

Vermilion



Idwal Jones

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The Splendid Shilling
Steel Chips
China Boy and Other Tales
Whistlers Van
Black Bayou
The Vineyard
High Bonnet
Vermilion

CONTRIBUTIONS

In *Pacific Coast Ranges—Farm, Rock and Vine Folk*
In *The Range of Light—The Sierra-Mother Lode Folk*

Vermilion

IDWAL
JONES

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Part One

YOUNG PABLO

Above the crying of the gulls the mate's whistle blew out sharply. Pablo Cope, laying down his quill, stalked over to the porthole of his cabin and looked out. He saw land through the break in the morning haze, green land beyond the tumbling of the white-capped water, and the sight of it, and the exultation, brought a cry to his throat. How bright and cheery it was, how blue the April sky, how vividly green the flat and twisted cypress trees above the creaming of the surf. It was home again, and he had been away from home for four years, when he had shipped aboard the old *Mizpah* as apprentice. He was returning at eighteen, an officer. He was also the supercargo. After the mists of the North and the empty and tumultuous world of ocean between these cypress trees and the China coast, the vista was a gladness and a welcome.

Again the whistle ripped out, this time with a snarl. Pablo, looking far down the coast, toward Monterey, already saw himself galloping out for the ranch of Alamos, laden with gifts for Ynes, his Aunt Paz, and Dona Ana, his grandmother. Alamos was too remote to be espied, and Monterey, the one customs port in all this region, was at least ten miles distant in a patch of haze.

A whiff of harsh tobacco smoke drifted into the cabin, and he turned. A stout Aleut was waiting in the doorway, a pipe of carved walrus-bone in his teeth.

“You've got that cargo on deck yet, Kiril?”

“All ready,” said the Aleut, flicking his thumb upward. His flat Mongol face, dark and impassive as a stone mask, almost betrayed a flicker of a smile. “Mr. Wycott, he blowing for you.”

Pablo laughed, and closing the porthole, for the waves were spraying into the cabin, gave a nod landward, and spoke in a mixture of Spanish and Russian, the speech of the otter hunters.

“You see those trees yonder? They're on the edge of my home fields. And Mr. Wycott can blow himself black in the face! I am home now! My voyage is over.”

He clapped a rum bottle on the desk. The Aleut drank off a tumblerful neat.

The door was closed, and they spoke quietly in the jargon that none on board knew but themselves. The days of the otter chase were nearly over, and age was creeping upon the Aleut, the cleverest of the spearsmen who, in their bidarkas, the slim, leathern canoes, had worked or else raided all the otteries on the long coast between Alaska and the lower tip of California. But he was a living part of the *Mizpah*, its eyes at night, the schemer who could outwit the government sloops on watch at the river-mouths and harbors against illicit hunters and runners of contraband. When the Aleut chose, he understood no order unless it were interpreted for him by Pablo, who knew as many tongues and ports as himself; all of which enraged Mr. Wycott, who was lost when he trod ashore anywhere except in New England.

The sailors of the *Mizpah*, mostly a reprobate gang brought up in whalers, had less than their full complement of eyes and fingers, but were lusty, stouthearted, and as handy in a fight with the sloop-men as at reefing canvas in a gale. For the Aleut, who had second sight and could whistle up a wind, they had the regard due a sorcerer, and also a respect for his knife, whose thrusts no one cared to sample.

“And our China goods,” said Pablo, “they are safe?”

The *Mizpah*, unknown to anyone else on board, had obligingly carried a hundred jars across the Pacific for them, and after nightfall they were to draw dividends on their private venture into the mercury trade.

“All safe. They are under the tarpaulin aft in the hold.”

“Good,” Pablo said. “They will be easy to take out. That will be nine o’clock, I think—if this breeze holds.”

The Aleut went out, and Pablo resumed his work of entering figures in the ledger. This was a dummy ledger to be scrutinized by the customs officers at Monterey. The real ledgers Captain Franchet, who was now reporting to the owners, had taken ashore under his cape the day before when the *Mizpah* reached Yerba Buena, as San Francisco was still named on the charts. It was a port of call, but not a port of entry, and the *Mizpah* was going down to Monterey to enter her goods at the excise office, a formality required of all ships before they could debark anything in the bay of San Francisco.

The vessel had come through handsomely on this voyage. It was a voyage that had spelled a turn in the fortunes of Pablo also, for the old supercargo had left at Shanghai to turn factor on his own account, and Pablo had been given the post. Here, at this beach, a good part of the cargo was to be hidden behind rocks, so that nothing dutiable need be declared save five hundred salted hides, and half as many bags of salt picked up at Montara.

Such was the school young Cope had been reared in, the old *Mizpah*: a wandering Yankee merchant in the fur and general cargo trade, a rough school that had exacted much, but that had given him something in return—seamanship, a gymnast’s skill on the high ropes, a feeling for the complex and romantic ways of barter, a disregard for comfort, a virtuosity in wares, and that shrewdness a man gets only by matching wits with officials and hucksters in half the port towns of the Pacific.

Just as Pablo was wiping his quill, the door flew open, impelled by a most violent kick. Mr. Wycott blew in like a hurricane, jaw set in rage, eyes harder than spikes.

“You disregarded my call! Didn’t you hear the whistle?”

Pablo slid off his stool. “I heard it. But I’m not to be whistled for, Mr. Wycott. I’m supercargo here, Mr. Wycott, and an officer myself.”

“And the cock of the walk, eh? I’ll have no clerk putting on airs on my ship.”

Pablo, somewhat of a hothead, being as much Spanish as Cornish, had an impulse to leap upon the mate and trounce him soundly to wipe off many old scores; many a kick and buffeting he had got since he first shipped aboard the *Mizpah*. Between the two of them was an old enmity that since he became an officer had been only smouldering, but now could burst into open flame. But he was also as much long-headed Cornish as Spanish, and foresight was apt to overrule his impulses.

“There was much I had to do, Mr. Wycott,” he said. “But I’m ready now to put that cargo ashore.”

“Very good, sir,” snapped the mate. “Take it. You should have been ready earlier. We have been delayed long enough.”

Mr. Wycott bowed, opened the door, straightened up after filling his chest deeply and went on deck, Pablo following, both watched by the Aleut, who had remained behind the ladder. The Aleut trusted not the sea nor the land, nor anything upon them save his arm and Pablo. The youth and the mate stood at the rail, looking inland at the cypresses, the *Mizpah* lifting and falling with the sea, a plane of blue that seesawed between the horizon and the white beach. No other hull was visible. On the deck was piled the cargo for landing, and more goods were coming up from the hold, with a screaming of block-and-tackle, and the chanting of the men at the ropes:

Oh, they call me Hanging Johnny!
Hanging, boys, hanging!

A limping sailor, with face of parchment and a bandaged throat, croaked the solo. His companions howled out the response in every accent heard on the Pacific. Bluenoses, Canucks, Aleuts, bullies from the China ports, and hard cases from Callao and the whaling trade, their voices keyed to ride the storm, blended in the warm spring air with a sound most tuneable. But Pablo was gazing ashore at the foot of a rock beyond the cypresses.

Kiril seized the guide rope and swung the rising load to the side, to whirr down into a boat. He dropped after it with Pablo, and was rowed beachward.

A good thing that fight had not come off, or he could not have left the ship at all, and Fray Pio, hiding there in the chaparral, would have had his waiting for naught. The lay brother had been informed about those jars.

Kiril handled the tiller, the wind on his face, dreaming of the fortune ahead of him, a stone house in his native island, a pony and cart, barrels of rum, and a wife: the reward of a violent lifetime at sea. He had come within grasp of it before, he, Kiril, who had once owned a warehouse full of furs that would have brought him twenty thousand pounds in Canton, where otter fur, flecked with white, was so highly esteemed by the mandarins. But no mandarin loved fur as much as Kiril loved gambling and drink.

The boat slid from one slanting cliff of sea to another in the swell, the oarsmen calculating their strokes, and it shot in with a large favoring wave. All hands jumped out, and waiting for the next, hauled it in far with a rope.

Further up on the beach, where sand tufted with grass and sapling pines merged with earth, were two high boulders, and between them was the cache. Pablo could have found it in the dark, for he knew this stretch of beach. Captain Franchet, with a sailor's eye for anchorage, had found the spot for himself while prowling about on some business of contraband, and Pablo had overheard him discussing it with the *Mizpah's* owners at Yerba Buena.

"El Punto Moro, it is," said Pablo, as he and the Aleut looked down upon the slope and the boulders. "Fray Pio, if I know him aright, is already watching us. I sent him letters to Chico Aria's tavern in Monterey."

The sailors worked silently, carrying boxes, rolling barrels up planks laid on the sand. The *Mizpah* had brought goods purchased from war-ruined factors in Macao and Shanghai—cashmere shawls, silks and gown patterns, cabinets, hunting watches, work-boxes, lacquer, velveteens, tinware, vases, gunpowder, preserves, beads and gold lace.

"The owners will make a fat profit," said Pablo. "But they'll wait two years to bank it. Our rancheros will pay in hides and tallow from this winter's killings and the next—two slaughterings in all."

The Aleut slanted an admiring eye at him. “And for our yin-chiu—our quicksilver—you get money?”

“Aye—good Mexican doubloons, pirate’s money.”

When the goods were all stowed, the sailors planted branches before the cache and as they dragged a plank broadside over the sand to obliterate their tracks, they lifted their voices in a song, and above the crash of the breakers and the returning drag over the gravel, very thin it sounded, like the cry of seagulls. The Aleut, on a log, smoked his walrus pipe under a peaked Chinese hat, drowsily, for the sun was hot, and after the salt air the odors of earth, of the wine-stemmed manzanita and dusky cypresses, the ferns and tarweed, were strong. Amid this greenness he thought of his own world, the islands where the grey rocks and the dripping sky were one.

“Make those hands wait down there at the boat, behind those rocks,” said Pablo. “We can do without any listeners. And our Fray Pio is as shy as a bird.”

The Aleut bellowed his order, and the sailors retired.

On the scratch of trail through the thicket, Pablo lobbed pine-cones into the shrubbery, and laughed at the earnest pelting-out of rabbits with their white scut of tail. Then he pitched a stone straight and far towards the ridge.

“Aleut, over there is my home. Alamos! That means sparrowhawk. And there was a plenty of them on the ranch. There was a fir tree where they nested, and my father used to send me up to count the eggs in a nest. If it had only a few eggs, that meant a hard season for food—those birds knew what was ahead for their young ones—and he planted more wheat. One field, anyway. It wasn’t much, because the Californios don’t go in much for wheat—just hides and tallow, grease and leather. Foreigners won’t take anything else. Only tallow and hides. Tallow for silk dresses and perfume, hides for watches and prayer-books, and punchbowls and cigars.”

The spearsman knocked out his pipe. “Doubloons,” he said. “We want doubloons for our jars.”

“Aye, so I wrote.”

A rabbit came leaping from the chaparral, from above an arch of young firs lifted a shrike. Pablo turned, hearing also the pattering of hooves. On a small black mule approached a corpulent man, his stirrups scraping the ground.

“Here he is,” said the boy, and the Aleut unshipped his hat and stood with head bowed. “You come back here a way so we shall not be seen.”

“*Ave Maria purissima!*” cried the Aleut, a pious soul, quaking, as well he might.

Corpulent, in a soiled and torn cassock, his broken nose dank with snuff, yellow eyes bulging like a toad’s, with shaven pate and a coarse, brutal mouth, Fray Pio was not a reassuring figure to behold. The squalor of his appearance, and look of a renegade, did not wholly belie his nature. Fray Pio Esmeralda Lauris, unattached lay brother, was one of the familiar characters in the region, but familiarity had not diminished the aura of the sinister about his name. He was a haunter of taverns and low dens rather than of the cloister. A theological student in his youth, his bent for adventure had thrown him into the New World; he became a refiner at the silver mines, a smuggler given to brawls and the knife, and after fleeing Mexico, came up to the backward province of California, where his talents for intrigue made him the scandal of the countryside. Unless it rained, he slept out under a tree, for he willingly tolerated no roof over his head, save a tavern’s. He was greedy, sharp in a deal, but spent all he earned on brandy and cards. Fray Pio had no passion for holidays, nor had he for evil. He was a picaro born; yet to the poor and helpless he displayed often a compassionate heart; and just as the cassock clung still about his frame, so within him lingered tags of grace, which Holy Church rightly considers a merit; and there were many among the Indians who knew of his sins, but bore him a love verging on idolatry.

“*Amar a Dios!*” responded Fray Pio in a tone that would have stunned a whole congregation into deafness. He dismounted, or rather put both feet on the ground from the stirrups, allowing the little mule to wriggle out from beneath him. “Welcome, *amigo* Pablo!”

He spoke a long greeting, and the sonorous, noble voice, the courtesy, the splendor of the stately Castilian periods were such that the apparent squalor fell away like a mirage, and the indestructible dignity of the Spaniard shone forth untarnished. It was in such manner that the *gente de razon* of California addressed each other wherever they met.

“Welcome again, Pablo Cope, son of my best of friends, Don Tomas, of the Rancho Alamos, whose loss I shall always deplore! I remember the day you left. And you return a man grown, *un hombre muy fuerte e valoroso.*”

“*Gracias*, Fray Pio. I am glad my letter was received. How is the family at Alamos?”

“They are well, thanks to Heaven and the blessed saints.”

“And also Doctor Kit?”

“The saints again be praised, he is sound.”

Fray Pio lighted a cigar, both hands cupped to his face as he managed a locofoco. He dashed out the splint, and cast a hooded eye on the Aleut.

“Your *compadre*?”

“My shipmate,” said Pablo. “He owns half the flasks we have down in the hold of the ship.”

“*Bueno*, then I shall talk openly and honestly before him, as is my custom with friends. I got your letter—two letters—at Chico Aria’s, where I had gone to play a little monte, for diversion. And after reading your message, I went over to see Doctor Kit, and he said at once he would buy the hundred jars. Tonight, he will be at Chico’s posada with the money.”

“In Spanish money, your reverence?” asked the Aleut.

“Better than that,” said Fray Pio. “In *Yanqui* dollars! Thirty for each jar. You will understand I got the highest price possible in these unfortunate times—when so little money is about that we have all but lost the use of it. These sea robbers, these pirates will take nothing but goods in trade—hides at two dollars, and tallow at twelve dollars the arroba. It is a rate that is making us as poor as dogs!”

“How do we get the quicksilver to you at Monterey?”

“You land them on the beach, as near as you can to the tavern. A cart in waiting will then haul them up to the yard. And now, with your permission, I will go on to find the carters before they get drunk, for this is a feast day.”

He lifted a huge arm. “*Vaya con Dios!*”

They watched him depart, the little mule trotting sedately, and the Aleut crossed himself.

“That Senor Padre—he is a monk?”

“As to coat, yes,” said Pablo, as they walked down to the sand. He touched the Aleut’s leathern jacket. “This is a spearsman’s coat, and you wear it though you find no more otters to hunt.

“And this Fray Pio is a very good fellow, who knows everything, especially what is inside rocks. Also he can sing like an archangel, and set a guitar on fire with his playing. He was a good friend of my father, who also knew rocks, but liked best the company of fish. Fray Pio would ride to Alamos with the news if a fish worth looking for stuck its head out of the water.

“Now that my father is gone, Fray Pio is eyes and ears for Doctor Kit, who is as honest a soul as lives in all Monterey, and who is my guardian.”

“*Gracias a Dios*,” said the Aleut, wiping his forehead. “One look at this Senor Padre Fray Pio, whom I took for a renegado, and I thought my jars were gone forever.”

“The devil with the *Mizpah!*” thought Pablo, walking silently by the Aleut who pondered his jars and doubloons. “Why should I go back to the *Mizpah*, to ‘Bellerin’ ’ Wycott and the sea?”

Then thought of them fell from his mind, for he inhaled the odors of the land, the blue lupines and the tarweed, and he was back again at Alamos, riding over the chaparral with Ynes, his cousin, whom he had not seen in years. The words of Fray Pio had filled him with longing, and the beach with recollection of his father, who seemed nearer to him on earth than on the sea.

“I’m not going to Yerba Buena, Aleut,” he said. “I’m not shipping out any more,” but the Aleut did not hear.

This cove had been a playground of his when he came here with his father; he digging in the sand or hunting for abalone, while his father, sitting out on a wreck, the complete framework of a vessel, its corroded iron bolts still sticking in it, cast his line out into the creamy surf. It was alluring, the wild and melancholy aspect of this solitude, a fitting haunt for buccaneers. And Alamos was so near. But by nightfall, after he had landed those jars, he would be setting out for it, turning his back on the sea forever. The dreariness of this last voyage from China had wearied him of ship life; he hungered for the land, the cantering after herds on the broad Salinas plains. Then came that chance meeting with the Portuguese clerk at a grog-shop in Canton, who treated him and the Aleut, his bodyguard, to a banquet, and next day took them to the quarter devoted to the lacquer and paint trades. The Street of the Pigment Makers, with its shadowy chambers, ancient furnaces bubbling with varnish, with sulphur and mercury, tended by half-naked, yellow giants, whose forefathers had toiled at the same craft in the days of Marco Polo, touched Pablo with a wonderment that was to remain with him always, like an indelible, glowing stain—like the touch of the fairy godmother in the Spanish fable.

The thin Portuguese, Silveira, who had loomed out of the unknown, and approached their table in the grog-shop, attracted, perhaps, by Pablo’s brass buttons, had been a figure of destiny. He was a clerk at the guild of compradores and metal brokers, and trade being at the time dull, with

exchange unfavorable, had on his own hook taken an option of a scow-load of quicksilver in jars.

“Trade, Senor, is presently dull,” said the clerk. “The market is distressed by armed conflicts. Outgoing ships are few, and what need Europe has for the live silver is supplied by the Spanish mines. But oblige me by coming this way.”

He showed them into a go-down back of the wharves, a cavern of stone, slept in by a horde of beggars, and guarded by watchmen with bamboo poles from which dangled lanterns that glinted like fireflies.

“Over here is a shipment of mercury. A hundred jars. First-chop Szechwan metal, clear as a looking-glass. They are my equity in lieu of salary in arrears. It is metal I recommend, Senor. The grade we sell to the oldest vermilion house in Canton, the firm of Tai-Ling.”

“The price?” asked the Aleut.

His money-belt was leaden-heavy, for he had played with cunning at four of the policed fan-tan dens along the port.

“Fifteen hundred dollars, gold.”

“That is much for a sailor,” said the Aleut in a broken Spanish. “And the officer and I, we must pay for the hauling across the sea.”

“The price is too high for us,” Pablo supported.

The Portuguese turned his head and coughed. The warehouse was damp; all Canton was fog and dampness, and he thought of a certain little olive farm on a sunny hillside above Lisbon. Pablo waited attentively. In the supercargo’s safe, of which he now had the key, he had five hundred gold dollars of his own.

“Twelve hundred, then, Senores?”

“We will pay you that when the jars are put down in the hold of the *Mizpah*,” said Pablo. “At midnight.”

The jars came by lighter, a little before midnight, were stowed below, and paid for. Captain Franchet and Mr. Wycott were ashore, and the crew had been drunk for hours. The Aleut and Pablo, working fast, had built a long, shallow coffer of planks down in the hold, near the step of the mizzenmast, and in this they set the jars, packing them with straw and crumpled sailcloth. The Aleut fastened on a thick plank lid, so that it might have passed for a solid timber, and piled more planks and spars.

“Wycott or pirate, whoever sniffs that out has earned it,” said Pablo, and the *Mizpah* sailed two days later.

No one on the voyage divined the secret of the argosy, which was the sleeping and waking dream of the two now walking on these sands: the Aleut with his heart in the fog-bound wastes of the North, and the youth on the threshold of his home in this coastal range.

The whaleboat took them back to the *Mizpah*, and Pablo was in his cabin when Mr. Wycott entered smartly, without knocking.

“It took you a long time to land that stuff, Supercargo. That dawdling cost us a wind! If it weren’t for that, we’d be on our way down by now!”

Pablo faced him. “It was not favoring us, sir, that wind. It was landward.”

“You have contradicted me,” said the mate with deadly precision. “You are not only insubordinate, but insolent.”

“You asked for it, sir!”

“If this were a frigate, I would give you a taste of the cat, and then a keelhauling.” The mate expanded his chest. “It is not too late to teach you manners. You have long been overdue for a thrashing.”

“I warn you, Mr. Wycott,” said Pablo gently, as if he were reminding a partner of a false play at whist. “I’ve taken many a trouncing from you when I was an apprentice. You never bested any man on board in a fair and square fight. You threw down on him with a belaying-pin or a bucket when his back was turned. That was the way you killed Kanaka Jack at Hilo.

“As sure as I’m an orphan, I’ll maul you, Mr. Wycott, ten times harder than you mauled him. I’ll give you no more quarter than you gave anybody aboard the *Mizpah*. That’s my warning. You’ll never want another. At the end of the fight, Mr. Bellerin’ Wycott, you’ll be sewed up in a hammock, and go splash overside to the sharks.”

Figures were jamming the passage, they stared into the cabin, but they were barred out by the Aleut, whose arm spanned the doorway. Mr. Wycott, face black with rage, turned upon them.

“Get away from there!” he exploded. “Up on deck, every mother’s son of you!”

They withdrew, the Aleut going last, and the mate had already hurled himself upon Pablo, pounding savagely, with the jabs, up-curved and swift, of the adept in-fighter. He drew blood. The blood was copious, and Mr. Wycott’s head, solid as a tackle-block, shooting back fast to a hail of blows, as hard as

any he gave, was suddenly red-drenched. One wall, then the other, as the fighters reeled against it, boomed like a drum to the impact. The cabin was roomy, the largest on the *Mizpah*. They charged, they fought with parryings and feints, the mate hammering, Pablo hammering no less hard, but with more agility and deftness. He was boxing now, on tiptoe, silkily, slipping past each time his foe tried to pound him into the bunk. For Mr. Wycott, who had begun to tire, and was snorting like a porpoise, it was like trying to smash a shadow in flight. He trod on the upset stool, grabbed and swung it for Pablo's head. Pablo's fist, with all the power of his frame behind the impulse, drove like a piston into his foe's midriff. Mr. Wycott shot backward through the doorway, and dropped.

He rose groggily. Pablo poured brandy into a tin cup, and held it out.

"I'm taking no damned civility from you, Supercargo!" said the mate with a maniacal glare. "This means the brig for you at Yerba Buena!"

"I'll fight you again on the way up, Mr. Wycott," said Pablo as the mate, smiling from his teeth, groped up the ladder. "And next time," he added softly, "square things for Kanaka Jack."

All fights aboard the *Mizpah*, on deck or below, invariably wound up with menaces delivered with calm, omens for a final encounter, which was never more lethal than the threats. That was the formality expected of both combatants, as a left-handed courtesy due from one to the other. The matter of Kanaka Jack, one of the *Mizpah's* legends, Pablo had exaggerated a trifle. Kanaka Jack, a giant cook, half insane after a bout with drink, had assailed Mr. Wycott with a large carving knife; he had, moreover, a weak heart, and one swing with the bucket had finished him.

Pablo, washing his hands before setting the cabin to rights, heard Mr. Wycott's voice roar out lustily to the bos'n. On the whole, he mused, it had been a good fight, the right ending for a voyage profitable for the *Mizpah* and for himself.

The *Mizpah* was being readied for the brief run south. She did not weigh anchor until late afternoon, when a light wind sprang up, and she cleared out under the whole mainsail, the mizzen, foresail, and second jib. The wind veered and all hands were spry, whistling for an even happier shift, for it was a two hour run down to Monterey.

Pablo had all the cargo papers in order, his report and a carefully drawn-up letter for the guidance of the mate who would have little to do at Yerba Buena but report at the office, which was full of clerks. Pablo had been paid

his wages there, and his ten days of work since then should square him with the *Mizpah* for the transport of the jars, though they took up but empty space.

He went up on deck. "Are we close enough in?" the mate hailed him.

"Aye, Mr. Wycott. You'll find anchorage right here at seven fathoms."

Pablo looked joyfully at the shore with its scattering of white houses roofed with tile, the Mission, the Presidio with its obsolete cannon and adobe walls, the Government buildings squat by the water, and the flags blowing straight out in the wind. He looked through his glass. A good thing the *Mizpah* was where she lay, for between her and the customs-house twenty ships, at least, were at anchor. There were the *Paramore*, the *Tasso*, some Peruvian brigs, a Boston trader, and a pair of American gunboats; all trimmed, all hung with bunting. Not a very close watch was being kept at the customs-house; the guard on its landing, back propped against a pile, hat over his face, was either asleep or lifeless.

The breeze was seaward, kicking rollers along to the vessel; a breeze that the old otter-hunters called a "willywaw," and it was hot and dry from the Salinas reaches.

Behind the dunes was a bright show of flags snapping above the booths of sweetmeat sellers and acrobats, and lifts of smoke above the barbecue fires; and on the breeze came scraps of fiddle and, above all sounds, the harsh, clappity shrieks of the ox-cart wheels left ungreased to make the loudest possible holiday din.

Pablo looked again at the anchored vessels, all so decorously trimmed, yards vertical, and the cross broken out.

"The Monterenos are keen on respect to saints, Mr. Wycott," he said, "and the harbor has an etiquette of its own."

"I'll not trick out the old *Mizpah* like a bishop's hearse," snapped the mate. "Damned if I do!"

"We'll be damned if we don't," Pablo said quietly. "The harbor people are inclined to be touchy. The port master himself will be out, to thwack us with an oar and teach us better manners."

"What we'll do is give him a hosing with bilge-water! I've met that kind of gentry before, and that's the way to handle them."

The mate gave Pablo a hard grin, as if to remind him that he gave not a hoot for any Montereno, on board or on land. Pablo smiled back, but more

amicably, not looking for a brawl, but not wanting to see any harbormen prowling about the ship, either. The sooner everyone cleared out, the better.

“As you say, sir. But these people, if they get huffed, can show their displeasure in many little ways. There are many ships ahead of us for clearance, and we may have to wait a week, two weeks, a month. I fancy the owners will not like that at all.”

Nor would they, and Captain Franchet himself, though gentlemanly when things were smooth, was hell in boots when crossed. Also, the *Mizpah* was two months late, a lot of explaining would have to be done—and Mr. Wycott, the best of navigators, was hankering for a brig of his own.

He swore heartily, turned his heel on Pablo, bellowed an order and the hands went aloft. The yards were struck prettily, Yankee and Mexican flags came out in a smash of color, and over all fluttered the ensign of Christendom.

“That’s a fine dress, and a piling up of grace,” said the mate, very well pleased at the effect, for the *Mizpah* out-blazed everything in the harbor. “We should clear out in two days for this.”

A round of Chile brandy was dished out to the men, who cheered for the holiday. The officers went ashore, then at six o’clock all hands except Kiril, two other Aleuts and the cook. Pablo watched on deck, listening to the creaking of the timbers as the *Mizpah* rocked in the heaving, glassy swell, the water sluicing from the kelp and barnacles on her grey hulk. When the sun began to spill red on the horizon, the Aleuts brought up the jars and stowed them in the dinghy. No one was about, and the cook was snoring. Dusk fell with a prinking of lantern-lights over the water, and the dinghy crept out, sculled, and drifting as noiselessly as a barrel. A mariner may quit the sea without regret, but from the ship that has been long his home in halcyon weather and foul he does not part without a twinge of sorrow; but Pablo, being young, and less a mariner than a landsman who had swallowed only half a pannikin of salt water, had taken up the profession and cast it aside, and his joy was unclouded.

The jars were his fortune. He could now buy cattle, and set up for a ranchero on the half league his father had bequeathed him. A comfortable way off, he hoped, from his grandmother, Dona Ana, and his aunt, though he was fond of Alamos and fonder yet of Ynes.

“Head out for those trees over there,” he said, pointing; and in a few more strokes a long comber rolled the dinghy up the sand. “This must be Fray Pio’s man coming to us.”

An ox-cart guided by an Indian creaked down towards them. The jars were transferred to it, resting on a mat of seaweed. Pablo struck hands with the rowers, bade them farewell, and with the Aleut walked behind the load to Chico Aria's posada.

In the stable yard Fray Pio, a silhouette in the fog, was awaiting them with a dark lantern. The cart was backed into the shed, and there unloaded, the lay brother himself lifting, with a grunt, every third jar, as if to try it for honest weight; and after all the jars had been toted into the harness-room, the doorway was stopped with hides and planks.

“And now, senores, after this valorous task, come in with me, I beg of you,” whispered Fray Pio. “Doctor Kit is already here at dinner. Seldom does he leave the Presidio on the eve of a fiesta, when he dines with His Excellency, his staff and the ladies. But knowing you would be here, he came straight over on horseback, with the speed of an arrow!”

That was just Fray Pio talking in the role of conspirator, Pablo knew. The surgeon cared not a fig for Presidio etiquette; he preferred to dine at Aria’s, instead of with a pompous martinet, and the apothecary who, though failing and half mad, was still by title the Presidio surgeon. Doctor Kit kept a room in the posada, anyway, for he had more clients in the town than at the post. Chico Aria’s, though it was looked upon with disesteem by the most conservative, was the oldest and the most comfortable of the inns, and was esteemed by the shipmasters, naval officers, factors in the Chile trade, and rich landowners from the South. Here were discussed at night such matters of intrigue as trade and politics, over wine that tasted of grape and not tarred pigskin. Citizens of rectitude found excuse to meet there by dark. The walls were of thick adobe, and the doors almost as thick. The tobacco and spirits were of that unaccountable quality so frequent in wares that came in over the surf; for Chico Aria knew even better than the excisemen the vagaries of the tide, and was, moreover, own cousin to the Alcalde.

Fray Pio led the way with a scratch of light. The yard was strewn with debris, driftwood, and ribs of whales.

They walked through the kitchen. Smoke rolled from the beef dripping on a spit turned by an Indian, and as much smoke lifted from the tallow lights on the table, around which sat ordinary folk of the town—carters, workmen, sailors, small rancheros, and travelers who had come for tomorrow’s festivities and the racing at the Presidio.

“You will sit there,” said Fray Pio to the Aleut. “You will have music when the guitarists come in. And after dinner we will call for you.”

The Aleut wedged himself in between two stout carters, got his elbows free, and drove his fork into a haunch of bear meat. Pablo and the lay brother followed the ample Chico who led them to a room off the passage upstairs. A personage in military coat and stock, with a wind-scoured face, lean, hard and aristocratic, rose from his chair. Fray Pio hung back deferentially, and Doctor Kit shook hands with the young supercargo.

“This has been a right prosperous voyage, Pablo, for it has fetched you home.” The Doctor held him at arm’s length, quizzically, his black eyes agallop with amusement as he took in his sea-coloring and gawky length of frame; and well might he be amused, for he had dandled Pablo on his knee a hundred times at Alamos.

“None the worse for having gone a-sailing,” he pursued. “Taller by a foot, and as hard as a ship’s biscuit, and with a calling that, no matter where you’ll find yourself, will never come amiss!”

“And now, sit down! First you’ll have a tot of Medburyport rum to get the taste of salt-horse out of your mouth, and then for some dinner. And you, Fray Pio—be seated.”

The landlord himself brought up meat and garnishings, also a bottle and another pair of candlesticks, holding dips of tallow, half a yard tall.

“A blessing, Fray Pio,” said the Doctor. “And remember these are not excommunication candles, to warn us to repentance before they are burned out. We have a sailor tonight, a hungry sailor. So make a short prayer that will dart to heaven. *Brevis oratio penetrat coelos.*”

Fray Pio bowed his head. It had not the tonsure of the true Friars Minor, nor did he wear the roped girdle, but a belt of oxhide like a vaquero; but he spoke a blessing unpattered, in a voice ringing like a struck gong, yet humble and eloquent. The surgeon brought the knife down on the meat, which fell asunder at all the joints, and Chico Aria poured into the goblets a wine of authority, dark red, old and masculine.

“No, you are not the worse for having gone to sea,” remarked Doctor Kit, though Pablo had uttered no word since the dinner began. “I wanted you to go to sea. No use a lad running wild in the back country, when the right mark is on him. And now you’re back.

“And you’ve learned something on ships. Learned to put up with what can’t be helped; to strike hard when it is a man’s duty to strike, when it would

be wrong to endure nonsense any further. Not to overdo it, of course. There is always a gentleman's way out of a difficulty."

He filled his pipe, the only clay pipe in the region, and putting a match to it, looked through the window, and nodded at a light in the harbor. This was the room he always dined in at Chico Aria's, and no other window in the posada gave out over the harbor. The port had no medical officer; pratique, or health papers, troubled no one, for none was required at Monterey, where so much of the life for decades had centered at the military post, whose eyes were turned inland, to the Camino Real, the great trading path over which life flowed to and from the missions in the North and South. Christopher Muggah, ex-naval surgeon, looked oftener, save the wharf clerks, at the merchantmen and gunboats with a longing if sometimes absent gaze.

He had served under Admiral Cochrane, when that Scottish franc-sabreur, aiding the colonists of Brazil, Chile and Peru, helped them shatter forever the tyranny of the Spaniards. A Scot, himself, and a rebel born, he settled down to a practice in Lima, but disillusion had fallen upon the new republics which, prostrate under the excesses of the liberals, could only sigh for the days of Spanish misrule, so much happier in comparison; and Doctor Muggah, with a game foot, fled Peru with his closest friend, Thomas Cope, engineer, whose quicksilver mine the revolutionists had grabbed as booty. To Chile they went again, then to Mexico, and lastly to California, where Kit Muggah, sawbones at Monterey, was still a rebel with a limp, and still gazed over the sea he had roamed with Cochrane, the destroyer of tyrants and corsairs.

Doctor Kit listened to the voices of departing guests in the yard, and dropped his voice.

"You'll be going to Alamos, naturally. But first there's that quicksilver. You must have it turned into money for yourself and your Eskimo shipmate, and it'll be three thousand dollars to divide between you. Get that Eskimo up here, Fray Pio."

The sandals clapped down the hall, and Doctor Kit listened, the pipe going out in his fist. "Those are the first jars to come here in an otter's age, and we shall send them to friends in Mexico who have need of it in their gold mills. Hark you, Pablo, what you brought from China was a gift of which we all have great need.

"The Spanish Crown forbade the Mexicans to refine quicksilver, though they mined it; and they forbade them to make wine, though they grew the grape. The Padre Hidalgo defied the Crown and its Viceroy, and for that temerity he paid with his life. The wrong man was hanged."

Fray Pio returned, showing in the Aleut.

“Bring me that case,” said the Doctor.

It was brought to him, and pouring out the gold coins, he made two equal heaps. He swept one heap back into the leathern case, and gave it to Pablo. The other he pushed over to the Aleut who stuffed it by handfuls into his money-belt and pockets.

“What you have about your person, my Northern friend,” said the Doctor, “is a parcel of reindeer, a fat harem, and enough blubber for the rest of your life. You had better go home. I want to see you return on the *Mizpah*, then you keep on going north until you stumble over polar bears.

“You go back to the ship tonight. After no more than one drink of rum, and one is enough. I have seen too many old hulks foundered here on a lee shore. They stayed one night too many.”

The spearsman listened impassively, and Doctor Kit filled glasses from a carafe of sherry. “Do I not speak truth, Fray Pio?”

“*Es verdad!*” came the sonorous response. “The mariner afloat is in less peril than on land where evil dogs him at every step.”

“May the Saints, then, guard him against all the powers of darkness,” said Doctor Kit, “and speed him home to his islands!”

The health was drunk. The Aleut, after clasping hands with Pablo in farewell, gave the company a naval salute, and left, Fray Pio also departing before the spearsman was down the stairs. The Doctor snuffed the candles, and resumed his pipe.

“Your first business, I suppose, will be to visit Alamos?”

“Yes, I have to see Ynes, and my relatives. I’ve a notion to set out tonight.”

“So I expected,” mused the Doctor. “You’ll find a saddle-horse ready here for you, and another to haul your dunnage and kumshaws. They’re hitched out under the pepper tree.”

“Good of you,” said Pablo. “And I may be coming back with them tomorrow. That is, if the Alamos folk are set on coming to the fiesta.”

“Have you made up your mind what to do? Turn ranchero—and you can, on a small scale—or go back to sea? I heard from Captain Franchet’s owners that they’ve been highly pleased with you. And that, inside of a year, you can

have either a brig of your own, or else be their top supercargo. Either is good, if you're bent on sea life."

"I'd rather do something else. I wouldn't mind selling hides—my own hides."

"Buy cattle then. Not too many. There's room enough on that half league your father gave you. All *panino*—land you can make pay. Now there's something I want to ask you." The Doctor folded his arms on the table, smoking hard, his eyes scrouged up as he looked at Pablo. "With everything to choose from in China, what possessed you to bring home that mercury?"

Pablo rubbed his chin. Had he done something absurd? What should he have got? Ginger, silk, or lacquer? What fault could the surgeon have found with the contraband in jars?

"Pablo," said the elder, his black eyes once more a-gallop with amusement. "The dead draw the dead, as mercury draws mercury. That's an old miner's saw that cuts deep."

"I've heard my father repeat that," Pablo recalled. "And he had heard it from my grandfather—the Cornish one. My grandfather, too, was touched with mercury. He would talk of nothing but mines of it he had visited in Spain."

"Touched!" The Doctor slapped his knee. "They were more than touched, they were crazy, the both of 'em! But there was none crazier over mercury than Tom Cope!"

He hunted through his shelves. This room at the inn, where he had lived ever since he came to Monterey, was full of shelves cluttered up with rocks, old weapons, curious pieces of wood, shells, Indian skulls and birds' nests, which he had gathered on his rides to patients. He put his finger on a lump of reddish ore.

"That's from Alamos."

Pablo remembered when the two of them, with his father and the majordomo, put in an afternoon at the cave, searching it with lanterns, and his father now and then swinging a pick. It had all been a rather clandestine visit. The majordomo frequently went out to see if strangers were around, attracted by the sound of rock falling.

"It's none too common, cinnabar. But Alamos has a plenty of it. I'd like to see you one day, when things are quieter, get at it properly. You'll have to go to Cornwall first, to get your hand in, and then to Spain to finish up.

“I’ve been keeping an eye on it, as I have on your half league. I wish that red muck were on your side of the line. There are a couple of men who know a little too much about it.”

“Who?”

“We’ll come to that shortly. And you’ll learn more from Martin, the old sergeant. He has eyes in the back of his head.”

“I think I will first get cattle. I took your advice and went to sea, and I brought home enough to buy some stock.”

“Aye, but not too much. The country’s too unsettled. Get enough cattle—couple hundred head—to play with until you get your bearings. You can lose cattle quicker than a mountain. No use cumbering yourself if you’ve got to make that shift overseas we talked about.”

The Doctor began again oracularly. “What’s bred in the bone——”

He was bent that night on discussing the mine, and to Pablo the talk, mixed with textbook jargon—drifts, hanging-wall, andesite and breccia—was familiar. The Copes had been miners since the Age of Bronze, and mercury, like a lodestone, had drawn Thomas Cope from Cornwall to Spain, to the Andes, and then to these Santa Cruz mountains. But in California, vassal to Mexico, mining was an art discouraged, as it had been, with the growing of the olive and the vine, in Mexico when that land was in its long fiefdom to Spain. And Thomas Cope’s charter from the Emperor Iturbide, as captain of mines, meant nothing, for Mexico preferred that California stick to her pursuit of cattle-raising.

“It seems quiet enough here,” said Pablo, after the Doctor had grumbled something about probable upheavals.

“Quiet?” Doctor Kit removed his pipe a moment. “You may find it so. I don’t!”

He cast a glance skyward through the window that was already misting, for the air was nippy.

“A stirrup-cup is indicated,” he said, filling two glasses. “Rum is a shield against the chill vapors of the sea. If we push out right soon, we’ll have the moon for company, and I have quite a way to go, myself. Heel taps!”

It was already after ten. Out into the yard they went. Pablo loaded his pack-horse, mounted the other, and they rode down to the beach. Two horsemen rode past, from the direction of the posada, and it was clear that the

Doctor, who was watching from under his hat-brim, recognized them both, though Pablo was sure only of the stout lay brother.

“My regards to the family, then,” said the doctor, and waved his hat. “*Adios!*”

He loped off, throat muffled in his serape, his pipe trailing sparks like a comet’s tail; and after he was gone into the night, Pablo turned his face to the north. The doctor was headed for a warm debate somewhere, he could never get enough of debates, and he was riding like a campaigner. That pony of his, with the coyote lope, was stretching out lankily as if it had fifty miles to cover before midnight. There must have been turmoil in the region, a battle or two and a handful of skirmishes—bloodless, however, for the Californios, with their bonhomie and tolerance, had a distaste for sanguinary conflict—and the ex-naval surgeon was certain to have been a pivot in the events. To Kit Muggah, air was not more needful than intrigue and politics, and whenever he had settled upon a cause to espouse, he was the most violent of partisans.

Most travelers went by the trail called Camino Real, the highway of the friars. But hunters had their own mesh of paths, winding through the forests and the canyons filled with mesquite and briar. Alamos was at the other side of the tree-clad Loma Prieta, the bulwark to the east. Pablo picked up the trail, and mounted half way up the side. Damp air met his cheek. Beyond was fog, and the trail along the spur was like a scratch of ink. With one horse he could make it, but the other, the ewe-necked pack-horse, had too great a burden, so Pablo fell back into a bit of high valley lower down. It was a jumble of sycamores, and he readied a jutting boulder under which he had often camped with his father and Martin. The cliff of fog was now blocking out the moon. He hobbled the animals, and built a tidy small fire. He had not lost his skill at camping; but he felt aware, as he reclined before the blaze, looking at the heavy green pine cones, the nuts popping like a string of firecrackers, that he was coming back half a stranger. There was not the creak of the *Mizpah*’s timbers, nor the lap-lap of water against the hull. The dark pressed about him, and the dark had a myriad sounds. High up on the spur he heard the swift ambling of a bear; somewhere back of him was a rustling or upheaval, as of some animal burrowing in leaves; and the frogs made the night reel with their choral. The fire was a good companion, and in an hour the voices had the old familiarity he had known in childhood.

Also the night had eyes. Everywhere in the thickets shone eyes, reflecting the blaze, like paired bits of glass. They watched him even as they moved with soft paddings of feet. He thought of the bluff and hairy old majordomo,

Martin Sanchez, that most excellent hunter of elk and bear—and when he got home, he would go hunting again with Martin. And he would go riding with Ynes, who was probably grown up by now; hair piled under her hat—she always wore a hat, in European style—and mounted astride instead of on side-saddle.

That was Thomas Cope's influence. It far overweighed the autocratic Dona Ana's. That Cornishman with his blond moustachios and lean British jaws had suddenly appeared on horseback at Alamos, from Heaven knew where. And seeing Juana, the eldest daughter, in the arbor, he flung the reins on the gate-post, went in and spoke to her. He had just landed in Monterey, he said, and he was exploring these hills. His explorations never led him far from Alamos, and finding Juana as interesting as its rocks, he became a familiar of the Casa. Then he married Juana, her mother objecting strongly, though Englishmen were in favor with the Californios. His wife being troubled with a malady, he carried her off to Santa Barbara, where they lived two years, then they returned to Alamos, where she lasted a year more, when Pablo was born. To the end she wore a camorra, a black silk handkerchief about her head, the sign of a Barbarena, and the one protest she could make, poor thing, against the tyranny of her mother who thought the *abajenas*, the women of Santa Barbara, light and unfilial.

As for Thomas, he was disconsolate. He turned solitary, talking with no one but Martin and Doctor Kit, with whom he hunted often the adjoining hills. He bought the next half-league to Alamos, as was his right, for he had married a Hispano-Californian and become a Catholic. "That son of mine will run cattle on it one day," he would remark. "And I'll see if I can't turn up a few rocks for him to play with."

He cared only to dawdle about and look for odd rocks, such as he had come across in the hill-slope a gunshot away from the Casa. Here was a cave with walls and a muddy floor of a blood-red tint. The Indians, long before the coming of the friars, had come to this dripping cave for their war-paint.

To work about this cave brought back his energy and spirits. With the help of Martin he drained the cave, put in timbers, removed ore, and roasted the pick of it in an improvised clay retort. This was all a secret activity. The two worked like conspirators, sometimes helped by a third, Fray Pio, who had baked the clay for that retort.

How word of it drifted to the Government house, no one ever understood. Later, there were tongues to say that the lay brother had revealed it to the Governor, but this was probably untrue, and most fair-minded men regarded Fray Pio, who found joy only in tasks unlawful, as incapable of a deed so

evil. But one day a deputation came riding up from Monterey, headed by a minor alcalde, who held a writ, which he read aloud. It ordered *el hidalgo distinguido y ranchero*, Tomas Cope, to cease, under pain of jail and fines, from excavating metals, particularly mercury, without full sanction of the Governor.

“What Governor?” asked Cope. “The one to be or the Mexican Governor who is fleeing towards the border?”

“What game is this?” interrupted Martin, his eye roving disdainfully over the file. “Hey? What mockery of the rights of honest men? What has this province come to? May not a caballero dig in his own hillside without being run off by a *ronda de cabrones*—a pack of crop-eared vagrants in jerkin? If it were not for that paper, Senor Alcalde, I would right now pepper the hide of all these leather-breeches and saddlers of others’ horses, and send them briskly on the trot back to their kennels.”

Martin, dandling his rifle, unpacked his heart of barrack oaths and threats, and rose to something adequate in fulmination. It would have blistered the ears of the Monterey jail guards. The Alcalde stammered. Martin Sanchez had no reverence for office-holders, no fear of any creature alive. He was also a hero, with a pension as large as the ex-Comandante’s; for it was Sergeant Sanchez who, with his swivel gun mounted on a cart, beat off the forces of the corsair Bouchard who attacked the Presidio in 1818, and it was Sergeant Sanchez who got all the women and children safely to the missions and the great ranches in these hills.

“I am not Senor, the Major Alcalde, but the Minor,” said the official. “And I cannot but execute the orders of the *ayuntamiento*.”

“Lackeys, all of you! Lackeys and vermin!” roared Martin, taking a step backward to adjust his gun. “Go, before I help you!”

As the locks clicked, Cope, who had listened in apathy to both sides, lifted a hand.

“Enough, Senores! You are here on a matter of duty, and it is not for a citizen to defy an order of the courts. I do not care to be accused of violating the Territorial laws. I shall comply with the order, and dig no more for metals.”

“You will, Senor, appear before the Judge of First Instance, and post another bond of a thousand dollars. In the event of this fourth, and last, forfeit, you will be deported.”

The Alcalde and his escort rode off through the field of blue lupin. Cope walked over to the ochre-red portal of the adit, all but invisible among the trees on the hillside, then stood as if dazed, his head sunken, his arms struck limp. Often enough he had been warned, but he had most venturesomely defied the order never to disturb any vein of mercury in the region of Monterey. Foes—everyone had political foes in California—and Cope's were the sycophants of the Mexican Governor—must have kept watch on him from ambush. Since he was no rancher nor a merchant, he would have to remain idle the rest of his days. Cope had endured many blows of fate without wincing, but this one, after the loss of his Juana, had struck the deepest. It was a blow mortal to his spirit, and in his heart he felt that no longer was the struggle of avail.

“We will go home now, Don Tomas.”

Cope heard nothing, and was as a captain who had lost a battle. Martin profoundly grieved for him. Juana Aguirre, his favorite among the children at Alamos, he had worshipped, and since the first time he met him he had been devoted to Juana's husband, the shy *Ingles*, half invalid and a solitary. How was Don Tomas to live, now that his avocation was gone? Martin blamed himself for this disaster, this visit of the Alcalde. He should have been more vigilant, more wary of spies in the guise of travelers.

Martin smote himself on the head, violently, in chagrin and grief. “Take that, Sergeant! Imbecile! May St. Anthony's fire seize you by the throat! Thou and the Alcalde Eusebio Nunez, who is no worse—and whom may the plague and a thousand devils strike down howling before the next Mass!”

“Come Don Tomas, come!” he said, bringing up the horses. And helping his master into the saddle, he led him at a funereal pace to the residencia. Pablo, playing at darts with the small Indian boys in the yard, was always to remember the arrival of the two, his father apathetic and pale; the women hurrying out, and then Martin riding like mad to summon Doctor Kit.

“They've euchered me, Pablo!” his father used to say after that, talking with him in English. “They'll rue it yet, they'll rue it! But one of these years you'll have a mine there—and a damned good one!”

Tomas never himself took his son to the mine again, but sent him to hunt for bits of rock, had him learn their names, copy maps and diagrams from old textbooks of geology, and listen by the hour to tales of mines in Cornwall and Peru.

Those were years troublesome in the countryside. The Californios fought internecine wars, oratorical, but none the less deafening. At times they joined

forces to hurl some Governor back into Mexico; then more rebellions sprang up at home, like winter storms. Young men were carried to remote battlefields, which were usually bloodless; armed groups levied on the herds of cattle and mustangs. Mexican convicts raided the undefended ranches to seize their choice of what was left.

Alamos, no less hospitable than it had ever been to all travelers found worthy, was inviolate, for its majordomo had eyes in his head, and his teeth were not cut yesterday. Convicts there were who stayed the night, or a brace of nights. But these, for all their lawbreaking, were old soldiers who had fought for the California Republic of brief but glorious life, and Martin embraced them on parting as men of unhappy fortune but of good will. Fray Pio, a recidivist from Mexico who had fought for no one but himself, he forgave since his manners were so courtly, and his Spanish so impressive, melodious and resonant that Martin would stand for hours in the garden, listening to him hold converse on life and philosophy and metals with Don Tomas.



Pablo sat listening to the booming of the frogs down the creek. He was lonelier than he ever had been at sea, and the feeling of isolation, as if he were the sole being on the mountainside, overpowered him. Wind poured through the tall branches of the sycamores and pines, and he tried to liken the sound to the thrumming of the rigging and yards atop the *Mizpah*. The frogs fell mute for a space, and somewhere an owl hooted, as if a wakeful influence were adrift. The eyes about him went out, and small things retreated in the dark.

“Who is it?” he called.

“*Amar a Dios!*” came the voice of an Indian, who stood in the thicket and saluted. This was no humble Mission neophyte but a woods Indian with a powder-horn at his belt. “A senior asks you to visit him at his camp.” He pointed through the trees. “It is there, up the creek.”

Pablo followed his guide a hundred yards through rocks and undergrowth, and they came to an islet of light in the fog. There a hunter in antelope jacket stood waiting.

“*Valeador!*” said he, with grandiloquence. He was roughly garbed, and his jaw was a velvety-black. His glance was lively and challenging. It being the style of the hidalgos to salute each other as “Valiant,” the courtesy was

not lost on Pablo. "I wished to welcome you at my own camp fire, for we are brothers trapped by the fog, and I have a servant. And you have done me the honor to come!"

"Fulgencio! Fetch the brandy and cigars. And bring up that saddle for a back-rest."

The Indian waited upon them, the two wrapped loosely in cloaks, toasting before a good blaze, their tobacco burning well, and the brandy, in silver cups, smooth and heady. They had exchanged no names. Pablo was less sure his host was a hunter merely. He had a servant as unobtrusive as a ghost, the brandy was from no still in the region; his hat was of vicuna felt, the emerald on its band worth twenty horses. A rancher, perhaps, Pablo thought at first; but no, he had small, cared-for hands, and a watchful, pensive expression, though his speech was firm and hearty. He was amused at Pablo's appearance, the sea garb of glazed hat, muffler and brass buttons.

"You have wasted no time in leaving the ship for your destination. A *senorita*, no doubt."

"Precisely, *Senor*, and my destination is also my home—beyond here, in the hills. After four years I have said goodbye to the sea."

He had not said very much, but enough for the stranger, listening thoughtfully to his speech, to gather that he was a Californio born, for all his seafaring aspect, and that he was a *huevo*—an egg, as the natives termed those of light eyes, tint and hair.

"I am returning to Alamos," he wound up, and the other, if not startled, withdrew his cigarette, and fixed him with a steady gaze.

"That's an old Crown grant in the Aguirre family," the stranger came in. He looked at the long range of Pablo who was sprawled before the fire, and nodded. "You are the son of Don Tomas."

"But you are not from this part of California?" asked Pablo in surprise.

"From the San Diego country, but I know the ranchers of the North. And seven years ago I knew your father at Sonoma, the winter of the plague. I was on the staff of the Comandante of the Northern Line. The military post was new. The Indians came in by swarms, hoping for plenty, for corn and supplies were scarce after a very hot autumn and early rains, as heavy as cloudbursts."

The stranger poked the fire, then shook his head. "Why should men swarm together so, as thick as a pile of leaves? There they were, by the thousands, filling the pueblo, the fort, squeezed tightly into their huts and bath-houses. Food grew scantier, and it rained and rained.

“And now, from Fort Ross, came a messenger to the post. What the message was, no one now recalls, nor does it matter. He was a Negro corporal, Miramontes, of the cavalry, and I went out to hunt for him. I found him in a hut, into which he had crawled ill, and then fallen into a stupor. When I lifted the poncho from his face, I saw he was wearing the mask of death.

“In three days”—the stranger waved his arm with the motion of a scythe—“so fell all the Indians that had not fled in terror from the plague. Smallpox, the sister of the black death. And those who fled were too late. They fell on the trails and on the rivers, through the Napa Valley and the Sacramento; they fell by the thousands, as if crushed under an invisible cartwheel.

“We had none skilled in medicine, so we brought up a surgeon from Monterey. And with him came the engineer from Alamos. They had been through plagues before. With the help of vaccine, fire and a squad of drunken soldiers, who breathed through ponchos soaked in vinegar, these two brought the plague to a stop. Most of the white race were spared, like myself, who was long ill, but a few died, and the engineer from Alamos was the last.

“I see him now as clearly as if he were sitting before me.” The stranger lifted an ember to his cigar. “*Un hombre muy bueno*. I am honored to meet his son.”

A peculiar man, Pablo thought. But there was something about him, the poise of that head under the vicuna sombrero, the elegance of that white hand holding a cigar to the lips that compelled his admiration.

“I have delayed. Pardon! Myself, I am Luis Medina, once staff officer of the Provincial Army, later a botanist and person of leisure.”

“Why,” he asked after they shook hands, “why are you returning home at this particular time?”

Pablo was nettled. “Because my ship berthed today. Does a man now have to report on his comings and goings?”

“You have the right spirit,” said Medina calmly. “The Alamos people always knew where they stood. They were for peace, and helped the strongest party. If it is not the strongest today, the party of Annexation, it will be so tomorrow. There is no rapid change without struggle. I wished to know if it was to help one party or the other that you came home.”

“No. I have spoken of parties with no one. Not even Doctor Kit whom I left an hour ago.”

“Then you must know a few things. I go about to see what is to be seen, and I ask questions. I knew when I first saw you that you are not one to hide deep in the rocks like your father. You are a fighter and therefore a partisan, the hunted or the hunter.

“I am an *Independentista*, like Doctor Kit. But we know change must come. The Government in Mexico City we have had twice to fight. It has now turned loose its convicts upon us. And worse than that, its negligent and devious officials. True, we have also a horde of American adventurers. I cannot tell which is the greater evil. The fur-hunters and the land-greedy, the plainsmen in raccoon caps, that squirm down from the Sierra that we thought our Chinese Wall—they are the worst. Perhaps those who come in by sea are less evil.

“But the first two, they are the ones to be watched. And I go about seeing what they are up to. There, Senor Cope, I have taken you into my confidence. You are a Californio, and the son of Alamos, which you are bound to protect.”

Pablo sat up. The ranch was safe in the protection of the old majordomo. Who could be threatening its safety? A group outside, or somebody nearer? Alamos had its gathering once a week, attended by neighbors and relatives, and it was called, lightly, the Cabinet. Who else, whose presence had led Medina and Doctor Kit to throw out these oblique hints, had joined it lately? Pablo was invaded by feelings of mistrust. He could think of no one even vaguely reprehensible among his old acquaintances. None, except that plump magpie of a lay brother—but Fray Pio was Fray Pio, a pet of his father’s, and tolerated by the women, was sure always of a place at the table, and a cot at night in the orchard or the tannery.

Smiling gravely, Medina filled the brandy cups. “I cannot tell you much more, Senor Cope, son of my friend. I have not been to Alamos for as many months as you have been absent years. If we may not see at a far distance, we may now and then hear a word.

“But enough of the complaints! Let us have a little music. Fulgencio! Bring that guitar here, and we shall sing a ballad for the young hidalgo of Alamos that is both touching and admirable. A song for his homecoming!”

The Indian came forward, raking the strings of a guitar. The voices of the three rang out with feeling.

*Palomita, vele el campo,
Y dile a los tiradores
Que no te tiren, porqu'eres
La duena de mis amores.*

The old Spanish song with its heartbreak died out, the night filled again with the booming of the frogs, and Medina, as Pablo put forth his hand, rose.

“Senor Cope, I am grateful for the joy of this encounter. Chance ere long will again throw us together. You are home. ‘Beware,’ the saying goes, ‘beware the returning arrow.’ If you should need help, send word to me through Doctor Kit. *Vaya usted con Dios!*”

Pablo groped back through the trees, so drowsy that he could barely keep himself upright, but still wondering what Medina meant by those veiled questions, the proffer of help, and the returning arrow. He was asleep even before he sank to the ground by the embers.

The sun was already high when Pablo, after that night with Medina, the rum, and the turmoil of his thoughts, gained the rim of the hill with his mount and pack-horse. He paused to fill his lungs. Below was a world of oak and fir, the trail like a ball of twine that unwound to play out at the edge of the sea. In this scamper upland he had once or twice lost the path, which seemed to have crawled away into the underbrush. Martin should send out swampers to slash and bring it back into light, or else travelers to Alamos might go astray.

He climbed on, riding through grass and lupins, this elevated small valley being lush in spring herbage. He passed his father's mine at the foot of a hill; the scar, with cinnabar mud before it like a patch of red carpet, was overgrown with briars. A quarter mile beyond was the Casa Alamos. He shouted and brought down his quirt. Home again! Before him was the Casa with its red-tiled roof, balcony, and the fortress-like walls of the yard, their white stucco looking blue-washed in the shadow of the sycamores. As he pelted nearer, a dog barked. Then a hundred dogs poured out of the yard and made straight for him, howling, splitting their throats in fury. The clamor fell musically on his ears.

He rose in his stirrups and sang out names, lovely names of dogs. "Perrogordo! Ojo Grande! Ilario! Florin! Negus! Bocanegra! Chiquito!"

Older dogs at the edge of the mob fought through and clamored joyously. Ilario whined. Ilario had been his pet. The din abated, then redoubled in a glad tumult, the pack lifting and falling, muzzles to heaven, baying welcome, jubilation welling from the throats of the beasts, half of whom had been whelped since he left Alamos. With this howling escort about him he clattered into the yard. Martin, his chin all lather, was sitting on a log whilst one Indian reaped his chin, and a squaw braided his hair in shoulder-long tails. Other squaws sat about in the yard, pounding wheat or corn in their stone metates, or gossiping over the washtubs. A squaw at the oven, her face as lined as a peach-stone, the old nurse who had cared for all the children born at Alamos, turned and gave a screech.

"Ave Maria purissima! Don Pablo has come back safe to us!"

"Hey!" Martin, pulling his nose from the clutch of the barber, jumped up, bellowing. "Pablo? And so it is!" He trumpeted through the lather. "Big as his

father before him. God be praised!”

He stumped over bowleggedly, spurs catching in the tarpaulin barber-cloth, threw his arms about Pablo, who had dismounted, and hugged the breath out of him.

“Son Pablo,” he said, pressing his lathered cheek against Pablo’s, then holding him at arm’s length to view him with affection and pride, “if only your father were here now! But we are here—we and Martin Sanchez, myself, who am most particularly glad!”

“You are no gladder than I am, Martin, at seeing you.”

“Come! You come right in, and we shall have a cup of wine!” Martin wiped his face with the tarpaulin and flung it at the log. “Claro! Carry all Don Pablo’s things into his room, and turn the horses into the corral. Angela! The wine! Quick!”

He led Pablo inside, and wrung his hand joyfully. “It was four years since you went to sea, friend Pablo—and it seemed to me like forty. But now that you are back, where you belong, I am back again as if it were yesterday!”

Angela, the hair-braider, brought in a platter of tortillas hot from the oven, a demijohn of claret cold from the well, and set them on the table. The two men clinked mugs.

“And where is everybody else, Martin?”

“Gone to the port. All but Dona Ana, who is deep in her siesta. You want to come to the fiesta? Good! We will go together, and come back tonight. I was being shaved to look presentable enough for church. I do not want to go to Mass. Nobody goes to it but women, priests and infants. We are not any of the three! Ha, ha!”

Pablo’s room was unchanged: a cell under a roof of tiles, with his books, old toys, his Spanish clothes, a painting of his mother—one of the five that the inconsolable Don Tomas had had made after her passing—and the cabinet of rocks, all neatly ground square and labelled, that he had gathered on trips with his father. He scrubbed himself at the pail a servant brought in, changed into fresh clothes and put on a frilled shirt.

“Dona Ana has just awakened,” said Martin, from the doorway, “and will receive you in a half hour.”

“Asleep, was she? A siesta so early?”

“She sleeps most of the time, you understand? She is old, older than I. When you come out, chocolate will be ready. And the horses will be

saddled.”

“Good!”

Pablo gathered up the presents—a high, tortoise-shell comb, a string of beads, a Persian shawl—and set out for the wing where his grandmother lived. Her chamber was at the end of a long corridor, set out with chairs, for it was also the anteroom where visitors sat to await her pleasure. This corridor had been open to the garden once, or rather to a patio, for the space was bare until his father came to Alamos, turned it into a green close with trees and grass, and with the help of the Indians gave the corridor a solid outside wall, and arched the ceiling. Don Tomas had a feeling for masonry and the dignity of the vaulted roof, and it was akin to his feeling for the solidity and quiet of mines, in which he had been brought up. To build this corridor and make that garden were deeds for which Dona Ana forgave him almost everything, except marrying her favorite daughter, Juana.

Pablo thought it gloomy, and it oppressed his spirits as he sat waiting. It was indeed gloomy, save for the light from one narrow window looking into the garden, and the entrance to the chamber, with its tall and broad door of leather, carmine, studded with brass nails the size of a fist; and the masonry framing it, blocks of cinnabar, the red ore from the abortive mine. The portraits, also in their carved rectangles of gilt, were fittingly gloomy, even those of the two or three Copes, blue-eyed and Cornish, with jaws like granite. The rest were Aguirres, and there was General Carlos Aguirre, of course, whose image, with side-beards, arrogant glare, and military stock, had terrified Pablo as a child.

“That’s your grandfather, lad, one of ’em,” his father used to say. “A high-roller, old Carlos was, a conquistador, and not halfway, either. He grabbed all there was to be grabbed. The grabbing was good here when the padres got chased out, and he got a handsome slice for himself. But even that wasn’t enough. He wanted to be the high military Governor, and rowed about it with the Emperor Iturbide, something quite fancy in the caudillo way himself, and the upshot of it was that a musket got fired into a coach, and General Carlos fell, and with him most of Alamos. There was the vein in him, all right. He had ambition, will, hunger for power—and the dash of vanity that starts all those things working in a man.”

Pablo was in his nightgown, a child of six on his way to bed, one hand in his father’s, the other holding a candle as he looked up solemnly at the awesome portrait, understanding only half of what his father was saying, though he was always to remember it. “That vein runs all through the family. What a man gives up is often better for him in the long run than what he

gains. When you get into mining, as I hope you will, you will learn that one way to beat a hard vein is to turn away from it.”

The door of the chamber creaked, and the Indian servant beckoned him in. Dona Ana was sitting up in bed, looking aged, but she had always been aged. Though nearly blind, her gaze was through the window into the garden with its two date palms and the ruined adobe chapel beyond. Her face was almost translucent, her hands were trembling, but her voice was firm.

“Who is it? Felipe? Don Tomas? Speak up!”

“Pablo, your grandson,” said the boy. “I have come back from the sea.”

“Why did you come back from the sea?” she asked. “What is there here for you? You went away in defiance of my wishes, and the advice of the Padre Ministro, to be a sailor. You would listen only to that doctor friend of your father’s. Well, you are here now. You have become wiser, I hope. Did you have a good voyage?”

“I had a very safe homecoming, Grandmother,” said Pablo. “The saints were with us. I was in China. And I have brought you some little gifts.”

She fingered the shawl, then spread it over her lap. “*Gracias!* Warmth is always a comfort. The shawl I now have, your father gave to me. He was always courteous. Stand there against the window, so I can see you. There! Yes, you are tall, and large. You are Don Pablo now, I suppose.

“Amara! Give Don Pablo a glass of wine. Or is there anything like wine left in this house? I never saw such a tribe of lazybones! Quick! Wine for Don Pablo.”

The servant who had leaped to the sideboard at her first sentence brought a glassful to Pablo almost before the last sentence was rapped out. Pablo bowed to the invalid, lifted his glass, called upon the saints to speed her return to health, and drank.

“Where is everybody around here?” she asked sharply. “To the fiesta, you say?” She half rose from her pillow. “Then you should have told me there was a fiesta, for how else would I know what was going on? Is there to be a ball at the Presidio? I danced there at a ball with the Governor and the Comandante and the Russian envoy from Sitka when I was a bride of fifteen, and it was my first winter here.” She sank back again. “Amara, never mind my ball dress, do you hear? Go out and tell the gentlemen in the garden not to wait for me. Who is that playing on the viol? Tell him, *por cortesia*, to stop, for I have need of sleep.”

The servant drew the curtains, and Pablo tiptoed out. He was relieved to be out in the yard, away from that mad woman, where he could breathe. Was it a black augury, that reception? He was sorry he had been in such haste to reach home—and this *was* home, after all—when he could have stayed on at Monterey and met Ynes and his aunt and seen a little more of Doctor Kit, who could have told him what to expect.

“Well, here you are,” said Martin. “Let us be off.”

They mounted their horses and galloped down the wagon-trail, Martin first on his mustang, a lively cream-nose. The majordomo, in vicuna hat and a flowing cloak, a cigar between his teeth, rode gravely, and his small mustang capered in ludicrously sportive little bounds like a kitten. And behind came the dogs, all in a string, a half mile of dogs, tongues out, keeping up a steady pace.

Martin waited until he and Pablo were riding abreast, then turned, looking at him from under bushy grey eyebrows.

“God’s wounds and the fifty saints, my young friend!—but you were white when you came out of the house. As white as those bones yonder.” He pointed to the slaughtering-field, with its brown earth and piles of bleached cattle skulls, picked clean and as white after the rains as sea conches, but still hovered over by the vulture and the hawk. “Your grandmother, you have found so much changed?”

“She has failed greatly. I do not like it.”

“Nor do I, Don Pablito! I lie awake thinking of it. Ah, fortunate it is that you are returned! And fortunate it is for Alamos that I should have come here to watch over its fortunes.” Martin gave his chest a valiant thump. “This hacienda, and its women, its Indians and its cattle I have tended as if they were my own children. Look at the horses on that slope. We now have two hundred. We should have more cattle, yes. But our vaqueros, they are all good men; not one that is slothful, intemperate, or given to wenching. I hold them to their tasks with discipline. To them I am as a General!”

Pablo suppressed his laughter. Martin, with his tremendous voice, his ferocious looks and tattooed hand flourishing a quirt as if it were a sword, was as trustful as an infant. His soldiering days over, he had been a *sereno* or watchman at the customs-house; with horn-lantern and staff, a hero fallen on lean days, and given to drinking much at the *tienda* with his old cronies of the musket. It was Don Tomas who brought him to Alamos, chiefly because the vaqueros were so wild, and installed him with the title of majordomo. They were still wild, still great drinkers and fighters, but a little more respectful

about the Casa. And if Martin was no cattleman, though a good manager in the slaughtering field, where the hides were taken and the tallow boiled down and poured into leathern botas, he did very well in his post, under the eye of Don Tomas, whom he worshipped, and then of Dona Ana whom he feared, as he did all women.

It was a little too much; Pablo sprang forward at a gallop, lashed his horse and shouted, to conceal his mirth. What was there to managing a hacienda? Far easier it was than to navigate a ship. Herds could no more cease from doubling, or even tripling, every two years than grass could refrain from springing up in these high pastures, or the rain from falling. And no peril had faced Alamos, for the unruly stray Indians who picked up a cow or horse here and there, or a wretched pair of convicts looking for a night's shelter, would have quailed at sight of Martin and his vaqueros. At the worst, they could not have been a patch on the crew of the *Mizpah*.

The dogs went crying after a coyote in the chaparral, and Pablo joined the chase. It came over him that he was riding with his old form and airiness. The knack had returned. He had lost nothing in his years at sea. A horse was thundering up. It was Martin, fleet on his mustang, his cloak streaming behind like a cloud, and his great hand out, holding the quirt. They rode side by side a moment, and Pablo felt the silver butt of the quirt against his arm. It was a restraint, and seeing the gravity on Martin's face, he slackened pace.

“And now, Don Pablito, I have given you an account of my stewardship.”

“You have indeed, Martin. And one of these days, when I put cattle on my own league yonder, I want you to oversee that, if I should go wandering.”

“Gladly!” said the majordomo, still holding the butt on Pablo's arm. “And now, my young friend, I must talk to you as would a father. You are also of the household of Alamos, and part owner by virtue of Don Tomas' legacy. Listen, then. We have an enemy. A neighbor, who is encroaching on Alamos. Three years ago, when you were away, he bought part of the Jiminez leagues adjoining. Dona Ana favors him, and listens to his counsel. So does your aunt. And he wants to marry Ynes.”

“What!” Pablo wheeled about. “What did you say, Martin? Someone is taking away our Ynes? Who is he?”

“Our neighbor, Felipe Gozlan. Who is, therefore, an enemy of mine. But you keep your head and temper, Pablito. He has not married her yet—nor will he, if you conduct yourself like a gentleman, and not a maniac or a convict. You are well bred enough to know you must smile in the teeth of your enemies, as did Don Tomas.”

“Oh, I shall,” said Pablo. “Tell me more about him. I will behave.”

“Good, that is a promise. But I have told you all I know. You are warned.”

“*Gracias*,” laughed Pablo, and wrung the hand which Martin, his eyes misting with pride, put out. “Who can ask for more than that!”

They galloped on, Pablo first, to lead being an adventure for the road was newly made, and snaking up and down wooded hills, it revealed strange vistas of land, and then of the sea prettily laced at the edge with surf. Light-hearted again, he rejoiced in the beauty and sunniness of the country, his own, to which he was bound by the happiest of memories. And days of fiestas were always days of gaiety. His father or the majordomo had taken him to the fiestas when he was small, and rode before them on the saddle. When he was five, or perhaps six, he had returned with a gift, a packet of fuses, or sea matches, and when the phosphorus came off on his fingers, which shone in the dark like flames, he thought them afire, hid them under the pillow, and wept silently until fatigue and sleep overcame him. Next day, finding himself whole, he wanted another packet, and Martin, racing to the fair and back, brought him one. The episode impressed itself so deeply on his mind, that even fear left his dreams, and danger appeared only an illusion.

Monterey, a jumble of red-capped white houses amid trees, was below him, and he halted. Washerwomen’s Lagoon, where two or three old Indians were bleaching clothes on the rocks, was still there, but now a road was going past it.

“There is the path still,” he said, pointing. “The old path.”

