next to him was confronted by a giggling young girl. She reached out and tapped the rico on the forehead with an egg shell filled with cologne. The man, with perfumed water half blinding him, tried to catch his assailant before she could take her seat. Under this lanten custom, had he been successful, the girl would have had to forfeit a kiss.

The rico lost the chase but received his prize for a good effort.

Julio noticed several girls stalking their beaux, concealing behind them the perfumed missles. The gringos singled out for this honor galloped across the floor without regard or apology to the couples they collided with. Some of the Americans already were very drunk. In this category, Julio placed Shallott. He was able to smile when the gringo was tagged by Felipa. What they did no longer

mattered to him. But he was concerned to look out over the sala and not find Luisa.

When he turned back to the table, however, he was facing her. She was aiming a shell for his head.

"Let me warn you," he said. "I am very fast."

"That is too bad. I am very slow."

Luisa brought the shell down on his head and ran for her chair. In the middle of the floor she turned to see him slowed by dancing couples. She stopped. He caught her around the waist and kissed her and she did not push him away until several couples began to snicker at the exhibition.

"I can see you again, after tonite?" he asked.

She smiled. "For a little more than a week I shall be staying with Don Fabio. Please come."

They danced past the line that had formed by her duena and Luisa ignored the gestures her chaperone was making. They danced without stopping, for fear the duena would insist on her sharing part of the evening with someone else.

Each time around the floor they had to dodge a gringo who staggered out to ask Luisa for a dance. The American slapped at his leg in anger as he was ignored.

"The gringo would also like to be a suitor."

Luisa laughed and held him closer.

The woman who made up rhymes for the dancers was moving her lips silently, readying herself for their next

swing past her. When they were in front of the orchestra, she began to sing:

Here we have a couple happy and fair  
The pretty girl with a rose in her hair  
Held so tightly by her dreamy-eyed beau  
That I'd warn her duena to beware  
Of the tall and handsome Don Julio.  
Keep the candles lighted in the corners  
Keep the door fast with a good strong lock  
Better be safe, senora, than join the mourners  
For remember how he stole the old dead cock.

Julio could hear Cristo's guffawing above the others.

A tugging at his arm slowed them to a stop. The American, so full of whiskey that he had trouble in standing, pushed between them. He grinned at Luisa, showing large yellow teeth encrusted with chewing tobacco. He reached out for her. Julio grabbed his arm and forced it down to his side.

"Wanna dance with a real man, senorita? The name is Kelley. Tell the greaser to go to hell."

Julio moved Luisa aside and they danced into the center of the crowd.

Kelley followed, bumping into couples and pushing them aside. He stumbled ahead, his eyes fixed on Julio.

He came up behind Julio, grabbing him by the shoulder and whirling him around. Julio heard Luisa give a cry. He was defenseless against the fist. He fell to his knees.

"Now, greaser, I ask to dance with your girl!"

The floor emptied quickly. Couples took refuge up against walls and under tables.

Luisa saw her chance to move to safety with them, but she stopped and went back to Julio. She put her arm around him. "Let me dance with him so he doesn't hurt you more."

Julio held her hand tightly and would not let her go to the gringo.

"Let me dance with him, Julio, and he won't bother us any more."

Julio started to rise slowly.

Kelley rushed in, bringing up his heavy boot into his head.

Julio fell back against Luisa.

To enforce his demands, Kelley pulled a knife from his belt.

There was a frantic rush for the door and the safety of the outside. The Americans stood their ground in the far corner, yelling encouragement to Kelley.

Julio pulled Luisa behind him. He was too giddy to spring for the American. The empty room whirled around him and the hammering at the back of his eyes did not cease. Kelley circled him, staggering so much that Julio hoped for a fall. He thought he heard Don Antonio shouting for someone to get off the floor.

"Do not touch my boy!" Cristo cried.

"Off the floor, greaser!" Kelley screamed at him.

"This is a private fight!"

"Go home, senor. You are drunk."

Kelley turned away from Julio to lunge for Cristo.

Cristo easily sidestepped him and the gringo fell to the floor. Cristo jumped on him and fought for the knife. They rolled over the floor, a tangled mixture of brown and white arms and curses in Spanish and English. The knife caught Cristo's palm, and the infuriated Mexican rubbed his bleeding wound into the American's eyes before going after the knife again.

Julio got up to move to Cristo's aid.

A shot was fired into the ceiling, showering the floor with tiny bits of mud plaster.

"No ganging up, greaser!" Shallott yelled.

Julio looked at the pistol. Shallott had every intention of using it, if he moved.

Cristo did not need him. With one arm he got a strangulating grip around the American's neck. With the other he lifted the knife out of Kelley's weakened fist and threw it aside. Quickly he pushed the gringo's head into the hard, earthen floor. Cristo picked him up in his arms and ran for the wall, slamming Kelley up against it.

Cristo turned back to Julio, smiling, when Shallott fired. He took a step and fell.

Shallott fired again, the bullet missing Julio and tearing into the wall.

Cristo got up to his knees and fell again, into Holz's arms.

The Americans smashed benches and chairs to make clubs. But there was no opposition thrown against them. They rushed outside, pushing Shallott ahead of them.

Holz inspected the wound in Cristo's stomach. He motioned to Julio that he could do no more.

"It did not hurt much," Cristo said, looking up at Julio. "Always I have been afraid that it would hurt so much that I would cry like a nino."

Despite his great struggle, tears were forming in his eyes and his lips twisted in agony.

"Holz is a doctor, Cristo. You will be all right."

Cristo's stomach moved laboriously as he tried to breathe. He managed a smile for Luisa, who had folded up her rebozo and tucked it under his head. "No, Julio, this time I am being whistled for." He motioned Luisa to bend close to him, that he might not embarrass her. "I recommend him, senorita. He is a very good boy."

A shot was fired in the courtyard.

"Did you see me, Julio--how I took care of the gringo?"

"I saw, Cristo."

"Where is the Don?"

"He will be here. He is coming, Cristo."

"You did see me, didn't you, Julio? How I picked him up and threw him?"

Julio ran his hand over Cristo's perspiring forehead.

Cristo closed his eyes and patted Julio's hand. "You

saw me. I know you saw. And so did Pepa."

Julio felt the pressure against his hand relax.

"You were very brave, Cristo."

His words were too late, he knew. But he said it again.

## 3

The Americans had barricaded themselves behind a wagon. An occasional shot was fired to keep the Mexicans from pressing them too closely.

Don Antonio, taking charge of his group, had found just enough weapons to hold the gringos in the ring he gradually closed around them.

The night was warm and dark. High cloudiness completely shut out the moon. Although the two forces were within fifty yards of each other, the riflemen were unable to take aim. To Don Antonio it was obvious that the Americans were frightened and did not care to take more life. Their firing was done into the air. In the lull that followed, nothing disturbed the peace of the night but the fierce soprano barking of Parra's miniature chihuahuas.

Kelley had been dragged outside. He was held securely between two ricos.

"He is no good to us," Parra told Don Antonio. "For the sake of Heaven, allow him to go."

"If necessary," Don Antonio replied, "I shall kill him myself."

Another rico sided with Parra's argument for a soft

policy. "After all, Don Antonio," he said, "it was not one of us who was killed. A day does not pass but what some peon dies of one thing or another. I see no reason for us to put our lives in jeopardy."

"This would not have happened," Parra whined, "if you had left your peon at home like a gentleman would have done. The americanos have nothing but kindness toward us of the gente fina."

"Sheep thieves never become gente fina, no matter how many sheep they steal," Molano said.

"My father did not steal sheep!"

"My dear Parra, I was speaking generally. I did not accuse your father of stealing sheep from Don Adan Trias to get his start in life."

Parra turned to the others. "If we are harsh toward these merchants, a gringo army will come and take everything we own. It is a problem to be handled by customs officials."

This argument swayed many of the ricos, but Don Antonio objected.

"If we follow that course, the americanos could just as well decide their own fate. And I would never get payment for damages."

"Don Antonio is right," Parra said. "The Americans are a generous people. They will make a satisfactory settlement."

"I shall drop all charges if they hand over the man

who killed my mayordomo and make a cash settlement for my loss and the burial expenses."

"You are unreasonable, Don Antonio! If the murderer is handed over for punishment, that is all the satisfaction you can expect. And you would get no money!"

They were still arguing when Julio and Holz joined them.

"Am I not right, Holz?" Parra said loud enough for the Americans to hear. "The traders will be happy to pay for Don Antonio's loss and burial expenses and maybe a small sum to the widow."

"I should prefer to hang him," Holz said wearily.

"Oh, my God, no!"

Don Antonio came up to Holz. "You are a very clever man, senor, but you are not dealing with fools--one exception granted. You pretend a friendship for us when actually you are working for our destruction. You do not wish to hang the murderer. You seek to divide us so no punishment whatever is dealt to your gringo friends." He pointed a rifle at Holz. "Lead me to your friends. I shall talk with them."

Holz shouted to the Americans to hold their fire, and he and Molano walked out to them.

The Americans were almost as confused as the Mexicans. Some of them had argued for Shallott to give himself over to the army for protection, while older traders maintained that they had seen similar trouble, where a small payment

settled everything.

It was not possible to distinguish faces in the darkness. Holz called for Shallott. He did not step forward until he was pushed by the American behind him.

"If you do not agree to my terms, I shall turn you over to the army," Don Antonio said.

"Don't let him scare you, Jim," a gringo called out. "You're a citizen of the United States and the greasers know it."

"Let me remind all of you," Molano said to the entire group, "you are not in the presence of peons at a common fandango. You are surrounded by men from the best families in New Mexico, the leaders of this territory. What we decide, shall be done."

Shallott looked back over his shoulder at the traders. "I agree to your terms," he said quietly.

"You have not heard my terms."

"But I agree." Shallott bit at his lip. "If you do not tell the army."

"That is for me to decide."

"For God's sake do not tell the army!"

Molano turned to Holz. "When your army comes, Senor Holz, it will have to be made stronger than this."

"What do you want with him?" Holz said.

"I want everything he has."

"I have no goods," Shallott said evasively. "I have sold everything."

"Then I must notify the army--unless you wish to give me all your silver." Molano raised his voice to the others. "And from every man here I want three hundred of your silver dollars."

The Americans protested loudly. But Shallott emptied his pockets and promised to deliver what Parra had held for him.

"All right, the rest of you--what do you say?" Molano demanded.

The Americans refused to the last man.

Shallott turned to them and pleaded that they have regard for his life, but he could not convince them that his life was in serious danger. He wanted to use his best argument--his membership in the Texas Expedition--but in the presence of Molano it would sentence him to death.

"I'll repay every penny!" Shallott cried in desperation.

"Don't be so damn yella!" one of them shot back. "I seen three greasers killed in one night and we got off for a hell of a lot less."

"It's the principle, Jim," another said. "We don't want to be pushed around by the greasers."

"All of you can go to prison for this," Molano threatened. "In our group we have an alcalde. He will try and convict you. He will send you to prison for aiding a murderer and then concealing him."

The Americans went into a huddle. They had not had experience with an alcalde, but from report they knew this unique Mexican judge was both prosecutor and defense attorney, as well as judge and jury. They agreed to Molano's terms.

"And one thing further," Molano insisted. "You will leave New Mexico. If you return, I shall carry my complaint to the governor."

The agreement was made with one compromise. They would leave, but they would not pay indemnity. Shallott alone was responsible. It was punishment enough that he should lose his money and they lose the right to trade in New Mexico.

Holz followed Don Antonio back to the ricos.

"The agreement is also binding on you, Senor Holz," Molano said, motioning him back to the wagon. "I was willing to settle for slightly less than I wanted--purely to get you out of New Mexico."

"But I was not even with them when Cristo was shot," Holz replied, flabbergasted. "I was walking in the courtyard. I have no sympathy for their cause."

"Nevertheless, you shall leave with them."

They were joined by Parra and Julio.

"Don Antonio, you cannot do this to me," Parra said. "At least you must allow Holz to remain. He is our good friend."

"I know that he is a spy. I have evidence, moreover,

that he has come into New Mexico to spy for the gringo army."

"Then he must leave," said a rico.

"But his is not true," Holz protested. "I am not a spy."

"Do you wish for me to call upon a witness?" Molano asked.

Holz looked at Julio. He pounded a fist into the palm of his hand.

"No."

"Here we have an admission of guilt," Don Antonio said. "You have no more than the two hours I allowed your friends to make ready to leave."

Molano walked up to Kelley who was still held by his guards.

"Let him go."

The moment his arms were released, Don Antonio knocked him to the ground and kicked at him until three ricos managed to pull him away from the Don.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

The Don assigned to Julio the duties Cristo had performed, giving him control over all the Molano working force. It was his assignment to keep for life, Julio knew. Cristo had held the job from the age of thirty until his death, without complaint or bitterness. For if the position did not pay enough to get out of debt, Cristo had always reasoned, at least there was enough prestige connected with it to help a man forget he was still a peon. Julio, however, found the work involved in his new duties a compensation for the lack of prestige. While he was working, he was not lonely.

The loneliness of the hacienda seemed almost unbearable to him. Several times, without thinking, he had started for Santa Fe to ease the loss of Cristo and the Dona, only to remember that Holz also was gone.

He spent long periods away from the hacienda, supervising the herders and the harvesting of grain; and on his rare visits to the great house, he noticed that the Don also was very lonely. Molano had begun to talk about the Dona again, reminding Julio of her wit and charm. It seemed to Julio that the Don was not particularly anxious for him to take up his quarters at Pepa's house. He kept forgetting, so he told Julio, to remind Pepa that she had to relinquish her home to the new mayordomo.

Pepa had come into wealth. Of the fifteen hundred dollars Shallott had surrendered, one hundred and fifty had

paid Cristo's way into Heaven; five hundred had compensated Molano for the loss of his experienced mayordomo; her debts had taken three hundred more; but she still had enough money left over to stock Nicolas with a sizeable herd and buy a piece of ground. When she asked for more time to prepare for their new house, Don Antonio told her to take as long as she wished. Molano explained to Julio that he would not be needing a house of his own until he married. Until changes were made, Julio was to stay with him.

Had he resigned himself to staying on with Molano, Julio believed he would be very anxious for Pepa to leave. But Julio worked hard and followed the Don's instructions without question. In this way, the Don's suspicions were not aroused while he was hard at work for himself.

In an abandoned outbuilding, he had begun secretly to store away extra food and clothing, broken tools he had repaired, a rifle and ammunition, odds and ends of all sorts which might be useful to him in the north country. For his victory over Shallott in the game of correr el gallo, the Don had presented him with a horse and an elaborate saddle. Julio had traded the saddle for a less expensive one, saving enough to acquire a burro. He wished it were possible to take with him things a woman would need.

The first few days after Cristo's death had been so demanding on him that he saw Luisa only twice before she left for Taos.

For all of the first visit and most of the second, he had had to talk with Luisa while the duena hovered over them. The old woman took care that they would neither say nor do anything that would make their parting easier. With Felipa, even before the time of Shallott, he had doubted if she could learn to care enough for him to stop her flirtations with the gringos. He thanked God for a merciful disappointment. It was not necessary to talk with Luisa to know that his love was returned. She was just as eager for the duena to leave. But the old woman listened to every word, and when she was tired and dozed off for a few seconds, Julio knew better than move closer to Luisa. Once, when he had tried to better his position, she woke with a start and clapped her hands for more genteel manners.

The duena looked upon Luisa's future without hope. "Poor girl," she said to her, in Julio's presence. "Unless some man comes along who loves in his heart more than in his cashbox, I fear you will become a spinster." Then the old woman looked at Julio. "But there is always a chance that a man from a very wealthy family will take pity on you and save you from despair. Some families, I hear, are so rich that a dowry of even sizeable proportions would not be noticed."

Luisa turned her head away in humiliation.

Julio, however, believed he had found at last a way to communicate with her.

"That is probably true, senora," he said. "I expect if a man loved a woman enough his greed would not stand in his way."

The duena's large, red nose seemed to light up with new hope. "True, Don Julio. How very true. I am sure there are still such gallant men in New Mexico."

"In reverse, I believe if a woman--say, even a woman from a proud family--loved a poor man enough, she would put aside her desire for comfort and marry him."

"Oh, my goodness, no, senor! A girl from such a family must put her future welfare far above affection."

"But senora," Luisa said, smiling at Julio, "if the girl really loves the man without wealth, the same should hold true for her. She herself has nothing, and if you expect the man to show charity for her, surely she must also be willing to settle for less."

The duena sat up and clapped her hands. "Now we have an issue to discuss. All afternoon we have talked of such trivial things. You young people ought to discuss more of the problems of life. Debate is good for the mind. It sharpens one's wits."

"The problem, it seems to me, centers on whether the girl could love a man enough to give up luxury," Julio said.

The duena wagged her finger at him playfully. "Now, Don Julio, you do not sound like a man of your class."

"Oh, yes, senora, I am sure the girl, if she really

loved the man, would give up everything to marry him," Luisa said.

"Marry a peon?" the duena gasped.

"Not all poor men have to fall into peonage."

"Oh, but they do, my dear. Invariably they do."

"He could go into the north country," Julio said, watching Luisa hopefully. "He could build a house and then come back for her. Of course, it would be a hard life. She would have to go without servants and other things that made her former life easy. He could trap and trade the furs for sheep, gradually building up a herd. She could not be guaranteed too many comforts, but I think I could promise her that she would never go hungry, never lack warm clothes or fuel to keep cold from her house. The country is full of game, senora, and there is an abundance of wood. For the very basic things of life, the mountains offer more than can be found here amid civilization."

"You make it sound much better than it really is, Don Julio," the duena said. "Such a life would be without visitors or bailes or the other things a girl wants so much."

"I disagree, senora," Luisa said. "The mountains offer beauty and freedom, and if the girl is with the man she loves, what more could she possibly want?"

"This is a delightful argument," the duena said.

"Please don't think I am a quarrelsome old woman, Don Julio, but I just love to hear two people argue. However, not for

any amount of amusement will I allow you two such a fierce dispute that it will lead to an estrangement. The secret of successful debate is harmony. If you two insist on carrying bitterness into our discussion, I am afraid I shall have to stop it. Yes, I shall."

"I give my word, senora, that I have no bitterness," Julio answered.

"On the contrary, senora," Luisa said, "I feel the very opposite toward our visitor."

"However, Luisa, I cannot help but believe that your line of thought is embarrassing to our visitor. After all, he is not living with a peon, you know. Is it true, Don Julio, that Senor Molano really owns more than a million sheep?"

"Two million is a closer estimate, senora."

"See, Luisa. Don Julio must be embarrassed for your taking the side of a poor man in the affairs of the heart."

"For all you know, senora, I might still be paying for the clothes on my back."

The duena giggled. "You are certainly an agreeable young man, Don Julio."

"I think going into the mountains sounds wonderful," Luisa said. "If I were the girl, I should be ready to go any time."

"First, this man we are using for an example would have to go into the north country and build a home for her."

"Then I should be waiting for him to return to me."

The duena had been sitting quietly, sucking noisily at her teeth, deep in thought. "I have the winning point," she said triumphantly, coming back to life. "You have overlooked the danger of the Indian."

"True, senora, the Indian is still there," Julio said, "but in my trip into the mountains I found he could be pacified. Then, too, there are so many gringos coming into the mountains that the savages are on their good behavior."

"Indians or no Indians, if I were the girl, I should go. Suppose this girl we are speaking of has nothing to look forward to in New Mexico. Her family hasn't enough money to provide a life for her as she has known it. In the mountains she could begin a new life with this man. If the land is as productive as I have heard, this man and woman could soon become ricos."

"Yes, it is a certainty," Julio replied. "At first it will be work and more work, but eventually we could build a big house, bring up servants from Taos and sit back and watch our crops grow and our herds increase. In the mountains work would be rewarded. Here it is useless."

While they talked, the afternoon sun grew weaker, and against the mica windows lost its power to penetrate into the darkened sala.

"We have argued until I completely forgot chocolate,"

the duena said, beginning to clap her hands for a servant.

The Indian girl did not appear. The duena clapped louder, but still the servant did not come. Julio thought he could hear Luisa trying to hold back a giggle.

The duena wrung her bony hands in indecision. Finally she jumped up. "I know you for a gentleman, Don Julio. Promise to stay where you are just a moment while I find that indolent girl."

"Rather than cause you anxiety, senora, I shall leave without chocolate," Julio replied, hoping that he had not said the wrong thing.

"Send you away without chocolate? I should sooner die, Don Julio."

The duena left the sala, taking one last look over her shoulder before she reached the door.

"All afternoon I was afraid Amata would forget her instructions," Luisa said.

"The senora did not ask for your word, Luisa."

She got up and came to him. He pulled her into his lap and kissed her.

"Awhile ago, when we were talking with the duena, did you mean--"

"I meant every word, Julio. Everything."

"But it will be a hard life, harder than you expect. Surely there is a man, a rico, who can offer more."

"Heaven knows my mother is trying, Julio, but she will

have no success. There isn't a man so rich but what he could use a dowry."

"What will you do in Taos?"

"I shall wait for you."

"I'll go north as soon as I can, Luisa. I know the place where I shall build. An aspen grove, by a river. It's beautiful, Luisa, and it will be a hundred times more beautiful when I take you back with me. Just as soon as it is safe to leave, I'll go. At the end of the summer I shall come for you."

He had had time to kiss her once more before the duena returned with a smiling Indian servant. After he left Luisa, he had wanted someone to share his happiness. To the Dona Adela he would have told of Luisa's wit and gracious manner. He would have reminded Cristo of her beauty. With Holz he would have laid careful plans for the journey. In the end, he was a little sad with his happiness, for it had to stay cramped within him and could not be nourished into further growth by sharing it with friends.

Julio had waited a month since being with Luisa for a moment when Don Antonio would least suspect that he had fled into the mountains. This time, he believed, would come when he was to make an inspection of the distant ranges. He would be safely into the mountains before Don Antonio was aware that he had deserted him.

On the eve of his departure, however, Molano had sent

for Julio and told him that he was leaving for a few weeks to visit his brother. Julio was given complete charge of the hacienda. Another man was sent to inspect the ranges. At first Julio thought he would carry out his plan on schedule, but later, when he realized that his desertion of so complete a responsibility would infuriate the Don to the point where he would hound him into the mountains until he found him, Julio decided that a better chance would come when the Don returned.

## 2

Julio found that the Don's absence was actually a help to him. With Molano away from the hacienda, he was able to make more thorough preparations for his northern journey. He was able to gather together enough supplies to load the burro near its capacity of three hundred pounds. In plotting his course, he accounted for a slow trip of twelve to fifteen miles a day and a swing out of his way to throw the Don off his trail, should Molano be determined to have him back. Once he was north, Julio believed his worries would be at an end, for every day saw more soldiers come into Santa Fe, and rumors of an impending gringo invasion was a favorite topic among the ricos. With such uncertain conditions, he knew Molano would not risk running into an American army. For the same reason Julio did not want to delay much longer. He had to get into the north country before the gringos came, or they would never allow him to

pass through their lines. He counted heavily upon the gringos to make his life in the mountains secure.