“Fallen,” said Martin. “The camino real—the highway of the King’s soldiers. No more than a scratch now, even if in the good days it was no more than a bridle-path, worn by the sandals of the holy friars, nose in their breviary, as they went clop-clop through the dust on the long journey, like a penance, from mission to mission. Though there was a Padre Ministro once that rode in a poled chair, carried by neophytes of his parish, until his Bishop heard of that great indulgence, and made him say a thousand Misericordias, and go on his own feet thereafter, like any other sinner, though the poor man was old, gouty and wobbling, but for all that a santo, and good to the Indians. No horse could support him, nor any mule, and never a carriage upon the road.

“But it was the camino real, and sacred to the Crown and Holy Church. The royal Popes, they say, made journeys out here, in the disguise of Vicars, and on foot, just to see this province of California for themselves. I never came across them myself, though I visited San Gabriel and San Buenaventura

in their heyday, which had a barbecue by the camino for the poor soldiers, and a wineskin hanging in the shade; I made the march twice, from San Diego to Sonoma and back. That was bleeding feet for us, and if it had been a pilgrimage to a shrine, we had amply earned the right to enter heaven. And now there's a road, and a Fray Pio"—he laughed ironically—"not fit to chant a prayer for the coyotes, as they say, rides upon it on a mustang—though not often his own.

"Pablito, I don't know what is coming upon us. The gates have fallen down, and we are not the Californios we used to be. Everywhere we turn, we look upon strangers. And some of them—Americans and Hispano-Mexicans—they would have us feel we are but here on suffrance. Times have changed, Pablito, but you are young and wise, and will know how to live with the cleverest of them."

From under his shagged brow he looked intently at Pablo. "I do not stop my ears, young friend. I have heard Doctor Kit say you will go farther than anyone. You are of our old Californio strain, and also *Ingles*—the breed of consuls and agents—and like them you now come in afresh with the wits of men from the sea.

"And who is to stay them? Not us—who have thrown the gates down, and are divided among ourselves, some of this camp, some of that, and others of the middle. If I had my youth again, Pablito——"

"Come along, Martin!" said Pablo, bringing down his quirt so that his horse bolted. "Or we shall be late for the fiesta."

With only a scattering of the pack at their heels, they pelted on, came to the old whaling tavern, where they barred their animals into a corral, and walked to the port. It was not only full, it was bursting with people—soldiers, vaqueros, crews from the men-o'war and trading ships, ranch families in Spanish garb of the old mode, officials with their wives and daughters, a Mexican reflection of styles current in Paris a decade ago. Pablo himself wore a broadcloth suit of his father's, tight to the leg, pinked with silver buttons, and a ruffled shirt. Heads turned to look curiously at him with his blond curled locks, lithe physique, and florid young face, his glance darting right and left, and at the giant, bowlegged vaquero in cloak, coat and belt heavy with hammered silver, whip dangling from his wrist.

"Cope of Alamos," was the remark Pablo heard oftenest. "The sailor one. And the bull-killer is that Sergeant Matador Sanchez who fought the pirates. A pretty pair!"

The *tiendas* were packed with carousers, and their noisy, laughing women. Along the Embarcadero were hawkers, selling pancakes, sweetmeats, coconuts and tortillas; and booths with striped awnings, set up by the traders and supercargoes. These booth tenders were foreigners, but with their broad hats, frogged jackets and ten words of Spanish kept up the fiction of being natives. The dinghies had plied back and forth all night under cover of fog, toting contraband, the guards indulgently, on the eve of a fiesta, pointing their spyglasses inland. Patrons felt the silks, rang knuckles on the brass urns, dandled the Mandarin dolls, and sniffed at the bottles of jasmine scent or ylang-ylang. Martin trod past, rigid and severe, being a disapprover of lawbreaking and all frippery; Pablo ahead of him, looking everywhere for Ynes.

A gang of seamen pushed by, gleeful and boisterous, half seas under; in the thick of them, a trull on each side, a stocky figure upending a bottle. It huskily roared a chantey. There was no roar in the world like that of the *Mizpah's* carpenter. The Aleut, still with a pocketful of money, would be king for the day, or at least until sunset. Forever out of his reach had slid the reality of the large-antlered reindeer, the island home and the squaw. Pablo turned to look back, but the old harpooner was beyond reach or call.

“What has got into you, Pablito?” demanded Martin. “A moment ago you were brighter than a wagtail. And now you have a sadder face than any friar.”

Pablo strode on, thoughtful. “There was nothing I could have done, nothing. That was a drunken sailor I knew, who will not have a dollar to stick to his palm, though yesterday he was rich. Martin, I want to buy some cattle. Cattle to run on my own league.”

“Money, Pablito, is safer in a hide than in the pocket. You have that good half league, and many springs of water. Your father was watching out for you. Three hundred cows will do for a start. Two hundred would be preferable, for you will get to know them better. Now, our good friend, Don Pedro Jiminez, whose two daughters are marrying, and who must raise them dowries, will sell you some cattle.”

“Jiminez?”

“Don Pedro Jiminez. He has a quarter league left over towards Salinas. We will ride over in the morning——”

“Pablo!”

They turned. Across the road was a young woman waving her parasol. It was Ynes. Pablo dashed over with a shout, caught her up in his arms, and kissed her soundly, then he had to lower her, for she was up to his shoulder in

height, and they laughed in joy at the encounter. He held her forearms, and looked into her warm, brown face. For all that she was taller she had still the air of a schoolgirl.

“You’ve shot up, Pablo! I could hardly believe it was you—until I saw Martin! It was such a surprise! You’re not going away again?”

“I wouldn’t think of it! I’m for staying here forever.”

“Did you just come? Why didn’t you let me know?”

“I came last night, and I got lost on the way up.” He looked pathetic. “And I had to sleep under trees. It was too late, anyway. But I did get home, and I hurried down as fast I could.”

They walked on in gladness, like brother and sister after a long absence, arm in arm, and she called out: “Paz! Luisa!” The women were already coming towards them—Aunt Paz, small and authoritative, like her mother; and Cousin Luisa Miura, angular, pallid and nun-like, and they greeted him with a kiss.

“You are just like Tomas!” announced Paz, distinctly. “The sea has been the making of you.” She glanced sharply at his clothes. “You have been home. I see you are dressed in your father’s blacks. They fit well.”

“Shore clothes,” said Pablo. “That’s one way of celebrating.”

“Are we going home now?” queried Luisa. She was meek, and reminded Pablo of his ewe-necked horse.

“I should say not!” snapped Paz with her bright smile. “The fiesta has hardly begun, and we’re going on to the circus. It begins at three, and Felipe is already waiting for us.”

They set off through the crowd, Pablo with Ynes, behind Martin who made way for them like a factotum, whip-butt forward, spurs clanking. Last came Luisa and Paz.

Save that Pablo and Ynes were taller, the parade was exactly the same as parades to the Mass and fiesta in their childhood, the same order, and the old majordomo with bowlegged dignity clanking ahead. He was so conscious of his office that he gave only the most cursory salute to friends, mostly grizzly soldiers or vaqueros, that hailed him. The Alamos family was the secret of Monterey’s greatness, and its social fabric was held up on the shoulders of Dona Ana Aguirre, whose surrogates were the nearest female relatives—Paz, Luisa, and Ynes; and in another year, whether or not she had an offer of marriage, Ynes would outrank Luisa, the oldest of the cousins.

Ynes was an Aguirre by adoption, the orphaned daughter of an army comrade of the late General's, who had left a sum of money that was invested in cattle for the Alamos ranch. Alamos was owned outright by Dona Ana, who had hung to it precariously through the years of misrule, which had cost the ranch nearly all of its stock, but she was glad to set aside a heavy share of it in Ynes' name. The child came to live at Alamos when she was five, and to Dona Ana she was as much a daughter as Paz was, and as Juana, Don Tomas' wife, had been. She ruled them as exactingly as she ruled her domain. Every two years the daughters were sent to live three months in Guadalajara. They came back with trunkfuls of fashions, and a lisping tongue for their "c's" and "d's."

"I saw Grandmother," said Pablo. He whispered, for he was aware of the two pairs of eyes boring at him a yard in the rear. "She looked as if she were hanging on by a thread."

"She always does, until she is crossed."

"Not going to send you away again this year, is she?"

"No. We're staying home for the first time in I don't know how long. I think she wants people around her. What did she say?"

They not only spoke under their breaths, they spoke in English, of which the cousins knew not a word. Pablo had his arm about Ynes' waist; she wore a fur mantle, and her warmth came through it, like the warmth of a puma.

"Not much. I gave her a Persian shawl, and that pleased her. She took me first for my father. Then for somebody else—Felipe."

"Her mind does wander," Ynes said casually.

"He must be a frequent visitor at the Casa. Did I ever know Don Felipe?"

"I'm not sure. Felipe Gozlan came after you left, and bought some of the Jiminez ranch, that quarter league on the other side of your land. He comes in now and then, to play the piano, or have a game of dominoes with Dona Ana. He is of a military family, in Sinaloa, but he lost his parents when he was quite young."

"This Felipe, then, must have the approval of Dona Ana and I suppose he sees much of you?"

"What can you expect?" laughed Ynes, with a shrug. "And Felipe is, after all, a neighbor."

The neighbor was "Felipe" to everyone, a familiar of the house, and Pablo frowned, though Ynes clung to his arm still tighter.

“For a moment, Ynes, I was almost jealous.”

“Oh, you were?” she smiled, approvingly.

They came to another crowd, before a large tent; a rowdy, good-humored crowd, such as would be attracted by feats of horsemanship, made up largely of vaqueros and slaughterers, woodsmen and hunters. Of these a good half were American of the frontier stamp, with narrow eyes, thin, ruthless mouths stained with tobacco, the look of Cherokees on the warpath, their carriage swaggering and easy. With a “Pardon, senores!” and a sweep of his doffed hat, Martin gained for his party a clear lane, and the Americans saluted in return, with bold looks of interest at Ynes. A rangy, dark man came into the lane. Felipe, no doubt, thought Pablo, and so it was. He greeted Ynes first, then Aunt Paz and Luisa.

“Felipe, this is Pablo,” said Paz, “my nephew.”

They exchanged a perfunctory handclasp as they entered the tent. Pablo disliked him on sight, and ignored him thereafter, as they sat on a bench, the whole group, Martin at the far end, and Ynes in the middle, between himself and this Felipe Gozlan, the intruder, with his compliments, soft hand—not a cattleman’s hand at all—and his air and clothes, more of the town than the range. Luisa distributed a packet of roast sunflower seeds. Felipe talked of the opera in Guadalajara, and of a Government ball somewhere. He had a sleek, taurine head, moustache, a knowing and flattering way with the women, and a suavity that manifested itself in his diction, not in his remarks, which struck Pablo as commonplace enough. A haphazard band, arrayed in coats borrowed from the Presidio, attacked some music, and everyone listened, Ynes pressing Pablo’s arm. The Comandante and his staff marched in, followed by the mob that had been lounging outside. Pablo had a glimpse of Fray Pio’s head, and far over on the other side, Doctor Kit, sitting by the Alcalde.

The band played frenziedly. This was more than a circus and a rodeo; it was a happening of the first magnitude, a spectacle with gymnasts. They came now on the trot, made a pyramid, then a tower, and the tower fell apart and the gymnasts spun all over the place like loose cartwheels. All save one in a black gown and wig, who struck the pose of an orator, and made believe to utter a speech, though not a sound came from his mouth. The audience, being Monterenos, and lovers of oratory, watched him between respect and mirth, and one vaquero yelled for quiet. As if piqued because nobody listened to him, the orator flung his arms up in despair, kicked the back of his skull, then tumbled hoop-like with the rest, as limply as if he were merely a gown with nothing inside.

A rum-blossomed clown was eternally being knocked down by the cartwheels, and rising bewildered. He dusted himself off after each fall, to prance about with trustful and pathetic gaiety, until disaster befell him again. Then, with his eyes ink-pools of grief, he stood on his head in a corner. He was like a forgotten broom. The crowd guffawed; Felipe laughed, and turned to Ynes.

“An *Ingles*, you see. These English, they are both comical and sad. A lost race, strangers everywhere on the globe. Ah, these English.”

Pablo, bending forward to light a cigar, heard him laugh again. Ynes was crackling sunflower seeds with her teeth. Perhaps she had not heard, for the noise of the crowd and the band was deafening. In time the arena cleared. Horses ambled in, and the crowd fell silent instantly. If it knew anything, this crowd knew horses. These were shod Arabs, with wild and beautiful eyes, sweeping tails, and fire in their veins.

“Horses, always horses,” complained Felipe. “Why don’t they keep the clowns on? Did we come here to be bored?”

“Look!” said Ynes. “There come the riders!”

Performers came running, leaped into the saddles, and among them was the English clown who, on his fleeting mare, stood upright, an equestrian in disguise. He flung himself into the air, revolved four times, then alighted on his mare which had cantered half-circle. His grace and dexterity were matchless. Effortlessly he repeated the feat, with the precision of a well-darted knife, the mare circling like a planet in its sphere, neither of them allowing for the error of a hair’s width. The crowd held its breath in delight. The majordomo took off his hat, and went nearer to stare over the rope.

The horseman’s art follows its own law as unchangingly as do the birds in flight, or the seasons in their order of coming. The wandering horseman, roaming from Egypt to ancient Palmyra long before Zenobia was its Queen—in the Circus Maximus, in the horse-fairs of Asia Minor, in a Manchurian caravan town, or with the traveling circus—finds his arena the same, the diameter of it unchanged from remotest antiquity. And this English clown, up from the Chilean ports, through Mexico to Santa Barbara and Monterey, knew the exact spring to release and cast himself in a parabola to land without breaking his neck.

The equestrian cantered off, to the shouts and handclapping of the onlookers. The majordomo, waving his quirt, bellowed approval on the names of all the Saints. The performance over, there was a rush for the exit.

“That was riding, Don Felipe!” said Martin. “What think you of that, Pablito?”

“Fair,” said Pablo. “Fair for an *Ingles*. I have seen Englishmen who could do even better.” He turned to Ynes and offered his arm. “Good, wasn’t it? And now we can walk around for a minute.”

It was taking her away from Felipe, whom he left to squire the older women, who were still talking of the linens, and crocheted bedspreads they had admired at the booths. Outside it was darkening. Relatives of the Aguirres came up; there was more chatter, and Don Porfirio Miura, Luisa’s brother, insisted that all dine with him. A sallow, dejected-looking man, with a plaintive voice, he had prospered in the tallow business, and had some renown as a politician. He was a bachelor, who had been a playmate of the Alamos daughters, and everyone believed he was still in love with Paz.

“*Bueno!*” said Felipe. “What better place to round out a fiesta!” So everyone agreed, talking at once, gaily, with handshaking and slapping of backs. Miura’s adobe, odorous with smoke from the barbecue pit and the open-air ovens where fire never went out under the cauldrons of red cowpeas, was a stronghold of hospitality. A night of it usually meant a week of nights, for the store of beef and brandy was inexhaustible, like the talk on politics and Felipe’s satirical verse, which he read in a high plaintive voice, though no one ever listened to it, preferring to dance in the fandango room, where Indians played guitar music in relays. Pablo had never cared much for its exuberant company. He wanted to be in the stillness of Alamos, talking with Ynes. He disliked politics, and had a glimpse just now of Fray Pio who was wringing hands with Felipe—an augury of what to expect at Miura’s. He took Ynes by the arm and led her apart.

“Look here, do you want to go, really?”

“To Porfirio’s?” She arched her brows in surprise at the question. “Why, aren’t we all setting out?”

“Are we? I’ll not spoil anyone’s evening, so I’ll say nothing one way or the other. But I’d rather be home. I haven’t seen much of it. And I’d rather be there than at Miura’s. I’ve been there often enough when I was small. I’m sure it hasn’t changed, and that the flies are thick as ever, and you cough your head off in the smoke.”

“I’m not excited about going, Pablo. But Aunt Paz and Felipe will expect me to. And I can’t see why you don’t——”

“Felipe expects you to go, does he?” said Pablo with firmness. “Then I’m not one to interfere, even if I don’t like it at all.”

She lifted her eyebrows again, playing with a button on his jacket. Then her mouth formed in a half smile, for she was sure of herself, and sure of Felipe. She was also sure of Pablo.

“No? Well, then, if you want to leave me and go home, I suppose you will. You have always done as you wanted to, Pablo. I never could. And this is the first time I’ve been away from Alamos in a fortnight, almost.”

“I might remind you,” he said, as he walked back with her to the group, “that I have been away four years.” Her half-smile was still there as she turned, with a “*Buenas noches.*”

He stalked on rapidly, consumed with anger. It must have gone pretty far, this friendship with Felipe Gozlan. What had the family meant by permitting—nay, encouraging—the advances of this Felipe, who, for the look of him, and for all that he owned a league—everyone owned at least one league—might be no more than a saddler of another’s horses, another stray adventurer of which California was already too full. One thing was certain, Dona Ana would not have been so indulgent with this wooer from the next league if he had had English on his tongue instead of Spanish.

He reached the corral, got out his horse, and loped on. It was cool, the winds blew upon him, and as he looked behind and in the moonlight saw the dogs padding behind silently in a long ribbon, he burst out laughing, and his petulance vanished. The air was pungent with scents, an owl spoke atop a bare and ghostly-white sycamore. On the uplands of Alamos, where he could still faintly hear the combers surge, the smells of grass and mist-damp juniper enfolded him, and threw him back into childhood and the old, secure feeling of home. He passed by the slaughtering-field, the crumbling adobe wall, crowned with skulls of oxen, rode into the yard, and throwing off the saddle, went straight to the house and his room.

It had been his father’s, but now it was his. He lighted tallow candles, kicked off his shoes so as to walk about on the tiles without clatter, and drew a chair to the table. He read idly through a packet of letters that had come at intervals since he went away on the *Mizpah*; all had been read by someone, either the matriarch or Paz, and some, no doubt, had been answered. He found a still older packet written in English. He mused through them, perched on his chair, feet on a rung, but they meant little. One was from Cornwall:

“Dear Brother Thomas Cope—My heart is full of thankfulness that I should be remembered, and I am grateful to the Lord of Mercy that you have been guarded all these years, and that at this far distance from home and amongst strangers you have been

blessed with wellbeing and prosperity. Since your letter dated the third month of last year, our father in his eighty-third year, his faculties strong to the last, came to his term. His thoughts were powerfully drawn to you. He often said: ‘We must let Thomas know that even if Eric is gone, what he taught Eric and an old tinstreamer like me keeps Torpen Old Mine going to this day!’ He found peace in his labors to the end. Your ventilating shaft sill keeps the workings airy and dry. And he knew how you loved the old mine. Eric’s little son, Carew, now goes to school. The garden is beautiful this spring, for father had planted a new rose, some meadow rue and colt’s-foot. I look longingly for your return with my nephew, Pablo, whom I shall rejoice to see. With prayers for your safeguarding, I remain,

Your affct. Sister,
Eliz. Ann Traherne.”

That was Aunt Elizabeth, thought Pablo, musing over this aunt of his so far away, who wrote in odd Biblical speech. She lived alone, his father had told him, and she spent her time in her rose garden at Torpen Farm. And he had also said:

“I’ll take you there one day, lad, and not be too long about it. A man gets into the habit of staying away from where he belongs, and he is done for. And the family mine is a wonder—very old a thousand years ago; and Elizabeth knows more of it than anyone in the parish. A good mine, too, though I wouldn’t give it ten years more—not that I’d breathe that to a soul. But it has a working or two that I’d like to see you poke around in for a while, and get the hang of the miner’s trade. You’ll not find a better school than that. And then you’ll come back to California all the wiser for it. We’ve got something here at Alamos that I wouldn’t trade Torpen Old Mine for—not if it was in its finest bloom again.”

Pablo put the letter aside. A good sort, his father; easy-going and a bit sentimental; perhaps done for, after staying at Alamos too long. But something was broken inside of him, everyone knew that. Pablo felt grateful to one who had given him roots at Alamos, and that rolling half-league with its woodlands and stream: something to return to, something enduring and solid.

He strolled back and forth over the tiles, hands in pockets, listening to the familiar night sounds—the tree-frogs, the horses moving in the yard, the laugh of an Indian at a card game, the bark of a coyote, and the answering

bark of a dog. He looked through the window. No sign yet of Ynes and her aunt. They might not return until morning. Aunt Paz and Luisa were conservative and frumpy; but they made as much of social life—such as a night at Miura's with a fandango—as they did of Mass. They were blooded to it, and Ynes no less. Well, in the morning they'd be home again.

He saw a pack of cards on the table, and after shuffling them, laid them out for a solitaire. They gave out a snuff of drug, like iodoform. Doctor Kit had probably been put in this room on his overnight visits. He played for an hour. No sign yet of the cavalcade. Perhaps Ynes was still dancing. He flung his cards down in a rage, and paced about once more. His father's Swiss music-box was on the dresser, and he set it going. It tinkled and played a thin, spectral melody—and he imagined Ynes dancing with Felipe. This time he laughed, threw himself upon the truckle-bed with its bearskin rug; his violent moods were always brief. And he was home. He became aware of the eternal smells of the house—smells of oil, gunpowder, herbs, tallow, and smoke of redwood. By the time the music-box had tinkled itself out, he was asleep.

Pablo was early up, and cheerful, waking to no more than a sense of temporary defeat over the episode with Ynes. Dawn had not yet broken when he lounged into the yard, where Agata, the slave of the servants, was groping in the dim light for kindling to heat the oven. No other sign of rising in the household; and it would be a couple of hours before Martin, who had turned in at Heaven alone knew what late hour, could set out with him for the cattle. The Jimenez family, also, who danced as readily as they breathed, had been at Miura's.

On his way to the corral for the pony, Pablo went past the quarters of the ranch Indians, and into the asistencia—as the old chapel was always called. Much of the building was yet firm, as it had been when it was his playground as a child. The roof was intact, though much of the adobe wall under it had melted away. He cast an eye upward, a sailor's eye, as if at a spread of canvas. The curved tiles, as long as one's arm, rested on withes lashed to the rafters by thongs gone iron-hard with age. When the Casa itself became his—and he had already firmly made up his mind it should be—he would have it all roofed with such tiles. Pablo's knack for envisioning was vivid, he had resolution, and a craving for possession that was not so much greed as it was for something to dominate, like a horse. He had dominated both horses and ships. He now wanted to dominate a ranch. That half-league of his would do very well for a start.

He bridled his pony, and rode into the range land. The cool air rushed at him, and it was rousing. By the time he got back, in an hour or two, the family would be up, having their chocolate in the garden. If he ran into Ynes, he was going to be quite hearty, quite natural, as if nothing had happened. Brought up in that houseful of females, who were women first and relatives afterwards, he knew fairly well how to make his own path as frictionless as possible. That reminded him a pack of cousins and relatives-by-courtesy would be in for a late breakfast, for it was Sunday, and the last Sunday of the month, with its customary gathering. It would be deadly, but there was no escaping it, for members from three parishes would be riding in to see him. Well, that was being a lion for once.

He hauled at the bridle. The pony was foraging around in a wet patch where flax grew, and bulrushes. A horde of white-crowned sparrows made

the shrubbery noisy with their buzzy warble. There was a rivulet, then reddish mud, and he knew he was already near the busca, his father's old workings. He tied his pony and walked soggily afoot to the adit. It was one that the Indians themselves had hacked out, and it was rightly placed, drifting into the main body of ore, which was directly under the hill.

“Some old conjure man among them had a nose for ore,” his father had said. “He was just born too early. He had the instinct, all right, but not the art to carry him through.”

Pablo squeezed in. A band of sunshine illuminated the cave with its slanting walls, and somewhere inside it broke and glittered on a red-grey pool in the floor. Baulks of heavy timber spanned the gaps between the walls, and more held up the roof here and there, looking like up-ended matches with a book laid upon them. There was also a ratty smell, and a sound as of disturbed owls. Pablo squeezed on, mucking his coat against the red of the slimy hanging-wall. The damp of it went through him like a chill, but he sidled on, in mud up to his ankles. At the end was a curved chamber. His father and the majordomo had not dug that, nor had anyone else alive; that went back to old, old Spanish days, and the roof had once collapsed to the floor, for it had not been timbered. Neither the Indians nor the Spanish soldiers who had followed them in to see what they were up to, had known anything of real mining, else they would have hammered a few upright baulks into place. The roof just settled down on them, like a hen settling on eggs, the friars came up to read a funeral service, and then they were forgotten until Don Tomas, poking around inside, dug out a casque and breastplate, then some skeletons. After all the bones were dragged out that could possibly be found, Padre Anton, one of Dona Ana's Cabinet, had them reburied in state, with plain song, and a choir of neophytes in lace robes playing violas and trumpets. It was a wonderful ceremony, but no one knew the names of these Spaniards and Indians exhumed. But much honor and grace were reflected upon them, and also upon Alamos, the ranch of Dona Ana Aguirre, to whom the Padre was attached.

“I'd give an arm if it were on my boy's side of the line,” Don Tomas grumbled to Martin. “You come over here, and I'll show you a vein of andesite that's something!”

Pablo, overhearing that, crept in and found that vein on his own. It looked not very unlike any other kind of rock, but darker, with a lava tinge, and picked out with globules that ran loose in the palm like tiny silver pills. Yes, that was andesite. He watched his father and Martin take out a barrow-load, with pick and drill, and stood there behind a pillar, unseen, for the air was not

good, and he was supposed to be out playing with his dog. That was what he exulted in, staring at them at work, listening to the crick of their muscles, the rasping of their tools, the hard clatter of rock into the barrow; and above all, the intent gaze of the men at the wall, divining where the matrix wound through sterile rock, and where a drill-hole, packed with gunpowder, would heave the most out at a blast.

The furnace was out in a ring of dead trees, their tops and foliage killed by mercury fumes. His father had brought up a pair of iron try-out pots from the old *Nymph*, a whaler, getting them cheaply from Captain Delano Fitch in exchange for twenty otter skins, and at first the ore had been smelted out in these pots—quite a change that was, from whale-blubber to ore—and the fumes went through old shotgun barrels to be condensed. Later, his father had set on end four cannon from a French privateer, and from these and yards of piping, had contrived a quite effective smelter.

Pablo went out, and saw that the apparatus, though quite rusted, was still there and whole. The pines were utterly dead. Fumes killed men, too, even faster than it killed trees, and Pablo remembered being chased away by Martin to the other side of the gully, and twice as far if the breeze was in that lay.

Under the overhang of rock by the adit was still the low bench where his father and the majordomo used to rest in the sunshine over their pipes. Once Pablo laid down a trap he was making to listen to Martin talk of his childhood.

“Padre Anton told me that the first Indians he ever saw here were tinted red and that this grove was a sacred place. Also that the Indians set as great store by this mud as good Christians do by holy water.

“The padre could tell no more than that, though he was wiser than any white man living here, but I soon came to know more than he did about this red mud. I have no head for mysteries, Don Tomas, and I shall tell my story plain. You see, at this time I was an orphan at the Presidio, and the Comandante put me to learn the saddler’s trade with an Indian called Mathias, who was an honest workman in leather. This was an Indian like no other, a chorister and a player of the bass horn, and of such instruction that he also taught me to read.

“I looked up to him as my master, for he was as good as a Spaniard, and so devout that he often served Padre Anton at the altar. Being an apprentice, I slept in the shop, as also did Mathias, on a cot near the door. Once a month, very late at night, he would disappear, not to return until near sunrise, and he

would appear fatigued, and his skin of a reddish hue, though I knew that before coming into the shop, he would wash himself at the bench by the door. He would say nothing of these disappearances, and moreover he was a taciturn man. I was inquisitive as a lad, and this made me very curious to know where he went.

“So, one night when the moon was in the full, I kept awake, though I pretended to be fast asleep, and I saw Mathias rise, throw a look at me, then slip out. I followed him, but he mounted a horse and rode away. The next time I had better fortune, for I got upon my own pony, and followed Mathias in a mist, lying flat so that he could not see me, nor see anything more than the outline of an animal that could be either wild or a stray, and there were also many such on this ridge, where I dismounted, and went the rest of the way on foot. I heard voices over here by the rift, and I wriggled on, crawling on my stomach, like a puma.

“Through the woods I saw a group of Indians, perhaps a hundred, about a fire, and heard first the voice of their chief, then the chanting of all tongues, quiet at first, then loud. I came to this rock above our heads, and looked down, hidden by a bush. The worshippers had on naught but breech-clouts, and helmets of leaves, their bodies in the firelight dripping red as from the thick blood of oxen. They sang, Don Tomas, and they shouted as if stabbed with goads, and were truly bleeding, their muscles twitched, and their throats jerked as if likely to burst with the violence of their mad yells. *Que ceremonia!* It was like the religion of mad animals! And terrible was the figure of Mathias, their medicine man, their wizard, stalking about them in a circle. The song of Mathias as he jabbed the mist with his spear was passionate and terrifying beyond words. I knew the Indian tongue, and saw that he was striking at an evil spirit—the white man’s civilization! And the chorus of all—the ‘ah-ha, ugh!’—rose to a frenzied delirium of sound that sent the blood hot through my veins. I could not stir from fright, and lay flat in the grass, hardly able to breathe. Then inch by inch I dragged myself away, to the top of this hill, and crawled by the roundabout to my pony. Ten yards away there was a sentinel with a spear—one of a great ring of sentinels. How lucky that I was but a child and a small one, for the life of no outsider at that ceremony would have been worth a squashed fig.

“I got back to the shop and my cot shaking with fear. Not from that day to this, Don Tomas, have I breathed to anyone what I saw. But my thoughts have dwelt upon it, and wondered upon the hidden things that even the humblest of Indians must keep in their bosom. We shall never find out, for even our own feelings are sometimes too deep for explaining, as is life and as is death. Who shall ever know? Not I, not any man; not even the Pope himself and the

whole college of Bishops; for only God knows, and at my age, Don Tomas, I have come to believe it is wisdom to be content with that, and to resign ourselves with the trust that all that unfolds about us is for the best.”

The majordomo filled the two little silver cups with anise brandy, they clinked a health, and drank silently. Pablo had returned to his work on the trap, but he still held an ear towards them. Soon the older man was talking of one whom he regarded with an uncomfortable mistrust.

“There were others, also, who knew of this *moketka*, this red earth, even before you found it prior to the coming of the Alcalde with the paper. But of them all, the most cunning was Fray Pio. It was sacred earth, you understand, but there is no true piety nor any respect in this Fray Pio, who has evil in his heart, despite the livery he wears to the shame of honest monkhood. He hauled ten ox-cart loads of this red to the mission, and sold it to the padres, who had it laid on the walls, up to the belfry. They thought it was paint.”

“Was it not a very good paint, Sergeant?” asked Tomas.

“Well, you may still see it there,” said Martin, “and redder than any sunset. But this does not pardon the sin of Fray Pio, however, who sold the holy mud of the Indians for profit. He is a rapacious man.”

“And also an astute one,” Tomas remarked with a laugh.

A pity that the rift and the hill were not on his land, Pablo thought, as he rode back for the ranch. They would be something to look after. And if that rift should grow into a mine, it could be something worth counting on. But it was too early to develop a mine; the old prohibitory laws were still in honor, and if anything could wake the sleepest Alcalde from his doze, it was a blast. The Americans might seize the country, and all would be changed; but taxes would come in with them. Cattle, being the most mobile of property, could be trotted off by night into remote canyons and hidden. A mine was fixed, and excisemen would be drawn to it like filings to a lodestone.

Alamos had before it an era more ticklish than any it had yet gone through. The prospect troubled Pablo not at all. He had been brought up to a life of danger; he had youth, he had wits adequate to any crisis, and he had an unruly conscience. From his father, who had delicate scruples, he had inherited will and a little Celtic imagination; and he had inherited a clash of that hard deviltry from the late General, who was compounded of nothing else.

Aboard the *Mizpah* and at the ports he had heard much of political unrest in California, and he felt inclined to keep out of it. Home again, he found that the trouble had been magnified. True, almost everyone talked politics; but it

was something that one breathed and exhaled like air, without worrying much over it. Politics were just a staple of talk, and all Californios loved talk, though they took care that it did not abbreviate their siesta, or cheat them of a dance at a neighborly fandango.

Leading his pony, Pablo came through the garden. The scents were stronger in sunlight. This part of the garden was still much as his father had contrived it, highly fragrant, with mint underfoot, lemon verbena to be brushed in passing, and boughs of eglantine dangling from arches, where birds fluttered. There was a reminder of Cornwall in the rows of perennial foxgloves. Martin was up. He was at his open window in a robe, singing a morning hymn. Three vaqueros with neat braids and embroidered boots sprang up from the coffee to greet Pablo bareheaded when he came into the yard. Martin joined them, after Pablo donned the money belt in his chamber, and they all rode out, only fifty dogs with them, the rejected members of the pack howling mournfully behind them at the gate.

It was a two hour ride to the Jiminez ranch. Pablo, falling alone in the rear, rode with thoughts of Ynes, and no more gladdened by them than by the brightness of the morning, for he was piqued at not having seen her. He was angry not so much at her as at Felipe Gozlan. He had the mad notion of tearing her away, of rushing her up north to Mariposa, or to Livermore, anywhere from Alamos, his rival, the Cabinet and Dona Ana—and even his blessed half league. The thought of the half league suddenly weighed him down like an anchor-chain. He was not a footloose roamer any more.

“What’s this?” he asked, pulling up when he saw the Jiminez place. Don Pedro was visible, in blacks, sitting in a chair. “Did you tell him I was coming?”

“I did send word, yes,” hesitated Martin. “By one of the vaqueros. So Don Pedro could receive you properly. Don Pedro is by nature courteous.”

Pablo laughed. The Alamos folk looked down their noses at Don Pedro. The Jiminez family lived untidily under trees; Don Pedro himself, lank, sleepy and shiftless, in bare feet, his beard straggly. He had one eye, and a pair of spectacles without lenses. They were a poor family, the Jiminez, but they had their pride. And Don Pedro was gay-hearted and adventurous. He was the only rancher about who had ever tried grain farming, and that venture had gone amiss, for the crops had failed two years running, and the plows were left to rust in the unfilled fields. But as they approached, he rose and shuffled out to embrace them both.

“Ah, my little Pablito! It is good to see you!” He yelled into the house. “Edelmira! Alma! Salvador! Come out and meet Don Pablo of the Aguirres!”

The two women emerged, timid, from the adobe, plain but agreeable. They blushed at Pablo’s compliments, and young Salvador brought cups of wine from a pigskin hanging from the fir tree. All sat on the grass, around Don Pedro, who resumed his chair. The matter of the purchase of cattle was broached. Pablo referred to them as if they were prize hide-bearers, of a breed beyond compare, though everyone knew better. Pasturage was thin at the Jiminez place. Through it wound a dead and gravelly river-bed, and a Jiminez cow was like a famished goat. Don Pedro returned the amenity by not haggling over the price.

“It will be six dollars a head for you, Pablito.”

Pablo unstrapped his money-belt and counted out twelve hundred dollars in coins, which the daughters recounted into their father’s hat.

He had got the cattle reasonably cheap. The Jiminez folk, all the way down to little Salvador, were nice, hospitable people—and more amiable than those at Alamos. His gift to the two girls was a handful of gold pieces to buy wedding finery.

“That was a good haul, Pablito,” said Martin. “That fat grass will give them hides as thick as your arm.”

“I think so.” Pablo grinned. “I’ve also let myself in for a chance of trouble. Calling on the Jiminez, for one thing. Buying cattle on my own, for another. Before I went to sea, Dona Ana had to be consulted before I could buy so much as a tin whistle.

“And how many cousins has Alamos who have cows to sell?”

“Hi-yah!” The majordomo scratched his head ruefully. “Now that I think of it, Pablito, all of them! But I didn’t think of it earlier. We have saved money, yet—Holy Saints! If Dona Ana hears of this! It would be as if we had stolen the family plate! You think she will make trouble, Pablito?”

“Trouble?” echoed Pablo softly. “Trouble? You just wait!”

The herd lingered, and the herd strayed. The sun was high, and Pablo had to ride back twice to help drive the creatures on. He found it irksome.

Alamos was miles off in the haze. To get these cattle—his fervor over the notion of being a cattleman had already worn off—uphill and on towards the half-league was tediously slow work. Some of the dogs were far in advance on the trail, and asleep, such being the wisdom of dogs, waiting until the last

of the cows straggled reluctantly up from the flat. He looked at his watch; it lacked an hour of being full noon.

Calling out to a vaquero, "Tell the majordomo I've gone on home," he said, and struck out for the ridge.



After exchanging his soiled coat for a clean one, Pablo slipped into the yard, and had a glimpse through the window of the dining-room. Instead of Dona Ana, it was Paz who sat masterfully at the head of the rubbed, satiny-black oaken table, flanked by twenty or more guests—members of the Cabinet and neighbors and odd relatives. Ynes was at the foot, alone. The breakfast was the usual portentous affair, with at least two solid hours of talk ahead of it, and the buzz was already loud.

An eavesdropper at the garden window could depart charged with Sibylline powers, for the week at least, able to predict most of the events in the parish, save those contingent on sudden death or lightning. "The Alamos Cabinet," Miura called it; but that was in the days when Dona Ana was really active, and in her rightful place by the coffee urn, and in the General's chair.

Little of that bareness, that almost Moorish dislike of comfort, of adornment, and a romantic air typical of California ranches, obtained at Alamos. It had never been in the primitive sense colonial. Indians and their dogs were in the yard, but the cattle, the stables, the hide-curing and tallow sheds were afar off, unassertive in the trade wind; servants opened the doors; in the salon, gilt mirrors reflected the spinet, the portraits, the service of pure argent on the sideboard. When the wealthier colonists came out in that rush from Mexico City twelve years before, they were chastened at finding in the Casa Alamos even more of authoritative taste and luxury than some of them had encountered before in or outside of the city. The name of Alamos passed from lip to lip. It was like home; it was like Europe. Dona Ana had rows of novels in crushed Levant. She dressed in admitted style, wearing a low comb, and gown of the finest Cherokee silk. Her daughters were accomplished in music. So, too, was Don Tomas, the quiet English son-in-law, who played "The Well-tempered Clavichord" on the spinet, and whose influence was discernible in the simple quality of the furnishings, the lack of tawdriness, the caraway cake with the port, the muffins at breakfast.

It was with the muffins that Pablo came in. He was late, and conscious of the look of Paz, her smile thinned with reproach; and he took the bench at the end, next to Ynes, who greeted him with affection. She had behaved very

badly the night before, but he greeted her with equal warmth, and soon they were launched into talk of their own, the Cabinet engrossed with affairs at the other end.

“Desperately sorry I’m late,” he said. “After being cooped up in a ship so long it’s queer being able to roam about like this. One gets late, of course. A couple of hours or so.”

“I was up early, too, and wanted to go riding. You might have let me know.”

“You didn’t give me time to tell you last night.”

“It was rather a mixed-up night. But where did you go to?”

“To the Jiminez ranch. I’ve bought a herd.”

“A herd!” Her voice carried. “You mean to say you bought a herd?”

Paz looked over. Cousin Basile, the stout neighbor who was carving the roast, lowered his fork, and all heads turned in surprise.

“Cattle, did you say?” asked Paz. “You bought cattle?”

It was exactly as Pablo had foreseen. Paz was shocked. That anyone on these uplands, to say nothing of the ranch itself, should have ventured on such a project without first informing Dona Ana was so audaciously against tradition, that everyone at the table, except Ynes, was shocked. Cousin Basile, who dealt in stock, blinked slowly through his thick glasses. He coughed, and went on carving beef to hide his outraged feelings. Paz was thunderstruck.

“Oh, yes,” said Pablo. “I went over with Martin, and bought some of Jiminez’ cows to put on my half-league. Not many, only two hundred.”

“Two hundred!” Paz framed the words silently. “But that—that is a large number.”

“Not for a start,” said Pablo.

He was pleased at the dismay in the Cabinet. Alamos had thousands and thousands of cattle, and what was two hundred? Really nothing! What must have upset Paz was that he must have had money to buy that two hundred—a thousand dollars at least, or more—perhaps two thousand. And no one in these times of scarce money should have that much rattling loose in his pocket. Least of all a youth of the house, a minor.

“It will do to begin with,” he added.

The Cabinet had been flouted, and it mused over that flouting in silence. Then it gathered its forces, and talk went on again. The breakfast was over. Pablo reached for a cigar, then hesitated. He was not by nature discourteous, and amongst Californios no youth smoked in the presence of his guardians, or more rigid elders. Ynes gave his ankle a kick, and made a sign of rising.

They excused themselves and went into the yard.

“We’ll ride over to the arroyo,” he said, “where we used to go fishing. And I’d like another look at those cows. I’ll go and saddle the ponies.”

“I’ll wait here.”

He went through the garden and the old chapel to the lean-to in the corral, where the saddles were hung. As he was cinching them he heard the pounding of hooves, and looking out over the flat towards the rift, he saw that Felipe was approaching. Another one of the Cabinet. Felipe, too, was one of the elders. The very thought of his rival irritated Pablo like a gadfly on a muggy day. And that parvenu *was* a rival. No telling what he had been up to the last couple of years; working himself in solidly, no doubt. Ah, there would be a fight one of these days! Pablo remembered what Medina and Doctor Kit had hinted about the man.

Leading the ponies he came into the yard, and saw Felipe leaning against his saddle, laughing, flicking his whip, chatting with Ynes. With a nod at him, Pablo handed her the bridle of her mount.

“We’ll set out now.”

The visitor had a grievance. Stiffly, and with an embarrassed smile, he looked at them both. “I understood that this morning we—Ynes and myself—were to go riding to San Jose.”

“Not this morning,” said Pablo firmly. When his mind was made up on anything his manners took on a brusqueness. “I am taking her out to see my cattle.”

“I see,” drawled Felipe. “And she is going to look at your—cattle?”

“This morning, yes,” Ynes said. The tension between the two men amused her. “I’ll be ready in a minute, after I put on something else.”

Felipe went into the house with her. It was not before a quarter of an hour that she returned, and it was almost as long, when they were far out towards the arroyo, that Pablo spoke.

“You have said nothing to me at all about this Senor Gozlan. What is there between you? May I ask?”

“Why, of course!” she said lightly, and he felt he must have been bullying her. “I really can’t see,” she laughed, but more to herself, “why you should be so insistent. We’ve known Felipe a long while.”

“I don’t like it, I tell you!” he cried hotly. “I don’t like it!”

She drew up, regarding him with mouth half open. It was not that she was startled. The outburst was novel to her experience, though she understood instantly what it meant, but it was difficult for her to utter anything sensible at this moment. She was not sure of her feelings, so she could not speak from her heart; she had not weighed the claims of the one rival against the other, and she could not until after much reflection. With Felipe Gozlan, shrewd, debonair, liked by almost everyone in the region, though comparatively a stranger, she had always fancied herself in love. Older than herself, by ten or twelve years, his devotion and ardency, suppressed as she was at Alamos where she was looked upon as a child, flattered her. No one before Felipe had looked upon her as a woman.

“Why should he be so often at Alamos?” Pablo went on. “Are you really in love with him?”

“I like Felipe, naturally,” she said. “I am fond of him. But I am not quite sure how much. But don’t be angry about it, Pablo.”

“Who wouldn’t be! You are interested in him. And so are the women at the house. He stalked right in after you, as if both you and the Casa belonged to him. And they don’t, I tell you!”

She stared at him wide-eyed, then her gaze dropped, and not knowing what to do or to say, she played with the knot of her bridle. Pablo had shouted himself out. Between fury and grief, he sat wet-eyed, gulping hard. She looked up with an embarrassed smile.

“I suppose you feel they belong to you?”

“I do. Ever since I can remember, I had always the feeling that Alamos, and you with it, belonged to me.”

“Oh, you have?”

“Always and ever!” said he.

“That’s quite silly of you!” she stormed. “And greedy!”

Then they stared at each other, and aware they had relapsed into English, they laughed, and before it had shaped to anything, the hurricane was over. That had been their play language, English! the tongue they had spoken together as children in league against the Casa, that fortress of the grown-ups

with their inexplicable “don’t do this” and “don’t do that.” They had fought against their elders from infancy—Dona Ana, Aunt Paz, Cousin Luisa, and all the Indian servants and the Cabinet—all the grown-ups, in short, except the majordomo and Pablo’s father. Against everybody but those two, it was their inveterate habit to war from morning to night.

“It’s been such a day!” said Ynes. “I don’t know when the Cabinet will get over it. Dona Ana now insists on going to Guadalajara. And you have bought a herd. Did you see Cousin Basile’s expression? He was stupefied! As if somebody had stolen his cheese! He’ll have a lot to say in the garden this afternoon, I’m sure. And Dona Ana’ll be sure to be out, because it’s sunny. Martin will be called in, of course. If anything goes wrong, it’s Martin who is at fault.”

“Well, he isn’t awfully clever,” said Pablo. “Stupid, rather. But he’s loyal, and I think more of him than of almost anybody.” He frowned. “What’s got into Cousin Basile, anyway?”

“Basile? Oh, he and Paz have sort of kept an eye on business things at the ranch, until—well, you see, trade hasn’t been particularly good, I hear. Not lately. Alamos needs more cattle. Every rancher wants more cattle, but hasn’t always the money on hand to pay for them. The traders dislike to pay out money for whatever they buy. And they won’t buy anything but grease and skins. They’re afraid the ranchers will try growing fruit, or grain, or lumber. So they discourage everyone and insist on paying in trade goods. No telling what a rancher would do if he got hold of some money.”

Her voice trailed off. Felipe had arrived from Mexico with gold, enough to buy land from Don Jiminez, and enough cattle to stock it. Cousin Basile, who dealt in land and hides and tallow, had been the go-between in that business, a delicate one, for the old families were reluctant to sell any part of their holdings.

“I have heard a few words here and there,” said Pablo. “Don Pedro was grumbling at the way things were going. I suppose the ranch isn’t worrying at all. It’s got enough cattle, hasn’t it? I should think it would have to be flourishing if Dona Ana can talk of going to Mexico.”

“I don’t know,” said Ynes, as they cantered on. “I can’t say for certain.”

“Well, then, roughly, how many cattle have we?”

“About six thousand head, I think. I think I heard Cousin Basile say it was that.”

“Six—thousand!” Pablo echoed, unbelievably.

It couldn't be. In this mountain province there was forage enough for forty thousand head, or fifty thousand. As a child he had seen all these green slopes black with cattle, down to the bottom of the valley, and up to the peaks beyond that far range of hills. The cattle of Alamos were almost beyond numbering, like the bees in the lupin-blue fields.

"What has happened?" he asked.

"We have had dry years. That starved off a lot of the cattle. Then there was an epidemic of some kind. I think I wrote you about that. Then the price of goods was against us. A cartload of hides for a watch; four cartloads for a gown, or a suit. Everything, you see, had to come from the outside. And that meant so many less calves tomorrow."

That all looked rather gloomy for California, Pablo thought, so far as the cattle trade went. The late General had been no fool: he had not burned all his bridges behind him when he settled his family upon this ranch. The Aguirres were still profiting from his investments in land and buildings in Guadalajara.

"The cattle business is kittle-kattle, Father used to say," remarked Pablo. "That's why he went underground, I think—he didn't like it, and he had got tired of looking at cows all over the place." He snickered. "Yes, the price of goods is terribly high. The rate of exchange is cutthroat. We are up against Yankee clock-peddlers. Well, I did learn something from them at sea. And what I've learned since is that a cattle ranch can go down as fast as any ship."

They were now looking down the apron of the valley, and the flats along the creek, with the cattle knee-deep in the shaded pools.

"There they are, the two hundred of them!" she exclaimed. "That's what you brought back from your voyage, Senor Dick Whittington!"

Only for a minute did that thought of gain touch Pablo with that complacency that follows on an easy triumph. It was not imagination and thought that had brought him that gain; it was merely an encounter with that starveling clerk in Canton, and the presence of the hapless and simple Aleut.

They rode down to the water's edge. "I can't understand," he said, "why Martin said nothing of Alamos having only a handful of critters."

"Martin doesn't know much really of what's going on," said Ynes. She was dismounting. "He only thinks he does. Let's chuck stones!"

She gathered up an armful of flat stones and darted them over the pool, skitteringly, like the flurry of ducklings. Pablo had a marksmanship even more precise. He darted stones over the pool, then up the bank into the shrubbery. In the bowlful of sunlight, for the spring air was soft and

incandescent, the stones were luminous specks. It was the widening ripples on the water that told when he struck his mark.

Ynes flung off her mantilla. It was a mantilla of costly and foreign mode that she had brought back with her from Guadalajara, or some other New World Spanish town with church-bells clanging above the clouds.

Her rock made a toyon shiver. "That hit the puma!" she shouted.

"Very near it! You're almost in practice!"

They were children again. When they were small and came here to fish or wade in the pool, and ostensibly help Martin and the oldest vaquero look after the calves—for the grass and water here made this a sort of calves' nursery—Martin declared the chaparral across the water was simply alive with pumas and bobcats and rattlers. Martin was given to wild exaggerations. He had been dragged up in the Indian days, and felt that the fearful joy of being amidst danger was really needful to the young. There weren't any dangerous Indians, so he exaggerated the perils of the puma.

But there really was a puma or two. Pablo had seen a rabbit carried off in the fangs of a puma. So he and Ynes hurled more stones, and grew adept at dropping them beyond the heifers in the pool, which thereupon lumbered up to this, the safer, bank. Martin provided them with slingshots. And they hurled as the slingers of Bethulia hurled stones against the warriors of Holofernes. The underbrush was full of phantom enemies.

"Missed!" laughed Ynes, after one last stone. "I think we're both out of practice!"

He had been watching her, the agility and grace of that frame made suppler by riding and the lariat. For all her travels, she was still a lank country girl, a shade too languorous, eyes too reposeful to be alert—perhaps rather too countrified and slow; no, assuredly not stupid, her glance, not dull, but somnolent, rather. She had long legs, and Spanish features, full and softly moulded, hair parted and set in braided coils, in Monterey style. A bloom as of bronze-dust was in her fruit-tinted cheeks. The same Ynes, and yet not quite the same; any more than he, grown powerful and tall and sea-tanned, was the same.

"I think we should be going back," he said. "Or Dona Ana will be cross."

"No more cross than usual," she smiled. "Funny to hear English again! I used to hear Doctor Kit talk it, of course. And then you hear the backwoodsmen in Monterey."

“I think I’m a backwoodsman now,” he laughed as they tore on up the hill. “More or less. Though one can’t entirely get away from his blood. What was it Padre Anton used to say? ‘No one can wholly escape the sacraments.’ You are born this, or born that, and you are done for, I suppose. That’s what I make out!

“You think the crowd is still in the garden?”

“They should be on a day like this,” said she.

It was a vaporous spring day, hot and scented with the tang of grass and cypress. The hills were piled beyond hills in retreating planes, their scooped-out hollows filled with light and the straw-shades of ripening grass, and the very dark green of scrub oaks. And there was the red earth of California that seemed bound to the thin emerald of turf by the roots of tall pines that littered the carpet with their prodigious, varnished cones.

The mounts pelted fast for Alamos and the yard, where they were left to the servants. Ynes went in at once to change. Martin lounged up with his pipe, and sighted it at the date palms behind the wall.

“They’ve been waiting for you, Pablito,” he said through his teeth. “All of them. *Todos quantos!*”

“I’ll be there soon,” said Pablo. “They’ll want to know about my cows, of course. Tell me this. Are things in a bad way here? The herds, I understand, are down to six thousand. Is it as bad as that?”

“A little worse, Pablito. We are praying for a good year. But we have never had so few cows. I hadn’t the heart to tell you.”

“No?” grinned Pablo. “Little I have to do with Alamos, you should know that!”

“Ah, but it is in sad case, the ranch, Pablito! I will show you my little book when you come back from the garden.”

Martin looked dejected; he must have long been reproaching himself for the dreadful state of affairs on the ranch. Everyone bullied the old majordomo, the whipping-boy of Alamos. Pablo went straight into the garden. Dona Ana was in a tall, fan-backed Manila chair under the palms, and about her were sitting the Cabinet—Cousin Basile, Aunt Paz, the inseparable Luisa, who lived at the Casa: a spraying of rancher neighbors, some related to the Aguirres, some not; and there was also Felipe Gozlan, tailored in fawn and blue. They had all been awaiting his coming, Pablo felt that at once. He was not sure which way the wind sat for himself, but he did not think it was favorable. What irritated him most was the inclusion of Felipe in the group.

By what right had this stranger been given almost family rank? And a stranger of whose origins no one knew anything, who he actually was.

The folk about Dona Ana were all chatting, and with an ease that struck Pablo as factitious, and they subsided when he came up. Cousin Basile lifted his chins, then rose, and waved to his own chair, which Pablo took, after bowing to everyone.

Felipe glanced at his watch, and remarked with an air of surprise that it was two o'clock. Aunt Paz spoke, rising trimly, and tidied the side-table near Dona Ana's chair. The séance was over; and after leave-takings, in which Cousin Basile shook hands with Pablo, they drifted down the path under the arbor. Birds lifted, with chattering, and Pablo drew up his chair to wait upon his grandmother and destiny. The eyes that met his were brightly black and hard, set in a doughy, lined old face. It was a face not so much imperious as stubborn and shrewd. He knew he was in for a bad half hour. She opened a small laced fan, and it clicked as she waved it in a hand that was as large and bony as a peasant's. Dona Ana was an aristocrat and landowner in fee-simple of will, not of birth. Pablo had never regarded her at all with filial attachment. He had looked upon her as did the Indian servants, as at something impersonal, to be viewed from afar, like the hills, or the Bishop that the Padre Ministro and the escort of friars brought up to Alamos once or twice a year.

"They tell me," said Dona Ana sharply, "that you have just bought a herd of cows. I want to know about this!"

"It is true. I bought them from Don Pedro Jiminez."

"You understand that you are a minor! You had no right to go into such a venture without first consulting my wishes. Where did you get the money?"

"It was money I earned on the voyage. After all, I have been away four years at sea."

"You spent it outside of the family and our neighbors—and that was both thoughtless and defiant, especially in times like these. Why did you not think of Alamos first? Why do you think no one has rights or duties but yourself?" The harsh voice, like the scratch of a nail on a dusty slate, girded at him. "You bought cows. Very well, where will they graze?"

"On my land, Dona Ana. On my half league."

"Our cattle have the usage of that half league!" Dona Ana with fan and clenched fist was beating the arm of her chair, furious. "They have always had the run of it! You must run your beasts elsewhere!"

Pablo leaned back, breathing heavily. She had no right to be so peremptory, nor to interfere with his managing his own land as he wished. But she was very old, and accustomed to being obeyed.

“There is plenty of grazing on my range,” he said, “and my two hundred cows can’t interfere much with those of Alamos.”

“You must take those beasts away! The usage of that land is mine! If you do not herd those cows of yours elsewhere, and by tomorrow noon, I will have the majordomo and the vaqueros drive them off—to the hills!”

She confronted him with a stony glare. But he had no apprehensions. He recognized her strength, her authoritative will. They were akin to his own. He admired her. He leaned forward, smiling gently.

“My cows will stay on my land, Dona Ana. Martin also knows the boundary line, and so do the vaqueros. If others try to drive off my cows”—it was Felipe Gozlan and Cousin Basile he had in mind—“I shall be there to show where the boundary line runs. So also will the Alcalde, and Doctor Kit, who is my legal guardian.”

They were on equal footing. Dona Ana perceived that now. Though her eyes were still jewel-hard, their glare had diminished. She saw in Pablo her son-in-law, the *Ingles*; but more than that, she saw in him the late General, whom she had respected and feared, though she had overreached him in business. That Spaniard was far stronger than the mild *Ingles*, from whom this grandson must have got naught but his coloring and foreign ways. She looked away into the past, all about her receding into shadow. She had met defeat, but was too wearied to feel it much. She was aware of little else except that she was tired.

“Four years? So you have been away four years?” she asked, bringing herself back with a start. “You have everything you want in your room? You are comfortable? Remember, I am mistress of Alamos!”

“Quite, Dona Ana,” he said.

But Dona Ana was already fast asleep. There was another stir of birds down at the arbor as he rose, and he fancied he saw the wrathful flounce of Aunt Paz’ skirt. Perhaps the whole Cabinet was in the arbor. None of them came out as he stood there, feeling a little helpless; then two Indian women hurried over to the fan-backed chair, and carried it into the house, he following with the side-table.

The mustang cropped on the high eminence of the ridge, and Pablo, his blanket-roll strapped behind, lolled in the saddle and looked upon the panorama of the ranch. It was early, barely seven o'clock, but the sun was warm on his shoulders. He had been away, across the Salinas, hunting for summer pasturage for his herd, and he had found a green clearing on the slopes of Loma Prieta. Home-staying folk like Martin and Don Pedro Jiminez had it fixed in their heads that Loma Prieta was haunted by wolves of great ferocity and size. Bloody-eyed wolves that bounded out of the gloom, and with one snap of their jaws broke the neck of a bull or a horse. Lambs and heifers never returned from that mountain, and no holy friar, however laden down with amulets, dared traverse it without the company of an armed bodyguard. No one had ever seen these beasts at close hand; but they were a legend believed in, and to the children they were as real as the wolf in *Little Red Riding Hood*.

Pablo had seen nothing larger than a deer, and heard nothing graver than the bark of a fox or coyote. A most profitable trip. On that pasturage his precious herd would fatten quicker than down by the creek on his half league, and at no cost. In two or three months he would run the cattle up to Loma Prieta, with his dogs, and get back into the swing of herding. He was also richer by a wobbly calf that had appeared in the night.

In July he would have a round-up, and brand with a mark of his own—a triangle to represent a sail. The first herd to be branded in these uplands. Two hundred and one for a start; then next year——

Already seeing himself rich and masterful, he whistled against the sea-breeze. Unquiet days were ahead. In Monterey there was talk of war before summer, which was nonsense, of course. But he was ready for them; he was never more himself than when in a rough game, either of muscle or wits. He had won a game of wits against Dona Ana, but he looked back upon it with small gratification, for age was heavy upon her. Though his grandmother had always been shrewd, she had now and then been vulnerable, and even the wisest of Californios could not outwit destiny in the dry years. Dona Ana had lost cattle, and she had lost acres, and in losing the acres, much of the ranch had fallen into the hands of Ynes' father, and had now come to Ynes herself. Pablo looked thoughtfully at Alamos, the green lushness of it slumbering in

the morning haze. What he owned, and what Ynes owned would together make far more than a league—and whatever happened this summer, it would still be an enviable holding.

The mine? His father would expect him to do something about that. The years blinked out, and he saw his father in the tunnel of the mine, leaning against the wall, the water dripping on his leathern jacket as he looked into the darkness of the solid rock, dreamily, like one in a trance.

There was grain, and there was also timber. Wool? No, not wool. No one would touch wool. All right-minded Californios, even those who went about in rags, kept aloof from the growers of sheep. Don Jiminez, poor man, making a venture in sheep, had winced under the disapprobation of his neighbors, and after keeping a score of the animals to kill for his table, had let the wolves and the pumas harry his flock to nothing.

Pablo started. An ox-cart had backed against the fence of the orchard at this end of the old asistencia. And through the apple-trees he saw Martin. A bit of tanning had been going on there. The orchard adjoined the outdoor stable, or corral, and it was fenced with tall boughs of dried willow—for it was also a *ramada*, where the Indians could gather for a dance and a barbecue. Pablo thrust fingers into his mouth and gave a blast. Two Indians poked their heads out of the old chapel, Martin turned, hands half uplifted as if startled, and saw him.

Pablo felt his chin; it was fuzzy, and he might as well go in the back way, through his window, and shave before meeting any of the women in the Casa. After sleeping out in the woods he was probably a sight. He rode down to the orchard, and vaulted over the fence. There were two bullock skulls under a tree; Martin was sitting on one, and Pablo sat on the other. An Indian brought them mugs of coffee from a jar steaming over a glow of embers, and some rolled-up tortillas.

“I was almost starved,” said Pablo.

“You were away all night?” asked Martin. “I didn’t see a light in your room.”

“I was out on Prieta looking for grass. I saw your hat, and I whistled.” Pablo laughed. “You jumped like a man at the end of a rope.”

“There was no telling who it could be,” said Martin guardedly.

Pablo looked into the asistencia, the semi-darkness of the open end of it among trees, and saw the Indians bending hides that had been rubbed with oil and stone until they had the shine of glass. The majordomo kept alive his

knack for saddlery work, and tanned all the leather that could be used by Alamos, and the women and near-relatives of the Cabinet. For the women he tanned leather in a blanching liquor, so that it might take on the fashionable red glaze. Pablo saw that these were dark and coarse.

“For the army?” he asked.

Martin spoke quietly. “For our *soldados*. I had to turn myself into a begging friar, going from one ranch to another to get skins. And then tan them here, with as little ado as possible.

“The *soldados* will need boots. And more than boots.”

They drank coffee in silence, the majordomo looking seaward as if at a gathering cloud, ears pricked, eyes hooded.

“You see it coming, Martin?”

“I have seen it coming for years. And I am waiting, from one sunset to another, Pablito.”

He throve on forebodings, and as far back as Pablo could remember, the old sergeant had forever been muttering darkly on battles to come.

“Is there any outlook for leather?” Pablo asked suddenly. There were a half dozen vats in the orchard, like watering-troughs, and in the asistencia were benches and drying-racks. “I think we could make good leather here at Alamos.”

The majordomo thrust forward his boots. “There!” his voice rang out proudly. “Where could you find better?”

“No man could!”

The trouble was, no leather could be shipped out. The Government was behind the traders, and all the traders would take was hides—raw hides and tallow. A barefooted Indian, or Californio, the traders preferred to one shod in home-tanned leather. The traders sold boots at a gouge, and bought raw hides at the rate of two dollars each in goods, or a dollar and a half in money: a difference that covered handsomely the margin for bad debts.

“You see, Pablito, it is these merchants—these Americans with the tailed caps who come over the Sierra, and those who come by sea. I don’t know which is the worse—the fox that climbs, or the fox that swims. Neither is a friend to the Government.”

From atop the ridge that morning Pablo had seen the trader *Marietta* at anchor out on the roadstead. She had been cruising up and down the coast,

buying raw hides which she packed down into the hold with the help of jack-screws. Her hold, after two years, was still only half full. It was the quip at Chico Aria's that hides were growing as scarce as otter skins. The hide trade was too speculative, Pablo thought; but there was something to be made in tallow, and since prices could sink no lower, in the face of demand, they might rise.

"They are smugglers, no less," said Martin. "And they have us by the throat! The prices they ask! Five months' wages for a garment like this!" He clapped his sleeve by way of rhetorical emphasis. This coat was of soft Alamos leather, and the rest of his garb had been woven by Indians. "If I were the Government, I would turn cannon on them!"

"There are still a few things we can get cheaply," smiled Pablo, giving the old patriot a cigar. "This, for example."

Customers had but to row out to the *Marietta* to evade paying the thundering duty of eighty percent, or whatever the impost was for the day, and that depended on the whim of the Governor. The *Marietta* was growing rich on the sale of clocks, tinware, percale, shot and fripperies. How much she paid for her trading license, no one could tell unless he looked into the pocket of the Alcalde of the First Instance, so went the hearsay at the port—but such rumors seldom winged inland. If they did, they were appraised as mere tavern gabblings, or canards set loose by friends of the Americans and the traders.

Martin glanced up at the sun, then under the blossom-lit branches into the shed, where the Indians were in the shadows, waiting.

"Bring out the hides now," he said quietly.

The Indians emerged, like terracotta statues come to life, balancing on their kerchiefed heads great shining plates of leather. Pablo got over the fence, and stowed them in the high-walled ox-cart.

"Springy," he said, treading the cargo flat. He looked about him. "We'll top it with hay. Some of that tall mustard by the woodpile."

The mustard fell to the strokes of a bill-hook, and was flung up to Pablo, who crowned it and lashed it down with ropes. All was secure, the nature of the lading safe even from a guess. The oxen were goaded, the cart moved through waist-high grass and purple lupin as quietly as if it were a cloud, except for the swishing rustle which was no louder than the stir of the breeze in the foliage. The majordomo breathed freely, then relighted his cigar.

Pablo laughed. "I wouldn't have known it was our old ox-cart. Not even one squeak!"

"Aye, Pablito. The Dona Ana—poor soul—is not to be disturbed. We have taken all but twenty of our dogs to stay at the ranch of Felipe Gozlan, so she may have more tranquility."

"And you have, for once, been generous with the axle-grease. A quiet cart won't run into trouble, either. Where is the leather going to, Martin?"

"To an old stable in the woods, a mile beyond Miura's hacienda. Tomorrow night I shall be there, with two others who are saddlers, and we shall cut the leather up for boots. Boots for the Independents. We must be ready in case violence breaks out upon us, like a storm from the sea—or from over the Sierra. I have been hearing much these days, Pablito, that has made me feel uneasy. But we have made a start. Eighty hides, and the tanning work of three months. Little enough, but the most we could do."

He watched the cart until it was lost among the firs, and had begun its descent into the ravine. Ten of the hides had been given him by Don Jiminez, the others he had laboriously gathered here and there from those upon whom he had called after dark, to speak with them outside, in a whisper, eloquently pleading. No *hombre fino*, however pro-American, refused a hide to the majordomo of Alamos, the half-legendary old soldier whose devotion to California and the cause of freedom was so prodigiously known. The tanning he supervised in the hidden corner of the orchard and the half-dark crypt, working between midnight and sunrise, with his own dog at the gate to give cry if someone drew near. No one need be the wiser—not even Dona Ana and Paz, who, being women, should remain out of any activity in politics. They were to be protected. If the worst happened, he would have but to surrender a life that belonged not to himself but to the cause.

The ox-cart was now out of sight, and he said, "I hope it will reach there safely, Pablito."

"It should, Martin. That mustard atop would be enough to mislead anyone. But anyone might stop the cart, of course. I'll ride after it, and see that it goes straight on."

"Indians are Indians, and could come from any ranch. But if the cart will be stopped, and they see you—one from Alamos——"

"No, the cart will not be stopped," said Pablo, putting feet into his stirrups. "That cargo is worth a cannon any day! I shall be its escort." Pablo waved his quirt as if it were a sword, and saluted. "*Adios, Sergeant!*"

The majordomo watched him speed through the firs and then sink into the wooded ravine. How like a vaquero born rode that youth, as if he had never spent a day on the great wetness, nor pulled an oar in his life. The hope rose in the old campaigner's breast that if battles should come, the son of Don Tomas, with his boldness and the conqueror's eye, would be on the side of the Independents, that valorous handful, or failing that, on the side of the Government, who, even the stupidest and most illiterate of them, were at least Californios.

So musing, the majordomo buttoned his coat and marched with dignity to the yard of the Casa. He beheld a stir in it; the women were flocking to the veranda, clacking, no doubt, like excited hens—as if there were no work to do, as if Dona Ana were not ill, almost on her deathbed.

At the gate stood a fleet and comely horse, black as the devil, with silver harness. It was Felipe Gozlan's horse. Beyond that was another, tied to the limb of a sycamore, and Martin's sharp glance told him it had a Presidio bridle and medical saddle-bag. Dona Ana was no better, probably worse. But Gozlan, that *gran' bestia* of his special abhorrence, what could have brought him up? Just as Martin stood, pondering doubtfully what it meant, the image coming into his mind of a falcon hovering over a stricken and defenseless animal, he heard the voice of Doctor Kit in the further wing of the Casa. It ceased abruptly with the closing of a window.

Martin shrugged and retreated moodily to sit in his chair by the gate and relight the stump of his cigar. For all he knew, Dona Ana was at her dissolution, the Padre Ministro was there with oils, and Alamos was facing its one great change since the Aguirres came to live upon it. Oblivious to the servants watching him from the yard, and to the dogs crouched before him in a semi-circle, he smoked in gloom, his shoulders heavy with dejection. Half a centaur, whose life had been passed riding in the sun, wind and rain, more at ease under his poncho than under any roof, affairs had also grown too complex for him, since he was not more given than an Indian to hard thinking. Shadowily across his mind drifted intuitions, and he considered them one by one. He adhered to certain deeply-felt principles, which he placed above self-interest, and felt his judgments sound if they squared with his instincts—the instincts of a healthy and half-savage horseman. Suddenly he smote his knee. He listened again to the voice, deep and irascible, of Doctor Kit, the tones muffled behind the window.

No, Dona Ana was not on her deathbed. And proof? The doctor would not be declaiming, as if he were in his surgery, at some drunken mozo or surly, wooden-headed corporal who had come in to be patched after a brawl

at a wine-shop. Nor would Felipe Gozlan—there was a fellow that Don Tomas would have ordered off the premises!—that intruding spy to whom Fray Pio was lackey, be there at such a moment. The doctor would not have tolerated him.

“I would not advise it,” pronounced Doctor Kit. “There is nothing good to be said for a change of air and environment for a patient of her age.”

“There is, if you will pardon me, Doctor, something in peace of mind, and a renewal of old interests,” observed Felipe, who was standing deferentially by the further window.

“And it would be a change,” agreed Paz, firmly, from her armchair, with a reassuring nod at her mother. Her chin was tilted up, and her hands were clasped tightly, as much in anger as in resolution. The Doctor, whom she had never liked, was as stubborn as a stone-cart ox. “A change is what she needs, as I told you before.”

Doctor Kit turned a scowling face upon everyone in the room, including Cousin Luisa and Ynes.

“If the Senora reaches Guadalajara alive, I shall believe in miracles.”

“The *Tia Jacinta*,” Felipe opposed, “is a comfortable vessel, you may permit me to repeat. I was aboard her this morning and saw the two cabins again. And Captain Yriarte is of opinion the voyage will be calm.”

“Off Tehuantepec it will be kicking up like the devil.”

“Calm weather or borrasca,” said Dona Ana, propped up with pillows, “it makes no difference. I have gone through more gales and hurricanes than I can remember. Don Felipe is right. Paz and myself and Ynes will leave in the morning.”

“Very well, then,” said the Doctor, with a nod of relief, for the argument had been long and futile. The debate had livened up the patient like a tonic. “The passages are arranged for? There isn’t much time. Those sloop masters usually prefer to close their fists on some hard dollars.”

“I have the amount,” said Felipe. “That is,” he said quietly in another tone, and the change of key was not lost upon Doctor Kit, who was bending his head sideways towards him, “I shall be seeing Captain Yriarte this afternoon.”

The doctor picked up his satchel and hat, and made a bow that seemed to include everyone in the room except Felipe.

"I may go aboard the vessel in the morning," he said indifferently. "Adios!"

At the gate he stopped a moment, saw that no one was about save the majordomo, who rose from his chair and asked brusquely, "The *vieja* will live, then?"

There was a rough fraternity of sorts among those who had served with the Presidio corps in its less tranquil years. Doctor and sergeant had campaigned under two Governors, and singed their boots at the same campfires when the Pueblo de Sonoma was flung up as a barrier against the invading Russians.

"Not likely," said the doctor, mounting into his saddle. "Unless she has absolute rest for a month, two months."

As he drew on his gloves, his eyes roved the sky from the hills above which wheeled a remote condor, to the immensity of the Pacific and the fog-banks shuttled by the growing winds. Beneath that shroud the sea was moving with the agitation of a millrace.

"Absolute rest! But in the morning she leaves with the two women for Acapulco. A week of that storm in the *Tia Jacinta*, which is no larger than a cradle, and it will be the end." The doctor shrugged. "The end, you understand, and the *vieja* goes over the side."

The old sergeant bent his perfectly white head and crossed himself with a murmur of pity. He had a dread of the sea, and in his three journeyings between Mexico and this colonial outpost had gone over the mountains on horseback with a dusty and fatigued *tropilla*.

"And to leave Alamos—" He waved at the peaceful vista of the ranch and the hills violet in the haze of late spring. "To leave here, where there is rest and quietness!"

As if besought, the doctor glanced over Alamos, and watched again the condor that was like a gigantic hawk poised for a swoop upon its prey.

"Yes, yes," he agreed in a subdued voice.

He flicked his thumb onward, and the majordomo walked by his saddle to the orchard gate.

"We, as old soldiers, Martin, know how swiftly quietness may end, to give way to violence—that violence which never dies wholly, but abates, to spring up anew like a raging fever, often more terrible than before.

“We have seen many a fever and friends go down before it. I perceive the symptoms again. This time a fever we can no more stamp out underfoot than if it were a movement of air. And the sounds of it are like the wings of fate stirring for the flight upon us. This time it is a movement of the spirit. They call it in the East ‘the Manifest Destiny.’ A fine phrase, *soldado*! It proves that others besides ourselves in California are accomplished in the art of declamation. And it is a good phrase, like a sanction and a seal—Destiny being a nobler word than Fate, though they are the same for a thing that is beyond good, beyond evil, so impersonal it is.

“And we here in the province, we shall be of little account. California will be as an over-ripe apple knocked into a basket, and we as the insects upon it. We shall, of course, hang on to the apple as long as we can.”

The doctor turned abruptly. “Gozlan was here last night, also?”

“Dona Ana sent for him. And the two of them with Paz, and a notary, sat up late, talking over business. I saw through the corridor window her maid, Amara, bringing pen and ink to the *vieja*’s room. It is probable they signed a paper.”

“Very probable.” It was evident now to the doctor that when the notary left the message at the inn for him to call at Alamos in the morning, the notary must have come directly from the ranch, for it was close upon midnight. “Pablo—where is Pablo?”

“Gone to the port. He went down to see that some hides got through the town safely.”

“Tell him to dine with me tonight at Chico Aria’s.”

Rider and horse departed, and the majordomo walked through the orchard to his room in the asistencia. He stood blinking a moment in the doorway, then sat before the small window that gave out over the path from the ravine, over which Pablo would be sure to come. His glance drifted to his uniform hanging on the wall, and then to the carbine on the adjoining peg: the sole relics, except for a scar and the barest limp, of his thirty years of service with the presidial force from the Crown days.

He reached for his tool kit, and busied himself with the carbine. It was a weapon that had been old when given to him as a young recruit; but it was not to be adjudged obsolete, and he had cunning hands and patience.

“*Cuando suena la tromba de guerra*,” he murmured as a scrap of an old regimental tune rose from the past.

Was the advent of war to be heralded this time by any trumpet? Or by a shot from one of the old cannons at the fort? It still had three that were serviceable. When that Commodore seized Monterey four years ago and ran the American flag atop the customs-house—he was under the belief war was on—his shipmaster spiked all the Presidio guns. The Commodore left after the most elaborate apologies, but the spikes had not yet been drilled out.

Perhaps, reflected the majordomo, it was not yet too late for that task. Among the force of twenty or so men at the Presidio—a skeleton force merely—or among the auxiliary band of cavalymen, who were a group of a hundred, and the thirty Independents, there must somewhere be an artificer skilful with drills.

Assuredly, battles were soon to come, and the local defenders were few. In the whole province they barely numbered five hundred, and most of these were in the South. None of the battles the majordomo had been engaged in had been of a sanguinary nature. All had lacked ferocity, most of them terminating over wine at a fandango and a barbecue, to which each side contributed a notably fat ox of honor.

But this time arms were to be turned upon the Americans. A melancholy and restless breed of men, with thin mouths tobacco-stained, fringed coats, little given to courtliness, and impelled, as if wound up inside, by driving notions of Destiny. The majordomo, having fitted together the parts of his worn carbine, replaced it on the peg, took off his glasses, and sighed. He felt himself involved in a most desperate state of affairs. Dona Ana was going, and that was like the falling of a tree. And tomorrow—war. Doctor Kit, most sagacious of all men in the region, now that Don Tomas was gone, had already perceived the first tremors of it. It had sounded like the wing-beatings of a monstrously large bird. The echoes, possibly of cannon at a distance, perhaps on the other side of the Sierra.

That was a late afternoon wind thrumming. The sky was greenish and the violet hollows on the hillside had turned black, the majordomo saw as he went out under the trees. There was Pablo coming now, riding high above the lupins, the horse lathered.

“The hides are safe!” he called out. “You’ll have your Indians back in the morning, if they’re sober.”

“*Bueno*, it was the hides that mattered. Saddle another horse now, Pablito. And before it gets dark, go. Doctor Kit is waiting for you.”



Why hadn't Doctor Kit somehow got the message to him before this, Pablo wondered, and rather irritably. It would be a plaguy night ride down to the tavern and back with no stars overhead, and a lantern bumping at his saddle. And he wanted to see Ynes. That business with the leather, the oxen crawling like snails, had taken a whole day, and no one had so much as thrown the cart a glance. The yard was full of Indians from other ranches and there was a turmoil of dogs. On the veranda were cowskin trunks, hampers and rolls of blankets. He strode through, and into the corridor, where the stout Amara was packing another hamper. This was portentous. Ynes was coming out of Dona Ana's room.

"Well, you're back," she said, tossing a couple of books into the hamper. She tossed them with an air of abstraction as if her mind were on the packing and nothing else. "You didn't think of coming home earlier, I suppose."

"No. There were some chores I had to do," he said easily. "I hope I was missed, though."

Inwardly he was half stupefied. Why all this chaos? Was Dona Ana dead, and were the women clearing out the suite to bring in the pall, candles from the Mission, and all the dreadful trappings to make proper the obsequies expected of any solid family in the parish?

"There was enough to do here in the Casa," she said, curtly.

"What's happened?" he asked, with a movement of his lips. He felt like a blunderer, and that made him resentful. "I don't suppose you'd mind telling me? Outside perhaps?"

They went into the yard, then through the gate, and paused near a thicket of mountain mahogany. "We're sailing at noon for Mexico. Dona Ana was bent on going—her last wish, she said. There wasn't any arguing with her, therefore. Felipe was on her side from the start. Doctor Kit growled a lot, and gave in to letting her try a sea voyage."

"And to die without him," Pablo interrupted. "How long will you be gone?"

"I don't know. Quite some time, perhaps. Paz is taking along the silver and the best linen. But there'll be things enough here, and Cousin Luisa is staying on to look after the place." Ynes plucked off a branchlet of the mahogany. "So that's what we've been doing, frantically stuffing trunks and hampers. And it was hardly a time for you to be away."

"Sorry," he smiled ruefully. "But there wasn't any way of my knowing. And there were the Indians around to do the lugging." He nearly added, "and

also Felipe.” In another minute he would be coming to the subject of Felipe. “You like the idea of the voyage, don’t you?” he asked. “It is exciting!”

“Rather more than going to a fandango,” Ynes said.

“It was quite wonderful of Felipe to arrange it for us,” she added, smiling at him. “We’re going out on the *Tia Jacinta*.”

“There’s not a better vessel on the Coast,” he said, after a breath.

That had shocked him. The *Tia Jacinta*’s agent, Captain Bascomb, a cheery and toothless old shark from Nantucket, sold passage on this boat—“the Governors’ boat,” it was called—only for cash in advance. No hides for Bascomb, no trading nonsense—but cash on the line. It was remarked in shipping offices that he had worn his teeth to the gums biting on the dollars.

“The *Tia Jacinta* has two roomy cabins amidship,” said Pablo. “They’re together, and you should have them both. I’ve put a few things Bascomb’s way in the line of freight, and he may trim the charges a little for us.”

Ynes looked at him with swift respect. Ports, foreign lands, agents, ship-owners, the insides of vessels—all these things that were but names to her, Pablo knew with a worldly and intimate knowledge, and that impressed her deeply. They were nearly of an age, but when he was living home, she had been far older than he in the ways of people; since his return, it was he who had the ascendancy, who had the older mind, and who dominated her. He had will, he had solidity; and a certain hardness, perhaps, which showed in his grey-blue eyes, often too glintingly hard for one so young. He never flattered her nor beguiled her with compliments. Perhaps that should have flattered her, for it was as if he regarded her as an equal. But since she liked more open flattery and compliment, she rebelled against him. She never rebelled against Felipe, whose manner, which was arch, deferential, bantering, suavely formal, or as courtly as the Governor’s or any grandee’s, responded to all her moods, and was eternally pleasing.

“Felipe,” she said, “has arranged for us to get both the cabins. And he paid Bascomb this morning, or perhaps it was last night. It was wonderful of him, we felt.”

She uttered that impetuously, with a happy smile. The voyage would be comfortable, a real holiday.

All of Pablo’s being tingled. He recoiled inwardly, as if he had been struck a blow from Felipe’s hand. A flush went over his face, and he could have cried out hotly. Then anger gave way to mortification. Felipe must have

planked down hundreds of dollars under Bascomb's nose. A showy play that had been, to impress women, and most especially Dona Ana.

"Yes," agreed Pablo, smiling back.

He would not betray his chagrin, though he could not help that flush. Come to think of it, he had only himself to blame in the affair; he should not have been so hasty in acquiring that spectral handful of cows. Everyone owned cows. He could have imposed himself more upon the women of the Casa if he had kept that money a few days longer, and been prepared for any contingency. The worst of it was that Ynes, in particular, was impressed by Felipe's manoeuver. But now for a good face upon the business.

"Yes, it was wonderful of him," he observed, with easy indifference, and again the tolerant smile. "It means you will have a comfortable voyage—a real sea holiday."

A bat gyrated in the dusk, and whisked between them into the mahogany bush. Ynes glanced towards a window glowing now with a lamp, then listened.

"Aunt Paz is still asleep—she had put off her siesta to pack."

"And Dona Ana?"

"Rather in a stupor after all that excitement, and she wants nobody around. That means we'll all have to be up with the sun. We may as well go in."

"Could I be of the least possible help? I have to be at the tavern for dinner, and I ought to be riding down now."

Slowly her eyebrows lifted. "You have to be at the—tavern?" A vertical line etched atop her nose. She drew back in offense.

"Yes," he said, and pretending he had not noticed her pique, he looked into the dusk-filled air about him. "And I may not return tonight. But I'll be aboard the boat early."

She showed him her back.

"Oh, not if you should find it the least bit troublesome!" she answered. "I know you have altogether too much to do."

Her back stiffened, she darted on with a flounce of skirts. She was a tableau of wrath, of hauteur. Her feet were ridiculously small. In gopher-fur slippers, they were like angry mice as she pattered furiously through the gate.

"I shall want to say at least goodbye," Pablo called after her.

No answer. And the rigid pose of her head informed him, or so he felt, that pursuit would be useless. Indeed, he had no intention of pursuing her. She had always been pampered, and after these emotional outbursts, it was he, oftener than anyone else, who comforted her. He would leave the task of consoling her to Felipe—Felipe the wonderful—who would have a grievous time of it, perhaps an alarming one. It was quite improbable that he had ever seen Ynes in one of her tantrums before.

He heard the Casa door slam behind her. As he rode on, he smiled a little grimly, and was not displeased.



“Late,” said Pablo, hanging his wet poncho on a nail. “But I wouldn’t have cared if it was midnight. I was glad to leave Alamos behind.”

It had suddenly come on to rain. Fog had pressed upon him all the way, and the horse had groped and slithered down one hill after another in a darkness resounding with the sea’s tumult.

“Eh?” muttered the Doctor absently. He was reading letters between a pair of candlesticks at the table, on which the dinner was spread. With the same knife he alternately cut meat and slit envelopes. The post had come in by courier and by sail. The envelopes were all blobbed with sealing-wax. “Ah, yes. A lot of confusion up at the ranch, to be sure. No, you’re not late. Sit down. I just got in, myself.”

He resumed his attack on the joint. Pablo bolted his dinner in silence, then remarked, “They’ll have a dirty voyage from the start.”

“H’m! I warned her! And all the thanks I got was a sound rating from the bed. Must be something in the climate up there that fosters obstinacy! Affects the whole tribe!” The Doctor gave a wry cluck. “Now what was it you brought in here last time? An Eskimo?”

“An Aleut. Our harpooner, and a very good fellow. I only wish I had taken his advice, and we had smuggled in three times as many flasks. I would have some surplus money—I think I would——”

“No!” The doctor leaned back to survey him. “With you it is Caesar or nothing! You’d have straightway bought three times as many cows. And not have a brass coin left over! Suppose you had, what then?”

At his skewering glance, Pablo shrugged and flung a nod in the direction of the port. “I would have got that cabin passage for the women.”

“Instead of which,” the doctor went on, “Felipe Gozlan bought the tickets, and you are not feeling chirpy over it.”

“Then you knew,” said Pablo bitterly. “He’s set himself up as banker of the family—stole a march even on Cousin Basile, who is usually in on everything.” His voice rose in protest. “I wasn’t told! Why?”

“There was not time enough. But it’s done now,” said the Doctor, whispering. “I’ve made some enquiries on my own account. After hearing the notary was up there. It was a five months’ loan. The notary drew up a mortgage——”

“Not on the ranch!”

“On a part of it, yes. Dona Ana—she declined a loan out of hand, as Gozlan knew very well she would. And so a lien was made out, hypothecating a part of the ranch.”

Louder than the surge and drag of the sea on the beach was the roar in Pablo’s head. He swallowed, gripping the table.

“That takes in the hill and the red diggings,” the voice went on, and Pablo sprang to his feet trembling.

“Not the hill—and my father’s mine!” he shouted.

“Exactly that. The fellow may be a scoundrel—though the law can’t prove it. But he isn’t a fool.” The Doctor slid him a glass of rum. “Get that down!”

Pablo, unheeding, stared out of the window, then patrolled the room, his rumpled head bent in fury and despair. With his rolling gait and stained jersey he was like a sailor clumping the deck of a ship headed for a reef. The elder devoted himself to his pipe and bottle, mulling the replies he would have to send out with the next post. The letters newly arrived had been a month and a half on the way, as if the mail-bags had been picked up and dropped at the whim of any chance messenger on the road, or at some port. These delays were infamous. Nothing could be planned for. Nothing! Gabriel might already have blown his horn, or Polk and Congress have declared war on Mexico—to acquire California. But at this rate no one in Monterey would hear of these events until summer’s end.

Behind him the violence of the perturbed march and the hard breathing died down. Pablo sat down firmly in the chair opposite him.

“Is that *tecolero*—that fandango singer—going to have that mine?” the doctor flung at him.

“*Pienso que no!*” Pablo glowered through a tumble of hair. “I’ll shoot it out with him first! That mine was my father’s. No one is to have it now but myself!” he shouted.

“You are not likely to unless you can be quiet. That fellow Gozlan is no fool. Don’t get in his way. And don’t try any bluffing, either. Don’t muff the game. Wait until you can play a trump card.

“I was thinking it over,” the Doctor went on, shaking out a match. “It’s a game worth waiting for.”

Wisdom had spoken. Pablo nodded. “No one can do much with that mine now?”

“No one. Not with these laws. Later, perhaps. Assuredly when we have a republic of our own, and faith and social order are established. Then California will be able to develop her material resources. We must keep up a ceaseless effort——”

Pablo drained his glass. “And a ceaseless oratory,” was the remark that almost came to his lips. The Doctor was the most zealous orator on the side of the Independents, but a worker besides, and with energy and a disinterested and patriotic heart he had been toiling for the cause ever since Texas broke away from Mexico seventeen years before, and under Sam Houston formed the Republic of Texas. “Texas had its Houston, and California has its Luis Medina,” was his watchword.

“I was born here,” Pablo observed delicately. “And most of us at Alamos are Independents. But if—but if the Americans pour in too fast——”

The Doctor fell silent. “Then that will settle it,” he said glumly. “We shall have their laws, not ours. But they will be better than what we have now. You will be able to plan to some purpose.”

Pablo bent forward. “The mine—somehow I must work it. My father knew rocks.”

The Doctor heard him out. “It was his profession,” he said. “And one that should be worth acquiring, when our house is put in order.”

Long before he had done, Pablo was half asleep on the couch. “Have Chico wake me up if you’re not here,” he mumbled. “There’s the *Tia Jacinta* waiting.”

Doctor Kit, the candlelight shining on his superb head, scratched off letters. He had given no heed to that drowsy babbling, except when the flasks came in. The lad could do something with the mine—after a couple of years

in Cornwall. Queer, but he hadn't so much as mentioned the girl, only the mine. The girl was a vain little fool, a coquette. Hardly her fault, with those women about her, indulging her caprices, spoiling her, matching her off with that Gozlan—and where had he come from, in the first place? No one in the region knew anything of Felipe Gozlan, and if they racked their heads they could recall only that he had first been seen about with that rapacious and paunchy renegade, Fray Pio. Birds of a feather, no doubt. The Doctor shook his head, then, engrossed in matters of politics, drove his pen steadily over paper until it was almost dawn. An hour of sleep, and he was riding out to make the rounds of the haciendas before he returned to his patients in the office and at the Presidio.



Pablo rose in his stirrups and looked back over the turbulent sea. In the roadstead the traders, a frigate or two, and the *Tia Jacinta* were bowing their masts above a cauldron of whitecaps. The black pile-work of the jetty was lost in foam and clashing waves that surged over its top. The lighters and dinghies usually moored at the jetty had been dragged up the beach, and the boatmen had settled themselves at the wineshops to drink out the gale. Squalls were blowing up all around. The prevailing wind, west-by-south, was likely to last another day.

The *Tia Jacinta*, so Pablo was told at the agent's, would pull out at noon regardless—whether the passengers were aboard or not.

“That's the sailing time, sir,” Bascomb said crisply. “Since the *Tia Jacinta* carries Government post, her schedule is fixed. If no boatmen can be got in this storm, that is regrettable, but the responsibility is not ours.”

Pablo disliked that office. He disliked Bascomb's nasal twang, eyes cold behind a pince-nez, and thin hair combed damply forward over the ears. Bascomb dealt in bills of exchange, speculated, never without profit, on hides; did business with officials, generals, and ship-owners, and being therefore an aristocrat, assumed the title of Captain.

Pablo protested. Bascomb displayed first heat, and then, after Pablo asked if the boatmen had not been got drunk so that the *Tia Jacinta* might sail without passengers, whose cabins, paid for in hard cash, could be sold again in Santa Barbara—Bascomb displayed signs of apoplexy.

“I will assume that responsibility,” said Pablo before the agent could recover. “And take them over in a rowboat. I'm a sailor, myself, not a wharf

clerk.”

Then he rode fast up the road to head off the cart bearing the passengers from Alamos. To go further would be useless, for the cart would veer at this point to reach the town. With his hat firmed against the cannonading wind, one leg crooked about the saddle-horn, he sat waiting, a black cheroot in his teeth. The art of smoking these cheroots, a staple in the Monterey shops, and to the fumes of which, so legend went, only the Indians and hide strippers were immune, he had conquered when a strutting vaquero of thirteen. The arts had come to him easily, and no less had the range of seamanship from Bowditch’s manual to sail-reefing in a blizzard. It was impossible for Pablo to conceive there was anything further for him to learn.

In a clearing lambs bleated hysterically in the wind that was tearing blue patches in the sky. California could show nothing more beautiful than this landscape with its clear April freshness, the cypress trees, and the sea tumbling on honey-colored sand. Here the road crossed the twisted mule-path that had outlasted the youngest Franciscan whose sandals had clogged over it in the epoch when it was a link between Mission and Mission. Pablo, occupied with thoughts of his own, recked not of beauty nor of the history buried in the dust with the monachal skulls and long forgotten. He thought of the routed Bascomb, of Felipe, and of Ynes.

There was the cart now, Felipe riding by its side. Pablo waved and called out: “The boat is over at Chico Aria’s! You’ll be aboard long before noon.”

The majordomo turned the cart—this time it was drawn by fat horses—into the road for the tavern. Dona Ana was half asleep in her chair; Paz and Ynes talked with Felipe, and with Pablo who rode a little ahead. At the tavern he waved them on, spoke with Chico Aria a moment, and rejoined them on the beach, carrying with him a pair of heavy oars.

“But can’t we take one of the boats at the jetty?” asked Paz, as Felipe, who feared rough sea, looked doubtful.

He pointed at the vessel. “It’s closer here,” he said. “This will be a more comfortable ride out.”

The boxes and hampers were stowed in the boat, Chico Aria’s jewel, a dinghy lost from a whaler. Dona Ana was next lifted in, then Paz and Ynes, and a tarpaulin was lashed over the hill of baggage. The waves, forty paces off, boomed and creamed on the sand, the spray coming like hail on the strong wind. Felipe stood bewildered. The rower’s seat was not for him, a landsman inept on water, and he would have to ride perilously atop the tarpaulin.

“Jump in!” Pablo called at him through the tumult. “We’re all ready! Are you coming?”

“Aren’t you coming?” Ynes cried, stretching out her hand to him. “There’s a place right here!”

“I can’t!” Felipe answered with an exasperated and frantic grin. “I——”

As he waved the boat shot on, the horses plunging with it over the sand, and Ynes, jolted backward, clung to the tarpaulin. She turned, and there was Felipe where he had stood, waving his hat. Surprised and also chagrined at his indecision, she did not wave back.

The majordomo wheeled off the animals, and knee-deep in the water scrambled back. Pablo, at the oars, pulled mightily, and next moment they were out rocking in the cauldron. He looked up at the women, and the women, outlined against the murky sky, looked down at him. Their eyes stared upon him with solemn helplessness.

“It’ll be calmer half way!” he called up at them.

He rowed with the utmost of his strength, the oarlocks clicked as he braced rhythmically, and pulled as if flattening mountains. In time the spray lessened, the going was less rough, and in something less than a half hour, the boat was against the grey side of the *Tia Jacinta*. A boom swung out, taking Ynes up first, then Dona Ana and Paz together, the boat heaving as if rising after them. Pablo sent up the baggage in a net, and loosened the painter. The coble drifted off. He stood balanced on the thwarts, looking up. Ynes’ head appeared. She was breathless after a dash from Dona Ana’s cabin, and she waved frantically.

“*Adios, Pablito.*”

“*Adios, querida!*” He smiled, waving with both arms. “*Adios!*”

She heard nothing above the wind and the clapping of waves on the hull. He half rowed, half drifted back towards land, an hour, perhaps two hours, later. The beach was deserted. Felipe had long ago departed. Pablo dragged up and secured the boat to a snag of timber, and heavy with fatigue and a sense of desolation, walked on to the tavern.

Late in the day—it was five weeks or more since the women had departed for Mexico—the last of several cartloads of tiles from San Juan Bautista creaked into Alamos. Pablo, who had despatched it the night before, and stayed on to play dice with Don Rafael Lisaldo, with whom he had stayed many nights, arrived at a gallop, and in time to follow the cart into the orchard.

“Here’s the rest of them, Martin,” he said cheerfully, as he got down. “Don Rafael has not a blessed tile left to his name! Don Rafael said he wanted these to roof his new pigsty. But I got them for a flask of brandy and a handful of silver dollars.”

The majordomo looked up from his doorstep, peering over his spectacles.

“Did you see Don Rafael’s new pigsty? No! Nor has anyone else so much as laid eyes upon it. His pigs have not so much as a roof over their heads. For twenty years he has been drinking the money he saves for that pigsty. And it exists in the clouds still, like Don Rafael himself. You could have saved those two reales. It was a folly!”

“I do not begrudge them, for they are holy tiles, and fitting.”

The majordomo’s grunt was inaudible. He scratched his ribs with a thumb—he was naked to the waist in the mottled sunlight—and bent over his book. It was a book of saints, a large and heavy one, with bindings of wood and cowskin. He read aloud, moving his finger from word to word. The carters stacked the tiles on edge against the fence. Pablo, lying on the grass, watched an old Indian toiling on the roof of the asistencia. The collapsed beams had been put back into place, the whole covered with tightly packed reeds, and then clay mortar, on which the tiles were set.

A few months of work, three at the least, and the drooping reeds would be cleared off, the roof done, and all the bare patches, where the adobe bricks showed, would be coated with more of that sand-and-lime plaster that in the summer heat would harden with the sheen of porcelain. This old Franciscan building he had been fond of as a child, and the idea of making it whole had constantly recurred to his mind while he was away at sea. He would restore it to its former size and dignity. To protect what he had an affection for was as strong an instinct with him as to seize and possess; and it would be his some

day, the Casa likewise, and all of Alamos. Luck and money had come his way in the last three weeks, when he was riding about from ranch to ranch, visiting with old friends, and playing at cards and dice. He had stayed a week with Don Rafael Lisaldo, a sleepy and impoverished grandee at San Juan Bautista, and won those dollars, ten in all.

“Take them in cows, Pablo,” said Don Rafael. “Ten cows! Twenty cows!”

“I want no cows, Don Rafael,” Pablo said, as they were riding about the hacienda. “I’ve already got two hundred and their calves, and that is enough. Instead, I will have those old tiles.”

He pointed to the ruined outbuildings of the Mission. Their roofs had slid down into untidy heaps, like rubbish at a quarry. The Church property had been in Don Rafael’s hands ever since it was secularized, and it had not fared very well. Some of the tiles roofed a pigsty, and some were laid for a path to the well. Don Rafael was scandalized.

“But suppose now, *amigo* Pablo, the Holy Father wanted his tiles back, and I should be in the next world—what could I say?”

“I don’t know. But I can tell you what he would say. ‘Don Rafael, that is a terrible thing you have done! You roofed a pigsty with the sacred tiles, and trod them underfoot. That is an impiety! You should have let Pablo Cope put them on top of his asistencia, where they will be clean in the rain and sunlight, and admired by all the faithful.’”

“Ah, take them, then,” said Don Rafael, scratching his head. “But I relinquish them with sorrow. And I do wish you would take the cows instead!”

The tiles were now all at Alamos. The carters had just left. The Indian was gone from the roof. On his doorstep the majordomo sitting in the shadow of hollyhocks—there had always been tall hollyhocks, the St. Joseph’s Staff, by this entrance, whose petals were scattered on the altar—read one more sentence in a booming voice, took snuff, and rose.

Putting on a hunting shirt, “I am going out to the end of the canyon, Pablito. Wolves, or perhaps bear. If not either—then, *valgame Dios!* I know not what they can be.”

“Wait for me, then. By the yard gate, with the horses.”

Pablo went to his room for a smoothbore, filled his pockets with ball, then stopped in the kitchen for a tortilla and a cupful of wine. Other food there was none, for his return had not been expected. Cousin Luisa had come up but once, when the Cabinet, or half of it, alighted at the Casa on Sunday. The care

of the place had been relinquished to the Indian women, who scrubbed and scrubbed, and hung out clothes, and troubled little about the meals. The usual beef was killed once a week, and the Indians given their rations, and Agata had generally seen to it that a stew of chicken and peppers was kept on the fire. The Casa was lifeless, the salon and dining-room under dust-sheets.

He munched his tortilla in the doorway, looking into the yard, where visiting Indians, with hair in braids, heads kerchiefed, dozed on the veranda, in attitudes of stupor. In the dust children were playing knucklebones. The dogs were asleep, for Miura had borrowed the vaqueros. Hens were scrabbling amid refuse and litter. The yard was quite unraked, and garnished with pools of dishwater, and swillings of tamale pans, above which buzzed clouds of horseflies. The sky was a soft pearl, the breeze scented from the flowers on the slope.

Pablo mounted his horse at the gate. "Like a frontier post," he laughed. "With Dona Ana away, the *Indios* have gone slack."

They rode up a trail the nearer side of the hill, which brought them to the first of the clearings, then to the next space, with a brook overhung by alders and sumach.

"Who saw the game, Martin?"

"The Indians, Pablito. They went out, after midnight, three times. 'Bear-hunting,' one of them said. I think he went in that direction, this side of the hill. They went and came quietly."

"They were quiet, Martin?"

"Quiet as doves, Pablito." The elder pointed to the right. "I will ride there, to some caves. And you ride straight on."

"Very well. Join me on top there later."

So the Indians had been quiet, Pablo reflected. He had never known Indians to go on a hunt, least of all for bear, without a pack of dogs. And no dogs made more hullabaloo than the lean, slab-sided dogs of Alamos, brothers to the coyote. Perhaps the Indians in some gully were gorging at a feast of donkey meat. And in hauling and thwacking long-eared Jack from his sleep in a corral they would have to manoeuver with care lest they be betrayed by the yap of a dog.

Atop this hill Pablo found no sign of bear. He was in a wood, dense with oak and conifers; the trickling of water apprised him that a spring was not far off, and leading the horse under the branches he went down towards the canyon. The pool was somewhere about. There it was, in a ring of tall pines,

with rocks at the brim: a basin no less than twenty yards across, and half of it green with reeds and bulrushes. In the long, arid summers of this region, such a pool was a rarity. The Indians had always known this water, and they camped here on their way to the Santa Lucias. Even now there hung in the air the smell of dampened embers, as if a party had only a few hours ago drowned out their fire. A path had been trodden through a madrone thicket, and with his eyes he followed it into a clump of oaks a little below, and properly in the canyon. He heard footfalls there, and then saw Martin looking up towards the pool, beckoning to him.

“You come down here, Pablito! Tell me what this means!”

Down he went, and at the other end of the clump he beheld a high shed of saplings, roofed with boughs. Before the door was a litter of salmon-colored rock. Martin stamped a lump of it to powder with his musket-butt, then threw him a glance of enquiry.

“Where would this come from, Pablito?”

“Nowhere else but from the mine.”

Martin led him into the shed, and they peered at a stone oven, blackened with smoke. Near it was an up-ended cannon, a rusty twenty-pounder. Only an artisan could have fitted it with the piping that coiled from the muzzle down to the ground.

“There is the bear, Pablito; and still warm,” said Martin, laying a hand on the oven. “That other one”—he nodded at the cannon—“I think it is dead.”

“It was a pretty good one in its day, I think,” said Pablo, who sat down violently on the floor and stared about him. The shed held a whaler’s try-pot, half buried in the ground; it held quicksilver to the depth of a fist. By the door was a row of squat jars; except that they were of Mission pottery and unglazed, they were not unlike the jars he had brought home in the *Mizpah*. “And that,” he said, pointing to the furnace, “that is an improvement.”

“*Cosas de Profesores!*” growled Martin. “I know nothing of those things, but I do not like them.”

“Nor do I. They know what they are doing here, our night-loving friends.”

“They are thieves!”

“But we could still learn from them. The one who twisted that copper piping knows more than anybody. He keeps an unhealthy classroom, I should say, and you and I had better go before he comes. *Vamos*, the hunt is over!”

They scrambled up to their horses grazing on the bank. All the way back to the orchard the old sergeant muttered, darkly shaking his head. There were foes nearer home, other foes than he had been prepared to meet—as they rode up from the port, either with the Governor’s flag, or the flag of the men from over the Sierra. And the Indians, again! What had they been up to, under his very nose! Sacrilege! They had tampered with the cave inviolate to the memory of Don Tomas. They had hauled up a cannon, built a stone oven far larger than any ranch ever had for the roasting of beef! These were not simple days. All foes—Indians or *gentes de razon*—they were cleverer now—

A slap on the saddle-horn woke him from his abstraction. “Not a word to the Indians,” Pablo was saying. His eyes were dancing, his smile grave. “Nor a word to anyone. And if you hear anything over at the Indians’ huts these nights, you turn over again, and sleep all the harder.”

Martin nodded. He was a shade displeased, not wishing to be out of any scrimmage, but he was used to obeying.

“As you say, Pablito.”

They were already at the orchard gate, and Pablo, after turning in his horse, strolled over to the garden of the asistencia. It was in soft sunshine; he reclined in Dona Ana’s chair, his eyes on the hill with its crown of pines, and small fields of grass already faded to light gold. His love for it was shared by nothing else except the Casa. They were things for him to do something with. The Casa, too, he would roof with tile, those long curved tiles, the shape of buskins, that he had won from Don Rafael. The Casa for Ynes, and the hill for himself, when they both came into his hands. He thought of the smelter up the canyon. No Indians had built that, but someone with knowledge and cunning. His mind raced on, ticking off this suspect and that. That antique cannon was hardly fit to cut up for ballast; but it had the shape of a cannon, and must have been down in the ordnance register, even if it had been hauled out of the mud in some forgotten army corral. Someone must have already done some whispering with a soul or two around the Governor. His thoughts were taking shape in this sunny quietness. Yes, it was a game for him to play singly. He smiled to himself, and he closed his eyes to the splendor of the hill, the Casa and the garden. The vision of a far greater splendor was shining in the recesses of his mind.



By three o’clock, when Pablo left the Casa, the quarter-moon was gone, and the thin brushing of star-dust overhead gave almost no light. In this dim

eclipse he began his journey up the hill, guiding himself by instinct, now and then putting his hands out to touch the shrubbery, the landmarks he had taken in after walking up to the pines alone for three mornings. He could have made his way blindfold. The brush was dry and crackling, the withered grass slippery; and he had the weight of his shotgun.

In an hour he had reached the top, and groped through the pines. A corner of the pool reflected the starlight like a bit of mirror. He rested a while and took off his shoes. The companionable sounds of frogs and the rustling of trees in the wind muffled his footfalls through the manzanita. And the wind was away from him, blowing off the smoke. The fumes mixed with it would have been the very devil. He could barely discern the shed and a moving figure in the glim of a lantern. Then there was a glow, and he lay face down on the wet moss, to watch. Logs were being chunked into the furnace. The jars—many jars, in tiers with boards between—were visible in the flare.

With cartridges in the hat by his elbow, Pablo aimed his shotgun at the pile of jars, and fired. The shed rang with a cry of terror. He fired both barrels at a time, reloading and firing steadily, until all the jars had flown apart, the quicksilver shining viscidly in the glow like mortar. He sprang down the bank, and into the shed with a bound, gun forward. Near the doorway was Fray Pio, his face in gore. He lay not flat but in an untidy heap, as if he had toppled while in an attitude of prayer. Pablo stood back, horrified and yet incredulous. And how could Fray Pio have been shot if he were at least two paces away from the door, which was as good as a mile. But there was yet life in him, he was still breathing. A jar had struck him on the head, and after whirling about convulsively, he had fallen prone. There must, too, have been a syncope. From no one stunned outright could have been wrenched a shriek so appalling. That blast in the darkness must have been trying to the nerves. But at any rate, there lay Fray Pio, muleteer, picaro, Latinist and vessel of all manner of learning, almost a corpse. In monk's garb, with a bubbling slash across his tonsure, stretched in the glare of the furnace, he was like a sorcerer overwhelmed by the horror of a revelation it was not fitting for a mortal to receive.

Pablo drew the hood over Fray Pio's head. He closed the furnace door, and seeing meat on a shelf, tortillas and brandy, he refreshed himself, found also a cigar, one of Chico Aria's prime perfectos, and sat on the threshold to smoke. Of the mercury there was no trace except for a glister, like a snail's track. It had been blown into hail, sunk into the ground, and trickled down the slope. A fortune had vanished in a twinkling. Two thousand dollars, no less, he mused a little regretfully.

So Fray Pio Esmeralda Laurins had built that smelter, and behind Fray Pio naturally, was Felipe Gozlan—whom it was far easier to dislike. Pablo ground his teeth at the thought of him. Felipe was the planner. To get the women out of the way was not a poor notion either! And that would make it easier to get the Indians, for Dona Ana was a light sleeper, as jumpy as any watchdog if anything stirred at night. He smiled grimly as he thought of that back-breaking trip to the *Tia Jacinta* with the Alamos women—helping Felipe with his plan.

A cart was coming near, the wheels turning on greased and silent axles. Then an Indian approached the shed. Beholding a youth, barefooted and with hair in disarray, a gun on his lap, leisurely smoking a cigar, he stopped. A lantern was shining on a hooded corpse. His hand lifted mechanically as he crossed himself.

“There has been an accident,” said Pablo. “Where is Senor Gozlan?”

“He was in the mine, but he has gone home.”

“There are no jars for you tonight.” Pablo lifted Fray Pio. “Bring up that cart.”

They lifted the lay brother onto a mattress of grass and ore sacks. “Take him around to the orchard,” said Pablo. “I shall be there before you.”

The cart gone, Pablo gazed at the retort a moment. If only he had a keg of gunpowder. A man could do no wrecking simply with his bare hands. The retort, though, had fittings that could not be replaced in a dog’s age, and ripping these off with a pick, he carried them to the pool and sank them under mud. There he retrieved his boots, and gun on his shoulder he tramped down the hillside in the pale daylight, without caution, humming a chantey. The majordomo was sitting on the fence, waiting.

“I heard the firing, Pablito. There was but one gun speaking. ‘Pa-ta-tat!’ That was your musket, so I knew you were safe, and I did not go up.”

“*Bueno*. What had to be done, I could do myself. But Fray Pio is badly hurt.”

“Fray Pio? You shot Fray Pio?”

“No. He broke a pot with his head. And there is no speech left in him. He will be here presently in our ox-cart.”

“Then he must be half dead. Never before at Alamos will he have been silent. We must send for the doctor to bring Fray Pio back to life.”

Pablo gave assent. “And put him on that cot in the tannery. Wake me when Doctor Kit has come.”

For hours Pablo slept heavily, and it was almost noon when he was roused by a sound in his chamber. Doctor Kit was in a chair, looking into the sunlit garden, nursing his cheroot. His gaze he turned from Dona Ana’s chair under the tree as Pablo sat up.

“You have had an untr tranquil morning.” The doctor smiled absently. “Fray Pio is on the way home. I took eight stitches in his head, and he will not die of his injuries. Not of that scalp wound, at any rate. But Ramon, the barber, will have to wait a month before he can shave that tonsure.” Moving the chair up nearer, the doctor began gravely. “I got here at eight o’clock, when you had been asleep an hour. And that saved the Indian a ride down. I was coming up to Alamos anyway.”

Something else was up and Pablo waited for it.

“The *Trinidad* put into the harbor last night. Captain Hatch’s cargo-ship. We had dinner at Chico Aria’s, and he gave me some news. Hatch spoke the *Tia Jacinta* off the Guadalupe. She had gone through that hurricane, and was a fortnight late. A bad experience. Dona Ana did not survive it. That was precisely as I had foreseen.”

“And the other two?”

“All well otherwise. You should get details in a month or two from Guadalajara.”

Ynes was safe, Pablo thought with relief. And Dona Ana was in the bottom of the sea. What change would that bring about in Alamos? It might be considerable, all depending on what Dona Ana’s lawyer in Mexico—she mistrusted the politico-legal talent that abounded in Monterey—could work out with his connections at the Colonial office, the source of power. Pablo only half listened to Doctor Kit’s remarks on that “extraordinary woman, whose tenacity and sturdy character personified the qualities of the Hispano-Californians in this wonderful region.” He waited until the talk veered to the lay brother again.

“Martin told me the whole uncanny story at once. It was almost incredible. Fray Pio—and he would say nothing at all—must have been frightened out of his mind. With eyes bulging, he looked like the Frog King. A shock, of course; and he lost some blood. For a moment I suspected apoplexy.

“An engaging rogue, with a talent for getting into trouble. I am very fond of him, of course. And so was your father.” With a rub of his nose the doctor added, “We must let him off easily. I can’t see he has done much harm.”

“I did the harm,” said Pablo. “Exploding those jars. Spiking the cannon.”

“Exactly! And for that reason you must leave here at once and stay away until this blows over.”

“I am not afraid of Felipe,” Pablo laughed. “Nothing could make me quit Alamos.”

“Yes—your common sense! That quicksilver—and a handsome package it was, worth a fortune these days, for whom do you suppose it was got out? For those fellows in Government whose rapacity and intrigue alone keep the Mexican banner flying over the heads of the Hispano-Californians!

“That’s the crew Felipe Gozlan is in with. Men devoid of the least shred of principle. They would even rob you of your suspenders! Who gave Gozlan that ready passage money for the women? Who got him that cannon, an obsolete thing, but Government property for all that? When they find that quicksilver is gone, they will be vengeful.”

“Which means jail, of course,” muttered Pablo. There would be nobody of the family around, either, to look after Alamos. If war broke out, and Paz were to despatch money to cancel the debt to Felipe, and it should be sequestered by someone at the Government adobe——

The doctor went out to fetch Martin. Pablo threw on his clothes. He stuffed cartridges and shirts into a saddle-bag, and a handful of gold coins into his pocket. On the dresser was a bowl, a half-bubble of grey enamel, that he bought in Canton because he was homesick, and it was the hue of the grey gulls at Alamos. That would be a little gift to take to the fandango for Edelmira Jiminez, who was soon to be married. After three days of hiding out in the role of a desperado, a fandango would be a happy diversion. He flicked the bowl with his thumbnail, and it was still ringing when Martin, snorting camp oaths, clumped in after the doctor.

“That litter of upstarts! I know them all, the whole Government pack of gallows clerks! And they know me, Martin Sanchez! Let them come to Alamos! I will pick them off one by one as they come up the slope, and split their heads like coconuts!”

“Yes, yes,” said the doctor. “It is this pack that gave Felipe Gozlan public money to dig up and smelt Alamos quicksilver. They knew about those jars.

And the jars gone, they will seize Pablo Cope. For robbery and an outrage on the person of a holy friar. An attempted murder.”

“Holy! Fray Pio holy!”

“For the warrant, you understand. They might make him *Santisimo*—before they get through with it. I know those senores at the Government adobe.” The doctor licked his frayed cheroot as Martin cursed with spitting emphasis. “However, Pablo Cope will not be locked up in that unpleasant *cabildo*. He will be roaming in the fresh air of the hills—like Domingo Hernandez, the bandit of the filed teeth, whose frown was horrible, but whose laugh was worse.”

Pablo stuffed the bowl also into his saddle-bag. “In a couple of nights I shall be at the ranch of Don Pedro Jiminez, for the fandango.”

“Dangerous! Better be shy than intrepid.”

The majordomo scratched his head thoughtfully. “I am going down to tell the *Independentistas*.”

They went to the orchard, where the majordomo saddled the horse and fixed on the blanket and needments.

“I will get word to one of you every two days,” said Pablo. He glanced up at the asistencia roof. The Indian working with the tiles was on the other side, and could not see him. “For a day and a night I shall be at Don Rafael Lisaldo’s. The third night at the fandango.

“*Adios*.”

They watched him go straight up the mine hill to reach the open country beyond, to travel north by a route where the chances of meeting any traveler were few.

At the top they saw him turn, as if to wave. He faced about, but the next instant slipped off and vanished. Only the horse could be seen, plodding towards the pine woods. The manoeuver was lost on the doctor, but the majordomo turned as if on a pivot and looked towards the slope.

“He knows more tricks than a water-carrier’s donkey,” said the majordomo.

Birds were rising, flying to either hand above the path down among the trees. “Horsemen,” he said, cupping his ear. “No, only one. Perhaps the clerk of the alcalde, or a——”

“One of the patrol,” interrupted the doctor. “Not with a writ of arrestation, I hope.”

At the fence the rider saluted. “Senores, I saw your Indian under a tree by the road, and he called me over. He was concerned over the injured man in his cart. One Fray Pio, it was. He has been a corpse for an hour. A *golpe de sangre*, senores, a haemorrhage.”

The Doctor plucked bark from the fence rail. Then he turned to the majordomo. “Come,” he said.



Pablo danced the last jota with Edelmira, the bride-to-be. The musicians had played without a let-up, for when they drank, they drank singly. Guitars, fiddles, a hautboy and a triangle sent out a flood of music that pulsed through the sala with its tiled ceiling, its twenty dancing couples, and a crowd even larger, sitting along the walls on log benches, settees, and gilt chairs. The jota was hopped as much as it was danced. As each verse was shouted, the men circled in one direction, the women in another, and when each had grabbed his partner again, there was more hopping, and another *estribillo*, or verse, began. It was a graceful dance, requiring a majestic dignity, as well as a capacious memory for verse, so the executants were largely the older folk. Since dancing was a passion with the Jiminez family, Edelmira knew almost as many rhymes as her father. Don Pedro, though half blind and rickety, chanted them with fervor, like a dervish. Edelmira wore her hair jota style, in immense black ropes that fell to her heels; her neck was heavy and powerful.

When the din was at its loudest, the tiles above sending down the echoes in waves, she put her mouth to Pablo's ear.

“You were good to bring me the bowl, Don Pablo. But did you know you were in danger tonight?”

“A fandango at Don Pedro Jiminez' is worth any danger to attend,” he returned into Edelmira's ear.

“*Muy galante!*” she murmured, smiling. “See all the guests that have come to the fandango!”

As they swirled by the window, she turned him half about. She watched his glance. In the yard, with its arbor of boughs, where men were lounging, shouting refrains to verses through the window, and encouragement to the dancers, he caught sight of Felipe.

“You saw him?” she asked after they had whirled to the other end of the sala.

“I did. What can the danger be?”

“Martin Sanchez did not tell me. But he left a message for you. ‘The magpie is dead. Be on your guard.’”

“In which case I shall stay here and dance,” he laughed. “What is one magpie more or less?”

After the jota came a contradance. The night was wearing on, and half the assemblage had left. There was a pause at one o’clock, with meat, tortillas and wine in the yard and in the sala. Few of the women stayed for the American reel. With Edelmira, who was indefatigable, Pablo danced a burlesque of a bullfight, with verse-singing, and baiting flicks of a knotted kerchief. With glasses in their hands, men came drifting in from the arbor, all of them strangers to Pablo. They were a fair crowd in themselves, had bottles of aguardiente, and the musicians played for another reel.

Wiping his forehead, for the dance had been vigorous, Pablo went to a bench by the inner door for a drink, and dipped a gourd into the water bucket.

A blow on the head sent him reeling. Arms pinioned him, and he was gagged with his knotted kerchief. He was on a ship dragging him down, down under water. He was moving along the bottom, fathoms deep, his heels bumping over coral and boulders. Then a darkness, oozy and sickening, closed over him.

Time lifted its weight slowly from his head. The pain was lifting with it. He pulled out his gag, crawled to the wall, breathed deeply, and recollected himself. It did not take long. Many fights aboard the *Mizpah*, a few falls into the hold, and once overboard—these had habituated him to dazed awakenings. He beheld a knife-edge of light on the floor level. That was the door. Above the ringing in his ears he heard fiddle-music, the clanging of the triangle, laughter, and shuffling.

Neat of Felipe, he reflected. It was probable that none in the party, except Felipe and two or three of his jackals, knew he had been slung into this room. They could explain he was drunk. Such disasters to guests were common at fandangos where brandy flowed, and all were welcome.

Fray Pio was dead!

An ignoble end. He must have died in the cart. Something of the old life at Alamos had died with that cowed, grimy and bright-eyed magpie who had enlivened so many nights for the children. He told stories—he was fuller of

them than Mother Goose—and cast shadow pictures on the wall as he stepped about, on tiptoe, with grimaces and whispers. With this plump rogue who had made them fellow conspirators at sight, an old entrancement had gone. A pity it was not Felipe. . . .

With hands outstretched he crossed the room, felt for the latch-string, pulled cautiously. It came away in his hands, for it had been slashed on the other side.

A shifting of footsteps fell upon his ear. It was overhead, he fancied, as if someone were crawling on the roof. That was precisely what it was. The room was windowless; he groped along the wall, heard the squeaking of tiles being wrenched up, then directly above his head he saw a patch of starlight. There was a tinkling. His prison wall backed against the corral. A tropilla of military horses always included a bell mare. Felipe was travelling about with armed company.

A stir above, then a rope slid in. Pablo tugged it in signal, then after a few breaths mounted to the roof, and got out upon the tiles. A ladder was being held upright and he descended to the corral, where two men were waiting.

“All safe,” said one of them to him, holding up a lantern. “If you go to that tree you will find your horse ready. We shall join you in a few minutes.”

He had been one of the dancers in the jota. Pablo felt sure he was also a stranger; indeed, one of those whom he had seen talking with Felipe. The night was all surprises, he felt, as he untethered his animal and climbed into the saddle, a bit stiffly. He must have been flung headlong into that room, and been mightily bruised. Round in the front, near the arbor, he heard a voice; then, after a pause, the door opened, and was closed. Wondering if his escape had not been discovered, he backed into the darkness to wait a moment. Some manoeuver was afoot.

A horseman came riding briskly, to pull up, throwing his mount on its haunches, and lift his hat. It was adept horsemanship, and in the starlight had a theatrical effect, like the statue of a hero on a pedestal.

“Pablo Cope, I believe? It is a pleasure to meet you again. You recall me, perhaps?”

“Luis Medina!” responded Pablo, with a little laugh of astonishment. They shook hands. “I am obliged—most deeply—to you and your men.”

Medina smiled, with a deprecatory gesture. “We knew you would be there. A fandango, and you at a romantic age! We had to be at the fandango, anyway. On other business.”

They turned, and the tropilla cantered up, to dash past like unbroken mustangs in flight. But they could still hear the bell jangling back there in the darkness. Three horsemen appeared, in file.

“You left the mare?” Medina asked.

“She went with her gallants!” It was the dancer who spoke. “But the soldiers will think their horses safe in the corral. We tied the bell to the senorita’s billy-goat.”

“Admirable!” said Medina. A sharp gesture, and the last horseman was brought up to him blindfold, arms tied behind. “This is the gentleman we are putting aboard the *Trinidad* for a long voyage, Senor Cope.”

It was Felipe. Medina unbound the captive’s arms. “The lantern!” In the light he roughly pulled up Felipe’s sleeves. Above each wrist shone scars like white bands. “As I thought. The senor is an aristocrat, indeed, and in Mexico wore cuffs. But they were tailored for him by the blacksmith! Forward!”

Medina and Pablo fell behind at a slower trot. Sea mist was beginning to roll in over the road to Alamos, further dampening Pablo’s thoughts, already dark and confused. Dangers had been swept from his path, but he had apprehensions that a danger still worse lay before him. Ynes might think he had been involved in the abduction of Felipe Gozlan. Then Ynes would indeed be lost to him. How carefree life had been at Alamos before he went away to sea! How tranquil only a few months ago!

“Those cuffs—those gyves?” he asked, waving ahead into the fog.

“A business at the army post in San Blas. The funds vanished. So did the regimental paymaster.” Medina shrugged: “He is going back—an unwelcome gift to San Blas. There are six in all. The most dangerous foes to us Independents! They will all be seasick in the morning, thanks to the master of the *Trinidad*.”

“An acquaintance of our surgical friend?”

“The same.” Medina reined in. Here the trail forked. “I am bearing a message to you. He has made his post mortem report to the Alcalde and the Judge Fiscal. Fray Pio succumbed to apoplexy. But these statesmen who have made a thieves’ chest of the treasury—” Medina unstrapped and threw a thick woollen cloak about his shoulders. “They have, let me impress it upon you, Senor Cope, less than the honor of wolves. And now, here you are at Alamos. Sleep at home tonight, and in the morning go back into the hills. Stay there until all is safe. The less inquiry made into the death of Fray Pio, and the

return voyage of Don Felipe, the better for our cause.” He waved a farewell. “*Buenas noches!*”

The hoofbeats died away in the fog. Pablo shrugged. He had been restored to his own doorstep, like a stray child. That irked him. But the urbane and quietly desperate Independent must have known what he was about. The task of smuggling the unwanted six aboard the *Trinidad* would be perilous. And the patrol, if re-horsed, might already be searching the roads. Some might be even drunk enough to blunder into the Casa.

Pablo turned back for the hills. A day in the clearing, he would send in word, then hide as if on another planet, in the forest of the Santa Lucias, where trout streams bickered darkly among the thick pines.



Two weeks, nearly three, and it seemed he had been forgotten. No message, no echo of violence save now and then a report of his gun, disturbed the stillness of these leafy arroyos. The ferment of his speculations on war, the *Trinidad*, the passing of Fray Pio, had quieted. His thoughts were only of Alamos, and then Ynes. Deer and birds were company enough, and he had found again a hut below a slope of firs in the wildest and most inaccessible corner of the forest. Neophytes from the Mission of San Antonio de Padua had camped here when they collected gum to burn on the chapel altar.

Pablo had returned to it from a long hunting trip, when he had killed a deer and found an outcrop of greenish rock, probably chrysoprase, and turning in late under his blanket, was roused as if by a cannonading. A rock had been lobbed into the side of the hut, breaking one of the slab boards. He tumbled out, yawning, and glanced up the slope. In the dusk was a squatting Indian. His thin words were lost in the tumult of the wind and the foliage. Pablo climbed to the trail, tendered him a cigar, and, since the messenger was simple and aged, patiently unlocked his mind with questions. The responses drifted out on slow exhalations of smoke.

Pablo listened to them in gloom. War had struck; and war, from the region about Monterey at least, was gone, leaving a new flag above the customs-house. Fighting? There had been fighting, on horseback, but the defenders had fallen back.

“Why wasn’t I told earlier!” said Pablo in exasperation. “The messengers should have found me! Now, what about the *Independentistas*?”

The Indian knew not the word. Pablo spoke names. At “El doctor,” the Indian rose and his frail arm pointed northward.

“He is at the Lisaldo ranch. Today.”

Pablo left him a coin, gathered a field kit, and galloped up out of the arroyo. How long Doctor Kit had been at Lisaldo’s, there was no telling. At the fastest possible pace it would take seven hours of hard riding to get there, and the doctor may have gone. There was still hope that California was not yet lost, if the camp had been made at Lisaldo’s. The mustang picked its way goat-like over the fallen timbers and deep scrub of the forest, then emerged into clear. The pathways were in Pablo’s head; he unreeled them through many tracts of wood, over many spurs, fields of chaparral or straw, and dry river-beds.

He had covered thirty miles. The country was dancing in heat waves, the sun was boiling; he was fatigued, half blinded by dust coming in whirls from the illimitable flats of the Salinas. Ten miles more to go, and the mustang was limping. He found a damp corner of marsh, and held the animal there for precious minutes in the mud, steam rising from its hooves. Then he spurred the mustang to flight; three miles more, and a rest, then another spurt, so violent that his face was dripping wet. The mustang sank, pitching him headlong. Pablo got up in a daze. Useless to try further, the animal was foundered. He clapped the saddle on his head, a rank and heavy bonnet, packed along his kit and musket, and trudged for another hour. He was on the stony league of Gil Quadra. Finding the corral, he led out a half-broken colt, restive at the girthing, then dashed on without pause until he clattered into Lisaldo’s patio.

Under the trees were perhaps a score of men, most of them travel-worn and asleep; a few at meat, the others playing cards and drinking. A Negro, naked to the waist, half lay in a hammock, feet on the ground, whittling a doll for a small Indian girl. Pablo unsaddled and dashed sweat from his face smudged with a fortnight’s growth of beard. He knew he could not have looked reassuring!

“You are *Independentistas*?” he asked.

No one paid attention except the Negro, who stopped his whittling long enough to glance at him.

“The Senor wishes to see someone?”

“Doctor Christopher Muggah and Luis Medina.”

“General Medina?” The Negro pointed over his shoulder with the knife. “In there, Senor.”

The Negro had hesitated a moment in his reply. Pablo, washing his hands in a runlet of water from a tank, flashed a glance about the yard, taking in the recumbent figures, the air of slackness, of dejection, even, as of soldiers routed in battle. There were no wounded. Armed encounters in California had been traditionally bloodless; the wounds suffered were wounds of the spirit, of pride, and thirst and footsoreness. The stillness was oppressive, like the mid-June heat. A muleteer, lying masked with his huge sombrero, snored to the twanging of a lone cricket. Even the village was still. Through the gateway he saw the Mission, Indians dozing in the shadowy arcades; a cormorant plowing slowly in the blue sky over the belfry. In the yard were muskets piled against a tree; the resting guerillas, leathery and lean, wore the iron spurs of vaqueros. Into San Juan Bautista, an inconsiderable post link, sleepy and pastoral, war had somehow mysteriously found its way, but had it yet been awakened by the din of arms? Had its citizens, and these visitors in the yard, not yet been roused by the clarion to the peril of alien invasion?

Agitated, Pablo strode into the house. Lisaldo’s niece, Viola, a child in her arms, turned her alarmed face upon him.

“What has happened?” he asked.

“The Americans!” She crossed herself. “They will be here within an hour. We don’t know what will happen.”

“Where is the doctor?”

“In there, with the General. But they are planning. They are not to be disturbed on any account. No!”

Pablo, disregarding her, went in. A number of men were about the long table, and he had come in at a tense moment, for they were listening to Medina’s sharp, angry expostulations. Some gave ear with reluctance, or tired scorn, or with a moistening of the lip. Doctor Kit sat back, his grey eyes hooded in patience, but his mouth firm in determination.

“I could not believe it possible that with not a man hurt, not a shot fired, this regiment would be ready to give up! A bold show of force will throw back the Americans. Then we can bring up more arms. Castro will return _____”

“He will not return!” cried Lisaldo, infuriated. “He is not blind, he is not swollen with stubborn conceit!

“His men have nothing to fight with. What has Mexico sent them? Not a single popgun! Sonoma has fallen, and Monterey, and by now Yerba Buena! Are we to stick our heads into the cannons, so the Mexican soldiery may advance—backward to safety and their mistresses?”

Medina turned from him in contempt. “I am for attack. We have a fighting chance. We must attack now, and boldly! Who is with me?”

“I am,” said Pablo. “Have we guns? Have we fighters?” He had seen nothing in the yard worth considering. “If we have, I am for going out with them instantly. An hour is little time.”

“Doctor?” enquired Medina.

“To attack,” said Doctor Kit, “would be not only futile but ridiculous. Another show of resistance—and three times we fell back in not bad order—would be a play of etiquette.” He spoke in a sad and gentle way. “The men are in no mood for that.

“General, in war one side or the other must lose. We have lost. We heard too late, by many weeks, that the war had begun. A handful of rancheros, not much helped by their Monterey statesmen, needed more time than that to scrape together guns, powder and beef to fight a considerable nation.”

“The advancing force, is it large?” asked Pablo.

“A purser’s guard, from the flagship,” said Doctor Kit.

“Twenty men, no less,” Lisaldo remarked. “Ready for every conceivable infamy. They will first massacre the entire pueblo, putting all to the sword, even the infants and priests. That done, they will wring the necks of our chickens, and eat them for dinner.”

The remarks were light, bitter. They were as if spoken by men whose hearts had been paralyzed by fatigue, who were still morally serious, but whose passions, fed not on belief and truth, but on dream, had played out. Medina sat with head propped on elbow, toying with a pencil. The drama in which they had seen themselves cast in the part of liberators, had turned, despite their aspirations, into an opera bouffe.

“The statesmen,” began Pablo, uncomfortably sure he knew he had little enough to say, “the statesmen of Monterey—what are they doing?”

“They have begun again, under the Americans,” said Medina scornfully. “Their trade is politics! It is a trade adaptable to use in any Government, bad or good. They are like shoemakers, who ply their craft in all weathers, and for anyone.”

“They would prefer it if we should attack,” said Pablo, who could not get the mine out of his head. “They will join up with the Americans against us. Isn’t the game all over now?”

“That’s precisely the state of affairs,” said Doctor Kit.

He frowned at his big silver watch, as if he had not been away from his patients for two weeks. From under his eyebrows he watched Medina expectantly. They were all watching him. Pablo, standing by the door, his head against the panel, heard a distant vibration.

Medina, hands flat on the table, was listening. There was a stir in the yard, with a lift of voices, then a tracking to the gateway. Far off was the sound of drums. It was a lament to the California he had known and loved in her Arcadian age, and the old adoration and jealous love he bore his soul’s mistress was the stronger for her tarnish and her fall. He was the last of the *Independentistas*, the one who had not surrendered. He buttoned his jacket with a hand that trembled perceptibly, and rose. Chairs were pushed back. All were afoot. But he did not speak. His muteness was more affecting than any utterance he could have made of farewell. He brushed the dust off his hat with a sleeve, then with an “*Adios*,” bowed out of the room.

“*Muy caballero*,” remarked an officer. “It’s hot here. And cooler outside.”

The music was louder now. Pablo went into the yard where the horses were flicking their tails sleepily in the heat. From the gateway he saw Medina ride down between the gnarled olive trees, glance a moment upward at the torrid, blue perfection of the sky, then pursue his rigid course southward, unnoticed. All faces in the Plaza were turned to watch the advance of the dragoons. The dogs were barking insanely. To a martial hymn the Americans came down the road, on horses caked with sweat and dust, bristling with gun-barrels; an unkempt troop, hard and wily, hatchet-faces sun-blackened, chins unraped, some with ears under braided swatches of hair. They could have passed for plains Indians. After them rode a handful of musicians in sea garb and a naval officer.

“Purser in charge,” muttered Doctor Kit. “Purser on horseback! Never thought I’d live to see that! But he ranks, he’s from the flagship.”

The force awakened neither wonder nor respect, merely idle curiosity. Pablo, lounging against a gate-post, looked through the veil of dust over an ox-cart and a clump of aloes at the two-story adobe house across the Plaza, which two soldiers had entered. Bunting dropped from the pole. The American flag went up jerkily to a furious beating of drums and the same martial hymn.

Lisaldo's niece burst into tears. On the balcony of the adobe the purser read inaudibly from a paper, and that done, a sailor nailed a poster on a veranda post. The band played with a show of industry in a minor key, for the day's journey had been in overpowering heat; dust had got into the flutes, and the drummer's wrists were limp with fatigue. Sombreros were thinning out; soon half had drifted away. In the intense, glaring sunlight, the heat prickling his neck, Pablo listened drowsily to the last tune, "O Dear! What Can the Matter Be?" Ynes and he had sung that years ago at his father's piano.

In the yard Lisaldo's niece was sobbing. The Negro had returned, and with a parrot seated on his shoulder, was finishing the doll for the small Indian girl.

"There is still Alamos," said Doctor Kit, leading out the mounts. "I'll stay there the night. Come!"

He was silent all the way up to the ranch, except for moments when he flung out ejaculations, wrathful or sombre, as if to phantoms riding about with him. "What then, tell me what we could have done!" "Texas—wasn't that enough!" "Ahab, thou hast despoiled the vineyard of Naboth!"

He broke into speeches, cajoled and threatened, addressing by name those who, Pablo was sure, had not for twenty years been alive. Twice he smote his pommel in rage, so that his horse caracoled. Doctor Kit, even before the arrival of Medina, had been the gospeler of the cause of independence. His speeches were quiet and logical; but he rehearsed them in the saddle, trying out the periods in a roar that would have split the head of a bystander. Speechmaking was done with, now. He was grieved by the outcome of the campaign, and like the lone vaqueros on these uplands was finding heart in his voice. It flung out more sound and fury than had accompanied the epochal events of the day. Pablo rode on ahead, concerned with affairs of his own, waiting for the doctor to shout himself out.

The rest of the world was quiet. History had rolled on like a hurricane. Not a leaf stirred in the woods, not a fox slunk in through the blue-washed hollows of dusk in these pale fields of waving foxtail grass through which they were riding far apart.

He heard the glad signalling of the dogs. There was the majordomo, standing before his gate, lifting his arm in welcome. As they came up, he was shaking his head.

"And what now?" he asked. "What after this day?"

"*Quien sabe?*" said the Doctor. "It was the end! But there was no one to throw it in our teeth and mock us! It was the end, indeed, Martin Sanchez.

But we may hope now it was also a beginning.”

The Casa was alight. Cousin Basile, grave in broadcloth, and Cousin Luisa, embraced them. Pablo was relieved they had come; they were the nearest to the family of all in the Cabinet. Cousin Basile led the way to the sala, where candles were burning in the sconces. A table was laid for dinner, silverware was on the sideboard, and the furniture unshrouded. Doctor Kit had sent up word by Indians that however the battle ended, Pablo and himself would be at Alamos that night. Pablo changed in his room, where he found his clothes and linen had been freshly set out, his best sea boots given their utmost lustre; and his footsteps as he returned to the sala brought the Indian women swooping in with dishes. Cousin Basile drew out a chair for him—it was at the head of the table—and waited until he was seated before he took his own place. Pablo was given the meat to carve. Usually, it had been hacked up in the kitchen beforehand. These and other little unwonted deferences made it evident to him he was looked upon as the master of the Casa. A cluster of flowers garnished the table. There had always been flowers on the table when Don Tomas Cope sat in this chair.

“That enquiry,” Pablo asked suddenly, “what became of it? I must remind you I was in the Santa Lucias all this while.”

“There wasn’t one,” said Doctor Kit. “It dawned on the statesmen that it had better be dropped. The Americans would have liked to know more about a quicksilver mine than of cattle—of which they have enough.”

“The price of hides,” said Cousin Basile in a harsh, troubled voice, “is gone down a peso, they say. But they are not being taken at any price. The trading ships are gone. They will not return until the war ends—and in the south it may drag on for months, for a year.”

Pablo only half listened. War, with its splendor, dash and heroism, had unrolled its panoply while he was hiding in the forest, no better than an outcast. He could have been a high officer in the guerilla troop of Medina. He had lost adventure, title, a whole illustrious campaign, and most uselessly. And his loss had been overlooked in this sordid discussion on the price of hides.

“They will rot, then, the hides that are filling every warehouse,” Cousin Basile went on. “Meanwhile, what is to happen to our land? What can land be worth if all it yields is worthless on the market?”

“If the hides are salted, Basile, they will keep. But Americans do not eat hides, they eat land.”

The Indian women had cleared the table, and brought on cognac and a pack of cards for bezique. Cousin Basile stretched out his hand, then let it fall.

“Our ranches, are they to be taken away from us? And our cattle run off? Are we to be completely robbed and, *por Dios*, treated like miserable savages?”

“We shall be a thousand times worse off than under the *politicos*!” Cousin Luisa cried out. “They, at least, were not heretics, nor foreigners!”

Doctor Kit filled the glasses with a firm hand.

“Since I haven’t been taken into the confidence of the invaders,” he remarked, “I don’t know what they are up to. We may as well expect rough dealing. We are, regrettably, the conquered! There are some in Monterey who think that any change from the *politicos* will be a change for the better. But observe, *amigo* Basile, they are not owners of land. They are traders.”

Cousin Basile wore a stunned look. He owned a quarter league, so rocky and arid that his cattle, a hundred head or so, were never seen in its desolation unless driven back to it by *vaqueros* on the neighboring ranges. Its whole expanse could not yield more than a cartload of wispy beach grass. But his cattle, grazing well elsewhere, had a prosperous fatness. So, likewise, had Cousin Basile. He had a minor business in hides, sold a few *botas* of tallow now and then, but being a ranch owner, he moved in the circle of *grandees*. The fear of being deprived of his ranch threw him into a state of alarm. He sat back, a corpulent man in a stock, arms out, as if he were fending off a peril.

Pablo rose and trod the room. He did not share in the gloom and apprehension that had seized upon his elders. The *Californios*, an amiable and courteous race, were almost all inclined to fear the incoming Americans. Pablo feared them not at all. He understood them, and in some ways was akin to them. Americans had taken over many Spanish land grants by the simple expedient of marriage. They were adventurers. They were fond of money, fond of all forms of wealth, and had a most inordinate hunger for land.

Land-grant heiresses were fewer now. The Americans, to get land, would have to go in for trade, force credit upon land-poor *rancheros*, and then present their bills in court. They would have their own courts. It was like sea-trading, and Pablo knew trading. It was all very simple, and it came under the head of what Washington orators called the Manifest Destiny.

“Are you playing?” Doctor Kit called to him.

“No, thanks.”

“Very well, then.” The Doctor dealt cards for a threesome in bezique. “Take up your hand, Basile.”

The three were deep in the game. At the far end of the room was the spinet. Pablo sat to the instrument; tinkly and ghost-like, rather, because of the dry heat. The tune at that flag-raising still haunted him, and humming the words, he played it.

O dear! what can the matter be?
O dear! what shall I do?
Nobody’s coming to marry me,
Nobody’s coming to woo!

A fragile air and it had always pleased him, but it was incongruous now, and sad. He thought of the bandsmen in the dusty plaza, and Lisaldo’s niece sobbing.

He got up restless. He was dissatisfied with the prospect of things at Alamos, and with the cattle trade depressed, he felt as if he had been left hanging in mid-air. There was nothing on the grand scale to engage his interest. He could repair the asistencia, and the roofing of it had all been done while he was skulking in the Santa Lucias; but Aunt Paz, the head of the family, would have to be talked with on the rest of the work. Aunt Paz was Dona Ana all over again. The brick-work, and the firing of the sand and lime for the stucco, a rough porcelain, might run to nearly a thousand dollars.

He thought of the mine again. If only he could be sure it was worth exploiting. Live silver was more profitable than cattle in the best markets. But to dig it was a craft in itself, a profession.

“Why not go to Cornwall?” he asked himself. “And now in this lull.”

He had relatives in Cornwall. Queer to meet relatives who could talk only English, and who had never left their native county! The old family mine, in which his father had started, was still being worked. A year in it, and then he would return to Alamos and see if its red ore was worth troubling with.

“Kit,” he said, going over to the table, “I think I’ll go to Cornwall. Is this a good time?”

Doctor Kit regarded him over his glasses and nodded. “Decidedly!”

“These are not the best of times, and to leave Alamos now——”

“They are not likely to be any securer for the next five years. But Alamos will be safe. Reasonably safe. And certain persons are gone, which is

reassuring. The women will be returning. And until they are here, I shall look after it, with Basile and Luisa. And there is the majordomo.”

The doctor nodded again. It was all as he had wished. Young Cope would be among his father’s people. It would do him good to live quietly and steadily, even a little humdrum, for a time. The second or third generation often went slack in this easy-going society, and Pablo had also that Spanish strain in him, with its predilection for ease. He might bring back something needed here.

“Captain Hatch takes a brig up to Astoria this week.”

“Then I’ll leave with him. I suppose I shall return in a year and a half.”

“Three years at least. Look into mining. It will take that long to learn anything worth bringing back. Stay four, if you wish. I’ll see that you get supplied with funds.”

“Thanks, Kit.”

“*Valgame Dios!*” said Cousin Basile. “He is going to the end of the world!”

Pablo was himself half dizzy at the thought of it. He wanted most of all to tell Ynes. He would have a long letter to write. The expulsion of Felipe would have to be told her, and the great news of the loss of the province, and his departure for the Cornish tin mines. He would ask her to join him there. Heaven knew when the letter would reach her!

Part Two

PABLO ABROAD

At midday the rain slackened, though promise of more storm was writ on the murky sky, and Pablo, in cloak and black Monterey hat, left the Fox-and-Crown, where he had spent the night, and struck out for the moors. His aunt, Mrs. Traherne, was expecting him. He had sent a message to her as soon as he arrived at Polwithiel by coach, and the inn servant brought back a reply. The letter, for all its old-fashioned script and Biblical turns of phrase, was direct, it pressed him to stay at Torpen Farm, where a room was being readied for him.

Pablo had sent his leathern trunks and valise out by cart an hour before: a cart more like a tray on wheels, and drawn by the smallest possible donkey. The landlord, too, had tried to be helpful in the matter of a saddle-horse, but the Fox-and-Crown had no horse except an unwieldy Percheron, with straw-braided tail, that fishermen now and then borrowed to haul their boats up for repairing. So Pablo departed on foot. He mounted the narrow, cobbled streets of the fishing hamlet, which was dark and dripping, and tumultuous with the sea's roar, and a lashing wind that beat his cloak about his legs. In the archways, booming like shells, oilskin-clad fishermen turned to watch the foreign young gentlemen in extraordinary boots, who strode upward, holding to his sombrero.

Beyond the rim of the hill above the hamlet it was calmer. Pablo could see the road, glistening like a snail's track amid rocks, pools, patches of trees like islets, and tall clumps of broom and vipers' bugloss on the moor. He espied the cart two miles off, under low, mourning skies whose dark folds were occasionally rent with jags of lightning. For an hour he followed it at that distance, sauntering, taking in the character of the brownish-green moorland. There were smells of briar, fern and yellow gorse. Sheep moved through the ground-blanket of mist, crows riding on their wool, like bright small clergymen in black. There were diminutive waterfalls, a yard or two high; and a stile where he paused to smoke.