The Don was in gay spirits when he returned. For awhile Julio thought his humor was good enough to ask for his freedom. But having the Don oppose his plan would ruin everything he had worked for. And Julio vowed to let nothing interfere this time.

The Don called him into the sala for their usual daily conference on business matters, and the question of inspecting the ranges came up again.

"I shall have to send another man. Tomorrow morning, Julio, you and I are going to take a very happy journey."

"Yes, senor?"

"Since the Dona Adela's death you have been very lonesome, have you not?"

"I miss her more as time passes."

"I assume you have given marriage some thought."

Julio was at a loss for an answer.

"Well then, maybe this journey will not make you so happy as I, if you don't approve of marriage."

"I don't disapprove, senor. I have not given it much thought, that is all."

"Then you are a very strange boy. I was five years older than you when I married. But I had thought of marrying many years before I met Adela. Now I fear you do not look forward to our trip to Taos."

"Taos?"

"Yes, I finished negotiating the marriage contract while I was there."

Julio's first impulse was to thank the Don for his kindness and then run from the house shouting with joy. But on closer inspection, he realized that if the Don chose a mate for him he would be tied to the land forever.

"It was necessary for me to settle a small, monthly sum on the girl's mother, but on the whole I believe it was a bargain."

"I am sure it was, senor."

"You understand, of course, that I will have to move you into the mayordomo's house just as soon as I can get Pepa to leave."

"I understand, senor." Julio resented Don Antonio's interference keenly. Rather than have Luisa live in peonage, he would sooner give her up. It would be impossible for the two of them to make the flight north.

"Like you, Julio, I have missed the Dona Adela very much, and because my days are not growing any more free from loneliness, I have decided to marry."

"You, marry?"

"Yes, I. Whom did you think?"

"Who, senor? Who is to be the new Dona?"

Julio sat back against his chair and gripped his knees until his knuckles showed white. He knew the answer before

he asked, but he held to a slim chance of making a mistake.

"You are right, Julio."

"Right? I did not say the name of the girl."

"But you know. I can read it in your face. Surely you are not still affected by your infatuation from the baile? I credited you with better sense, Julio. Luisa de la Vega comes from one of the best Spanish families. A woman like Luisa would never marry a man God destined to work with his hands."

Julio sprung from his chair. "God did not will that a beautiful girl of seventeen should marry an old man of sixty!"

The Don showed no surprise at the outburst. He sipped slowly at his wine. "Evidently God did, Julio, for I shall marry her."

"Why?"

"Why? I don't know. I have never questioned the will of God."

"It is you I am questioning! You had the best of wives and failed to appreciate her. You ruined her life. Must you ruin two more lives?"

The Don brought his fist down sharply on the table. "Be still, Julio! I need not account to you for anything. You must account to me. In the morning we are leaving for Taos."

"I refuse! I refuse to be taken along for amusement,

just as you amused yourself by taking Cristo under the gun of a drunken gringo!"

"Tell me, Julio, do you think it is possible that we would still have Cristo with us today, had you not struck up a very foolish infatuation with the Parra girl?"

Julio did not answer. He had not considered before his responsibility in the tragedy.

"You are a blind, stupid ass! I am ordering you to go to Taos in your capacity of mayordomo. There are many duties I must have performed, duties which would be completely bungled by another of my men. You speak of ruining a life. Impossible. I have rescued this girl from poverty. She will live in a luxurious house. She will have anything she desires--imported fabrics, jewelry, music, dancing, and above all, there will be security for her. Tell me, what would you give her?"

"But she will not love you! That is a gift nobody can buy, senor. Not even with two million sheep!"

"Very well, so you could give her the passion of youth. But what of the luxuries I have mentioned? Don't be so naive, Julio, as to think that love occupies a heavenly niche where the problems of money do not enter. Speak softly of love into her ear when she is carrying her fifth or sixth child and her beauty is destroyed by poverty, and then ask her if she is happy, if she is not glad that she chose love instead of fine clothes and leisure and the gay

times of the sala. She would laugh you down for the fool you are! Luisa is no fool. I have arranged to meet her mother's daily needs so she can continue living with the gente fina. If Luisa cannot love, at least she will respect me. I ask no more."

"But will she respect you? Will she be as angelic as the Dona and forgive your endless infidelities and abuses? I pray to God that she is not! I do not wish the same malady to take her life. I hope for her own sake that she is not such a fool!"

The Don's thick brows met at the bridge of his nose in anger. He got up and made a quick round of the room before returning and slamming his cup hard against the table.

"The evening you first came into this sala, I hated you! And I hated myself for not leaving you to the elements. The moment I saw Adela take you into her arms I knew a reconciliation between us was impossible. You were that precious gift that I could not give her. She was a beautiful woman, a wonderful woman, and I failed her. And always you were between us, first as a baby and then as a youth growing into manhood, and always the Dona loved you and claimed you for her own. It was you, Julio, who drove the wedge between us so deep that it could never be withdrawn. And my only wish is that Adela realized it before she died."

The Don walked into the corner and took a chair by the fireplace. For a long time neither of them spoke. Julio threw down his wine and thought of Luisa. He knew Molano was right. Luisa would have the life she was born for. Her mother was rescued with her. She was probably rejoicing with her mother. All thought of him was shoved aside with the fear of poverty and disgrace. He tried to make himself glad for Luisa, but the sudden turn of her fortunes could not even partially ease the gnawing emptiness he felt.

For speaking up to the Don, he had no regret. Whatever the punishment, he had had the satisfaction of saying what he had not dared to say for years. It was a good feeling to stand on his feet and tell this mortal that he was capable of error.

The Don got up from his chair and came back to pour another cup for Julio.

"Drink, Julio. The wine you will be able to buy does not taste quite so good as this. I shall be glad to be rid of you and your gringo temperament."

"Why shouldn't a gringo have the temperament of a gringo. A man can be no better than this blood, you always say."

The Don's body stiffened. "What have you learned?"

"The power of money, senor. If a man is bought once he can be bought again."

"Guido, I should guess. He was the least trustworthy."

"Any man who would take or give a bribe is incapable of trust."

"So you are bitter, Julio. And for what reason? Because I rescued you from death and saw that you were raised without want? Or is it that I paid a heavy sum in bribes to hide your gringo ancestry so you could live without having to face the prejudice of our people? You are a fool, Julio. An ungrateful fool."

Julio put the cup down. It was impossible to swallow the wine.

"You have been raised to live with your hands. In addition, I have seen that you were given many of the advantages you ordinarily would not have received. What more can you ask of me?"

"My freedom."

"That I must refuse."

"But you just said that you would be glad to get rid of me and my gringo temperament."

"From my house, I meant. You are to go where Pepa lives now, as soon as we can get her to leave."

"And there I am to rot in peonage like Cristo and the others. I am grateful for everything, senor."

"You won't rot in peonage unless it is of your own doing. You will be released, completely cut loose from my

protection when you reach your majority. That much I promised the Dona. Until then you are to serve me as I see fit to use you. In the morning we leave for Taos."

"No, senor. Ask for something else. I cannot go with you."

"Your skin and hair, Julio, are all that save you from being completely gringo. You have the heart and brain of a gringo, I am sorry to learn. You feel and think like a fool. Luisa de la Vega was destined by birth for the life I shall give her. It is a life your gringo blood cannot understand."

"It is a dying life, senor. Enjoy your new bride and your way of life. New Mexico is changing."

"You were with Holz too much. He is another fool. If the gringos try to conquer us, we shall have the opportunity to gain new territory--from them. Their lust for expansion will explode in their faces like a faulty cannon."

"We are changing from within. Go about the streets of Santa Fe and ask every man you see if he will lay down his life to keep the gringos from our soil. Not four men in ten will fight, senor. They know the gringos as drunkards and thieves and despoilers of our women, but still they will not fight. They will not fight because they are sickened by the rule of the dons. To them anything will be better."

"You shall leave with me in the morning!"

Julio turned to leave.

"What you say is partly true, Julio. The rule of the

dons is absolute. A don can take an erring peon like yourself out into the courtyard and shoot him with no more fear of retribution than if he had shot a mad dog. You are quite mad, Julio, to think you have anything to say to me. In the morning we shall take a happy journey."

## 3

Julio was given a candle as he entered the house. In the center of the room a table held wines and cakes and sweetmeats. The women who sat on benches and on the floor stopped their talking a moment to look up at him. Then they went back to their gossip and cigarettes. He was ushered into the sala where an altar had been erected. The musicians were tuning their instruments.

Don Antonio had not demanded that he appear for the ceremony, but Julio wished to suffer a little more over his loss. During the sleepless night he had agreed with Molano again. Marriage with the Don was best for Luisa. Yet, for himself, he could find no consolation. Running away from Molano would have given him some satisfaction, had the Don not ruined this by promising to free him.

The bridal party walked past him. Don Antonio. A still pretty woman of fifty whom Julio guessed to be Luisa's mother. Molano's brother, a shorter and stouter version of the Don. Luisa. Her eyes did not leave the floor.

The padre took his position at the altar and began to read in a bored monotone the rites of marriage. When the

service was nearly over, the musicians began to play, a number Julio recognized as the first dance he had had with Luisa at the Parra baile.

After the benediction, the women retired and the men went into the refreshment chamber. Julio lost sight of Luisa among the well-wishers who had crowded around her.

Julio left the house without refreshments.

He walked aimlessly about Taos for several hours, finally stopping for a cup of American whiskey the gringos distilled not far from the city. After another drink, a brown arm went around his waist. Her face was not pretty, but she had a lush, full figure and a willing smile. He asked her to drink with him. They drank until the tapers had to be lighted, and when he got tired of her kissing him, he bet and lost at monte. She pulled at his arm and told him of a place she knew. His luck could not fail there.

He went out with her, behind the building. The cool evening air was heavy with the sweetness of tuberose from the adjoining courtyard. In the distance, always soft, sometimes fading away entirely, he could hear music from the wedding baile. The girl put her head in his lap while he rolled a cigarette for her. She inhaled deeply, twice, and threw the husk into the grass.

Drifting in louder, above the music, Julio could hear laughter. He could see Luisa in Molano's arms, her head

thrown back, laughing.

The girl tugged at his neck, impatiently, pulling him down. The laughter swelled louder. He freed himself and got to his feet.

The girl followed him part way down the alley, and when he did not turn back, she spat at the ground and screamed a curse that his children might be born as stupid as he. Julio kept walking.

The sala was so crowded that the dancers found it almost impossible to move, but the lack of space did not dull the party. They held their partners just the same, laughing and singing, and so long as the wine flowed without stopping, there was nothing in sight that would make the evening dull enough for anybody to leave.

Julio pushed among them. In one group, he heard the eager bridegroom discussing the need for a more rigid tariff policy. Luisa's mother, in trying to dance with the Don's brother, was suffering from repeated bumps into other couples.

Just as he turned away to keep from being seen by the Don, he faced Luisa. An aged grandee had given up the bruising ordeal.

She came to him without hesitation. They moved into the crowd, and held to each other, and did not try to dance.

"For your sake, I am happy, Luisa."

"For your sake, are you happy?"

He did not answer. He felt a tremor run through her shoulders. Soon she was shaking and crying without control. Julio held her closer and tried to dance.

A heavily mustached don peered at her over Julio's shoulder.

"My dear, I should also weep with joy, if I had multiplied my flocks into two million this afternoon," he shouted so loud that everybody around them heard.

The dancers looked at Luisa and then roared with delight.

She left Julio and fought her way back to her mother.

## 4

They arrived late in Santa Fe. Julio was about to leave for Pepa's when the Don asked him to remain with them for a cup of wine.

It had been a silent trip, with the Don trying to get conversation out of them, and failing in this, saying nothing himself.

Maria came forward and was introduced to her new mistress. She showed Luisa through the house and said as little to the new Dona as she had the old.

"Do you like the house?" Don Antonio asked when she joined them at the table.

"Yes, senor. It is a nice house."

Molano started to pour wine for her.

"No, senor. I do not care for wine."

"No wine? Are you tired, Luisa?"

"Yes, senor."

Molano glanced at Julio.

"I shall go to Pepa's," Julio said, getting up. "She has had to put me up before."

"Of course, if you wish, Julio. But I am sure the Dona doesn't care if you remain. I want you to look upon Luisa as you did the old Dona, Julio. Let us have things as they were."

Julio looked about the sala uncomfortably. It was the only room with mattresses.

"You don't care if the boy stays, do you, Luisa? He was a favorite of the former Dona and has become quite used to my house."

Luisa's lips turned pale. She did not speak.

"See, Julio, the Dona has no objection to your staying."

"I object, senor!" Julio said forcefully enough to raise Luisa's eyes from the floor. "I shall stay with Pepa."

"Very well, Julio. I have extended my generosity to you and you have not accepted. There is no more I can do."

"I wish to say, senor, that I will treat Luisa as if she were the old Dona, beginning immediately."

"Good."

Julio went to her, lifting her face and kissing her, holding her much longer than he planned.

"I always kissed the old Dona, senora," he said. "I

hope you have no objection."

He turned, walking past the startled Don, and left the house.

It took him several hours to pack his supplies and load them on the burro. He was tired from little sleep and the day's journey, but he could not wait until morning to leave. Many times on the ride back from Taos he had weakened and decided to say with Molano so he could be close to Luisa. The time to go, he knew, was the time while he was still hurt and bitter. There would be no turning back once the Don was aware that he had deserted him. In the mountains he would be too busy to remember. To the portero he mentioned casually that he was getting an early start for the ranges. The old man did not question him further.

He had not ridden two leagues, however, before he was ordered to a halt by three men.

When they came closer, he found they were soldiers.

"Where is your destination?" one of them asked.

He told them he was going east to the ranges.

"I should not advise your going anywhere, senor. But our orders do not call for stopping you unless you go north. The gringos have provoked us into war. Already we believe there is a force moving down from the north."

Julio rode slowly back to the hacienda.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

Early summer was a time of waiting. The people of New Mexico saw no need for alarm until the Americans arrived. The gringos had a long, hot march ahead of them. Sometimes men perished on this journey over arid plains and burning deserts. No lesser men than the great tejanos had been brought to their knees from a lack of food and water.

Over their wine and at their bailes, the ricos encouraged one another with boasts of a glorious victory. The peons tended sheep and had children and danced at their fandangos and wondered if a change for the better were possible outside of Heaven. For Americans stranded in New Mexico it was an anxious time. Fearing both for their lives and property, they were polite and stayed out of trouble. It was also a time of distrust. A man could not be certain of his neighbor's loyalty. There were many Mexicans, ricos among them, who wanted the gringos to come quickly and take possession of the territory. To sway the indifferent there were conflicting claims. Those who were sympathetic to the United States argued that an American victory would bring new freedoms, greater prosperity and security from Indian attacks. On the other hand, there were those who claimed that an American conquest would mean rape and murder of the innocent.

The report of the American advance was confirmed later in the summer when General Kearny crossed the Arkansas River

and headed south. The Mexicans put their faith into halting the Americans at Apache Pass, a narrow passage not far from Santa Fe, where it was believed several cannon and a few men could turn back the strongest attacks of the invader.

On the evening before the Mexicans were to take up their position, Julio was summoned by Don Antonio. He dreaded the visit, for he knew Molano would insist on knowing where he stood in his loyalties.

Frequently he had been asked to come into the sala to visit with Don Antonio and his bride. But they had talked so far only in general terms of the city's defense. Coming into Luisa's presence, now that she was the Dona, was always difficult for him. Regardless of his discomfort, however, he looked forward to seeing Luisa. She seemed just as eager for his visits. Molano was not displeased to be left out of their conversations. He sat back, drinking his wine and smoking, as if he were glad to have someone relieve him from the task of spanning the generation between Luisa and him.

"In the morning I shall leave for the Pass," Molano said, after he had had Julio served with wine. "Now, I want to know your wishes."

"I shall do as you order, senor."

"There must be some way of solving our differences with the Americans," Luisa said. "I don't care to see either

of you enter into the fighting."

"But we must fight," the Don said, glancing at Julio.

"At least some of us."

"I agree with the Dona, senor. We have nothing to gain by fighting."

The Don poured another cup for himself. "Notice, my dear, how Julio thinks we have little worth fighting for. I am sure you do not agree with him. First of all, we shall lose our independence to a foreign power. This foreign power which Julio regards so lightly will destroy every thing we esteem. From top to bottom our lives will be ruined. Even our beloved church will not escape their persecution. The devil-worshipping protestantes will make it their first target for destruction."

"I cannot believe that, senor," Luisa said. "They will respect the holy faith."

"Have they in the past, Luisa? Have you been blind to their insults, their desecration of our shrines, our holy processions? No, Luisa, this is an ancient grievance that is carried over from the Old World. Ask Julio. He studied under a noted scholar."

"It was true of the Old World, yes. But the Constitution of the United States guarantees every man the right to his own religion."

"Where did you learn that speech?"

"I studied with two scholars, senor."

"Nevertheless, it is a lie. Have you seen a gringo put this idealism into practice? No, of course not. Tolerance to him means something far different. Should he take over New Mexico we shall be greasers in his eyes forever. Civilizations are not blended together overnight. To the gringo tolerance means that he will tolerate only those who are like himself. His first act will be to put the priesthood to the sword. Then our churches will be burned. We shall have to die now for our holy faith or die later as our heathen enemy will die--without the blessings of Heaven. This is an issue between man and God. We must not hesitate to die for Him Who died for us."

Luisa was plainly horrified by the thought of an American victory.

"But we might not die so much for the holy faith as we do to protect a system of living that is already dead," Julio replied.

"Julio has been greatly influenced by false teaching, my dear. He is very intimate with gringos. You know, I suppose, that he spent much of his time at the home of Don Arrio Parra, in the company of the Don's gringo-loving daughter. Yes, I imagine he was greatly influenced by Felipa."

"I have used my own powers of reason, senor. What you say about the Americans is a distortion. We have nothing to fear, unless it be an unlawful power over our fellow

men, a power the gringos will take away from men and give back to God where it belongs."

The Don rose from his chair. "Will you fight, Julio? Are you ready to kill gringos?"

Luisa watched Julio closely as he tried to evade the Don's question. She tried to change the subject, but Molano insisted on having an answer.

"I believe it would be useless to fight, senor. That is my honest belief."

Don Antonio looked at Luisa. "So it is useless to fight for the honor of our womanhood. You refuse to step forward to rescue our women--our beloved Dona, for instance? Without a fight you would have our women feed the lust of the invader?"

"For your safety, senora, no sacrifice would be too great."

"I am sure the Dona would appreciate your deeds much more than your idle words. Will you fight?"

"It makes little difference if we fight or not. The Americans have too many men, too many guns, too many--"

"You have listened to the defeatists! We shall turn the gringos back. We have the Pass. If necessary a handful of men could defend it. But we shall have hundreds! It is impossible for the gringos to get through."

"And what are we to do if they decide to march around this one small obstacle?"

"You are a coward!" Molano cried, pounding his fist against the table.

"Not cowardly, senor--realistic! To die now would be cowardly. The coward is the man lacking in courage to face a new life."

Molano turned to Luisa. "Cowards are always full of excuses, my dear. I have never heard a man admit he was a coward, yet the world is full of them. Witness the man in front of you."

"I am trying to be sensible," Julio said to Luisa. "The sensible man will not die uselessly. He will live to help his people make a useful life."

"You are wasting your breath on the Dona. Do you expect her to listen favorably to your cowardly excuses when her family was ruined by the gringos?"

"They were tejanos, senor," Luisa said.

"It makes little difference what you call them. They stem from the same source, and they hate us alike. Is it not true, Luisa, that your father would be alive today, had it not been for the gringos?"

In her confusion, Luisa looked first to Julio and then at Molano. "His heart might have failed him without the interference of the tejanos, senor."

"Very unlikely, Luisa. He did die from their abusive treatment, did he not? When his land was stolen and his sheep were killed?"

"Yes, senor," Luisa said quietly. "I believe so."

"Tell the Dona again, Julio, that you do not care to put up a fight against the men who killed her father. I am sure she enjoys your argument tremendously."

Julio sipped at his wine in silence, not pleased with himself for blundering into the trap Molano had set for him. The Don had been a good husband. Luisa was given jewels and rich fabrics and all the comforts due a woman of her class. Since their marriage he had remained constant to her and had not indulged in the slurs that had been so painful to the Dona Adela. But it had not been enough. The Don was no longer satisfied with respect. Julio knew that until he was disgraced or in some way forced out of her mind, Molano would receive no more than respect; for even now, when he looked at Luisa, her eyes were on him and she was smiling.

"Tell me, Julio, are you a coward or a traitor? You must be one or the other."

"Neither, senor. I am merely a little slow to guess the motives of men."

"Then I gather you are a traitor." Molano faced Luisa. "You know, of course, that Julio is a gringo himself."

It was a shock Luisa was not prepared for, and the Don turned to Julio smiling his satisfaction.

"During these difficult times, my dear, we must face unpleasantness. Julio is the son of a gringo trapper. My generosity, I am afraid, got in the way of my good sense

for sheltering him all these years. His gratitude, as you can plainly foresee, is to be repaid with treason."

Luisa watched Julio as the Don talked, waiting for him to deny the accusation.

"I shall go to the Pass with you, senor," he said, unable to hold out against Luisa's growing restlessness.

"I shall fight as long and as hard as you, senor!"

Molano shook his head. "It would be very foolish of me to take a traitor into the midst of our troops. I see that is what you want."

"I am sure he is not a traitor, senor," Luisa said. "Give him a chance to prove himself."

"He has said enough already, my dear, to convince me that he is unreliable. Nevertheless, if you wish me to prove his worthlessness, I shall do so. Yes, perhaps that would be better than the alternative I had planned to offer him if he chose not to fight."

"I did not count on an alternative," Julio said. "It is the same treatment given mad dogs, I assume."

"On the contrary. If you chose, you could have remained here with the Dona during my absence. Someone is needed to look after her."

Julio glanced up at Luisa. Her disappointment appeared to be no less.

The affair at Apache Pass, Julio realized later, was

tailored especially for Cristo's humor. He wished Cristo could have seen the Don in his breast plate and newly-polished sword, bowing before the padre and making his last confession. But the Don was not the only Mexican who made peace with his Maker, expecting never to see home again. From start to finish it had been a fiasco. And bloodless. The Don had not even smelled gunpowder.

At the very beginning, Molano had doubted if their leadership was good enough to annihilate the Americans completely.