Wildings of the hedge, a great thicket of blackthorn, yew and holly, began to move as he held his breath. A hedgehog and a flat-headed weasel emerged in the stillness from their homes in the tough, ancient roots. He thought of the old Indian at Alamos, who for hours sat under the heat in the yard, stick in hand, waiting for a gopher's head to lift from a burrow. Magpies and butcher-

birds scolded as Pablo rose and followed the path to Torpen Farm. The house was large, almost a castle, of moss-covered stone, at the foot of a high, black crag; the slate roof, in the light rifting from the clouds, was blue-gray, like the back of a dove.

He knocked, and the door was opened by a gaunt woman in apron, whose pale eyes looked not at him but over his shoulder at the moor. She ushered him into the drawing room, and pointed to a chair.

“Mrs. Traherne will be down shortly.”

The drawing room was a pink-panelled extent of space, garnished with fleurettes and cupids of plaster; with a marble fireplace, screens, tapestries, and a profusion of delicate, bowlegged furniture. It had an un-lived-in air, as if it belonged to a past age, and was visited only by bewigged ghosts with snuffboxes. Mrs. Traherne appeared, and he rose. She was in crinoline, small-boned, with an absent look, as if her gaze were eternally inward. But her speech was curiously direct.

“You are tall. Even taller than your father. You were staying at that—that tavern? I would have sent the trap to meet the coach if I had known you were coming. That tavern is not a respectable place.”

He gave an apologetic murmur. The company at the taproom, as well as the landlord, he had found engaging: smugglers or poachers, a good part of them, and they had promised to take him out with them on their next excursions.

“But now you are here,” she said. “And Deborah has put your father’s old room in order, and I hope you will be comfortable. You may find Torpen Farm very quiet.”

“I shan’t mind that for a change,” Pablo put in, with a smile. “In California, we have had a war——”

He spoke of the war, and also of the events at Alamos; and she listened, at first disapprovingly, and then with no more concern than if he were describing a brawl at the Fox-and-Crown. She rang a bell. The gaunt housekeeper brought in a tea-caddy and a platter of saffron cake.

“Did you know you have a cousin?” she remarked, pouring tea. “Eric’s son, Carew. He is at Oxford, and Mr. Tonkin, the clergyman of Polwithiel, takes the warmest interest in Carew, who is fitting himself for the Church. He is also engaged to Mr. Tonkin’s daughter, Arabella. You will see much of them when Carew comes here next month for his holiday. They are very fond of walks on the moor.

“What church did you attend, Nephew? Thomas was very Low Church, and disapproved of the extreme Anglican branch, to which Mr. Tonkin belongs.”

“Indeed,” said Pablo, putting down his cup gently. His father had become a Roman Catholic, and by virtue of inclusion in that fold had been able to marry a lady of Hispano-California, and become a landowner. “I never attended very much. We lived out in the country, quite far from any church.”

“People on outlying farms tend to become neglectful,” said his aunt. She was looking out over the moor, probably at farms, whose tenants were indifferent to their souls’ welfare.

He could have hazarded, “The Bishop came to our ranch twice a year to read a service,” but was unsure that any remote Bishop, though his diocese were twice the size of all England, meant anything so much as Mr. Tonkin, the Vicar of Polwithiel. It was raining hard; the wet blackthorns were flattened against the streaming window. His aunt turned.

“You have come to see the mine,” she said quietly. “It was your father’s wish that you learn his profession. He began here, then he went to Saxony, to study engineering. Then to Northern Spain. He taught you a little?”

“I was too young then to learn much. Torpen Old Mine is still alive?”

“It survives. Since I was a child it never had more than fifteen or twenty workmen below. But even in dull times they streamed tin, for Torpen Farm always kept the mine going. And always with Polwithiel men, who handed their trade and tools down, father to son, son to grandson. There are still a Borlase, a Cobbledick, a Faro, a Garrad, a Pernberthy. But there isn’t any Cope in the workings now. An omen, perhaps? That may be. And Torpen Old Mine, I feel, is nearing exhaustion.

“Torpen Farm draws a profit of six hundred pounds a year from its tin, after all costs are paid. The workmen drive back and forth from Polwithiel in their traps, or on ponies. Hector Borlase has been the Captain since your Uncle Eric was killed. Hector is eighty-one. He can tell you all you would care to know about the taking-out of rock.

“There is more to mining than that. As there is more to astronomy than looking at the moon through a telescope. But not all are born to either, I think, Nephew Pablo. You will learn that shortly.

“Torpen Old Mine I have left in the hands of others who have known it all their lives—Hector, and our solicitor at Marazion, Mr. Glazebrook. They have been told you are here, and you should find them obliging.” She rose,

the absent look again coming over her eyes, and she pulled at the bell-cord. "Deborah must show you upstairs. And you will now, Nephew Pablo, please excuse me."

She was gone. In the hallway Pablo saw the austere Deborah, who must have been awaiting him at the stairs all this while. He followed her up to the tower room.

"Your things have all been unpacked, Mr. Cope. In that closet are clothes suitable for the mine. You may prefer to have your meals in the small dining-room. Tea will be served there at six."

"And Mrs. Traherne?"

"In retreat," said the housekeeper, then nodded at a rope. "That bell will summon the maid."

"Perfect!" thought Pablo, and he was genuinely relieved. Women in the house, but they wouldn't fall over him. What did that grenadier mean by saying his aunt was "in retreat"? Locked up with tracts and religious books in a cell? He would be left comfortably alone. The room was spacious, with good chairs to sink in, and absolute quiet. On a long plank table were books, chunks of ore, bottles of chemicals, and glass tubes for blowpiping. Charts of Torpen Old Mine, and of engines were pinned to the wall. They were signed "T. Cope." And so this had been his father's room! A storm was blotting out the daylight, and the window being small and leaded, Pablo lighted a candle and sat down to a book. It engrossed him. He had a knack for machinery and drawing, and bent over a drawing-board he worked until evening.

It was six. His descent being looked for, he went downstairs, and in the small room off the kitchen found a plate laid for him under a hanging ship's lamp. A pasty was brought him, saffron cakes and ale. He would have preferred the kitchen. Through the door left half-opened he saw the low-beamed cavern, with its fire of peat and gorse-roots, its light glowing on the faces of the farmhands about the table. Their speech was cheerful, but slurring and pitched low; only the soft laughter was intelligible. They were greeting a visitor, a lean youth of a pale and dissipated aspect, and the look of a night prowler. He had dropped by a moment with a lantern to speak of the pheasants that had been turned loose to restock the moor. He left after an exchange of sallies.

"And speed ye, Powey! Or ye'll find the ponies awash in the shaft!"

The pump-tender at the mine, Pablo conjectured. The rain over, and being in the mood for a stroll, he went out by the side door, and stalked to overtake the glim that bobbed like a will-o'-the-wisp on the dark expanse of the heath.

A dog crept out from somewhere to lurch at his heels. A wisp of moon hung over the path. In the moist, salt air were separate odors of heather, earth of old granite, and withered bog myrtle. Hedges to fend off stray cattle and sheep reared about pits that had long ago been abandoned. The dog loped on to the mine; and by the sheds the youth turned swiftly and held out a lantern. He had something of the glance of a trapped fox.

“I wasn’t sure hands would be working this late,” said Pablo. “You are going below?”

Powey looked remotely into the night, as if to ascertain that he had not been followed by more than one person. He still averted his face, and after a kick at a pebble, completely turned so that Pablo saw only his back. The dog raised its hackles and growled to itself.

“Th’ gaffer wants no strangers down in the pit,” said Powey with defiance. “Can’t go down, no matter who they are.”

He was half drunk, Pablo thought, and seemed convinced he had been tracked to the mine by the law, or by someone who had lost a pheasant.

“I’m Cope from the Manor,” he explained. “You were in the kitchen a while ago, and I tried to catch up with you.”

“You are the Spanish relation?” asked Powey.

“That’s close to it. I’m from California. You think I had better come around by day?”

“If you want to go down, then I’ll take you. There’s not many in the shift. There was a apple harvest, and we’re making up for it tonight, taking ore to Polwithiel. To the Jews’ House.”

That was the term for smelter in this part of Cornwall, where the tin trade was older than any living thing, older even than the stone hedges that were old when the Phoenicians first dug tin in the Scillies, off the coast. Since those early adventurers were swart and black-bearded, legend regarded them as poor Jews enslaved in the smelters.

“Torpen has no Jews’ House?”

“There’s been no smelter here since George First,” said Powey. “We’re tin-streamers here, not furnacemen. And coals is cheaper to buy at Polwithiel.” He spoke with less wariness. “If you’re going to the pit, then you come this way.”

At the shed he gave Pablo a tarpaulin hat, and they went down a sloping into earth, then into rock, and over a tramway under a roof of beams. Dark

tunnels debouched into the passage. Twice they flattened against the wall as a pony intent on its business champed past with its load of ore. Powey slid into a crevice, and Pablo after him into a timbered alley, velvety-black, squealing with animal life. But it was no blacker than a ship's hold. Pablo groped into ringing light, a cave noisy with the fall of hammers, which stilled as he stood there blinking. It was a silence in which he was being looked at, but whether with resentment or wonder, he knew not. The keenest gaze was from under a shapeless, felt hat. It crowned a venerable man with walking-stick, and a white beard mixed with red that fell to his waist.

He looked at Pablo as if at a frame, and his sharp recollection fitted into it, one after the other, all the Copes he had ever known, and in his sixty-eight years in Torpen Old Mine he had known many Copes. He judged men as he judged rock. This one, he assured himself, had the look of all the Torpen Farm men, even if he was rather foreign-seeming. Captain Borlase, a Methodist elder, was prosaic, unimaginative and as matter-of-fact as a stone gate-post. He had no high regard for foreigners. He was of opinion that Spaniards—he judged them hardly, for he was well-informed on the Armada, the Inquisition, and piracy on the Spanish Main, with butchery by cutlass, and abduction of high-born ladies—were the least trustworthy of the lot. Pablo—*that* name settled it! Still, and he hesitated, this one was a Cope; and he had the right craggy jaw and forehead.

“We know each other, I think,” said Pablo. His smile disconcerted Captain Borlase, who felt his mind had been read. “My aunt sent you word I’ve come to Torpen Old Mine to get practice?”

“Harrrr!” grunted Mr. Borlase. “She did! And Thomas Cope’s son you are!” There was no doubt of that, but it was a pity a Torpen Farm man had got tangled up with a Spaniard. Tommy Cope was always a one for foreign women. “Well, how long will you be staying?”

“A half year—perhaps more, or less. I don’t know much about mining, outside of books.”

A cart backed in, the hammers fell again. The Captain took up a lantern, and walked back with Pablo, not saying a word until they were upon the moor.

“‘A half year—perhaps more, or less,’” came from him like a belated echo, as he prodded with his stick at the turf. “That isn’t much. Men have come here from the Calcoats copper mines and elsewhere, and a few did learn something. Not many! Your father did, but he was one in a hundred. Harrr! Why he took himself off to foreign parts, I don’t know. If Torpen Old Mine is

still alive—and some would say it ain't," he said with a ghost of a chuckle, "it's because of Thomas. He was an engineer! He pulled the workings up into life again. Torpen Old Mine knows how to be grateful. You will learn all it can teach you, if you be not too blind! If you were twelve, or fifteen, you'd learn deeper—but try to make up for it!" He jabbed into the air with his stick. "Take that shiny wall below, that slickensides. The devil to work. That was a fault. It slipped a million years ago, and——"

In a girding voice, like a preacher, almost staggering Pablo by the harsh intensity of his utterance—fanaticism, almost—Borlase, driving his points home-like nails, kept him there rigid on the moor for an hour.

His head twisted sharply, like a bird's. A sound out on the moor that Pablo had taken for the bickering of rainwater in a ditch had ceased. They waited a minute, then it resumed, but this time with a throbbing, as of a disordered pulse.

"The Jamie again!" exclaimed Borlase. "And she'll be wanting more than new gaskets! It's a going-over, she wants. We'll have to get someone. Powey Faro's looking after her, but he's not the engine man his father was. Nor much else, either! Unless it's poaching."

Aboard the *Mizpah* Pablo had been as much acquainted with the pump as with the quadrant. "I'm fair at tinkering," he said. "I can give him a hand with that."

"There's a two-day holiday in a month," said the Captain, "and you can work on the Jamie then. And tomorrow I'll put you on that slickensides."

Pablo walked on towards the farm, elated. He had been staggered, as by a blow, into a state of receptivity, and an awareness of rock. That old Cornishman had awakened something in him, with an impact like an electric eel. He could never look at rock again, or at a mine, with the same attitude as before this night. This was worth coming for! If he had known what he would have found at the end of the voyage, and if there had not been that war—so unreal now at this distance—and the red-wet mine to save, he would have come to Torpen earlier.

The manor was dark; he climbed to his room, and being thoroughly awake, cast himself into a chair. He thought of the old life, which he had loved but put aside for a time, and the new life, which considerably amused, as well as pleased, him. It was all on a diminutive scale, sedate and tidy; something like the Noah's Ark that Ynes had played with at Alamos. And it was immeasurably peaceful—no wars, no fandangos, barbecues, no bullfighting, rodeos, gallopings for day after day from one end of a ranch to

the other. He thought of Captain Borlase, with his schoolmasterly, buttoned-up tightness, and the majordomo, with his expansiveness, his roaring and hearty bluster. How immeasurably quiet it was! He would grow very fond of it. He was already fond of it, and instead of feeling a stranger on the moor, and also in the mine, he had the sense of having returned to a world that somehow he had known before. He rose and groped for his pipe. It was around twelve, he thought. If he had a saddle-horse, he would have fancied a canter to the Fox-and-Crown, and a tankard and crack with the smugglers. An animal's cry broke out in the darkness, then the howling of dogs, and a voice.

He peered down through the window. That was a cat, in a set-to with dogs, egged on with laughter and jeering. There it was now, prancing, fighting, with fluffed-out tail in the lantern-light. It tore up a tree, and the baying kept up frenziedly, a woman, holding up the lantern, encouraging the dogs. She turned about, startled, then slunk back, and he saw that it was the housekeeper, Deborah. He heard her fasten the kitchen door, and saw the dogs gaze up at him. They wheeled off, mute, towards their kennel. A shudder went through him. The night was dreadfully still after that outburst of hysteria. He closed the window thoughtfully. What madness had come over these people on the moor? Did it come of solitude, or was it some emanation of the night, or a strain in the blood? First, there was his aunt, who had locked out the world; then the fanatic old Captain with not a thought for anything but his cavern under the moor; and this woman who must be the sole being awake but himself in the house.

It was all like a nightmare. He peered through the window again, and there was no sign of the cat. His discomfort was intense, he felt alone, and was homesick for the familiar and heartening solidity of the Casa at Alamos. The weirdness of the moor, with its deceptive tranquility, had thrown a spell over him. It would have to be broken. He removed his boots, in stocking feet went carefully downstairs, and groped into the kitchen. There was moonlight in a streak on the stone floor. Someone in a chair, upright, bowed at him, straightened, then after a space bowed again. He froze. It was the gaunt Deborah, her head drawing back with chin upraised, then after the space of two slow breaths, bowing again. The chill went through him again. Her eyes were closed; she was asleep.

He crept upstairs, and lighted the lamp. He wanted a measure of the old life to hearten him. A horse to ride, and a gun for hunting! That young Faro, a poacher, should be a good person to know, he reflected. He propped up a book, trying to get Deborah out of his mind. It was one of his father's books and in Spanish and crabbed reading, for it was very old, and had to do with quicksilver, alchemists, and Moorish physicians. He read steadily with

profound interest, making notes, until the morning was advanced. He pulled corduroys and a jersey out of the closet, also some boots, iron shod, and dressed for the mine, went downstairs.



Pablo lay flat on the turf, head over the edge of the bank, and he peered cautiously into the pool. For so small a brook it was a very deep one, and being in the shadow of dense and long-branched, though leafless, alders, it was also dark. The five large trout, hovering about a boulder, were still there. They had not stirred, though he had tried them with flies, a maggot dug out of the turf, and a fat worm.

“Now for the mussel,” he whispered. Faro, sitting firmly on Pablo’s legs, to keep him anchored, inched the pole out through furze, and from hand into hand passed out the baited hook. Pablo swung it clear, and lowered it, not a ripple breaking the surface, so firm was his hand. The mussel fell straight before the nose of the highest trout. It was less ignored than not noticed at all. He bumped it against the noses of all five trout. Nothing could rouse them from their prolonged meditation. They barely flicked their tails. They were of remarkable age, ancestors, probably, of all the trout in this brook from the tarn to the sea, and having experienced everything, the outer world and all things edible, had ceased to exist for them. Perhaps they lived on thought, like sage enchanters in a fable. Their trance seemed eternal. Pablo, uttering maledictions in Spanish, wriggled back, and sat up.

“If they won’t take that, Powey, they won’t take anything!” He rubbed his arm violently. “Damn! I thought my arm was coming off.”

“They’re sly, Cope. I could never get strike from ’em. Nor could anybody at Torpen, nor Lugg, the gamekeeper.”

Pablo went back in mind. The majordomo brought many fish home from the creek, though he never went armed with hook and line.

“The gun, Powey.”

It was slid to him; he rammed in the cartridges, and wriggled forward again, nuzzling the barrel along the edge of the bank. For minutes he lay cramped, his legs numb under the weight of Powey, who sat expectant, eyes on the surface of the water. The mirror shattered with a tremendous roar. Slowly through the broth of mud and weeds, the patriarchal trout rose one by one, silvery side up. Pablo, wiping his face, grinned.

“There! We got those fish! That’s quicker than a rod, Powey.”

“’Ow!” gasped Powey, then rolled on his back, kicking the turf helpless with laughter. “That was taking ’em! What old Lugg the gamey would say to that!”

“What would he say? They belong to somebody?”

“To the law! And I thought you knew! They’re off season, and the law’s trout!” Powey strangled in tearful mirth, wiping his eyes. “He’d say nought to you nor to me, nor to the manor folk, even if they do give goose-grease for his boots. He’d talk to the Magistrate!”

“Oh, well,” said Pablo, chagrined. “Live and learn, I suppose. I thought all fish were for the taking. You take ’em home after we have another go at that pump.”

Powey hung the fish by a withe on Pablo’s saddle, which also held a brace of rabbits and a curlew. They rode on through the gorse. Pablo had bought a cob at Marazion, and for a month had been again in the saddle. In another hour it would be gloaming; the shadows were long; the dark, lonely bogs, the silver-gray of the heath, the bleakness of the disused tin mines, shrouded with yew and thorn, the haunts of crying birds, were notes that fascinated him in the wild and splendid desolation of the moor. His deep roots were elsewhere, but here his affection was beginning to put forth tendrils that would bind him to the scene, as young ivy clings to an ancient wall, and merges with the past from which it henceforth draws part of its life, and its own distinct but subtle variations of color in twig and leaf.

They came up to the mine, and after stopping the engine in the shed, went below with their lanterns. The screen about the intake-pipe in the sump had rusted off. Pablo rigged block-and-tackle and lowered a cask, then stepped waist-deep into the tailings and bilge. The two dipped and hauled, filling three carts with the muck, and returned to the shed.

“I’m stuffed with tin,” said Pablo, and washed his mouth at the tap. “Give the Jamie a pinch of steam now, and see if it’ll hold together.”

A cylinder hissed, the walking-beam of the engine began to stir like a daddy-long-legs. It was a Watt pump-engine, with sun-and-planet wheels, a contraption that Grandfather Adoniram Cope had brought in to drain the Royal George pit, now forgotten. Pablo looked at it, marvelling, as if he had not taken it apart only the day before. Jamie Watt’s engines had saved from drowning half the deep mines in Cornwall, and his firm had also drawn salvage royalty from the mine owners, who had thereby suffered anguish. But Adoniram, after a discount for payment on the nail, had planked down his

guineas, and that was the end. Not a farthing more did the firm get from him. As well try to wring a drop of blood from Cornish granite. Pablo had discovered a hamper of the old Gorgon's papers and ledgers up in the garret, and wage-sheets, with the pennies worked out to the last decimal. He had found them profitable reading. Adoniram, gentleman venturer and mine captain, was a genius at finance as well as at ore-winning. That engine had saved him forty thousand pounds, and he took every speck of tin from the Royal George, which he let fill up after withdrawing all its timber. Wheezing and archaic, with a clatter at every joint, there was still valorous life in its old heart. Powey, lying on the floor, ear on the pipe, was listening to the click of her valves.

"That's softer than I ever heard her before, Cope. She's better nor new!"

"She'll do," said Pablo, throwing aside his wet boots. "I'm going now. Take the game and fish with you. And don't run into Lugg!"

He cantered towards the manor, barefoot and muddied, intending to scrub and change in the coach-house, then dine with the farmhands by the peat fire. That was his easy custom, disapproved by Deborah, to whom he was "the California relation," who should be dining in the parlor, and not in the kitchen with Moses, the shepherd. Moses came in with his steaming sheep-dogs; he sat at the table before anyone else, outranking the others in age, and he ate with his clasp-knife, which had a fork attachment. This had been a gift to him from "Cap'n Adoniram." None left the table until Moses clicked his knife shut, a sign that the meal was over. As a boy he had worked in the Royal George pit, and since he remembered vividly its ore veins and timbering, Pablo clung avidly to his words.

"Aye, Adoniram was a rare one," he would repeat. "One of the gentry, but a tin-streamer first and last! He knowed rock like I know my dogs. I've seen Adoniram step into water up to his neck, and pound a drill with the best of 'em."

A tilbury was coming up the road at a brisk pace, and being near the yard entrance, Pablo halted to let it pass, but the driver pulled up. Pablo pushed wide open the gate, the tilbury entered, and the driver helped out a young woman in furs. She took Pablo in at a glance, from his towseled head to his bare feet in the mud. Her eyes flashed in merriment.

"Carew, haven't we here your Spanish cousin?"

"That's so!" said Carew. "This is Miss Tonkin, Pablo. I knew you had come, of course."

They shook hands. A bookish young fellow, Pablo thought, but agreeable. "You go straight in," he said, "and I'll take care of your trap and boxes."

He put up the horses, carried in the baggage, and made himself presentable for dinner. It would be a family dinner this time, with Aunt Elizabeth, and he deplored it, for after a heavy week with the pick and textbooks, he had hoped to make a night of it at the Fox-and-Crown. The visit would also cost him other lively nights, for Carew had come to spend the holidays—and at Torpen little was made of Christmas except at the mine.

He lingered over his stock, put over his frogged vest a coat that the best-patronized tailor in Boston had fitted upon him, and went downstairs. The solicitor had also come in. Dinner was in the library, a cave of books with a bottle of port on an oaken Welsh dresser. Miss Tonkin's eyes snapped brightly at him twice as he came in, then she became demure. He sat between her and Mr. Glazebrook, a formal little man, like a cockatoo. Deborah served, and Carew said a long grace. Forks and knives began to move.

"Do you like it here on the moor, Mr. Cope?" asked Miss Tonkin.

"Hugely. I have a feeling sometimes that I have always been here. Though I haven't seen much of it outside of the pits."

"There's good walking on the moor," said Mrs. Traherne. "Out towards Willy Tor and Pennock Heath. Carew knows the best paths."

"I'll take you out, Pablo," said Carew. "You've just got to look out for those grown-over shafts. And if you like angling, I have a fair rod."

"Thanks, but I'm in disgrace already. I haven't got the hang of these seasons and game laws." Pablo looked shamefaced. "Never shall. I went hunting today, fired right into a pool and did for a lot of trout. Somebody's pets, I think."

Carew looked up, startled. "Not—not the—alder pool?"

"Must be. I killed the five big fellows."

"Well I never!" Carew laid down his fork. Then he laughed delightedly. "Never! That was prize shooting!"

The dinner livened after that. There was cabinet pudding, and Deborah brought on the carafe of port. Pablo told of Alamos, and of his father surprising two bears in the orchard. Then of the mishap over the flasks and Fray Pio, and the war. The library was very still. Mrs. Traherne and the solicitor gazed at him as he were something not within their comprehension

—Carew with blank wonder, and Miss Tonkin with envy, listening with her chin on a propped elbow.

“You’ll find it soothing here—Pablo—after all that!” said the girl, turning a glowing face upon him. “Won’t he, Aunt Elizabeth? We do have our little excitements.”

“There’ll be the calling at the mine,” said Mrs. Traherne. “Captain Borlase will speak to the ponies. I think all the mine families will be there. Deborah is making the simnel cakes.”

“That’s our Christmas custom,” explained Arabella. “We haven’t an awful lot of customs, but we do make the most of what we have. And there’ll be the Guize-dancing at Polwithiel, of course. You must come to that!”

“It’s been going on for almost a week,” said Carew. “Lasts a fortnight, usually.”

“Oh, he must see that!” said the girl, cheerfully. “I shouldn’t want him to miss that. It’s quite the oldest thing we have here, after the moor itself.” She pressed her wish, appealing to everyone. Nobody else at the table, except Pablo, seemed taken by the idea, though Mr. Glazebrook gave a tolerant half-nod. Mrs. Traherne’s mind had gone back to her tracts; as for Carew, he seemed a shade concerned.

“It’ll be a bit less rowdy, or primitive, Christmas night, I think,” he hesitated. “We could look on then, for a minute or two. If it would amuse him.”

“It would,” said Pablo staunchly. “I’m on Arabella’s side!”

Why was it that only the young were rebellious enough to be conservative, and keep up the old customs? He wished he were back at Monterey this instant, with Arabella, both of them riding out to a fandango. Taking along Ynes, of course. Had Ynes returned to Alamos, he wondered? Not a word from her yet, nor from Doctor Kit. He had another twinge of homesickness.

“Don Porfirio Miura—that was a sort of cousin of ours—” he began, turning to the girl. She would understand. “He held a fandango once——”

“And what’s a fandango?”

“A dance, and this was a Christmas dance after a barbecue—the roasting of a whole ox. Then there were gifts for the Indian boys, a lot of clothes and penny trumpets atop a greased pole. Don Porfirio was a tease. They just couldn’t climb that high. So, when the grown-ups were all inside, eating ox, I

got upon a tall pair of stilts and threw all the trumpets down to the little Indians. Then they trooped in, blowing music quite wonderfully, for they had been trained by the choirmaster. I was thinking just now of that Christmas at home, with the Doxology on penny trumpets, the smoke of barbecue fires, and the surf pounding on the beach.”

Arabella listened on, intent and amused, chin resting on her hand. She never wearied of hearing him talk of his old ranch life; that interest was like a bond, it repaid him for his exile, and it also flattered him. How swiftly Arabella, with her tolerance and merry heart, could have fitted into the colonial and easy-going ways of his own people. She was cleverer than Ynes, cleverer than any woman he had ever known; but she was also unspoiled, and her fluctuations of mood left her serenity of spirit as untouched as Torpen Moor, solid and enduring for all its shillings of color.



For days the rain had fallen copiously on the moor, turning the small bogs into lakes black as ink-blots; the brook rose, drowning the alders, and overflowed into the turnip fields. Pablo was in his room, working over the drawing-board, lettering a chart he had made after dragging a surveyor's chain through all the newest drifts. Mr. Glazebrook, who had ridden to Torpen in the deluge, came upstairs, in oilskins, and gave him a missive.

“The foreign post, just in,” he said, “so I brought your letter over myself. It's from Mexico.”

Pablo opened it at once, nervously, the first letter Ynes had written him since she left Alamos. What else could he expect but anger and reproach? He hurriedly took in the pages at a glance, then read slowly, relieved. She had written in Spanish, and for no eyes but his own. There was no reproach, and of anger not the least trace—but shame, rather. Doctor Kit also had sent her word, and the letters had reached her the same time. Felipe, who had been turned loose in Mexico, after only a brief questioning by the officials, had sent her a message, but she had ignored it. “It was a dishonour, *querido*, even to have known him at all! Why had I not known before? Why?”

There was still war, and no one could foresee its end. Aunt Paz, who had come into a large part of the estate, was inclined to stay in Guadalajara when peace should be signed. She was willing to give her the two hundred acres in the middle section, which included the Casa and the hill, and all the rest of Alamos, save for the quarter league Dona Ana had left her grandson. And Ynes was grievously homesick. She wanted to go home. She reiterated her

anguished desire to be home. It was a long and rambling letter, six pages, but one meaning was stamped clearly on them all. She was in love with him.

He sank back, his heart pounding. The mine was his now, and the Casa, and the asistencia he had roofed! And he was the richer by a quarter league! The Americans, he gathered from a paragraph, were not likely to change things very much—not the new territorial government; they would not void the titles. He now owned almost a league. When he returned he would, if cows should be profitable——

“A business letter,” he said. “My grandmother has left me a parcel of ground.” He looked out into the rain. “Somewhat larger than Torpen Moor.”

“Ah, a considerable bequest. It will change your plans?”

“I shall be going back, of course.” Pablo stuck the letter into the drawer, and whistled. He would go on to Spain, inside of a month. To the great mines at Talavera, where his father had stayed three years. There was much to be learned at Talavera, and very little more from Borlase in the Torpen pits. “But not immediately.”

“It is very quiet here just now,” said Mr. Glazebrook, as he rose to leave. “The Guize-dancing has been stopped by the rain. You may get a night of it, if it clears.”

Alone again, Pablo set himself to writing. He wrote to Ynes and to Doctor Kit, very long letters outlining his plans. He was going to say goodbye to Torpen.

Half way through the letter to Doctor Kit, sadness came over him at the thought of leaving Arabella Tonkin. He had been aware of a growing affection for her, like a hunger. She had come over often from Polwithiel, even when Carew was at the vicarage, where he spent most of the time with her father, and she had not come to see Mrs. Traherne, either. He and the girl had ridden to Pennock Heath and back one marvelous afternoon, when the weather was fine.

Arabella, bright, sharp-tongued and generous, was like no other woman that had ever lived. The more he thought upon it, the surer he was that he was falling in love with her. And that would not do. He had Alamos to think of, and himself, and Ynes. Nothing else. And Carew, cleverer than himself—though deep in books, moor-bred and another Reverend Mr. Tonkin—was the very match for Arabella. She would never dream of leaving this shaggy, primeval world between Pennock and Land’s End, a world to which in the deeper sense he would always be a stranger.

He threw aside his pen, and thought again of that ride. They had returned to Torpen moor in time for the streamers' Yule-week party at the mine. The ferns had opened their grey, wintry fronds in the rain, and their color had changed to a glowing and beautiful red, like the red in the cave at Alamos. It was the unbelievable hue that vanished when rain ceased. But a frost had come on, entrapping the hue, and it lay in vivid cornelian splotches on the ice-bound palette of the moor. The beauty of it made him cry out. A party of hunters, in coats equally red, espied Arabella, and abandoning the chase—the fox had gone to earth anyway—rode back with them as far as Torpen Old Mine. Gentlemen of the county, all courteous as well as merry, and pleased when Pablo invited them to attend the pony-calling.

Two score folk and as many children were gathered at the pit top, on benches. There were ancients of the moor, streamers long past work, with sticks, quavering voices, and beards like sunsets, whom nothing could keep away from the ceremonial. In a sheepfold, the bars wrapped with bunting, were chairs, seats of honor, for Mrs. Traherne, Mr. Tonkin, Captain Borlase, and Anthony Cobbledick, who was ninety-five, the oldest of Torpen streamers. Deborah, assisted by two farm-wives, was behind a plank table, helping out tea, buns and saffron cake. Moses, in his chapel suit, distributed sugar-candy in lumps to the children, and small books.

"It's always *The Little Woodman*," said Arabella, "but once I did get *Pilgrim's Progress*."

The Polwithiel Temperance Band blew and thumped through hymns and "Rule Britannia," and very prettily the tunes sounded in the open air, Pablo thought. A comfortable and homey scene, too, for there were braziers, in which furze crackled and glowed. The ponies came up from the mine, and Powey Faro led them before the sheepfold. Mr. Tonkin rose, and after reading their names aloud from a paper, gave an address of welcome and praise, and said that at this season of good will it was fitting that a little testimony be shown of the obligation owed to the miners' dumb friends. Up here by the wall everything could not be heard, but Arabella, who knew the sermon by heart, echoed bits of it for Pablo and the fox-hunters, who listened as they sipped whiskey. Then each pony was given an apple and a bucket of hot barley-mash. The band played once more, and the ceremonial was over.

Carew, his aunt and Mr. Tonkin rode back to the manor in a basket-carriage. The fox-hunters rode behind in escort, and Pablo and Arabella made them a punch which was served in the library. Carew and Mr. Tonkin took barely a sip and with Mrs. Traherne talked in the parlor, as if they had thought for nothing but tracts and missions.

Did Carew understand Arabella at all, and was she really in love with Carew?



Christmas was deathly quiet, except for the chatter of daws, and the sky was murky, with outlook for a dry, easterly gale. His aunt he had not seen since the pony-calling. Carew had left early for the vicarage, and no doubt would be going to church service in the evening with Mr. Tonkin. No sound otherwise, except for a stir at times in the kitchen, for Deborah was about. Pablo kept to his room, reading more of the Spanish books. At six he had late tea, then dressed and rode out, with a rolled-up chart under his arm. At Borlase's cottage, two miles down the road, he stopped. It was quite near the pool where he had shot the fish. Nothing had come of the incident, not even a query from Lugg. If they had been missed, their vanishing was probably set down to the flood, which had scoured the brook this steep edge of the moor.

"Aye, aye, come in," said Captain Borlase. "A good Christmas to you. Sit here!"

Pablo dropped obediently into the Windsor chair, and gave him the roll. "A gift for you."

The old foreman flattened it out on the table. "Now, that's a one!" he purred. "I knowed you were up to something—dragging that chain and level around. I'm obliged, Cope!"

Pablo had spent much care over his gift. The chart, on vellum, was two yards long; and he had colored it, the levels in varying shades of red; the gwags, or abandoned workings, in black; the new drifts and faces in green.

"Ah!" Captain Borlase champed. "That scale of tints was your father's! And the same lettering!"

"They should be," laughed Pablo. "He had left one of his old charts for me to steer by."

They talked a few minutes, and Pablo got up. "I'm on my way to Polwithiel. I hear the Guize-dancing is on again, for the last night. The manor is too quiet for a holiday. Even Deborah must be going on tiptoe."

"Oh, aye—her!" Captain Borlase peered at him shrewdly. "She has her tantrums at night—if there'd be beasts around." He gave a dusty cackle. "It's more than her heart is tetched, for all that she has to sleep in a chair. The whole run of moor folk is queer." Something elfin broke through his rigidity.

At ease in velveteens, puffing at his churchwarden pipe, he stood oracular and bowlegged on his hearth. "And the moor streamers, no less. They've always had a bee in their bonnet. And most particularly the Copes. There were Copes digging here at Torpen when Joseph of Arimathea came in a ship to buy tin—and some preached, and some farmed. What they wanted to do, they did, regardless. I knew only four generations of 'em. Adoniram, who streamed the Royal George reef, was the first. A quarter million pounds he got out of that. Money never turned his head. He could have bought a baronetcy, but none of that for Adoniram! You'd find him with his beer at the Peal of Chimes or the Crested Hen, like anyone else. Thomas was of the moor stripe. Hard-set. He wanted foreign parts, and so he left."

"From what port?" asked Pablo, buttoning his coat.

"Spanish Docks, Falmouth."

After more talk of the mine, Pablo rode out through the wind to the vicarage. In the hall was excitement, and holly and mistletoe. There were young people, in masks, and paper hats, all ready for an excursion. "Good—you're just in time!" said Arabella. Her coat was inside out. "I wanted to see you. Come!"

They were the first to leave, the mob tumbling after them in the darkness, laughing, clutching their hats and lanterns. Half the villagers also were outdoors, climbing up their narrow, crooked streets, in masks and fantastic garb. They were in little groups and processions, and Pablo and the girl, arm in arm, joined one, then the other, on the zigzag way to the beach. It was childish and boisterous fun, with little of the gusto and flashing humor of the carnival at Monterey. There was a hoppity sort of dance on the beach, around a bonfire. Arabella and he danced the ring twice, and strayed off among the up-ended boats.

"And that's the Guize-dancing," said Arabella, "and I'm glad you saw it. Just simple jollity, Pablo. A bit wanting in finesse. Now you're seeing some of our life."

"I like very well what I have seen," he remarked, listening to the fiddle and the laughter of the revellers.

"But there is more of it you must see. You are such a recluse, staying down in the mine, or up in your room. You won't meet anyone, you won't go fishing or fox-hunting. The Copes did, and they were always part of Polwithiel."

"I like the moor best. I don't see how you could ever leave it."

“Oh, but I could!” she said. “If I wanted to! Perhaps not without sadness, for it is a pain to leave a place if we have loved it. But people do leave. As if they must. For the sea, and not to come back. Or to far countries, as your father did.

“I often wish somebody would take me away.” She laughed. “I love the moor and the village. But I could leave them forever. Have you ever seen the fisher boats leave after a violent and dreadful storm? I have; I have watched them often, from my window that overlooks the sea. After storms it is white from the salt. I have seen the women standing right here, in their shawls—looking far off. And the fishermen trooping down slowly with their oars and gear, to go out as before—but not so many of them, for the sea takes down many of Polwithiel. And, too, of Marazion, which has lost as many more in the sea and in the mines. What a name it has! The ‘bitterness of Zion!’ But still the men go away to cast nets and dig ore. Those who have suffered much have often that courage which is indifference, or resignation. As strong as the love of life, is a hatred of it.

“Some Guize-dance, some do not. Some wander away, some stay home. Who has the better of the bargain? I am never sure, Pablo. We are Celts, you know. Never very much at ease between the land and the sky. Usually tormented, always strangely restless, even when we are quiet.”

“You should get out of it, Arabella!” he said. Her talk had disturbed him, the more since she was clinging to his arm. Her voice was steady with repressed feeling and a quiet bitterness. “Get away from it, for a long time—a year!”

“Would it do me any good? Wouldn’t I be taking the moor and myself with me?” she smiled.

He must have been blind, unaware that beneath the apparent placidity of the life in this region was more ferment, more turmoil than he had seen in all his years at Alamos. A fear shook him, and a sense of utter loneliness; he was homesick for the old leagues, the soft nibbling of water on the sand, the grave, sonorous Castilian speech, and the feeling of rootedness.

Arabella turned her face up to him. He pressed down his mouth upon hers. She was in his arms, all of Torpen, and all of the world, though something very small and warm. “Take me away with you,” it wanted to say. That was all that mattered, and he kissed her again, with abandonment, with a passion that roared in him so consumingly that it drowned out the thunder of the sea on the rocks. It cancelled the future for him, for an instant.

Later she disengaged herself. She was very calm, and he helped her take off her Guize-dancing coat, at which they both laughed, for it was inside out.

“For you it would be easy to go,” she said. “You belong elsewhere. You will settle down, with a Spanish wife, start your own dynasty, and turn nabob. Isn’t that so?”

He could say nothing. He had never loved another as he now loved this woman. Perhaps—some day—if he should return here—He stalked in a confused fury. He did not want to leave her here to Carew. Then he turned upon her, hungrily. She was watching the Guize-dancers treading away two by two after a fiddler scraping his small, simple tune.

“Don’t think that I don’t envy you,” she was saying. “Because I do! I shall be staying on here—a curate’s wife, driving in a basket-carriage, taking calf’s-foot jelly and tracts to the parishioners. That’s Arabella Tonkin!”

“It does seem rather a fate,” he said.

“Doesn’t it, though?” said Arabella, and laughed. She was serene again. “Let’s go back to the vicarage, Pablo. Will you be coming to the service with the rest of us? Carew and Father left quite a while ago.”

“No, I’m going back to the manor.”

They walked back arm in arm, and he felt helpless and absurd. There was nothing for him to do more urgently than to ride to the Spanish Docks in the morning, and enquire about the ship.

On a bench in the dark pool of shade about an oak Pablo sat waiting for Jose Mendoza to come up from the mine. The road was floury white under the fierce sun of August, and the bare hills of La Mancha, tawny and harsh, seemed to glow like mounds of earthenware in a kiln. He had his cigarettes and a jar of wine, brought over from the posada across the road: a ruined palace of the Renaissance, with a stable as dark as a cave, in which muleteers lay sprawled in their siesta. The houses in Talavera were all of tarnished or decayed grandeur. Their windows looked blindly into the road, and from behind some shutters a guitar twanged sleepily in duet with a cricket, and then stilled. Near the tree was a fountain, a heap of masonry, ivy-hung and crowned with palm-grass, where village women came at long intervals for water, then moved off through the dust, their gait slow and hieratic as they walked from the hips, the heavy, dripping amphorae balanced on their heads. They were acrid with sweat, their upper lips marred with black down.

Spain was very hot, very dusty. Mendoza was slow coming. Pablo was impatient. He had not for many weeks been patient, the monotony of the life had begun to wear on his nerves, and this was his third summer at Talavera, and the last. He was leaner, and his bluish eyes seemed to be paler in a face burned dark by the Castilian sun. He had the tint and the aspect of a young Manchegan, but he still affected the Torpen pea-jacket and neckerchief: a garb not unfamiliar to the town, for there had almost always been a Cornish mining student at Talavera.

A coach, its driver lashing the four horses to a gallop, came up from the mine and went swaying past with a guard of carabineers. Through the window Pablo had a glimpse of a pallid face and smooth, iron-hard jaw, the eyes somehow peevish. That was the distinguished new chief of the Compania de las Minas de Talavera, hurrying to a belated siesta at his residence. He was late today, almost an hour late, and must have been detained in a talk with his staff at the mine office. M. Marcel Blanqui had been a district governor in Algeria and Tunis, an invaluable man in that post, for he was a metallurgist of skill, and adviser to the French syndicates opening up the iron and phosphate deposits in the Atlas. He was now the satrap of Talavera, invested with full powers by the great banking house in London to which the Spanish Crown had farmed the mine.

Pablo glanced only indifferently at the coach with its escort, and licked a cigarette. The Senor Administrador was in high disfavor at Talavera these days, hence the escort. He knew especially those ores whose complex and refractory nature called for a special process of reduction; but the miners he had known were never other than Khabyles and Berbers. These at Talavera were *mercureros* of La Mancha, whom even the Crown, which had long ago granted them privileges, looked upon as all but a race apart. The damp pits, the salivating vapor, the falls of rock, were hazards so extreme that they worked but four days a week, and had five Sabbatical months in the year. Those disabled were early pensioned, and lived, most of them, at the Bosque, a settlement where each had his own house and garden. All males born at Talavera were exempt from service with the military, though learned historians of the parish, like Don Andres Gallego, the priest, regarded this less a special privilege than the survival of a rule in the sixteenth century, when the laborers were convicts, ineligible to bear arms.

The great shafts of Talavera, each with its intricate system of tunnels and workings, were known as the Hamilcar shaft, the Claudius shaft, and the Joven shaft. The Hamilcar, visited in its youth by Caesar and Pliny, was the oldest. Its metal, held in the matrix of cinnabar, had been used by the ancient Greeks, and the rock, itself, crushed and bolted through silk, was esteemed by the matrons and dancers in Rome during the reign of the Emperor Heliogabalus as a rouge incomparable for texture and hue. Avicenna, the most eminent of Moorish physicians, rode to Talavera when Christianity was less than a thousand years old, and procured mercury from the Claudius for the treatment of the itch. At the time of Henry the Eighth, Paracelsus employed the same metal as a specific for the alleviation of a distressful and widespread social malady hardly yet abated.

But it was the Joven—"the Young One," the newest of the shafts developed after a strike of rich ore in the age of Columbus, and which supplied most of the quicksilver for the later alchemists—that was *facile princeps*, the deepest, the most scientifically contrived and the richest. The Joven was the paragon of shafts, and Jose Mendoza was the paragon of foremen. Pablo, enrolling at the office, where his credentials and himself were given official scrutiny through a monocle, was attached to the gang of Mendoza.

If he had nothing to unlearn, he had much more to acquire, and that he acquired after two years under the eye of the fanatic and terrible Aragonese in the workings known as the gallery of Cosimo Branco. He swung pick, blocked out areas to rend, drilled, and fired the explosives. He became aide to Mendoza, read and experimented in the laboratory, which was also a

Government school, and then worked through the Academy of Distillation, which had to do with chemistry and gases. Pablo spent most of his time among the retorts, and the *tuyeres*, the clay pipes and chimneys, like piled-up flower-pots, on the hillside. An attachment had grown up between Mendoza and him; they lived in the same leaky house on the outskirts, where a sister-in-law of Mendoza, the wife of a guard, kept a pension, to which he had brought Pablo. This female—she owned a herd of pigs and half interest in an olive-press—was a match for the Aragonese in rapacity. They haggled over the price of an egg or a piece of dried cod, fought their way penny by penny through Pablo's monthly account, and usually it was Mendoza, the craftier, who won the battle.

"*Amigo*," he would croak, both hands on Pablo's shoulders, "behold, I have saved you four pennies! You will go back rich to your mine in California! Listen to the Capitan Jose Mendoza always, and you will be the gainer for it!"

The Capitan esteemed himself to the marrow, he was as vain as he was greedy; his arrogance and will drove his creaking frame—he was piteously salivated from mercurial poisoning—to vast exertions in the foul air of the pits, and he was as relentlessly hard to his workmen as he was to himself. Pablo had an open and generous admiration for him; envying the Capitan his knowledge, his devotion to the gallery of Cosimo Branco, and that *pequeno mas*, that atom more of acquaintance with rock that projected his mind's eye into the unseen heart of it. And Pablo, his favorite pupil, he took all through the workings of Joven, and even, through the sagging fusty tunnels swarming with rats, to the still older parts of the Hamilcar and the Claudius—moving by his side, arm over the youth's shoulder, like Death in a cloak, ringing his spiked staff against the walls, croaking out his wisdom through the shawl that bound his mouth. Borlase, too, had wisdom, but compared with the Aragonese, who was rock-born and elemental, he was a church mouse.

The bell in the tower rang one stroke. Mendoza should appear any moment; he was usually punctual when they were to set out for an excursion in his vineyard. M. Blanqui must have held another consultation in the gallery. The outcome of it, judging from his expression as he rode past in his coach, must have been unpleasant.

Only a week before, Pablo had gone down to see how the work was progressing. The chief and his assistants were at the westerly end of the gallery, talking to Mendoza. All was still, for the miners had retired to work in a distant adit. Pablo stood near the niched pillar that held a statue of the Virgin and the lamp kept perpetually alight in honor of Cosimo Branco, the

engineer who had carved out this excavation. As with the rest of the mine, the passage and the gallery were propped with masonry, for the country was bare of timber. Every third man at Talavera was a stone-mason.

“It is useless, Capitan,” M. Blanqui was saying. “For two months the work has continued in borrasca. That wall of dead rock is too thick.”

“In twenty days we shall cut through to the ore, Senor Administrador,” Mendoza repeated. “I know that bend. So do my workmen, whose fathers and grandfathers knew it before them. And the maps, they——”

“Enough!” said the new chief, testily. “I shall have correct maps drawn up.” He waved a gloved hand at the wall. “I don’t say there isn’t ore there, but I want the trabajadores put elsewhere. A week more, then, Capitan! I will give you a week!”

That was uttered in defiance of the polity that for twenty centuries had been held inviolable at Talavera. The judgment of a Capitan and ten of his oldest workmen, which by rule included two versed in rock and engineering, had always ranked higher than the judgment of the administration.

“Twenty days, Senor!” thundered Mendoza. “Not a day less! Or, by all the thousand devils in hell——”

Pablo trod back discreetly and heard no more.

There was Mendoza now, coming up the road. Pablo shouted to the stable, and a boy led out two mules under saddle, and another loaded down with supplies. He and Mendoza rode out into the blinding heat. Even the lizards were silent as the mules plodded through the ankle-deep white dust. Pablo led the way, reading letters. By nightfall his companion would be in fair humor again, but just now he was in an evil one, muttering to himself, head on his chest, something like a crow in his black hat and cloak. The women turned to stare at him, and the officials at the customs-house lifted their hands in salute. Their baggage, which consisted of a jar of black wine, goat cheese, smoked pig’s flesh, bread, and a string of dried cod, was not examined. Great was the Capitan of the largest gallery in Talavera!

Mendoza did not return the salute. Always he rode past the customs-house with his eyes shut as if glued. A pause he made there once had changed his life. It was during the Carlist War when Cosimo Branco, shot in the street-fighting, had been buried, and the Talavera miners were returning from the night funeral. At the gate was a young woman sobbing as she pleaded leave to enter the town, but the collector was obdurate. No stranger might enter in war time. She was in rags and shawl, and great with child. Mendoza had seen a hundred such pleaders, but never one like this refugee with the uplifted

white hands of a saint, and he was moved. He pulled her up before him. "My wife, Senores," he said, and rode on to his house, cloak up to his eyes.

The Capitan had neither hair nor teeth, and before his face, ravaged by mercurial poisoning, many fell quaking who knew not that he had some virtues and a heart not incapable of generous impulse. After the birth of the child, who was duly registered as a Talaverano, absolved from arms-bearing, there was a marriage. In a year the woman vanished, leaving no trace of herself and the child whom Mendoza worshipped. Thereafter, the gallery was both his wife and his son. The one being envied was Cosimo Branco, living though dead, for there was a gallery that would bear his name to the end of time.

"Desde aquel doloroso momento—" He was cawing a song harshly, a cigarette in the fingers of a hand that waved as if to a lady on a balcony. His spirits always lightened when he was nearing the vineyard.

Pablo thoughtfully read the letter once more, a long one from Doctor Kit, then stuck it in his saddle-bag, which held a leathern sack filled with ore. The ore was from Alamos. Nothing had changed on the ranch, except that the herd had doubled, and that slaughtering had begun again, for hides and tallow were not only in greater demand, but beef also. Meat was needed for the gold-fields, into which men were pouring as if the earth had tipped. There was seemingly no end to the rush. And Ynes, leaving Aunt Paz in Mexico, was on her way home.

"These Spanish women marry early," wrote Doctor Kit. "You will be returning to Alamos shortly?"

He had despatched his reply, but not until he had spent half the night in thought over the paper. He was returning, but less free than when he left, for he was enchained by Arabella Tonkin. He loved her incomparably more than he could ever love Ynes, and since he had a pride in himself, he was certain that he was closer to her than was Carew. It was either the one woman or the other, and though Alamos was his destiny, the price of seizing it gave him anguish. He would be paying for it for the rest of his life. The very thought of Arabella quickened him into being; the prospect of being married to Ynes—an Ynes grown slow, amiably drowsy and torpid, like the wives of all the cowmen he knew about Alamos—that sometimes drove him stark mad. But without Ynes, there could not be the Alamos upon which he had set his will; and, when the vision of Arabella had not glided before him, all his heart.

He bit his pen, then wrote to Doctor Kit, saying he would depart before the month was out. The letter had been sent by the post to Cadiz this very

morning.

They had left miles behind them in the dusk of the Manchegan plain, and the thin mules were climbing sturdily into a sierra of crenellated peaks, rose-pink in the declining light. A stark and desolate world, as inhospitable as the moon; but now tiny squares of green appeared, tracts of oak, or grass on which the wild goat browsed. The cry of a wolf sent a twitch through the ears of Pablo's mule, but all was still when they arrived at a patch of vineyard, and a low stone house under a chestnut. He carried in the esparto-grass baskets, built a fire on the hearth, and heated up some food that had been cooked at the inn. Mendoza, still in cloak and the black hat kept in place by a tasseled ribbon under his chin, dug in the vineyard until night fell, unwilling to lose a single moment with his plants. He came in, they sat at table, eating off earthenware plates, drinking goblets of wine, the patch wine, dark and brutish, almost brandy strong, and then they played dominoes. Pablo lost.

"The Administration was in the gallery today?" he asked, sliding out a token coin no larger than a bean. Mendoza's hand, like a hairy tarantula, closed upon it swiftly. "I saw the new chief drive up when I was waiting."

"Si, he came. Six days only he gave us to find that vein. We shall take twenty, and if that is not enough, keep on until we strike it. We warned him, and he said he would close all the Joven first!

"Little he knows of Talavera! He thinks he has learned more of it in three months than all the *trabajadores* in the Cosimo Branco, who count all told six hundred years of experience! We are weary of the arrogance of this upstart! Against us of the Cosimo Branco, what is Blanqui, even with the Crown behind him, and all the bayonets of the guards!" shouted Mendoza, with a bang on the table. "Answer me that, Senor Californio!"

"Strong enough," thought Pablo. Blanqui he thought less ill of than did Mendoza and his cantankerous squad, but the new chief could have masked his obstinacy somewhat, and let a skeleton crew hack on for that vein. Blanqui had noticed him in the laboratory, had even spoken with him a minute, asked a question or two about Cornwall, though not listening with much attention to the responses, his gaze, indeed, straying off into the distance.

Mendoza darkly hinted of violence, growling in his dour fashion, shoulders bowed, as if under the burden of a world of rock. But they were strong shoulders, his will was strong, and he gulped down by the tumbler his honest, rough wine. Pablo felt very little interest in the quarrel. He had got all he wanted from Talavera. He smoked, and saw through the haze a ship from

Cadiz clothing herself with white sails, her prow turned westward. Word of the gold strike had already seeped through Castile, and many had tramped to the ports whence they would leave for the new Golconda. He did not regret having lost a part in the rush. Alamos and Ynes were a fortune more secure than a place among the turbulent mobs in the foothills.

Reaching for the leathern poke he emptied it on the table. "High-grade?"

Mendoza pounced on a red lump of rock, pin-pointed in silver, and hefted it. With his belt-knife he scraped off a pile of chips, and rolled the globules of quicksilver in his palm until they made a thick blot. "*Sangre de cielo!*" He stared. "Twelve per cent! Now where—not in the Hamilcar—nor in the Joven _____"

"From Alamos. I am going there. You will come, Capitan?"

"There is much of it?"

"A hill taller than this. We have one small drift, but I have told you of it a hundred times. If you come there, you will be the Capitan."

"Ah," sighed Mendoza. "And leave Talavera—and this little vineyard? And forego the pension? But most of all this vineyard—for it grows better grapes than can be grown at Bosque."

"You will have a far larger vineyard, and no cold like a wolf to bite your throat in the winter. And twice as many pesos in the month. Three times, Capitan, when Alamos has a gallery of its own."

The Aragonese, staring at him with cupidity, his hands contracting on the table, breathed in a slow rattle. Fortune was dangling before the man's eyes, and Pablo knew it. The Capitan drew the equivalent of thirty dollars a month, which was high for Talavera, where he lived as well as the richest muleteer. But that was the man to get for Alamos, to see to the actual digging. An invaluable man, a jewel, worthy of the new mine. Pablo looked into his own vision and thought in figures. He was rolling in cattle, and with Dona Ana's bequest and the lift in values, he would be able to spend in development a thousand dollars a month for the next two years, and in the meanwhile build a row of brick furnaces.

Mendoza, after a paroxysm of coughing, for bronchitis was rife in the damp Joven, shook his head slowly.

"This vineyard is my son, my little Salvador," he said to himself under his breath. "I could not leave him behind."

“You will,” Pablo continued, affecting not to have heard, “find it workable. The cinnabar comes away from the gangue as easily as it does in Talavera. We shall make a larger mine. And no stone-masonry, either! That, in Talavera where the rock is hard and the roof able to support itself, is a supreme and wasteful Roman folly.”

“Senor, that is a blasphemy!” croaked the Aragonese, shaking.

“It would be, Capitan, if it were not true. Ask your own bones if it is not true! If you want propping, then you shall have timber. But you will not require much, except in a few tunnels. I have learned something since I left my hill! And then we shall have a gallery twice as large as the Cosimo Branco. And the name?” Pablo lifted his glass, and he and the Capitan clinked. “The Galleria Jose Mendoza!”

The Capitan faltered. In the two thousand years of Talavera, only three men had been so immortalized. And the late Cosimo Branco, whose lamp he kept alight, replenishing the oil with his own hands, was his god. And the gallery and the vineyard were his religion.

“Ah, my good, young friend, who are to me as my own son—I am grateful to you. But I must stay here.”

Pablo nodded, “I shall ask you again, Capitan.” Then he sank back in his chair, and brushing aside the ore, spread out the dominoes.

The game was matador. They both excelled in it, and Mendoza was the sharper, guessing with skill at the pips in his opponent’s hand and in the boneyard. He played in a hunched truculence, his crafty, large hands upturning his pieces at the showdown like pistol-shots. He might have been playing for a thousand-pound note at baccarat instead of a pinch of coins worth two-bits at the most. The pile went, and Pablo slid in two, three, four “fat dogs” of silver. The wine and the winnings lightened the heart of the Aragonese, he simmered, his eyes danced; he unbandaged his jaws, set a cheroot in his teeth, and after rubbing his hands, shuffled again. Night was gone; and as Pablo glanced through the dark window, the outline of the Sierra to the east was scratched in carmine. Two more fat coins he contrived to lose, then got up.

“Capitan, you are still of the same mind?” he asked.

Mendoza, after counting his gains aloud, and stowing them in his purse, looked up through the smoke. “Of leaving here? Ah, *hijillo*, my little son, that is true! At the end of the road is the penny, they say. But often the wine is neither so good nor so strong!”

“There is wine elsewhere, too! You shall see for yourself,” laughed Pablo, as he took the extended glass. “*Manana es un otro dia!*”

He slept in his blanket, deeply, until noon, then joined Mendoza in the field where there was no relief from the heat. The earth was as white as chalk and powdery, the whiter for the tinge of blue. Miraculously green were the vines, weighed down on their props by enormous bunches of small grapes, still unripe. The two hammered in more stakes, raked the chalky soil loose to hold the dew that would fall by night, and they toiled in the sun until evening. They paused for a dinner of garlic broth, worked until the moon rose high and full, then they rode back to Talavera.



The last batch of assays was done. It was from the Cosimo Grande, the third batch that week, and the poorest; the mine was still in starveling rock. Pablo gave the report slip to the old Napoleonic soldier who was the messenger for the Department of Distillation—the furnaces and retorts. He went upstairs, to the second floor of the laboratory building, where it was less hot, and sat down to read a book by the half-shuttered window.

It was a book as weighty to the head as to the arm, for Don Sereno Vilamil, the historian of Talavera, who wrote in the days when its mercury primed the gold mines in Mexico and Peru, had troubled his head more with the costs of kiln brick than with the might and commercial glory of Spain. Pablo threw aside Don Sereno, stretched his arms, and felt suddenly homesick. A draught of air, pine-scented as at Alamos, had filled the room. In two or three nights he would be on his way home, and aboard the diligence for Badajoz, whence he would ride down for some port.

Yawning, he flung open a shutter. The road was empty, save for a lone donkey moving about with its shadow in the late afternoon light. Arms on the windowsill, Pablo glanced up and down the road. The laboratory was half way between the village and the mines, and he had an equally good view of both; the mines were far to his left, but one part of the village was nearer, with an apothecary's almost opposite him, on a slight rise. Directly across from him was the small Renaissance building that was the headquarters of the Talavera Mining Company, where M. Blanqui had his office.

What Pablo first noticed was that in the small throng before the apothecary's was the old Napoleonic soldier, with the assay report stuck in his hat, like a white cockade. Why had he not gone on to the furnaces? He and the group with him—women, an innkeeper with tucked-up apron, and

some gipsy muleteers, were standing rigidly, looking down the road. Was there trouble afoot? Mendoza had not been at the house last night, and probably had slept in the mine, though Pablo was not sure. The underground men never came into the laboratory, for by ancient law it was out of bounds; and the laboratory men and metallurgists also had their bounds, and went not into the mine, unless they were officials or cadet engineers, and their visits were in the line of duty.

The old messenger pointed with his sword towards the mines. A gendarme came up running, looked, then vanished, as if to give alarm. Pablo hurried downstairs. Sounds of riot were coming on the wind. He felt certain that Mendoza, who had the renown, the sinister prestige, of being the dominant spirit in the depths of the Cosimo Grande, was at the bottom of the trouble. The new chief must have demanded the closing of that mine. They were marching on the headquarters now, its workmen. Pablo could see them clearly in the dusk, a procession moving three abreast up the tortuous street lined with spectators. Its voice came rhythmically, at every alternate step, like the slow, rolling utterance from a thundercloud.

The marchers trod nearer, in cloaks and sable hats like a vast confraternity of a penitential order; the miners in blocks headed by their foremen bearing staves, the watchmen carrying their lanterns. Their slow tread was hypnotic; the cadence of their shout, harsh and sombre, precise as the beat of a metronome, chilled Pablo to the bone. Between the shouts a giant stableman pounded a drum with snarling rattle. The voices came as one:

“Abajo Blanqui!” “Viva Talavera!” “Abajo Blanqui!”

Pablo was jammed back against the wall by the crowd. He saw Mendoza in the first row of the marchers, and they wheeled to mount the steps of the office, roaring their battlecry. A squad of gendarmes came out with rifles, then Monsieur Blanqui, who stood at the head of the steps, and ineffectively above the uproar flung himself into a speech, with wide gestures of the arms, like a classical actor. But his air was harassed and fluttering. He had hurried out from his desk and had found himself an unprepared figure of destiny.

“Senores!” he cried. “I beg of you——”

With a howl as of a furious beast, the marchers swept up, and the windows of the office caved in before a shower of rocks. The guard fired above the heads of the crowd. Bullets spattered above Pablo’s head, and he ducked into the mob, where he thought he would be safer. He saw Mendoza clubbing with his staff, beating down three of the guard. A miner whipped a hand from his belt, and Monsieur Blanqui, with a knife in his chest, fell like a

cloak pushed from a nail. More gendarmes poured out, and by this time Pablo was across the street, and as the mob came up in a wave, he seized Mendoza, pulled him away and through the swirl of rioters to the other side.

“In here, quick!” he said, and pushed the Capitan into the laboratory, and shot the bolt of the door. They both leaned against the wall, gasping.

“Listen!” said Pablo. There was a hot musketry fire, like peas streaming on a drum. Cries of pain tore the air. “More guards! A force of them! And there’ll be more soon, from Badajoz.”

Mendoza shrugged. “I will go on to the vineyard.”

“Useless, Capitan!”

The firing recommenced. This time the shots were blank, but there was still uproar, and now there was the crying and calling of women, but above all rose the shouts of the guards. The odor of spent gunpowder was seeping in. Pablo led Mendoza upstairs, and pushed him into a closet where jars of chemicals were stored. Already they could hear the pounding of musket-butts at doors along the street.

“I don’t know how many besides the chief are killed,” said Pablo. “Half the guards at the office, I think. You will be hunted. That means prison, or worse. Only one thing is left—you must leave Talavera at once.”

“That will mean forever, *amigo!*” Mendoza breathed in a gurgling rattle, drew the cloak over his mouth, and trembled, his elbow vibrating against the wall. “My little vines!”

The street door was kicked open, calls and trampling resounded in the hall, then died out, and the door was slammed to. Pablo drew a breath of relief.

“You had better think of your neck, Capitan,” Pablo corrected. “There is only one safe place for you. That is aboard a ship. We will go to Cadiz, board one, and sail for California.”

“I will go.”

“Keep still here. I will be back in an hour.”

Pablo locked the door as he went out, emerged through a back window on the ground floor, and reached the house. The guards had come, the woman said, but had gone back to the mine. And M. Blanqui was dead, with six others. Pablo went to Mendoza’s room, stuffed money and clothes into a sack, crammed needments of his own into another, and pitched them out into the garden. That was all they would need to take, and the belt he wore under his

shirt was weighty. He leaped after the sacks, alternately ran in a fury, and slithered, until he reached the stable of the posada. He saddled two of the mules in the yard, pulled on an old cloak he found on a cart, and rode back by a roundabout way, among the furnaces, to the laboratory.

Around midnight he and Mendoza, after traversing an ilex forest, crossing a high spur and mountain streams, reached the smooth-flowing Guadalete, and set their course along it for the port of Cadiz.

Part Three

QUICKSILVER

From where he sat in Dona Ana's Philippine chair in the summer-house Pablo saw nothing of the mine, saw nothing at all but the massed fires of foxglove and godetia against the tall evergreens of the garden. For once his thoughts were not engaged with ore and balance-sheets. The garden, which had never been more beautiful than on this Easter holiday, filled him with delight, with contentment, and with something of a regret that such loveliness had existed for so long—it must have been almost ten years—without touching his bosom until now. The design of it was the Scotch gardener's, whom he had brought down from San Francisco and the dunes, that were being turned into a park, and to whom he had given carte blanche and a fortune to spend. But the inner beauty of it had come from Ynes. The rockery was hers. She had gathered up rocks that she knew he liked because he had chunks of them on his desk, when he left closed for months at a time, for he was so much away. Among the quartz boulders she had planted violas and gilliflowers, very pretty against the white; and against the serpentine—it was the rhombic, lime-silicate stuff of which there was an outcrop on the Jiminez place—she had grown butter-yellow marigolds. She had written to him in London and asked what flowers he liked most, and not having given much thought to flowers since he was a boy, he had named those simple plants. And here they were, so brightly framed, wistful small notes in the homecoming.

He had been away five months, and had come back by way of San Francisco, getting there to meet Gervase Cope, aged two, who had just arrived from China with his amah. That had been the arrangement. Carew and Arabella were living at a mission near Swatow, where the climate, frightfully hot and steaming, had already cost them two of their children. And though Arabella wrote tearstained letters at the thought of it, she and Carew were happy that Gervase was going to live at Alamos. Though mountainous seas were between, it was nearer than Cornwall, where death had been a poor ally to them, taking away Vicar Tonkin and Mrs. Traherne, and also the mine. Torpen Old Mine, worked out, had been left to drown under the heather.

Also a miraculous thing had happened at Alamos! There was another Cope, a flesh-and-blood son, Roger, born a month ago. Doctor Kit came out of his retirement to post up to the Casa and see that Roger uttered his first squall under the best of auspices. Pablo, listening in the summer-house, his

head wrapped in cigar smoke, could hear the Casa ringing with his son's yells.

"This one, ma'am," Doctor Kit, gruff as ever, told Ynes, "will outlast the pair of you twice over! I never saw a finer lad. And this one stays here! I'm having a ring made from Alamos rock for him to cut his teeth on!"

Doctor Kit was right sometimes. And now, after twenty years of marriage, there was an heir at Alamos—two heirs, for they had adopted Gervase. They had lost two children early. Ynes was in fine health, content, gay-hearted, and as happy as she had ever been. Pablo had a warm fondness for her. She had become more sensible with the years, she still had her attractiveness, though she was somewhat heavier, but she was light-footed, and often in her Spanish dress, with her hair, caught in a band, hanging down, very black, and as glossy as a looking-glass, seemed a young woman. It was a satisfaction that he could do so much for her, satisfy her wants and caprices, and let her travel all she wished. Half her married life she had spent in Guadalajara with her devoted Aunt Paz. Whenever she went down, he got her a suite in the largest and most comfortable ship, and she took along Cousin Luisa and a maid.

In short, Pablo had nothing whatever to regret in their married life, unless it was that the two lost children had been born in Mexico, and had there died. But he had never reproached Ynes; her grief had been as keen as his own, and she was a good, uncomplaining woman, not very clever nor individual, nothing like Arabella, or some other women he had known, but kindly, easy-going in the old Spanish way, quiet and reposeful. Neither would have dreamed of interfering in the life of the other. Things had even gone very well when old friends of his, whom he had met on visits to Paris, London and Talavera, and with whom he was on the warmest terms, had stayed a few months at the Casa Alamos; people like the Senorita Albufuera of the stage or Estelle Ramos y Bencivenga, the widow of a Cadiz banker, and others of charm, beauty and distinction. If she happened to be in Alamos at the time, she got along exceedingly well with them, was the most thoughtful of hostesses, and kept up a sporadic correspondence with them after they had left; and that was often more than he had done, for he had much on his mind.

The finances of the mine, the Five Apostles, it was called, engrossed him more than anything. They were, after a little roughness, especially during the Civil War, in a shape that could not be accounted less than excellent. The mine had flourished from the start. He and Mendoza had driven their shifts as hard as Mexicans could go, and sold, until the placer mines were worked out, all the mercury the Argonauts could take. A pinch of it juggled in the handful of washed gravel in the pan, such being the mysterious way of the element,

amalgamated whatever gold there was. Then the Nevada treasure-box that was the Comstock was broken open, there was gold in its silver ores, and Alamos profited thereby. The Chollar and Potosi, the Belcher, the Gould and Curry, the Yellow Jacket, were running full blast, and took twenty thousand flasks a year.

Some little venturers in the hills, a few of whom had been digging even before he had got home from Spain, had built a “Jews’ House” of a smelter in the canyon back of the hill. So quickly had rumor of cinnabar in these hills got about. It stood exactly where Fray Pio and Gozlan had distilled with their cannon retorts, and so was within the borders of Alamos. But the trade had its courtesies, the “gopher syndicate” was friendly, and no rival to the Five Apostles—so named from the row of great furnaces, burning and smoking night and day, each named in Talavera style (to please the Capitan Mendoza, who had a pious streak) after the Apostles. So he could afford to be indulgent. Once he had obligingly treated for it a run of ore, to help it fill a rush shipment.

Then the gophers, tangled up in litigation, defied both the Supreme Court judges and the Eastern shareholders, and closed their mines. Whereupon a member of the War Cabinet, a friend of the Easterners, talked with the President for an hour with the door locked. Half of what he said firmly was right. Mercury he apotheosized as a principle of staggering importance. It made fulminate to explode bridges and culverts. Secession was growing, the country on the brink of war. The mines should be seized by the Army of the Western Department, run under Federal aegis, the metal to flow to its own arsenals. And that would divert mercury from the Confederate States, whose agents were buying it up by the ton. The President nodded, and pulled the bell-rope.

The echo of that ring Pablo heard when an army officer who was dining with him at Sandy Marshall’s Chop House in San Francisco, whispered in his ear.

“And in a fortnight, Don Pablo, I shall be happy to billet myself at the Casa. Won’t nick you too much, I hope, that reopening.”

“A million or two,” said Pablo, as he and his guest manipulated their heavy silver forks. They were dining on baked bears’ paws, the justly admired specialty of the house. They drew out the meat, and at the exact moment the waiter proffered the currant jelly, and uncorked the Zinfandel. “Not anything to worry about.”

They both laughed, and went on with their dinner, leisurely, though Pablo's eyes slid now and then to the wall clock. They finished the wine. It was an Alamos creature, dark and tawny, which Mendoza had grown on his farm near the Five Apostles. The Capitan had upon it a five-acre vineyard, and a comfortable and well-staffed house.

"It's sound," remarked Pablo. "You come down to the Casa anyway—don't wait for a Federal excuse to prove the glass. That lieutenant of mine, who's got a gallery named after him, grows a Valente that'll ring on your teeth. He's as much a sharp on vineroots as he is on deep ore."

After Mr. Marshall himself lit their cigars from the cabinet to which only he had the key, they sauntered down Merchant Street. Four doors away was the Ivy Green saloon, the haunt of ochre-faced miners in velvet jackets, carters, and hands from the schooner line that hauled Five Apostles flasks from Aliso far down the Bay. Pablo recognized all the faces he saw in the mist-filled doorway, for the street, with its iron doors and shutters, like Commercial Street below, where he had his city office and vault that held as many as fifty thousand flasks, was a quicksilver market. In the fog he saw a fine horse. At the corner he chatted a while with the officer, and they parted. The next instant he ran back, found the horse, and leaped into the sulky of an astonished foreman who was just about to pull out for his mine at Guadalupe.

"*Amigo*," he shouted, with a mighty pound on the driver's back, "a hundred dollars says your horse can take me to the train boat in three minutes!"

"The money lies, Don Pablo," grinned the foreman, as they sped out. "But she can make it in four!"

Washington in its profound wintry gloom was dank and fog-wrapped, with shaking-out of lightning, clatters of chill rain, and deep mud underfoot; the spiritual climate worse, as if the planet were dying out in Old Night to the croakings of the Senators. Pablo, praying for hot sunlight, and fearing a cold, waited morosely under the palms of a gaslit hotel until the President could be seen. He feared it would be too late. After two days he trod, a cheerless atom, under an umbrella to the White House, and was led by a secretary to a corner room upstairs. A rather funereal room, with a wardrobe, a familiar hat and umbrella on a side-table, and a large, neatly arranged desk, to which the tall, awkward figure standing beside it, looking upon him, did not seem to belong. This was a room in which decisions were made as purposeful as any released by King or Pope, or head of any august system, and he would have felt more uncomfortable if he had not seen that this head, though friendly and patient, was as anxious as himself. He felt relieved, too, that the President had heard

of him through Captain Halleck, a lawyer in San Francisco who had often stayed the night at Alamos.

“Yes, Mr. Cope, a man may hear almost as much in confidence as out of it. You have come a long way to see me. How does the situation appear to you.”

“Grave, Mr. President. I would say that California is teetering on a knife-edge. It may secede, it may not. We have many Southerners. To seize those mines may be a just act, but it may be less than politic, for a large section will regard it as a usurpation of State’s Rights, and an arrogation by the Federal government. At this moment it might throw California into the Southern camp.

“A State order, if it could be arranged, or a small subsidy per flask—which I would decline—might open the mines. The air would be cleared anyway if the troops did not go down. But the Government can count on us. Our mine alone can give its Army all the mercury it requires. The Five Apostles prides itself that it has never sold an ounce of its metal to Southern agents, and it never shall.”

The President stood between the draped hangings at the window, looking out upon the soaking lawn, and the road deep under puddles. He watched a barouche splash past, and turned his head, with fingers on cheek, to peer until it had vanished, as if in that trifling phenomenon lay an augury that it would be darkly fateful to overlook. He did not seem to belong in Washington, either, the notion flashed through Pablo’s head. That gaunt, rangy figure reminded him of the frontier trappers and plainsmen he had known in Monterey as a lad. They always seemed to be glancing at the sky, or feeling the wind, as if in search of some occult guidance before they went out on a hunt.

“Thank you, Mr. Cope,” he said, as he turned. He looked even more anxious than before, though he smiled. “I just don’t like to see that teetering.”

A brief talk after that, with talk of some grandees, of ranches, and the cattle trade, and after a handshake Pablo left, and trudged back through the rain; not lighter in heart, perhaps, but feeling somehow more established, as if his feet had found a solider purchase. Washington seemed less like a death’s head.



No troops came to Alamos. The “gophers” had reopened their mines by the time he got back. Just how, Pablo did not enquire, though he heard from Doctor Kit, to whom politics was as oxygen, that the managers had agreed to do so after a dinner at Sacramento with the Governor, whose astuteness and gifts as a conciliator were now being praised by everyone. Nor did Pablo breathe a word of his journey to Washington. He was by nature secretive. If word of his talk with the President got about, they would again try to drag him into politics. He did not want to run for Senator. That was all very well for the Comstock fellows and the railroad crowd: a bold and solid lot, honest enough by their own lights, but parvenus, who were encrusting Nob Hill with their ormolu-stuffed palaces, all in incredible style, modern enough, yet blowzy and Chaldean.

But he hated politics, actively. The Five Apostles and Alamos claimed all his strength and devotion. And he had done enough for the Government by seeing that it got all the stuff for fulminate it wanted. The Five Apostles had earmarked fifteen thousand flasks every war year for the Eastern arsenals. Every quicksilver mine in California—the Guadalupe, San Benito, Morena, New Idria, the whole pack of the big ones—had turned in their handsome quota, and let not a trickle go to the revolted States. Heaven knew their agents got enough somehow. The contrabandists worked in darkness and mystery, sending their flasks over the border through Texas and the Gulf to the Southern workshops. The six largest mines had bonded themselves, submitted to a board their flasking reports, and each was above suspicion. Pablo, a committee of one, drove at night along the beaches, especially near Castroville, looking for smugglers. He paid “gratifications” to spies, who followed flask-laden schooners and carts, watched where they stopped, and took names. The flasks at his own filling-sheds and warehouse he counted himself. There was a leak somewhere, but it was never found, nor spoken of openly, and it was hushed up by the trade that had its pride.

Pablo turned. The Casa door had let out a Chinese servant with a tray of rum and ice, limped after by Doctor Kit, who was grumbling louder than usual, for the arrival of the drinks had been delayed a half hour. The servant, who had been engaged for the holiday, was still flustered at having miners’ wives baking up things in the kitchen for the guests coming to the Cascarone ball.

“Damn lot of noise in the Casa,” said Doctor Kit, slumping into a chair near Pablo. “Your Chinaman was half out of his wits. Give me that glass.”

He quaffed, but in minute sips, his hawk-like eye on small Gervase dragging a pole over the lawn and crowing in imitation of a boat siren.

“Those moor bluebells go sickly in the China heats, but he got here in time, I think. I gave him another going over. He’ll thrive. Fella has a good-shaped head. Be running the damn mine for you one of these days. But don’t hurry either one of them. Wait until they grow up and get some sense.

“I just saw Ynes. She’s already dressed for the ball.”

“Yes, she’s dancing tonight.”

“She’d better! That’ll make Alamos Spanish again. Place has changed enough as it is!”

That was Doctor Kit’s chief grievance. Strangers in Monterey he had accepted, but not at Alamos, and in the new order he saw no good. The cigar in his teeth described an irascible arc as his eyes took in the alterations. A tree-filled gap divided the asistencia in two; the further end was still the servants’ quarters, and this end a stable with paddock where Pablo kept his precious trotter, Ozias. The orchard had given away to a garden where children in frilled pantalettes ran, or trundled hoops as in tidy, framed prints. And this summer-house, a belvedere with a lot of gingerbread trimmings, and a vane on top, it was comfortable, yes, but much too fancy. He had preferred the old yard, with its ox-skulls, refuse, pools of water, flies, Indians sleeping under the brick-paved overhang, and the valorous old majordomo, gone these twenty years, dozing at the gate with rifle across his knees.

And now strangers had been turned into the Five Apostles. Only the Hispanic natives and the Mexicans had seemed to belong to the region about Alamos where, in the early years of the mine when the camp was itself an Hispanic village, something of the idyllic part of the old ways had endured, the processions, the dances, the outdoor feasts and music. They belonged to backward times, but he had loved those simple and hearty customs, the flowers of an ecclesiastical age that was not without its iron-hard aspect, and he regretted their decay. Some were even crude. There had not been a mimosa processional since the Civil War. Nor even a Judas burning.

He remembered coming to Alamos camp—it had sprung up under the row of sycamores half way between the Casa and Mendoza’s vineyard a mile and a half distant—riding to it with Don Porfirio Miura, in time to see Judas Iscariot, an effigy in robes and a mop of hair so comically red that it evoked yells of gleeful derision, paraded about in a cart drawn by the Mexican workmen. In the plaza Judas was tried at a mock court. His goods, supplied after raids by the young whose mothers dashed up frenziedly to recover some garment or a frying pan, were distributed with much wit and laughter at the reading of the will, which was usually drawn up in rhyme by some wag like

Don Porfirio. The effigy was then properly hanged; firecrackers in its midriff were exploded, a cat in it was released, to spring out, symbolizing the devil in Judas, and the effigy was set afire.

It was not very decorous, perhaps, but the cat always had its saucer of cream after its leap, and verses of Don Porfirio, as playful as they were edged, lived for weeks afterward, the jokes of the villagers. That and some other customs were gone, and Doctor Kit deplored them, for though he cherished the spirit of unbelief, he was a jealous conservative. Don Pablo kept up a few, he had less sentiment, and therefore made his way effectively in life, but he was paternal to all who had a claim upon himself or his family.

Alamos camp was now full of miners in yellow corduroy, with string tied below the knee; and honey-haired wives who grew geraniums and fuchsias at their doorways. Their customs and diversions were alien. Instead of a fandango on holidays, the miners went out on picnics, when they wrestled, competed in a tug-of-war, or in stone-drilling matches. They had their own brass band, and held concerts in the lodge house of the Knights of Cornwall and its Ladies Auxiliary.

It was called "the Lodge," and it was the center of life at Alamos, this two-story brick edifice that Pablo had built for them at the cost of eight thousand dollars. The Knights were a benevolent order, with a burial fund and a sick benefit fund. At funerals of eminent persons in the region they marched in sashes fringed with gold tassels, and carrying a two-man banner, with the legend,

KNIGHTS OF CORNWALL
PARENT LODGE
ALAMOS.

That parenthood made the lodge illustrious in all the mining camps of the State, and Don Pablo Cope had been its first Worthy Grand Master. Its ritual had been brought over from Cornwall intact, with its Methodist tinge and Rosicrucian passwords. Sister lodges had been established at Grass Valley, Nevada City, Volcano and San Andreas, but the lodge at Alamos was the fountainhead, and here the lesser Grand Masters came for induction by the laying on of hands, and to receive their plumed hats.

"Why are you bringing in all these new people?" snapped the Doctor from behind his cigar. "Hey?"

"They came, and that's enough," smiled Pablo. "They've been working for one Cope or another since Rome fell. It was a habit of Torpen Mine

streamers. They'll stay here. Our old lot came and went, and didn't always come back. We can't go after them with a press-gang."

"But they were good *trabajadores!*"

"Aye, they were. But we're going in for deep shafts now, heavy timbering. The rock has changed. It is harder. Torpen men have a way with it."

"You'll not be dethroning Mendoza?"

"No one can. But he's half vineyardist now, and prosperous. Has a pair of racers for his buggy. He shot his bolt in that gallery. Even to me, it's stupendous like the man. He's a *gallerista*. He's not less mad, but more cautious. He even erects horoscopes before he drives a new adit. Torpen men are good at digging shafts."

"I don't know them! Only one I've come across is that—what's his name? He's drinking himself to death."

"Powey Faro. He's just the lamp-tender, what liquor and jail-fever have spared of him. He did know pumps once, and he was Torpen's champion at the single-drilling contests."

"Hrrumph! I was just thinking of that unfortunate child of his."

"And I've known Powey for years. It was rather awkward sending money to solicitors at Polwithiel to get him out of jail, for he had the poaching habit, too. It was simpler to get him over here. He knocks around with Cloke, the blacksmith—another good hunter, a bad parent, but they know dogs and hunting."

"I wouldn't have 'em on any terms!" snapped the doctor.

"Wait a bit!" laughed Pablo. "Between them they keep the Casa going in venison and fish."

The Chinese with triangle and bolt filled the dusk with clanging. Dishes and bottles were on the long tables against the wall of the salon, which was now carpetless and emptied of everything else except chairs and the piano in a corner. There were joints of venison, heaps of shrimp, Cornish bread and cakes, smoking pots of Mexican frijoles, and the great room swarmed with Alamos folk in their Sunday best. All was not cleared off until nine, then the ball commenced. Don Porfirio Miura brought in more guitarists; young Jorge Jimenez, who was now head of his grandfather's ranch, banged at the piano.

Ynes, in her Spanish lace costume, with hair down, caught in a silver band, led the grand march with Pablo. The windows were open, the veranda

crowded with onlookers. Partners were changed at every round; Pablo danced with the Mexican pumpman's daughter, Ynes with Jemmy Cloke and the furnace boss. Jorge and the guitarists played a stream of fandango airs.

"Now for a couple of waltzes, Jorge!" shouted Pablo. "I've got a Cornish lady here!"

That cleared the floor. Jorge thumped in waltz time on the silk-faced, yellow-keyed piano, and to the accompaniment of stamping from along the wall, Pablo and the stout Cornish wife tripped sedately through "Wapping Old Stairs" and "Green Grow the Rushes, O!"

"Cascarone! Baile la Cascarone!"

The shouts and louder stamping increased, for it was midnight. Couples formed in sets of four, each girl with her baskets of cascarones, or eggshells filled with confetti, and sealed. It was a country dance, to music that increased in tempo and loudness, the cascarones cracking the faster. Often they were cracked on somebody's forehead. In rougher days at Alamos, pranksters filled the shells with perfume or face-powder, or with a pinch of shot that rolled under feet, and sent dancers sprawling. But this *baile* was riotous enough, gay, noisy, and light-hearted also, for they were natives who were calling the tune. Even Doctor Kit, smoking in a corner with the Miuras and Cousin Basile, looked on approvingly. Ynes was dancing with a tireless bounce. She was at her happiest with the Casa full of people and music, and old friends about her by the dozen, and Pablo's heart warmed at her blissfulness.

Although every window and door was open, the room was airless and hot. He wanted air, and he was tired. He brushed confetti from his head and eyebrows, and slipped upstairs where it was quieter. He did not care for parties, nor for any social life; he kept up a pretence of liking it because it would please Ynes. They both knew what Alamos expected of them, and she had a genius for planning these little festivities, where all manner of people were brought together and fired with her spark. She was aboundingly good-natured. He paced the corridor, head down, smoking his cigar, then mounted the stairs to a sort of tiled attic, where the children were sleeping for the night, away from the noise. Moonlight was streaming in through the window. The amah, awakened by the creaking of the boards, heard him move about on tiptoe, saw him look at his son, and she closed her eyes again. She did not see that over Gervase's crib, he bent low, listened to the quiet breathing for a moment, and then drew a finger over the velvet cheek.

“The moor bluebell,” Doctor Kit had remarked. How fresh and innocent was the child. He had a greater affection for him than for his own son. So like his mother, little Arabella Tonkin, he was. Pablo touched the small ear. “Moor bluebell,” he said under his breath, and that set loose a rush of emotion, and a pang of remembered beauty. He thought of Arabella’s rose-petal cheek, the carmine of the gorse in frost, the tinkling of ice-tipped flax in the breeze over the heath; the home-like smells of thatch and peat at Torpen Manor; its garden now warm in sunlight, with odors of herb-robert and honeysuckle. They had entered his heart, they were a part of his soul like ancestral memories, and the thought of them, as he felt his way down the back stairs, blinded him. Perhaps he should have stayed on the moors. That was where the child belonged, like its mother; but she was now in some forlorn and steaming village in China, and the boy was here. If he had stayed on at Torpen, he might have saved the mine; or have found another, and gone over to it with the old machinery, with no breaking of the links of age-long association. And yet, he felt, he could not have done otherwise but return to Alamos.

He swayed a shade in the air, then trod on to the stable. It was his custom when home to ride a few miles before turning in, leaving still earlier when Ynes and her friends were making a night of it. He saddled Ozias—this was the second Ozias, son of the one the majordomo had got for him in a good trade at San Juan Bautista, and which he drove when he did that night patrol along the beach in the war days—and half circling the Casa went up the road. Now and then he passed departing revellers, on foot or in straw-filled ore wagons. Not all of them had been in the salon: those who cared less for the dance than the keg had all the kegs they wished in the old tannery, which was now the sala in the servants’ quarters. One wagon he passed in the moonlight, full of singers from the Knights of Cornwall lodge, who had fortified the lyric temperament with fluids stronger than ale, had a casualty, and he knew that sprawling figure. Powey Faro was vertical only in the morning when he filled the miners’ lamps, and when he came round to the back of the Casa with a gift of venison, like a penitent humble at the temple gates. A poor creature, battered by drink and ill fortune, but withal cheery, living only for his bottle and a night’s stalking after game. The chase was in his blood. He had a fierce attachment, also, to that child he had brought over with him from Cornwall: an orphan, so it seemed, left on the moor, perhaps by some tinkers. The child had some go in him; kept the shack red up, and brought in a few pennies earned by delivering milk for a farmer in the arroyo. There was nothing to be done with Powey, but he had a shack rent-free, and only the grocer knew it was the Five Apostles that kept his bills paid up.

At the crest of the hill road a wagon passed him, but without hailing, for none ever disturbed Don Pablo when he rode by absently, head on his chest. Not that even a pistol-shot could have roused him when he was deeply pondering. A chess player in a game blindfold against four antagonists, exponents of the unexpected—such was his position at the moment. He had need of all the adroitness and resource at his command. The Ottenheims, who had the Talavera franchise, so he had been warned by his London agents, were about to dump a hundred thousand flasks of quicksilver in a try to break the market. The attack was at the Five Apostles, whose output had closed down all the Italian mines. That move he had foreseen. His rivals were still unaware that he had new five-year contracts with all the mines on the Comstock Lode, the prize market.

The Lode, so everyone said, would run on for all eternity. An eternity?

At the Pacific Club, and at the austere saloon of Messrs. Barry and Pattern where he sat in a leathern armchair, drinking porter, dipping into *Punch* and *Galignani's Messenger*—silk hat at the back of his head like a Member of Parliament, talking with Ralston of the Bank of California, Haggin, Flood, and other magnates whose names were as popularly known as Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse; with envoys from Madrid, London and the Ottenheims, a capital unto themselves—he gave ear to the orations and the least whisper of the thirty mines on the Comstock, where they were as trees springing from a single root. Then he went to Nevada, and in corduroy, with a lamp in his cap and a pick over his shoulder, hoodwinking the watchmen, he tramped the underground miles of the burnt-out Yellow Jacket, and the Hale and Norcross, and the Ophir.

He mounted the Ophir shaft in a cage, certain that a glowering eye had been upon him, and left Virginia City by the first train out. No, the Lode would not last an eternity. Five years would be nearer the mark—ten at the most. The Comstockers would prop up the hill with the market while they tore out the foundation. He had seen the rock. What he saw was as good as a royal flush, and playing it on the market he gained enough to rebuild the five kilns into a link of Scott furnaces that comfortably and cheaply roasted its daily stint of three hundred tons. And Talavera at its peak never sent up from the pits in its box-cage dragged by a hempen rope more than eighty tons a day. By now all of Spain, all the world, knew of Alamos!

His agents were building up secretly its own market. They sold flasks to isolated gold mines on the llama route in the Andes; to an Australian who turned wool into felt for saddle-pads and piano-string hammers. A looking-glass factory in Tokio ordered ten flasks. So had an Ohio shop that made big

livery-stable thermometers to advertise Professor Rarey's Horse Liniment. And the drug store end of things was beginning to look up. Drops in the bucket, these orders, but they mounted up. Their accumulation was part of tomorrow's strategy. They gave variation to the game he played disinterestedly, as if it were an art; and it was, for him: the creation of a mine, an adventure, aesthetic in part, and his last, for he was falling into the dullness of middle age, his dynasty already founded.

Ozias stopped dead in the moonlight. They were before the gate of the Mendoza ranch: the spring foliage of the vineyard, grown to twenty acres, like strips of velvet thrown to cover the tall hillocks and the low dips in the tract between the ridge that overlooked the sea and the foot of the slope where the creek meandered. Upon them grew thousands and thousands of vines. Mendoza had started in a small way with Aramon cuttings from the San Juan Bautista Mission, and then branched out most spectacularly with tracts of Folle Blanche and Pinot, got at large expense from the Buena Vista nursery, which had brought them "round the Horn" from Europe. It was a vineyard of eminence. More wealth had been poured into this parcel of ground than on any other in Alamos, except the Casa and its grounds. Mendoza, Pablo decided, had either managed extraordinarily well with his mine wages, or he had profited much at the outset by his wine-making. He had those two Mexican hands and the seasonal crowd of Chinese workmen who came down from San Jose.

It was all rather puzzling, even if the Capitan Mendoza paid for the usage of the land only a dollar a year. Pablo had let him have it for life, a little reward for the prodigies his servant had accomplished during the War, when the Five Apostles by every route sent an unbroken stream of mercury to the arsenals of the North. The incorruptible Mendoza, half the time in full charge of the workings, had with maniacal energy carved out that vast hollow for him, the Galleria Mendoza, written of by all the mining journals in the world. Pablo himself had written a monograph on it for the newly organized Royal Society in London, though he let the praise fall upon "Mr. Mendoza, our able superintendent." The design, with its boldness and economical key, and system of timbering, was his own.

Even his pride was disinterested. Pride, like greed, was a root of confusion and all evil work, and he shunned it. Neither Ynes nor Doctor Kit had ever seen a letter he kept in the bottom of a locked drawer, a letter of commendation signed "A. Lincoln."

He was glad that the Capitan had prospered, had triumphed over the pain of homesickness, and become part of Alamos. To bestow upon him the tenure

of this rich part of the half league which he had stocked with his first quicksilver money, was the least he could have done for his jewel from Ciudad Real. And he had built for him, too, a home, large enough and very American, like the “missionary houses” going up in San Jose, which Mendoza admired.

The Capitan still had energy and spirit. Exacting though he was, and arrogant, he was beginning now to get along on amicable terms with the Knights of Cornwall. He might even be the man to oversee the job of sinking the new shaft.

Pablo turned and rode back to the Casa. The household was asleep, and carrying a lamp he walked through Ynes’ room to his own. She was in Dona Ana’s canopy bed, under a cross that was a large, freak piece of driftwood, bleached in the surf, and upon its whiteness hung Ynes’ small black crucifix. Her dress and dancing shoes lay where she had dropped them, and upon the bureau, in front of the Venetian glass mirror, were piled the souvenirs of the night—handfuls of tinted eggshells; paper fans she had won at the quadrilles; and some candied figs, impaled on a rib of palm leaf, the Easter sweetmeat of the parish.

Her ways, like herself, had not changed with time. She was unspoiled, like much of Alamos, and Pablo, on the truckle-bed in his own room, winding his watch with a key, felt thankful. Those old-fashioned enough to live in the colonial ways of life, which he valued, had moral integrity. Ynes was old-fashioned. The boys would be brought up sensibly. Alamos, and its mine, would be safe.



A glory-hole, a sloping entrance the width of three carts, hub to hub, was being sunk to the tunnel from the hillside, and the work kept Pablo at the Five Apostles a fortnight longer than he had planned to stay. Mendoza had wanted to tackle it from without, hauling the rock up by derrick. Pablo was of another mind. He never lifted a rock with muscle or harnessed energy if the rock would save him the trouble by its own force of gravity.

So the glory-hole was digging itself, and fast. The miners worked up from a tunnel, and the rock, loosened by blast and crowbar, streamed down, to fill this or that abandoned drift on an upper level, or to chock through a grizzly of railroad iron into carts in the main tunnel. The last shot blew a hole in the upper darkness. The trickling of rock ceased. An unearthly beam, like a ray of light from some cold star, poured down into the heart of the Five Apostles.

The miners, linked with rope on the Cyclopean ramp of the sloping, looked tiny, like pins. They were staring upward in fascination. Mendoza, who had directed that last blast, also stared upward.

“Capitan,” said Pablo, “that was shooting a crow blindfold! A clean drop!”

Mendoza touched his hat at the compliment, and the blacksmith, who had been standing by with a load of drills, came forward and spoke. Powey Faro, who had been keeping the lamps filled all morning, had been found unconscious in his work shed.

“We just had him took to the hospital on a shutter.”

Pablo nodded, seizing the rope for a climb. “Give him a hair of the dog, Jemmy, and straw to lie on.”

“Looked mighty peaked, he did, Mr. Cope,” said Jemmy.

“What’s he been wrestling with?” asked Pablo. “Camp brandy?”

“Aye.” The blacksmith shook his head. “And lying flat, he was, on his back.”

“On his back, you say? Then it’s more than brandy, this time. Brandy chips a man to his side, never on his back. I’ll go have a look at him.”

Pablo rode at a streak to the camp, and to the Clokes’ house near the post-office. Mrs. Cloke, who was twice as large as Jemmy, and worth a dozen of him, ran not only a boarding-house but a cottage hospital, where those bashed up in the mine were taken to be treated by Doctor Kit or one of his assistants. His rig was at the hitching-post. The advent of the Doctor’s old piebald on this bit of street was as eloquent of disaster as a bell-ringer. Women in aprons, their arms floury, were gossiping at the fence-gates with their neighbors. Accidents were a reliable staple of talk at Alamos. The sight of the piebald, or the office shutter coming up from the mine, half emptied the schoolhouse instantly, and gruesome-minded young at once swarmed like lizards over the Clokes’ front window, clinging to the frame and sash, peering into the room, reporting full details to those in the yard who were either less acrobatic or had lost their vantage-points in the scuffle.

As Pablo crossed the street, the shade was brusquely pulled down. He knew what it meant, and he went straight through to the kitchen, which was crowded.

“You tell the Capitan to come here,” he said to the miners who had conveyed Faro hither. He gave them two cartwheel dollars. “As quick as he

can make it!”

Four or five, including Doctor Kit and himself, sat to the table. The others drifted out, all save a large-headed boy of ten or eleven on a box near the stove, cap on his knees.

“The lad?” he queried.

“That be Powey Faro’s young ’un,” said Willie Trembath, the secretary of the Knights of Cornwall. “Now, Joab, you see, we are all Knights here, like your father was.”

The boy threw him a glance that Pablo saw was either of indifference or contempt. To everyone else in the room he was indifferent, and he looked out of the window at the sky and the trees. Pablo was to remember later that at this first encounter with Joab Faro he had felt curiously stirred. The waif, with his thin body, and the large head and feet he was to grow up to, like a mastiff puppy, had a glance as sharp and appraising as old Captain Borlase’s. And there was something else about him that was indescribable. Character, he thought.

“This is Don Pablo, Joab,” said Willie. “He’s of the lodge, too. And you don’t have to take on. You’re in good keeping, Joab.”

Pablo felt that glance once more, a gaze as direct as his own, taking in his aspect, with the reddish beard, corduroy jacket and the bunch of tallow candles hanging from the lapel. He hoped that the survey was not one of disapproval, but he could not be certain. The lad had more sense than anyone of his age he had ever encountered. And he was sure now he had seen him once or twice before. At the back door of the Casa, delivering milk for old Hernandez. That was it!

“I’m not taking on,” said the lad, looking at Willie Trembath.

There was a pause.

Doctor Kit’s breath went out explosively.

“And he isn’t, either! So much for that! And now, Joab, what have you a mind to be, when you’re older?”

“I can milk cows. I can look after a farm. I’ll work on for Mr. Hernandez.”

“No, no, you’ll not,” said Pablo to himself. Wouldn’t do to waste that fellow on some wretched creek-road farmer. There’d be somebody to grow up with the Five Apostles. He could go to school a while, possibly board here. Jemmy Cloke’s wife, sensible, huge, red-faced woman—young, too,

and of the Californio breed, a grand-niece of Martin Sanchez—that was the person to bring him up.

He spoke with her quietly in Spanish. “You can board the lad? And see to his clothes, and that he goes to school?” At her nod he spoke even less audibly. “He is not to be a farmer, you understand, but a miner when he grows up. So, keep him away from Hernandez. The *muchacho* will be as the son of the Five Apostles.”

Mendoza entered, rasped out a greeting in Spanish, with a gesture as if to assure all that they were included in the benison, then spoke a word to Joab, who was the chief, as well as the sole, mourner. He remained afoot, hand on his tall staff, with an attention that, because of his severity of manner and his aspect, which half froze Mrs. Cloke with terror, likened him to the corpse of an alcalde in grave-swaddlings.

“Capitan,” said Pablo, “the boy is a Cornishman, which is a start in the trade that will be his. I want you to make a miner of him. He will be going to school, but in the summer, when school is closed, he can begin in some capacity under you.”

“That shall be done, Don Pablo,” said Mendoza, the red-stained parchment of his face softening. He and the boy’s father had fought once over a matter of wicks, and Powey, smiting him with a lamp, had brought him down. The Capitan had a respect for serious men, and thereafter the two became friends, though they had no language in common. “I shall install him as my map boy when school is over.”

“And the day of the funeral, Capitan, the Five Apostles will remain closed. I am leaving for Europe tomorrow, so I am telling you my wishes now.”

Mendoza bowed and left. Pablo regarded the boy, who sat on the box, feet swinging, his gaze through the window.

“That makes three who will grow up to care for the mine,” he remarked suddenly, looking at Doctor Kit. “Three.”

The small boy was regarding him solemnly.

“I want you to understand what I have arranged, Joab,” said Pablo. “With Mrs. Cloke, and with the Capitan Mendoza. First you must not be afraid of the Capitan. You will get to know him.”

“I do know him, Senor Cope,” said the boy. “I go with Hernandez to his farm to play dominoes. Nearly every night. We speak only Spanish with him.”

There was a silence. Then Doctor Kit chuckled as he rose. “I told you, Pablo, the boy *is* a wonder!”

Cousin Luisa was unremittingly faithful. Whenever Pablo came to Alamos after one of his zigzag and busy journeyings abroad or in Mexico, there was Cousin Luisa seeing to it that the Casa was in order, and that not an obstacle was left to interfere with his flow of old habits. She had not ceased to wear mourning for Ynes, who had been gone for three years. The insigne was an extra bit of black somewhere on her small, dowdy person, quite thickened now, or on her formidable bonnet decked with jet aigrettes and beads. Her display of mourning was cumulative, and once the items were sewed on, they were never officially shed. If they grew rusty, they were replaced by new material, blacker and crisper. Every bead, spray or ribbon of her trappings her nieces could read off like a chronology of the House of Aguirre, and the quite as notable House of Miura which was her own. At intervals of four or five years, without her knowing it, they smuggled her things down to the little dressmaker in Monterey, who altered the lines somewhat in an effort, always hopeless, to bring Cousin Luisa nearer style.

They adored her, they upheld her in the role of tyrant, and yielded to her on not a single point that conflicted with their wishes. Pablo adored her not in the least. The woman was an eccentric; she was a damned fool; she was stubborn, "like all those Miuras!" If, when speaking of her, a table were at hand, he pounded it. He mocked her but his "tut-tut-tut!" faltered when her jet aigrettes began to vibrate in counter defiance. The truth was, he yielded to her on every point except two. He would not coerce Roger or Gervase into marrying any two of her nieces.

"They'll marry whom they damn please, Cousin Luisa! That's what I did."

His triumph on the other point afforded him intense satisfaction. On his previous return Cousin Luisa, who had to visit with friends in Oakland, brought the Miura's Chinaman to the Casa as a temporary loan. Ah Moy could assemble curry, fix drinks, put the right gloss on shirts, on leggings, on the hide of the venerable Ozias. The run-down garden, also, burst forth magically. It had a pool with water-lilies, and a clump of bamboo under which he could doze with his pipe when the heat was oppressive. Ah Moy refused to budge when his time was up, and Cousin Luisa called the loan. It was untrue that Pablo had bribed him, either with larger pay or glasses from

that barrel of dark Talisker, the accepted premier of Highland whiskies, down in the crypt, or by a brand of Havana rolled especially for the nabobs of the Comstock. Pablo liked comfort. He liked the atmosphere of comfort that Ah Moy dispensed for him, and had given him the keys to these things. If anything else was needed, Ah Moy went up by stage to the purveyors in San Francisco and bought them.

Cousin Luisa was wroth. She taxed Pablo with grand larceny, with the blackest ingratitude he had shown since he bought his first cattle from old Jiminez instead of his relatives or a member of the Cabinet.

“Like Felipe Gozlan,” he might have said, but did not.

“We must have our Chinaman back right now!” she said finally. That was her sixth ultimatum since the loan began. “Tell him to pack up at once!”

“I’ve tried locking him out a few times,” smiled Pablo. The smile was a deception. “But he only climbs back in again through the window. Perhaps he just needs to be coaxed a little.”

“Coaxed!” erupted Cousin Luisa. “I’ll coax him!”

She marched off to do battle, her aigrettes waving like the helmet-plumes of Semiramis, and entered the kitchen, the citadel of Ah Moy, where no female dared enter save at her peril. This one should have known better. Pablo heard shouts and yells; then flustered protestations, and more yells. The door slammed. The invader was routed, and shocked. Pablo lost his gravity and fled.

But all that was a year ago, and he had made up for it often; and this time, on his return from France, he brought her dress-goods, silks and toiletries, and a tinted set of stereoscope slides of the World’s Fair, including the Eiffel Tower. He owed much to Cousin Luisa, apart from Ah Moy.



She was in the Casa now, going over the supplies with Ah Moy, inspecting the linen, and sending away from the door every caller whose name was not on the list of the five or six he would be glad to see. He had done nothing for two days but recline in the chair near the pool, and look out upon the Five Apostles and the hill with the rift upon it veiled by the summer mist. Carts went up to the vat-house, and carts went down again, laden with iron flasks, the driver on the high spring-seat under his umbrella. The flasks were not taken to Aliso and the wharf any more; the ox-cart days were gone,

and flasks were now loaded into freight-cars on a near-by siding, and sent on to San Francisco. Forty years had witnessed many changes. Without his spectacles he could see the pulley above the gallows-hoist only as a blur, and less than half that many years ago he could see from this chair the spokes of the wheel as it revolved. He had always prided himself on his needle-sharp eyesight.

This had been a heavy year for him. The feeling of loss that afflicted him when he got word in Talavera of Ynes' death had become much less intense, but he still missed her. That is, he missed her as he would have missed the Five Apostles if it had all sunk into the earth and been smoothed over during one of his absences. The emotion he felt was a pathetic regret that she had not meant more to him. He had cared greatly for no woman except Arabella Tonkin, who had been part of his youth, and the abounding liveliness of her image had, he saw with pain, diminished with the passing of the years. It disturbed him. What *did* endure on the planet? She was in Assam now, at a mission for tea garden coolies far up in the hills, and actively in charge of it, for Carew had been taken off by the black fever. A lonely and dreary life, he thought; patching up sores, delivering babies; pumping an organ in a corrugated-iron Bethel, the monsoon rain clattering overhead as she sang "O, Ope Ye Pearly Gates" to a handful of half-naked, malarial natives. She used to sing with competence; she played with art, the cantabile touch, and the playful, starched-lace quaintness so fitting for Bach. In the stiff little parlor at Torpen they had played together that duet arrangement of "Saint Anne's Prelude," rounding it off with the fugue in E flat.

But Arabella was happy, no doubt; established in grace, useful to many of her fellow-creatures, and uplifted by a strong faith from the strife and confusions of temporal life. If he had married her, he would have kept up his music. Ynes never touched the piano, her liking for music had drifted away from her, though she taught the boys their notes. Ynes, a placid mother, brought Gervase and Roger up well, and he was grateful to her for that. They outgrew her at an early age, and she placidly resigned, to click her knitting needles, rock in the summer-house, and gossip with Cousin Luisa, who was an encyclopedia of Monterey.

Yet, when word of her death reached him, he was greatly upset, half frantic at being so remote and helpless. But all had been done that could be done, and the mausoleum and private chapel that he had built at San Jose was waiting. It was of Tuscan marble, with fence of bronze chains, the Portiuncula of Assisi in miniature; and Bishop Salvatierra, her devoted friend, came to the Mass, though he had been ailing, and was bent under the weight

of ninety-three years. The Sodalities marched—and the Knights of Cornwall, the Ladies Auxiliary, and the Native Sons and Daughters.

Why should events such as this happen precisely at those times when he was away from Alamos? He had missed the spectacle of the gold rush, and also the collapse of the Comstock boom. That had even shaken the mine to its foundations. That, too, he had expected; but still it had been costly, and the great stamp-mills on the Lode, though cyaniding had come in, displacing the mercury process, had been his best customer. A gamble in stocks, too, had cost him a quarter million. But the Five Apostles, though it could do with a new market, had weathered the blow, and kept open. He had found the dollars, selling off chunks of range land and many thousands of flasks at a heroic discount.

“Chut-chut, whew, whew!”

That was an oriole’s song. He reached for a binocular and levelled it at the sycamore before the Casa. It was a warm, silvery day, and the foliage looked absolutely black against the pale sky. He made out the bird, thought it at first an Audubon, but it was a hooded oriole. It had a fine song, and with its orange bonnet was a handsome fellow, up to specifications. He had never lost his consuming interest in birds. Alamos was full of them, even if most of the neighboring woods had been cut down, and fumes had yellowed the shrubbery on the hill behind the mine. He had tramped about that morning in heavy blue shirt, corduroys, and sombrero, listening to bird songs, and he was still in his field garb. Two buggies were drawing up under the sycamore; the next moment Crossett, the lawyer, came into the garden with a rancher with his twelve-year-old daughter.

“The deed’s all ready to sign, Don Pablo,” said Crossett, a crispish young man, long and angular, like a folding-rule. He held out the paper. “My office sent it down here last night.”

“Hey?” Pablo held it out at arm’s length, head on side, and favored it with a dubious scowl over his glasses. “Hmmmh!” He looked upon all law papers as if they were as full of concealed surprise as a land-mine. He read it through, lips moving, then held it in both hands. “Looks all right. Where’s a pen?”

Crossett held out a pen. It was one of the newly invented kind that held its own ink. Pablo, after a look at the girl, signed. Jiminez, overlooking all the eligible women in the county, including the Miura nieces, had married a shipmaster’s pink-cheeked widow from Eureka. And his daughter had lustrous red hair—as vivid of color as the oriole.

“There’s the deed to your wheat field, Jorge,” he said. “It’s worth having. And now you must share your luck! Are you going to buy that little *colorada* of yours a pony? Eh? If you’re not, then I will.”

“If Nina has one pony to her name, Don Pablo, she has four or five. As many as she has uncles.”

“And saddles?”

“Well, no. She rides bareback.”

“Then I will get her a saddle. So she can take the fences.”

After the rancher and his daughter were gone, Pablo listened to Crossett read through a handful of papers.

“Yes, yes,” he said impatiently. “They can all wait. If I can wait, they can. I’ll be up at the office anyway in a few days.”

Crossett snapped an elastic around the papers and stuffed them into a coat pocket. “You had a very good trip, you were saying yesterday, Don Pablo?”

“Yes, yes,” admitted Pablo, biting off a cigar-end, one eye fixed thoughtfully at the oriole in the sycamore. Orioles to his recollection had been nesting there for fifty years. “I went around some, Freiburg, for one place. I saw that the boys got into Freiburg. It’s a great mining school. Buchner’s still there. That’s the metallurgist. They’ll hear a lot from him on condensers, and gas-scrubbing with sprays. And some of it may stick.

“I did fairly well, myself, at Talavera. Nothing to regret, for the experience was good. But it was all rule-of-thumb; not scientific enough. Talavera is all right in its way, which is mediaeval. Three thousand men working, and only eighty tons of ore—dragged up by a rope—is the day’s output. But it’s twelve percent ore. The lads will be down there for the summer, cutting their teeth on it.”

“That,” said Crossett, as he got to his feet, “seems to be part of the Alamos upbringing.”

And a rigorous one, too, he thought, as he left. Don Pablo had said little about his trip; indeed, not much of anything except the mine and Gervase and Roger, whose behavior for once must have been painfully decorous.

Pablo, lounging in his chair, stick on his lap, was aware that he had said little, and he had been reticent also to the reporters awaiting him at the ferry building in San Francisco. He had managed to get a hatful of orders on that trip, and all by a fluke. He was in Brussels, discussing the mercury cartel with the Ottenheims, when a message came to him from his London office,

advising him to come there with speed. It was annoying, for he was to leave from Cherbourg that night, and it had been the devil's own job to get a cabin on that liner. He hurried to London, and found himself in private talk with a statesman. Those incisive features, the primrose in the lapel, and the monocle had been made familiar to him by cartoonists. Joseph Chamberlain was amicable. He had just served on a board in Washington, settling some fisheries dispute; he knew as much of the economics of gold as he did of the economics of fish, which was considerable, and was most courteous. This was the decade of the American mining engineer. Would Mr. Cope fulfil a mission for him? Go down to South Africa and look into the resources of their mines?

Pablo agreed. He left that morning on a P. and O. boat for the Cape, toured the fields, from Namaqualand up to the Rand and the gold reefs. In three months he had drawn up his report; not a hard task, for he had transcripts of other reports in front of him, and they all tallied. Why should there be so many reports, unless trouble with President Kruger was expected? The gold operators were nervous and restive, and the California mining superintendents—there were a dozen on the Rand, fellows he had known at his club in San Francisco—were gloomy. The cartel's price for mercury was not a ramp, but it was fairly high, and the operators were grouching. His warehouse was overstocked. He was under no obligation to the Ottenheims either. He gave a banquet in Johannesburg, floated it on champagne, with an opera and ballet troupe for divertissement, and sold all his flasks between drinks. They would be delivered f.o.b. Cape Town at eleven shillings under the cartel figure. The jaunt to the Cape had benefited him by sixty thousand dollars; the Five Apostles had won twenty new customers in another hemisphere. The statesman in London was satisfied with the report, and nodded merely, betraying not the least surprise when his proffer of a fee was declined. And at this moment the four-masters, *Star of Kodiak* and *Rotomahana*, were loading with flasks in San Francisco Bay.

Ah Moy tapped the triangle, and Pablo went in. Luncheon was ready in the study, and Cousin Luisa poured tea. She was staying for a day or two more until she was positive that the Casa was in what she called "decent order."

"You just ought to have a housekeeper. All upstairs was quite a sight! Widowers and bachelors are exactly alike—they let everything go to ruin. Such dust! Such a litter of papers!"

"The garden's neat enough," said Pablo, lifting his cup. "So don't raise too much Cain with my Chinaman. Did you see Jorge? He's quieted down

now, doesn't bang the piano any more—or not by the look of his hands—and is making a good thing of his cattle ranch.”

“They live like a pack of Indians, those Jiminez,” said Cousin Luisa tartly. “I'm sure I don't know why you should bother with that tribe.”

“Oh, no harm in them! They have sense enough to live just as their grandfathers did. Nothing to worry about. *Manana* is time enough to worry. They've got plenty cattle, and they've still got that wineskin hanging from the tree in the front yard. And that little girl looks bright.”

“She'll leave that place when she's older—and if she's still bright,” sniffed Cousin Luisa. The Miuras had moved up, they ranked as high as the Aguirre-Copes, and the Jiminez, who had never been much to begin with, had sunk even lower than before. “And I suppose you gave Jorge that field because he had a small girl.”

“Well, no. He paid eight thousand for it. And he'll get it back in three years with the extra price for beef fattened on the grain. He's going to raise wheat on that field.”

“And there's that cottage you built for Faro. He could have lived up at the Mendoza ranch. I don't know why you don't rent out that vineyard on shares, and have somebody keep up that house.”

Pablo silently finished his tea. Casa Alamos was more or less under the immediate sway of Cousin Luisa; but the vineyard and that house, planted on his original half-league, and which had reverted to him after Mendoza had done with it, was irrevocably his own. His refusal to let her nephews-in-law move into it with their large families was a sore point with Cousin Luisa. That the nephews lacked the business idealism which would have reconciled them to the fate of being tied down to mediocre and uncongenial tasks was as much their misfortune as their fault. They had tried work at the mine, pushing cars, or helping the blacksmith sharpen drills, but with no real success. They regarded their attempts as praiseworthy, and as favors to him, who was in duty bound to help relatives less fortunate than himself. A dogma Cousin Luisa strongly upheld. She was welded in cousinhood to Casa Alamos through a sister-in-law at whose christening Dona Ana had officiated as godmother. And to a Hispanic-Californian like himself, relationship was binding.

Those nephews! The trouble they had put him to! For one he had bought a team, and set him up in the hauling business, but the sheriff had seized it. After paying the other nephew's family bills for three months, he achieved

for him the promise of a job at the camp-meeting grounds in Pacific Grove; but he refused point-blank to go.

“A Capitan must have a house of his own. Faro wants to live near the mine. And so I built him that cottage. I want nobody living at that vineyard except Luis.”

“And a poor caretaker that Luis is!” she said tartly. “If my nephews moved in, they wouldn’t let the roof tumble about their ears. There’s not a window in it that isn’t smashed.”

“And who smashed them?” he asked, as he got up. “Your grand-nephews and grand-nieces! Luis has put the whole tribe of them out three times from the house.”

“They are very healthy, the little ones,” said Cousin Luisa in a forgiving tone. “And they must, after all, live somewhere.”

“Near the sea, then, where they are now,” he rejoined. “By all accounts they thrive in that sea air.”

He left for the mine office, where he busied himself until dark with his correspondence. A sackful of letters had been sent down to him from the San Francisco office; and these he answered, writing briefly and fast. Robin Sim, the bookkeeper, made copies of them in a squeaky letter-press. It was heavy this time, the outgoing mail; and in two days the ships would be leaving China Basin hull-down with flasks for the Transvaal.

“Send them all out on the coach tonight, Robin,” he said. “They might like their invoices early, our African friends. They can make checks on that collateral.”

The Casa was still alight when he sauntered down to the road but the heaven itself, splendid with a chaos of stars, was brighter. He turned up for the camp, swinging his stick. The foliage was commoved with an exhilarating wind, nearly a half gale. It was quite late, about eleven; the village was abed, the avenue between the trees a track of silver light, and he was the sole pedestrian. He came to the Mendoza ranch, let himself through the gate with a key, went on to the house, entering from the back veranda. The kitchen itself, in contrast to the rest of the house, was Spanish, beamed, with stone walls; and on a hearth crackled a log under an iron pot. It was as if Mendoza’s hut in Spain had been transported here intact to the string of peppers and the last clay jar. Luis, the caretaker, with a grave salutation, lighted a candle. He dished up some legumes and beef, put on a glass of rough wine, and Pablo made a spare dinner.

“You were at Talavera, also, Don Pablo?”

“A few days,” said Pablo, turning his chair to the fire. “It rained. There was a bullfight. Domingo Pan now runs the tavern, and he sends you greeting. The vendors in the plaza had good roast chestnuts. For the rest Talavera is unchanged.”

Luis, holding a cigarette in his iron fingers, gave a nod. Only here were there changes. He had come here from that village, having been sent for by Mendoza to work on this farm. He had brought hundreds of cuttings from his little hillside vineyard, and cared for them aboard a ship that took months to make its way here around the Horn. Hurricanes and doldrums had delayed it, the water had about given out, and none was left to keep alive the cuttings. He saved them by rooting their ends in potatoes, which he had bought from the skipper at gold prices—an outlay for which, not the pinchfist Mendoza, but the owner of the Five Apostles repaid him. The vineyard was a jungle now, all but a half-acre that he cared for in his time away from odd jobs.

“Luisa Miura came here when you were gone,” he said. “She went all through the house when I was on the ridge cutting wood.”

“That woman is not to come here—never!” said Pablo. “Nor anybody else. I want to come here sometimes and rest. Bring that wine!”

Luis, with a sympathetic grunt, brought the demijohn. The house was not only haunted, it was accursed. What could the presence of any woman in it do but bedevil matters still further? The door of the wall clock flung open, and the cuckoo hooted once. Pablo sat back in his chair, staring at the fire, and beyond the flames into the past.



Rich Wargrave, the medical man at Alamos, had come to the Casa to spend the evening, and he and Pablo retired after dinner to the study. Rich was new to the camp, though he had for a while helped Doctor Kit and his assistant, both now gone. Pablo had a great opinion of his skill. He had a notion, too, of Rich starting a small hospital at Alamos.

“Once it gets started, it’ll begin paying for itself,” he said over the port. “No use looking to the county heads for anything. They’ve got the county hospital to look after. I’ve assessed all the chances on that, and they’re nil. So it’ll be the usual way—church socials, raffles, subscriptions, and so forth.”

“I don’t see anything wrong with that,” Rich said. “The usual way usually works.”

And that remark had pleased Pablo, somehow. The young fellow was deep, well-grounded in medicine, and practical, too. Rich had also a pretty grasp of California history. He was not old enough to have “lived” much history, of course; but he had read much in it, and picked up a lot here and there, talking with those who had. So it made an agreeable evening, the two of them sitting before the parlor stove; Pablo, as names rose to the surface of his mind, speaking of men he had known. He was thoughtful. The State, thirty years old now, had already outlived most of those who had created it. Of himself he spoke little; of his own part in the events at San Juan Bautista and Monterey still less; and of his visit to Washington, and the letter from the White House nothing at all. It was characteristic of him that he preferred to be a mild commentary and not a test.

He had got on. Abler men than himself, men of finer ethical sense and greater spiritual capacity had not got on, but they had come nearer to the bedrock of life. His idols had, and ten more of his contemporaries, and all of the women, even Cousin Luisa. He envied their aliveness, their instant response to the simple demands of the day, their pleasure in the small things that were so important. He had lost much, for he had drifted off into finance, the bankers’ cloudland, and his sensibilities had dulled. He had been happier as a sailor on the *Mizpah*, or riding with the majordomo, or working among the vines at Talavera. The advance—or the movement of the State and its social fabric—had pushed him on. He was not sure it was progress. He did not believe in progress. California could attain no happiness comparable to the pastoral bliss it had enjoyed in the past. Progress was the high road to extinction. The Comstock had come to its inevitable smash-up.

But he was snug this bleak winter night of rain, the wind booming over the tiles; comfortable in his easy chair, listening to the talk of young Rich, and the thrumming of the wood in the stove.

Someone was rapping. Pablo lowered his match.

“That’s a hard fist. Someone from the mine, I reckon.”

He went to the back door. There was Jemmy Cloke, his hat shedding water like a duck’s tail. A pallor was showing through his grime, and he appeared to be groping for speech.

“What’s up, Jemmy? Not an accident?”

“Looks that way, Don Pablo. I looked in the office, seeing the lamp was burning. And there were men on the floor. So I came down on the run,

knowing Doctor Wargrave was here.”

“Damn queer,” said Pablo, pulling on a waterproof. “What d’you make of it, Rich?”

“Can’t say. We’ll go up and have a look.”

They followed Cloke’s lantern through mud and rain to the mine office; the door was still open, and on the floor of his room were the men, three Mexicans, lying unconscious. They were alive; he could see the flutter of breath at their throats as Rich bent over them. He noticed that the men had been stretched out flat, that their collars had been loosened, and that all the windows of the office were open.

“Not drunk either,” said Rich. “Go bring a cart, Jemmy, and some tarpaulin. We’ll take ’em up to the surgery.” He rose, puzzled. “Some kind of poison, I think.”

“How the devil did they get here?” asked Pablo, even more mystified. “I’d swear they are strangers.” He stooped to look at them closely. Their hands and faces bore the stain of cinnabar. “But they’re not *mercureros*. I wouldn’t have anything like this happen at Alamos, Rich.”

Pablo bent over and turned up the lip of one man, then the lips of the other two, swiftly. The next instant he rushed out into the rain and stopped at each furnace, peering at the thermometers. He made the rounds again, more bewildered than before. No mishap could have befallen anyone at this battery of ovens. Nowhere could he find sign of a leakage of fumes. At three hundred degrees or less vapor of the smelting ore was poisonous; one whiff of it and a man would fall as if poleaxed. But these ovens all were roaring at five hundred degrees, safe and tight. He went back to the office, just as Jemmy turned up with the rattled watchman.

“What d’you make of these fellows?” Pablo asked. “And what knocked them out?”

“No men of ours,” said the watchman. “I don’t fit ’em anywhere at Alamos either—unless it’s that heavy-set one. I’ve seen him before, somewhere. Maybe at a bar.”

“Fumes did it,” affirmed Rich. “Anyway they’re poisoned. And the quicker we get them up to my place, the better. You go ahead and get nurses, Jemmy.”

“And get my horse over here,” said Pablo.

The cart appeared; the men were put in, under tarpaulin, and hauled up to the surgery, where Rich worked over them until midnight. Pablo sat in the little office, to await the verdict.

“I’ll have ’em all hobbling around in a couple of weeks,” said the doctor, coming in. “One of the chaps is back in his senses already. As much as one can be in delirium. Babbling in Spanish.”

Pablo listened to the ebb and flow of muttering from the cot where lay the man in delirium. “What d’you make of it, Rich?”

“Not very much. Something about the storm, and a boat. Why a boat, I don’t know. He is poisoned, too, like the others, but he is also bruised. He got clunked on the head. And they’re all slivery, as if they’d got hauled here in a cart—to be dumped upon us.”

Pablo rubbed his chin. “They don’t look like sailormen to me. I’d swear that chap’s a furnaceman.”

“What’s the nearest furnace to Alamos?”

“San Benito way. But there are plenty of doctors between San Benito and here.” Pablo chewed his cigar, looking perplexed. “Queer business, Rich. Can’t say I like it at all, but I couldn’t tell why. Now, they could be gopher miners—one-flask men, with those portable retorts. When the smoke comes at you off those things, you turn up your toes.”

He licked his cigar, then flung a sudden glance at Rich.

“There’s that old wreck of a furnace up the canyon—the Jews’ House. They might have been patching up that damned thing. I’ll go and see.”

Donning his oilskins, he strode out into the rain. Rich, pressing his face against the window, saw him gallop off, his mine lantern at the pommel, a luminous splotch bobbing in the darkness. The Chief was racing, and over a confounded heavy road, too. Well, the whole affair was a mystery.

The canyon road was a morass, and Pablo rode up it in a torrential storm, fending his head against the low overhanging branches. The furnace was dark, and so far as he could see by the lantern, as utterly dead as it had ever been, but he walked around it in the deep mud. There was the woodsy smell of tarweed, and a hint of skunk; then came the reek of ashes, the empyreuma of fuel newly quenched. The rain was drumming somewhere on metal. Flung about on the earth and shrubbery were sheets of iron, like boiler-plate. Roofing of some sort, he conjectured, and looked up. Then he saw what had happened: the smelter had been unroofed by a violent gust of wind, the mercury fumes had then rolled out, asphyxiating the workmen, felling them

where they stood, as if poleaxed. And one of the three, doubtless, had first been stunned by a flying plate.

In the woodshed were scores of empty flasks, half of them bearing the Alamos stamp. He wrenched open the door of the furnace, and heard the gurgle of rain inside, seeping through the charge of mixed ore and wood. He thrust his lantern into the kiln. The rock was not the green serpentine of the hills, worked by gopher miners, but cinnabar. He pulled out a lump. That rock he knew; it was from the Five Apostles, from the old level, and in particular from a thin, irregular and rich vein in the gallery. So that was what those fellows had been up to! And their accomplices, after carrying them to the office, had decamped.

Where to? A ship, more than likely, since the bruised man had babbled of a ship. On to the sea, then. Every rock, beach and eddy on the littoral was etched sharply in Pablo's mind, and instinctively he knew where that ship should be hiding. He galloped down the canyon, rode down to the sea, then along the highway to the marshes of Castroville, and the inlet where he kept his own boat. At the jetty was but one other vessel, a fore-and-aft schooner with sails reefed, and hurrying over he surveyed it by his light, and by two successive flashes of lightning. He stood there, trembling in the downpour that clattered on his hat and poncho. It was an old Mexican grain-boat, and he had seen it often, and most frequently in the years of the War between the States, when he was the patroller on this coast. He had never suspected it hauled anything except grain, but now——

Rage seized him. He clambered aboard, and entered the cabin. Four sailors were in it, asleep in their bunks, and he poked them awake with his lantern. The master sat up frowsily in his red undershirt, and blinked. The visitor with the dripping black beard, and whose giant bulk seemed to fill the cabin, he recognized as *El Diablo* Cope of Alamos. But his voice came quietly, in Spanish.

“Capitan, from whom are you getting my quicksilver?”

The master shrugged, a little helplessly, and felt for a cigarette. He knew he was trapped, he and all his men. This was the end. Someone at the mine had given him away.

“Jose Mendoza, Senor.”

“You smuggled out flasks for the Confederacy all through the war years—and in this boat? And for Jose Mendoza?”

The master looked at him searchingly. His visitor, for all his quiet voice, had grown black and terrible like a thundercloud, but unlike the cloaked

Capitan of the Five Apostles, there was justness in his anger. *El Diablo* was known to be fair in all his dealings, and it might be well to be open with him, for he was stronger than the Capitan, and besides, there were three hostages in his holding at Alamos. A curse on those blundering workmen!

“That is true, Senor. Many flasks, and all of them were hauled down to Baja California. But we had also much other cargo—barley, wheat, salt, and hides——”

Pablo, sitting on the edge of the bunk, listened no more. As his mind grasped the enormity of the betrayal, his anger gave way to mortification. He had been gulled, and mocked at for years. But more than that, he had failed others who had trusted in him. That was his supreme mockery. He thought of that letter from Washington, and he was wounded in his deepest pride.

“And now, my friends,” he said, rising with his lantern, “we shall waste no more time here. You have a cart on the jetty. You will all get into it inside of five minutes. I am taking you to Alamos.”

The master and the crew obeyed without demur. The cart pushed into the highway, and they rode before him all the way to the mine, like four scarecrows sodden in the rain.



The gale by early morning had declined, though a drizzle still fell from a lowering sky; the earth was soaked, the mine-top a quagmire of red muck, wrinkling in a chill sea wind. A night of unfavorable signs was protracted into day, and ill omens were still abroad—at the surgery where Rich was feeling less sure about one of his Mexican patients, and in the tunnel where the Capitan was in one of his maniacal humors. Twice the morning blast had misfired. Perhaps the rain permeating the pine-slab walls of the powder-house had dampened the explosive; or perhaps the workmen had botched the firing. Everything had gone wrong below: the lowest pump had gone awry, and was swamped under water that had poured down the shaft. And Jemmy Cloke, looking as if he had had a rough night, had come in tardily to repair it. Eight o'clock, and still no ore had been loosened. Mendoza limped from one end of the tunnel to the other, hoarse with rage, blaspheming like the Devil, cursing the blacksmith and the powderman. The powderman was the culprit now. That wretch, quailing under his maledictions, he sent away for ingredients and the mixing board. They were brought into the gallery, and with a shovel Mendoza stirred up his own batch of rack-a-rock. Slavering with hysteria, he

worked in a frenzy, cape thrown back to give his arms play. The shovel struck a nail, and a spark leaped out.

Faro, coming in from the tunnel, was blown back by the force of the explosion. It was like the release of a gigantic breath. For a moment he was stuck against the wall like a wet leaf. Men came running from every adit and drift, and Faro, trembling in every joint from the shock, groped first into the gallery.

Pablo was at the guest-house of the Casa, watching his hostler lock the door on the four men from the schooner, when he heard the sound. He drove at once for the mine, and entered it by the canyon road. Someone had been killed. The entire shift was going home; from every drift men were leaving, in groups or singly, and in the semi-darkness as they passed the crucifix hung at the entrance of the gallery, the Mexican workmen crossed themselves.

“What was it?” he flung out.

“The Capitan, sir. In the gallery.”

Pablo turned in. The dank air of the workings was heavy with vapor and fumes; the oil-flares were struggling vainly to beat their light through the greyness. The workmen were all gone, except Faro and Jemmy Cloke, who were looking up into the jagged low roof near the entrance. Near the wall was a small heap under a tarpaulin, and he stared at it for a moment in silence.

“Is there no more of him than that?”

“It was all anyone could find,” said Faro. “It was as if he had gone clear through the roof.”

Shreds of wood were about, and Pablo saw they were parts of the mixing-box. The blast must have been frightful. Only a madman or a fool would have committed the folly of mixing explosives underground, and so near pillars, which could be dislodged and let the roof fall. It must have been Mendoza who had mixed the powder, for no one else would have dared.

“A spark, no doubt. In a tantrum, was he?”

“Aye,” admitted Faro after a long pause, for Mendoza was dead and defenceless. “And it was the worst I ever saw a man in. It was as if something had come over him.”

Jemmy Cloke said, “Doctor Rich and the priest will be here shortly. And the Knights will be taking care of the arrangements. There’ll be a vigil tonight at the lodge.”

“Everything has been done then,” remarked Pablo.

He spoke mechanically, and fell into quietness. The events of the afternoon and what the schooner men had told him on the road from Castroville had dazed him. And now this unreality of Mendoza's vanishing! He was benumbed. He was aware that Faro and the blacksmith had turned their faces upon him. There had just occurred in the Five Apostles the most stupendous event in its history; they were awe-struck. They were expecting from him an utterance fitting to the occasion. Usually he was articulate; he had something of the rhetorical gift, and he was also the Grand Master of the Knights. He tried to speak, but no words came; he could hardly breathe.

"You'll be coming to the vigil, Don Pablo?" asked Jemmy Cloke.

"I'll be keeping a vigil of my own," said Pablo.

He drove on to the Mendoza ranch, had the house to himself, for the caretaker, Luis, was away at San Benito, and he searched the house. He found an armful of letters, most of them from relatives in Spain, and in the barn he found a small locked trunk which held papers, accounts, and a notebook in a crabbed, Spanish hand, with dates going back to the Civil War. These he carried back to his room in the Casa, and for a week he mulled over them, comparing the dates and figures with pages in the ledgers of the Five Apostles.



Pablo did not go near the mine for a fortnight. The hostler carried all his messages for him, and saw to it that the four men under guard were put aboard the schooner with Rich's patients, and banished. The night they left, Faro was brought in. He sat waiting until Pablo finished some work, pushed aside the desk lamp, and wheeled about in his chair. Nobody else was in this wing of the house, and the blinds were drawn.

"I hadn't been able to see you, Joab," he said, waving at the desk. "And hardly anyone at all until this moment. You are now the Capitan of the Five Apostles."

"I am obliged, Don Pablo," said Faro gravely.

"No, no. It is I and the mine who will be obliged to you. And now, I shall be brief. As Capitan—the new one, and most likely the last, for you are young—you should know all that has gone on before."

Faro, cold as if under a chill fall of water, listened, gripping the arms of his chair. Jose Mendoza, in the War between the States, had smuggled out

flasks of mercury to Confederate agents, himself keeping watch on the night riders that patrolled the coast. The war over, he had high-graded ore and smuggled metal by his grain schooner to dealers at Mazatlan and San Francisco. A fortune had come into his hands, and it had been invested in land; but where, no one could find out.

“Perhaps the secret was blown into the roof,” said Pablo, “and this is just as well.” His hand as he picked up a cheroot and lighted it was unsteady. In his desk was that yellowing letter from Washington, and the remembrance of it now was a humiliation. “It was greed that killed Jose Mendoza—greed for more wealth, for more power. And he had been in power too long. His conscience slipped first, then his hand.”

“It was the Five Apostles that killed him,” Faro thought. He saw the mine as a living thing that had been injured.

Pablo half turned; for a long time he bit and smoked at his cigar. It was he, who had brought Mendoza to Alamos, who was answerable for all the harm done.

“I’d been working out something here,” he said, bringing a hand down on some papers. “He was a remarkable fellow, Mendoza. He was a very good Capitan, and did a lot for the mine. More than anyone else could have done, I think. Who else could have bitten out that gallery? I think we’ll have an annual Mass there, with the Knights in to sing. A trust fund will take care of that, and the Knights will administer it.

“And there’s that nursing-home Rich wants for Alamos. Rich deserves it. He pulled back to life those chaps that got smoked out at Mendoza’s oven. Half the doctors I know would have lost them. Does no man any good to get a whiff of mercury fumes. And that hospital may come in handy again. A little endowment will keep that going. We’ll have it understood”—Pablo slapped the papers again—“it is, like the Mass, a Mendoza bequest.

“I’d rather have it known, than not, that Mendoza was a right one. And he was, barring a fault or two.”

“Does anyone else know of—of that high-grading?” asked Faro, wiping his forehead.

“No one.” Pablo looked directly at him. “I shall count upon you to see that not another soul shall know of it.”

Faro gave a nod, and rose.

“Good-night, Capitan,” said Pablo, and turned back to his desk.

Entire logs burning in the great fireplace flung out warmth into the salon which was still hung with garlands and boughs after that formal banquet a week ago to the new mistress of the Casa. It was crowded with guests from the village and the Lodge and simmering with a gaiety that was free, and much of the restraint that had been noticeable at first was dissolving under the benign influence of tea, wine and cake, helped by the ladies of the Auxiliary, wearing aprons over their best dresses. This time it was a homely Cornish night. Pablo was playing a ballad tune at the piano; if his touch was somewhat less flexible, he made up for it by a redoubled spirit. It was a joy to him that Roger and Gervase were again home, after finishing their last term at Berkeley, and doing well in their profession at the Five Apostles. And Roger had sped to Talavera, to get himself a wife. So Casa Alamos, with Dona Ysabel Machado Cope as its chatelaine, was being run as it had never been run before. A little stiffly, perhaps, but she was still new, still among strangers, and Pablo, at the keyboard, was conscious that he was watching her with admiration.

Cousin Luisa, her lady-in-waiting, more formidable than ever, and with a greater profusion of jet fruit on her bonnet, was introducing the newcomers to her. Ysabel was gracious, strikingly so, but with that rigid grace and poise of the Machados, an aristocratic over-bred and melancholy strain. She was beautiful, and Pablo approved of beauty in women, which atoned for much. Ysabel was as slim as a wand, her skin ivory pale under that pompadour of dark hair; and she was in a gown of puce velvet, with only a cameo brooch for ornament. Even at the banquet, she was the most beautiful woman at the assemblage. Her beauty was a shade cold and imperious, but it would endure well, he thought, and with no broadening shadow as she advanced into maturity.

The arrival of Ysabel Machado was the most stupendous event in Cousin Luisa's life since the death of Dona Ana. It was she who planned the wedding banquet at the Casa, where a hundred and ten sat at the table, and the Bishop, seeing that all but a handful were Hispano-Californian, and all were of the social hierarchy, charmingly uttered both the grace and the address in Castilian.

Cousin Luisa, faithful, tireless and worldly-wise, had managed all that, and the banquet was immensely successful, glittering. Casa Alamos had overnight become again the great manor, the Versailles, of the region, and simultaneously the whole Miura clan was lifted to a pre-eminence only second to the Copes. The Miuras had all attended the banquet, in coat-tails and white ties, and in ballooned dinner gowns; the nephews, as figures of social consequence, swam as smoothly as fish in the elegance of that affair; and the last of the unmarried nieces, the most hopeless one, had become engaged.

Gone were their lean and carefree days when they battled with the constables, and hobnobbed with jockeys in the paddock; they saw the openings of the races stylishly from boxes in the grandstand, and with binoculars hanging on their chests, were recognizable with their wives in the pages of the *Sunday Examiner*. The achievement of this miracle was a triumph for Cousin Luisa. Under the attrition of her hints, Don Pablo had at last succumbed and done the proper thing for her nephews. He got them into his office with their wives and aunt, and after blistering them with his tongue, and bulldozing them until they were meek and pulverized, announced he was setting them up in the cattle business on acreage left the Miuras by Cousin Basile. He shoved at them contracts for beef he had cajoled from Miller and Lux, a railroad and two wholesale meat houses; and the women, all as badly frightened at his menaces, did the rest. They had acted well ever since, and their manners at the banquet had been almost beautiful.

But he had not forgiven Cousin Luisa. He had approved the list, all of the hundred and ten names; and then she had not invited Jorge Jiminez and Nina. What the devil had got into the woman! True, Nina was at Berkeley for her entrance examinations, but she had not been sent an R.S.V.P. card. Pablo missed Jorge at the party, learned the truth of the matter, and went out in a rage to the Mendoza house, where he sat before the fire, half sobbing with humiliation, to the alarm of old Luis who kept him plied with brandy and cheroots.

“*Ah, la bestia!*” muttered Pablo. “*La bestia! Estas mujeres*—those women!”

He knew that the Jiminez tribe were below the salt; that they lived as they always had lived, simply like vaqueros, with no overfondness for the razor. Cousin Luisa had never relaxed in her disapproval of them, and Ysabel, he had observed, was chillingly polite to Nina. Those two had hatched up something. Of Nina—“Queen Mab” he called her—he had always been fond. She used to ride over to play croquet with him on the lawn. Her smile

displayed wonderful white teeth; she wore a silver-mounted vicuna hat. She had copious ruddy hair, and the tint of an English moss-rose. Abounding, devil-may-care life was in her, and laughter; and when she rode, she came bareback, slashing harmlessly with a quirt, and swooping like a martin at dusk. She was Gervase's girl. The lad had a proper eye for quality. He had met her on his rare visits to Alamos after she had grown; and seen much of her in Berkeley, when she was at a preparatory school. They were doing their utmost for her, those dark vaqueros at the Jiminez place, who worshipped her, who looked upon her, no doubt, as if she were a fairy changeling.

She could not have come to the banquet in any case; but not to have sent her even a card was an affront. Ysabel could have overruled Cousin Luisa if she had wished. But she disliked Nina. He should have been used to the vagaries of women now but this infuriated him more than anything. His anger was uncontrollable; and since he could not explode at his son's bride, he went over to calm off at the Mendoza house, after damning Cousin Luisa. *La bestia!*

Jorge Jiminez was here in the salon this evening with the glee singers of the Knights of Cornwall. They had come to try out a lot of catches for the tea and concert at which funds were to be raised for a chapel harmonium. And Jorge had a good voice. So had Faro, Robin Sim, and Benjy Cloke, Jemmy's son.

"We'll hold some more concerts this winter, Don Pablo," said Jorge, dragging up a chair, "and get you a grand. It's getting a bit worn, this piano."

"You mean those things with a cover you prop up with a pole? I'll keep this, Jorge. It does pretty well for me!"

And it did. Ynes and he had played upon it together long ago.

"You could always dig color from it," said Jorge. He looked about him. "I don't see Gervase."

"He'll be in any time now. He had to go up to the city."

The last fugue had no accompaniment, and Pablo brushed his fingers silently over the keyboard, listening through the smoke of his cigar to the voices, and to Roger's plangent, warm tenor. It pleased him and he was pleased, also, that all was going so well tonight. Roger was inclined to think the life at Alamos pokey and boring, new bridegroom though he was. And this was taking him right into the lively heart of it. After the Five Apostles, the Knights were everything. Pablo, though he had not gone often to the Lodge, had planned the evening to that end; and also he had invited Jorge, to make amends for the women's neglect.

“Hand these copies around, Jorge. It’s a catch. But not a new one. Shakespeare knew it, I think.”

Roger had pressed the copies off for him on the copying-pad at the office. Agreed that what the Knights wanted was a change of rounds, the two of them searched through the piles of music in the cave, and came up with the madrigals of old Master Orlando.

The lull came, and Faro rang his tuning-fork. He was the precentor, and an able one. When the Knights sang their antiphonies in the gallery, under his wand, and the echoes fanned out into the tunnel like the beating of wings, that was something to hear. Pablo had heard the Mass once, and been so deeply moved that he had not gone again.

Another note of the fork, the gleemen opened their mouths, and Pablo struck the chord.

The silver Swan,
Who living had no note,
When death approached
Unlocked her silent throat:

“Farewell all joys,
O death come close my eyes,
More Geese than Swans now live,
More fools than wise.”

Thus sang she first and last,
And sung no more.

Roger sang without prompt-sheet, for he had been taught that madrigal in childhood, and linking it with the swans in the pool, which he had plagued, thereafter treated the fowl as respectfully as if they were archbishops.

A dozen more tunes, then Roger sat to the keyboard, and crashed upon it fortissimo, with great recoilings. Then he sang “The Man Who Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo,” which was the newest thing out, and which Pablo, who disliked most popular songs, found tolerable. “The Red-Hot Chicken Tamale,” which Charley Reed was singing with the Emerson Minstrels, came next. Pablo sat in an easy chair, cigar in fingers, listening to his son. A half chuckle escaped him. Roger sang cleverly rather than superlatively well but he had almost a professional gusto. He sang with lustre and music-hall joviality, a shade too loud. Pablo reflected the least bit ruefully that these

songs, though diverting enough, were hardly the fitting epilogue to the budget of quaint and dainty Elizabethan things that had filled the evening.