The loss of General Manuel Armijo, so the Don told Julio, would be the only good to come out of an American victory. The Governor was not of the gente fina. He had been born into a poor family at Albuquerque, and had risen to wealth by stealing sheep from the ricos who had employed him as a herder. His rise to power had come from bribery and blackmail. No one trusted the word of Manuel Armijo, but he was powerful enough not to need their trust. His skillful maneuvering of the counter-revolution of 1837 had won him a place in the favor of Mexico. He lived in luxury, surrounded by mistresses his wife carefully chose for him, pocketing taxes and the tariffs paid by gringo traders.

Argument and bickering were common among the defenders. There were rumors of Armijo's selling out to the Americans, for the Governor had begun to talk of the advantages of a peaceful settlement, once the size of the approaching

American force was made known to him. Centering around the second in command were counter-rumors that Armijo would be killed before he could turn traitor. Colonel Archuleta, as everyone knew, was too ambitious to let a chance for power slip past him. As the days went by, desertions became common, for the men felt the cause was hopeless without better leadership. But the greater part of the Mexican troops stood fast, ready to meet anything the Americans might throw up against them, regardless of the odds that grew hourly in the favor of the invader.

Then, suddenly, Armijo appeared before the men and ordered them to return to their homes. He would make his defense in the south, where he could kill more Americans. Colonel Archuleta agreed that a defense would be unwise.

The men were stunned by the news, but they turned back to Santa Fe, without questioning their leaders. Armijo had fled already to Mexico before the truth was made known. A party of Americans, under a truce, had come into Santa Fe and concluded a bargain with Armijo. How much money the Governor had been given, no one knew. But they were certain that Archuleta had been promised all of New Mexico that lay west of the Rio Grande. Unknown to the defenders of Apache Pass, a column from Mexico had been rushing to their aid. But it was too late. New Mexico had fallen to the gringos without a drop of blood being shed in its defense.

The Don brooded over his wine.

In the days since their return, Don Antonio had not left the house. Standing straight, with his proud shoulders pushed back, Molano had never looked his sixty years. Now he had grown old. He slumped over his cup and daily refought the battle which had never been fought. It was the first time Julio had seen him drink more than his system could absorb. Yet when Julio came to the house for a conference on problems which had risen in the management of the hacienda, Don Antonio was unable to speak intelligently with him. He took no interest in the hacienda. Julio was allowed to do as he pleased, without questions or recommendations.

Julio came to him daily and met the same indifference. It was necessary for him to invent problems in order to get into the sala, for the Don never asked him to come. Molano did not even talk with Luisa. After his sessions with Don Antonio, Julio managed to find a moment to talk with Luisa, before the Don asked him not too politely to leave. As the American occupation neared, Julio knew he could go north unhindered. Yet a look across the room at Luisa each day had come to mean more to him than all the freedom he could possibly find in the mountains. When the Don was not watching, her smiles told him all he cared to know. He wondered if the Don were not bitter over two defeats.

Late one afternoon, during chocolate, while he was trying to interest the Don in sheep, a distant shot from a can-

non was heard. It fired again, and the Don's cup vibrated shrilly against the decanter. Thirteen times, far apart.

Julio followed Molano to the roof.

Over the Palace of the Governors a new flag rose slowly against a sunset of fiery copper. The bugle finished its last crisp notes, and the echo was lost in a great burst of shouting that was slow to die away.

Don Antonio was not anxious to leave. The sun went down, and in its last moments turned adobe the color of gold. The same misleading sight hundreds of years before had sent the Spanish conquistadors into New Mexico in search of that precious metal. And the Spaniard, in the magic of human alchemy, had stayed to be moulded with the Indian into Mexican. The sun was out of sight, leaving the horizon with a thin edge of scarlet. The fires were burning again for his last transformation.

Molano turned to Julio. "All my life I have been able to choose the alliances I made, Julio. They were good decisions. I had wisdom and saw the future. Always I used my mind, never my heart. Now I am not allowed to choose. I must use my heart. In any event, I shall hardly be wise."

## 3

When they returned, Don Arrio was in the sala, pacing the floor and wringing his hands. Parra embraced the Don warmly.

"My dear friend, in these evil times I am doubly glad to see you," Parra said, still holding close to Molano.

"These are terrible times. It is good to meet old friends."

"Today is an answer to your prayers," Molano said bitterly. "You should be quite happy."

"Happy? Oh, my God, no! I am ruined."

"There will be more traders than ever for you to accommodate."

"There will be traders, but they will cut my throat for the way I--" Parra bowed to Luisa "--for the way I made strict bargains. I was very firm with the gringos."

"You should have been governor. You have all the qualifications. Now, Don Arrio, be brief."

Parra blinked his eyes at the Don's rudeness. "It is a favor. A great favor. But from such an old friend, I do not hesitate to make the request. After all, Don Antonio, we have been friends for many, many years." Parra smiled at Luisa. "In fact, one might say that our families have been on a very intimate footing."

"What do you want?"

"My wife was sent to Mexico last week. I do not dare remain in Santa Fe now that the americanos are in control. I made plans to send my family into Mexico ahead of me, to allow time for me to settle my business affairs. I succeeded in getting my dear wife on the way, but when it came time to find Felipa, she was gone. She had run away! I am dis-

graced, Don Antonio. Humiliated. A subject of ridicule. Indeed, I am very miserable."

"So am I, dear friend. Be briefer."

"I found her this morning. Where, I cannot disclose. But now I must ride fast. I cannot be bothered--rather, I cannot expect a fragile, young girl to keep up the pace I must make, if I am to get safely into Mexico. Thus, Don Antonio, dear compadre, I ask an enormous favor of you. Keep Felipa in your house until I can send for her. If I leave her in the city, she is sure to be seen by the gringos. And I have been disgraced enough already. Oh, God, think if I should become a grandfather to a gringo's bastard!"

Don Antonio glanced at Julio.

"That would be horrible. I could not let such a thing happen--even to a man who probably deserves it."

"Say that you will keep her, and I shall repay your goodness in silver."

"Very well, Don Arrio. However, the most satisfactory payment will be her speedy departure from my house, just as soon as you can arrange it."

Parra embraced the Don and ran from the room. In a moment he was back, with a tight grip on Felipa's wrist.

"Do as the Don orders, nina," Parra told her. "And for the sake of God in Heaven, do not disgrace us further."

Parra embraced Molano again, and left.

Luisa ordered chocolate for Felipa, but it was refused.

She sat on the floor, cross-legged, with her bare legs exposed well above her knees, and rolled a cigarette. Luisa was plainly disgusted with the exposure, even more so when she glanced up to find Molano staring at the girl.

After the Don had tried without success to engage her in conversation, Julio said that he hoped her father would have a safe journey.

Luisa sat erect--hurt, he thought--looking at him with disapproval.

"You should have gone with him," Felipa snapped. "The gringos will give you what you deserve!"

Julio turned to Luisa. She seemed pleased and could not hold back a smile.

Oblivious to the exchange, Molano sipped at his wine and stared at the table.

## 4

In the morning Julio and the Don followed the crowds into Santa Fe to take the oath of allegiance and hear an address by General Kearny.

The plaza was jammed with Mexicans waiting for the few words which would transform them instantly into Americans. They were strangely quiet, as if they were in the presence of death. Julio could not recall a Mexican gathering that had not been singing and laughing and shouting to one another.

The men who climbed to the roof of the adobe building did not have to beg for quiet. It was a bright August morn-

ing and the sun shone down hot and glimmered brilliantly on the Americans' brass buttons. In metal-starved New Mexico it was a sight to command awe and respect. The common soldiers already had lost their brass buttons in exchange for more perishable merchandise.

The older American stepped in front of the others and began to read his proclamation. He spoke with the enthusiasm of a priest who had an aching head while reading the rites of burial on a hot afternoon. The Mexicans followed his words so intently, however, that it came as an anti-climax when the proclamation was handed to a Mexican for a reading in their own language. The General sounded a little less powerful than God in an understandable language.

The General told them that he was now their governor, and that they should look to him for protection. He assured them that their property was secure and outlined their rights as citizens.

Julio watched the Don frown skeptically when Kearny said, "We come as friends, to better your condition and make you a part of the Republic of the United States. We mean not to murder you or rob you of your property. Your families shall be free from molestation; your women secure from violence."

The General carefully emphasized that upon taking the oath of allegiance they would be citizens of the United States, enjoying its freedoms and benefits; but at the same

time, they would be loyal to the United States or suffer the consequences as traitors.

"If the General does not keep his word," Molano whispered into Julio's ear, "I shall not be obligated to keep mine."

When the General had finished, a response was delivered by Juan Bautista Vigil y Alarid.

"Do not find it strange if there has been no manifestation of joy and enthusiasm in seeing this city occupied by your military forces," he told General Kearny. "To us the power of the Mexican Republic is dead. No matter what her condition, she was our mother. What child will not shed abundant tears at the tomb of his parents? I might indicate some of the causes for her misfortunes, but domestic troubles should not be made public.... Today we belong to a great and powerful nation. Its flag, with its stars and stripes, covers the horizon of New Mexico, and its brilliant light shall grow like good seed well cultivated.... We know that we belong to the Republic that owes its origin to the immortal Washington, whom all civilized nations admire and respect. How different would be our situation had we been invaded by European nations! We are aware of the unfortunate condition of the Poles. In the name, then, of the entire Department, I swear obedience to the Northern Republic and I tender my respect to its laws and authority."

When the oath was administered, Molano spoke the words of allegiance so forcefully that Julio could not hear his own voice.

Julio felt a tap on his shoulder. He turned to a red beard, grown bushy and dusty from a long march.

"Congratulations, gentlemen," Holz said, pumping Julio's hand warmly. "The United States of America is richer by two new gringos."

"One gringo, senor," the Don said coldly. "The other is a greaser."

Molano walked past him, ignoring the American's outstretched hand, and pushing his way into the crowd.

"After such a reception," Holz said, "I need a drink to start my blood moving again."

It was almost impossible for them to find a place where they could be served, for the celebrating Americans were everywhere, some of the soldiers escorting as many as three Mexican girls. Holz and Julio edged into a far corner and sat on the floor. They ordered aguardiente and tried to talk above the laughing and singing and the squealing of the happy Mexican girls. One soldier near the door snipped off his last button and handed it to a girl. They pushed through his giggling, teasing comrades and went into a room at the rear of the building.

One of the girls who felt her escort was not giving her a fair share of attention, left him to go to Holz. She

put her arm around his neck and kissed him on the cheek.

"Please, senorita, I am a married man with fourteen children," Holz said to her. "I am very tired."

The girl removed her arm like it had been stung by fire. She went to an American who was burdened with only one girl.

"Never go too far north or east, my boy. You'll be sadly disappointed in American women. They dress tightly at the top and tightly at the bottom, like they had taken it upon themselves to safeguard the national gold supply. On the road back to Missouri, every mile finds a little less chile pepper in their blood. By the time you land in St. Louis, it has turned into goat's milk--frozen goat's milk."

For awhile they talked of the possibility of their meeting in battle at Apache Pass, and then Holz explained his civil status and the type of government the military was going to establish. Julio lost no time in unloading his troubles. He covered everything from his futile attempt to go north to his problems with the Don. Mostly he talked about Luisa.

"Forget her," Holz advised.

Julio shook his head.

"So she is beautiful and witty. I can understand your pain at having her bed down with your sour friend, the Don-- but also remember she is married. I doubt if she is happy

under the arrangement, but rico girls are taught to make unhappiness in marriage an art. And, Julio, remember they stay married. The Don is in excellent health, damn it. You had better forget her."

"I doubt if she will forget."

"Oh, so you're a sly one. You're going to milk the cow but pasture her elsewhere."

"I resent your illustration," Julio said hotly.

"My dear boy, now that you've become a genuine gringo, you must stop your chivalry. It will give you away."

"Holz, I love her."

"And does she love you?"

"Yes, I am sure of it."

Holz laughed so hard that he had to put a hand against the wall to support himself.

"There is nothing humorous to it," Julio said, glaring at him.

"Oh, yes, Julio, there is. It serves the old bastard right!"

"That doesn't comfort Luisa and me."

"Forget her, Julio. She and the Don are married and the sooner you realize it, the happier you'll be. This war can't last too long. Once it is feasible we'll go north, just as we planned. I have a little money--not much, mind you--but enough for a start. Up north you'll forget her. We'll be too busy getting rich to worry about women. But

when we come back to Taos for a few days in town--then the women had better run for their duenas. Now, what do you say to that?"

"I don't know, Holz. I really don't know."

"Until you admit that you have absolutely no chance with Luisa, you're going to be a very sad boy. What I am driving at is this. The bonds of matrimony, in a religious sense, are too important for her to discard. So forget her. For all you know, she might like being a dona, even if she wouldn't mind a slip from her throne now and then."

Julio was not listening to him. Over the heads of the soldiers he saw Shallott.

The American saw him at the same time and shouldered his way through the crowd over to where they were sitting.

"Hello, greaser," Shallott said.

Julio felt Holz grab his arm.

"You greasers put up a very brave fight," Shallott went on. "I told the boys on the way down from Missouri that you cowards would never fight."

"Do nothing," Holz warned Julio. "He wants trouble."

"Keep out of my business, Red! You know as well as I do that the greasers are too yellow to fight."

Julio tried to rise, but Holz gripped his arm tighter.

"Don't worry, Red. He's as yellow as the rest of them. I met your pal in a corn field some years ago. He had to call on half the greaser army to save his skin."

The tejano Julio remembered from the corn field was much thinner and whiskered and without the ugly scar that ran down the side of Shallott's head. He reached into his pocket and laid a silver dollar on the floor in front of Shallott.

"Not all of us Mexicans take gringo bribes," he said. "Some of us would sooner fight."

Shallott picked up the dollar, but on turning to see the effect of Julio's words on the soldiers who had crowded around them, he tossed it to a girl.

"A present from me. A souvenir from the time this coward took money from me without carrying out his part of the bargain. He stole it from me, and his old man beat me senseless with a rifle butt." Shallott pointed to the scar. It grew redder as he talked. "I was lucky. These goddam filthy greasers shot Downes and laughed at him while he laid on the ground, begging them to kill him clean. I saw a dozen men killed the same way. If a man was too tired to march along with them, he was clubbed to death, and if we asked the greasers to bury them so the vultures and coyotes wouldn't get to eat 'em, they laughed at us and jabbed us with their rifle butts. These greasers are brave only when they got a man bound hand and foot so he can't fight back. Oh, God, you should have seen the cocky, little bastards then!"

Julio jerked himself free from Holz. He saw Shallott's

hand go to his Colt. But before he could rise, Holz jumped forward, in front of Shallott, pinning Julio's arms.

"For God's sake, be still, Julio! He wants a fight. Can't you see he wants an excuse to kill you? And if you give it to him, no one can stop him or punish him. He knows the General would hang him if he killed a Mexican needlessly." Holz turned to Shallott. "Carry your complaint to the General, Shallott. God knows you licked his boots to get where you are."

"Shut up, Holz!"

"Tell your General how you Texans came to conquer our land," Julio said, staring up at him. "Tell him how you Texans drove our people and their flocks from the land that had belonged to them for centuries. Tell him how brave you Texans were in butchering my defenseless people. Whatever punishment you suffered from my countrymen was just in the eyes of God. It was you and your Texans who shed our blood first. It was my people who won your independence in Texas. And be sure to tell your General how you Texans rewarded the Mexican people for their service."

"Don't anger him further," Holz warned.

Julio shrugged away from Holz's grip.

"I don't know, senor, when your people came to the New World," Julio continued, "but a part of my people came in 1492, and the other part was already here and had been here since the beginning of the beginning. Tell your General

how you traders were received with our hospitality and friendship and how it was repaid with abuse and ridicule and murder."

The Mexican girls who had held snugly to their escorts, eased away from them and stood silently apart.

"Don't let the greaser spoil the fun," a soldier said. "Let him alone. Let him drink away his troubles."

His comrades agreed that Julio was having a very bad effect on the girls.

"Especially, senor," Julio said, above the noise that the Americans were making to distract him, "tell your General how you shot Cristo without giving him a chance for life. Yes, above all, tell him how you killed a Mexican gentleman and orphaned his children."

The Americans quieted, waiting for Shallott to act. The tall American's face was white with anger and the pistol trembled in his hand. But he was silent.

"And while you're at it," Holz said, "tell the General how you got down on your hands and knees and begged Molano to save your life that night. Tell the old goat how you paid every cent in your pocket to--"

"Shut up, Holz!" Shallott cried. "I have authority. I'll have the General ship you home."

"At least I won't be going home in a box."

An American, who was soon joined by others, began to snicker at Shallott's discomfort.

Shallott looked back over his shoulder at them. He jammed the gun into his belt and forced his way through the soldiers and their girls, out into the street.

The soldiers returned to their singing and pinching.

"Both you and the Don be careful not to start anything that might give him the excuse he is looking for," Holz said. "He can't do a thing if you live peacefully and stay out of trouble."

"Are we to jump for every soldier?"

"If he were a soldier he could be handled easier. Like me, Shallott came along for the ride. Only he convinced the General that he is just the man needed to carry out the law. Once the General moves on, his power will be even greater, I am afraid. He has an office something similar to your alcaldes, only he doesn't have the power to try and judge. He can only arrest."

"Where is the good government you promised, Holz?"

"There will be better men, Julio. Your new governor will be Senor Brent, a very good man. Don't worry. Keep out of the way of Shallott and everything will be all right."

"Why must I keep out of his way?" Julio said bitterly. "He is a murderer. I am an honest citizen. Must I allow him to kill me without objecting?"

"If you don't start the trouble, I think you could kill him--that is, in the defense of your self or property. Our government is not unreasonable. All officials are account-

able for their conduct to the people, Julio. You are an American."

"Yes, in name I am an American."

"You are as much an American as I or Shallott or the General."

"But only in name, Holz. Ever since we went north and I found that my father was American I have wondered which side of me would win out."

"It makes no difference what you were, Julio. Now you are an American. There was a time when we were German, Jewish, Irish, Russian, Spanish, Indian, Polish, Dutch or Mexican. Now we are all Americans."

"I remember your telling me once that I could be thankful I was not many shades darker. Now I find my skin too light for slavery and too dark for complete and equal freedom. You Germans and English and Poles are easily changed into Americans. I shall always be a Mexican, a greaser. I realized that a moment ago, Holz."

"Forget Shallott!"

"No, it's more than Shallott. I have seen it on the face of every American soldier. I would be lying to myself if I thought myself equal to them. They don't want me for an equal."

Holz drained his cup without answering.

"Don't worry. I know I can't fight it. I'm not going to murder the governor. But the Don was right. These two

civilizations cannot understand each other. They should never have been joined."

"You'll see the situation in a better light tomorrow," Holz said, filling Julio's cup. "Shallott and the men like him can't live forever."

"Shallott looks very healthy."

"He'll probably marry a Mexican girl and settle down to eat torillas for the rest of his life."

"Holz, I think I could give up my life without regret, if I could kill him."

"There are better ways to prove your equality."

"None would make me happier."

"I doubt if Cristo would ask you to avenge him. He would ask you to be careful, Julio."

"That is why I would do it. Because he was too kind ever to ask for anything out of life."

"And Luisa? Better ask her, my boy, if she wants to warm her toes against a corpse."

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The Don drank heavily until late fall before his moodiness ended. Frequently he left the house at night, without telling Luisa where he was going or what he was doing.

To Julio the conduct of Molano was not surprising. It was a repetition of the old pattern. He had not expected the Don to remain faithful to Luisa for so long.

On these nights, Julio gave up his usual sessions with Holz to sit in the doorway of his house and watch the weak, yellow light of the sala on the mica windows. All around him the golden leaves from the big cottonwoods were falling into the courtyard. A chill breeze swept them into corners where they lay in piles, until a stronger gust scattered them again. Some nights the door to the sala opened and he could see the soft contours of Luisa's body silhouetted against the candlelight. For awhile she would stand there, watching his cigarette burn in the darkness. Neither of them spoke. Then the door closed and soon there was no light against the windows, and he went to his bed.

While he was preparing his meal one evening, Maria came to him with a message. The Dona wanted to see him.

Luisa was in the sala. She faced the wall and did not turn to him until Maria had left.

"Where is she, Julio?" Luisa asked.

Her dark eyes were angry.

"I have said nothing to the Don. But it must stop. I

hate to interfere in your personal activities, but you have no right to invade this house. I am disgusted, Julio. I had expected better conduct from you."

"What are you talking about, Luisa?"

"Please don't try to add deception, Julio. You have done enough already. Is she in your house?"

Luisa gripped her hands together and held back her breath, as if she hoped he would lie, if he had to answer at all.

"Maria is a little too old," he said, grinning. "I suppose you mean Felipa?"

She turned on him indignantly, even more hurt that he should play with her feelings.

"Yes, Felipa! What am I to tell the Don if he should come home and find her gone? That Julio had borrowed her like a cup of meal that he promises to return in the morning?"

"Remember, Luisa, the Don charges interest," Julio said, laughing.

"Return her to this house instantly!"

"Are you more worried than jealous?"

He was pleased to see her turn away to hide the answer on her face.

"I don't have her, Luisa."

"Are you lying?"

"Of course not."

"What about the other nights?"

"I haven't had her. And I don't want her. Now or ever."

She came back to the table where a cup had been placed for him. She poured the wine without looking up at him.

"I am sorry, Julio."

"Sorry that I don't have her?"

She smiled. "No, Julio. For that I am very glad."

"Why haven't you told the Don about Felipa?"

"I didn't want you to suffer his--"

"It is impossible for me to get into any more trouble with him. Besides, I think it would have pleased him to know that Felipa had been with me. Yes, I am sure it would have relieved him."

"I am married, Julio. He needs no more assurance."

She quickly withdrew her hand when Julio tried to take it.

"But you, Luisa--is that enough assurance for you?"

"Please--go find her for me."

"And should I look for the Don at the same time? He was no better in his treatment of the old Dona, Luisa. His sole purpose in life is to keep other people from being happy. You know as well as I what he is doing."

She was silent a moment. "I have been unduly alarmed, I guess. You need not hunt for her. Felipa has always returned safely, before the Don could come home and find

her missing."

"How many times has she done this?"

"I have lost count. Seven or eight times, maybe."

"And always she comes home before the Don?"

"She will make it back in time again. You need not bother to look for her."

"Are you afraid of what I might find?"

"No."

"You are afraid!"

Luisa turned away from him. "It makes no difference what you find. Nothing makes any difference."

"Nothing?"

"You know better."

"Then let me look for her."

"If you wish."

He started for the door, eager to make a great discovery.

"Julio?"

"Yes."

"You said once that you always embraced the old Dona before you left her."

"It was a good custom."

"Then it deserves to be revived."

Luisa left her chair and ran to him. Julio drew her close and kissed her and felt her tears hot against his face. She broke away from him.

"I tried, Julio. I tried."

"God knows whose blame it is," he said, drawing her back to him. "Let the Don do the crying."

"I tried to do what was expected of me."

"Will it make any difference in the way you feel if I should find Felipa and not the Don?"