Roger was still playing when Ah Moy opened the hall doors to bring in the trays of saffron cake and beer. Just then Gervase came into the hall, hung up his hat and coat, and bowing—a little stiffly, Pablo fancied—to Ysabel, who was there to supervise the entry of the refreshments, entered the salon. He moved here and there, mildly impersonal, nodding to Benjy Cloke and Faro. He clinked mugs with Jorge, chatted with him a moment under his breath, then when the music ceased, came over to Pablo.

How dissimilar were the cousins, was Pablo's thought. Quiet and unobtrusive, Gervase would have been hardly noticeable in any group, though he was certain to be at ease in it: a loosely-built youth in tweeds, with pipe, humorous grey eye, and a knack of uttering a remark, some bit of drollery at which the hearers would laugh, and then wonder what it meant. His quietness and simplicity arrested one. He never had to say much; a word or chuckle, and his attitude towards a subject was clear. Both he and his cousin were liked by the miners, but Gervase was liked in a profounder sense. A dependable lad!

"Jorge tells me I missed some good catches," said Gervase, "but I came down fast as I could."

"All well in the city?"

Gervase nodded. "The stuff's moving out. I knocked around a bit. Even went up-country to look at Sulphur Bank and the Plato. Plato's bought a power-shovel."

"Hrrumph," said Pablo, hooding an eye. "They have run into something?"

"I've got to talk with you about it."

They met outside, and walked up to the mine office where they sat in lamplight with the blind drawn, and Pablo slid the cigar box over the table.

"I didn't like that snubbing of Nina and Jorge at all," said Gervase. "And that's one of the reasons I went up."

Pablo's cigar blazed like fury, and his face turned dark purple.

"I've been trying to square myself with Jorge ever since," he said. He thought of that stubborn old war-horse, Cousin Luisa, and his restraint was heroic. "You managed to explain to Nina, I hope?"

"I did. And Nina understands perfectly. She sends you her love." A smile flicked across Gervase's cheek. "We were married three days ago."

Pablo drew a slow breath. It seemed only the other day when he was watching Gervase toddle across the grass to the finger of his Chinese amah. And now Arabella's son had shot up and got him a wife, and she was the daughter of his old haunt, the Jiminez ranch—the little Queen Mab for whom he had bought the saddle.

“I could have wished for you no finer thing than that,” he said. And after they had shaken hands: “You must bring her home, and if she wants a house built, then we——”

Gervase leaned forward. “That's fine of you. But it wouldn't quite do. We are going to China.”

“China!” echoed Pablo in unbelief.

“We can't stay here,” Gervase said gently. “One engineer is enough for the Five Apostles. And what could I do here? I have always, somehow, though it may strike you as a childish notion, wanted to go back where I was born.

“And I could not bring my wife to the Casa, which is Ysabel's home. Her dislike of Jorge Jiminez and Nina is only partly because of Cousin Luisa.”

“What then!”

“It goes back to Talavera,” Gervase said. “Roger and I called upon the Machados, and I fell half in love with Ysabel. I fell wholly out of love in a month. But the trouble was, she didn't.” He shrugged. “There's the situation. I couldn't, with all the best intentions in the world, iron it out. And it's not going to help things, either, my marrying Nina.”

“Women can be the damnedest——” Pablo began, then broke off, to frown at his cigar.

On the probable behavior of women he was never disposed to give anyone advice; and when he had found himself involved in a pickle, he merely sat back unruffled while the women fought it out. But his own affairs had been with actresses or singers—“*fulminantes*,” he called them, and he had found them livelier and more amusing. Ysabel Machado was something else. She was not the kind to forgive Gervase. That cold, arrogant and punctilious sort of woman nursed a grievance like a jewel. With her looks, breeding and wealth, she was a good mate for Roger, and she had also a business head, which Roger had not. He was probably done for, and tied to something. But what man was not?

“China—what's all this about China?” he asked.

“I had an idea for a market there,” said Gervase.

“Yes?”

The Five Apostles was not selling quite enough flasks to suit him. He had never been able to make up for the loss of that old outlet, the Comstock mines. And the cyaniding process of treating ores was everywhere knocking mercury sales on the head. One could sufficiently allow for the vagaries of politics, but not of science. There was no telling what science would be up to next.

“Nina and I went up on a coaching trip beyond Saint Helena. And I had a look at the Plato, which I heard was selling to China. When we got back to the city I found the little shipping clerk at the docks of the Orient Mail, and we hit it off. A lot can be done with that market, I learned. So Nina and I are going over. To Canton.”

“Canton,” murmured Pablo, with an absent look. “Canton.”

He thought of the warehouse, of the coughing Portuguese clerk, of the quicksilver jars he had bought. An Eskimo harpooner was with him. And that Portuguese—Silveira was his name—whom chance had led to a bar that night was the moulder of his destiny. Forty—forty-five years ago—that was.

“Canton. Did this dock clerk give you any names?”

“All sorts of names.”

“Tai-Ling, for one?”

“Possibly. There was one name that sounded like a bell.”

“I did business with that house once, but in quite an indirect way. It wouldn’t remember, though it was a big firm, and big firms have a memory like an elephant. They handled Szechwan stuff—in jars boated down the Hoang-Ho, or some river. They’re able, those Canton people, but you’ve got to be careful, or you might sign and give up your eye-teeth.” Pablo whistled softly. “You are going to Canton. On a sort of honeymoon?”

“That’s one way of putting it,” smiled Gervase.

Pablo scraped his throat, and frowned. “Nuisance to have anyone around on a honeymoon. But if you and Nina wouldn’t mind an old codger tagging along—I might look into a deal for you. You might be put up in a way of business.”

“Done!”

“Canton! Glory, I was younger than you in those days!” Pablo looked at his watch. “There’s time enough for beer, and another round of that madrigal, I think. It’ll be a farewell song. And when you get to the city, tell Crossett I’ll be following you—in the next boat.”

Three months, four months, and Hundred Willow Castle was wrapped in the haze of late summer. Mr. Wu Tai-Ling, to whom word had been sent the very day Gervase and Nina had arrived, had not yet returned. Szechwan was a very long way off, thousands of miles; and one bearer had been sent up by the Hankow road, and the other up the river gorges and by a caravan route to the mountains West of the Min. Young Mr. Wu Tai-Ling, known as Son Wu, though he was really the grandson of the house, was a poetic and slight youth with a moon face, rather sad but clever in business, thought it probable some calamity had overtaken them: possibly malaria, or tigers. Also the Boxers were beginning to cut up in the West, and with travelers whom they suspected of being spies they had been known to deal unpleasantly. The unrest might even sweep down to Canton, but nobody in the city was much concerned about this, for American gunboats hovering at the mouth of Pearl River would rush up as far as Whampoa, and Whampoa was only nineteen miles away.

“But your grandfather,” said Pablo, sitting in the garden with Son Wu, “is he not apt to find himself in a plight?”

“Oh, no, Don Pablo, give yourself no concern over him. He is a great gadabout, and immune to discomfort. His age, which is eighty-seven, entitles him to reverence, even from bandits. He is indestructible.”

“Apparently,” Pablo said.

He liked ease, himself. To think of the ageless Mr. Wu Tai-Ling climbing the peaks of Szechwan, sleeping in flea-ridden inns, or under a yamen wall with bandits, living on crusts and water like a hadji, though he was a multi-millionaire, with a most comfortable home—in fact, this chair and side-table with its supply of brandy-and-soda and Havanas, was the old gentleman’s—seemed not only odd but incredible. It was an asceticism the mere practice of which exalted a man to sainthood. The thought of it made Pablo feel decrepit.

“You dislike travel, Son Wu?”

“Precisely. My grandfather likes it. He also likes a diversity of sunsets. Often he goes afoot, and that, at present, may account for the delay in his return. Travel and business are his recreation. A string of cash and a stick are all that he takes along. He has many friends along the Northern Route—jade

dealers, mostly. They are Mohammedans. But they also have temples, and Tai-Ling vermilion goes into them, as it does into Buddhist and Taoist temples. In every village is a priest or a merchant who knows the Tai-Ling paints or varnishes, or a moneylender who has Tai-Ling chop-dollars. A mint at Hankow stamps our money for us.

“He usually sleeps in temples, and if you judge that he is religious, you judge aright. But his zeal is tempered by moderation. He makes sacrifice twice a year. He believes that to make it less than twice would be irreverence to the gods, and to make it oftener would be importunate. He is very rigid in his convictions.”

Son Wu’s smile was gentle and tolerant. He was an old-young man, and wilier than he looked. Whenever Pablo had ventured on business, Son Wu spoke with cheerful detachment about his grandfather, who, Pablo surmised, ran Tai-Ling, Limited, while Son Wu looked after things at the shop. He was a chemist, also. They talked of metallurgy and shipping rates. Pablo talked in Spanish; Son Wu in Portuguese, for he had lived in the Portuguese colony of Macao where the firm had a branch factory. After the first week Pablo gave up trying to draw him out on business.

“My grandfather works with his head,” said the young man, and held up his stained fingers. “But I with my hands.”

Then they both laughed. In his jade-green robe, with designs of bamboos in which dragons lurked, and his head bowed gently, Son Wu had the air of a reflective bonze. Nor was it deceptive. From the consul Pablo had learned that Son Wu had put the old branch factory on its feet, and the firm had declined an English syndicate’s offer of a hundred thousand dollars for it. The Tai-Ling policy was to sell only what it created in hues. Son Wu was the compounder of colors. He had revived for the ceramic town of Ching-te-Chen its lost mediaeval glaze in Mohammedan blue, softened with wood ashes, and given a vibrant intensity with cobaltiferous ore of manganese—and for the stoneware potters of Fukien the “hare’s fur” brown glaze for the cups of tea-tasters. They were tints of superhuman delicacy. The firm had a poignant concern for the loveliness and absolute permanence of its colors. And that idealism and benevolence, the Californian perceived admiringly, was not incompatible in the Tai-Lings with a respect for just profit.

So Pablo sat in the garden under a pear-tree, enjoying the shade, the warmth and the tranquility, and waited for young-old Mr. Wu Tai-Ling’s arrival home, afoot, or on mule or horse. To stretch his legs he walked about the grounds or down the road a mile to the Street of the Pigment Makers. Sometimes he visited the factory to look at the flat ovens in which mercury

was cooked with sulphur, and more often he stood watching the potters spinning the wheels, making pots and jars. How well he remembered the shape of those jars!

Gervase and Nina spent all the time driving about with Madame Son Wu. She had gone to Berkeley, and returning there for some class reunion, had met both of them at a reception on the campus. That was enough, and the three of them, ever since Gervase and Nina came to Hundred Willows, were inseparable. Fan Hui, as they called her, took them up to the family bungalow in the hills; along the Pearl River in the Tai-Ling houseboat for reed-bird shooting on the marshes; or downstream to Whampoa where Madame Tai-Ling's old college-mate lived, Pudgy Venn, the niece of a missionary.

Pablo, who had come a fortnight after Gervase and Nina, sailing on a freighter which had promised him an acre of deck on which to plant his solitary lounge-chair, kept fairly close to the garden and his brandy-smash. Mail got to him by almost every boat: long and detailed letters from Crossett, and brief and less frequent letters from Roger, who sent him copies of the office correspondence. With the invaluable Faro keeping guard at the Five Apostles, Roger was contriving to stay away from Alamos all week. Anything but routine suited Roger. Duck-shooting at San Rafael, a sailing race to the Farallones, trolling in San Pablo Bay with a lateen-rigged boat; the pleasures of the town itself, with the promenade to Pisco John's at dusk, then dinner and waltzing at one of the hotels; but none of that insalubrious round of deadfalls along Battle Row, from the Marsicano to the Eureka; Roger's caprices were not of the lower type, fortunately. Still, he should be oftener at Alamos. Was the marriage turning out badly? Pablo suspected it was. A stubborn, hard woman—Ysabel Machado. Hard, cold and smooth, like a statue—and inside quite conceivably a termagant. Alamos folk were calling her "Dona Ysabel," as if she were a duenna while yet hardly more than a bride.

Grievous! She threatened the very foundations of existence at the Casa. Once a woman got into the Casa with both feet, it was next to impossible to dislodge her. Cousin Luisa, the formidable, had been difficult enough at times, but an ultimatum always quelled her. But against his son's wife he could, unhappily, deliver no attack. She had already cost him Gervase. What next?

Then he thought of his own inviolate wing of the Casa, that had been his grandmother's, and he felt content again. Perhaps Gervase was well off. He seemed more at home here than he did at Alamos. The Tai-Lings had firmly adopted both him and Nina. In time, perhaps, after he had got into the

mercury field here, and built up a respectable agency of his own, he might be able to buy his way into the firm. He could be its buyer of mercury, graphite, oxides, lead, cobalt and oils—the traveler West of the Min. A good life! California had been tamed, and corseted with railroads; and there was much to be said for wilderness and desert and immense space that for the soul's necessity must always be stronger and cleverer than man.

He heard footsteps in the garden, and thought it was rather early for the servant to come along with tea; and besides, he had not called.

“Excellency, I am honored!”

The salutation was in Portuguese, but with an accent a little more halting than Son Wu's. Pablo rose after an initial perplexity, and turned. A small, elderly man in mandarin cap, long jacket and iron-grey queue was bowing to him gravely.

“Mr. Wu Tai-Ling,” said Pablo, “my profound respects!”

The servants came hurrying with tea service and another chair. Seated, the two fell into talk. Mr. Wu had left Khotan and was on his way back over the Silk Route to Pingliang when his grandson's message came to him indirectly. The bearers had left it at every stop on the way out, and had not yet returned, but he was sure they were perfectly safe; the rebellious armies were further North. Tigers were scarcer than dragons, and along that route so near the sky was no malaria. He had gone far this time, through Thibet to Kashgar, then back over snowy mountain chains to Szechwan, and down the gorges of the Hoang-Ho. The small, indestructible Mr. Wu, whom time had not so much aged as fined down to a pure spirit, sat on his chair like a bird, and in his thin, fluty Portuguese spoke of the moon-bleak world of spires and crevasses unknown to geographers. Perhaps this little alpine drummer, who knew Turkestan from end to end, had flitted over them like a carrier pigeon, or one of the flying lamas of the Red Hat sect. He had also seen mines of cobalt and cinnabar that one could have bought for the price of just enough maize to feed a donkey. Pablo, who had given up all pretense of being able to follow him in his travels, puffed thoughtfully on his cigar.

“It would be a very dear price, Mr. Wu. War is coming. I don't see how an acorn's weight of cobalt or mercury can travel down the roads to Canton.”

That was getting in the wedge of business. Mr. Wu sipped much tea before he made his reply.

“There are the waterways, Don Pablo.”

“Junks are easy to sink, Mr. Wu. Jars are very fragile to transport, and Szechwan is a long way off. Our quicksilver comes in iron bottles, and you will find it in the warehouse at Whampoa.”

Mr. Wu’s face was as expressionless as a doorknob. “Our Szechwan miner charges us a moderate price, and Tai-Ling’s has dealt with him over a long period.”

This was true, but the source was being choked off, and the firm was looking elsewhere for its metal. This pilgrim from the clouds was the shrewdest buyer of all, and where he turned, there would turn all his colleagues in the trade.

“I think it possible,” said Pablo, “that Tai-Ling’s will find our terms more than moderate. I might even say enchanting.”

Mr. Wu blinked slowly, as if distrustful of enchantments.

“He has been supplying us for twenty years. Tai-Ling’s does not change readily.”

“Nor, Mr. Wu, does the Five Apostles. It has been under an old obligation to the house of Tai-Ling for forty-five years. If it were not for a Tai-Ling clerk I should not be here now—hopeful of seeing it among our clients.” Pablo fell back in his chair, fingertips together. He beamed with affectionate solicitude. Mr. Wu was still doubtful, but that beaming eye warmed him.

“I came here on the *Mizpah*,” Pablo began, with a shift of his cigar. “And that was in forty-six——”

Mr. Wu gave ear, and succumbed. He listened with the rapture of a child at a puppet-show of roguery. The rise of the Five Apostles from that armful of smuggled jars to its full-blown majesty that in the trade was hardly second to Talavera was a tale that, limned by this gentleman so eloquent in Spanish, had the completeness of a work of art in the round, like a piece of sculpture. The sailor lad had grown with his creation. And that was the admiration and despair of Mr. Wu. He had seen the growth of but a tiny fragment of Tai-Ling’s, which was large and old when his great-grandfather was born. How sedentary had been his life! He had never crossed the ocean. Alamos and California were as remote from him as the craters of the moon. And Alamos, he felt proudly, was as a stepchild of Tai-Ling’s. Those smuggled jars—the whole exploit was comical! A laugh escaped him; he shook, with eyes closed, in an entirety of wrinkled merriment.

“How many flasks do you wish to sell me, Don Pablo?”

“A thousand flasks for a start?”

“And the terms?” asked Mr. Wu as they walked along the green brick wall to the house where the servants were awaiting them.

“Gervase, my son, has the terms in his head. And he should be here tonight.”

That was bringing Gervase into the scene, who would manage everything henceforth. And a pretty order that was, enough to make Gervase instantly a figure in the Asiatic trade. The lad could coast along on that for a year while he and Nina got settled. This in itself justified the voyage to China.

They had the house to themselves, for Son Wu had gone up the river by naphtha launch to find Gervase, Nina and Fan Hui. The meal was in a tapestry-hung pavilion. The plum-glaze porcelain looked wondrous on the teak. Mr. Wu, at the head of the table, sat under a lantern of carved pale nephrite. With his robe of gold brocade, he looked like an idol that had been brought out for the occasion. He ate sparingly of rice-birds and fruits in syrup. For months on the route he had lived on millet and scraps of dried donkey-meat, and had small taste for anything else. But he drank much of the warm, scented wine, and his eyes twinkled as he talked of a lamasery at Kashgar.

“I have been going to it for seventy years, Don Pablo. And it has the same abbot, who is so full of wisdom that long ago he gave up all speech for silence. But I think he feels he is near the end, for he stopped twirling his prayer-wheel and he called me over.

“‘Wu Tai-Ling,’ he asked, ‘what does it all mean? what does anything mean?’

“That was his question, and he wanted to know. Those who have hope enquire, and enquiry leads on to faith.”

“You answered him?”

“No. He had already gone back to turning the prayer-wheel, and it was not for me to disturb the reflections of a man so venerable and reflective. Besides, faith might overwhelm him at the next click of the wheel. And now, Don Pablo, do you favor scotch?”

In the smoking-room the bottle was waiting, and Mr. Wu filled two small Canton cups with whisky. This was Pablo’s favorite room. It had Fan Hui’s piano, and a painting of a lone seagull hovering over a bulrush swamp. The bleakness of the scene the artist had so strongly felt that it was conveyed even in the spaces where his ink-brush had not passed. They had no sooner sat in their chairs when Fan Hui opened the door. Nina, Gervase and Son Wu

appeared, all animated, all a little breathless after the climb up the hill from the launch dock.

Fan Hui fell straightway upon Mr. Wu's neck, and with everyone talking at once, she brought Nina forward. "My grandfather must know you," she said. Mr. Wu had just finished greeting Gervase, and then Nina stood decorously before him. Son Wu and his wife, Pablo saw, were proud of their friendship with her.

Nina had unerring tact. To a conservative old Chinese gentleman, her foreign, pink-and-white tints and hair of ruddy hue were probably disturbing. Her impression of strangeness would have to be diminished. She spoke to him in the not unfamiliar accents of Spanish, and Mr. Wu, bowing to her, responded with a sprightly welcome in Portuguese.

Relatives came in, the servants brought wine, cakes and sweetmeats. The assemblage was lively and gay. It was all like a family gathering. Nina and Gervase fitted into it. Mr. Wu applied himself to a pipe. Though he was still in gold brocade, he seemed to Pablo less oracular, less of a sentient idol, or a pilgrim from the recesses of Asia. Nodding and smiling, with smoke trickling from his nostrils, as he talked in the midst of his circle, he was more like an elderly grandfather who had left his farm merely to visit the next market town and buy a couple of pigs.

Nina came over to where Pablo was sitting.

"You should have come with us this time," she said, chidingly. "We stayed up in the hills—at their summer place. And Pudgy Venn joined us. It was quite jolly. A huge old brick house—velvety, greenish bricks—and big porcelain critters on the roof that should have been dogs but weren't, and had three tails. Big pines all around, with some deer and wild pigs. Pudgy and I rode horseback. It was like being at Alamos. Then after three days of it, we went down to the marshes and hunted rice-birds. And waited for Son Wu to come for us in his launch. I don't know why on earth you stuck in the garden in weather like this. But you did see much of Mr. Wu?"

"I did. He knows that back country. I thought I'd give something to be half my age and tag along with him. But not on foot, thanks. That small yellow gentleman can out-hike six of me and the wind."

"He's going out again in the Spring. I hope he'll take a string of horses. Son Wu thinks there's a good chance of Gervase and me getting a lift. That'll be seeing country."

"And calling on the trade," said Pablo. "Son Wu's no great hand as a drummer, I hear. He dislikes donkey-meat, and can't stand fleas."

It would be a good thing if the two did pull out with the old pilgrim. Those central provinces and the stations on both caravan routes were good for a hundred thousand dollars' worth of paint a year. An inside coat of vermilion would last forever almost, but the desert sun burned like a blow torch, and the gritty wind did for an outside coat in two years, four at the most. The more red paint those Mongols laid on, the fatter would wax Alamos and the Five Apostles. And Gervase could trade on his own hook, picking up oil, metals, pig-bristles, and such. Old Mr. Wu was still talking to him. It was an improvised party; Fan Hui had done her best, sending for friends in the neighborhood, but nothing much could have been planned. She got up, passed sweetmeats, and came over to Pablo.

“Our musicians didn't come, Don Pablo.” Her smile was desperately pleading. “So won't you play for us?”

She was a young bride herself. There should have been at least a moonkwan player and flutist, if only to honor foreign company.

Pablo lugged a bench over, sat to the piano and gave it a portentous thump. The effect was magical. All chatters fell silent as if paralyzed. A few of the strings were off key, and in the summer mugginess some of the hammers had lost their felt; but it was still a fair piano, and on the rack was a hymnal—perhaps a gift from Pudgy Venn. It was a new book and would not stay flat open. He roared with pathos through “Poor Tom Bowling.” Then he launched into a jota. Mr. Wu would understand that.

Palomito, vete al Campo!

He was a trifle lame in jotas, but a little extra heartiness and some pedal-work took him over the gaps. “Palomita” he and Ynes had sung together at Alamos, the old majordomo, tipped back in his chair at the gate, plunking his guitar while they danced in a sort of tarantella, whirling about with handclaps. He still heard her, still singing to the majordomo's guitar, for it was a singing that however long he lived would never be done.

“*Entre—entre—*” He got stuck after four verses.

“Oh, aren't you rusty!” laughed Nina behind him, her hand on his shoulder. “I'll take it up from here.

*“Entre las flores de lirio
No te pude conocer—”*

Her voice was full, candid and girlish; she had youth, she had physical perfection, and she brimmed with a sense of vital power and energy. And she knew jotas. She used to sing for the Knights of Cornwall, with her father at

the piano. A wave of homesickness surged over him. On the sands at Monterey the breakers were creaming; in the Casa yard was a smell of new bread and burning pine-cones. What lunacy had sent him roving to China after all these years, when he should be content to stay in his garden at Alamos? He paused and gulped down his long drink. Assuredly he should have stayed at home. He belonged irrevocably to the past.

In the pause there came a singsong voice. "Are there no more words, Yin-Chiu?" That was what the Tai-Lings called her for her red hair—"Yin-Chiu." "Vermilion." "No more words?"

"Only some very foolish ones, Mr. Wu," she laughed, and began again. After each ten foolish verses, she whirled and clapped her hands, and sang a hundred verses in all. The old pilgrim, smiling and bobbing his head like a mechanical idol, had not outlived susceptibility to the magic of youth and loveliness.

The party was not over until two in the morning. Son Wu felt it was worthy of the Hundred Willows and Fan Hui, and was so grateful that for the next two days he planned with her a week of festivities for the Copes. He told the program when all were together under the pear-tree one evening. A lantern-voyage on the Pearl as far as the marshes; then up to the summer-house in the hills for a deer hunt; then a three-day feast at the most fashionable restaurant in Canton—a hundred courses, with interludes of listening to *Angels Gathering Flowers*, a much-admired drama at the Dragon theatre where, because of the applause and impatience of the critics, it was to begin its second act, though the first had been running only twelve weeks. Son Wu had seen it twice with his bachelor friends, and it had a laughable scene in which a she-medium, terribly martial on a horse, chased everyone with a spear until the unbelievers broke her power by shouting and hopping around on one leg like geese. And up in the hills, a mile above the house, fish abounded in a brook so cold that anglers wading into it immediately got chilblains. All the family were under the pear-tree except Mr. Wu, who was at the factory office, going over accounts. He would be unable to go on the outing.

A young peoples' affair, thought Pablo. Nothing more to do here, and he was ready to go home. He had told Gervase of the sale, Gervase had filled out the order-blank, and Mr. Wu signed it. Gervase was deeply pleased. But Pablo felt the lad could have done just as well himself. The wind was sitting in a favorable quarter for him, and he told Gervase so that very morning.

"There's more where that came from. I'll keep on sending you all they need. And if the ship line kicks Alamos a rebate, I'll pass it on to you, and

you can shave the price for Tai-Ling's. It'll pay you. One of these days Mr. Wu will decide to just stay home and fly his kite, and you and Nina can go on the road in his place. Son Wu can't be dragged away from his retorts. And later you can buy your way into the firm."

No man could do more for his son than that. And Gervase would go far with that counsel and start.

"My outing I shall have to take on the way to California," said Pablo. Directly after that talk with Gervase he had gone in a rickshaw to the steamship office, partly for the ride, partly to make some enquiry. The only decent boat going to San Francisco was the *Ardennes*, which was quite an old tub but not unreasonably slow. And there would be no other boat in a month. "It's on the *Ardennes*, and it's leaving Whampoa tonight."

There was a clamor of protest from under the pear-tree.

"But this is too soon!" cried Fan Hui, with a spoonful of apricot ice half way to her mouth. "It's too soon! And you never told us!"

"No. It wouldn't do to make a fuss. And besides I didn't know until three o'clock."

But there was a fuss. The hurling of a bombshell into Hundred Willows would not have caused more commotion. Son Wu sped to the factory to tell his grandfather, and Fan Hui vanished to direct the servants. Mr. Wu showed up in less than an hour, the calmest of all. He did not usually regard a departure on such brief notice as fantastic, for he struck out on his own journeys with no more preparation than a talk with his astrologer; but this one did seem unhappily precipitate. He commanded dinner for twenty, and sent out notices by the porter. Fog was descending on the valley; the night would be clammy damp. Mr. Wu had a strong belief that much hot rice wine was the best fortification against the chill of sea-fogs. And he, Gervase and Son Wu began their intake of it with Pablo in the pavilion, and right through the dinner with the family and the guests.

At nine there was not much left to say. Pablo disliked ceremonies over himself. He wanted to slip out to the launch, with Son Wu to run it; and hopeful of effecting that manoeuvre unseen, began to say his separate farewells. He said the first to Nina, and that was his mistake.

"It's useless, don't you see?" Nina declared firmly, shaking him. "You can't skulk out, Pablo. And not while I am here! They think a lot of you, for one thing. And if you did—rush off like that, as if you were in a hurry to get to Alamos, and I know you are—it would only make me feel more homesick than ever!"

“Then I won’t!” said Pablo. He half wished he had not come in the first place. It was poignantly like leaving a daughter behind. He was thankful she was safe, and happily married, and thankful that the Tai-Lings were—well, the solid Tai-Lings.

The baggage went out with the servants, and down to the launch, the whole party trooping behind, swathed against the fog. Half the guests got into a second launch. It was less than an hour’s wallowing run down to Whampoa and the lights of the *Ardennes* at buoy, her siren gnawing at the heart of the wet darkness. Another goodbye to the Tai-Lings, and a longer one outside the launch cabin to Gervase and Nina. The guests in the second launch were casting packets of firecrackers into the air. In their light he climbed the dripping ladder to the deck and his cabin. His baggage was already there, and a lot of boxes he had not seen before—gift boxes. There was also a bamboo crate with four jars in it. The second batch of crates in forty-five years he had hauled out of Canton! But this one was a gift. The tag was in Nina’s writing:

“Tai-Ling vermilion. You can paint my summer-house
with this yin-chiu, says Mr. Wu.”

Pablo dropped the tag slowly. “Nice of them—damned nice,” he said, then groped his way on deck to look over the side. But the siren was blowing hard, for the *Ardennes* was already moving, and the launches gone without trace, save for one last sputter of firecrackers in the darkness.

In the suite at the Palace, overlooking the courtyard, a table was laid for four. Pablo studied the table and the lights. This was, more or less, an annual dinner for Ottenheim's man, Swayne, of the London office, and hitherto it had been held at Alamos, Pablo meeting him in the city and driving him down in a tandem. It was a high-wheeled tandem with red wheels and a monogram on its box; and Pablo drove with form, for he had "good hands." He had brought Swayne nearly every spring for the six or seven years that had elapsed since his return from China. This time Roger had suggested he might as well be dined in the city. Everything was in San Francisco—"the office, the warehouse, the other chaps in the line, and everyone he might want to see." And everything was—except the Five Apostles, but Pablo was growing accustomed to overlook in Roger's category of things important, the omission of the Five Apostles. It was dull for Roger, and probably would be dull for Swayne, or anyone else of great consequence.

"If you don't mind, Ysabel, we'll give Swayne his dinner up at the city," Pablo said at the Casa. "Roger is arranging things. And we'll be back that night—in time for Val's birthday."

Mrs. Roger, straight upright in the hall, her lace-wristed small hands folded, listened stiffly to his remark. She had grown immeasurably more remote and dignified. She had never been, to begin with, informal. A small, cool and hard statue, Pablo thought, and he always thought of her as Niobe, the only statue he could think of offhand that had children.

She released a thin, comprehending smile so faint that it would have been unnoticed by anyone not of the family.

"I shan't mind at all. Mr. Swayne will be well looked after up there, I'm certain."

And Pablo had been relieved. Ysabel had always been a thorough hostess, openhanded and dutiful, whether the party were a barbecue for the Knights of Cornwall, a Michaelmas or New Year's affair for the Ladies Auxiliary, or a Cascarones ball for everyone at the camp. She saw to it that the affairs started well, and as soon as they were moving under their own momentum, she withdrew. She had a talent for the socially correct and for management; but her openness was not of the heart, and she cared nothing for Alamos folk.

Roger went down there less and less, and the Casa now received guests only at the longest intervals. He and his wife pulled in opposite directions, and it was no one's secret. Pablo was neither on Ysabel's side nor on Roger's; he was on the side of his grandsons: Val, aged seven, and Esme, a year and a half younger. So for that reason he was going back by the tandem, which Robin Sim had bound himself to bring up at midnight. The shameful thing to Pablo was that no longer was his home the hospitable Casa Alamos it once had been. Ysabel's manner, characteristic of the Machados, had increased in stiff haughtiness. Roger was a fool to have let her get out of hand. But Pablo lost no sleep over it. If he wanted friends down for a rowdy night of drinking and cards, and Ysabel was at the Casa, he took them over to the Mendoza place, got a Mexican in to cook, and locked the gate.

This was to be an orderly but amusing night. Swayne was accompanied this time—and most unexpectedly—by Cyril Pitt-Manston, the present Lord Mountford, chairman of Ottenheim's. Old Sir Eric Ottenheim's son had, by newspaper accounts, just arrived in California for the sake of his throat, and to rest his nerves. By none of these reports was Pablo deluded. Mounty, sound of gullet and wind, had been at Napa Soda Springs for a fortnight, incognito, more or less. The clunk of his mallet—a fervid devotee of croquet, he played it in a pearl-gray topper, and no bishop could outdo him in finesses at a triple peel—was audible from the highway. He had drunk at the vine-clad wineries, and gone driving to Silverado and beyond. Mounty, as Pablo rightly judged, was misspending no holiday. He was hoping to pick up some quicksilver mines for a shade under nothing, and rumor of it had come to Crossett. Pablo telephoned to operators in the pool, and that hope of Ottenheim, Limited, was temporarily, at least, in the dust. Swayne and Mounty were down at the hotel bar with Roger.

A waiter lighted the candles. The sommelier was unkenneling bottles from a large hamper. The key that hung from a gold chain about his neck was massive enough to batter down an ox; the wine, however, had not mellowed in his cave, but in Pablo's warehouse. This was to be a dinner that touched the extreme of the modest. The last of the pre-phylloxera clarets, Ch. Léoville, would accompany a baron roast of venison, and a White Hermitage of 1867, the Alaska Purchase year, the sand dabs. The sommelier opened a Madeira of the same age, and put out the glasses. After the long ride up from the bar, the gentlemen might arrive with a raging thirst.

“Lower the window a trifle,” said Pablo. “The night's warm.”

He looked through the window into the courtyard. There were guests down there without even a topcoat. All day the weather had been sunny and

breathless, with an Indian Summer touch, though it was April. "Earthquake weather," the natives called it.

"You'll have a fine drive down the Peninsula tonight, Mr. Cope," said the waiter.

"Aye, that tandem can make a breeze, Frank. Though any kind of night will do for me. I'm a country mouse."

"I thought you might be going with Mr. Roger in his motorcar."

"None of those damned gadgets for me! I think I hear the guests now. Better have that fish sent up quick for a start."

They sat down to dinner, all four, MOUNTY, robust and florid, like an ex-Admiral, the hungriest and most talkative. The four of them had discussed prices and a deal in the office early in the afternoon. Then MOUNTY had ransacked a lot of second-hand bookshops, and from one of them ROGER had led him to the Palace bar, where he had effectively sluiced the dust from his throat. No indisposition of that throat was disregarded at the Exchange. The previous one had taken its owner to the salubrious air of lower Austria.

"That was a good buy, MOUNTY—the Neugoritz." PABLO'S up-ended cigar gave out interested spurts of smoke. "It'll give you a lever over there. And you may find something, once you get past that clay into schist."

"Thanks. It wasn't a bad play. And now I'll see you on Alamos. You'll take three million?"

"I'm not selling. I couldn't place that anywhere now and get my ten percent interest. I don't care for the looks of this market."

"You'll care for it less, PABLO. When we begin trimming the price. We can cut heavily, you know. I've got a new string of producers."

MOUNTY had got them but not in California. There was the sea and the tariff between, and the operators up and down State in a bloc. And MOUNTY had still to pay out five millions for Neugoritz alone. A lot of his contracts had run out, and his stuff was going to the open market. If he chopped the price so little as eight percent, a nasty cut even for OTTENHEIM'S, the contracts couldn't be renewed at the old and profitable figure. And on American sales, he would have to pay the swingeing customs fee. PABLO and his associates had not been talking last night for nothing. With loud oaths he had affirmed that OTTENHEIM'S would boggle at even five.

"You want to make it ten percent?" smiled PABLO. "We'll meet you. We'll make it twelve, and peg it there a year."

Mounty shook with delight and quaffed brandy, his rubicund eye fixed over the top of the bell-glass at Pablo.

“Shall we go up a shade, eh? The market can stand that?”

“You leave the market alone, old boy. The market and—California.”

“Done,” said Mounty, laughing himself more florid than ever, and biting off a fresh cigar. Swayne and Pablo laughed with him, and Roger joined a bit subduedly in the merriment. Two hours of that kind of poker was enough for anyone who had no hand in the game, and the prelude of venison and the Léoville had been a heavy one, though he had made no more than a pretense of dining. He looked at his watch. Quarter after nine. In a few minutes Angie Delambre would be through with her fiddling at the Tivoli.

She had been in San Francisco only two months. Her father was a lace mill foreman in Lyons. She liked to talk about Lyons, and was regretful that she had ever left it to study the violin and drift out here after the break-up of a minor operatic troupe. It was his typist who told him of the stranded French girl at her boarding-house. Knowing a director at the Tivoli, he took her there for a hearing. She was very young, unworldly, and a little forlorn as she stood on the bare stage in the bare theatre, facing the orchestra. She tucked the fiddle under her chin and played. The director whipped out his cigarette and stared. Her playing, strong, resonant and unearthly, might have been the voice of a Medusa. It contrasted with the innocence of her blonde head, and her eyes that were like blobs of violet. In two days she was on the Tivoli posters—Angelique Delambre, European Solo Violiniste. She was young, and she was indeed innocent. At dinner, when he very lightly proposed that they drive down to his bungalow at Millbrae, she flushed, bent her head, then rose from the table. She gathered up her handbag with a little gloved hand. He was touched at seeing that her gloves were darned.

“Did you, M’sieu—did you really think that I—” she faltered.

Never could he forgive himself for his crudeness. He was mortified. Not until the third night following did he again recover enough of his courage to repeat the proposal.

“*Avec un—non—non—non, M’sieu!*” she said in a firm little whisper.

Angie had a firm will, but he had a persistence to match it.

Mounty was booming away with a yarn, and a very dull one, and he made it worse by muffing the point. Roger patiently sat out the torture, and rose.

“If you will excuse me,” he said. “I have some work to get out. I hate to go, but——”

It seemed ages before he could escape, and drive out to the theatre in the slowest hack it had ever been his misfortune to encounter.

“Bright fellah—that lad of yours, Pablo,” said Mouny an hour afterwards, pushing forward his glass again. “Just half, will you—and soda in it. Thanks. Yes, fellah’s bright. Knows mining.”

“He was brought up to it, Mouny. He sees the trade, looks to the city end of things, and the shipping.” Pablo was proud of his son, yet he spoke heavily. “What d’you say we walk off the dinner?”

“Right,” said Mouny. “You’ll come, Swayne?”

“No, I still have the post to get out.”

Next moment they were strolling past the outdoor flower market into Kearney, which at even this late hour was thronged. The air was scented from the flowers. It was still warmish. Pablo had observed that even at midday when the early morning fog had lifted from Portsmouth Square, that slanting envelope of green below Chinatown, the air was almost syrupy, the leaves motionless, as if cut out of tin. That was a phenomenon, and yet not particularly marked; indeed he might not have noticed it had he not a sailor’s eye for the weather.

But a slight breeze was now coming in from the sea. That lightened his spirits. The heaviness that had weighed upon him in the suite was not in the least attributable to the dinner and the lashings of cognac. If only he could feel surer about Roger. That impediment to a complete trust was of a nature too intangible to be defined. There was so much that Roger did not see. It was Crossett who looked into the rumor that Ottenheim’s was on the foray, and phoned down word of it to Alamos, and yet Roger was at the mining exchange four times in the week. If it had been Gervase—well, Gervase would have pelted out for the Springs as fast as a racer could take him.

A driver at a cab stand touched his hat, and they climbed into a hack.

“Down Grant and along Market,” said Pablo. “Unless someone has a better idea.”

No one had. The hack wandered up to the Chinese quarter, and jolted over the cobblestones in that lanterned zone where the air was all but palpable with the smells of fish-oil, roast pig and the smoke of punk-sticks. The warmth of day, which fosters sound in bee-hives, was resulting in a fuller outpour of music than usual; each shadowy alley yielded forth its particular din as they rode past. Pablo had an ear for the music. A lullaby with yowling whine on flutes and a clatter on wood reminded him of his Indian nurse at

Alamos, and the wind screaming in the pines. Gamblers' Alley with its silhouettes in gloom, hurled out louder dissonance and a whanging obbligato on brass and railroad iron. It had measure, and tremendous earnestness, and perhaps it had meaning. From the clangor and the smells, which were more meaningful, the hack moved down into broad Market Street, where endless hacks were pushing out in the direction of Twin Peaks.

"We've been running into some odd rock at Neugoritz," said Mouny. "Shale with plenty of mica. I had a notion that Roger might care for a look at it."

"The Five Apostles seems to offer Roger quite enough rock to look at," said Pablo.

"I see. Gervase, then? He might care for a trip some time? And a bit of salmon-fishing in Scotland?"

"Gervase," said Pablo, rolling his cigar, "is sticking close to his rice-pots, and he can get all the roaming he wants with the Tai-Ling outfit."

That was slamming down on Mouny. He was fond of Mouny, but not if he had five sons would he have permitted one of them to go into the Neugoritz, however large the fee. Ottenheim's was his enemy, and he had no other enemy left now to solace himself with in his declining years. It was an old enmity that he cherished as much as a friendship, and it would be a pity to spoil a game that had been running so spiritedly and long, and unmarred by rancor. Frequently it struck him below the belt; whereupon he came back with some brisk knifing, and more than evened the score. To get Roger over there for a visit was one of Mouny's little designs. Roger could be pumped on most things outside of his private affairs, and Mouny was curious about the China market.

Gervase, in a few years, would be half the Tai-Ling firm: its director, and master of an enterprise larger than the mine at Alamos. The very thought of that infuriated Ysabel. She was resentful, bitterly resentful, at his aid to Gervase, and her jealousy had infected Roger. How the devil did the woman learn of those advances, Pablo wondered, unless she had rummaged through his desk? Thereafter he kept his personal accounts and letters at the Mendoza place, which was his inviolable retreat.

Twice—and no doubt Ysabel had put him up to it—Roger had asked him for a stiff loan, and he had said to that, "No!"

"You are favoring Gervase, it would appear," Roger complained.

“Rubbish!” Pablo said. “You’re the one that’s favored. The Five Apostles has paid you ten times what Gervase ever got from me! And what have you got to show for it? A lot of women hanging on your neck!”

Gervase was already the backbone of the Canton house. Old Mr. Wu, poor man, no longer drank the night wind and trod the mountain peaks of the Min; a Boxer mob looting on the Northern Route seized a village and fired the magistrate’s house where he had taken refuge. Not so much as a bone of his had been found to lodge in the ancestral tomb in Canton, though Gervase, Nina and Son Wu searched everywhere in the province. From that journey Nina came back ill of malaria and some obscure infection; they thought later that she had quite recovered, and after three seasons at their summer home in the hills the last trace of malaria had indeed vanished. But she did not survive the birth of her infant. Fan Hui was rearing the child as the daughter of Hundred Willows; and Pablo kept in his pocketbook a snapshot of her sitting with Gervase and all the Tai-Lings under old Mr. Wu’s favorite tree. He fancied he saw in that elf, with her button-nose and tall Manchu head-dress, traces of both Nina and Arabella, the last of the women that had ever meant much to him.

The hack turned from the heavy traffic into a side street. “Knapp’s,” Pablo commanded, and the driver pulled up at the curb. “You wait for us.”

They entered Knapp’s. It was the rendezvous of the after-theatre crowd, and the most celebrated tamale parlor in the city, which, at the height of its craze, was as famous for tamales as Bath was for buns, or New Orleans for gumbo. Pablo had a liking for the theatre, but Knapp’s with its show patrons was the nearest he came to it now. It had a handsome downstairs grotto with a string orchestra; cooks from Michoacán, and a squad of Japanese waiters, the first ever seen in San Francisco. It was fashionable, and it served the tamale, and also the lesser enchilada (“hell wrapped in buckskin”) for fifteen cents, which covered the beer. Pablo had taken Sir Henry Irving and Ellen Terry there, also Sarah Bernhardt and Tamagno, and all had professed themselves enchanted with the grotto.

Pablo ordered. They had a corner table with a good view of the crowd sitting amid a jungle of palms. Mounly liked it instantly. The orchestra was deep in “The Blue Danube,” but through the sound cut animated tones from the booth just across. The voice was not loud, but it carried, and it dashed on the ear, a laughing, golden outpouring. Said Mounly, lifting his beer, “Caruso.”

“The opera is in town,” commented Pablo, turning.

He lowered his fork, and looked again. But not at the booth. He was looking at the table in the opposite corner. That was Roger, oblivious to the universe, bending forward, talking to a young woman with the absorption and intenseness of a lover. He must have been laying siege for quite a while, for the table was littered. He reached across it and seized her hand. They had their own privacy in that crowded grotto. Pablo saw through the foliage that she was young, well and plainly dressed, and retiring. She pulled her hand away, then lowered her head, with a trembling of her lower lip. She was still resisting that siege. Roger was encountering a hitch.

“Waiter!” said Pablo. “There’s a draught. Bring that screen over here.”

“He’s in voice,” said Mounty.

“Eh? Oh, the singer! Yes. I brought Tamagno here once. He was over at the Baldwin then for a week, and they gave him a dinner at the club.”

Pablo spoke heavily again, recalling Tamagno. Then he argued most plausibly with himself that the affair at that table could mean nothing. His argument, he knew, was weak. Perhaps it was only a mushroom sentiment, or a chance exercise in gallantry. But the woman was not quite the usual type of game. She had a dished, sensible face, and a likeable expression. A girl, thought he angrily, too nice to be made a fool of! Roger had not gone to the office at all. He had as good as ditched Lord Mountford, head of Ottenheim’s, the most distinguished figure in the mercury trade. Dropped him like a hot potato to dash out on a flirtation!

“Topping!” said Mounty. “A quite jolly place. Mind if we trot soon? We’re pulling out early for Vancouver.”

They finished their beer and left. It was past midnight. An hour later Pablo was in his tandem, bowling down the Peninsula. He sat with arms folded, beard resting on his chest as he watched from under the brim of his hat the road uncoiling in moonlight. Robin Sim, hands and mind occupied with the tandem, and which had to be floated round endless curves, did the talking for both of them, and that was little enough. Don Pablo cared for no talk of mines when he was riding, and at no time would he bend an ear to the scandals of Alamos. Robin heard nothing else from Verity Sim. Verity took a grim view of the morals of the camp. It was, indeed, two camps—one very small and of terrific respectability, which included herself and the handful in the Ladies Auxiliary who believed that nobody but Verity should be the delegate to funerals and the regional meetings; and the other camp was the rest of Alamos, which was given over to sloth, intemperance, illicit loves, the uttering of base calumnies, the display of pride, hypocrisy and jealousy.

Though not often a delegate, Verity Sim made the most of it when she was. Then she sat in the lobby of her favorite hotel in San Francisco or Stockton; rocking amidst painting and tapestries and huge gilt mirrors that reflected her severe dignity as envoy of the Mother Lodge of Alamos; and reading some much-folded envelopes or a healing cult leaflet she had pulled out of her handbag. On these semi-public occasions she read through a lorgnette, a small tarnished one with a cracked lens. There were some in the opposite camp who regarded her use of this help as an affectation, and said there was nothing wrong with Verity's sight, and that it was as sharp as her hearing. Roger, who had once seen her enthroned behind a hotel window thus perusing, said she reminded him of "a vengeful boarding-house landlady reading somebody else's letters."

She was the first person outside of Tandy's drug-store to know that crippled Aunt Julie, who lived alone in an Alamos shack after the death of her husband in a runaway accident, bought morphine, and had the staggering monthly bill of fifteen dollars. It was scandalous to have a morphine addict in the village; she felt justified in conveying word to the sheriff, and was annoyed when the enquiry was suddenly dropped. Aunt Julie had twisted her spine in that accident, was still being attended by the doctor, and it was Pablo Cope who attended to all the bills. No wretch in Alamos could hope to veil his frailties or his sinfulness from Verity Sim, nor were the walls of the Casa itself impenetrable to her eye. She disapproved of much that she saw there, as one might disapprove of goings-on among royalty, but said nothing adverse of Mrs. Roger who, though distant and high-toned, was a lady and all-powerful in the Lodge. Verity had much sympathy for Mrs. Roger, and would have been glad to take the place of confidante that had been left vacant after the death of Luisa Miura.

"Mrs. Roger," she used to say, "has much to contend with. More than you can imagine. When I talked with her last—" she would begin, though she had never been in the Casa, and had talked with its mistress only once—an exchange of a "goodnight" after a reception at the Lodge.

The way Roger Cope was cutting up in San Francisco didn't help matters, either. It was shocking; no account of it could be worse than the truth. He had been seen at the hotels with the most brazen of women in ermine, mink and ballet-slippers, and anyone could guess how they got those furs. And there was Angel Lopez, who had been skip-tender at the Five Apostles, and whom Roger had set up in a roadhouse down by the creek, where the doings were scandalous. It was clear to everyone that Roger got more women through him. The sheriff would be swooping down upon them both one of these days.

These dreadful things had Verity poured into Robin's ears, and his heart dropped to his boots. Scandals involving the villagers were of a lesser breed. No scandal should touch the Casa nor anyone belonging to it. He was as devoted to Don Pablo and the humorous, easy-going Roger as was the Capitan Faro.

The Casa had more to dread from Verity's tongue than from Roger's misdeeds, though these could be most alarming. Don Pablo must again have been hearing of them. He had never on these rides been so quiet.

"When the boys get into the Mendoza place tomorrow," said Robin, "they'll be finding a surprise."

"A birthday one?"

"Aye, a swing. Cloke and I, we rigged up a swing in that sycamore by the house. I think it'll be pretty good. Cloke made swivels to hang the rope on, and we softened it to take out the kinks."

"Now, that's mighty fine. A swing is great. I don't know why I didn't think of a swing up there. They've got one at the Casa. But I take them to the Mendoza place on birthdays just for a treat. And Ah Moy has fixed up a cake. He's pretty good at cakes, and this one—this one——"

An invisible wave lifted under the wheels, and the rig dropped with a jolt. Then a succession of impacts shot forward beneath them, and the long white road shook out in waves, like a strip of carpet flapped by a giant. A file of trees slid past solemnly, danced, then was shunted back with a jerk, and the birds, jolted into mid-air, fell as if paralyzed. The head horse, frozen in an attitude of capering, like a steed on a monument, emitted a panic scream of fear. Both horses bolted. It was a flight of abandon, hind legs flung back convulsively as they swam through the air.

"Young 'uns," said Pablo, whose hands had already closed over the reins. "Their first quake. Hang on, Robin!"

Pablo half rose and pulled back massively, as if he were reversing a titanic lever. The jaws of the animals were drawing backward against their gullets; and the lines that set his body vibrating carried back the steady, cold will of a horse-breaker. The pace abated, but as it neared a walk, he coaxed it up to a trot.

"Just keep 'em at a sweat," he said, handing back the lines. "And they'll forget they went loco."

"Aye," said Robin, "they'll forget it before I will. That was a real quake."

“A lively one.” Pablo dragged a flask from his valise, and poured it against his teeth with satisfaction.

He replaced his valise, and felt in the rear of the vehicle. All was safe there—the air rifle and halma board for Val, and a rocking-horse for Esmey. While the horses were bolting, he could think of nothing but the toys, and the cake to be made by Ah Moy, who could incomparably bake cake. He licked his frayed cigar, which was still aglow.

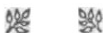
“Those big quakes, they all feel alike. As if you were in a boat bumping over a whale.”

“The mine,” asked Robin, “you think it will be safe?”

“Aye. It’s off the fault. We were almost plumb on the line when the shift came. It veered north and seaward. Missed the city, I think. But the kickback may be something. We’ll find out when Roger gets home.”

The boys and Don Pablo were always expecting Roger at the Casa, thought Robin, but he seldom came, even on birthdays.

“I wouldn’t mind if I was home right now,” he said. “I’ve seen trees waltzing. Nothing is going to seem real after that.”



Dawn was gaining. A mile this side of Millbrae, Roger flicked out the headlights. Angie was asleep, her head on his shoulder. He was thankful he had this new steam car. They had made the run down in less than an hour: that was fast, faster in the long run than a horse, and at the end no trouble with stabling. About eleven in the morning, noon at the latest, he could drive back to the city, leave Angie at her boarding-house—unless she cared to stay at the bungalow all day—and then rush down to Alamos. His father and Ysabel made a lot over these birthdays; that was the Spanish in them; his father kept up all imaginable customs, and Ysabel very stubbornly kept all in which Val and Esmey could have a part—even Halloween, when they wore masks, and All Saints’ night, when the Casa spread a midnight supper and the boys were kept up late in high chairs. And he was expected down, of course, no matter how far away he might be—up at Sulphur Bank, or in Oregon. He came sometimes; and when he didn’t, Ysabel would write him one of those extraordinary and perfect letters of which she had the secret. He kept those letters. Their style was beautiful, and severely religious, but they left him unmoved, even the lamentations of the children over his absence. They were fiction, to mask her own reproaches. She was a cold, prideful and jealous

woman, and half the time he wondered if she thought him simple enough to be taken in by them. If she did, she was less astute than he thought.

He really should have had a divorce long ago, but there were impediments, and it would hardly be worth the row and the scandal. Her damaged pride was balanced by her gains; she had everything else she wanted. Better to be the grand lady of the Casa Alamos than to live in the stodgy mining town of Talavera, where the heats were frightful, and existence in the dark house of the Machados a kind of living death. There was madness in that ancient line; the dowagers and tottering uncles who frequented the house, a gloomy and ultramontane crowd, full of *superbia*, were half of them out of their wits. Ysabel was well out of it. She had two sons, and Val had all the earmarks of a prodigy. She had also money to spend, and Ysabel was avidly hungry for money. She should have been the wife of one of those regal looters of Peru—or someone like Don Pablo Cope, who had done some fancy sacking in his heyday, when the Comstock was in its bonanza, but was no high-roller himself, and had a wife whose extravagances were buying silks for her crochet-work, and voyaging to Mexico on a freight-boat.

No, his father was a good man at heart, and wholly a puritan capitalist. All his life he had grubbed for money, starting off with a few hides and a dozen flasks of quicksilver; and then, when he had acquired wealth, gambled in high play for more. That he had ever been touched with the fever of romance was unthinkable. A cross-section of his brain would have shown a lot of rings as in a sliced-off oak, marking years of bonanza or borrasca—in flush years or the years of the locust. He was growing softer now, fonder of the past and fonder of the very young. At his club's outdoor retreat down in Woodside, where he sat about the campfire with the elders, he spoke less of the mine than of his grandsons. He talked less of the new drift that Faro had begun than he did of Gervase's girl.

“My granddaughter in China, sir,” he would remark with gravity, showing that indistinct snapshot of an infant in a robe, with her nose blotted out by a crease in the print. “That's Paula, sir. Named after me. When she comes here, we shall have a barbecue, and you must come down to Alamos. I expect to make a Californian of her yet. Her mother was a Jiminez. I know of no family in Monterey County had handsomer women, sir. When I was young, I——”

He had known everyone at that period. In youth, with his manner and looks and wealth, he could have made a prodigious splash among the ladies. He was a romantic, but business on the large scale was the center of his energy; his energy and consuming ardor he devoted to that, not to women. He aimed at no killings, no conquests of the heart. Whatever he desired, and he

desired much, he bought and paid for. He had been rather a blood at gatherings in the county, and at dances in South Park, when it was a sort of Belgravia, made fashionable by naval and shipping families. It had an elliptical sward, patterned after the deck of the *Great Eastern*, Mr. Brunel's steamship, which was famous in its day; and the sward was now under dust, and South Park findable only by the postman. Later, as a widower, he gave dinners at the Casa to friends attached to the opera, and of these—buxom and large-toothed Amazons in velvet—there was still whispering in Alamos. Then he built a cottage in the hills near Millbrae.

The "Chalet" was lost in dense greenery that gave forth scents of resin and eucalyptus, and was to be reached by a bridge over a thorn-filled gully. Roger had made it his retreat, and here came on week-ends, with a servant, and a companion or two. It was Julie Rocher, the painter, who came the oftenest. The back veranda, looking down on billows of shrubs and rhododendron, and roofed with green branches, was her outdoor studio. Julie had refurbished the "Chalet," leaving its dark redwood unpainted, and rubbing in a trim of subdued blue. He liked women of artistic and yet simple tastes. That was what had first attracted him in Angie. Over three months ago, that was, and he had paid her unremitting court ever since.

He had tried on the way down to make light of the achievement, but he failed. It was a conquest. It was his greatest triumph in a year, the successful wooing of Angie. He had almost despaired this night in the tamale parlor, then his luck turned, and at three in the morning, when the waiters were beginning to stack chairs on the tables, she yielded. He might have lost. He damned those misspent hours at the dinner to Lord Mountford. If he had stayed long enough to hear one more anecdote, he would absolutely have lost! He had won, but he won only by a hair's breadth, and left the field with his lady just as the scrubwomen came in brandishing their mops. He had snatched triumph from defeat, without a minute to spare.

The engine was not at its best, either. At San Bruno it had got out of whack, and he spent an eternity coaxing it back to life. It was past five o'clock as he turned up from the steep dirt road to a narrower one, walled by trees, and then into a lane. Past five, and already day! At the end of the lane was the rustic bridge; they rattled across, and he stopped in front of the veranda. The girl sat up, sleepily blinking, and he helped her out. So light she was as he carried her up the stairs, her arms around his neck. Her hands were cold, for the wind had blown in with a nip from the bay.

"I'll bring you something hot to drink," he said.

In the butler's pantry he made tea on an alcohol lamp, brought it up to her. Then he went for her handbag.

"What a beautiful room," thought Angie. It was of oiled cedar, and had pictures and a tall pier-glass with a dressing-table in front of it. She took off her jacket and hat, and sitting before the glass she released her hair and took up a brush. It was Roger's brush, heavy with carved gold, and her tresses were of almost the same hue. She smiled as she brushed them, watching herself in the glass. She had a blue ribbon in her handbag, and if it were only here now she would have her hair bound prettily by the time he came in.

The pier-glass suddenly thrust out at her. It fell back and danced against the wall, and she grabbed the dressing-table. It was fickle, and leaped in dance with the mirror and the whole room. The house was swaying like a ship. She rose, weak and hollow, without any insides. The pier-glass was banging absurdly on the wall. A cedar pressed against the window, as if trying to get into the room. The teacup crashed on the floor. That set off her nerves. Blind panic drove her downstairs, then out, her hair streaming behind. She leaped into a pair of arms.

"Roger! Take me away from here! Right now!"

"Yes, yes!" His voice was soothing, but it did not calm her. "It'll stop in a second. It should!" He laughed foolishly, without knowing why. "It can't last."

"Take me away! Oh, I know I should not have come. It was wicked of me! *Le bon Dieu*—he was angry at me—Roger!"

The tremor kept up with a sound as of a lorry jouncing past with a load of iron. Angie clung to him with a wild sobbing.

"It's only a small quake. Count four, and it will stop."

The opposite bank of the gully was throwing a little, the jump about half a foot. It would settle very shortly, he thought. They were nowhere near the rim of the quake. The epicentre of it was a league away on the San Andreas fault. He did not think it much of a quake; at the next brief jolt it would end. The bridge shook as they watched it. The spikes holding it down on a cross-log at this end came out with a shriek, and the bridge slid into the gully with hardly any sound. All was still again. Then a woodpecker began drumming in an oak. Its day had begun.

The two looked down at the bridge. The girl threw a piteous glance at Roger, who essayed a grin. It was a rueful one. She laughed hysterically, and

sat down plump upon a bed of mallow. With her unribboned hair about her, she laughed in a transport of hysterical mirth.

“Shall I heat up that tea for you?” he asked, pulling her to her feet after she had quieted.

“No tea,” she said. She wiped her eyes. “Nothing. I suppose we might as well get back now.”

“I’ll see if I can find help.”

He cranked at the telephone box in the hall, and stood with the receiver at his ear. A voice broke out to remark curtly that service was disrupted. He cranked again, shouted blankly into the realm of silence, and after an age raised the Dunnings’ house. That was at the other end of the lane, and closed up because the Dunnings were in Rome for the year, but he did get the coachman. Farrell also looked after the garden at the “Chalet,” and was trustworthy.

“Any harm done there, Farrell?”

“None, Mr. Cope. All right with you?”

“The bridge is down, and I can’t get the car out. There’s a lady marooned here. Bring up the landau, and don’t trouble with your uniform. I want you to drive us to the city.”

“I’ll get the horses now, Mr. Cope.”

From the potting shed Roger dragged a long hose, tied it around an iron shepherdess, which was a hitching-post, flung the other end down the bank, and with the help of it got Angie into the gully, then up into the lane with her baggage and a package of gifts for Val. It was nearly eight by the time the landau with Farrell on the box, resplendent in boots and tall hat, appeared. They drove down to the highway, leisurely in the cool sunlight, then found they had not the road to themselves. Vehicles were now coming thickly, horses at the gallop. In a tearing hurry, thought Roger. Progress was slower, and at San Bruno there was already a jam, and to make it worse there was a flow of vehicles coming down upon them, a heavy counter-current. Farrell pulled up and enquired. The reports were ominous. Gas and water mains broken, the firemen were having trouble, and the army was moving in to save what could be saved of the city.

“I know what that means,” said Roger. “Angie, it’s no use your going any further. You’ll either have to camp in the park, or leave town with the mob. I have it! You remember the tavern at Hermanos where we stopped one afternoon? Angel will look after you—Angel Lopez.”

“But, Roger, I would rather go into the town with you,” she protested, clinging to his arm. “And my things——”

“There may soon not be any town,” he said. “And I’ll look after your things. Farrell will take you right down. And when, you get there tell Angel to send this package to the Casa.”

Angie was a little tearful but resigned. He gave her a kiss, thrust money into her purse, gave a handful of bills to Farrell, and then the landau turned to push out into a confusion of traffic that was growing more frightful every minute. A low-slung warehouse truck was going by and he clambered aboard, to stand in it with at least twenty others. They were all silent, their eyes fixed on the great mushroom of smoke beginning to lift from the horizon. Roger shrugged. It was a night that had, after all, ended badly.

Pablo woke at noon. The day was brilliantly fine, and sunlight was pouring through his window, strained through sycamore leaves that cast a dancing pattern on the wall. He gave the bell-rope a pull. Ah Moy, who knew his habits—no one knew them better—came up with tea, a rack of dry toast, and a cigar, laid them on the table by the bedside, and glided to the door.

“Ah Moy!”

The houseman, waiting, turned. Pablo frowned a little. There was something he had to say, something important; and having slept very soundly, as if he had been hit with a pick-handle, so fatigued he had been, was not quite sure what it was. There had been an earthquake. And there had been a big evening with Lord Mountford, at which they had polished off two bottles of that Jerez brandy, nutty and half-sweet, with a drowsiness in the second bottle. He struck a match.

“Oh, yes!” He lighted the cigar, and his head fell back on the pillow. “It’s Val’s birthday. If you see the lads, tell them I’ll be up soon. And we’ll go over to the Mendoza place.”

“I tell them. They gone Fi’ Apostles to see Cloke. They be home bime’by.”

The door closed, and Pablo quaffed hot tea. Through the open window came the song of a bird. After the song wore off, his mind considered the events of the night. It had been decidedly a night! And the horses had gone a bit flighty after the shake. What surprised him now that he thought of it was that Robin Sim had wilted with fright, as if his bones had turned to gelatine. Perhaps it really had been a bad shake. A quite bad one. He gave the bell-rope another yank.

He got into his dressing-robe, and went to the wash-stand, where his razors were laid out. He took a pride in his razors, which he had bought as a very young man. They were hollow-ground, buffed, dark as old silver, with handles of walrus ivory. His head flung back taut, at that angle most favored by visionaries, and with mind blank, he reaped his chin leisurely. To shave was his matin ritual, and it put him in a mood receptive for thoughts that winged in, or the night’s problem, often neatly solved. It was the important moment of the day. In the glass he saw the houseman by the door.

“Ah Moy, you make a birthday cake for Val?”

“Icey cake. Happy Bi’thday. All’eady.”

“Very good. I had forgotten to ask about the cake.

“Another thing. Wasn’t there an earthquake last night? Has anybody heard anything about it here?”

“No,” said Ah Moy, leaving with the dishes. “Ev’lybody sleep.”

The ripple, then, must have travelled over the earth’s skin northward. Pablo was visited with the conviction that the shake had been a bad one.

With a feeling of regret over it, he wiped his razors. The office, though, was safe. He remembered when that building was put up, back in 1853, by Chinese masons who had reassembled the granite blocks they cut for it in Shanghai. The walls were a yard thick; only cannonading could have knocked them down. Had Roger come home? The chances were, he hadn’t.

Dressed, Pablo went downstairs.

“We had a quake,” he said to Ysabel, who came into his den.

“So I’ve heard. Mr. Sim came to see if you were up. He’d been hearing rumors about the city.”

“I hope Sim recovered. We felt it on the road. We left quite late, too. Mounty was at the suite for dinner.”

“Lord Mountford?” she asked.

It was the most celebrated name in quicksilver, in finance, and most particularly celebrated in Spain. He had come five times to Talavera, and the Machados—her father was then the Mayor—once had honored him with a special bullfight and a feast, where she had met him. The Sunday papers were full of his visit to the Coast, the tours he had made to Napa Valley and Del Mar. She saw with relief, with satisfaction, that he had not been entertained at dinner by anyone, or not by anyone high enough on the social ladder to be mentioned in the reports on or before last Sunday. Lord Mountford adhered to all the customs of the trade, and would dine at Alamos before he dined elsewhere. Nobody who was anything in quicksilver ever neglected to visit the mine and its owner. They would no more dream of neglecting it than a Cardinal visiting Rome from a far shore would neglect paying his respects to the Pope.

“Yes,” said Pablo. “Of Ottenheim’s.”

“When do you expect him here for dinner?”

Slewing about, Pablo looked at her over his glasses. At his expression the fearful doubt seized her that Lord Mountford was not coming at all. If he were, Pablo would not have journeyed up to the city. The lion had come and gone. And she, the faultless hostess of the Casa Alamos, who knew every detail concerning the proper entertainment of nobility—she had been ignored. The shock was not slow in coming.

“Well, that *was* the dinner,” he said. “Very quiet. And I expect he has left California by now.”

Her spirit was wounded, but the Machados never showed their hurt. More than an ignoring, it was an affront. Roger, she was sure, had arranged that dinner at the suite, and kept Lord Mountford from the Casa. It was a discourtesy that no one but Roger would have been capable of. Her pride had suffered many humiliations at his hands since their marriage, but this rankled beyond them all.

“Roger arranged that affair, did he not? I am sorry he could not have given Lord Mountford a dinner here. The Casa could have done it very well. We have the space, the plate, the——”

Pablo saw that her feelings had been lacerated. He blamed himself for his tactlessness in mentioning that evening in the suite, and he put his cigar down hastily.

“Roger had nothing to do with it. You see, Mouny was here for but a week. And since I had to be in the city on business, I arranged that dinner myself.”

That was the truth of it, but there was no telling this woman anything once she had an idea fixed in her head. Old Mouny was pretty sick of banquets. And he would have died at one of Ysabel’s stiff-necked affairs, with two long rows of County officials in tailcoats, with their frightful wives. He would have preferred a bowl of frijoles at the Mendoza place, some Bourbon in his fist, and his feet on the hob. Flow of soul, and all that kind of thing.

“I see,” rejoined Ysabel, but he knew she did not see, and that she felt that he was drawing fire away from Roger. “I thought, too,” she went on, “that Roger’d be here for his son’s birthday.”

Pablo rubbed his nose. That was another jab, and Roger no doubt deserved that. He really should have tried to make it, instead of dilly-dallying, stepping out in tamale parlors with——

“The roads might have got shaken up. Or blocked, so he couldn’t get through. Might be a lot of confusion.”

“But you got through.”

“He may still be on the way down. I came in a two-horse rig, and that’s quicker than a car. I don’t take any stock in these cars.”

“It’s late, almost one,” said Mrs. Roger, and with a flick of her hand dismissed the matter. “Now, this is what I have planned. The picnic will be in the garden, and the guests will be coming in at two. They will have swings, the seesaw, and the pool to sail boats on. Luncheon at three, and plenty of ice cream and hard candy. The Miura children will stay for the night.”

“Did Robin bring the Knights’ magic-lantern?”

“It’s here, and set up in the parlor. And after the show, Ah Moy will give them cake and hot chocolate.”

“And stomachaches.”

“Ah Moy has been told to serve them only just so much.”

“Sure, sure—but they’ll all bully him out of that. Now I’m going up with the boys to Cloke’s shop. Then to the farm. The buggy’s ready. We’ll be back in good time.”

He picked up Val and Esmey at the foot of the hill, and marched them on to the smithy, where Cloke gave Val an especially made hoop. Then Pablo took them to see the blasting on the hill. Faro had saved the blasts for a birthday serenade. He crouched with Pablo and the boys behind a wide tree, gave a yell, and after a brisk retreat of the miners, who hid like rabbits, the charges exploded. Seven blasts together, one for each year, like a firing of seven guns. Seven mushrooms of earth, capped with branches and old tram sleepers, lifted into the air with hollow coughs. The earth trembled. Smoke billowed out acridly on the wind.

“Thank you, Mr. Faro,” said Val.

Everybody had meant well, but the blasts were rather a fizzle. One could hear blasts any day in the mine itself that were fifty times louder. The hoop was a better gift. Cloke made one at every birthday, for hoops were always getting lost. Val picked up a stick to trundle it with, and the three of them piled into the buggy, and rode on to the Mendoza ranch. Pablo, in his rough tweeds, with four inches of pipe in his teeth, complacently unlocked the gate, and let in his grandsons. Esmey, the blond, tousle-haired angel, was the excited one. This was a treat. Val, a man of the world, acted up to the role.

The ranch was out of bounds, but he sometimes wriggled through the fence with his playmates, and he had found a key that opened the house. This key gave him an enviable primacy among his coevals, who envied him this domain, with its easy trees to climb, a dammed-up stream to swim in, and the outdoor wine-vats with roofs of thatch, relics of the Mendoza era. They were like the cannibal huts in the geography, and perfect for a game of hide-and-seek. Pablo went into the kitchen, and took down an old baking-powder tin in which he kept chocolates.

“Here you are,” he said. “You’re not supposed to have any until after dinner. So all you get is five apiece. I don’t think they’ll do you any harm, but you might as well keep quiet about them.”

The grandsons bolted down the chocolates, then Val, with Esmey after him, dashed off to trundle his hoop down the path that ran to the lower gate, and was a short cut to the Five Apostles. It was a well-beaten path, and ran along a file of evergreens and a hedge which Mendoza had planted. It was still called the Mendoza path. On a bench Pablo sat and smoked, the sunshine warm on his folded hands. A blur in the distance was the wheel atop the mine gallows. He had not in three years visited the mine, and from this bench and the red summer-house at the Casa, he was content to watch it. And he was content to listen to the voices of his grandsons. Val was of the Aguirres, dark and vivid, like his father, quite as rebellious and headstrong. Esmey was of the moorland Copes, in whom an easy-going, farmer strain cropped out. They were no more alike than Roger and Gervase.

Val at this moment was feeling anything but rebellious. Deathly sick, he was under a juniper bush by the gate. Hidden from the eye of man, he sat and suffered, his teeth clenched. Spasms went through his stomach. He sweated, his heart jounced, his head throbbed like a violently beaten drum. Never in his life had he been so ill. The foliage parted, and Esmey, hands clasped behind him, turned a solemn gaze upon him.

“Are you ill?”

“Terribly. Go away!”

“Are you going to die?”

“I think so.”

“Give me that hoop.” The voice was sweetly insistent. “Do you hear me? I want that hoop.”

The only response was a groan from the invalid, who clutched hoop and stick with a grip that defied his brother’s hard tugs.

“I think you are very nearly dead,” said Esmey. “I had better tell Grandfather.”

Though entranced by a lizard that eluded capture, and a pair of rabbits that bounded twice across his path, Esmey managed to reach Pablo with the tidings.

“Val won’t give me the hoop. He’s under a tree and quite dead.”

“Huh!”

Pablo withdrew his pipe in alarm. It was those chocolates! Ysabel was opposed to anyone but herself giving the boys chocolate, and then they only got one drop apiece, an hour after dinner. Retribution was on his trail. The wrath of Ysabel was something to be feared. And the boys had bolted down five each, the size of their thumbs. The queer thing was that Esmey was manifesting no distressful symptoms.

“Let me see your tongue.”

He bent over his stick and peered at Esmey’s tongue.

“Can’t be that, then! Show me where he is.”

A buggy had driven up, and Mr. Wilkes, the carter, who delivered messages, came out to try the gate. Val turned his head feebly, and saw a stranger trying the padlock. He crawled out.

“What do you want?” He clutched his stick defiantly, as if it were a cudgel. Nobody should know how sick he was. “You can’t come in here!”

“Excuse me, sir,” said Mr. Wilkes, touching his hat. “I thought Mr. Pablo Cope might be around here.”

“Don Pablo doesn’t see anybody here. Everybody knows that.”

“That’s right, he don’t. It is kind of private here.” Mr. Wilkes, his spectacles hooked over one ear, furrowed through a handful of yellow envelopes. “I’ve got something here for him.”

Val scowled. This was an intrusion on his birthday and the refuge of his grandfather. He scowled, too, because he felt ridiculous. Mr. Wilkes had suddenly become two Mr. Wilkeses, and the sky was bobbing up and down.

“Howdy, Wilkes,” said Pablo, and turned to inspect his grandson. “You’re poorly?”

“M’no.”

He was chilled and shaken, his scalp was tight. Great hammers were pounding at his head. His stomach felt queer; he was really frightfully sick. He swayed, and braced himself with his hoop-stick.

“Looks wobbly to me,” observed Mr. Wilkes. “You’ve not been after any berries, uh? Or some of them mushrooms?”

“Aren’t any berries here, nor any mushrooms either.”

“Stick your tongue out,” said Pablo, who had been surveying him over his glasses from head to foot. “Hrrm!” He stretched out his big hand and lowered Val’s eyelid, with another “Hrrm!”—an amused one this time.

“You give me that hoop-stick.”

It was a sharpened stick, and he looked at it quizzically. “Where did you pick this up?”

“On the hill there—at the digging.”

Pablo nodded. “It’s what the blasters poked fuse-holes with—in dynamite. Poison, that’s what it is. I suspect you’ve got a head that seems fit to burst.” He sent the stick flying across the road. “Now, just you get a long drink at the pump, then lie down flat. You’ll be good as new in a couple minutes.”

Val dragged himself on towards the pump.

“He’s a bright ’un,” said Mr. Wilkes. “Just about knocked out, but he watched me like a bulldog. Here’s your wire, Don Pablo. Robin said I’d find you here. It’s about the quake, I guess.”

Pablo read. “All downtown afire. Office and papers safe. Am piling bricks under guard. Unable to attend party. May be here a week. Love to all. Roger.”

“H’m,” said he. “Here it is, almost two. And this the first word.” He glanced at the telegram again. “It got routed by way of New York, and here through Monterey, though we’re nearer to San Jose, what with this new road built.

“Wires jammed, I guess.”

“That they are,” said Mr. Wilkes. “I’ve been on the go all day with messages. All alike, all bad.”

“I’ve a notion to go up and see what I can do.”

“You can’t get in with everybody trying to get out. The roads are jammed with refugees headed south.”

“We can put some up if they come here,” Pablo said, with a nod at the Mendoza house. “But we’re pretty much off the track.”

Mr. Wilkes got into his buggy. “There’s only one I know of that’s come this far. That’s a lady who’s staying at Angel’s. She came down early in a carriage with a big ‘D’ on it, and a driver in a silk hat. She must have got burnt out. Hadn’t any baggage.”

“It’s a rough place for her,” said Pablo, and he thought of the spacious Casa, and the rooms in the guest-houses off the orchard. “I might call on her, and find out what did happen. You’ll have a glass, Wilkes?”

“Can’t stay,” Mr. Wilkes said. “I’ve got five more wires to deliver. So long.”

Val turned up, eyes alight, head wet from a sloshing under the pump, his legs sturdy; no stick, but over his shoulder was the precious hoop.

“You’re right again, huh?” asked Pablo.

“Oh, I wasn’t so ill. Not very much. I was more sleepy.”

“That’s the way to talk. Now get in, both of you, and we’ll head out for home.”

Pablo drove off, flicking his whip, and he gave a chuckle. Val had been sicker than a cat. That seven-year-old had fought back a megrim, a headache that would have knocked out a six-foot blaster, kept it to himself—though his eyes had been popping out of his head—and got up as chipper as ever. Pablo had his future all planned out for him. Val was to be trained to run the Five Apostles, and develop it upon a scale unmatched on the globe. As master of the Five Apostles, Val could dispute the prestige and the power of Ottenheim’s. As an engineer he could be a Pumpelly and a Hammond rolled into one; and as a dictator of the market, a Mountford. Val at the age of seven had unequivocally proved himself—to Pablo—a prodigy. Pablo insisted upon it. Roger and Ysabel had come round to agreeing with him, though at times they regarded the fervor of his belief as a mark of lunacy. They had urged him to be sensible, and pointed out that Val was still a child in kindergarten. But Pablo came back with the retort that a grandfather could afford not to be sensible, and that at his age he could see further into the past and further into the future than any mere parent, and knew therefore what he was talking about. Then they felt convinced that a man could be a lunatic and still be right; and that a child was marked out from the rest of mankind if genius

were discerned in him by a genius proved, and Pablo Cope assuredly was one, though Ysabel privately thought him a fool in many respects.

Pablo adored youth, and in Val he saw himself in the tender years when he was the pupil of the majordomo and Doctor Kit. He knew no one more capable than himself of planning Val's career. He opened a bank account to sustain Val as a student at three mining schools: in California, Saxony and Talavera. It was equally a manifestation of generosity and of egoism. Esmey he overlooked; so did Roger and Ysabel. The wonder of the Casa Alamos was Val.

Pablo drove to the coach-house, then went into the garden with the boys, who turned themselves loose with whoops. It was exactly two o'clock. Ysabel came to him in a hat like a trayful of flowers, and he gave her the telegram.

"Sorry, but Roger won't be here. He's piling bricks."

"It's a pity," said Ysabel, after reading the message. "Val will miss him." Her eyebrows lifted. "But his gifts came. I don't know how, but they did. They came through, and a messenger on a horse—Ah Moy thinks it was a farmer who lives near that creek tavern—left them at the back door."

"The quake's shaken everything topsy-turvy," said Pablo, and they went into the sunlight.

The red summer-house where he had planned to sit in the role of benign spectator was a redoubt full of pistol smoke and Indians. The whole garden was bursting with children. A very small girl, dank as a wet kitten, was being hauled from the pool, blissfully clutching her prize, a Zanzibar water-lily. The other plants were not likely to survive the aquatic wrestling-match that was setting the pool a-boil. Someone had left the stable-door open, and Ozias the Fourth had come out to sniff the hollyhocks, and swish his tail musingly. He was a static horse until a clothes-line whacked him on the rump. Ozias the Fourth, snorting like a unicorn, plunged about earnestly, kicking up scads of lovely turf and branches of balsam. This met with the loudest juvenile approval. Ah Moy, outraged, dashed out and with a dishcloth chased him back into the pen. A Miura heir, purple in the face, whose attempts to cut himself off at the mellow age of six by holding his breath, was the next center of interest. Then Ah Moy staggered in with a cylinder of pink ice cream. His advent brought down the Indians from the fort. The din increased.

Pablo went to his room and closed the windows. It was a party that had got off to a good start, and he was glad of it. He wrote letters, then threw down his pen. Perhaps there was no San Francisco left to receive them. He

leaned back in his swivel-chair and looked regretfully at the photographs hanging over his desk. The dock at China Basin, with himself, Faro and Chuen Toy—in pigtail and formal overcoat—each carrying a flask of mercury up the plank of the *Comanche*, which was to carry the first shipment from the Five Apostles to Canton; and himself on the seat of a tally-ho with Ralston in front of Belmont, the mansion which that financier had just built. And there was Don Pablo Cope again, before the new house of his club, The Family, on Post Street, standing with Phil Bekeart, the gunsmith, after a dinner given them on their return from Sutter's Mill, where they planned a marker to commemorate the discovery of gold. This side of the room was hung with photographs, himself in them all. Swaying in his chair he looked at them through the dense smoke of a Havana, and he was conscious of that lively contentment untouched by regret or introspectiveness which is the reward of men whose lives have been purely lives of action. He also had a sound historical sense. Those relics he had preserved, and a copy of each he had given to Hank Bastian, who ran the tavern at Alamos, which was also the camp museum.

Ah Moy had brought in a luncheon. Pablo finished it, then again set himself to writing letters. They would get there somehow. It was not the first time the town had been burnt down. He wrote until seven. Faro would be through with his meal shortly, and he would ask Faro to drive out with him to Angel's. But first, his usual catnap. He flung his arm over the chair, his hand with a bunch of keys in it, above a crumpled newspaper. A light doze unfailingly refreshed him. In time his hand relaxed. The keys dropped, and the crash awoke him. He departed for Faro's cottage, and threw a handful of gravel at the window. The foreman lifted it.

"There's a refugee woman at Angel's. We'll go and see her."

"Aye. I'll bring out the rig."

Soon they were jogging past the Mendoza place, and down the wooded slope on the way to Angel's on the creek road. It was steep; Faro drove with caution the reins tight in his large, calloused hands. For a recluse—he seldom left the mine, or the cottage, which was Pablo's gift to him, unless it was to attend a meeting of the Knights—he knew every tree and boulder in this nook of the mountain. Angel's he disapproved of as a den harboring persons of dissolute ways, like Cloke, who, though the best of smiths, was a two-handed drinker, the foe of all game wardens, and the scandal of the Knights of Cornwall. The shocking thing, too, was that Roger Cope should have backed that scapegrace Lopez. And as for any woman who put up there——

Pablo, sitting back, cigar rolling in his mouth, talked of Val's party, which would have been perfect had it not lacked Roger. A pity it was that he could not have come down that very night, and escaped the trouble and onerous chore of piling bricks. In a way, also, Faro regretted it. Roger had not inspected the new drift since the first of the year. He came through the mine only at lengthening intervals. Don Pablo never came. It was as if both were waiting for Valentine to grow up and assume full command.

"A worldbeater, that's what Val is," said Faro. "Knows the mine like his own house. He came with me to the Mass in the gallery, and you should have seen how he sat there as easy as you please. There's grown people in Alamos who would have been scared to death being there at midnight."

"Fellow's born to it," said Pablo.

"Other lad's bright, too. A quieter kind."

"He is that." Pablo thumbed backward to the Mendoza place. "Might be Esmeý could make something of that ranch. That is, if he doesn't take to the mine business, which is not for everyone. And that farm's been lying fallow a long while. It'll make a better than ordinary vineyard. In the right hands as good a vineyard as that on the Almaden slope. But that'll be long after my time, Joab. I'm leaving it to Roger to do what he likes with."

"You've been hearing anything from Gervase?"

The Capitan felt some delicacy about referring to Gervase, who had done the Five Apostles no great service in abandoning all activities in it to Roger. There had been some rift, possibly a quarrel, but that did not excuse Gervase.

"He's in the clear, now. Business has picked up in China, with the old empress gone. And Tai-Ling's going ahead."

Pablo's favorite was his son, but Gervase he admired more. He had sent Gervase sums of money, a hundred thousand dollars in all—the proceeds of a coup in railroad stock. That stock was a venture he had gone into for the sake of Gervase and his small daughter, and something apart from the Five Apostles. The lad had not buried his talents, either. With that money he had bought well-established shops along both caravan routes, and left them in charge of their old Chinese managers. They were an exclusive outlet for Tai-Ling goods, and with the proceeds he had bought a full partnership in the house. Tai-Ling's was not the giant it once had been, and it required a little more nursing, but it was still the largest in the Street of the Pigment Makers.

"He'll be coming back to Alamos some time?"

“Oh, aye. There’s Paula to put to school. Berkeley, I think. A redhead, like her mother.”

That would not be for some years, Faro thought slowly, and meanwhile the Five Apostles would have to rack along the best it might under the lesser man. They drove along the creek for another mile, and in a rift at the foot of the hillside, behind the Paschino winery, glowed the tavern.

“We’ll be hearing something,” said Faro. “A man at Bastian’s was telling Cloke he saw the ferry building slide into the bay. I’d like to know.”

But Pablo was lost in his own thoughts, and he was perplexed. Was it not a “D,” that monogram on the lady’s carriage? So Wilkes had remarked. He ran through all the San Francisco surnames he knew that began with a “D,” and again he came back to Dunning. The Dunning house was just below the “Chalet,” but it was locked up and the family was abroad. Bella, old Tom Dunning’s widow, rode about like Marie Antoinette in coaches with her monogram and a coronet slapped upon them. Roger could always borrow one when he was at the “Chalet” and that fool car of his was out of commission. That’s what it was! He had sent that sweetheart of his, that painting woman, out of harm’s way in it! And she had brought along with her those gifts to send to the Casa. Damned awkward to run smack into this Julie. He had never seen her, and knew nothing of her except what Bella had let slip, and that was two years ago.

“You coming in, Joab?”

“I’ll stay out here,” said Faro. “Air’s good and there’s a moon.”

Pablo strode into the tavern. It smelled of good and costly liquor. A well fixed-up place, half old stucco, half new frame, it had the look of a business that would thrive. There were customers at the bar, and Angel, hulking and amiable, with unshaven jowl and red undershirt, behind it. At sight of the master of the Five Apostles he was speechless.

“I hear you have a refugee. Who is the lady?”

Angel irresolutely wiped the bar, and set out a glass and bottle. “Didn’t give any name, sir.”

Pablo poured himself scotch. “A dark lady? A Miss Julie Something?”

“I didn’t ask, sir,” breathed Angel. Don Pablo could not be uninformed on a certain state of affairs; he probably knew more than he let on. “Not her, no. And this lady’s light-complected, but foreign. Came in her own carriage.”

“It had a ‘C’ on it?”

“Maybe it was a ‘C.’ ”

“Or a ‘D’?” toyed Pablo. “Where is she?”

Angel hesitantly pointed at the dining-room, and Pablo went in. It was empty save for a woman at a corner table near the door, reading a newspaper. He remembered instantly that blonde head in the tamale parlor. She turned. An elderly gentleman, towering and wide-shouldered, was bowing to her. A farmer, she thought, for he was ruddily tanned, and in tweeds; but his large sombrero he swept off with a polished air, as if this were a salon. He had an immortal head.

“Good evening. I hear you have just come down from San Francisco. I have interests there. Perhaps you might be able to give me an idea of the extent of the damage, or of what you saw?”

He seated himself before her, across the checkered tablecloth. The sight of his ring filled her with disquietude. It had a dark red stone, and Roger wore one exactly like it.

“My name is Cope—Pablo Cope—and I have a ranch not far from here, the other side of Alamos. I have a son up there in San Francisco, and he has not been able to come down. Naturally, I felt disturbed over his safety.”

“Ah—naturally, Mr. Cope!” Her glance was quick with concern. She had been here since early morning, and not a word from Roger had come through to her. “I can understand.”

“I got a telegram from him, though, by way of the East, and he was all right, also his office,” he said, and she was relieved.

The thought had crossed her mind that somehow he knew of her relationship with his son, and the thought still persisted. He would begin to ask questions now, of course. She would say as little as possible, to protect Roger. He had not asked her name; she was reasonably sure no one in Alamos knew it; and the landlord, Angel Lopez, who was discretion itself, did not.

Pablo called for claret and a siphon. It came, and he charged the glasses.

“You hear queer things in a time like this,” he said. His voice was grave and courteous, like Roger’s, but there was a humor, a half-mocking humor, in his Spanish eyes. He pushed a glass towards her. “I have heard that the ferry building fell off into the bay. What truth is there to that?”

Blonde head laughed. “I have heard refugees who watched it fall. And some said it was really the Cliff House. Perhaps they were in both places at

the same time, at the bay and on the ocean side.”

“There must have been two frightful splashes.”

“But nobody seemed wet, M’sieu. So it was an illusion. An illusion, too, can be terrible.”

“You saw the fire for yourself?”

“No. It began after I left the city. There was a large cloud of black smoke. I did not see anything more than that.”

“You were fortunate to get a lift out of the town.”

She traced a pattern on the tablecloth, and he saw that her fingers were tapering and firm, like those of a musician. “Yes?” she said, then shrugged. “Here or there, one lives somehow.”

She had little more to say. To be forced to live away from the city and her interests (she did not say what they were, and he could not ask) was rather a nuisance, but it could be endured. In a week, or two weeks, the ashes would be cooled off. Meanwhile, she was comfortable here. And the landlord had an old horse used to the saddle. The countryside was pretty this time of the year, and close by was the farm of Mr. Paschino, with riding paths through the vineyard.

“A week or two weeks”—that was her guess at the probable length of her stay, and she was apparently unworried. It was Pablo who was disturbed. Uncertainty always disturbed him. Was Roger deeply interested in this young Frenchwoman? She had betrayed no hint that might indicate she had much interest in anything in the world. And yet—Roger had left the suite to spend the evening with her.

No action of Roger’s had perturbed him so much as that ditching of Mounty. It should be business first, and women afterwards. Could Roger swing them both? The Five Apostles was going to require more care and time henceforth to keep it at its peak. The old days of its profusion were gone. Mercury no longer gushed out at the rap of a wand or a pick-handle. It took going after, and the shifting of worlds of rock to get at the veins. And Roger was indolent at the best. Could he spare time from the women? Or long enough to ensure the mine being in good shape for his sons?

This refugee was an agreeable young creature, and as quiet as the unseen Julie. And that was ominous. Quiet women were the costliest.

“I hope you will not find your sojourn here too dull,” he said, rising. “And that when you return you will find everything well for you! Meanwhile

—” He bowed. “*Bonne chance!*”

He left. After she heard the outer door close, she smiled into her glass with relief. She was still not sure that some whispering or a suspicion had not impelled him to call upon her. For a moment she had felt he knew everything of the night’s escapade. The notion had given her a flutter of the heart, and she had steeled herself to front him with bravado. Whether she had dispelled his suspicion or not, one point of satisfaction there was—he had left no wiser than before. She would say not a word of the meeting to Roger, of course. It all seemed rather amusing to her now. A gracious old gentleman, Mr. Cope, she thought, as she resumed her newspaper, and a little droll.

Outside, Pablo spoke with Angel.

“If there should be poor refugees coming down, send them on to the Mendoza place. The Five Apostles will take care of them. The Five Apostles, you understand; not I. You know nothing beyond that.” He looked directly at Angel. The man was trustworthy, and he was astute. “Nor do you know anything of my coming here.”

“I know nothing,” said Angel.

“*Buenas noches!*”

Pablo climbed into the buggy, and it went on. He lighted a cigar, and was silent most of the way home under the stars. A country girl, that refugee at the tavern, and a little ordinary. Roger had never been tangled up—or not for long—with women who were ordinary. Possibly there was no affair at all. An indelicate business, poking like that into his son’s very personal life. He felt half angry at himself for having called upon her. But it was for Val’s sake that he had made such a damned fool of himself.

The buggy was drawing near the Five Apostles, its glissades of waste rock silver in the moonlight, the whirr of its sheave above the gallows-frame audible above the wind. Where the miners had been blasting on the hillside was a white scar. Roger had ordered there a stripping of waste to expose the ore zone. It would be cheaper to loosen steam shovels upon it than run tunnels.

“You finding anything in the schist, Joab?”

It was the first time in months that Pablo Cope had asked him so searching a question. Five thousand tons of waste had been flung out, and they had not yet come to rock worth picking over.

“Nothing with color.”

“May walk over there in the morning,” said Pablo.

They neared the Casa, the horse at a slow pace, and Pablo cleared his throat.

“Joab, about that refugee lady. I asked her about that sliding of the ferry building. ‘An illusion,’ she said.” He mended his cigar with a lick of the tongue. “It was not the only illusion of the day, I hope.”

Cloke at his portable forge down in the mine hammered out just such a hoop as Paula had dreamed of. After thudding on it until the iron was dark, he returned it to the fire.

“Is it going to be as big a hoop as Val’s?” she asked.

“Aye, sure. And a bit higher. Now who wants to turn the crank?”

Val edged Esme out in the scuffle, but as he grasped for the blower handle, Paula seized it first and cranked with headlong energy. The draught blew out sparks, the hot smell of iron, and burning pine-cones and coal. Cloke threw on some more coal, wet and caked. The smoke rose in a thick column to the roof, and it rolled slowly, pushed by the wind coming in through the main tunnel, to the heart of the mine far off in the blackness. It made a gladdening spectacle for Paula, who cranked on at her volcano. The sparks leaped up to that rolling heaven, and shone on the backs of the horses in their near-by stalls. Cloke had just finished shoeing them all. Mine horses, as everybody knew, never went out unless they were dead, or they had to soar up to blink in sunshine and munch Christmas gifts of grass, sugar and apples.

It was more fun below than above, Paula thought. It was darker, the walls were rough and jagged, and the roof, spanned with held-up timbers, wound mysteriously into the heart of the mountain, as if to a robbers’ cave. She liked these holidays at Alamos better than going to school at Berkeley, though she loved Pudgy Venn, whose house had windows overlooking the bay, with furrows like white snakes crawling after the boats.

“Do you see that one,” said Pudgy one day. “The big one going out? That’s yours, Yin-Chiu. In January you will be going home for a while.”

The boat would take her back to her father, and the sons of Son Wu and Tai-Ling. Tai-Ling—nobody called Fan Hui anything but that—and her father had brought her to California. Two years ago. She was forgetting them. She felt as if she had been living here almost forever. At Berkeley, and here every summer. She was almost eight.

“It’s a beautiful boat, Yin-Chiu.”

“I don’t like it,” she said. “I like Cloke’s boat.”

That was the *Apostle*. One could get on the *Apostle* only if one lived at Alamos, where Ah Moy lived, and Cloke, and Val and Esmey. And Don Pablo, who was most of the time at the Mendoza place, smoking on the porch, and never taking his eyes off her when she was around. They all came for rides with her and Cloke on the *Apostle*. Uncle Roger, who hated the sea, gave her chewing-gum, and Aunt Ysabel looked at everyone except Val with hard stares, and sent her up to bed early where she often had to undress in the dark.

“That’s hot enough now, young lady,” said Cloke.

He whisked out the hoop, dirty but beautiful. He pounded the joint smooth, and slid it to hiss in the tub of water. She stopped cranking. But there was more than a hiss to break the silence. The wind came blowing steadily, with a fluttering as of paper, through the dark tunnel whose opening was far back on the canyon road. And somewhere there was a shout.

Esmey looked upward. “Look, look! All that terrible smoke! Nothing’s going to happen, is it, Cloke?”

The smoke was still rolling under the roof, in rolls like tremendous bolsters. She looked at it uncomfortably. After all, she had worked it up, cranking so. And suppose it exploded? Somebody might be killed, and the Capitan would be angry. He often looked about him angry when in the mine, talking to himself, as if it were his own and he wanted nobody else around.

“Huh?” said Cloke. He cast a weather-eye upward. “I don’t know for sure.” He glanced at his silver watch. “You just count a hundred.”

Val exchanged a look with him, and laughed. That was just like Val. He would throw a half-look at a grown-up when something childish was said, and laugh. He seemed not to belong to the young. Already he was nearly twelve; he was tall, with black curling hair under a miner’s cap, a carbide lamp hooked upon it, its jet of flame like a needle. He wore overalls and hob-nailed boots.

“Count a hundred,” Cloke had said, pulling the hoop from the tub, and wiping it dry. “And we’ll see what happens.”

“Twenty-three, twenty-four, twenty-five”—counted Paula. She would gabble fast at the start, then slowly, then fast again. Esmey sat heart-sick on a rail, hands to his ears. He hated and feared the mine with its choking blackness, the damp smell of rock, of bats, pools of rust, sweat, horses and spent blasting-powder. If it were not for Paula, whom he had brought in to watch Cloke making the hoop for her, he would have stayed up in the

sunlight on the farm, picking grapes. Instead, he was crouched here waiting for he knew not what. It came—a blast.

Pa-toom!

The detonation shook him to the marrow. Echoes roared out, casting from side to side, like the confused shouting of ogres as they fled the corridor in maniacal fright. He rose, shaken. Paula fell back against the wall, a panic wilder than any night terror beating at her chest and temples. The roars went on at a thundering pace, thinned out to laughter, then into silence. Remote beyond the stalls, where the horses were eating hay—even the youngest of them had not so much as lifted a head at the sound—bubbles of light were floating in the darkness.

“A squib shot,” Val said critically. “It’s at quitting time they set off the big blasts. There’s nobody around then, to get smoked out.”

He was as cool as a hero. He had wisdom as well as he had courage. But that did put him a little apart for Paula, though she admired him. She felt then closer to frightened Esmey.

“Mind if we go now?” she asked. “Mind if Esmey and I go back?”

“Oh, I’ll come with you,” said Val. “I’m driving.”

After he had gone to see the effects of the blast and returned, they went out and rode on to the farm in the cart pulled by the retired Ozias the Fourth.

Tia Ana, the Indian woman, who always came to look after Paula on these holidays, had a meal ready for them when they came into the roomy kitchen of the Mendoza place. They had milk, and a dish of Chinese food—tiny square boxes of boiled paste, glistening like ivory, full of minced greens and meat, which Ah Moy never made except when Paula was at Alamos. And with them came her pair of chopsticks. She ate rapidly, the chopsticks a blur between the plate and her mouth.

“You think you can finish picking those grapes?” asked Pablo from his corner. He was with Father Vargas at the table in the recess which had a window overlooking the slope of vines and the Five Apostles. “You just holler if you need some help.”

“We’ve got five bushels already,” said Esmey. “And that makes only thirteen more.”

He, Val and Paula left, dragging along their red express-wagon. Tia Ana, built like a tree stump, put the basket of washed dishes on her head, and ambled down sleepily to the Casa for her siesta. Except for a cricket twanging

under the floor, and the clicking of the dominoes in the recess, the house was again silent.

The kitchen was blue-washed, and because of its yard-thick adobe walls, it was cool even on such a hot day as this. Father Vargas, the new young priest, who had come to the favorable attention of Pablo, often visited it when he wished to meditate on certain parish matters well and truly. Also, being a Spaniard, he could feel he was back at Toledo when he was in the Mendoza house. The kitchen had not changed in more than half a century. It was precisely as the cloaked Capitan had left it, except that a ship's lamp had been hung from a rafter, and by the fireplace dangled like gyves a handful of old muffin-rings from Torpen Farm, Pablo's one souvenir of Cornwall.

No one else came here to talk with "*El diablo* Don Pablo," as the elder generation in Monterey referred to the head of the Cope family, though the old buccaneer was pretty well tamed now, given much to dozing in the sun with the cat on his lap. Pablo liked to talk with the young priest, and also with Cloke, who had mischief in him, and whose company he preferred to Faro's, though Faro he trusted wholly, for in business and in the serious, though not necessarily the more important affairs of life, he trusted only dull and solid men. Father Vargas, who had been brought up on a Spanish grape farm, and Cloke had cleared and brought back to bearing the three rows of Aramon vines at the foot of the declivity, the last vestiges of the vineyard that Mendoza had planted. From these grapes Mr. Paschino, who owned the farm and winery near Angel's tavern, made the special wine for the Mass in the Mendoza gallery. Esmey had helped at the clearing. He earned a dollar picking the fifteen express-wagon loads of grapes that Paschino took down in his cart to be pressed at the winery. That made enough Aramon wine for all those who loved Aramon, and there were only two in the parish, Father Vargas and Pablo.

The domino game over, they sat back opposite each other across the plank table, and smoked their pipes. It was pleasant for Father Vargas to relax in the coolness and look through this north window into the bright reality of the slope throbbing in the heat of the September afternoon. Val went past with a rifle over his shoulder. He had the tread and the quiet alertness of the hunter. A handsome fellow, and precocious: the next brilliant member of the family. There was a youth who would cut a figure in the world, and take the place filled so long by his grandfather. No drudgery of grape-picking for Val Cope. What he could not do in an instant, and do perfectly, he would not do at all. On that youth the sun of Don Pablo, to whom by right of will and talent, the magistracy of the domain had been given, rose and set. If iron had been laid upon him, it was but to sharpen his mind, not to fetter him. His energies,

instead of being driven within, were given free rein. The era of the Manifest Destiny might be over for others, but not for Val Cope. And Don Pablo, late supercargo of the *Mizpah*, who had lived joyously free and untrammelled, lived again in this grandson with the beautiful head who marched past with his rifle; he lived perfectly. It had been all or nothing—his own chosen way of existence—with Don Pablo, and no other was worth living. And Father Vargas, who was a Spaniard, and knew how to evaluate violence and energy, could not, though he was in love with virtue, but rejoice, as one rejoiced at the spectacle of an unimpeded hurricane or tidal wave. The lad had his grandfather as mentor—who was past eighty, more than twice the age at which Marcus Aurelius said a man had no more to learn of feeling or experience; and he had Benjy Cloke, master of Don Pablo's boat, poacher and hunter, illegal supplier of swordfish and game to Angel Lopez—the greatest pair of lawbreakers or rogues in the parish. They were helping him to cut his teeth, that pair! Fortunately, there was Joab Faro, who rubbed his nose in rock, and there were the hard schoolmasters to come.

“Val's gone hunting,” he remarked. “A bit early?”

“No; there's a lot of pigeons on the ridge. Shooting season begins here when you see a pigeon. No sense in owning a farm otherwise.”

Father Vargas made sounds behind his pipe.

“There's also something I wanted to ask you,” he said. “They're still looking for a speaker at the Admission Day celebration. In Monterey. They all seem to be looking to you as the orator. I told them I'd ask you.”

Pablo, looking out of the window, stroked the cat on his lap. “Tell them I'm obliged, but that I haven't talked for them yet, and don't intend to. I'm going to San Juan Bautista with my grandson. I helped pull up the flag there sixty-five years ago. We're going to plan something there. The way things have gone with some of us Californios, there were times when I felt sorry it ever did go up. We had good times in those days. It's a long while ago, Padre. Sometimes I think all the good fellows are gone.”

“It has been quiet here ever since, I believe. No wars.”

“Not with cannon, no,” said Pablo, looking out over the straw-colored fields tremulous in the haze. “But it seemed there was always fighting enough, of one kind or another. There was Doctor Kit Muggah, with whom I rode to the San Juan flag-raising. He was a one-man army. He fought on against this, that, or t'other thing until he was ninety-two. ‘Human life itself is a reign of terror,’ Kit used to say, ‘and time is a tyrant more ruthless than Robespierre.’”

Down by the vines Father Vargas had a glance of Paula, emptying a large square tin into the little express-wagon, which Esmey then dragged up to Paschino's cart near the gate. Val had wandered off for good. Possibly he was now chasing pigeons along the creek towards Hermanos. He had staying power, when it came to wandering. Even to look at the vines flashing in the hot sunlight made Father Vargas dozy, and he turned again to his game. The Mendoza house was the abode of stillness, disturbed only by the piping of the cuckoo-clock.

After the wheels had gone squeaking up the hillside, Paula went back to her picking. The foliage was dense in these bottom rows, and she could thrust her hand into caves of green and pull out bunches of cool grapes. Somewhere a clattering rang out. She started. Was that Val with his repeating rifle? Val had gone far beyond the barn, and even there she could see no flight of pigeons. And this sound was close at hand, perhaps in the next row. Again the fusillade in spirited attack. Her eyes hunted in the sunlight, she went on her knees, and peered into the next row. That was where she had left her tin, an old five-gallon container for oil, as shiny as a mirror.

A bird tore up furiously. It drummed a rat-tat-tat at its mirrored self, boxed, dodged, jumped back, then returned to the attack. Its fury, its unkempt top-knot and slatternly tail gave it the look of an outraged nursemaid. It backed, charged, and struck furiously at its image. Paula let fly at the tin with a pebble, but at that second the bird had slewed about, it took the blow on its ribs, and rose to spin in mid-air like a Catherine-wheel. It tore off in a raging heat and vanished into a clump of toyons. She ran over, and as she looked into the undergrowth a rabbit bounded out and up the slope just as Esmey was coming down with his express-wagon.

"I was looking for a bird," she said. "Right in this bush."

"I saw a rabbit jumping out of it."

"Perhaps it was the bird with its shape changed."

"Did it have a long tail?"

"A long tail and a top-knot. And it was boiling mad. It had been fighting its looks in the tin, and when I threw a pebble it hid in the bush."

"Well, I did hear a lot of banging. It's a road-runner, and Mendoza's special pet. Nobody has ever seen it except Cloke, and he says it usually comes out at night, just before the ghost makes its rounds. We may be seeing it next."

“I don’t want to see it. I want to go right home. Haven’t we got enough grapes yet?”

“We’ve got to pick two more loads.”

“I wish Val was here to help us.”

“Oh, he wouldn’t pick,” said Esmey. They both sat in the dust pulling at the largest bunches that hung close to the ground. “He doesn’t have to. He’s grown up. I think he’s gone on to tell Mr. Paschino the grapes are ready. But I like to pick. I am afraid of ghosts, but I like to be here.”

“We are picking grapes for a ghost,” said Paula.

The heat was retreating before the long shadows, and Father Vargas lifted the window to catch the breeze that drifted over the gully where wild nutmegs grew. The children were taking up the last load but one, Esmey dragging at their wagon, the girl pushing it from behind.

“The girl seems to belong here,” Father Vargas remarked. “A pity she will have to return to China.”

“She is at home in both places,” said Pablo. “I wish she could stay at the Casa. If there’s anything it needs, it’s a girl. But Gervase wants her back.”

“Yes, the old place could do with Paula,” agreed Father Vargas.

The Casa, to which he paid parochial visits that he found extremely dull except when Don Pablo lifted him from the murk of the salon—like a trout from a pool—into his own den or to the Mendoza house for a glass and a debate in Spanish on the comparative merits of the Monterey and the Castilian landscapes and vineyards—the Casa had been livelier since the girl had come into it. Extraordinary persons like Gervase Cope, Madame Tai-Ling and the crop-headed Quaker, Doctor Pudgy Venn, turned up; and infrequent visitors like Joab Faro (who disliked Mrs. Roger) and Chuen Toy, and some of the Jiminez tribe from Nevada, appeared more often. And Roger and his wife, as if to keep up a semblance of harmony, contrived to be seen very much together, even attending a dance or social at the Knight’s lodge. Father Vargas would have given much to know all of the drama unfolding at the Casa; in particular, to know why Mrs. Cope regarded Gervase’s daughter with such overt lack of warmth, and why it was only when Gervase was in Alamos that Roger was so much at the Casa, though they diverged so much in temperament and likings that the bond between them must be of the lightest.

He believed it to be fairly certain that Gervase was the stronger. He had prospered; he had much influence in the trade; he was a partner in the firm of Tai-Ling, Limited, which had branches all over the Far East. In short, he had

wealth; Roger and Ysabel Cope craved more wealth, and except for what Don Pablo might leave them, there was small likelihood of their achieving it unless more money were poured into the Five Apostles. It was probable, then, that they expected much of Gervase.

Father Vargas could see the mine clearly from his seat: the tip-cart moving from the shaft to the mill; the six-horse truck, under brakes and dust, creeping with a screech to the railroad siding with a load of flasks. He had the conviction that in the last six months shipments were leaner, and that the crowd of workmen leaving for the mine with their lunch buckets had diminished in size. Certain families had moved away from Alamos, and these, instead of going to other mercury workings, had settled in gold camps like Grass Valley and Chinese Camp.

“You think Faro will be running into a bonanza one of these days?”

“I’m not sure a bonanza is wanted.”

Pablo raised a shaggy eyebrow. “Mercury, like poor Othello, has depended too much upon war. But tomorrow somebody will think up a fresh use for it. I can’t guess what. Science has gone beyond me, further than the moon. Paint may come back; but we’ve lost much of it, except in China. A Chinaman will pay well for a red paint that doesn’t make him ill at the stomach to look at. Occidentals, and owners of grog-shops in Haiti, will thank you for a mixture of oxide of iron and white lead—a loathly consortium, Padre—at one-fifth the price. Five-and-ten shades in tasteful tins. That’s what our civilization has come to. It will soon be a privilege to be color-blind. *Hasta el dia!*”

Pablo smoked his cheroot with no lessening of gusto.

“Well, El Greco could do without any red. And so can the Five Apostles. The paint trade demand wasn’t much more than a flea-bite—or a fair-sized dog-bite. And when the warehouse fills up, it manages to empty itself in time. So, this old mine of ours——”

He looked again through the window towards the lower road. A rider was approaching.

“I think that’s our friend coming for the grapes.”

They strolled out. Mr. Paschino, a small, aged farmer with circular wrinkles and faded eyes, rode up to the loaded cart by the juniper. He reached through the wasps for a grape and ate it slowly. It was a small cart, but that two young children should have filled it that hot day was a feat that no one chanced to remark. Mr. Paschino with eyes closed ate another grape and took

council with his palate. He was a sun-baked gnome whose skin yielded a clean aroma of fruit and garlic.

“Sweeter than last summer,” he said. “I will bring you a good Aramon in mid-April, Don Pablo. A week before the Mass.”

He drove off, and they watched the cargo of Aramons with its cloud of wasps, cant to and fro down the road in a glow of reddish dust. Mr. Paschino, a lean Bacchus in a sweat-tagged shirt, rode astride the horse, with feet on the shafts, dodging as he passed under the branches of the acacia trees.

“What a wonderful summer it has been,” said Pablo, closing the gate. “I asked myself all afternoon if we ever had another half so fine. I have come to the age when I like to feel the sun on the back of my hands. And did you notice Mendoza’s grapes? They were sweet, sweeter than the honeycomb. That Aramon will be a wine worth waiting for.” Pablo tried the chain, and gave a quiet laugh. “In April, did he say? That is a long wait for me, Padre.”

Father Vargas brought round his buggy. “Shall I take you down to the Casa?”

“I walk it on a day like this.”

“*Adios!*”

The priest drove on. At the top of the ridge he paused to look back. Don Pablo had not moved; he was still at the gate, leaning against it, his stick before him, looking upon the tawny, basking hill, the shadows of the oaks and bushy madrones dark-blue and long in the late afternoon sun. The day had indeed been perfect; it was still perfect, and there was a sniff of resin in the air, for the lightest wind was coming from over the sea, with echoes of surf breaking on the beach. It had also been a perfect Castilian afternoon, for the two of them had spoken only Spanish. Don Pablo’s tarrying at the gate—was it a reluctance to leave the farm? And what had he meant by saying April was so far away? Perhaps, though the vineyard had not yet done giving, he was unwilling to say goodbye to a summer that he had passed almost entirely at the Mendoza place, with the company of his vines, tobacco and the old spinet-like piano he had brought in from the Casa. Father Vargas resumed his journey. He had not been able to induce Don Pablo to speak at the Monterey gathering, and he was regretful. Perhaps, if work permitted, he could hear him at San Juan Bautista.



Dinner, because of the lingering warmth, was served in the garden under large paper lanterns, white and round like moons. Tia Ana folded away the tables; the boys went to tinker in the workshed, and Roger strolled down to the cottage to bring up Joab Faro.

“And here,” said Ysabel to Ah Moy in the garden, “I want gardenias!”

She was speaking quietly but Pablo, sitting with his pipe in the summer-house, could hear her with distinctness. Her voice was cold and stubborn. She was eternally arguing with Ah Moy on gardening, but Ah Moy, equally stubborn, kept almost as silent as his plants. He planted them, and where he planted them, there they stayed.

“This wall,” he said, “good fo’ Bougainvillea. Plenty sun. Gardenia like shadow, by stable gate.”

Her voice grew colder and harder, but it splintered against the rock of stubbornness that was Ah Moy. Pablo rejoiced behind his pipe. The Chinaman was right. He planted azaleas where she insisted on gayfeather, and where she insisted Michaelmas daisies should grow, he conjured up gloxinias showier than a florist’s window. The garden was as much Ah Moy’s as was the kitchen, into which Ysabel dared not set foot.

“I want no more of that ivy-geranium, either! Not a sprig of it. And it must all come out!”

Ah Moy entirely disregarded her. How her tongue ran on, thought Pablo, blissfully apart in the summer-house. She was eternally at variance with those about her, except Val; no one was ever right but herself. One such woman was enough in the world; and in the Casa, one too many. She turned her back on the garden, and Paula in overalls and red pigtails, her hands clasped behind, tagged after Ah Moy, who found speech again. He began with a snort and a high-pitched tirade. His equanimity returned, and the two rattled on together in Cantonese like a pair of accomplices, Paula the more voluble. “Mendoza place,” “Esmey” and “Paschino”—those indicated the recital had to do with her triumph at grape-picking.

Darkness swooped in with the bats. Roger had gone to bring Faro for another talk on the state of the machinery at the Five Apostles. Both the hoisting-engines were worn, one of them badly; and seepage from the two new drifts had thrown an overload upon the old pump that when new had been hardly more than adequate. The market was poor again, and Talavera, which had run into bands of rich metal, was getting out quicksilver at a third of what it was costing the Five Apostles. Ottenheim’s had run into ten percent ore, and as a consequence Pablo’s mail was heavy with enquiries from

agitated mine owners up and down the Coast. They remembered, whenever the outlook was gray, that Don Pablo, the sagacious, the old rival of Ottenheim's, the patriarch of Alamos, was still by virtue of knowledge and perception and years the doyen of the mercury trade.

Roger meanwhile was at the cottage, talking privately with Faro, who had closed all the doors.

"I've told my father just how things stand, and he thinks it rather a good idea to close down a couple of months. We've got a backlog in the warehouse. That'll take care of any upturn in the market. Garcia and Cloke will see to the water and the repairs. And you can go to Nevada and have a look at the pump and those hoists at the Queen Mine."

"You've got a price on them?"

"Six thousand."

"Seems high," muttered Faro. "And there's freight on top of it."

Roger laughed easily. "We're getting something. Betts' outfit paid seven thousand new, and the Queen only ran a year. The hoists pulled up a skip only once a month, just enough to keep a little life in the gears. The factory grease is still on them. And the pump is a two-stage turbine, with its own engine. The freightage will be all right. The machinery being second-hand, you can get scrap-iron rates."

"Aye." Faro rubbed his head. "Hadn't thought of that."

It took Roger to think of these little strokes of economy. By luck he had run into Betts, a market operator and cattleman, who had all but forgotten he had anything on the Queen in his ledgers. Betts, with whom he lunched frequently at the club, he had tipped to a forced sale of cattle at Chowchilla, and Betts was glad to return the favor.

"I'm trying to forget that lady in the desert, Cope. You can have her clockworks at the quotation for rust. What's the figure now?"

"Fifteen hundred, Bettsy."

"That's bloody low."

"That junk," said Roger, scratching off a personal check, "isn't doing either of us much good where it is. Here you are!"

The profit of that deal went into concrete. He was quietly putting up on Russian Hill a monolithic ten-apartment house, with quarters for himself on the top floor—great polychrome beams in the ceiling, and a view into Marin

County and through the indigo-floored Golden Gate to the ocean. An imperial view! It was a community apartment venture, and he had an architect who even tested the nails. Angie was to have an apartment on the second floor, and Julie on the third. The two women got along with each other charmingly. Julie designed the interiors, and her sketches helped sell the remaining seven apartments. They made a good pair, she and Angie, they were gracious, handsome and likeable, with plenty of hard, practical sense and a feeling for line and color. They had even undertaken to design the drapes and select the furniture for the seven clients. All paperwork at the moment, for the concrete was still pouring. It took money to pay for that pouring, and he had to take it where he could find it. A stroke of business in mercury—off the mine books—had helped a little. He had traded in five hundred flasks, in the name of a fictitious client with an option, and that had pulled in close to fifty thousand dollars. It hadn't been easy, though, to make delivery. He had almost to snag those flasks out from under Faro's nose. There wasn't a flask left in Alamos, unless the Cornishman had some hidden away somewhere. An upright fellow, the Capitan, but damned secretive.

"It's near Tonopah, the Queen is," Roger said. "There's a whole lot of camps in the desert around there. And you can get all the riggers and truckmen you want." He rose. "Let's go on to the Casa."

They strolled up, and into the summer-house, where Pablo's pipe was still aglow.

"I've told Joab, and he's going up to see that machinery."

"You'll be wanting to close down a while, I understand?" Faro said.

"Eight or nine weeks," said Pablo. "Right through the quail hunting season."

"Things must be pretty bad," Faro affirmed.

"They'll not go any worse, Joab. And it's not so easy on the Spanish outfit, either. Talavera is putting on a show like a picture-gallery. On the other hand, the Abate isn't kicking out rock better than half of one percent. What Lord Cyril Mountford makes on the banana he loses on the peanut."

Not since Mendoza's day had work at the Five Apostles ceased for longer than a fortnight, and then only to dig out and replace a pump smashed by a roof fall. Faro was dispirited. That it should close at all was a foretoken of little good at this stage of its life. In his younger days Don Pablo Cope would not have countenanced it. He would have piled up reserves in flasks and ore, and set his best miners to hunt for leads. Beyond the hanging wall there must be veins that would overtop anything that had been struck yet. But Don Pablo

no more went underground. Roger was indolent. Everyone outside of the Casa must have heard whisperings of his goings-on in the city, and the money he squandered on women. In everything he undertook he was extravagant beyond words. He had spent a huge sum hacking out that glory-hole in the hillside, and only a part of it would have kept all hands busy until the market rose again. And ever since, he had been tight where the mine was involved. Perhaps Mrs. Roger was blamable for that. She kept an eye on the account books, and on the collection of the rents for the houses the Casa owned in the village. In business affairs she was near and shrewd. Did she have a suspicion that Don Pablo, for whom she had no liking, might bequeath the bulk of the mine property to Gervase instead of Roger? If Roger himself feared the possibility of such a bequest, that would explain his insistence on taking up to the city warehouse every available flask of metal at the mine.

“I was thinking,” said Faro, “that with the mine closed we might lose some good men.”

He did not want to waste time in Nevada if there was a chance of exploring the mine with a handful of the oldest miners. It was Roger’s place to go over the border and look at the machinery.

“They’ll be quitting the Five Apostles,” said Pablo. “They can go fishing. In my boat, if they like. Or they can have fare both ways to the gold camps. Grass Valley and Amador mines will take them on a spell.”

“If we’re closing, we’re closing,” said Faro, and got up. “I’ll have Robin post the notice tomorrow. And this mid-week I’ll go and look at those engines.”

“Good-night, Joab,” Pablo said, rocking in his chair, legs crossed, holding a briar to his mouth. A pleasantry was forthcoming. “Don’t let those Nevadans pass any wooden nickels on you, now.”



Faro sent his car at top speed over the dry soda lake, and then carefully up the steep canyon trail to a world of upheaved and jagged porphyry. It was very cold at this altitude. He had left Tonopah an hour and a half before, when it was hardly yet dawn. He was glad he had bought the car as soon as he arrived at the camp—he had got it cheaply from a prospector at the Miners Club who was getting himself an imported English model that cost four times as much, but would travel twice as fast. No prospector dashing out on report

of a gold strike could afford to lose time. As well get there six months too late as be an hour behindhand.

“I don’t know why you’re buying it.” The prospector smiled. “Unless maybe you were brought up on mush. A Californian.”

“That’s right,” Faro smiled back. “And I can run only an old car. We’ve got one at the mine where I come from. And I’m in no hurry. Where’s the Queen?”

“The Queen?” More amused than ever was the Tonopah man. “You don’t want to go to the Queen! It’s deader than a smoked fish. Never had any color to begin with. There was a San Francisco party who tried to develop that claim six years ago. Been trying to get rid of it ever since, but nobody’d take it on a bet. He even tried to give away the machinery, I hear.” He chuckled again as if at a hardy old desert jest. “You sure you want to look at the Queen?”

“That’s right,” said Faro after a long pause.

The desert rat levelled his pipe. “You see that range yonder? That’s Silver Peak. Queen’s on the shoulder. It’s a fifty-three mile run. There may be a watchman there, but you better pack along blankets and some grub.”

That talk gave Faro a bad night, but he was over it now. Even if the Queen’s machinery were scrap-iron, it had cost the Five Apostles six thousand dollars. One of Roger’s little private deals, perhaps. Well, he would find out soon enough; and meanwhile he was thankful he had bought a car. It bumped and chugged up a lightly sketched road, over rocks and gopher mounds. The wind was tremendous, an aerial tidal wave, the sage-brush flattening as if under an invisible roller. The sky in the east paled from liver-color to varying shades of coral, then to a sulphur hue, against which Silver Peak etched its black, rhyolite profile. The land was songless, bone-dry, with no sign of animal life—bare even of the Joshua trees that made whimsical the desert on the flat below.

Here was the Queen. A cluster of weathered huts pressed against its stamp mill and the head-frame with the dead wheel. The tips of waste rock were small; the mine must have run less than two years; and at this height it must have caught so little water that the pump must hardly have been used at all. Faro looked through the car window down into the flat, and beheld a lake with wooded islets; upon it lay the golden morning haze. He unslung a binocular—and saw that all was mirage. The lake was the dry soda bed over which he had coursed; the islets were patches of black sand; the haze came from the ghostly whirlwinds that meandered clockwise over the surface. Over

all this rough country the engines would have to be hauled to the sidings at Tonopah.

Faro got out. Wasn't there anybody around this place? He sounded the horn, but the whine was lost in the up-blowing wind. The mine was still in the shadow of Silver Peak. He put a match to a thick clump of sage-brush. The blaze thrummed like a torn sail in a blast, and painted the windows with a red glow. A door flung open, a frowsy watchman stood there, and Faro, covering his face against the flying grit, backed towards the shack.

"Blowing, that is," he said, and closed the door. "Faro's my name. I'm from the California mine that has bought the Queen's machinery."

"Time somebody came," said the watchman. He filled two mugs with coffee, and they sat to the table. "I've been here going on six years, waiting. First time anything happened was that sage-brush going up in fire. Just as I was fixing on pulling out."

"I looked down at the road—or where there should be a road. I never saw such rough country. That'll be a haul, taking those engines and pumps to the flatcars," said Faro.

He decided to put in a week or two dismantling the machinery; that would cut the expenses down somewhat. Engine-men were harder to find than truckers.

They went to the hoisting-shed, and he inspected the engines. They were perfect. Next, they entered the mine through a drift in which the wind screamed as through a fife. The pump was rustless and sound, and so was the piping, a hundred yards of it; and the Five Apostles required more piping. But six thousand was still a price, and the freight charges on all that bulk might run to another thousand.

"You can find me some help on the rigging, Maguire?"

"I got a prospect I haven't looked at since I came. But I'll give you a hand if it don't take more'n two weeks."

"We'll both be out of here by then," said Faro.

He got into overalls, found tools, and began dismantling the apparatus. Day after day he worked, to knock off at sunset and drive into Tonopah with Maguire, where they dined at Wong Kee's. The watchman was a good driver.

Wong Kee was a round, golden Chinaman who moved between his fires and the greasy counter with its tall chairs, occupied by prospectors and girls in from the dance-halls. He was remarkably kind-hearted, and filled the plates

high. Wong Kee's establishment was a cave filled with blue vapor lifting from the range on which a mound of onions smoked in grease. Faro grew to like Wong Kee's. The food was at least a change from the flapjacks and canned tomatoes at the Queen. Music there was also, of a kind, from a row of slot machines. Sometimes patrons danced to it with the girls. Maguire clumped untiringly in hob-nailed boots with one girl after the other. Faro disapproved of dancing; it was one of the drawbacks at Wong Kee's, but a greater one was the women. He ignored them, and sat at the counter with a newspaper before him.

He was always to remember that night, when a woman on the next chair spoke to him.

"If it isn't troubling you, sir, might I have the water?"

"Water?" He turned, curious. Her soft, black eyes were respectful. She was slightly built, and in a cerise ballroom gown decked with rhinestones. It was the solitary instance in his life in which he had been addressed as "sir." He stared at her. Her voice was low-pitched, her dark hair drawn smoothly into a heavy braiding on her neck. He was quick-eyed enough to perceive that her gown was unstained, and being fastidious that somehow impressed him more than anything else in this woman. Her smile indicated that his newspaper was propped on the waterjug.

"Excuse me," he said. "I had been looking for it myself."

He filled her glass; she thanked him, and spoke no more. They were on adjoining chairs the following night, and this time they fell into talk.

"You're from California," she said. "I knew from your hat."

He glanced into the mirror behind Wong Kee at his bearded self in leather jacket and high-peaked Monterey hat. There was a difference between his hat and all the other hats in the room, but he had not remarked it before.

"That's so! I never thought of that," he said. A woman would notice hats, of course. "And they've got their own opinions of Californians here," he said, drily. "They seem to think we live on mush, and are claim-jumpers."

The woman was amused. "It's only what Nevadans used to say a long time ago, and it doesn't mean anything. People always say on in fun what they have always heard. But Californians somehow always had the best of it."

"Oh, they did?"

"Look at all our rivers," she smiled. "They're not much, but what we do have—they flow over the border to California. And all the silver from the

Comstock, and all the gold from these camps here, they flowed to San Francisco. And what we could hang on to here was mostly sand.”

“Well,” he laughed, “I’m not jumping claims on any of it.”

“You are working anything here?”

“The Queen. Taking out her machinery to send over the border. But she’s dead. I’m pretty near through with the rigging job. I’ve got the pump out.” It was strange, discussing machinery with a dance-hall girl. “And the engines are on rollers.”

“That’ll be heavy work, bringing them down from Silver Peak. Four horse teams and windlass trucks.”

She stirred her cup thoughtfully. “There’s been a lot of that done around here. Bullfrog, Grandpa, Bonnie Clair. Lot of camps. They all got cleaned out.”

“You know the desert.”

“I don’t know much else.” She had tapered off on “sir.” “I’ve always lived on it. You are looking for heavy truckers? The best are Eli Jaggar and Con Hodge. They hauled off all of Rhyolite, and they’re in Tonopah now.”

“I ought to see them, and mighty quick.”

“I’ll leave a message with the barkeep at the dance-hall.”

“I’ll be obliged,” said Faro. “Tell them to come up with their teams soon as they can.”

Wong Kee spoke a word to the girl with a nod at the clock. It was nearly eight, and she left at once. Faro half rose from his chair; his impulse was to hurry out after her. He had succumbed to a powerful attraction. Half of all the life in the world seemed to have gone out of the door with that slight woman in the cerise gown. He resumed his chair slowly, aware that the girl’s departure in such haste had been noticed, and that four or five of the miners were looking at him.

The second day the truckers came to the Queen—Jaggar and Hodge, with low trucks, timbers and cable, and a pair of Indians. Inside of a week all except some lengths of piping had been put aboard the flatcars. Then the piping left. Maguire stowed his blanket, tools and utensils in the car that last sunset at the Queen. They were leaving it forever, Maguire with pay for his dismantling work, going to the Panamints, and Faro home by the Carson route.

“Who is that woman again?” Faro asked. He did not particularize her, though there had been many women at Wong Kee’s. “What’s her name?”

“That slim one? Oh, she’s in the Golden West. Kathy, they call her. That’s the barkeep’s girl.”

Faro drove as if in the clutch of a blind fury, in a straight path across the dry lake. The barkeep’s girl! A spectral whirlwind careened towards them in its dance. The car tore through it, the grit storming in their faces, and for an instant he lost control of the wheel.

“The barkeep’s girl, you say!”

“Women has to belong to somebody,” said Maguire, spitting out dust. “You don’t keep ’em in glass cages, either. Not in the desert! And those in the Golden West come a little rough. From Yerington mostly. They ain’t very eddicated. Careful there, Faro!” he laughed. “There’s another funnel coming!”

Faro stepped on the gas; they reached Tonopah when it was still light, and in front of the Miners’ Club he said goodbye to Maguire. At Wong Kee’s he sat in a booth, waiting with one eye on the door. At eight o’clock he ordered his meal, remembering that it was pay-night, that the dance-hall bars were sloshing over. The girl, of course, would come in late. He dawdled over his coffee and a local newspaper. A despatch caught his eye.

Mining Man Dies

Pablo Aguirre Cope, 86, the oldest resident in Alamos, died at his home today after a short illness following a visit to San Juan Bautista where he delivered an Admission Day address before the Society of Pioneers. Deceased had for many years been prominent in California mining circles.

Faro read again, unbelievably. He was in a stupor. He was orphaned, the Five Apostles was orphaned. Don Pablo, the immortal, a Capitan greater than Mendoza, greater than anyone on the Coast—Don Pablo, that lurching and wondrous old giant, who was all of the Five Apostles and almost all of the history of California on two legs, was gone! “Prominent in mining circles.” The end of him, and his life, had been dismissed in this perfunctory item. As if he had been a constable, or a mine watchman!

Who was to take care of the mine now? With the paper still in his hand Faro dragged himself out and stood bareheaded under the stars. They would be looking for him in Alamos. He would have to leave instantly, and without

sleep drive night and day westward. If only Roger had sent him a message! In forty-eight hours—perhaps less—he would be home.

But he was overpowered by another and more urgent thought. That was to see the woman again. There was no telling where she might stray before he came here again. He got into his car and sped on to the dance-hall. He entered. In the middle of the crowd before the bar he saw her. She saw him first, and came through towards him. The next moment, since he had not advanced beyond the doorway, they were outside.

“I am going to leave now—right now,” he said. “I came for you, and you are coming with me.”

She pleaded with her eyes, without words, gulping in the chill air. The dust underfoot was like powdery snow. “But how can I? You don’t know me enough. And there is something else——”

“I know that. But you are coming with me!”

The door opened, a figure in a white coat emerged, and the woman shrank. The figure leaped upon him, but Faro’s fist, like a block of granite, met him under the chin, and it crumpled in the doorway.

He lifted her into the car and drove off fast. The lights of the camp were far behind, but after an hour he heard the sound of cars in pursuit. It fell off before they reached the dry soda lake. When they had passed Silver Peak she was asleep from fatigue. By morning, he thought, he would strike the dirt road for Mono Lake, and then head straight down the foothill road for Alamos and home.

Part Four

MISS VERMILION

Dusk had thickened the shade on this forested apron of the hill where night came earliest. On the footpath between the highway and the mine, which for two days had been wrapped in absolute silence, crouched a mastiff waiting, jowls on earth, eyes glowing with the red-lustre of opals; indifferent to the birds and the slow trot of a fox that had been lured to the wood by a stillness more profound than either dog or fox had known before on this hill. Another half hour passed, with the coming of a sea wind that blew up mistily through the larches.

The stir of foliage mingled with the roll and drag of a remote surf. On the highway, far beyond the trees, the station-wagon of the Mendoza place, back from the funeral at San Jose, paused a moment, then rushed on. To no human ear could the advancing footsteps have been audible, but the mastiff rose and barked in welcome, the wood blatting with echoes. Then its owner appeared, in uniform, treading with the plume, sword and dignity of one who was both Grand Master of the Knights of Cornwall and Capitan of the renowned quicksilver mine of Alamos. The mastiff waited until they were five yards apart, and since no greeting came, for the Capitan, with head bent, was absorbed in his thoughts, it turned and led the way down the path as if it were his shadow. They emerged from the wood into the road.

Joab Faro paused to look before him at the mass and profile of the Five Apostles. Few things created by man can be so signally harsh and unlovely as a mine; and this one, the greatest in all California, was uglier than most, though its aspect was softened by the rains, sunshine and the sea vapors of eighty years. The stone-built hoisting-shed, retort-house and mill were choked with dust like powdered red chalk. They were silent; so was the wheel atop the head-frame. His eye was upon the flag above the adobe office. Again, after sixteen years, it was at half mast. Roger Cope had been buried that afternoon.

His widow whom he had thankfully left to her missals and solitude in the Casa years before, had sent over to the Knights' lodge a wreath with her card. Paula, the "China cousin," who had surprisingly turned up, had come late to the services attended by Esmey. As for Val, the new head of the Five Apostles, he was still on the way home from Mexico; he had the gift of unpunctuality.

It was the Knights, the children of the mine, who had seen to the burying of Roger. The mine looked after its own, although Roger, the wastrel, had not deserved well of it. The Five Apostles, the Capitan felt deep in his heart, had sat in judgment upon him, as it had more than once done upon others, and decreed a lonely and remorseful end.

“You go on now, Perro,” said the Capitan to his mastiff. “So she’ll know I’m back.”

The dog withdrew still as a shadow, and went on to the fenced cottage a stone’s throw down the road. Faro walked up to the mine-top. A light was over the first of the low, brick smelters standing in a row below the *planilla*. The others—there were five in all, named by Don Pablo Cope himself after the Five Apostles, in the old Spanish fashion—were dark hulks, given over to rust, decay and the conquering vine. Only the San Lucas was left. He stood reflecting on the days of the fullness when each of them, insatiably devouring logs and cinnabar ore, roared and spouted flames like so many Molochs, and his father, Powey, rode him up and down the row on his shoulders.

One smelter after another was rebuilt inside to house a rotary gas furnace. The Molochs were tamed. They slept in times of falling prices and lean rock, to stir again when wars troubled the planet, or foreign mercury rose another peso to the flask. Sometimes all the quicksilver mines of the world, lying dormant, shivered as if some mysterious influence had touched them, then woke to labor frenziedly until some balance, less predictable than the tides, was restored.

Emissaries from Madrid, the capital of the quicksilver world, came to this hidden valley of the Santa Cruz mountains to dine and sign papers at the Casa. Sometimes Don Pablo had pounded on his mahogany table, dredging his Spanish with tin miner’s oaths, which are Celto-Phoenician, and got down to bedrock, vowing he would run his mine as he damn well pleased, cartel or no cartel.

The complexities of the mercury trade, since they involve finance and some incursion into the supernatural, for mercury, as everyone knows, is the one mystical element except sulphur, were entirely beyond the Capitan, a simple man, knowledgeable but in the winning and smelting of ores, and whose motive power, apart from a devotion to rock, was a loyalty to the owners of the Five Apostles, symbolized by the Casa. It was with a distress bordering on consternation that the Capitan saw these furnaces one after the other go cold and black. In another year, perhaps, the last of them, the San Lucas, would go out. It was a fear he kept locked in his breast. The name the mine bore was no charm against the evil that hung over the camp of Alamos.

“You’re early back, Joab,” said Robin Sim, limping out of the office. “Clope was here. He said it was a fine turn-out for the funeral.”

“Aye, a half mile of Knights, pretty near. And five bands. Not so large a parade as there was for Don Pablo, but large enough. Everybody on foot. That was tiring, but Esmey gave me a lift home, and dropped me off at the shortcut. Run the flag up now, Robin. High as it’ll go.”

“It’s not in the lodge rules, lifting the flag at night.”

“You run that flag up. We can make our own rules here.”

Robin dipped the flag. “May the power of the Lord be with Val Cope,” muttered Faro as the flag rose to the top of the pole. “And may good chance be the fortune of the Five Apostles if he and those who serve him be found worthy of reward.”

That was a scrap of invocation he had always remembered from some service at the lodge, and it seemed fitting. Robin, impressed, fastened the rope to a nail.

“That’s a prayer for no more than we should ask, Joab, and a good one. I remember when you came back in time from Nevada to say it at the flag-raising here for Roger. It was answered, but not as we would have liked.” Robin looked gravely at the shuttered Casa. “I’d more than once thought the old breed was pinching out.”

They sat on the bench under the flag, and Faro loosened his coat and sword-belt. He wanted only to rest his feet, and he gave but half an ear to the clerk’s maunderings. Robin was a great brooder over affairs at the Casa, and a simpleton, but trustworthy.

“Don’t know how you could say that, I’m sure. The Copes all had more brains than the common run. And more than their share of luck, too. They either came into stacks of money, or they made it, like Gervase, who is gone now. Don Pablo himself married rich.”

“Roger married rich, too,” demurred Robin, “but the luck didn’t work for him.” He snickered. “Mrs. Roger kept the key to the money-box. He never did make much of a start. And the feeling for rock wasn’t in his bones.”

“He had sense enough to know that,” Faro intervened. “That’s why he kept away from the Five Apostles as much as he could. The Copes, by and large, were not fools. Not even Esmey, who went farming.”

“Heh, heh!” cackled Robin. “I don’t know the line has improved, Joab. Don Pablo got rich on the Five Apostles. Roger spent the money on fancy

ladies. And Val, they say, is spending what's left on horses and racetracks. If he's got half his father's smartness, we'll not be seeing much of him, either, around the mine. He'll leave the whole thing to Joab Faro."

"No. Val could be a Don Pablo over again, and more. He could be, I say. He's got the earmarks, and Roger was not half the engineer his son is."

He stopped, and looked at the far turn of the road, towards the camp. "That's Esmey's car we hear. They must have stopped at the village to lay in supplies for the ranch. Paula's with him, and Madame Tai-Ling."

Both he and the clerk were visited by the same thought. They asked themselves whether or not Esmey, home from the funeral, would call upon his mother at the Casa. A thin wash of mist concealed the road and the firs, but they saw the car-lights flick past, and soon they were gone beyond the clump of firs on the way to the Mendoza place.

"It'll take something more than Roger's death to bring Esmey and his mother together," said Robin.

"Aye, it would!" thought Faro. And Mrs. Roger, he was sure, would be thoroughly displeased if she should learn that Madame Tai-Ling and Paula—for neither of whom she had liking—had attended the funeral; had, indeed, been the female representatives of the Casa at the service.

Robin lighted his pipe and waited for Faro to speak. Strange things had occurred this eventful day, and the Capitan, who knew more about the events than anyone else, stood glowering at those remote firs. There was much that Robin wanted to hear. His wife would expect to be informed, and Robin, not being of the stock of martyrs, was troubled at the prospect of reaching home without a full description of the grandeurs of the funeral. Robin's wife was on the committee of the Ladies Auxiliary of the Knights, which had seen to such matters as the flowers and cards, and unless the Capitan broke his silence, he would have to stop in at Bastian's and garner some details at the bar.

"Paula Cope and Madame Tai-Ling just got in from China yesterday, eve of the funeral. And they're staying at the ranch."

"It was as if they had heard something. But they couldn't have! It was sudden with Roger."

Faro, smoothing his white gloves, nodded. "It was. And by the way, Robin, I stepped out of the parade a moment to go into Pelt's hardware and order some washers sent up. Have they come yet?"

"They're here. At the blacksmith shop."

“Then tell Cloke to fix up the Queen pump. I heard it all last night coughing like an old horse. Mrs. Faro spoke of it this morning when she came in with some mint, and said the ditch was half dry. That garden’s got to have more water. You better tell Cloke to drop in, and see me before he goes home.”

“How was the music? How did the march go?”

“There was no complaint at all about the march. Our band played it at the head all the way to the chapel. I don’t know that I ever heard ‘Pomp and Circumstance’ played finer.”

Robin champed testily. He was the trumpeter of the Alamos lodge band, and fate in the guise of a touch of rheumatics had stopped him from sharing in the glory of the day.

“Maybe so, Joab; maybe so. But you don’t get much out of the andante without full brass.”

“No, but we get along. We borrowed cymbals from the Grass Valley outfit, and muffled another bass drum. Our band had them all stopped.”

“ ’Night, Joab,” said Robin, heavily.

It had been a calamitous day. And he had failed to pry a word out of Faro, who was a close-mouthed one! Paula Cope—she was all of the China side of the family now that Gervase, her father and the late Roger’s cousin, was gone—why had she come here all of a sudden? Had she come at last to marry Val? Gervase had left her everything—his share in the mine, and in the Canton paint factory that had been the mine’s largest customer for twenty years. And money married money. There were people who said that the Tai-Ling grip on the mine was firmer than anyone liked at the Casa.

Robin knocked out his pipe ruefully, and watched Faro, sword resting across his arm, descend the path with his massive tread. Faro was graver than usual. Though his remarks had showed him to be still engrossed with the routine trifles of the mine, his concern could not have been other than the passing of Roger Cope.

Robin, like everyone else in Alamos, was in error. Joab Faro was not griefstricken; he had no concern for anything at the moment but the tomorrows of the mine, which he had nursed like an infant ever since the sepulture of Don Pablo, the only one in the Cope dynasty whom he thought worth a fig. Roger had dropped the Five Apostles on his lap in an indecent hurry.

“Run her, Joab,” he said. “You’ve got as much comprehension of rock as I have, and you’re better at digging it out. I’m giving you the rating of manager plus Capitan!”

With that he fled to San Francisco, where he stayed as much as he could, except in the hunting season, when he slaughtered ducks and geese in the marshes, with a pair of handsome women in breeches to paddle his canoe. Sometimes Val, when he happened to be in the region, which was not often, for he was abroad much of the time, or in Mexico, accompanied him on these sumptuous forays.

“Not half bad fun, either, Capitan,” he used to say, giving him a brace of game. “Though I’m not a mud-lark myself. But they do themselves well, with a Chinese cook, a big tent, and all that. You’ve got to say it for Father that he’s as good a hunter as they come. Even if he’s like that French general who never took to the field without the endearing solace of female companionship.”

Faro disapproved of it all. But he was thankful to Roger for giving him so much leeway; he had always worked better with no one breathing on his neck. If he needed instructions, or some engineering figures, he went up to San Francisco and got them; or Roger might come down, usually at night, to discuss some problem or other, and have a tramp with him through the mine, and then stay until morning at the cottage. Things worked out very well in that manner. The last year or two, Roger had sent down Val, who was capable, and who knew the mine after dragging a theodolite through every foot of it from top to bottom for years. Val was the more studious one, the more thorough, the cleverer of the two. He always had a book under his arm, a textbook in German or Spanish, stuff about metallurgy. That was a hobby of Val’s, metallurgy. And he made a neat sum—pocket-money for him—as consulting engineer for some of the up-State mines. That was the trouble, picking up fees elsewhere interested him more than staying reasonably close to Alamos, where he could be found when he was needed. The plain truth of it was that Val shared his father’s distaste for Alamos.

Faro rested again on a log. That march behind the drum and fifes had been more wearying than an entire day of slogging through the mine, and the sun had been hot on his plumed hat. The air was cool and salty tonight. Whenever the scents were pungent, that was the sign of a gale getting ready to blow in from the sea. He could smell the mint in Kathy’s garden. A lifetime in the galleries had so sharpened his awareness of smells that even on the blackest nights he could find his way home down this path, or through the

canyon, by the familiar odors of the plants. That mist, too, was another sign of a gale.

He listened to the far throb of the pump he had brought from Nevada; it sounded like a tiring heart. But it was the mine that was tired, not the pump, which needed only a handful of washers and a little tightening-up. The old Five Apostles was playing out, and no one knew that but himself. He had once told Roger his suspicion, but Roger had laughed at him.

“Nonsense!” he said heartily—perhaps too heartily. “It will outlast Talavera! I hope you’ll live forever, Capitan—but if you don’t, there’ll be at least fifty Capitans more at Alamos. And this two percent ore looks pretty good from any light.”

That was all very well, but something was amiss. Twice since Roger had taken charge, the Five Apostles had shut down, though it had been putting out a stream of flasks, and after each shutdown Roger sold off another parcel of land on the Mendoza holding—but pasturage mostly, at the far end of the ranch. Old Don Pablo must have turned twice in his grave. Well, the house and the vineyard were safe; they had been turned over to Esmeý.



The mastiff barked, the door flung open, and the block of light fell upon Faro standing absently in the yard, head bowed.

“I knew it would be you, Joab,” said Kathy. “Now you come right in, and supper’ll be ready soon as you change.”

Upstairs Faro changed into corduroys and slippers, and came down to join Kathy at the table spread before the hearth on which a pine root was crackling. It was a large, beam-ceilinged room, with an odor of mastiff and Kathy’s perfumes. On the mantelpiece were a fan and a cowed friar carved of liver-hued cinnabar; shells, souvenirs from the Pavilion at Santa Cruz, and some log funguses from the mine, large as trays, tastefully painted with sketches of the Casa and its rose garden. The other notions, and the ugly and solid furniture, most of it from the Casa where it had been used from Dona Ana’s day to the advent of Ysabel Machado, Roger’s wife, had been brought to the cottage long before Kathy came.