Before she could answer, the grating shuffling of Maria's feet could be heard approaching the sala. The sound was no more welcome than a shout into a dreamer's ear.

## 2

He could smell the unmistakable odor of an American cigar grow stronger. From the shadows near the gate came a quick stamping of a foot, grinding into the sandy earth.

"Fedro?"

"Yes, it is I, senor," the old portero said weakly.

"Has the Don's guest, the senorita, gone out?"

"No, senor. Not a soul, except for the Don."

"Have you ever let her out?"

"Of course not, senor. The Don has expressly ordered me not to open the zaguan for her, unless he should order me to do so."

"Then he has asked you?"

"No, senor. She has never gone out."

"You are lying, Fedro," Julio said, stooping to run his fingers over the ground. He found the half-smoked cigar and held it up to Fedro. "Who was smoking this?"

"How should I know?" Fedro said uneasily. "Perhaps it has lain there a day or two. I cannot remember who was smoking it."

"On one end, Fedro, the cigar is hot and on the other it is wet from your lips."

The old man stared at Julio, blinking his eyes and moaning softly. "Yes, I was smoking the cigar. Sometimes I like to smoke cigars."

"Who gave you this americano cigar?"

"Americano? I did not know it was americano, senor."

"Be truthful with me, Fedro, or I shall tell the Don that you take bribes and cannot be trusted."

"The Don does not need to know," Fedro said, running his tongue nervously over his lips. "No harm has been done."

"Who gave you the cigar?"

"An americano official--he had questions of importance to ask Don Arrio's daughter. Be careful not to tell the Don, senor. The official said it would be to the Don's advantage if he did not know it."

"This official--was he tall, blondo?"

"Yes, that is the one. A very generous americano. There is no need for alarm, senor. I shall keep my silence when it is your turn. We poor men like our luxuries also, true?"

Julio went back to his house for a rifle. He thought of Cristo and the good days he had spent with him. The times

he had sat on Cristo's lap as a boy and heard Cristo talk of sheep and Indians, while he pulled at the mayordomo's mustache; and the times, as he grew older, when he had come to doubt Cristo's bravery. Julio tried to reassure himself that he had never doubted his goodness. He thought also of what Holz had said to him. A Mexican was guaranteed the right to defend his home against invasion. The American army would have to agree with him that Shallott deserved to die for violating the sanctity of the Don's house.

Julio had not walked far after leaving the gate before he saw a big horse of an American breed tied to a young cottonwood near a brush covered ravine. From this trysting place, close to the zaguan, Felipa was able to make a dash to safety, once the Don's horse was heard coming down the road.

Julio crawled forward, his stomach close against the cool earth. Carefully pushing aside the brush, he slowed his pace as he reached a point at the top of the ravine. He rubbed his hands together to get warmth into his fingers. A bullet this close, he knew, would go through the American without stopping. His rifle was drawn closer as he looked down on them.

They were lying on the ground, only partly covered by a blanket. Felipa was even more beautiful, he thought, contrasted against the sickly whiteness of the gringo. They lay close, Felipa cradled in his arms, smoking and talking.

"When my father sends for me, amante, what am I to do?"

"Then come to me. We'll make other arrangements."

Julio raised his rifle and aimed for Shallott's temple. The Americans would be satisfied with the damning proof Shallott's body would give them. He was squeezing the trigger when Felipa reached out and pulled the American closer, too close to her for a clear shot.

"We shall be married?"

"Yes, in time. Give me time, Felipa. I swear to God that we'll marry just as soon as we can. The General wouldn't trust me to enforce the law if I married a Mexican. Don't you see? Someday when all this trouble ends, we'll get some land and settle down together. You are going to have to trust me, Felipa."

"I trust you, Jaimito. But also I love you."

"I've worked a long time to be on the inside when things break. I can't risk ruining my chances now. It's for your good as well as mine, Felipa. There are lands I have my eye on. The government will dispose of them cheaply--to those on the inside. I know this land, Felipa. There is money to be made on and under the soil. We'll have a big house and servants and grow rich."

"And you will be called Don Jaimito."

"Yes, they will call me that, won't they?" Shallott could hardly conceal his pleasure at the thought of a title.

"And you will be called the Dona Felipa."

"We have so much to live for, Jaimito. Don't risk your life foolishly. My people are not so quick to forget as yours. Try to live at peace with my people. Learn to live peacefully with them now so you will live to see your dream come true."

"I want to live as much as you do," he said, caressing her. "There is a lot to live for."

"Often the Don taunts me with your name, Jaimito. He sits in his chair and drinks his wine and talks about you."

"What does he say?"

"He would like to kill you."

Shallott rose to an elbow. "I hope he tries. I hope he tries something so I can kill him. I will kill him, Felipa! Sometimes my head pounds like a railroad gang using sledges were inside pounding away. I can thank the Don for that. I can thank him for robbing every dollar I had."

"Don't anger him, Jaimito. Everybody in Santa Fe knows he is not to be angered or cheated. He is powerful. And he has important friends."

"His friends will do him no good. I have the powerful friends now. I have the army."

"Yes, he knows. I heard him tell the Dona Luisa that he had tried without success to see the General. He wanted to tell him that you were a murderer."

"You know I didn't murder the peon, Felipa. Everybody

at the dance that night knows I did the only thing possible. He would have killed Kelley if I hadn't done something. I know these greasers. I know 'em, Felipa. They go crazy. They like to kill. It's in their blood to be cruel. They go crazy and love to torture a man."

"I know, Jaimito. But please do not call my people greasers."

"I forgot you were Mexican, I love you so much. It's a compliment to you that I forgot."

"Please be careful. The Don has said that if the army does not kill you, someone will."

"You know I can take care of myself."

"And I won't let them kill you," Felipa said, before he pulled her close to him.

Julio relaxed his grip on the rifle. He had not counted on Felipa's remaining faithful to the gringo. To avenge Shallott she would not hesitate to ruin the honor of her family by denying that she had been forced from the Molano house. For a moment he debated whether to shoot without regard to the consequences, to put the icy coldness of death into Felipa's warm embrace. But then he thought of Luisa. As he worked his way back to the zagan, he tried not to think of Cristo.

Julio found the portero where he had left him.

"If you let the girl go without the Don's permission, I shall tell the Don. It must not happen again."

"I have learned my lesson, senor."

A thought came back to him. He had wanted to point the rifle at Shallott, flushing them like startled rabbits, humiliating him in the presence of Felipa, and warning him that he would be shot if he returned. But it had occurred to Julio that Felipa's absences might be of some benefit to him.

"Use your own judgement, Fedro."

From the old man's toothless smile he knew Felipa would have her freedom so long as Shallott was able to pay the cost of the increased danger.

For several hours Julio sat in the doorway of his house and wondered if it would work to his disadvantage, should he go to Luisa and tell her that the Don was innocent, at least so far as Felipa was concerned. Before his conscience could be of too much bother, however, he heard the gate open.

Felipa walked carefully across the courtyard, tugging her blouse into place, and keeping within the shadows. She was on the porch when Julio first heard the Don's horse.

By the time Molano rode through the zaguan, Felipa had had time to be safely in her mattress.

## 3

It was Holz who suggested to Julio the real cause of the Don's nightly absences.

"The authorities won't listen to me," the American said.

"But there is a real danger. The army is blind. Just be-

cause everybody smiles and looks happy, the army thinks everything is serene. But a revolt is coming. The army talks to the army and consequently knows nothing. I have talked with my old Mexican friends and know the situation. Within six months there will be an uprising."

"I have heard nothing."

"That is because you talk with the Don. I imagine he would be the last person to talk of a situation that must be very dear to him."

"He took the oath with me."

"He was given little choice, Julio. I am sure he did relish the idea of giving up his wealth and moving to Mexico. Evidently he has seen fit to cancel his obligation, for I am sure he is one of the conspirators."

Julio remembered the Don's saying that he would keep his word only as long as the Americans kept theirs. He said nothing of this to Holz.

"I have heard conflicting reports," Holz continued. "They meet either at a secret point in the countryside or in the home of Tomas Ortiz. He is the leader, I hear. The army should not underestimate their power, for all of them are great men. Pino, Chaves, the other Armijo, Duran, Dominguez, Sanchez, Trujillo. Possibly even Padre Martinez of Taos."

"Padre Martinez would not take up arms."

"Maybe not. But he controls the Indians in Taos. The

real man to fear, however, is Diego Archuleta. He is capable and daring enough to make this into a bloody uprising."

"But they haven't a chance. The army will crush them."

"Ultimately, yes, but not before many people are killed, I am afraid. Every day the army is weakened by withdrawls to other fronts, and the revolutionists are encouraged by wholly false reports of Mexican successes to the south."

"Archuleta should know the Americans are too powerful," Julio said.

"I think he does. But he is so blinded by his thwarted ambition to rule western New Mexico that he would do anything to have his revenge."

"I thought the army gave him western New Mexico for his part in seeing that no defense was made here at Santa Fe."

"Yes, I believe he was given such a promise, although now the army denies it. At first, when it became obvious that Washington would not stand for the promise, the army said that its emissary, Magoffin, had merely hinted to Archuleta that the United States did not want the territory west of the Rio Grande. Now they deny everything. Of course, Archuleta deserves no better reward for his treason."

"Yet, for many Mexicans, that is sufficient cause to say that the Americans have broken their word?"

"Yes, I am afraid so."

"Will the army hang the conspirators if they carry out

their plans?"

"That would depend on the severity of the uprising. Of course, the army would try to confiscate their property. And if many people were killed, I believe the rebels would be hanged. However, I doubt if there is any legal basis for accusing Mexicans of treason, when legally they are not yet citizens. But the law is often forgot during passionate times. If the army would stop taking bows for an easy conquest and start listening to competent advice, it would be impossible to launch a revolt. Instead, the army grows more lax every day. The officers are having a gay time at the bailes, and even if they were alert, hardly an enlisted man could be found who would not sooner get drunk and chase the senoritas. For his part, the General is too busy getting ready to leave for California."

"But surely, Holz, if you went to the General he would not turn you away."

"No. But he would want all the details, even the hour of the uprising, before he would take my information seriously. The army has no imagination, Julio. They don't want to be bothered. Give them the time and place of the revolt and they will be there. However, you must choose a time that won't conflict with a baile or a dinner party. The army has no time for rumors, he will say. The army has urgent business."

Holz lapsed into a discourse on the efficiency of the

German army and the mistakes of Napoleon before he worked his way back to the problem.

"Strangely, the only man interested in this situation is a lunatic. I have heard him regret that the Mexicans did not put up a fight so he could have shed blood. Shallott is waiting for the uprising with the eagerness of a bridegroom. And those on the Mexican side want gringo blood. They have been hurt, Julio. They were men of power, and once a man has known power he doesn't relinquish it easily. With so much to gain the odds actually appear favorable, for life to them without power is no life at all. Many people are going to be killed--absolutely needlessly--and I don't care to be one of them. In fact, I have begun to value life a little more than I have in the past. After forty-two years, Julio, I have found exactly what I want out of life. I want a porch to sit on in the evenings after supper and an occasional jigger of whiskey. One thing more. While sitting on this porch I want to read what I've never had time to read. Also to re-read Schiller, Goethe, Homer, Aristotle, Schelling, Aquinas, Shakespeare and all the others."

"You should marry."

"Marry! You have twenty years of trouble ahead of you. Then maybe your ambitions will come into a better focus. I have led a very useless life, Julio. I have tried too hard to accomplish something. Now I know what I want, even if it does sound a little dull to you. I have been making inquir-

ies. If we ever plan to go north, the time has come for us to get ready."

"I have been ready for more than a year."

"We should go, then, within the next few months."

"I hope to be ready."

"What are you waiting for?"

"Holz, would it make any difference if--if I should want to take a woman with me?"

"We're going north to ranch, not to enter a monastery. No oaths of celibacy are required--or tolerated, for that matter."

Julio was relieved that Holz had questioned him no further about the woman, although he believed Holz had sensed that he was talking of Luisa. He gave a tentative promise to be ready shortly after Christmas.

When he had made the promise, Christmas seemed far in the future, giving him all the time he needed to get Luisa ready. That Luisa would be willing to go with him, he had no doubt. More than a month had passed since he had seen her, however. She had not sent for him, although there were many opportunities to do so, for the Don's absences throughout November and into December had grown longer and more frequent.

A change in the Don's attitude prevented his going to see her. Molano came to him every morning, eager to plan the day's work so completely that he could not invent an

excuse that would admit him to the sala. Molano had begun to talk about the future of New Mexico again. But the future he had in mind did not take into account an American occupation.

One morning, after they had planned the construction of a new building, the Don asked Julio's opinion of the Americans.

"You have seen them for over four months now. What do you think of them?"

"It makes little difference what I think, senor. They are here to stay. I shall try to get used to their ways."

"Well, you don't sound as enthusiastic as you did six months ago. Have you found something wrong with your dream?"

"It is too early to tell, senor. Conditions will improve when we are able to elect our own government."

"Don't feel bad, Julio. As a young man I had dreams that never quite worked out the way I had imagined. But I think you would be wise to face reality now. The Americans have brought no benefits with them. Their orators talk a great deal of freedom. What do they mean? The man with money and power always will be free, regardless of his government or where he lives. The poor always will live in slavery. That is the design of God's creation. But under Mexican rule no man was born a slave. I have heard the Americans talk, Julio. This country, they say, is suited

for the use of Africans. And it was the American song of freedom that lulled our people asleep! Soon New Mexico will be populated with Negro slaves. What happens then to our poor people who must find employment or starve? The gringos had not learned to free each other before they came to free us. And free us from what? They say that we are backward and poor. Instead of asking our financial condition, the gringos should have asked us if we were happy. The Americans are not a happy people, Julio. They are like horses in a race. Strong, fast, but knowing not where they are going or where the race ends, running madly in a circle like a dog determined to corner the moon."

"They are an ambitious people, senor."

"Ambitious for what, Julio? They are seeking the unattainable. Ask an American what he is running for. He will not be able to give you an answer. There is no pride in an American. How can we expect him to respect us when he fails to respect himself? He will buy and sell his honor whenever there is a good price at the market. He calls this "good business," a term that sounds a bit strange in our language but serves to his advantage when he is confronted with peddling human values in the market place."

"Every people has its mercenaries, senor."

"Yes, that is true. We have Parra and at least twenty more whom I could name."

"And there must be many Americans like Senor Holz."

"Yes, it was good of Senor Holz to come all the way from Missouri to look after our welfare," the Don replied sarcastically. "I am sure he wants nothing from us--no money, no power, no land."

"I believe he is sincere."

"Sincere in his own ambitions, yes. He is no different from the others--only more shrewd. There are undoubtedly exceptions among Americans, as you say, but I have yet to see them. As a whole they are mercenary and without respect. The General, before he moved on with his promises, guaranteed our lives and property and institutions would be respected. He made no effort to keep the promise. His troops run drunken through the streets insulting our women. Do they think we are animals, because we are different? The General has called us Americans. But did he order his men to follow his example? No. We are greasers. We are greasers to the General also, but in public affairs he has the shrewdness of Holz. And yet the General expects us to defend him from revolution and Mexican advances. We are Americans when he needs us. When all is calm we are greasers, to be discarded like a mistress who is no longer exciting.

"I could tolerate defeat, Julio, had I fought, had my people done everything in their power to fight off the invader. Is it any wonder that we are cowards in the eyes of our conquerors? If our blood had been shed, we could have lived honorably in defeat. We have lost the admiration a

conqueror usually bestows on a people who have fought for their freedom. It is because of our weakness that the Americans have broken their word. To Archuleta they promised western New Mexico, a reward he hardly deserved, but nonetheless an example of gringo honor. To all of us they promised respect and equality. I need not tell you how well they kept that promise. They promised to free the country from Indian attacks, and you know as well as I that Indians cannot be fought at bailes in Santa Fe. They promised good government and gave us a murderer to enforce their laws."

"I have seen Shallott, senor."

"Did he threaten you?"

"Yes."

"Shallott is your dream of American government, is he not? He has also threatened me. I was told that he would kill every member of my house. He was drunk at the time, but still I do not doubt but what he will try. I took my complaint to the American army. I was allowed to talk with a sergeant. He was a very stupid man. He told me to go home and forget the matter."

"Holz says that he can do nothing to us, if we don't provoke him into an act that would find the law on his side."

"This is my land. I would sooner die than live under his control. And you, Julio, what is your preference?"

"The same, if necessary."

"You are an unusual man, Julio. Your talents have not gone unnoticed. Under your management the peones work harder and I have realized a greater profit. You have a talent for handling men. Moreover, you are aggressive and intelligent. Although I have been critical of you for many of your shortcomings, I must agree with those who think well of you as a potential leader. No doubt you have already attracted considerable attention. If a man--say, a responsible citizen--should ask you to join in overthrowing the Americans, what would be your answer?"

"I should join in overthrowing Shallott."

"What about the source of Shallott's power, the gringo army?"

"I should say that the Americans are too strong."

"But they are not strong. Every day they become a little weaker by making the mistake of thinking we are too docile to cause them trouble. The General has gone to California to fight there. Colonel Doniphan has gone south. Governor Brent is napping. Colonel Price has an extremely weak garrison. A skillfully executed attack at the right time could give us control of New Mexico again."

"Only temporarily, senor. More Americans would march from the north. We would be postponing the day when we must live with them as Americans. That day is far away, I know, senor. A revolt would only delay their acceptance of us as Americans."

"Maybe you're right," the Don replied, after thinking awhile. "I was posing a hypothetical question, anyway. I doubt if trouble will come."

Julio was satisfied with Holz's belief that the Don had joined the conspiracy. He wondered what Luisa's reaction would be if she knew Molano was on a patriotic mission instead of making visits to another woman. Possibly she knew. That could explain why she had not sent for him.

"Don't be caught napping, Julio. I never know when my blond gringo friend will call for chocolate. To you I entrust the safety of my house. I shall not return until late tomorrow afternoon."

Shortly after sundown, the Don rode out through the zaguan.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Later in the evening he heard the gate open and close again. But he gave up the temptation to follow Felipa. She had gone many times to meet Shallott since he had seen them together, and Luisa had not thought it necessary to send for him. He went back to his supper.

While sitting on the floor eating his stew of brown beans and chile and mutton, he thought of the times as a boy when he had come home in the evenings after spending the day with the Dona Adela. Neither Cristo's food nor Cristo's house had suited him then. His head was full of dreams of being Molano's heir. To Nicolas and Goyo he had boasted of someday owning the biggest, blackest horse in New Mexico. When that day came, he had told them, he would not work. He would ride his horse all day and watch them work and at night he would go home to the beautiful girl who was his wife and eat hot-bread with sugar and spice and drink chocolate from silver cups. Now Cristo's house was empty and quiet and the stench of untended children was gone. There was no sound other than his chewing on a tor-tilla. A lone ant crawled at his feet. It was not the first time he had felt like a fool.

He had not escaped work. In the new country to the north a man would have to work to stay free. If he were lucky, a living could be made. But there were many signs of bad luck. There was every possibility that the land he

choso to work would be awarded to someone else when the Americans opened the country for permanent settlement. Only the land grants were secure, and they were owned by men who did not need them. Building a herd from a trade in fur would be slow, uncertain. Already the mountains were lacking in animals from the indiscriminate trapping of the Americans. Julio had not taken seriously Holz's offer of partnership, for Holz needed all the money he had to get a start for himself. The offer was made in sympathy. He would not take advantage of his generosity. Comradeship would be enough to ask of him. To ask Luisa to share this uncertainty was equally unfair. If he were going to a grant with a small herd there would be a future to offer her. The wild life of a trapper was no life for a girl like Luisa. There was no future he could offer her. He was not sure if there was a future to offer himself.

He looked up from the floor to see Maria standing in the doorway. Her sallow, wrinkled face was even more yellow by firelight. For the moment she ignored him to look about the room, into the darkened corners, in search of something.

"I keep my mistresses under the floor while they are not in use," he said, irritated by her snooping. "What do you want?"

"The Dona has an errand for you," the Navajo said.

He got up and followed her across the courtyard. The

wind was in the north, and damp with a promise of snow to ruin the Christmas festivities. At the porch Luisa was waiting.

"I shall need you no longer, Maria," she said. "After the mayordomo leaves on his errand, I shall retire."

The sullen Navajo nodded her head. She wrapped her shawl about her head to keep out the cold and walked slowly to her quarters.

Julio followed Luisa inside. She poured a cup of wine and handed it to him.

"You didn't come back to me that evening I sent you to find Felipa," she said. "Did you find what you expected?"

Julio had made up his mind not to lie to her. If the real purpose of the Don's absences was made known to her, she might be less inclined to be drawn away from him. It would make parting much easier.

"You were right, Luisa. The Don is innocent."

"Then you found Felipa?"

"I did."

Luisa ran her fingers over the tall decanter, removing imaginary blemishes, without looking at him. "She has gone out again, Julio. That is why I sent for you."

"That is strange. Twice last week she went out, Luisa. You did not send for me then."

Luisa turned away, embarrassed. She went to the corner, under the pretense of having to warm her hands against the

fire.

"If you pay such close attention to her movements, why didn't you stop her?" Luisa asked.

"Because I also needed an excuse to see you."

He watched her face grow tense in the big mirror that had been the Dona Adela's.

"Senor Parra's great fear will be confirmed by summer, Julio. Who is the man?"

"The one she danced with at the Parra baile. The same who killed Cristo."

She turned back to him, smiling. "It was not the Don whom I doubted, Julio."

"Are you disappointed?"

"No, not in the way you are thinking. I should have been relieved, had it been the Don."

"You mean a lapse in his judgement would have justified yours? Mine? That won't do, Luisa. I wish it were that easy."

"What have we done to be unhappy?" she asked, coming to him, willing to drop the mask of pretense. "Is it our fault?"

"It would have been my fault, if I made you unhappy."

"That is impossible, Julio."

"That night I found her with Shallott--I could have come back and told you the truth. But I wanted you to be impatient. I wanted you to lie sleepless and learn to hate

him as I hate him. I was afraid that the truth would turn you back to him again. I wanted you too much, Luisa. I would have invented schemes much worse to take you away from him."

"When I told you it made no difference if you found the Don, I meant it, Julio. His loyalty cannot make me love him. I may sound ungrateful, but his regard for me does not enter into my feelings."

"The more he hurts the better I feel, Luisa. That is not what I mean. I could have made certain that Felipa would never meet Shallott again. I could have frightened the portero into refusing Shallott's bribes. But I didn't. For a very good reason. A very selfish reason. If Felipa were not gone, I wouldn't be with you now."

"The responsibility is not all yours, Julio. I could have told the Don."

"And if Don Antonio should return--now?"

Luisa instinctively turned to the door.

"That would make you unhappy, Luisa--if he were to find me here."

"Unpleasant, I admit. But not unhappy, Julio."

"But next week, next month, next year?"

"I am not ashamed to love you, Julio."

"Can't you understand what I mean? The best you could hope for is secrecy. Happiness can't be found that way.

There are no easy answers, Luisa. When I was a boy I asked

the old Dona why the poor people should take orders from the grandees when there are so few of them. The Dona said that someday easy answers would not come to me. That was the day, she said, when I would know I was a boy no longer. Up to a day or two ago, Luisa, I was a boy. I felt and thought as a boy. All answers were simple. In short, I was a fool. The harder we try for an easy answer, the more complicated it becomes. The only completely happy man I ever knew was happy because he never grew up. The wiser a man becomes the less he is able to explain. Cristo gave me answers to problems that were beyond Holz's understanding. The last time I saw you, Luisa, I had a very simple answer. We would leave here and go north and be very happy."

"Leaving here is the only answer."

"To go where? North is a very general direction. I have no land, no animals, no money to buy them with."

"Once you said a start could be made from trapping. I said then that I would go with you. I shall go with you now."

"In July I have seen the sweat pour down the arms of the herders, while they cursed the heat and wished for winter to come. In February they stand in snow reaching their knees, blowing their hot breaths against their fingers until they are without breath. Their fingers pain them too much to whip life back into their hands. They stand lifeless, moaning, promising not to make fools of themselves when

summer comes again. There will be no summer to save us, Luisa, once the Don is left behind. Tonite you are in a beautiful, warm room. You are clothed in a beautiful dress. You have eaten and drunk the best that could be provided for you. If you wish, Maria will come in and undress you for the night. In the morning she will be waiting for you with another beautiful dress in her hand. You will eat your breakfast of mutton, hot-bread with sugar and spice, and coffee. Later there will be roast mutton or beef with a stew of buffalo meat and rice and cabbage. Maria will serve you with custard and then with wine. At sundown you will have your chocolate and guests. In the evening, maybe there will be a baile and laughing and more wine. And all the time, Luisa, you need not worry. No one is going to take this life away from you. Tomorrow you will be as rich as you were today. Your only worry will be the dress you must choose from the scores Don Antonio will provide for you."

"You have decided not to go?" she said disappointedly.

"No. I shall go."

Luisa came up to him and touched his arm. "Then take me."

"You would wish for summer again."

"Why don't you speak the truth, Julio? I would be a burden to an ambitious man."

He took her quickly and kissed her once, before she

pulled away.

"You know there is nothing more valuable that I could take with me. Most of my life has been spent in waiting, only to find later that it wasn't worth having. But I have never stopped waiting for you, Luisa. A hundred times a day I take you to a grove I know in the mountains, and there I build a home for you."

"But now you think I am too weak to live in it! The life you mention is the easy life, Julio. You would leave me with a man who could be grandfather to both of us-- watching his head bob sleepily in the evenings. He mentions people he knew, events of his time. I don't know them. I talk of something that has struck my fancy and he yawns. I am out of his time. It is because I am weak that I cannot endure this life, Julio. He will take the good years from my life and then die, leaving me young and alone. Then I shall sit in my beautiful sala and admire my beautiful dress and eat good things. Is this happiness, Julio, when I am dead but too young to bury?"

She sat disconsolately on the mattress prepared for the night, watching him, waiting for his answer.

"Luisa, do you know what your friends here would say if you went with me?" he asked, coming to sit beside her.

"Do you know what you would be doing to your name?"

"Yes, Julio, I know. And if we were running away to another part of Santa Fe, I should be terribly afraid. But

we are leaving behind the dead world to find the new, where the customs of our grandparents haven't been plated with silver and handed down as law. We shall be the life and the law, and if we approve of each other, nothing else matters."

"And the vows of the holy faith, Luisa? What do you tell the padre?"

"I vowed to God that I would love you, before my mother made the contract with Don Antonio. The padre made me break my sacred vow. In the mountains we won't be bound by superstition and prejudice. Our children will be taught the law of love, and love will permeate our house. They will love God and He will love them, and there will be no contracts and no sadness. This is a new world we're going to, Julio. We can make it beautiful and wonderful, and if we fall short of our goal, we have no one but ourselves to blame. God has given us freedom from the past to begin again. It is a gift to be valued much more highly than beautiful dresses and bailes and servants."

"I can offer you nothing but a house and food--and worry and insecurity."

"At least there will be a tomorrow in the life you offer. My life will not end before it has begun. You offer the best gift of all, Julio--a reason to live. Don't be ashamed of it. We can always look forward to having the ornaments later. We can work and build for these things

that are so important to you."

"They mean nothing to me, but I shall work so you can have them."

"There is time--we have all our lives to wait for them. At least let me have something to wait for."

"We may have to wait ten years before we have enough sheep to market."

"We can wait twenty years and still be more than twenty years younger than the Don."

"The soil is rich," he said, feeling the warmth of her hands circling his neck. "We may have land."

He put his arms around her and drew her down beside him.

"For guests we'll have the mountains," she said.

"The nights are beautiful."

"And the days will be nights, too."

"It snows often."

"There will be wood for floors."

"And all the chairs and tables we want."

"And a bed for the mattress."

"And wood to burn on cold nights."

"There will be no cold. Always it will be warm."

"Is--is this what you really want?"

She answered silently, positively.

"Luisa, the Don--"

"Not until tomorrow."

"No--let me be honest, first. He's innocent."

"I know."

"Beyond Felipa, I mean. Tonite or any other night."

"I could have told you," she laughed. "Tonite or any other night."

He laughed, too, for a moment--while it still seemed important.

## 2

The last log in the fireplace erupted with a flash and crumbled into dust and gave no more light. Its warmth faded and lay concealed under ashes.

Julio lay on his back, smoking. She sat beside him, running her hand absently through the smoke rising from the husk. A long time has passed since they had spoken.

A taper wore down, flickered and went out, leaving a single candle to light the room.

"Tomorrow is Christmas," she said.

He raised to an elbow. "We must leave whether it is Christmas or not."

Luisa was silent again.

"Luck is with us if he doesn't know by tomorrow," Julio said. "Rumors travel fast among the peones."

"One day more will do no harm."

"If the Don should find out, he'll never leave the hacienda again. There will be no chance for us to get away."

"If he doesn't know by tomorrow, he will never know."

"Luisa, you don't need time," he said impatiently. "There is nothing you can take with you. The Arapahoes don't have bailes."

She looked at him, hurt.

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean it that way. You can gather together in an hour all you'll be able to take. There is no reason to wait--a delay might mean that we'll never get started."

"Tomorrow is Christmas."

"Are you a child?" he asked sharply.

"Tomorrow is the birthdate of our Savior."

For this, he had no reply.

She ran her fingers over his face, several times moving her lips and then stopping, as if she wanted to speak of something delicate.

"Luisa, you are not being truthful."

She took her hand away abruptly.

"I know you are keeping something from me."

"In two days I shall be ready. Isn't that enough?"

"I must know what you are keeping from me."

She started to move away. He took her by the shoulders.

"It is a promise I made to the Don."

"Go on."

"A promise that I cannot violate."

"Surely it is no violation to tell me," he said, not caring if his jealousy was concealed any longer. "I must

know."

"The telling of any secret is a violation of a promise."

"Secret! You have secrets with him?"

"Is that strange?" she said, no longer meek. "He is my husband."

"Your loyalty belongs either to him or to me, depending upon whom you love more."

"Haven't I made my choice clear to you, Julio?"

"Then a promise can't stand in our way. A wait of a day might be disastrous. Tell me what you have promised him, and I shall decide if it is to be kept."

"Believe me, Julio, it is for your own good to remain here another day."

"That is for me to decide."

"Is my judgement worthless to you?"

"I know the problems involved, Luisa. I know the Don. Is this your polite way of telling me that you have changed your mind?"

"No, Julio. I gave my sacred word."

"You have not been particular in all of the sacred promises you made with him."

Julio watched her body stiffen painfully. She pulled up the blanket, covering her breasts. He regretted his choice of words but resolved not to comfort her until she was sure of her loyalties.

"Please--don't tell me you are sorry for what you said,

Julio. We both know it is true. I earned it."

When tears began swelling in her eyes, his resolution weakened. He took her in his arms and tried to kiss her.

"And you, Julio," she asked, turning her head away, "are you as happy as you expected?"

"Luisa, tell me one thing. Was the Don required to take an oath? Is that why you are protecting him?"

Her weeping was too severe for an answer. She nodded.

"Christmas! They could not have chosen a better time."

"You know?"

"Apparently everybody knows but the Americans."

Luisa had been relieved of a great burden. She put an arm around him and for a moment was still. "I promised not to leave the sala or admit strangers. If anything goes wrong, I am to take his papers and go to Taos, to his brother. He must trust you, Julio. You are to escort me."

"I'm sorry, Luisa," he said quietly. "I feel like a fool."

She kissed him.

"If we succeed, Julio, the americanos will be driven away. We can go in peace and live in peace."

"What time, Luisa? When are they going to move against the gringos?"

"Midnight, tonite. The Americans will be too drunk to resist. The garrison will be celebrating. Our men are to meet at the church. At the ringing of the bell they will

pour into the streets to join with the men whom Colonel Archuleta has brought into the city. At the plaza, one group will seize the cannon, while another captures the army officials. New Mexico will come back to us as it was taken away--without a shot fired."

"You're wrong, Luisa. The Americans will be slaughtered. And when they return--stronger--they will slaughter us. The Don and his friends are not performing a patriotic service. They are fools to fight the Americans."

"Julio, you don't--"

He felt a tremor against his body. He looked up at Luisa. She was staring past him, at the mirror, terrified by what she saw. He turned.

Felipa giggled at their discomfort.

"Were you expecting someone, Don Julio?" Felipa said.

She turned and ran through the door, into the courtyard. The sound of her feet against the hard earth came to a stop. The zaguan could be heard opening.

Julio got to his feet as fast as he could and ran out on the porch in time to see the gate close.

Luisa soon joined him. "You can catch her, Julio. Bring her back to me!"

Julio did not wait for an explanation from the portero. He looked back at Luisa. She was still on the porch, watching him. He pushed the old man aside and opened the gate.

The sky was overcast, the night air damp and growing

colder. He stumbled. Ahead of him, he heard Felipa begin to run again.

He moved after her, taking long strides, now that his eyes adjusted to the dark road under him. She would be unable to run far or long, he knew. But he speeded up his pace in the event she might overtake Shallott.

The distance between them closed. Her breathing was heavy and forced and came in convulsive gasps. Her leg was almost within his grasp. In a moment she would be led back to Luisa, his fingers wrapped tightly about her wrist. She would be breathless, unpenitent, even hostile, but the Don's secret would be secure.

Julio stopped.

He waited, listening until he heard nothing but the distant baying of a coyote. Then he turned back to the zaguan, walking slowly.

Against the light of the opened sala door, he saw the first flakes, big and wet, fall from the sky. He felt them hit against his face and melt.

Luisa waited until he came closer, making sure he was alone, before she closed the door.

The courtyard was in darkness again.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Midnight passed quietly.

In the morning, Santa Fe was still in the hands of the Americans. No challenge to their authority had been made. The Americans soberly guarded the approaches to the city and riflemen on duty in the plaza quickly dispersed even small groups of Mexicans that gathered together for their morning chats. At the church where the conspirators were to meet, scheming had given away to the praying of the sick and the troubled and the thankful. The distinguished congregation that the padre expected had gone to their homes, to await a time when their ranks were better disciplined.

Julio was anxious to see Holz. When the Don came home, Julio went to the sala before he could be summoned. Felipa had not returned. The Don soon would notice her absence and make inquiries.

Although they were eating, the Don received him well and gave him a chair at the table. Julio refused his offer of wine. Molano was not in gay spirits. But neither was he broken by defeat, as Julio expected. He gave his approval to the Santa Fe visit, and to Julio's relief, did not question the nature of his business.

Julio spoke to Luisa. She answered in the same discreet politeness, without once looking at him.

"Oh, by the way," the Don said, as Julio rose to leave. "Did you sleep well last night?"

Julio glanced at Luisa. She gave a short, quick breath. For a time she held the wine in her mouth before gulping it painfully.

"Yes, senor. I slept well."

He had not slept, and he knew that he looked it. The night had been long and full of doubt. A hundred times he ran after Felipa again, sometimes dragging her back to Luisa and other times standing in the road as he had done, listening to her feet grind into the loose sand.

"You came very close to waking to a new world," the Don continued. "In Santa Fe you will hear the details, no doubt. I have heard little, but it appears that a group of patriots nearly overthrew the gringos last night."

Julio knew his efforts at feigning surprise would be clumsy. His blood had not absorbed the Mexican art of evasion. He said nothing.

"These patriots would have succeeded, too, had the Americans not been put on guard."

"Their timing ordinarily would have been clever, senor."

"Yes, had I been one of them, I should have proposed that Christmas was ideally suited. No great harm has been done to their cause, however. There will be another time."

"What will become of the leaders, senor?" Luisa asked. Her voice was unsteady and faint. "Surely they will be persecuted."

"You give the americanos too much credit, my dear. The

men are safe. Only their secret was lost. The identity of the men was guarded so closely that I can only guess their membership. However, I could guess with reasonable accuracy the one who betrayed them."

"And he?" Luisa asked.

"It would not be a man, my dear, although I believe one of them--a man who drinks and talks too much, who is sure to be expelled from the group--is directly responsible. Betrayals of this sort usually come through women."

Luisa's food had been pushed away. Her hand pulled nervously at the edge of her shawl. And Julio saw the same face he had seen when Luisa looked up at the smirking Felipa.

"There can be no doubt," Molano said. "Someone on friendly terms with a gringo--one of Santa Fe's baser whores."

"Or a patriot," Julio said quickly, to draw Molano's attention away from Luisa.

"We have argued the point before, Julio. There is no need to carry it further. The cause of these patriots, as you know, is very dear to me--and all sensible, loyal sons of New Mexico. The views of a gringo are not important."

Luisa asked to be excused.

"If you wish, my dear," Molano said. "And please send the senorita to me."

Luisa kept her back to him. "I--I don't know her

whereabouts at the moment, senor."

"Have Maria find her, then. Don Arrio has made the necessary arrangements to have her go to Mexico. I am anxious to be rid of her." Molano turned to Julio. "For our friend, however, I am sure this is sad news. All good things must end, Julio. And so with your playmate. My eye is not practiced for detection of this sort, but unless the plumpness of her mother has come early, I should say that the past weeks have been anything but dull for you."

Julio started to object.

Molano motioned for him to be still. "I fulfilled the agreement I made with her father. What happened to her within my home I cannot be blamed for. In fact, as a ranchero, I should be paid the usual fee." He turned to Luisa, laughing. "Forgive me, my dear, for the illustration."

"You are wrong, senor!"

"I am asking for no declarations of innocence. You are not to be disciplined. If a man passes my orchard, or the orchard of any gentleman, and sees the fruit of his choice, he may eat first and thank later. It is one of our better customs. God has given justly to Don Arrio what he deserved. I am not sure but what this is a fulfillment of your old ambition. She should be willing to marry you now."

Julio did not try to answer him. He looked at Luisa. She gripped her hands tightly together and continued to stare away from the Don.

"You should be in an excellent position to bargain with Don Arrio," Molano said. "He has made a good fortune from his dealings with the americanos. You should be able to command a sizeable dowry. Write a marriage letter immediately. I shall sign it and send it with her."

"No, senor, I--"

"Don't be a fool, Julio. You can name your price. He is so sensitive about his father's thieving that he will pay the ransom to preserve what little honor he has. Don't be timid. Ask for American silver. It can be converted into sheep and land. This is an opportunity I cannot permit you to lose. Write immediately, before you leave."

Luisa turned quickly to Molano.

"Felipa is not here, senor."

"So you said, my dear. Send her to me as soon as you can."

"She is not in the house, senor."

"Where is she, Luisa?"

"Last night she ran from the hacienda, into Santa Fe. She did not return."

Molano picked up his cup and drank it down slowly.

"When you return from the city," he said firmly, "be sure, Julio, that she is with you." He sat back, frowning, thinking. "And be quick!"

On arriving in Santa Fe, Julio expected to see the army

at full strength, on guard against a possible attack. But already the garrison had relaxed, confident and complacent. A few army regulars, above the usual number, patrolled the streets, ignoring the brawling of their comrades to break up even the most innocent of Mexican gatherings. Other than this one precaution, life in Santa Fe was unchanged.

The Missouri volunteers--at least those who had bothered to answer the call from their officers--were allowed to resume their usual pastimes. The others had not stopped drinking or gambling to answer the alarm. At the height of the threat, company officers had been unable to account for nearly half of their men. No attempt was made now to find or punish the delinquents.

The officers Julio met seemed no more concerned over the situation than the men who played at the monte tables or walked unsteadily at the side of Mexican girls, communicating their wishes by obscene gestures.

None of the volunteers had seen battle. Yet they had grown used to death. The lack of sanitation and discipline was costing the army more lives than would have been lost in putting down a revolt. Almost hourly a soldier was carried to the American cemetery. The passing of a funeral procession no longer commanded awe and respect. In the saloons the soldiers would order another drink and talk a little louder to drown the sound of the firing squad.

Death was not enough to keep boredom away.

The novelty of Santa Fe had worn thin. The men grew quarrelsome and unmanageable and fought among themselves. Citizen soldiers, always hostile to the regulars, challenged the authority of the officers, and wrote long, bitter letters of denunciation to their Congressmen, demanding less discipline. The officers, already under criticism in Washington avoided clashes with the men. Many restrictions which General Kearny issued before he left New Mexico were eased to give the men more freedom. The officers were quick to forget their humiliation in the arms of a pretty senorita at the evening's baile. The men tried to drink away their boredom, and if that failed, there were Mexican girls to make them forget their homes in Missouri. As a last resort, when a man was really restless, a fight could always be picked with a Mexican.

Julio saw one fight and the beginning of another before he reached Holz's quarters.

Holz was squinting into a tarnished mirror, using a knife to trim his beard.

Julio ignored Holz's comment on the snowfall to ask if he had seen Felipa.

"No, but I have seen her friend. Shallott was in the streets early this morning to take his bows."

"What do you mean?"

"He's quite a hero. He broke up a great revolution."

Julio took a seat on an empty box and rolled a cigarette

in silence.

"You're looking very serious, Julio. Which woman is it this time?"

"Holz, I think I've made a mistake."

"You're young yet. You'll make more."

"No, this is no ordinary mistake. Last night I did-- or rather, didn't do--something that I may regret for the rest of my life."

Holz put down the knife and turned to him.

"What happened?"

"I could have made the Don and his friends successful. I wish I had. I wish the Americans would have stayed home." He threw the cigarette to the floor and ground it out under his heel.

"You should write Washington. Everybody else does."

"I mean it, Holz. I've been wrong. It was not for the good of New Mexico that I wanted the Americans to come. I see now that I was more interested in having the Don uncomfortable. He was right, and I was wrong."

"Are you sure?"

"Holz, what I have to say is no reflection on you. Had all the Americans been like you, my mind would not have changed."

"If all the Americans were like me, Julio, they would not be Americans. They would be Germans, living in America."

"There is no room in your America for Mexicans. There

is no room for us even in our own land. Where is the democracy you promised? Your soldiers have shown us no democracy, Holz. They don't even give us respect for being human. They boast about their country, their people. To hear them talk you would think they are serving time in Hell. From our people they expect nothing but entertainment. Our people are no good. We are subjects for abuse and ridicule and insult. The government we had before you came was not perfect, Holz. Our leaders took bribes and saw to their own comfort. We had no iron, no wood to make ourselves rich. We had nothing but pride. Now even pride is lost."

He was disappointed. His castigation of the Americans had even bored Holz a little, he thought. The doctor picked up the knife again and hacked off two pieces of chewing tobacco. Julio refused the gift.

"So Luisa doesn't care for Americans?"

"I said nothing about Luisa!"

"No, you haven't mentioned her by name, but you've talked of nothing else."

"I am talking of abuse," Julio replied hotly. "The abuse of your government."

"Your government as well as mine, Julio. I refuse to take sole responsibility. True, the soldiers are still playing the part of apes, but this is no revelation. Soldiers have been brutal and animal since armies were first

organized. Think of the trouble J. Caesar must have had with his legions when they hit London on Saturday night. Do you suppose his boys were cold fish, Julio, reading their catechisms instead of having a good time? Not on your life! The next boat might take them home to their wives. They chased a pretty leg while there was a chance. And Hannibal, I believe, took to the Alps to keep his boys out of the saloons. It's an old problem. Your discovery is no revelation. When a man is taken away from his home and put into the army, he changes. Give him a victory and he grows worse. To an army a conquered people are always foreigners. I grant, of course, that most armies are better organized than this one. But their conduct has neither bettered nor worsened. The only change has been Luisa's attitude--or maybe your discovery of what she has been thinking all along. I knew her father. If he were alive today, he would cast in his lot with the Don. It doesn't surprise me that Luisa has done the same."

"She is right, and the Don is right. I am the one who has been wrong."

"What do you want?"

"I should like to go back--a year, two years--and start over again. Those were peaceful days, Holz. I was a fool not to appreciate them."

"Dying is a permanent affair, Julio. Think twice before you sacrifice your life to win a woman."

"I've told you Luisa doesn't enter into this."

"And you have lied--to me as well as yourself." Holz got to his feet. "What was your opinion yesterday at this time?"

"I was for the Americans."

"Why?"

"Holz, I changed my mind. I don't have to account for the process."

"No, not if you think with your glands. Be truthful with yourself, Julio. Why were you for the Americans?"

"It doesn't sound good, anymore."

"Go on!"

Holz's voice was sharp. He pounded a fist against his palm, circling the box where Julio sat. Julio knew it was useless to try to evade him.

"The Americans promised good government and prosperity."

"Yes--and freedom from peonage and graft."

"Our children were going to have free education. We were promised that we would rule ourselves."

"Doesn't it still sound good, Julio?"

"What happened to the promises?"

"The Americans have been here not quite five months. It might take a year, many years. But isn't it worth waiting for? Your people have waited for centuries, Julio, and the old government did not provide for them. Why do you expect the Americans to accomplish miracles overnight?"

"I don't expect miracles. I expect decency and respect."

"Julio, I am not going to say that Americans are without fault. I have lived nearly twenty years with them, and I doubt if my adjustment will be complete by the time I die. But this much I can promise, Julio. No country on earth can give you more respect or more freedom. Oh, I know the soldiers and what little respect they show your people. But I have seen other armies in other countries that were much better disciplined. In those armies a man would be shot for thinking what our soldiers actually do. Have you ever realized, Julio, what a privilege it will be for you to live under a government that is scared to death to lose the respect of ordinary army privates? If these soldiers were subjected to European discipline, they would pack their bags and march home to Missouri and say, to hell with it. Not all of them are rowdy. Unfortunately, the quieter ones are too quiet to be noticed. You see the braggarts because they want to be seen. No group of men in a strange land is going to behave too well. Get them home again under the eyes of their women and they will become deacons and prohibitionists. All of us, Julio, at one time or another, do something because we are sure nobody is watching. This is the reason, my boy, why it is easy for homely women to jump up in church and give their pretty sisters holy hell. They have never had the chance to be alone under tempting circum-

stances. These boys will change when they get home. And those who stay behind will live prudent lives here. Watch out for some of them. They come from pretty religious stock. If you don't stand up for your rights in years to come, they'll whisk your aguardiente from your table, like their parents are trying to do back in the States."

"Yes, but when are they going to live up to their promises?"

"I doubt if they will, at least not in the way you think. Someday they're going to march home, when this war with Mexico is won, leaving you alone. They are not going to give you gold or lumber or iron. They are going to give you one thing only--freedom. That is all you get, Julio. No gold, no riches, no permanent system of schools, no cattle, no horses--just freedom to sink or swim. The soldiers will be worrying about their crops back home when they march out of here. They will be much too busy to give a damn whether you sink or not. Your problems will be turned over to the men you elect to rule New Mexico. You will be free, at last, to find riches for yourself. They will not be drained off either by Mexico or your sister states to the north. If you can become rich, you will be admired. If not, your fellow Americans have done all you can expect from them. They showed you the way. Your people will be completely free for the first time in centuries. If they want to be rich like other Americans, let them work."

"And there will be Americans coming to get rich from our land," Julio said.

"True, and without them you will stay poor. They will bring money with them in their greed to make more money. They will be useful to you. They will start factories, build mines, grow new crops, introduce large herds of cattle. These men will provide the jobs and money your people need. Without them, your people will have a harder time. They will do great things for your people, for New Mexico. I needn't ask what the old government did for New Mexico. We both know." Holz went to a chest and threw out several dirty shirts before he found the bottle of American whiskey. "Now, why have you changed your mind?"

Julio took the bottle and shook his head. "I don't know, Holz. I've changed my mind a hundred times since last night. When I came here, to ask you when we should go north, I was a gringo. When I saw the soldiers and thought of what I had done for Shallott, I was a greaser."

"What have you done for Shallott?"

"I made him a hero--with Felipa's help. I gave him what he wanted, Holz. Felipa learned from--she knew the time of the revolt and started for Santa Fe. I could have stopped her. At the time I was a gringo, a real American patriot."

"You needn't be ashamed of it."

"That is easy for you to say, Holz. You're a gringo."

"No more than you, Julio."

"The decision isn't easy for me. Nor was it last night. Being half-American at birth isn't enough for a man to think like an American--not when he was raised by his mother's people to think and act like a Mexican. To you, Holz, letting Felipa run to Santa Fe would have been a great personal triumph. It wasn't for me. I had to decide for my people. To me there is the question of betrayal. I might have ended their last chance for freedom. On the other hand, I might have guaranteed their freedom. Why did I have to decide? There are men who like to make decisions. Why did I have to be the one?"

"You know that the decision was good."

"Yes, I think so."

Holz took a long drink from the bottle. "If you could get Luisa out of your mind long enough to think straight, you would know what a great service you did for the people of New Mexico. Don't confuse pleasing Luisa with the welfare of your people. Just because you have made her unhappy is no sign that the thousands of people of New Mexico are going to be unhappy. If it will make you feel any better, Julio, your people will have another chance."

"I think they know now that the gringos are too strong."

"For a man who pretends to be a great authority on the Mexican temperament, you are badly informed. In a month, two months, there will be trouble again. The Don's friends

won't stop until they have blood."

"Maybe. The Don is waiting, I know."

Holz sat down against the chest and folded his hands gravely over his stomach. "The Don won't be with them next time."

"For a man who pretends to be posted on the revolutionaries, you are badly informed," Julio laughed. "The Don is ready to go again."

Holz did not respond with a laugh, as he usually did when Julio imitated his manner.

"No, Julio. More information came to Shallott than the time of the insurrection. He knows the Don is involved."

Julio rose quickly and started for the door. Holz caught him by the arm.

"Don't go home, Julio. There is nothing you can do. Shallott has the law back of him. The Don should have followed some of his friends who fled into Mexico. He was warned by Kearny not to conspire against the Americans, Julio. He chose the alternative. It is the Don, not you, who has done a disservice to your people."

"It is easy for you to say that, Holz. When I let Felipa go, I betrayed Cristo. I gave approval to his murderer."

"Julio, don't make the mistake of letting one American color your estimate of an entire nation or government. His time will come. A man like Shallott will manuever himself

into a noose."

"Holz, will you help shove him into a noose?"

"What do you mean?"

"You were the only American in Santa Fe who was here the night Cristo was killed," Julio said, his voice rising with excitement. "If you testify against Shallott, the Americans will have to arrest him."

Holz frowned. "It's not that easy, Julio. As soon as papers can be issued, Don Antonio will be taken into custody and held for trail. Perhaps Shallott already has him."

"Holz, you're evading me. Will you testify?"

Holz leaned wearily against the chest, rolling the bottle between his hands.

"Later, when civil government is organized, I shall testify against him, Julio. It is my duty, I know. But now I would be interfering with something very serious. Rebellion must be stopped before hundreds are murdered. Shallott's duty must be performed. I regret Shallott has to be the man."

"A long time ago, Holz, you said America was good because the individual was not sacrificed to make the mob happy. What of Cristo? If your army can give my people one example of American democracy, maybe there will be no rebellion. I remember your saying that kings and dictators were wrong for using undesirable means to reach a desirable

end. The United States, you said, had discarded this idea for the good of the people. Are you going to let a murderer carry out the law?"

"I might upset things. Conditions are very delicate. You are asking me to make a difficult decision."

"My decision has not been easy."

"I know," Holz said, smiling weakly. "It is much easier to make decisions for other people. But you are being unfair with me, Julio. I can't interfere in this matter. I would be giving comfort to the rebels. I would betray my government."

"I have made my decision, Holz."

"There is a compromise, however, that I'll offer. I will testify against Shallott on one condition--my action in no way will interfere with the arrest of Don Antonio. When Shallott's mission is complete, I shall testify against him. But not before. This is all I can offer."

"What will they do with the Don?"

"He will be given a fair trial. A lawyer will represent him. Then a jury will decide if he is guilty."

"Will he be hanged?"

Holz found it easier to answer with his back turned to him. He tucked the bottle away in the chest, taking time to arrange a growing pile of dirty clothes.

"I don't know, Julio. If he is tried for treason, maybe."

"Most of my early years were spent in wishing that he would die. To be truthful, I have wished him dead many times since Luisa came to live with him. Except for a few years with Cristo, I've lived with him since I was two. Next to Cristo, I guess, he was the closest to a father that I had. He was stern and unsympathetic and cruel, but he always told me he wanted me to grow into a sensible man. Cristo never disciplined me, unless Pepa nagged him into it. I guess you could say that Molano is my father. He wouldn't adopt me, but he was the only man who took enough interest to beat me into maturity. Cristo was the man who loved me. But the Don did the unpleasant part of raising a child. I played on Cristo's lap. The Don worked with me."

"Let events follow their natural course, Julio. I'm sorry I made such a proposition. It sounded like hell."

"I expect you to fulfill your promise, Holz."

"What will you do?"

"Go home."

"Shortly before you came, I sent a boy out with a message for you to come to me. I didn't want you to be there when Shallott came. I don't want you to be there now. Nothing will happen to Luisa. We'll wait here for Shallott. Then I promise to go to Colonel Price."

"You wait for Shallott."

He walked past Holz, out into the street. He did not



## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Twice he stopped to listen for the sound of a horse coming out of Santa Fe. But there were no riders behind him. He rode faster. The wind was sharp bit into his face. Night had come early, with an overcast sky shutting out the sun. He could distinguish nothing but the mountains ahead, smooth and low. A thin crust of frozen snow lay on the road, cracking under him like the breaking of small, dry twigs.

With snow for a cushion, he knew his horse could not be heard behind the adobe walls. He dismounted to rap at the gate.

He was surprised to have the small door open so quickly. Fedro challenged him, then ducked his head inside again. Soon the gate was open.

"Has the Don gone out?" he asked the portero.

"No, senor."

"Is he alone?"

"No, he is not alone."

Julio ran his hand along the edge of his trousers until he felt his fingers smart against the cold handle of the knife.

"Who is with him, Fedro?"

"His wife, senor. It is a good night to have a wife."

"Has anyone come in this evening? Be truthful, Fedro."

"He is alone."

"Are you sure?"

"I swear the Don is alone, senor." The old man kicked at the snow, warming his feet as he talked. "But I am human and make mistakes--such as last night when I left the gate untended and the girl got out."

"You let her out!"

Fedro edged closer to him, smiling, and Julio felt an icy hand close around his, and the foul breath of the old man was blown into his face with a sudden burst of contempt.

"You are not in a position to tell the Don, senor! Now each of us has his secret."

Julio turned away from the portero and went to his house, groping his way through the darkness until he found the rifle. He stood in the doorway and watched the windows of the sala, undecided whether to go to the Don with a warning.

He heard nothing on the road. There was time yet for Molano to flee into Mexico. Friends along the way would hide him and see to his care. The garrison at Santa Fe could not spare men for a thorough search. Don Tomas Ortiz, the rebel leader, had left Santa Fe disguised as a woman, with a water jar balanced on his head, and the soldiers had stopped him to ask if he had seen Don Tomas Ortiz. The Don pointed to his house and went on his way, unmolested, while several Mexican women shouted at the soldiers: "There goes Tomas Ortiz, you fools!" The gringos laughed at the Spanish outburst. Greaser women were always shouting at one another. Molano knew the country, and had more than ten hours of dark-

ness ahead of him. The flight would be as easy as Ortiz's. Only safer. Safe enough to take Luisa with him.

Julio went back into his house and sat on the floor next to the fireplace, poking into the coals until the mud walls became orange with its light. He lifted out a coal and lighted a cigarette.

Holz's alternative, he knew, would guarantee Luisa's staying where she was. The Don would go to prison or the gallows, and Shallott would go with him. He remembered a fight he had seen in Santa Fe, when a Mexican had drawn a knife. The gringo had bellowed at him: "When we hang, greaser, we don't give the luxury of a fall. We let you slip off easy so you can dangle awhile and enjoy yourself up there." Julio wondered if he could achieve the same satisfaction by firing on the American when he rode through the gate. He remembered the Dona Adela at the time when Molano was getting ready to take sides in the revolution of '37. Although nearly ten years had passed, Julio could see vividly her long, slender fingers grip his hand as she said, "Whatever happens to him, Julio, happens to me. If he is victorious, I shall be happy and sing. If he is disgraced--then I, too, am disgraced."

Julio got up and threw his cigarette into the fire.

He walked across the courtyard, carrying the rifle at his side, and rapped at the sala door.

Luisa, not Maria, opened the door. She came forward,

blocking his view of the sala. She was surprised, he thought, even frightened to see him.

"Don't scare him away, senora," said a voice behind her. Shallott ignored him, to level the pistol at Luisa.

Julio looked down at the rifle, impotent and useless in his hand. He dropped it to the porch.

"You kept me waiting," Shallott said.

"He is not involved," Luisa said. "I swear he is not involved, senor."

"What about the Don--your own husband? Won't you kiss the Bible for the old man?"

Shallott laughed when Luisa gave a hurried, guilty look at the Don. Molano was seated at the table, with his hands secured behind him.

"It's too late to worry about the Don, lady. We know enough to hang him tomorrow. We have a witness."

"Shoot me now," the Don said, glaring at him. "I expect no more fairness from an American court of justice."

"I'm patient, senor. I waited a long time for today. I can wait a couple weeks more. The army will do what I've wanted to do. I'm going to see you hang with a clear conscience. Maybe I won't get such a kick out of it, but you will. And that's the important thing. When they cut the ground out from under you, I want you to remember Downes and the night you blackmailed me. I want you to think of all the Texans you greasers clubbed and shot to death when

they surrendered to you as prisoners of war. When you slide off the end of a wagon, I'll see more than one man dangling from a rope. I'll see all you greasers choking until your hearts bust. Then I'll know God has grabbed the reins again and got the world under control."

"I won't be on my knees, begging for life with silver in my hand."

"You'll wish you were on your knees! You'll want to give every penny you got--just for a couple feet of ground to stand on."

"And me, Shallott?" Julio asked. "What witness do you have that will convict me?"

"You have none," Luisa said. "I will swear that he is innocent."

"Be still, Luisa!" the Don ordered.

"She's right, Molano. The young greaser is a legal problem. I know he's guilty. Unless the army is crazy, they know he's guilty. But I lack evidence to jail him. As a matter of fact, I can't even hold him now. That's the way we Americans do business. It's not enough to think a man is guilty--the way you greasers used to operate. We have to prove a man guilty or he goes free." He motioned Julio to the door with his pistol. "All right, you can leave."

Julio did not move.

"I said you could go."

The Don sat up quickly. "Don't be a fool! You will be shot in the back."

"The old man knows I can't shoot innocent people. Go ahead."

"He will fabricate a story," Molano said. "He will say you ran from him."

Luisa came up to Shallott. "Not even American justice would allow you to kill a woman, even if she resisted you."

Luisa turned to Julio. "I shall be alive as a witness. You will be safe, Julio."

"You're right, senor," Shallott said. "I am going to kill him. But you're wrong, senora. You'll never stick your head in a courtroom--unless you want my witness to tell the whole damn world how you and your lover were caught cheating on the old man."

Julio looked at Molano. The Don did not take his eyes from Shallott.

"This isn't cleverness on your part," Molano said. "The indiscretion of two persons is responsible for the advantage you enjoy. By killing Julio and me and silencing the Dona you have rid yourself of the only people interested enough to bring you to justice for the slaying of my mayordomo."

"I didn't murder him, and you know it. He was trying to kill a man, and I stopped him. That's not murder. At least it's not murder in the States. But you're right about the worry. I won't have to worry about false charges."

"I'm not going to move," Julio said.

"Suit yourself, greaser. I'll shoot you here, if you want it that way."

"But you don't want it that way. How could you convince your superiors that I had resisted you?"

"I'd drag you into the yard."

"And leave blood here?"

"I'd wash up the blood," Shallott replied uneasily.

"You would wash away the floor," Molano said.

Shallott turned nervously from one man to the other.

"One blunder would end your power with the army," Julio said. "Even if they don't hang you."

"Look, greaser, your only chance is running. If you run like hell I might miss. But if you stand there, I swear to God I'll shoot. You wouldn't want your sweetie to lose her stomach looking on, would you? Running is your only chance."

"Maybe you're right," Julio said, advancing a step.

"It's too bad you have no chance."

"What do you mean?"

"There is a witness, Shallott."

"The old man at the gate? Not him, greaser. He's on my side."

"There is another."

"Not the Navajo, either. She told me it was only fair that she should have a chance to sell the old man, just like she was sold to him. The sins of you greasers have caught

up with you."

"There is a witness against you, Shallott. He is not from this house."

"Then he can't be a witness. He can't testify in court to what he ain't seen."

"He saw this long ago. He saw you shoot and kill Cristo. In court he will say that Cristo was not touching the American when you fired at him."

Shallott took a step back, licking nervously at his lips. "The army won't listen to a greaser. The army will think the greaser is sour on me for doing my duty here to-night. The army will laugh at him."

"He is not a Mexican."

Julio watched Shallott's mouth twist with surprise and worry. His only chance, he knew, was to inflame the gringo's temper. Enraged, as he had seen him other times, Shallott was hasty and blindly inept.

"My witness is an American."

"You're lying!"

"This witness will not lie."

"You're bluffing!"

"Holz is not bluffing. At least he was not bluffing when I left him to come here. In fact, Shallott, he was trimming his beard, getting ready for an interview with Colonel Price."

Julio saw his grip on the pistol tighten. His lips

were dry and without color and moved rapidly in thought. Julio saw the chance he had waited for. He advanced a step, but Shallott took two steps back and kept the pistol on him, for instant use, should he move again.

"I'll tell the Colonel--I'll tell him Holz is in with you greasers. He'll believe me. The Colonel will take my word."

"You know better," Julio said, dismayed to have the American moving even farther back, completely out of his reach. "Your only chance is to run."

"Like hell I'll run! If I do any running, you greasers are going to be dead first." Shallott shook his head belligerently as he talked. The pistol was waved angrily to make his point. "I don't bluff!"

He took another quick step, back toward the table, as a precaution.

Don Antonio lunged forward, butting Shallott in the ribs. Julio was on him quickly. But not before the American fired. The bullet ripped harmlessly into the earthen floor, lifting a cloud of dust. Julio grabbed at the gun, keeping it pointed at the floor. They went down together, struggling for the weapon.

Don Antonio followed them, kicking wildly at the gringo, several times falling on his back after missing him. When he finally connected, the pain was felt more by Julio, but the pistol rolled free. Another kick sent it out of their

reach.

The blow on his hand caused Julio to loosen the hold he had around Shallott's neck. The American was able to throw him aside. He crawled quickly toward the pistol. But before he could reach it, Julio was on his back, pinning him.

Julio heard the Don yell at Luisa to pick up the gun.

Shallott was frantic under him. His movements were desperate, ineffective. His hands were as useless as the Don's. Julio felt his great strength as he tried to lift himself and his burden from the floor. His sweating fingers slid away from Julio's arm like it was a greased cock's neck.

Julio saw the Don move in again, ready to kick at the American's head. He told him to stay away.

The Don was satisfied that we was not needed.

Then Shallott brought his head back quickly, painfully into Julio's nose. An upward jab with his knee enabled him to take a knife from his belt.

Julio rolled away, in time to miss the downward slash of the blade. The American lost his balance, falling with the blow.

Reaching for his own knife, Julio pounced on him again. He heard Luisa give a cry, and the Don's ordering her to use the pistol, if he could fight his way clear of Shallott.

In desperation, Shallott made another wild swing.

Julio saw the opening he needed. He made a short, quick jab.

He felt a shudder against his body.

Shallott looked at him in surprise, his face misshapen by pain, and fell on his back.

"Again!" the Don shouted. "Stab him again!"

Julio got up and stood over the American. Shallott tried to take fast, deep breaths, but his pain was too great.

"Kill him!" the Don said, coming to Julio.

"I'll take him to Santa Fe. Holz is waiting."

Luisa picked up the American's knife and severed the rope binding Molano's hands.

"Holz is a liar. He won't testify against this man. Think of Cristo. Think of yourself. If he recovers, he will try to kill you again."

"You and I will take him to Santa Fe, senor."

"You need not fear the Americans. Within a month we shall have killed all of them. Kill this one now."

Luisa took a blanket from a mattress and made a pillow for Shallott. She looked at his wound and started away for a bandage.

"Where are you going?" the Don demanded.

"He will die unless the bleeding is stopped, senor."

Molano grabbed her by the arm. "No, Luisa. He would have given us no bandage, no consideration whatsoever."

"That is no reason for us to deny him kindness, senor."

His punishment can come from the Americans."

"Don't be gullible, Luisa. Julio has not always shown good judgement. Don't trust him now."

"It is my own judgement, senor, that won't permit me to watch needless suffering."

"Don't be foolishly soft, Luisa. This is a time for strength."

"There is always a time for mercy, senor. We have had our victory."

She pulled away from him and went to a chest in the corner.

Molano glared at her as she returned with a cloth and began to work over the American. "What is your offer, gringo?" he said. "What will you give this time?"

"Nothing," the American said hoarsely. "Not a goddam thing." He looked up at Luisa and smiled faintly. "I do not mean you, senora."

His answer infuriated Molano. Julio had to hold him back.

"Stop your work, Luisa!"

She went ahead, without paying attention to him.

"I order you to stop!"

Shallott tried to push her hand away. "You are in enough trouble, senora."

"I was taught by a Spanish gentleman, senor, that honor and bravery and mercy are all the same," she said,

tying the bandage into place. "My father taught me that the care of the ill--"

"Your father would be proud now, Luisa, to see you kneel at the side of a gringo! Has the gringo lack of respect crept so much into your blood that you refuse the orders of your husband?"

Luisa worked without answering him.

"Well, Luisa?"

She finished and stood up. "Our agreement, senor, does not require that I sacrifice all the respect I have for myself."

"You have Julio's weakness for trusting gringos. You are both fools to believe that they are to prevail. These Americans whom you see now and respect so much will be driven out into the streets and slaughtered."

"That is the reason why I shall take him to Santa Fe, senor," Julio said. "Let the Americans prove their democracy. If they punish Shallott for the killing of Cristo, they will prove their good faith and our people will have no reason to rise against them."

"Julio is right, senor," Luisa said. "Give the gringos a chance to prove themselves."

"Witness one of the lesser evils the Americans have brought with them. A wife begins to tell her husband what to do. A landowner cannot give orders to his peones and be sure that his instructions will be followed. Our civil-

ization already has begun to show decay from the American interference. But we are going to remedy the disease. In the raising of stock, Julio, what do we do with diseased animals that threaten to infest all our herds?"

"They are destroyed, senor. They are not fit to live. They belong to another age and cannot adapt themselves to new ranges. One way or the other, they perish." Julio turned to Luisa. "Have a mattress ready. I'll get a cart."

"Where is your regard for Cristo?" Molano asked.

"I shall have my satisfaction when he hangs," Julio replied. "Will you accompany me to Santa Fe, senor?"

"Possibly."

Before leaving the house, Julio took the pistol from Luisa and stopped on the porch for the rifle as a precaution for Shallott's safety.

Julio moved quickly in the darkness, hitching the cart to a burro. He was leading the animal across the courtyard when he heard Luisa cry out for him.

Her cry was followed by the repeated screams of a man.

By the time Julio leaped to the porch, the house was quiet.

Molano was still jabbing at the body with a knife, when Julio came to pull him away.

Molano rolled a cigarette slowly, indifferent to the horrified staring of Luisa.

"Well, my dear," he said at last. "What have you to say?"

"I have never seen anything so cruel in my life. I was led to believe, senor, that Santa Fe would be restored to us without bloodshed. Julio was right. You--"

He motioned her to stop. "Now, Julio. It is your turn. What do you think of me?"

"I agree with Luisa. Only I would add murder to brutality."

"A soldier on the field of battle kills his country's enemies and he is hailed as a hero." He turned to Luisa. "Don't look like a fool! You have not lost a brother."

"Worse, senor," she said. "Our people have lost their chance to live in peace with the americanos."

"You are assuming, my dear, that Julio is correct in his assumption. He is not! This is an isolated matter."

"Murder is not an isolated matter to be shrugged off," Julio said.

"True. And Shallott would have been wise if he had realized it when he killed my mayordomo. At least one member of this house was strong enough to avenge Cristo."

"You have labeled yourself as a murderer. You are no better than Shallott."

"See how he speaks to me, Luisa? I am the man who saved his life. The man who raised him. Indeed, I shall not boast of it, but you would think I am owed a little

respect. Yes, Julio, I suppose I am a murderer to the army. But what about you? Can you prove your innocence?"

Julio glanced up, surprised. The thought had not occurred to him. Molano leaned back, taking short, fast puffs on the cigarette. He was smiling.

"I shall tell the truth, Julio," Luisa said, looking at him as if she wanted to come to his side and give him further proof of her support. "You have nothing to fear."

Molano laughed at her sentimentality. "That is right, Julio. I shouldn't want to frighten you. Therefore, I shall not ask you to take the blame for a deed you were too cowardly to perform. I shall take full responsibility. Luisa will write a note to the Colonel and tell him that I want to take the credit for the killing of his underling. I want every grandee in New Mexico to know there is yet one brave man among the gente fina, one man who will stand up against the americanos. Maybe this one deed will put faith into their hearts again."

"Or sicken their stomachs," Julio said. "Not every rico is a fool. There are many who are learning to face a new life. They see the great possibilities for New Mexico when we have our freedom. These are wise men, senor. They know that feudalism is dead forever. But there are some ricos, senor, that are blind. They would sacrifice their lives and the lives of their countrymen to resurrect the putrid corpse." Julio looked at Luisa. "There is not

much time. We must get ready to leave."

"I shall go somewhere, Julio, but not with you," Molano said. "I made a promise to the Dona Adela that I would keep you until you reached your majority. According to my calculations you are now at that age. I can cut you loose with a clear conscience. For nineteen years you have lived under my protection, and I did well by you, Julio. Now you can go to the building where you hid your implements of escape. You are free to go where you please. Your next meal will come from your own labor, or another man's table."

"I am not unhappy with your decision, senor."

"Good. Now, Luisa, I believe you have something to say to Julio."

Luisa was seated at the table, facing the wall. She turned slowly to Julio. "I am sorry, Julio."

He went to her, taking a chair next to hers. "There was a time, Luisa, when I was ashamed to ask you to go with me, because I had nothing to offer. But now it is the Don who can give you nothing. I offer freedom, Luisa, and a chance for better things in the future. He is hunted by the americanos as a traitor and a murderer. Even if he should escape and live in exile, he will be poor. He will be too old to rebuild. The Americans will confiscate his lands, his sheep, everything he owns. The Don and I, Luisa, are on the same footing tonite. We are both poor men. I offer a future. He offers nothing. I am not ashamed to

ask you to share my future now. I can offer you something besides despair."

He watched life return to Luisa's eyes. She looked first to Molano and then up at him, as if she wanted to speak. She was stopped by Molano.

"You are wrong again, Julio," he said, stepping over the body of the American to go to the table. "For two reasons you are wrong. In the first place, the americanos will be run out of New Mexico. Second, I have taken the precaution of failure. Three months ago, in a legal act witnessed by officials, I gave to my brother in Taos everything I own. Legally, even the wine I drink is his. But in our fraternal agreement he will return everything I ask for. Naturally, I made a provision that Luisa should live in this house as long as she wishes, or until she dies or forfeits the right by re-marrying. My brother is no politician, Julio. He will be safe. Luisa will be safe. The Molano family will be safe."

"Don't make me out to be so mercenary, senor," Luisa said. "For myself I ask nothing."

"He can't stop us, Luisa."

"No, Julio. I shall remain with him by my own choosing."

"I have a forgiving nature, as you know from childhood experiences," Molano said. "I have forgiven the Dona. Her mistake will not be repeated. She has seen her original

mistake, which is far more important to me than my own wounded pride. God has admonished us to be forgiving to those who sin against us. And God has been with her in this decision, Julio. She has been saved from the unpardonable sin of breaking the unbreakable vows that joined us together. She has been saved from a wretched life here on earth as well as eternal damnation. Further, Julio, there are practical matters the Dona could not help but see. Your blood has been corrupted by Indians and gringos, while hers as well as mine has survived in its purity. The Dona could hardly endure the dishonor of mingling her blood with the blood of a gringo. Moreover, her patriotism could not permit her to ally with a man who values his own selfish ambitions above the welfare of his people--at least the people who fed and sheltered him, the people to whom he owes his allegiance. In addition, Julio, she saw the error of youth. She is ashamed, bitterly ashamed for her lapse of good judgement. She cannot respect you for yours."

Luisa rose quickly. "I shall speak for myself, senor!" Her eyes were moist when she turned to Julio. "I am ashamed of nothing, Julio. Above all, I am not ashamed of you."

"Then don't listen to him."

"I have made up my mind to stay with him, Julio."

"Why? You are not making sense, Luisa. Is it because I am loyal to the Americans? Because I see as treason the activities of men who would ruin our country?"

She did not answer him.

"Someday you will see that I am right. Many lives will be lost, but you will know I am right. And it will be too late."

She shook her head and closed her eyes.

"I have not withdrawn my offer, Luisa. I want you as much as ever."

"I cannot accept."

Without looking at either of them, she ran from the sala. Impulsively, Julio started to follow. But he was checked by Molano.

"She means it, Julio. Luisa has matured. I know you can never be grateful, but Luisa will be thankful someday for the strength she has shown this evening. You are an americano, Julio. You cannot understand. I saw it in you as a boy. I see it better now. A man cannot betray his blood, though in your case it was hidden from you in your youth. You have no sympathy for us--for Luisa and me and those like us--because you were never one of us. You cannot understand that a girl of Luisa's class was never meant for you. God in His wisdom gave to the world two classes of people. The barriers were not made to be crossed. For this reason I was furious with the Dona Adela for taking you into my house. I foresaw the consequences of raising a boy out of his class. It was my weakness then, Julio, that makes you unhappy tonight. There was nothing she wanted

that I would not give her."

"You gave her everything but what she wanted."

"I cannot expect you to understand our differences. I loved her."

"And Luisa?"

"I don't know why you love her, Julio. But I love her because she is Adela as a girl."

Molano poured a cup of wine for himself and one for Julio. It was refused.

"You should have been raised solely by Cristo," the Don said, staring down at Shallott, watching his blood sucked into the earthen floor. "But I wanted to give you something more than Cristo could give you, because you were destined to be more than a son to my mayordomo. Your mother's family was not a bad family. In the early years of Spanish colonization they mixed too freely with Indians, but on the whole it was not a bad family. Your grandfather was an industrious man and increased his family's fortunes. He was a very proud man. A good man, I believe. With a good father, Julio, you might have been accepted as gente fina. Your father, however, was typically gringo. Unfortunately for your mother's family, he was attractive to women. If your grandfather had been strong, he would not have consented to the match. He had no one but himself to blame for the misfortune. However, he did the next best thing. He sentenced your mother to death."

"How do you know these things?" Julio said angrily.

"Why haven't you told me before?"

"Your name is McCann. I protected you from your gringo name and your gringo background as long as I could. I tried to raise you for the life you would lead. I even tried to have your grandparents raise you as gente fina. But they refused."

"What were they like--my father and mother?"

"I know very little. Your father was a trapper--a rascal like the traders, I suppose. Your mother was a celebrated beauty of her town. Unfortunately, the Indian blood of your family which had lain dormant for a hundred years or more crept into her veins. She was indiscreet and wanted so desperately to marry this McCann that her parents feared an even greater disgrace than marriage with a gringo."

"Why haven't you told me before?"

"You were not of the gente fina. I could not raise you as such. I did the next best thing. I taught you manners while I taught you to work with your hands. You know sheep and how to run a hacienda. Now you are ready to go."

Julio went to the door and opened it.

"One thing more," Don Antonio said, going to a chest in the corner.

Julio watched him shuffle through a sheaf of yellowed papers.

"This is all you own to your name. A grant. Not quite

so large as mine. But it is rich. There is water. Grass. Your father and mother lost their lives trying to claim it. Perhaps it will prove as worthless to you. But this land has great possibilities, Julio. I envy your youth." He handed the papers to him. "Your land adjoins mine. In the future you will live neighbors with Molanos--my nephews, if they care to leave the luxury they enjoy in Taos. These papers were all that remained the day I found you. They have been brought up to date. You should have no legal difficulties. When I returned home with you, I left at the first opportunity for Socorro to see your grandfather. I used every art of persuasion I knew. I argued your case well, Julio. But he would not hear of taking you into his home. He had given the grant to your father to rid himself of disgrace. He did not wish to be reminded of his daughter's foolishness. I drove a thousand sheep back with me--his gift to me and your legacy. I shall keep seven hundred of them."

"Let me speak with Luisa again," Julio said impatiently.

"She is aware of the grant. It will do you no good to argue with her. She wants to stay with me. If you do not believe me, look among your papers. You will find a note in Luisa's hand to my brother instructing him to deliver to you three hundred sheep. I believe I have been fair. Be happy with what you have."

"Yesterday, senor, this would have meant very much to me," Julio said, folding the papers and placing them in his

his pocket indifferently.

"I know, Julio, that fortune never comes at the moment we want it. As a young man I wanted my father to pass quickly into Heaven so that I could swagger at the head of my house. He did not die until I was forty. I was too old to make a fool of myself." Don Antonio put down his cup. "Now you must leave. I must also prepare for a journey."

"What will become of Luisa?"

"You are speaking of my wife, Julio. What she does is not for you to question. I have given you enough liberty to plead your case. Now I must ask you to look upon Luisa as my wife and respect her as such."

"As your wife, yes. But not because you are a don. We are Americans now. You are no longer the law!"

"Nevertheless, you shall honor my house!"

"I shall honor Luisa's wishes."

"A word of advice before you leave. There is only one way you can lose your land, Julio. Stay away from the Americans. Do nothing against the cause of our independence. I have lived many years in New Mexico, enough years to know what happens to a man who backs the wrong faction. With your foolishness I give you a month. No more. In a month you will be a peon. Remember me as I was in the revolution, when I rode up with the army from Chihuahua. Remember how I was wise and outwitted my enemies. Don't be a fool, Julio.

A man does not have to ally with the cause he favors to reach the end he desires. I concealed your birthright that you would not be spoiled and demanding. Don't betray the training you were given. Don't become a child who wants this and that without discrimination, without a thought to the consequences of his foolishness. I wish you well."

Although he could have walked around him, Molano preferred to step over Shallott's body on his way out of the room. He stopped before the large mirror, frowning into the glass, dissatisfied with the service it had given. Then he stood erect, stroking his mustache into position. He turned back to Julio.

"Good evening, Julio."

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Several inches of snow lay on the ground outside and the sharp blasts coming down out of the north burned faces raw. But behind the adobe walls of the saloon it was steaming hot, and there was not enough air for all the lungs that had to breathe the sweat and liquor and stale cigarette smoke. Yet it was better than freezing.

Julio sat on a bench, drinking his aguardiente slowly, that his money was not exhausted before his boredom.

In the corner, two Pueblos were carrying on a vigorous debate, stopping only to stare at a Mexican girl who came out of the back room now and then to talk with the old man who was sprinkling water on the floor to settle the dust.

One of the Indians turned to Julio. "Am I not right, senor? The gringo women also must die."

Julio did not reply.

"He is a man of sense, you fool!" the other Pueblo said. "It is warning enough to the gringos that we kill their men."

Revolution was a common topic. Julio was no longer surprised at the tension that gripped Taos. Santa Fe, with the army quartered there, had been peaceful by comparison. Not a day passed but what he was approached by a Pueblo or a Mexican and asked to join them. Their questions were blunt. His loyalty was not tested before they told their plans in detail. They were silent only when he asked who led them.

With evening approaching there would be more Pueblos coming to drink the whiskey Turley distilled near Taos. The Pueblos would go crazy on Turley's whiskey and then make plans to kill him. Later in the night, with their bellies full, the native leaders would work the Pueblos into an enraged mob. Julio had seen it happen every night since he had come to Taos. When a speaker openly demanded the annihilation of the Americans, the leaders could barely restrain the Indians. They screamed and kicked at the floor until it seemed that they would rush into the streets prematurely.

There were a few Mexicans among them, but the greater number was Pueblo. These Indians had adopted the language and much of the dress of the Mexican and often it was impossible to tell the difference between the two. Most of the Mexican population looked up the activities of the troublemakers with doubt and fear. It was obvious that the Pueblo had not decided to rise against the American on his own initiative. The revolutionists had captured the manpower they needed by playing upon the Indian's dread of change. Julio remembered the Dona Adela's account of the uprising two hundred years before. The Pueblos had dreaded change then, too, and rose in revolt when the Spanish padres banned their pagan dances and hanged their tribal priests. The Spaniards who saved their lives were compelled to leave New Mexico. When the Spaniard returned, he did not try

again to change the ancient ways of the Pueblos. They were allowed thereafter to attend the rites of the holy faith and dance naked in tribute to the old gods, all in the same day. And the Pueblo had not changed since that time. Julio recalled the Don's saying that a man sometimes had to make odd alliances to achieve his goal. Spaniard and Indian had killed each other for centuries. Even in times of peace the truce often was broken. Only the common dread of change had brought them together to challenge the gringos.

The man responsible for delivering the Pueblos to the revolutionists was Padre Martinez. His name was not unknown to Julio. Padre Martinez had made himself the most powerful man in New Mexico by courting the favor of the Pueblos. The women who bore his children had good reason to boast, for the priest was a power in the government as well as the church. His talents were somewhat similar to Don Antonio's. He always made the right switch of his allegiance at the right time. To Julio, however, it appeared that the padre, like Don Antonio, had let his heart dictate to his mind.

"Tonight I shall strike the governor first," one of the Pueblos boasted.

Julio turned to them.

"Tonight?" he asked.

"Tonight."

"You are mistaken, compadres," Julio said. "I have not been informed."

"Then you are deaf, compadre. It is no secret--except to the governor."

The other Pueblo giggled.

Julio went back to his aguardiente. Both Indians were giggling now.

Then, abruptly, they were silent.

Julio turned to the door, to see what held the attention of the Pueblos.

An American trader was standing at the counter.

"Are you McCann?" he asked.

"I am he," Julio replied.

"I have a message from Red."

The trader ordered a drink and sat on the bench beside Julio. He put a finger to one nostril and blew hard. He kicked up a little dirt to cover his contribution to the filth of the place.

"I'm glad to see an American again," the trader said.

"I'm getting goddam sick of Indians. The town in crawlin' with 'em. More so than usual."

"They're going to cause trouble tonite."

The trader looked at him skeptically. "Brent's word is good enough for me. He says the Pueblos are his friends. And he oughtta know. Brent has been in this country a long time. He knows a good Indian when he sees one."

"Someone should tell him that the Pueblos are planning to kill him."

"God knows enough of the greasers have been to him today, pleading with him to go back to Santa Fe. You know him, McCann. He doesn't scare. And he's a smart one, too, when it comes to handling greasers and Indians. From what Holz tells me, I guess your father and Brent were good friends in the old days. I heard Kit Carson talk about your old man once. He must have been all right. I can understand why you don't trust an Indian. Personally, I don't trust 'em, either. But I trust Brent. And he says not to worry."

"I've heard otherwise," Julio said, motioning to the Pueblos behind them, "from a good source."

"Sure, they talk a lot and blow off steam. They've been gettin' ready to kick the white man out, ever since Columbus, and so far they've never gotten outta the thinking stage. There's no danger. They're just a bunch of savages, without training or leadership. They can't expect to battle with an army."

"But the army is in Santa Fe. And I believe they have more than native leadership."

The trader showed interest. "If you go to Brent with names, he might do somethin'."

"I don't know their names. But they must be some of the men who failed at Santa Fe."

"Don't worry about them. The ones we didn't catch ran like hell for Mexico."

"All of them?" Julio asked, feeling his throat tighten painfully. "Senor Molano?"

"We're sure of it. That reminds me. Red also told me to tell you that the Senora Molano must have gone into Mexico with him. She's not in Santa Fe." The trader lighted a cigar. "Holz says you are to wait for him. He'll be up here by the end of the week, just as soon as he can sell some stuff."

After the trader left, the Pueblos began to jabber again, this time lapsing into their native tongue. Julio was unable to follow them, but he had no doubt that his fraternization with the American was their topic.

He could hear Holz's first words when they met: "With Luisa a couple of thousand miles away, my boy, we should be able to get a lot of work done." If Holz said it, he would throw a drink into his face. Julio tried to remember everything Luisa had said to him the last night in Santa Fe. He was sure she had not gone willingly with the Don into Mexico. Julio reconstructed the arguments he had used. He had been too weak. He should have taken Luisa by force, he knew. Yet the Don had not used force to keep her. Apparently she had been given a free choice. It was always a distressing conclusion he reached.

The trader had given him one smile, however. He had called him an American, and had used his American name. It was some comfort to know that his father was not the rascal

Don Antonio had painted for him. In the note to Holz he had casually mentioned his new name. Holz had thought enough of it to tell the trader of his father's association with Governor Brent. Julio felt good enough to want another drink, but more Pueblos were crowding around the two that sat behind him. He decided to leave.

The late afternoon sun shone brightly against the adobe, blinding him as he entered the street, and he bumped against a man dressed in the garb of a Pueblo.

Julio was unable to look closely into his face, but he was sure he had seen Don Antonio. He turned and followed the man.

The Indian glanced back, pulling his serape close about his face, and walked faster.

Julio started to run. But three Indians suddenly stopped in front of him to talk. By the time he could free himself, he had lost sight of the man. All day Indians had been pouring into the city from their villages. It was not hard for a man to lose himself in the crowded plaza.

On his first day in Taos, Julio had located the house of Don Francisco Molano, but decided against an interview with the brother until Holz arrived. He went there now, rapping loudly on the gate until the portero opened the small door to ask his business.

"I wish to see Don Francisco."

"What is your name?"

"My business is sheep."

"What is your name again?"

"I have a letter of introduction," Julio replied impatiently. "Is Don Francisco at home?"

"Senor, I must have your name."

"Tell me, is there another woman in the house--besides Don Francisco's wife?"

"I have orders, senor. No one passes into the courtyard until he gives his business and name."

"My name is McCann," Julio said weakly, realizing that the portero had been instructed too well. "Will the Don see me?"

"You are fortunate, Senor McCann. The Don left a message for you. He is away on business. You are to come back tomorrow."

"I want to see him now. It is important."

"He does not care to see you!"

The portero smiled at his error and quickly shut the door.

For awhile Julio waited outside the gate, to see if anyone would leave the house, but the street was growing so crowded that it was impossible for him to keep his vigil. The Pueblos and a smattering of Mexicans were rushing to the plaza.

Julio walked along with them, stopping at the place where he had played monte the night of Luisa's wedding.

Except for a few Mexicans, the saloon was deserted. They were silent and morose, drinking without talking, ignoring the calls of the monte dealer. Several girls sat on the floor, looking very bored. The man behind the counter waited on Julio, then continued to store away his bottles and jars and everything breakable or valuable. When this was completed, he made the rounds of his patrons and filled their cups, announcing that it would be their last for the night.

Julio drank his slowly and thought of Luisa. It had been impossible to force his way into the Molano house. And had he been admitted, there was no assurance that he would have found her. He had no proof that she was in Taos. He might have dreamed a Pueblo into the shape of Don Antonio. The brother might have had legitimate reasons for not wanting to see him. Moreover, the truth of the matter had not changed. Luisa was given her choice. She chose the Don. No amount of dreaming was going to bring her back. As far as his hopes were concerned, Julio knew, she could just as well be in Mexico. He discarded the idea of going to the house where she and Molano were married. In the morning, if the idea sounded any better, he could always give it a try.

By the time he was ready to leave, it was not possible for him to push his way through the crowd to go to his quarters. The mob had become a solid, impenetrable wall, rushing in one direction like a flooded river, breaking down

everything that tried to stand against it.

Julio was swept along with them. When he tried to resist, they beat at him wildly with their fists until he gave way. He sought to move gradually to the edge, but the mob gained numbers as it advanced, compressing him into the center with hundreds of chanting Pueblos blocking his exit.

The Pueblos grated together all of their ancient noise-makers, lifting a raucous screeching above the howling of the mob. He was jostled along, kicking those ahead of him as he was kicked from behind, to keep his balance and stay on his feet.

A man in front of him fell. Julio was pushed over him. The man's screams were lost among the more hysterical Indian screams.

The forward movement of the throng slowed to a stop. The Indians in the rear continued to push, until Julio was locked tightly between the men in front and behind him.

For a moment the mob was quiet. He was conscious now of the smell of whiskey and sweating bodies. A Mexican near him broke the silence, yelling for the governor. The cry was taken up by the rest of them.

Julio watched the door of the governor's residence. A lamp had been lighted in the sala. When Brent appeared at the door attired in his night shirt and motioned for silence, the crowd obeyed. Julio thought that the trader might have been right after all, for the Indians evidently

had a great respect for Brent.

Brent did not seem to be unusually disturbed. He was not a new gringo. Together with his brother he had built a fort on the Arkansas to trade with Indians. For many years, before the coming of the American army, he had lived in Taos, gaining the respect of Pueblo and Mexican alike. He had no reason to fear them now. His request for silence was granted, not so much because he was the civil head of New Mexico, but because he was Brent.

His voice was strong, calm and without a trace of fear. He asked them to disperse and submit their grievances in an orderly manner.

Then, in the midst of his speech, an arrow struck him in the face.

He staggered back. Another arrow hit its mark. Brent fell to his knees, pulling at the arrows.

A mighty roar went up from the mob. They held back only a moment before rushing him, scalping him alive, and following him as he crawled blindly through his house. At the feet of his wife and children he was shot to death.

Brent's murder was but a start.

The sheriff, the prefect, the district judge all were murdered. Every American known to the mob was slain and their homes looted and burned.

The overcast sky was orange with the light of fires, and the rebels ran crazed through the streets, no longer

caring if the property to be damaged was American. Julio watched helplessly as the trader he had met in the afternoon was dragged from a burning building and taken to the plaza and hacked to pieces.

However, it was for the Mexicans who had accepted office under the Americans that the mob reserved its full savagery. Death was not enough for traitors.

Julio saw one locally prominent Mexican run through the icy streets naked, hopelessly trying to evade the jabs of the lances and the arrows which were aimed carefully to avoid hitting him. At last, unable to endure the torture longer, he fell to his knees and begged for mercy. His cries were answered with an arrow in the groin. He lay moaning against the snow until a careless shot brought death. A groan went up from the mob. The erring bowman was given a thrashing.

The rebels were soon without people to kill, and parties of them took to the countryside, killing the few Americans who lived in the small villages near Taos. At Arroyo Hondo, eleven miles away, they killed Turley and six of the men who helped him run the distillery.

By morning the revolutionists were yet a mob. Worse than their lack of order, however, was the news that the revolt had not spread into other sections of New Mexico. The Pueblos were sober and depressed. They faced a march into the country where they would meet in battle the American

army coming up from Santa Fe. The insurrectionists of Taos stood alone against the gringos. The Mexican orators had lied.

Yet they marched bravely out of the city to meet the enemy. They were poorly armed. Bows and lances far outnumbered rifles. But they had another weapon. This was a holy war, the orators had told them. A fight to the death against the infidel. The Mexicans and Pueblos were loud in their prayers. They prayed to the God of the padres and to the gods of the Indian priests for a miracle.

The miracle did not come.

Under Colonel Sterling Price and Ceran St. Vrain, the Americans scattered them quickly. Those who ran into the hills in their panic were hunted down and killed without mercy.

In Taos, Padre Martinez denounced the revolutionists as a pack of wanton murderers, thereby divorcing his connection with them. All other men of influence, regardless of their sympathies, followed his example. The cause of revolution was declared forever dead, even before the mob straggled back to its last defense.

Julio entered their ranks to look for Don Antonio. The men he saw were silent and frightened and the sentence of death was plainly in their faces. They prepared their defense at the old mission church, some of the Indians taking their women with them. When Julio saw this, he prayed

that the Don would not be found.

Shortly before the gates to the church were closed, however, he caught a brief but unmistakable glimpse of the Don towering above his smaller comrades. His face was more wrinkled and showed fatigue, but the same arrogant defiance was there, as uncompromising as ever. When an Indian accidentally brushed up against him, Don Antonio stared at him contemptibly and moved away, his body erect and his shoulders pushed back, as if he were serving his finest brandy to a visiting bishop in the sala.

Julio called to the Don and started after him. But the men preparing to fasten the heavy doors warned him that there would be no leaving once he stepped inside.

## 2

The revolutionists counted on more than earthen walls four feet thick to protect them. Their fort was also a church, and as such it traditionally enjoyed immunity from attack. Nevertheless, holes were cut in the walls for rifles, should the soldiers below them become the first American force ever to fire upon a church.

Holz had come into Taos with the Americans. He and Julio stood in the snow near the fort and heard St. Vrain and other of Brent's friends argue for an attack.

"We'll have a long wait," Holz said. "Price himself is a Catholic. He will try to starve them into surrendering."

"They won't surrender."

"Maybe. Just the same I hope Price doesn't open up on them. It's time we started making friends."

"After what the rebels did, Holz, the Americans don't have to worry about hurting the feelings of the Mexicans. This is the last fight gringo soldiers will have in New Mexico."

"One thing is certain, Julio. It's not just that these Indians and Mexicans should be slaughtered when the men who tormented them into revolt are living in peace in Mexico."

"Not all of them are in Mexico. Don Antonio is in the church. I think Luisa might be with him."

"I suggest we go for a drink," Holz said, running a hand over his face uncomfortably. "Price won't fire on the church."

Just as Holz finished speaking, the order came from Colonel Price to commence the attack. The howitzers were brought into position.

Julio and Holz ran for cover.

The defenders answered the first volley with firing of their own. The Americans kept up a hot fire without once penetrating the fort. All day, until sundown, the battle continued. The rebels huddled behind the safety of the walls, hearing the thud of the missiles which imbedded themselves in the thick adobe. At night both sides

rested.

During the evening Holz took Julio around to the officers and introduced him. They dropped their work a moment to talk with him and tell stories about his father, Brent, Kit Carson, the other early gringos who had settled in New Mexico.

At the insistence of St. Vrain and Colonel Price, Julio told of how he had been raised in the home of Don Antonio Molano. They listened with more than polite attention.

"McCann, with your background you can be a great service to New Mexico," Price said, when Julio finished. "The army can't stay here forever. When we leave, a problem arises. New Mexico can be governed by Americans who will choose to remain and others who will come here when the fighting ends. But that is no solution, any more than government solely by Mexicans or Indians is a solution. The people of New Mexico must learn to live and govern in harmony. Men like you can make it easier. You are the representative New Mexican, years before your time. The Americans and Mexicans will value and trust your judgement, for you represent them both. There will be elections soon. Men will be needed to sit in the legislature. I don't predict an easy time during the first years. But the road to statehood will be smoother if there are men who can speak for both civilizations. You have a very great responsibil-

ity."

"He is capable of any responsibility, Colonel," Holz said.

"Good. Someday in the future, McCann, you will be asked to come down from your ranch. You will donate a lot of work without pay. You might even make enemies. Will you come?"

"Yes, senor--" Julio looked at Holz uncomfortably. "--yes, Colonel, if I am needed."

"I can vouch for the McCann side of him," St. Vrain said.

"You might not agree, gentlemen," Holz said, "but I wish to vouch for the Molano side of him. Whatever the faults of Don Antonio, he did not slight this boy in his training."

Holz and Julio spent the rest of the night in silence. Holz knew that Julio did not want gaiety any more than he wanted comforting. They lay huddled in their blankets, both awake, keeping the silence until morning, when the booming of the American cannon brought them to their feet.

They arrived on the scene in time to see the first American charge thrown back. The Americans retreating to their own lines carried with them a mortally wounded officer.

The rebels poured a steady fire down upon the gringos, but they were unable to stop the next charge. A squad of men succeeded in getting under the protection of the walls.

With axes the soldiers hacked away at the adobe, chipping gradually into the fort. The blows would have been no less noisy had they struck against rock. But an opening was made. Then grenades were tossed into the crowded church.

The explosion made a muffled sound, like a charge detonated deep under the earth. Cries of pain and fear following the first explosion were drowned by the second.

American losses grew heavier as the howitzers were moved closer. The wounded had to lie where they fell, for there was no time now to care for them. They lay on the icy ground that was discolored with blood and gunpowder, and called for aid.

Early in the afternoon a six-pounder advanced within sixty yards and loosened a barrage, further widening the breach made by the grenades. Yet the rebels still were not weakened enough to make safe a charge by infantry.

Gradually the howitzers were brought even closer, until at ten yards a shell and three rounds of grape were fired into the opening. The acrid fumes of gunpowder filled the church, and there was coughing and choking mingled with the cries of the wounded.

The officer in charge of infantry was signalled to commence his attack.

The Americans left the safety of their positions to storm the fort. There was little opposition. Many of those

who still lived came forward to surrender. Others who fled were cut down by the mounted volunteers under St. Vrain.

Holz spoke with a captain and they were permitted to enter the church. Not so fortunate were the sobbing Pueblo women who appeared to claim their dead and wounded. The women were told to wait.

Julio walked slowly behind Holz, looking into the faces on the dead and the dying. Where bodies were piled together it was necessary to wait for the Americans to come and separate them. Already the soldiers had removed many of the casualties, raising in Julio's mind a doubt if his search would end within the church.

Only one body in twenty was Mexican, and none of these were women. Holz guessed that the women, if they had not been sent from the fort before the attack began, were sheltered behind the men and ran forward to surrender when the Americans entered. Julio was not convinced. They continued their search, though most of the area had been thoroughly covered. Occasionally they saw the Americans drag out a wildly screaming Indian who had feigned death in the hope of gaining his freedom.

They made a circle of the church, nearing the point where they had entered. Holz stopped. He pointed at his feet.

The ball had hit him squarely, caving in his chest.

A wounded Pueblo lay at the side of Don Antonio, sharing a common pool of blood with him.

## 3

Don Francisco Molano was not in mourning. He welcomed his visitor cordially and ordered wine for him while he read the note.

"I am sorry to intrude at such a time," Julio said. "But I needed to see you before you left for Santa Fe."

Don Francisco looked up at him a little irritated. "I am not going to Santa Fe, Senor McCann."

"But his wife, all his family are buried in--"

"That is true. Santa Fe is our family home. But I am hard pressed with work here, Don Julio. I cannot spare the time. Besides, our eternal home is not a cemetery. Antonio will find Taos restful for the present."

Molano went back to the note, satisfied that he had made clear the position of his family in regard to Don Antonio.

"I am afraid, Don Julio, that I haven't time to read all of this document. Would you mind telling me briefly what it contains?"

"You are to give me three hundred sheep, by order of your brother," Julio replied, barely able to conceal a smile at Molano's artful disguise of his illiteracy.

Don Francisco sighed heavily. "I hope this is the last of them. My legacy is being rapidly drained, senor."

"That is too bad, senor."

"Do you have any idea how many of these bequests my brother made?"

"No, senor. I thought mine was the only one."

"How I wish you were right! Last week I was compelled to give away a kingdom in silver. Had Antonio been dead then I should have fought it in the courts. My brother, in many respects, was a very foolish man. All his life he insisted on making a fool out of himself over women. But this was his greatest blunder. The mother of the woman he married deserved nothing. Yet he gave her a fabulous sum, enough to keep her for the rest of her life. I wonder if Antonio had any romantic designs on the mother."

Julio rose to his feet and placed the cup on the table.

"Is there something wrong, Don Julio?"

"No. Nothing, senor. In fact, I feel very good."

"In the morning I shall have a lawyer inspect this document. I am sure he will find it in order. Sometime tomorrow you can have your sheep."

"I should prefer to wait until spring before taking them, senor."

"Yes, we can arrange that. However, for keeping your stock, I believe some compensation is due me."

"Ten head?"

"Agreed. I shall look forward to your visit in the spring."

A boy of sixteen came into the sala. He was introduced as Camilo, Don Francisco's son. He had inherited his father's tendency for stoutness, but he did not have the bone structure that made his father look powerful. The fat hung loosely on Camilo's slight frame, and made him appear all the more awkward as he walked slowly, listlessly to shake Julio's hand.

"Someday, perhaps, we shall be neighbors, Camilo," Julio said. "I own a land grant next to your father's."

Camilo turned to Don Francisco. "What is this, Father?"

"Oh, it's some land up in Indian country that your uncle hoarded like gold."

"How many sheep are on it, Father?"

"There are no sheep," Don Francisco replied irritably. "How could there be sheep in Indian country? Use your head, Camilo."

"In the future there will be sheep, Camilo," Julio said. "And I suppose you will come north to run your hacienda?"

Camilo glanced at his father. "Do I have to go, Father?"

"Next fall Camilo will go to school in St. Louis," Molano said proudly. "I shall have them make him into a statesman."

"Yes, Senor McCann," Camilo said. "And someday I shall go to Washington and be a Senator. Or maybe I shall become

an actor."

"Our visitor is interested neither in your ambitions nor your lack of good manners," Molano replied. "You may leave us, Camilo."

Don Francisco rose to dismiss Julio.

"One thing more, Don Francisco. I should like to pay my respects to the Dona Luisa."

Molano appeared unhappy at the request. "I am afraid, Don Julio, that it is impossible."

"Suppose you ask her, senor, if she wants to see me," Julio said firmly. If he was accepted now as a don, he intended to make full use of his power.

Molano shrugged his shoulders. "It is beyond my power to produce her."

"Then I shall wait here until I do see her."

"Your wait will be very long, Don Julio. She is not in my house."

Julio thought instantly of the bodies the soldiers had carried from the church before he entered the building.

"Where is she, senor?"

"That I cannot tell you. She insisted on leaving my house and I graciously gave in to her wishes. My brother always chose peculiar women. This one has the temperament of a tejano."

It was nearly dark when Julio returned to the place

where he had left Holz with the wounded. But he saw nothing of Holz or the casualties. A soldier he questioned pointed out a nearby building.

The floor had been cleared, giving the Americans the room they needed to treat their wounded. Blankets were placed on the floor and the men laid in rows. They were given what medical attention the Americans had at their disposal. In the corner, a man with a fresh leg amputation started to rise in his delirium, but he fell back, sobbing, when the shock of sudden pain brought him to his senses. The strong odor of carbolic acid burned in Julio's nostrils. He stood inside the door, watching Holz bend over a man, his fingers running skillfully along a damaged arm.

A woman at the doctor's side was ripping her petticoat into bandages. A man behind her gave a cry. She turned and said a few words of comfort and the man smiled and bravely held back his pain. She glanced up.

The immaculate Dona whom Julio had never seen beyond the confines of a sala was not fit to receive guests. Her bare arms were streaked with gringo blood, and her hair was badly out of place. She looked more the part of a ranchero's wife, he thought.

When the last bandage was put in place, the last man comforted, she walked away from Holz in the dignity becoming a dona. But as she neared Julio, she ran into his arms and kissed him.

"Tomorrow we are going north, Luisa!"

"You must be very happy, Julio. I am very happy for you."

When he tried to draw her to him again, she eased out of his arms.

"I imagine the mountains will be beautiful in the snow," Luisa said absently.

A frown had replaced her smile. She started to go back to Holz, but Julio caught her by the hand.

"What's wrong, Luisa?"

"Please--please don't count on my going with you."

"There isn't time, Luisa. I wish I could give you time. But you must decide now."

"Decide what, Julio? We made our decisions in Santa Fe--all of us."

"But conditions that existed then are changed now."

"You cannot understand, Julio."

"Death freed you from every promise you made with him."

"From marriage, yes, but not everything."

"I know about your mother."

She turned to him quickly. "What did she tell you?"

"Nothing--except that you had not come to her house after leaving Don Francisco's. Why did you come to the American wounded, Luisa?"

"Because they were the first I saw. They are no different from our own people. When they are hurt, they cry."

When they are comforted, they are very grateful. I hope the Pueblos are cared for. They are the most seriously wounded, Julio. They gave blood for something very useless, something very foolish."

"Was your mother sworn to the same ridiculous terms he made to you?"

She did not answer him.

"Before he married, the Don told me that he had settled an allowance on your mother, to keep her living here as gente fina. He used her then as a threat to marry you. He used her again as a threat to keep you. Your mother didn't tell me, Luisa. His own brother told me. He took out time from the counting of his new riches. I should have known that Don Antonio would never give a free choice to anyone."

"You make him sound cruel, Julio. He did not mean it that way. He said he was doing it for my own good. And I believe he was sincere."

"I don't blame him. I would have been just as foul with him if I could have taken you with me."

"Only your motive would have been selfish. His was not selfish, Julio. In my immaturity he wanted to protect me. He wanted my blood to remain pure and loyal to the life I was born into. But most of all, to prevent my youth from sending me into the mountains where I would regret to my death a decision that would torment my conscience and make my life miserable. He said the day would come when

I would thank him and ask forgiveness for the bitter things I said to him. No, Julio, he did this for my good. Not his. There was nothing he could gain by keeping me."

"I was never to be told?"

"I was permitted to tell you anything--anything that would send you away."

"And for this you traded the security of your mother?"

"For you, Julio, another choice might have been possible, but not for me. You have never been a rico. You don't know the hopeless life a woman like my mother faces when she wakes suddenly to poverty. She has not touched a bit of work in her life. She has not even dressed herself once in her life. She couldn't bake or sew or clean or do anything. She was born to sit in the sala and smile at her guests and plan dinners and bailes. I would have killed her, Julio--no less mercifully than the Don killed Shallott--had I denied her the life of the gente fina. My father died when he lost the right to the life he had been born for. You have a future, Julio. No amount of labor is going to kill the spirit with you. Despair is behind you. You will always know that tomorrow will be better than today. You are not a fallen rico."

"And you won't be a fallen rico, either, unless you remarry. Is that what you are telling me?"

Luisa sat down on the floor and rested her back against the wall. She closed her eyes. "I have never lied to you.

I told you once that it made no difference to me. I have not changed my mind."

"Did your mother's bequest carry a provision that she would lose it if you remarried?"

"He knew I would marry no one else."

"Then you are free. Both you and your mother have fulfilled the obligations he required you to meet."

They were interrupted by Holz and a tall, fleshy Mexican. When Luisa saw that the Mexican was a priest, she started to rise. The padre motioned her to be still.

"Your visit has done more good than all our bandages, padre," Holz said.

Luisa stared up at the priest, surprised that he had come among the infidels to give them comfort.

"They have souls, senora," the padre said, seeing Luisa's concern. "I was glad to comfort my American brothers. We shall be living together a long time. I have always told the boys in my school that the genius of the American government is in complete harmony with freedom of worship and with the complete separation of the church and state." The padre paused to smile. "I tell them, senora, that the American republic is a burro on which the lawyers jog along much better than the priests."

Luisa rose. "You have comforted the wounded in body, father, but what is to be done for the Indian widows who lost their husbands today?"

"They will be comforted by the promises of God, senora."

"But what of the women who made promises to their husbands?"

"All promises die when the body dies, senora. Only the promises of Heaven are eternal."

"I should think these women would be better off if they found a good man and married again," Holz said.

"They might as well brighten a few dull days until they get around to collecting on the promises of Heaven."

"By all means, senor. If you are looking for a wife, there are many fine women among those who were widowed today. Shall we arrange an introduction?"

Holz reached into his pocket and pulled out a cigar. He bit off the end savagely. "No, Padre Martinez. I am very happily married, thank you. Fourteen beautiful ninos."

Padre Martinez's brows climbed high on his forehead. He said nothing more.

Holz took the padre by the arm and walked outside with him.

Julio rolled a cigarette and smoked it down before Luisa spoke again.

"Can't you understand, Julio, why I am grateful to the Don for what he has done for me?"

Julio turned away and looked down the aisle at the wounded men. The amputee had fallen asleep.

"He prevented a very serious mistake, Julio. Both of

us should be thankful."

He felt her arm go around his waist. He turned back to her. She was smiling.

Holz returned to them quickly. His cheeks, cold from the night air, were the color of his beard.

"Now, for a moment, I wish to speak," he said. "Julio has had his turn."

"Yes, Senor Holz?"

"Julio has land. I have a little money. Julio and I are going to buy cattle with my money to graze on his land. Someday we are going to be very rich, Luisa. But we won't be very happy, either of us, if this partnership is limited to him and me. We'll sit up in the mountains with nothing but mountains to look at, and we'll be very unhappy with the barren landscape. In short, Julio needs a wife and I need a cook."

"I have never cooked a meal in my life, Senor Holz."

"Any girl who can wrestle wounded men the way you did tonite can learn, and in the meantime I'll have something to look at besides the mountains."

"I didn't say I could not learn, Senor Holz." She turned to Julio. "I must have time. Give me until spring, Julio."

Julio felt the knot tighten around his stomach again. "Do you need time to decide?"

"No. Time to work. There are a hundred things I must

learn to do. I would be a burden to you now. In the spring when you come back for me I shall be able to cook and sew and use my hands so I can be a help to you. I shall work beside my servants and they will teach me. I want to be needed when I go to my new house. There are things I must gather together for a home, things a man in his haste is sure to overlook. There are events we can't foretell, yet they must be prepared for. Has it ever occurred to either of you rancheros that there will be children born?"

"I am out of practice," Holz said eagerly. "But I am still better than the average midwife."

Luisa turned to Julio. "Will your proposal be half so eloquent as Senor Holz's?"

"Even more so. I shall see that the doctor gets his practice."

They walked outside together and saw that the padre had stopped to look at the church.

"It can be rebuilt, father," Holz said.

The padre shook his head. "No, senor. Some things are better left as they are. We shall build another church in another place." He smiled at Luisa and Julio. "And we shall build new people. That is important, senor."

They continued on together, leaving the padre. A strong wind blew down out of the mountains and Holz pulled up his collar and commented on how cold it was.

There was no response from the two lagging behind.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Allen, John Houghton, Southwest. New York: Lippincott, 1952.
- Arnold, Oren, Thunder in the Southwest. Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1952.
- Austin, Mary, Isidro. New York: Gosset and Dunlap, 1904.
- Austin, Mary, Land of Journey's Ending. New York: Century, 1924.
- Austin, Mary, Land of Little Rain. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1903.
- Austin, Mary, One-Smoke Stories. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1934.
- Bancroft, Hubert Howe, History of the North Mexican States and Texas. Vol. VII. San Francisco: History Company, 1889.
- Bartlett, J.R., Personal Narrative. 2 vols. New York: D. Appleton, 1854.
- Beadle, J.H., Western Wilds. Cincinnati: Jones, 1878.
- Bender, Averan, March of Empire. Lawrence: University of Kansas, 1952.
- Cloud, W.F., Church and State or Mexican Politics. Kansas City: Peck and Clark, 1896.
- Coates, Robert M., Outlaw Years. New York: Literary Guild, 1930.
- Connelley, William Elsey, Doniphan's Expedition and the Conquest of New Mexico and California. Topeka, 1907.
- Corle, Edwin, Desert Country. New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1941.
- Davis, William Watts Hart, El Gringo. New York: Harpers, 1857.
- Falconer, Thomas, Letters and Notes on the Texan Santa Fe Expedition. New York: Dauber and Pine, 1930.
- Fergusson, Harvey, Grant of Kingdom. New York: Morrow and Company, 1950.

- Fergusson, Harvey, Rio Grande. New York: Tudor, 1945.
- Fergusson, Harvey, Wolf Song. New York: Knopf, 1927.
- Foreman, Grant, Pioneer Days in the Early Southwest.  
Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark, 1926.
- Fulton, Garland and Horgan, Paul, New Mexico's Own Chronicle.  
Dallas: Banks Upshaw, 1937.
- Gard, Wayne, Frontier Justice. Norman: University of  
Oklahoma, 1949.
- Garrard, Lewis H., Wah-to-Yah and the Taos Trail. Vol. VI.  
Southwest Historical Series. Glendale: Arthur Clark,  
1938.
- Grant, Blanche C., One Hundred Years Ago in Old Taos. Taos,  
1925.
- Grant, Blanche C., When Old Trails Were New. New York:  
Press of the Pioneers, 1934.
- Gregg, Josiah, Diary and Letters of Josiah Gregg. 2 vols.  
Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1941.
- Hallenbeck, Cleve, Land of the Conquistadors. Caldwell,  
Idaho: Caxton, 1950.
- Hewett, E.L. and Fisher, R.G., Mission Monuments of New  
Mexico. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1943.
- Kendall, George Wilkins, Narrative of the Texan Santa Fe  
Expedition. New York, 1856.
- Laut, Agnes C., Pilgrims of the Santa Fe. New York:  
Frederick A. Stokes, 1931.
- Lummis, Charles F., Land of Poco Tiempo. Albuquerque:  
University of New Mexico, 1952.
- Lummis, Charles F., Spanish Pioneers. Chicago: McClurg,  
1925.
- Otero, Miguel Antonio, My Life on the Frontier. New  
York: Press of the Pioneers, 1935.
- Ritch, William G., Illustrated New Mexico. Santa Fe:  
Bureau of Immigration, 1883.

- Ruxton, George Frederick, Life in the Far West. Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1951.
- Sibley, George Champlin, Road to Santa Fe. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1952.
- Thwaites, Reuben Gold, Early Western Travels. Gregg and Pike. Cleveland: Arthur Clark, 1905.
- Twitchell, Ralph Emerson, History of the Military Occupation of New Mexico. Denver: Smith-Brooks, 1909.
- Twitchell, Ralph Emerson, Leading Facts of New Mexican History. 2 vols. Cedar Rapids: Torch Press, 1911.
- Vestal, Stanley, Old Santa Fe Trail. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1939.
- Webb, James Josiah, Adventures in the Santa Fe Trade. Vol. 1 Southwest Historical Series. Glendale: Arthur Clark, 1931.