They went through the meal silently, and after the Indian girl cleared and folded away the table, he turned to sit facing the hearth, with the wine glass on his knee. Kathy began to knit. Patient and watchful, her easy alertness ever on the edge of a smile, Kathy lived always in the center of a calm.

Though she was after Mrs. Roger the ranking officer of the Ladies Auxiliary, she had somehow never become part of the village life, which she looked upon quietly and with almost the detachment of a stranger. Her world was Joab Faro, who had lifted her in a bound from obscurity to the second most notable rank in Alamos. Of her earlier years she never spoke, nor of what camps she had lived in. She was still dark with the sun-tan of the Nevada desert, still handsome in a thin, country way, with her graying hair drawn to a chignon, her hands, though she was indefatigable about the house and in the garden, smooth and well-kept. She was Mrs. Faro, she visited the Casa now and then, she attended the Auxiliary meetings regularly, and she was from Nevada—beyond that, the village knew no more of her than it did when she came.

“Do you hear that, Joab?” she said, with a pause in her knitting. “The runlet’s full again in the garden.”

“Aye. Cloke fixed the pump. I bet you he’ll be at the ranch tonight. Talking over with Esmey what’ll happen.”

“They’re a pair, those two.”

“I’ve got news for you,” Faro said, “something more than you’d believe. Paula is back. Esmey gave me a ride back with her and Tai-Ling.”

“Paula! Where? At the Casa?”

“Not with Mrs. Roger still there! No, Esmey took them straight on to the ranch. They didn’t even stop at the Casa. I saw them at the services, in mourning, and rode up with them as far as the shortcut.”

“So Paula’s back!” said Kathy. “Well, well! I suppose that’ll bring Val here quicker. They’ll be married soon, I expect. They’ve been engaged a long time. Is she pretty as ever?”

“More, I’d say. Quite the lady. Taller, with Gervase’s nose, and ropes and ropes of hair. Madame Tai-Ling was calling her ‘Yin-Chiu,’ ‘Miss Vermilion.’ I remember how we used to call her that.”

“And it’s been nine years since we saw her last,” said Kathy. “She was fourteen.”

“She sent us a card last spring, but didn’t say anything about coming over here. Now what—what was it, do you suppose, that——”

“That brought them here at this time?” he finished for her. “That’s what Robin was asking. As if anybody knew.”

A sudden wind clashed boughs over the roof, and sparks blew over the hearth. Faro rose to put up the screen. Kathy's hands lifted her knitting, then fell again.

"Wasn't it as if some warning had come to her?"

"A warning?" Faro looked at her hesitantly. "She wasn't that close to Roger. It doesn't seem likely a warning should come to her, and not to Val, or someone nearer the family."

No one, not even Roger's Japanese valet, had suspected that when he came back to his apartment in San Francisco, a little shaken after a touch of fever in the marshes, where he had gone duck hunting, that his illness would turn into anything grave. A hunter of robust vitality, he had packed his canoe, gun and supplies from one islet to another for days, wading up to his belt, lying in coverts for half a night, until he had knocked down his limit of game.

"She *was* the farthest away," said Kathy, resuming her knitting. "And yet she came back the very eve of Roger's funeral. They do say there was always a feyness in the Casa people."

"I never did hold much with that," Faro said, looking uncomfortable, "but I won't say Don Pablo didn't have a streak of it. Perhaps it wasn't feyness. Second sight, perhaps. Like when he saw that ten-foot seam under the floor of Number Three level. But he never heard knockers—nor tappings where there was ore—even if he was part Cornish."

"Second sight, then," said Kathy.

"They do say that skips over and touches a grandchild. I don't know about her. But Val is more like Don Pablo. More than Roger was—which may be a good thing for the Five Apostles." He nodded at the melodeon in the corner. "Time that Paula came to give us a few tunes."

"She must come," responded Kathy with warmth. She was also proud of her melodeon, which Faro had bought after settling her in the cottage. To own a melodeon in the Alamos of that time, when society was mostly chapel-going, was as much the stamp of assured place as the owning of a phaeton and trotter; and Kathy's melodeon was the shiniest to be found in any San Jose music-shop.

Neither Kathy nor Faro played with skill, and there had been little music and gaiety in the cottage since Paula, Esmey and sometimes Val (who was so much of the time away at school) came in the evenings to visit them. Often they came riding, the three of them, on Val's saddle-horse, Red Flame. More often they came on foot; and with their long legs and large Spanish eyes, they

looked like deer coming down to water at dusk. Faro had a great tenderness for young people, and for none more than the children of the Casa, who were noisy and affectionate; in short, quite natural, and as tuneful as thrushes. He liked to hear their voices in hymns, and they sang for him, Paula on the seat, noisily working keyboard and bellows. If it were someone's birthday Robin Sim came in with trombone, and Faro would thunder ballads from the album, rattling the windows, and the night wound up with Kathy bringing in cocoa and hot saffron cake.

It was Paula who came the oftenest when all three of the children were at the Casa, but her holidays at Alamos were far apart. She always came from China with her foster-mother, old Mr. Wu's widow. Gervase never had burned his bridges behind him. He was often homesick, his heart kept wandering back to Alamos, and he sent his daughter to follow it, so that when the time came for her to return to California to stay, she would not feel wholly alien.

After the cheerful life of the Tai-Lings, with its boatings and festivity, and winter excursions up to the snow and the mountain house, life at the Casa, which was ruled over by her austere Aunt Ysabel, could be grim and stuffy. It was more than easy-going Roger could stand, and one night he packed up and left the Casa forever. The children after that got along well in a state of rebellion, and were most scandalously aided and pampered by the Chinese houseman.

Gervase came even more rarely than his daughter. He was received coldly by Mrs. Roger, mindful of a quarter million loan made the Five Apostles by Tai-Ling and Company, of which Gervase was the "Company." To make things worse, the loan, without interest, had saved the mining firm. In return, it had agreed to send the Canton house all the metal it needed, at ten percent below the domestic market, which to the unbiased mind seemed fair dealing, for the China end paid for the hauling of the flasks—each cast-iron cylinder held seventy-six and a half pounds of metal—to San Francisco, then the over-sea freight, and the lighterage up the river to the factory.

The mine, for a while, sold less and less metal to the Tai-Ling house, selling it, instead, at home. A quarrel followed, and Gervase opened a mine of his own in the province of Sze-Chuan. Roger's stubbornness came near to being fatal. The market slumped, quicksilver fell to seventy dollars the flask, then to forty, with no demand. Roger made peace with the Canton house, sold his reserve and kept the mine working. Mrs. Roger did not conceal her resentment at the prosperity of Tai-Ling and Company. She lacked much in graciousness and tact. Her coldness troubled Gervase not in the slightest. He was thankful that in his impetuous youth, when he had pressed her to marry

him, she had turned about and married Roger instead. Roger he thought quite an unlucky dog. Gervase lodged at the Casa, nevertheless, being on good business terms with the Five Apostles—he owned a chunk of it, anyway, and the mine would have to keep on sending metal to Canton until that quarter million dollars was paid up—and he enjoyed his holiday. It was very distressful to Mrs. Roger, for he was not fastidious; he spent much time at Bastian's tavern, where he drank beer, and played cards with old school friends and Knights, called at the Faro cottage now and then, and left one night for China. That displeased Faro. No Cope was ever the better for being absent too long from Alamos.

“Paula was in mourning?” Kathy asked.

“Aye.”

“Then she must have had it made up in San Francisco.”

“They were there two days after landing, Madame Tai-Ling told me.”

“They could have come here directly, and we could have given them the front room. The idea of Paula staying up there at a hotel when she could be here.”

“I don't know that they stayed at a hotel. It isn't as if they were strangers. Paula has friends at Berkeley, and Madame Tai-Ling has friends in the trade. Like Chuen Toy, who used to drive up here years ago to buy job lots of flasks.”

A rap fell at the door, and under the writing-table the dog barked. Faro looked out into the night. The ditch in the yard was running a full stream, and at the mine, where all else was quiet, he heard the throb of the repaired pump. Cloke appeared on the veranda, carrying his hat.

“You'll come in a moment, Benjy?”

“Won't stay long, Capitan.”

Faro filled a wine glass on the table. The bottle struck an empty glass, which flung out a ring, and he quelled it with his hand. It was one of the beliefs in the mine that the ringing of a glass boded no more good fortune than a knell.

“It was a holiday for you, Benjy, but I asked Robin to have you get at that pump if you came in. I didn't like that coughing.”

“Didn't take me any time,” said Cloke, after emptying his glass. “I came to work a bit on that engine before it got too dark. And Robin told me. It was a bad day for Robin, losing that chance to play trumpet in the procession.”

“Aye, but he’s not one to speak of his good days. And Robin and his trumpet aren’t through yet. They’ve outlasted two Copes already, and I don’t know how many Knights.”

“You heard anything, Capitan, of Val being on the way home?”

“No, but I’ve heard they got word to him. He was down in Mexico.”

“If you’d speak to him when he comes about that engine I figure on building, I’d be obliged, Capitan.”

That pile of wreckage that Cloke hoped to see evolve into a locomotive, though the dump-cars could be pushed about easily enough by the shoulder, was cluttering up the mine-top.

“I will. You might get that top cleaned up first, if only to make an impression. It’s growing to look more like a junk-yard.”

“You’ll be seeing Esmey in the morning?”

“I’ll be there around noon.”

“You might see about getting some wood for the boiler-house. He and Rios are swamping on the ridge, and they must have at least thirty cords stacked up.”

“There’s a lot of scrub in the canyon that we can cut.”

“That’s just brushwood. What we’ve got to have is juniper and oak—about four loads.”

Cloke trudged off into the night, and Faro closed the door. He had said little to Robin and still less to Cloke, who was so much of the time at the Mendoza place where the women were staying, and perhaps the less the women knew, the better. Paula might be engaged to Val—it had been a long and rather vague engagement—and yet she might, after all, be on the side of the Canton family, as her father had been. Faro was as reticent about affairs at the Casa and the Five Apostles as he was about his own household.

“Capitan,” Roger had said once, half amused at the debate they had over some work, “I’ll be damned if I don’t think the mine is nearer to you than the vein in your neck!”

And Roger, for all his light tone, had meant it.



Faro lighted the red cannonball lamp on the table. In a few days Kathy and the Auxiliary were to pay a call at the Casa. Mrs. Roger Cope was the Worshipful Grand Matron of the Order. On this visit Kathy would have to speak what was known as a "condolence piece." Her addresses on all such occasions as these were moving and eloquent.

"Where's some paper, Kathy?"

"In that drawer where the string is kept."

He found it, smoothed a sheet on the table, leaned back and stared up at the whitewashed beams of the room. Writing was a discipline contrary to his temperament, but as Grand Master of the Knights of Cornwall, upon whom was placed the burden of orator, he had trained himself to work out patterns of commemorative phrase.

"Honored Madame," his pencil began.

After that, it moved easily. The room clicked with Kathy's knitting. Loose blocks of storm broke in from the sea. Lashings of rain swirled on the dark windowpanes. Faro wrote on steadily, covering the backs of assay-office reports with his minute script. He was the scholar of the village, acquainted with chemistry and the inside of large books that he had brought back with him from Spain, and because of his penmanship he served on voting days as clerk of the election board.

Kathy's pride in his learning was the stronger for her own slight instruction. When she was very young and lived at Calico, Mesquite and Bullfrog with her mother, an inebriate mining-camp cook who passed as a widow, there was either no schoolhouse at hand, or it closed after a brief while, the camp dying, and they went on elsewhere with the miners before she came to grips with spelling. A gambler insisted on having her sent to a convent in California, where she wept, stormed and rebelled. Her language, gathered from Bullfrog teamsters, whom adversity in the shape of mules and bogged-down ore wagons had thrown into grievous emotional stress, was something unheard of in those confines. The complaints were many, and parents sent letters to the school. A frightened nun came into the classroom one day, hurried Kathy to the study of the Mother Superior, and fled.

"So you are the small girl from Nevada I've been hearing about?" asked the Mother Superior. She hardly lifted her eyes as she wrote at a big mahogany table. "Sit in that chair, please. Now, you may cuss for exactly ten minutes."

Hesitating, the child began. She swore herself out in two minutes, then stopped.

“I am extremely busy,” said the Mother Superior, stamping hot sealing-wax on an envelope, “and have no time to waste on disobedient children. You have eight minutes more to say what you wish. Proceed.”

Kathy began again, and finished up with spectacular efforts in Spanish and an English used by the Indian teamsters at Bullfrog, who had an especial form of address to mules. Then Kathy sat dumb. The Mother Superior laid down her pen and looked at her. She was very old, with hands that trembled; and the years had laden her with wisdom. But she was still capable of wonder.

“For a person of your age, you have heard a great deal. Too much, I think. I must hear no more complaints of your swearing, Never! If you feel you must swear, then come into this study and sit in that chair and swear.”

“Yes, ma’am.”

“Very good. From now on let me hear nothing of you save good reports. You may return to your class.”

Her deportment in school from that hour was exemplary. At fifteen, when letters and gifts of tuition money ceased to come, the Mother Superior asked her questions which she could not answer. A half year later, Kathy, alarmed, fled the convent. She left for Nevada, and in empty search of her mother, flitted from camp to camp, here as a waitress, there as a dance-hall girl.

Joab Faro appeared at the Golden West and carried her away. It was a night of piercing cold on the Sierra Nevada. Twice they were caught in snow-drifts, for winter had come on early. Her dress was a thin red dinner-gown, and he wrapped her in blankets to save her from freezing to death. By the time they reached Mariposa she was ill, and when they got to the cottage at Alamos—she remembered the black-garbed crowd before the Casa where Don Pablo’s body lay—she was delirious. Then women of the Auxiliary came in, headed by Verity Sim.

“She’s from Nevada—” she heard Joab say. “My wife—it was rough travelling for her.”

Joab was absent from the funeral, absent from all the services except the flag-lowering at the mine office where he spoke a prayer. In a month she recovered. Verity Sim came in now and then with dishes, and to see that the Indian girl was thorough in her housework.

“Mrs. Faro,” Verity Sim called her. “Mrs. Faro” she was to everyone.

The past was gone, and Kathy Faro she was, wife of the Capitan of the Five Apostles, though no marriage contract, with a pair of clasped hands

framed in tinted forget-me-nots, hung on the wall of their cottage.

“And now, my lamb, are you ready?”

Faro read the address. He read it twice over, repeating each paragraph slowly. She echoed it as he watched her over his glasses, swaying his hand like the finger of a metronome.

“Honored Madame: Since all-wise Providence has in the measure of time deemed it meet to remove from our midst our Worshipful Past Grand Master, Roger Seraphin Cope, whose example and guidance have for these many years——”

Faro listened from his desk, the same phrases murmuring in his beard. Still knitting, her gaze fixed on the cinnabar friar on the mantelpiece, she went through the piece by rote. It was an address of comfort, and her intonation was clear and moving. Kathy Faro had a wonderful memory and the Capitan was proud of her.

Poplars, scrub oaks, and a spraying of pines and junipers—all second-growth wood, the thin echo of a forest whose columns had gone down into the mine—still remained on this field. Beyond it an acre of the old timber flourished in a strip atop the ridge, a windbreak of redwoods loud with sound from the Pacific and the rolling combers on the beach. The ranch had always been a tributary to the Five Apostles, and in times of borrasca, between the exhaustion of one vein and the finding of another, or when mercury went a-begging, the ranch was levied upon. Wood was cut and hauled to market; and always the mine had drawn upon it for timbering. Though it was now Esmey's, the Casa still felt it had prior rights to the timber. Roger had given up arguing with Esmey over it, but Mrs. Roger, after upbraiding Esmey for his mulishness, sent over the reluctant Father Vargas, who walked about with him in the strip, looking up at the trees.

“And you decline to hack them down, do you?” he asked. “You're not going to give the Five Apostles any of this lumber”—he touched a fine young cryptomeria respectfully—“though it was marked for the tunnels before you were born?”

“They'll not get that, nor any of the others, as long as I own this ranch. Or don't I?”

“You do,” said Father Vargas, and there the matter ended for him.

In a week Faro came up, vexed. That tree was good mine timber. It was needed for roof props, and he had promised Roger, as he had also promised Mrs. Roger and himself, that he would surely come away with that tree. Esmey listened to his argument.

“That timber's needed. We've got to have it for that roof in Number Two level, and we've been waiting for it all this time. Reason we didn't cut it down earlier was it had to thicken out.”

“It's on my claim,” laughed Esmey. “And it'll stay where it is, and thicken out more.”

“Prop timber was exempted,” Faro said.

“That isn't a prop. It's my cryptomeria. And if it's anybody else's, then Crossett forgot to mention it in the deed of sale. We'll just leave it grow,

Capitan. Too much of this ranch has been poured down the shaft. And I'll hang on to what's left, I promise you. I rather think this will be a good ranch when the Five Apostles is caved in and drowned out."

Faro swallowed. This was an affront not only to himself but to the Casa and the mine.

"I've known a good many of your family," he said. "They were of a line that respected mines. And I never believed I'd come across a Cope that would speak in this fashion."

"You've come across one now. But don't judge the line by me. I'm just an off sample."

"Fuel wood, then?" asked Faro. "If you're clearing that ridge, you'll be having a lot of stumpage and trash. We could use that in the boiler-house."

"Not selling any of it. If the mine wants any, it can get some from Angel. He's in the wood business, too."

The rebuff greatly tried Faro's patience. Esmey was the dull one of the family, but to argue with any Cope, however unworthy, was useless. He glared from under his shaggy eyebrows, flicked the brim of his hat with a thumb, and marched off the field.

Such was the lack of unifying sentiment between the ranch and the Casa that for the next two winters the Five Apostles got its wood from Angel's.

The rains were copious at this year's end, and since the ground was soft, Esmey and his helper were putting in a few licks on the clearing. Rios lighted a fuse. They watched the spark trickle through grass, and into the hollow he had scraped under a scrub oak and packed with dynamite. A tremor, and the tree rose, to fall across a hummock, where it would be easy to saw up.

"That was calling the shot, *hombre*," said Esmey, honing his axe. "If we keep this up all winter, we'll get enough wood to boil *frijoles* for part of the Spring."

He swung the axe and lopped off branches and foliage. Rios flung the slashings into a bonfire that made the bright air of the morning aromatic, the twigs exuding incense, the pine-cones snapping like firecrackers. In the next field, a pasture, two old horses put their blind heads over the fence, their nostrils dilating in the vapor of blasting-powder. They neighed. Then they cantered off, sedately rebellious, with the gait of old rocking-horses. Five pensioners of the mine lived out in these hills, to come home at night for shelter. Life was oats and skittles for horses released from bondage in the

mine. Esmey pampered them—duty to animals the one point on which he saw eye to eye with the Five Apostles.

A juniper branch thick with chickadees, mostly upside down, hung over his head. He could have brushed them all off with his finger. It was pleasant in this field, the wind being stopped by the grove on the ridge. Warmth sprang up, though the indigo sky was brushed with a gouache of mist. It was still early, two hours after sun-up. Esmey flung off his coat, and cut away steadily.

All this field, when cleared, he would put under grape vines. This tract of ground, unbroken and weedy, was his favorite, because of the dream locked in it. The rest of the farm had been proved; it gave what it had been giving for years before he had become the master. The ranch vineyard, which had been planted to Spanish grapes ten years before the Civil War, was not to be tampered with, for it grew the wine drunk at all the christenings and weddings from here to the lower tip of San Benito.

But this was a peculiar field, reddish and gravelly, facing away from the sea to the brown valley that all summer reflected light as from a shield. Between cool and warm, a thousand feet high, Pinot should flourish in it; or if the imponderables were on his side, a run of Grey Rieslings. Adventure was ahead of him, but haste would be unwise. Other farmers who had tracts at this altitude were putting out white strains, and it would be well to see how they flourished. Meanwhile, the field was slowly clearing, the stumps being dislodged with deep, soil-loosening blasts of dynamite. And he had just found out why the manzanita clumps were so green of leaf, looking, from a distance, as if sprayed with enamel, and why their branches were smooth and the color of Burgundy. From a spring in this little forest, water came seeping down between rock and earth.

Rios came up with the tools, and soon the whip-saw shrieked and blatted, with sawdust leaping in jets, and log falling after log. Plaintively and with long-drawn notes, childish and wild, Rios sang through a tavern ballad, singing it over and again endlessly. It was an air he had learned at Angel's place, where he danced every Sunday night, dressed in clean, turned-up overalls, with blue, mail-order sombrero and knob-toed yellow shoes. They were his dancing shoes, and to save them from the mud he rode out the three miles and back on one of the blind horses. Rios either sang that ballad, or was silent. And he was now singing for Don Esmey, who was a musician who played the piano. He yelled with variations through the song as they cut the rest of the logs.

"That is good," said Esmey. "But don't they have a new tune at Angel's?"

“*Si*. They come from the box with the guitar. But there is no tune as good as *Tambien, Muchacha*. I will sing you other words.”

“The wedges now, *hombre*.”

Rios held the wedges. Esmey clanged with the sledge-hammer, the logs were rent, and the pile mounted. Then he looked at his watch.

“Getting late. You better go to the house now. The *senoras* should be up.”

Rios dropped the hammer and looked at him in distress. He was a simple field man, alien to housework more involved than boiling up coffee and frijoles, and pushing a broom over the floor. To wait upon two women from an upper sphere of life, to be penned up in the house with them—the thought of it threw him into a state of dismay.

“First, you start a fire in the kitchen, and keep it going until the boiler is hot. The *senoras* like their baths in the morning. Then they will want breakfast. Eggs, perhaps.”

“Eggs!”

“You will have to hunt for eggs. I don’t know if our hens have been equal to a couple of eggs this month. But you can look. And if you can find a clean shirt for yourself, you might crawl into it.”

Rios, dispirited, trudged off. Esmey, with an inward chuckle, went on with the log-splitting. The Mexican was a handy man about the house, good at all manner of chores, though he had gone slack the last year or so and much had to be done in the fields and at the winery.

Paula was self-sufficient, but Madame Tai-Ling would require servants. Esmey was glad they had moved into the ranch-house; he had an affection for Paula, Madame Tai-Ling he admired. Both women were fond of Alamos; there was nowhere else to stay at the moment; and after a space it might occur to his mother, who thought it proper to go into seclusion and outward mourning for a month at least—the Spanish folk of the county were rigorous in their observances—to ask them to stay at the Casa for the rest of their sojourn.

Someone whistled down the slope. He turned. It was Cloke getting over the zigzag fence down by the winery. He jumped to the turf, hitched his belt, and pulling his hat over one eye, came up the path with the gingery tread of a deer-stalker. His professional gait, Esmey called it. What was afoot now? Esmey guessed at a cockfight in Monterey, or a moonlit cruise after broadbill, which were running now between Point Lobos and Santa Cruz, and offered the prime illicit sport of the winter.

He could be bringing news from the mine. Cloke, for all his vagaries, was a Five Apostles man, his pride in it only less strong than his devotion to Esmey, with whom, as a fellow-rebel, he was on an equal footing. It was Esmey who bailed him out after any mischance with the law, some scrape involving a sackful of trout, or a covey of pheasant, lifted from a preserve along the Seventeen Mile Drive. The wardens swooped down on him once when he was stoking the barbecue fires at a Knights of Cornwall picnic, to which he had contributed half a deer. It was someone else's deer. Faro, the Grand Master, felt obliged to announce his expulsion from the order.

For a week, indeed, until Esmey heard of it, Cloke was locked up in the San Jose jail. Esmey, paying the fine, sprung him out at midnight and drove him fast in darkness over the mountains to a cove near Castroville, where Cloke kept his boat, the *Apostle*, at a little hidden jetty. Trolling gear and harpoons for big fish, now out of season, were laid out in the cabin, where Angel was awaiting the two.

“Broadbill are running out near the Point,” Esmey explained to Cloke. “Doesn't do a harpooner any good to get rusty in jail. Takes him a while to get into practice again. Come, we're going right out.”

Those two could always count on each other.

“You and Rios been swamping?” asked Cloke, after he thumbed tobacco into his pipe. “That's a lot of firing stacked up.”

“Plenty. Who was enquiring?”

“Any for Faro?” Cloke narrowed up an eye as he shook out a match. “Any for the boiler-house at the mine?”

“The answer's the same. Not a splinter.”

“I'll tell him,” laughed Cloke. “No harm in asking. He seemed to figure that with Val coming here you wouldn't mind so much.”

“The Capitan's been doing some wrong figuring. There's no wood for the Five Apostles no matter who runs it—Don Roger, the Capitan, Val, or whoever comes after them.”

“That's the way to talk.”

“It's different about the wine, though. Faro can't have wood, but he can have all the wine he wants for the Mass in the gallery. It's for the sake of old Senor Mendoza who planted some damn fine vines here. Sentiment, not business—that's me, Benjy.

“There’s no wood to sell. I’d burn it up first. You can tell Faro I still insist on being the official black sheep of the family—even if another one has bobbed up—and I retain all the privileges of a black sheep.”

“You’ve got a few principles, Esmey, and what you have, you abide by,” said Cloke. He whistled vacantly as Esmey gathered up the tools. “I wanted to ask. With Val back, there’s going to be changes at the mine?”

“He’s a new broom.”

“He’s smart, Val is. Knows when to go by the book. And when to throw it away. It was Val got Roger to put in oil burners. The Capitan was dead set against them ideas and near had a fit. But the Capitan has still got a lot to say around here.”

“You’re cottoning up to him?”

“Well, that trolley engine I’m building, I’ve got to finish it.”

“What’s stopping you?”

“The Capitan don’t like it around.”

Brow lined with anxiety, hands thrust into his pockets, Cloke spoke doggedly around his pipe.

“Told me, he did, it was a heap of junk, a disgrace to the Five Apostles. He can’t see anything of the mine except what’s below. The top, which is all anybody else can see, he’s blind to.

“Now that top is nothing to be proud of. More like a barnyard than a first-class mine. What I’m doing is giving the Five Apostles an engine it can be proud of. There’s no mine in three counties that has got a train engine.”

“I can’t very well interfere with either Faro or Val.”

“You could tell them I’m building it for the Five Apostles. Something I’d like to do for the mine, and—” Cloke dug into his pipe with a knife, and blew it out. “You come down to the shop with me, and I’ll show you the engine.”

Not in two years had Esmey been at the mine.

“I’ll come,” he said.

They trudged off the field, through the vineyard, and went along by the road, falling into the slouching gait of hunters. The morning was filled with the boom of wind from the sea. Esmey’s glance slid from the green patches on the slope to the summer-burnt fields in the hollow, and took in with the slow appraisal of a farmer the shades of color between. Cloke jerked a thumb.

From a clump of toyons, red and green after a smashing rain, lolloped a brace of rabbits. The stringy little man had a spirit that responded with a thrill to the flash of life in a copse, the cry of a night-flying solan goose, and the shimmer of a struck broadbill as it lifted its dorsal fins above water. What he felt in these full moments none other knew but Esmey, his hero, with whom he had crouched wet and half frozen in the duck marshes, and gambled their lives on a torn patch of sail in a gale off the coast. Esmey came first, then the chase, then the mine, where the forge shop was as his own.

They came round the hill, and Cloke pointed. “That’s her. This side the boiler-house.”

“I see, where the shine is.”

“That’s the cabin, and it’s got an aluminum hood. Shows up. I put some licks on it so there’d be something for Val to look at when he came. The flywheel’s down in San Jose to get a crack welded.”

They lurched on. Cloke, muttering around his clenched pipestem, imparted more details in shop talk. Esmey, his thoughts on the Five Apostles, which was soon to have a new master, was looking at the debris heaps of the mine that were the nearest, and the oldest, and they were covered with vetch and milkweed. From here the dumps had the looks of hillocks, so ancient they were at this end, and softened with vegetation. The mill and ore-shed could have been barns, the gallows-frame a pair of blasted pines. The aspect of a mine is sometimes deceptive, like that of an iceberg, which reveals to the eye but a fraction of its structure. Underneath the burros grazing on the green hillside was an architecture vast and hidden. Few outside of Alamos could have guessed at its immensity.

“A Giralda carved out of blackness and stone,” Don Pablo had once said of it.

From the appearance of her top, which was grimy and slipshod—as Cloke had indignantly pointed out—a stranger might have inferred the mine was in bad case. Her mill and boiler-house let in rain. Her hoisting shed was oil-blackened, smacked and ripped by cables; the broken windows were stuffed with old gunny-sacks. Pigs and hens strayed about the smithy. They kept the weeds down, but Cloke took pride in the mine, and the untidiness irked him.

No one was about as they walked to the smithy and its arbor of fir branches, under which the engine stood upon a frame of ties. Cloke gave it a slap, as if it were a horse.

“That’s her.”

“Well, she could be worse, I dare say,” Esmey ventured.

He felt unsure of himself before machinery in a chaotic state. The Capitan, who had, after all, a penetrating eye, had called it a “heap of junk.” This ruin, the vestiges of a steam-powered truck, obsolete and retired twenty years before, Cloke had rescued from the mine’s scrap pile, and after hacking away clay and rust, a sculpturing job, hauled it to his shop.

“She’s better’n she was,” said Cloke, thoughtful, with head on one side. “I can get plenty of power into her, so she can haul a string of trams, like an elephant.”

“That’ll run you into expense.”

“But she’ll be a looker, with that cabin finished. I’ve got to get wheels now. There’s a blacksmith at the Guadalupe that used to work her, and he bought me those condemned sets of wheels from the San Jose roundhouse.”

“You got broke on that deal?”

“It ran to a hundred. I’ve got to haul them to a big shop and get them turned to size. That’ll run to something.”

“You roll them down into my truck, and we’ll take them to town for you. Anything else?”

Cloke gave the ties a kick. “Faro says he wants them right back—for track repair in Number Two level.”

“You tell Rios what you want—poles and logs—and he’ll bring them in off the ranch.”

“Comes under the head of timber,” grinned Cloke, wiping his hands on a lump of waste. “Timber for the Five Apostles.”

There was Faro now, in wet oilskins, climbing out of the skip at the shaft-head. He walked to the office with the underground foreman and Robin.

“No,” said Esmey. “The timber’s for that heap of junk.”

He flicked a thumb at the smithy, and the two went in to the bench.

“Swordfish will be running large in a couple of weeks.” Esmey drew on the bench with a piece of chalk. “They’ll be too large for any hooks or ordinary harpoon. Here’s a harpoon with a togglehead. You can swing that, Benjy?”

Cloke peered through glasses at the drawing.

“Aye. You give me a couple of weeks.”

“Good. By then swordfishing will be in season—for us. We can’t let Paula Cope miss out on a bit of illicit sport.”

Esmey came by the roundabout to the veranda, and halted. It had been sluiced, a table brought out, laid for breakfast, and upon it were roses in his pet ash-tray, a piece of old silver newly rubbed to a shine. And there were the women in dressing-gowns, each decapitating an egg.

“We’ve been waiting for you!” Paula called out. “Here’s your chair.” Ah Moy shuffled out with a tray. “And a crumpet!” she added.

“Thanks,” said he. “This is all surprising—and everything scrubbed. We’ve always had bachelors’ hall here.”

He took his chair. Tai-Ling poured tea, and it had the smoky aroma of kippers, or tarred rope. Her thin, cream-tinted hands seemed to render light everything she touched—the thick crockery, the clumsy three-tined forks. Out on the ridge a hammer clunked with slow echoes.

“Your man Friday,” said Paula. “He escaped when Ah Moy came in with the eggs.”

“He got frightened off.” Esmey grinned delightedly. “And a good thing, too. He is quite worthless in the house, and you wouldn’t look to him for crumpets. He’s a field man, and henceforth he’ll be living out with his wedges and hammer.”

“You have no other servant on your estate?” Tai-Ling asked.

“Only myself! A simple and rough life we have here. And I’m not sure this is an estate—unless in the legal sense. It’s just a farm, Tai-Ling. The grapes keep it going. And we had a forest here once, or at least a large piece of woods, but the mine ate that up. Haven’t you been here before?”

“No. It is a very nice farm.”

“I must take you all around the place. It used to be grandfather’s retreat.”

He remembered that Tai-Ling’s visits to Alamos were brief and always formal, and she stayed at the Casa, and then no longer than two or three days, even when Paula was living there. Tai-Ling and Son Wu stayed up with Pudgy Venn in Berkeley, and Gervase also, though he came down here oftener. The long-suffering Tia Ana then took the children up to visit them—quite heavenly visits, with rides on the ferry-boat, and to San Francisco,

where Tia Ana took them straight to the Sutro Baths, where they stared at the frowsy stuffed cougars, Eskimos and wax-work groups behind glass, where they left her flattening her nose while they slid down the banisters and chased each other among the pools. They had had three kaleidoscopic summers together, and two winters. And after the end of each stay, either Tai-Ling or smiling, quiet Uncle Gervase, as dark-tanned as a saddle, descended upon Alamos and bore Paula off to China again. Once he took Val back with him, and Val had been there frequently since. He had always been close with Paula.

They were alike, as headstrong, unfettered and restless now as they had been in childhood. With Gervase and Son Wu they had travelled for months in the Western provinces, and up to Thibet, and down to Szechwan—a land of tigers and quicksilver. They were in love; at least they were engaged, and the match was highly approved by everyone (except Ysabel Cope, who had one of the Miura girls in mind for him, or some connection of the Machados in Talavera)—though they had a habit of differing quite violently over some trifle, with Val packing off for home.

“It is a very nice farm,” Tai-Ling went on, putting down her fork. “I was up very early this morning, long before anybody else. And I went out, up to that rock, where those queer trees are.”

“Cypresses,” Paula broke in. “They do look queer—with arms flung out, as if they were trying to flee from something, but can’t, because they’re chained to rocks.”

“I must see them again; they are very pretty. But I was standing there, and looking at the house, and I felt that the farm was very old, and full of ghosts.”

“Oh, if you like ghost stories—and there are lots of them here—you must know Father Vargas,” said Paula. “There is the Mendoza ghost, and a road-runner ghost, which Esmey and I saw once, after it had changed into a rabbit.”

“Mendoza?” asked Tai-Ling. “I think Don Pablo spoke of him once, did he not?”

“He may have.” Esmey laughed. “It is quite possible that he did. They say Mendoza is still around. Angel saw him a couple of times, riding by in the fog.”

The whole green-and-bronze region from these hills down to where Point Lobos thrust its jaws into the surf had its arcana, its legends of spectres and visitants who, like the ancient gods, existed because they were believed in. And Mendoza’s was one of the most durable of the local ghosts. Angel’s

father, when young and on his way home from a barbecue, had been overtaken by a stagecoach that hurried past him without sound in the fog, and through the window he had a glimpse of that immortal Capitan, his face bound with a shawl. That was a night when Mass had been held at the gallery.

“I’m for a walk,” said Paula, getting up. “I promised myself I’d see our fig tree the very first thing.”

“It’s where you left it,” remarked Esmeý.

“And you remember how Tia Ana used to bring us here? We climbed it one day, and she was standing below with a clothes-basket full of figs, and a limb fell down with us, and made a jam of the figs. And I’ll want to walk to the creek—but not barefoot, this time—and see if I can’t trudge back with one wretched minnow.”

“I haven’t fished there since,” said Esmeý. “But I go harpooning out on the *Apostle* with Cloke. I’ve an idea harpooning swordfish is against the law—when it’s out of season. But Cloke can’t afford to get out of practice. Angel depends on him for swordfish. I’ll see if we can’t work up a harpooning trip for you.”

They went out into the fenced square of the yard with its upright gum-trees, their columns whitewashed as high as one could reach. The ground was wet, and Paula had on her slippers.

“It may rain,” she said. “I’ll dash in and put on some boots. I’ll catch up with you two.”

“I’ll wait,” he said.

Tai-Ling looked up at the sky in which circled a hawk. She listened to the tossing of the foliage, like swatches of trout-colored silk, and to the remote thunder that was the eternal, slow plowing of the sea. Her throat, ivory-smooth, was as golden as her hands. Her face had the purity and finish of a stone mask. She was neither young nor old, Tai-Ling; and her beauty was hieratic—the beauty of an undying, racial kind; it was perfection, and being perfect had no relation to time.

“A hawk,” she said. “Is it not dangerous for your guinea-hens?”

“Don’t worry about them. They’d put up an awful fight if he troubled them. But he won’t. He’s a peregrine. They breed around here, and nowhere else in the range. Mendoza brought the first pair here, to train for hunting. He knew vines, and he also knew birds. And these peregrines are like eagles; they look after live things near their home, whether doves, guinea-hens, or rabbits.”

“I was out on the ridge this morning,” she said. “The cypresses, the hill, the vineyard. I understand why you do not leave Alamos. Why have you not married?”

Tai-Ling was always direct. She repeated her question, though Paula in boots, black jersey, and beret, was coming towards them.

“I haven’t thought of it,” he demurred.

“Why?” she insisted.

Tai-Ling intercepted the glance, the signal of distress he flung at Paula.

“But why?” she repeated, her shrewd bright eyes glinting with merriment.

“We’re trotting along now, Tai-Ling,” said Paula. “Back in an hour or so, to dress.”

Esmey and Paula walked on to the ridge.

Summer’s dust had been washed from the house, which stood in a field alight with velvety green fire; its slabs were of a darker stain, and the wide porch overlooking the valley was blue with campanula. The mast-like columns of the blue-gums were sharply white under the sun, their foliage swaying in the salt, oxygen-filled air as if still moving after the night’s storm.

The ranch itself hung between the blue heavens and the sea, a peak world given to Sierra juniper, the bluejay and nuthatch. Seagulls camped on the tall side-posts of the gate. Uncouth pelicans had lifted up here from the kelp to ply with graceful wing and a trolling of legs in the mountain air. Far to the left were hills, ochre and green-flecked with woods and plowed fields, and through a rift was to be seen the floor of the remote Salinas valley.

“You see the old vineyard there?” asked Esmey, pointing. “It’s twice as large as it was. And there’s to be a new one where we were cutting wood this morning. For a long time, for years before we were born, the hacienda was a place to do something to. Well, that’s one thing that has been changed. It’s a place now to do something with—and for its own sake.” He paused, then continued, reflectively, “And if I hadn’t come here, if I hadn’t taken it for my share, there would have been still less of it, and the house would have been torn down for the lumber.”

“And that?” She pointed as they came within sight of a long, green building, which was of wood, but of stone where it abutted into the hillside.

“The new winery. Rios and I built it ourselves.”

“Ah Moy brought a message over with the crumpets,” she said, as they sat by the fig tree. “We’ve been asked to call. There’s some kind of reception this afternoon.”

“So there is. The Auxiliary women. You’re going?”

“Oh, naturally. I just wouldn’t think of not going, nor would Tai-Ling. To come in with all those women might make it easier for Aunt Ysabel. I expect to be lost in the shuffle, but we shall at least have paid our respects.”

It would still be difficult for Paula, he felt; and especially since Son Wu’s widow, the head of the China house, was with her. Now that his father was gone, the gulf between his mother and the China house was still wider, and an old enmity—he had no inkling what it might be—had deepened. Some huge loan, payable in metal, was also involved in the quarrel. Esmey knew only that his mother had not been consulted—and there was no reason why she should have been, for she had been left nothing by Don Pablo—when the arrangements were made by Gervase and Son Wu on the one hand, and his father on the other. He did know that the fiscal shape of the mine had been dreadful at the time, that his father liked the terms, and that directly the papers were signed, the money had been paid over in a lump.

Whatever the terms had been, his mother was angry. She was implacable in her dislikes. Perhaps, Esmey thought, she believed the Casa had been put under an obligation to Gervase’s house, and that she had got none of the sum from Roger—she was always buying up some building or bit of ground in Alamos—and that the contract might somehow hamper her adored Val.

“I’ll take you down in the station-wagon,” he said, “and call for you later. You’ll see Kathy, of course. The Casa will be thrown open for the first time in ages, but it won’t mean Mother’s retirement is over. And then the front door will be opened only to Father Vargas and some of those Monterey families. I don’t know to whom else. I’ve been completely out of the Casa since I refused to go into the family’s business, and went to the farm. If I had anything to say, I’d tell Ah Moy over the back fence.”

“Uncle Roger and she never drew any closer? You see, I haven’t been in close touch with the Casa, and Val never did say much.”

“No, the family has been all split-uppty. Mother withdrew from the world, and Father, who had no tendency to the ascetic life, kept in San Francisco. I have to think back to childhood to remember when the Casa meant anything as a home. But Father is the one I was sorry for. We did get along, after a way. He was disappointed in me—and everybody else was, I think—when I didn’t aspire to be a sort of Capitan—under Val, of course.”

“It’s been quite a change, since Grandfather’s day,” she laughed. “But I’m glad to be back here.”

“It’s rather camping it. And I hope you’ll stay on here. Even if you really should be staying at the family manor.”

He had suggested on the way home from the service that they stop in at the Casa, but she had declined. True, she had Tai-Ling with her. He was still wondering why Tai-Ling had come to Alamos.

“But I’m very comfortable here,” she insisted.

“Thanks. But Mother will think you ought to be where people can meet you.”

“But why? Do I really have to be met?”

“Certainly! It’s appropriate. You’re to be the daughter-in-law, and the Monterey families will want to call. You can’t expect to blow in from China after all these years, and not be put on display. Especially with Val coming home any moment.”

“I can still protest,” she said, after a laugh.

“And you will have to put in a series of monumental evenings. The Spanish and Comstock era furniture and horsehair will rise to smother you. It’s a very dark salon; you don’t see much there by day, and still less at night. Just outlines of Father Vargas and the inner group from Monterey; who talk, and sip Port, and talk again, in a buzz-buzz like a hive. They’re Machados, Escobars, Miuras, Romeros—all ultramontane, all related, and they all belong.”

“Well, I don’t,” she snickered. “I’m a Jiminez.”

“And after each has soliloquized, then they have a game of bezique. I do hope you and Tai-Ling play bezique.”

“We play penny-ante. You get Cloke in some night, and we’ll make it a foursome. Tai-Ling loves gambling. She plays for blood.”

The siren at the Five Apostles proclaimed high noon. It was a harsh, brassy cry that winnowed out among the hills. A cloud of nuthatches broke from the fig tree and scattered.

“It blows at midnight, too,” said Esmey. “The graveyard shift. About a year ago it woke me, and I heard somebody on the veranda. I went downstairs, and who should be in the kitchen but my father. First time I had

seen him in a year, and he had just dropped in to see me for a minute. I stirred up the fire, and we had a long talk.

“He was really nice, and I had never known him quieter. Said he was glad I was content on the farm, and making something of it, and that the vines looked prosperous. Always had felt I was practical, he said. And then, a very queer thing, he said he hated the damned mine, himself. It was just a snarl of burrows and damp rat-holes to him—and a livelihood—and he was waiting for Val to take the burden off his hands. Val was just then in China, I think. We had some wine, and we smoked, but he hadn’t anything particular to say. I didn’t know much about the mine, and he knew nothing of the farm. I think he was feeling adrift, as if he had cut loose from something, and was trying somehow for an anchorage, and that was why he had come to the Five Apostles that night, perhaps to find one.

“There wasn’t one at the Casa. It had ceased to be a home when Mother froze everybody out, and the old life was gone. I suppose the pioneers, like my grandfather, had the best of it. They created something. It sounds ridiculous and preachy, but they did have energy and faith. I suppose my father felt that, and that was why he wanted to turn Val and me into the mine—so we might come out a pair of Don Pablos. Well, maybe Val will be one.”

“I don’t know,” murmured Paula, pulling off her shoe to remove twigs. “What else did he say?”

“Nothing much. I don’t think he had anything to say, but we shook hands, and he left, about two in the morning. Went straight back to the city in his car, alone. That was the last time I spoke with him.

“It must have been some sort of witchery that brought him now and then to the mine. And he wanted to see that Val had a good start. The two of them and Faro, Cloke said, used to walk up and down the road by the mine, heads bowed, thick as thieves, talking about ore, or some vein or assay. More often it was Val who talked. Faro thinks him a genius.”

“Has that old curmudgeon changed any?”

“Not he! We still keep up a feud. He’s still trying to buy some wood here, to burn up in his boiler-house. But he’ll never get any. The Capitan’s all right, though. Stubborn, but square.”

“Kathy’s the one I really like,” said Paula. “Dear Kathy! She put up with an awful lot from us youngsters! Those evenings we used to spend at her house, eating saffron cake, shouting at the melodeon, raising Old Ned. It was something we couldn’t do at the Casa, what with Aunt Ysabel’s headaches.”

Paula was re-tying her boot.

“I shall be seeing her this afternoon. I suppose she knows now that I’m here.”

“She asked me once last winter when you and Val intended to marry.”

“I do intend to marry him. But something always happened. I either got out of the mood, or we’d get into a big row.” She laughed easily. “By the time I was in the mood again, I was elsewhere, and he out at sea, or in California. This time—well, it is something else. I think you ought to know. The China house—and that includes me—is in quite a tangle. It has received no quicksilver from Alamos in two years. Not a flask.”

He looked at her dumbly. He had not known that anything was wrong, or quite so wrong as this. The mine was yielding metal, and metal was being shipped out, and Tai-Ling’s, he had thought, was being as steadily supplied as any of the mine’s old clients. Then he remembered something of a contract. Tai-Ling’s, indeed, was more than a client; it was a creditor. That made it all the more confusing. Perhaps it explained why both Madame Tai-Ling and Paula had come to Alamos.

“But why hadn’t it?” he asked. “What happened?”

“We could never find out. That’s one of the reasons I’m here.”

Perhaps his father knew, but his father was gone. Who else would know? Crossett? The girl was looking wretched, and a little frightened.

“That’s a great pity,” he said. “It was terribly important, to get that supply? Didn’t the firm have any reserve at all, any backlog?”

“It had a little, yes. But there had been floods, and long seasons of rain, and that meant famine, because the grain spoiled in the ground. The seedsmen needed the mercury to prevent rot. There were governors who looked to us for help. We did all we could, giving up our metal, and buying a little here and there, but never enough.”

“What did Father say?”

“We wrote and wrote, and we cabled. Never any answer. ‘Five Apostles, Sanfran’ might as well have been the Dead Letter Office.”

“Oh, that was too bad,” he said, inadequately. “And you couldn’t get metal from those Western provinces?”

“They were cut off. I went there once, with Chan, Little Wu and Pichi, but there was much disturbance. First, bandits had the roads and canals; and then

the rebels had them. We could bring no metal through. We tried bribery; that didn't work, either. It took us four months to work our way back home."

And there were women in Alamos, he reflected, who did not dare stick their heads out into the street after nightfall! What she must have gone through.

"I knew the route as well as they did, or better. Father used to take me along it, though I was very young then. But the tradesmen and the monasteries remembered me. And they remembered 'Tai-Ling Cope,' with his pith helmet and calabash pipe, the tall American who sold paints and enamels and lacquers and oils for old Mr. Wu's house, whose chop was the 'Goose-and-Arrow.' They thought highly of that vermilion, too. The laws of the Seven Purgatories and Heaven are very strict about the right shade of red. And I had to explain why we hadn't any.

"Then Pichi went out for another try on the Thibetan route, and we have not heard of him since. The crop failures and banditry kept up, and the factory closed, all but a corner of it. Tai-Ling and I came here to see Uncle Roger—and too late."

"He should have written!" said Esmey. "He had always been punctilious in answering letters. What could have happened? Would Val know?"

"I think not." Paula was nibbling on a blade of grass, her eyes on the enigmatic hulk of the Five Apostles. "He was away much of the time, and only Uncle Roger knew anything of the accounts and the shipping."

Esmey trod back and forth on the path. He was bewildered, and he was mortified. His father, what with the women, his stock-trading and other extravagances, must have got his affairs into a snarl beyond any unravelling. And now there would be the deuce to pay. It mortified him, too, that he was unequal to giving Paula any advice. Business on any scale larger than the balancing of his check-book was not within his scope. Even in such minor transactions as the buying of some grape-lugs or a load of fence-posts, he came to no decision until Angel and Cloke had scratched their heads with him over the deal. How large was the sum the Tai-Ling house had lent his father? A million? A quarter of a million? It would take shiploads of flasks to pay off that debt.

There would have to be a talk of importance at the Casa, with Crossett sitting in. That small Chinese dowager would be listened to! Heaven help the Five Apostles. But his own sympathy was with Paula. It was high time Val came into the scene. Val was quite as extravagant as his father; but nobody else in the family knew much about the mine.

“Isn’t it getting late?” she asked.

“About two.”

“Time to be sprucing up a little before we go to the Casa,” she said, rising. “And I must coax Tai-Ling into a black tunic. She still insists on wearing white for mourning. I’m afraid I shall have to give up trying to uncivilize Tai-Ling.”

They walked hand-in-hand up the Mendoza path to the house.

“Ladies, they come,” said Ah Moy, looking into the salon of the Casa. “At gate now.”

Candles, as thick as one’s arm, were lighted in the sconces on the mantelpiece, dispelling some of the shadow that was heavy here in the late afternoon. Firelight from the hearth rippled over the curtains of hunting tapestry. The room exhaled what Roger used to call “the Spanish odor”: a compound of bulrushes, dried pampas grass, and ancestral chests; and it was mingled now with the clove-like scent of carnations. A large basket of them was on the mahogany table carved like a tomb. There was also a catafalque of a sideboard, with carafes of wine upon it, and more candles. Shadows lay on the grand piano, and the late Don Pablo’s chair, which was at the head of the table. There Mrs. Roger was sitting.

“Bring them in,” she said, as a chime rang out. “And in half an hour, Ah Moy, you serve the refreshments.”

He opened the front door, and the visitors entered in a troop, some sedate, some a little flustered, and after she had greeted them, each by name, they found seats. The curtains were half drawn, the windows looking into the garden where the sun came only in the morning. Two other windows were at the end of the room, facing the mine, but they were shuttered, and behind tapestries, as if to close out the world. She spoke on in welcome—a collective welcome—and touched the carnations.

“And I thank you all for this kind expression of your thought.”

She did not say “sympathy,” but no one observed that, and her remark evoked murmurs of response from the Auxiliary. Verity Sim, usually the spokesman at most communal affairs in the village, bent forward as if to speak, then swallowed and sat back with hands folded. About Mrs. Roger, the pallor deeper on her Castilian face, there was, for all her politeness, something austere and chill.

Eyes veered toward Kathy Faro, the most self-possessed of the visitors. Here should be sounded the correct note, the official voice of the Auxiliary. Kathy, in her Sunday furs, her hands in new gloves, sat with gaze fixed on the mantelpiece. As it shifted to Mrs. Roger’s cameo brooch, she rose.

Her speech began, spoken with that authority, quietness and diction that made her the despair, the envy, of all the women in Alamos. This time there was no envy. They sat back, relieved and thankful. It was more than an address: it was an oration, moving and eloquent, with here and there little hesitations, like grace notes, and then a rolling, long phrase, like a passage from the Bible. It spoke, for a good stretch in the middle, of the Five Apostles, and the two Copes, the founder and his son, then it returned to Mrs. Roger. There were Cornish inflections in it, but no one noticed these, nor that some of the thoughts could have been uttered only by a bewitched miner. But what mattered it, for she was one with the Capitan, and believed with his belief.

Mrs. Roger listened, immovable. The parlor had darkened. In the candlelight her thin eyelids seemed transparent.

“Ladies of the Auxiliary, I am deeply grateful to you,” she said, then, drifting to the end of the room, pulled the bell-cord.

Ah Moy came in with a tray and passed about the seed-cake and sandwiches. He brought in the tea urn, and the hostess filled the cups. Next came Port, in a carafe with a stopper like a crown. More took wine rather than tea, as if the atmosphere required it, and Verity Sim drank two glasses. The bell pinged out front, and Ah Moy went to the door. Tai-Ling and Paula came into the room.

“It was good of you to come, very good,” said Mrs. Roger. “And to write me. You arrived at so mixed a time. You are staying long?” She looked at Tai-Ling. “I hope to see much of you, and you are so near by.”

She shook hands with them both, and rather coldly withdrew her hand from Paula’s. “You are welcome to Alamos. Did you have a comfortable voyage?”

“There were a few storms, Aunt Ysabel, but I didn’t mind, nor did Tai-Ling. We are quite used to voyages, and on the whole they are a bit easier than journeys, at least in these times.”

Her aunt listened to her with something not unlike amusement in her eyes. They could both have dispensed with this sort of thing. Paula, she knew, had disliked her most heartily even as a child, and with very good reason, she reflected, but with no pain nor regret, for the situation had endured too long. And for her part, there was no one in the world whom she cared less to see at this moment than Paula.

Had she come to marry Val, and at this most unfitting time? It would have to be staved off, that marriage, and Mrs. Roger had been staving it off ever

since Val had written to her from China, announcing their engagement.

Any other girl he had brought to the Casa would have been a better match. She was too closely mixed up with the Tai-Lings, who had done harm enough, and was probably their accomplice. Nothing would please them more than to get the Five Apostles into their hands. She had a stubborn will, also; she cared no more than did Gervase for the Casa, or the feelings, or rights, of anyone in it. And if it were true that the paint firm was in a bad way, because of the exchange or some rebellion in the back country, then the girl and that crafty foster-mother of hers—and a scandal it was for anyone in the family, however remote, to have a Chinese foster-parent—would have to be watched.

But Mrs. Roger listened to Tai-Ling's words of condolence. And the women of Alamos also listened, with sideway glances up and down the figure in black tunic, from her lacquer-black hair in chignon to the trim little green shoes, and watched her again as she sipped tea.

"Oh, Kathy!" exclaimed Paula. She was about to fling herself headlong, but checked herself and advanced decorously to plant a kiss on Kathy's cheek.

"You should have told me you were coming, Paula!" was the reproach. "The cottage was always waiting for you."

"I'll be making up for it, Kathy. We sailed in such a hurry, and we got here anyway long before any possible letter. I have such a lot to say, and _____"

The buzz of talk in general was louder. If no one was yet very much at ease, the visit was growing slightly less painful. The hostess was sitting by the table with Tai-Ling, a little apart from the others who had detached themselves into groups of three or four. Formality was as thick as a fog-bank, but now it was dissipating in spots. Ah Moy had been moving about with the carafe, and here and there had discreetly put little trays of filled glasses.

Paula fitted a cigarette into a tube of malachite. No ladies ever smoked in the Casa. She snapped her lighter, and all heads turned as if at a pistol-shot. Even Kathy on the sofa, pushed far back in the corner, looked faintly uncomfortable. Dominance had fallen away from her, for she had spoken her piece, and the prop of authority was gone. She wanted to be at home, where dough was rising in the pan.

"I'm coming to see you tomorrow, Kathy dear——"

If it were not for Kathy, the reception would have been frightfully tedious. Now and then she caught the glance of her aunt straying in her direction. She

rejoiced that her aunt was finding it hard going with Tai-Ling; she was asking Tai-Ling questions, but not deeply concerned in the answers. Aunt Ysabel would quite disapprove of the cigarette, of course.

The severity of her smile and the folding of her spare, transparent hands revealed to the corporate guests that she was scandalized. What little smoke had clung to the tapestries of the room had risen from the after-dinner pipe of Father Vargas, to whom, since he was her spiritual counsellor, she was lenient. Paula was Nina Jiminez all over again.

Mrs. Roger had never forgiven Gervase his marriage with that hoyden. It was a *mésalliance*, if ever there was one. Her jealousy of Nina grew with time as, living alone in the Casa, her memories receded farther into the past. Mrs. Roger saw again that supple, laughing figure galloping over the salt-flats with the dark troop of the Jiminez vaqueros, and once again she felt a bitter pang of envy. Again she heard that voice. But it was Paula's voice. How very like her mother she was, too, in energy and spirits. Perhaps she had imparted them to the Auxiliary, which now appeared to be simmering with parochial feeling and talk.

If only, Mrs. Roger thought, the gap between them could somehow be spanned. Madame Tai-Ling was closer to the girl than anyone except Val, and she rose to sit still nearer the Chinese lady, though she had little enough to say, and that little would sound trivial.

"I think you have come in the finest season of the year," she said. "Have you had a chance yet to ride through the dunes between Pacific Grove and Carmel?"

"It is both savage and beautiful," said Tai-Ling. "The wind sings, and the sand dunes have the color of tigers. We came down through Capitola, and I remember, on my first visit here, it had a village of Chinese fishermen. They turned a big winch to pull in their nets, and the axles were so dry that you heard the screech a mile away.

"Gervase talked with them," she remarked brightly with a smile. "They told him the noise frightened away sharks, so that they were pulled in unbitten, and worth five cents more a pound."

"That was amusing," said Mrs. Roger.

"Gervase," remarked Tai-Ling, bringing up his name again, "always managed to learn amusing things. That made him such a good traveler."

"Indeed?"

“And his daughter has much of the same gift. That is fortunate, for she has had to travel much. Last summer she went nearly as far as the Szechwan mines.”

After the fatigues of yesterday Tai-Ling was beginning to feel weary, and would have been glad to leave, but possibly they would have to remain until everyone else had gone. The call had already lasted an hour. This talk, the visitors, the entire reception, could have no interest for anyone but the Auxiliary. Mrs. Roger was perceptibly withdrawing into herself. An imperious and a selfish woman, she thought.

Tai-Ling pushed the curtain back lightly and looked into the garden. “Is that rain?” She lifted her crystalline voice. “I believe it was near raining when we came in.”

A stir went through the women. Kathy Faro rose. The Captain was upon her mind. He would be alone in the house when the storm broke.

“It was kind of you to invite us to call upon you this afternoon. I am sure I speak for all the members of the Auxiliary when I say we would like to stay with you longer. But I feel we must leave.”

She put out her hand, and her hostess got up. “Thank you again, Mrs. Cope. Goodbye.”

Verity Sim rose last. In the hallway the group dissolved in slow leave-taking; motors coughed; cars sped out over the gravel. Paula looked into the garden, and up through the mimosas at the sky. There was no sign whatever of rain. Her gaze turned about the room, with none in it but herself and Tai-Ling. Portraits on the wall, Machados for the most part, grandees in stocks and an arch-browed duenna or two, with here and there a blue-eyed Cope, looked down upon her. Above the bookcase was a drawing of a group on the Casa steps—Don Pablo and two youths. Her heart leaped at recognition of her father, at her own age, with the same nose and light eyes. Then she felt unworthy. Had she done, she wondered, the unworthy, the irrevocable thing, in leaving his tomb and their Chinese home? She thought of the bamboos, the water-lily song of her nurse, the garden with its grey walls, and the plane-trees shining after rain in the window-light. How long——

Mrs. Roger came back into the parlor, and they got up. “You will stay a little while?”

“It is really too late,” said Tai-Ling, “and we must leave you.”

Mrs. Roger turned to Paula. “The immediate family will be gathered here this evening about nine. Val will be here then, and Mr. Crossett, the lawyer.

There are some papers to be read and Esmey should be here.”

“I shall be here,” Paula said. She was not a legatee; and being the China cousin, once removed, she was hardly one of the immediate family. Since Val was to be home, this invitation perhaps might suffice as an outward acceptance of her. She knew Val’s mother was not pleased at his engagement. “At nine o’clock, then, Aunt. I shall be here.”

Paula hurtled the car homeward. It shrieked at the whip-curve; her grip was sure, she drove on faster, making a gale that blew hair over her eyes.

“Tai-Ling, for a glass bead I’d have told her to go hang! Did you ever see such haughty airs? They didn’t set with me at all. They didn’t even when I used to wear pigtails and slide down the Casa banisters.”

The car slithered, then jounced back into the rut.

“Did she expect me to kowtow before her, as if I were a daughter-in-law, or a concubine, or a poor relation?” demanded Paula. “And that was as good as a command, asking me to return tonight.”

“But why not?” chided Tai-Ling. “She is the head of the family.”

“Doesn’t she ever, ever reflect that I’m in my own right half-owner of the family mine?”

“Quite often, I should judge,” said Tai-Ling, with a bubble of mirth. “And most annoyingly the half-owner.”

“Oh, I don’t mind it, really, being tapped for the reading of the will. The séance may be amusing. It couldn’t be half as dull as the Auxiliary tea-fight.”

Paula turned in and nosed the car into the toyon hedge. In the kitchen was Rios, in clean, bleached overalls, stirring a saucepan at the stove. Esmey was filling the wood-box with pine cones.

“Thought we’d wait dinner for you,” he said. “Such as we’ve got—frijoles and red ink. Not up to the funeral baked meats you must have been invited to at the Casa. I wonder you pulled away. How was the reception?”

“Proper, if not very consoling,” said Paula, sloughing off her fur coat, and throwing it with Tai-Ling’s on the settee. “We have to be at the Casa, you and I, at nine. The will business.”

“Crossett phoned me,” Esmey said, when they were at table. “The family lawyer, he has been living days and nights at Father’s office, going over the papers. There must have been cartloads. I’ll drive you down to the Casa. But I don’t know why I should sit in, really. I’m out of it, Yin-Chiu.”

“So am I, for that matter,” said Paula cheerfully. “But we can’t wriggle out of it. We’ve been asked, and we’re expected. So we’ll go together. And over and above all, Val will be there, and naturally, I’ve got to see Val.”

“Even,” Tai-Ling affirmed in the precise, formal way she had at times, “even if he were not there, it is your aunt’s wish that you be present. She is the head of the family.”

A blink of lightning flared into the kitchen. Through the window they saw the head of a tall eucalyptus in the yard toss and revolve as if on a pivot. The house rocked at the impact of a wind that squalled over the tiles. Rios cleared the dishes and passed a wet towel over the oilcloth, dug out a pack of cards, and the four of them sat to a game of fan-tan. A log crackled in the low stove propped on bricks; underneath, their eyes glowing, lay Rios’ dogs in a heap. At each loud scream of wind, puffs of smoke oozed up about the stove-plates, and the air grew redolent of dogs, tobacco, burning pine-gum, and stables. The four played raptly, an hour, two hours, with hardly a word, hardly a sound but the clicking of chips. Esmey smoked a clay which he filled with raspings of a slab of plug, and it burned with the odor and sputtering of sugar. Tai-Ling, an ivory goddess in a tunic of black silk like enamel, was the child of fortune, and a dollar ahead, the chips stacked in a wall before her.

The storm waxed in fury, the storm she had unwittingly forecast at the reception. Instead of howling over the roof-top now, it fought a loud, private war in the vineyard, with overflow into the yard, one regiment coming in after another, to whisk off and join the greater body of wind that roared like an express train up the valley.

“Coming in from the ocean,” said Esmey, casting a reluctant glance at the clock. “Not what you’d call a night for swordfishing.”

After a half hour he flung down his hand. “Time to be going, Cousin,” he said, and they counted their chips. “I’m six bits in the hole. If we don’t pull out quick, we’ll be broke. It’s Tai-Ling’s night for luck.”

“I think so,” she remarked, taking in the money, a dollar and a half. “At least I don’t have to go out into that storm.”

Esmey clumped a handful of cartwheel dollars before Rios. “That’s some pay for you, in case you want to keep on with the cards. But don’t let her win it all.”

He and Paula pulled on their boots and raincoats. The veranda was awash. He stepped down and carried her pickaback to the station-wagon as she played a light on the flood. They churned on to the road, the rain sluicing over the windshield.

“Falling in slabs,” said Esme. “We should have towed a lifeboat along. I’m devoted to you, Paula. There I was, comfortable at my own fireside, and I dashed out to give you convoy to the Casa.”

“It’s simply heroic. You should have been a Coast Guard.”

With pipe in his teeth, he peered ahead through the curtain of water. “You’re going chiefly to see Val?”

“That’s about it,” she said. “It seems as if we had always been engaged. I think it began when he first came to visit us in Canton, and we went riding up to the summer retreat in the hills. We fell in love then. To fall out of love and in again, and always, somehow, to be engaged, has been a habit with us ever since.” Her laugh was indulgent. “The other summer when he was there, he said you had moved into the Mendoza place, and there wasn’t a chance you’d ever come to the Tai-Ling retreat for a visit. Everybody else from the Casa has been there, I think, except Aunt Ysabel. Even Grandfather Pablo!”

“I haven’t any reason to leave the farm. And there’s the ghost,” he laughed. “Mendoza’s ghost.”

“It turns into a rabbit sometimes?”

“Except when it means business! It looks after the Aramon, the sacramental wine for the gallery. Bad luck would come if the Aramon died out, as it almost did a few times, when it ran wild to cane. Grandfather brought in a pruner from the Almaden vineyard who looked after these vines, and made two hogsheads of wine every Fall. That was old Marco Lopez, Angel’s father.

“It makes a strong and healthy wine, with plenty of lees. Aramon must have its first racking here in March, when the north wind blows up, and the barometer is high. Then it can be racked clear as a bell. No sacramental wine is licit if it has a speck of lees.

“Well, it came the end of March, and the racking wasn’t done yet. Marco got to the farm at night, all tanked, and fell asleep on a cot in the hallway. He had figured he would get up before sunrise, and do the racking before he went back to his work at the Almaden. He was shaken awake. A figure in a cloak, with jaws bound up and a pair of black dogs at his heels, was standing over him. It pointed to the winery, and spoke in old-country Spanish:

“‘The north wind is dying down. Tomorrow is April, and it will be too late. Go!’

“Marco walked backward, jerkily, his knees shaking. That was the first Capitan himself, in a grimy, wet cloak, who had come from the gallery on

purpose. He was not one to stand for having his mass wine bedevilled. Marco fled to the winery, and racked off the Aramon in the moonlight while it was yet March. After that he went most strictly by the calendar.

“I asked Father Vargas about it. He’s the expert on the local spooks, and he had known Marco Lopez. He hemmed and hawed a little. There were two ways of explaining it, he said. If it wasn’t Mendoza’s ghost, then it was Mendoza himself, who had crawled out of the roof hopping mad.”

“And which do you believe?”

“I haven’t thought much upon it, really. But in Alamos one can believe almost anything.”

They pulled up before the Casa, at the cast-iron jockey that held up a lamp shining with rain glints.

“You’d better land on the curb here,” said Esme. “Mud everywhere else. And I’ll park down there, out of the wet.”

He parked as she mounted the steps, then he went round by the stable to the back entrance of the garden. The porch light was on, and as she put her hand to the door, it was pulled open. It was Val who came out smiling to greet her, and clasp her in his arms. Val, sun-blackened, tall, direct as a lance, and as handsome as ever in a boyish, foreign way. In height and features, he resembled those Machado grandees on the parlor walls with their cynical, thin eyelids, except that Val was a laughing spirit. How well groomed he was, Paula noticed. He was always too subtly tailored ever to be dapper, and after the turmoil and rush and hard travel of the last few days, here he was, turning up, fresh and immaculate.

He kissed her soundly as he swung her into the hallway, and to the dining-room where they could talk a moment.

“There, there!” she laughed, holding him at arms’ length, while she looked at him. “You haven’t changed a mite, have you, after all these months?”

“Nor you! You’re more beautiful than ever, Yin-Chiu.” He helped her take off her coat. “And to think you were here all the time! Forgive me. I was lost in Mexico when the telegram was sent to me. And it wasn’t until I got to San Francisco I learned you had come. I should have flown up!”

She clung to his fingers as he led her to the parlor.

“You should be here, really,” he murmured. “The both of you.”

“Should we? We’re quite comfortable where we are.”

“Yes, but—the ranch!”

She laughed, and arm in arm they went into the parlor, where subdued greetings came at her. Esmey pressed his lips on his mother’s smooth forehead, and he shook hands with the lawyer, and with the pear-shaped, little, humorous priest, Father Vargas.

They all dispersed themselves in chairs and sofas. Ah Moy blew at an end of sea timber in the fireplace, and the flames rose and jiggled in a ballet. The lawyer broke the seals on a long envelope, and began reading. In front of him burned a pair of tall candles that flickered in a draught. A chill—perhaps it came down the chimney—spread over Paula. She listened, very still, hands folded; from where she sat all three Copes were more or less within her vision. Her aunt, rigid in Don Pablo’s ram’s-foot chair before the fireplace, seemed far off from everyone. Esmey was across the room, under the overhanging pampas grass, shoulder turned to the rest; he helped himself from the carafe on the side-table. In the shadows, the small glass of Port in his hand glowed like a ruby.

Crossett read a description of the Five Apostles, and of a block of shops and dwellings in the village of Alamos. The widow was to receive the block, and the Casa and its three acres of ground. Roger’s holdings in the mine he was bequeathing to his widow and his son Valentine, to be divided equally. Paula turned her gaze imperceptibly to Val. He had been sitting with legs stretched, feet crossed, mockingly alert, arms folded. He bit his fingernail. The girl knew he was shocked. Plucked from him were the reins he had already felt in his grasp. Roger’s favorite had been fobbed off with a quarter-share in the enterprise. And for this, merely for this, he had returned.

He leaned forward. Crossett turned over a leaf. A thousand dollars of the funds at the bank were to be given outright to the widow. Val did not remove his eyes from the document. Paula had a foreboding that Crossett was on the brink of a revelation.

“To Angie Delambre and Julie McQueen Rocher, who have for years been my good and devoted friends, I bequeath, share and share alike——”

The rest of the funds and an apartment house in San Francisco had been left to them. Esmey’s fingers all but tapped nervously. It would be miraculous if anything were left. The building was described in surveyors’ terms. But he saw it in his mind’s eye: a monolith overlooking the Golden Gate. It could not have been cast for less than a quarter of a million. He had been there once, to spend an evening with his father and talk over the purchase of the Mendoza ranch. So it had been left to his father’s agreeable and devoted

friends! It had been pretty widely known in Alamos—thanks to Verity Sim—that his father had once been seen in Andrews’ Diamond Palace, engaged in the transaction of buying rings for them. There was also a bequest to a housekeeper, whose discretion his father must have had good reason to value.

Mrs. Roger listened without so much as the flicker of an eyelid. Val breathed deeply, his nostrils twitching.

“That sort of thing can’t hold, Crossett!” he rapped out.

“Those were his wishes,” said the lawyer, “and they are explicitly put down in his will.”

“It’s monstrous!” said Val. “Property can’t be slung about like that—at whatever baggage comes along! That makes the whole will invalid!”

“‘Invalid’ is a bit strong,” said Crossett. He laid the document on the table, and tapped it with his pince-nez. “I’d say it would be upheld in court.”

“It can’t be possible! We’ll break that will if it’s the last thing I do!”

Val rose sharply, and paced up and down the room, hands in pockets, pale with rage. Crossett threw an uncomfortable glance at the widow.

“It must not be broken,” she said quietly. “Let it stand.”

The pride of Mrs. Roger, observed Paula, had risen superior to her humiliation. Val, his cheek twitching, cast himself back into his seat. Esmey, who had seemed lost in musing over the glass in his hand, had looked up with a start.

Val glowered. “The codicils? Are there no codicils?”

“None,” said the lawyer. He drew from his portfolio some papers. “I have here several copies of a report on the fiscal state of the Alamos Mining Company.

“Briefly, there is at the bank the sum of eight thousand dollars, and fluid assets on hand are, roughly, five thousand dollars, in flasks of mercury. Trade demand has been off the last four years. And the output of the mine, due to exhaustion of ore, has dropped three-fourths.”

Crossett read figures. Val broke in abruptly. “There are still veins to be worked. Why have they not been worked?”

The lawyer paused for a moment. “If you will permit me to remind you, Mr. Cope, I am reading a fiscal statement, not a report by any mining expert familiar with the work done in the Five Apostles. I made a thorough search in the files, but I found no trace of any such report.”

Father Vargas struck a match and lit his cheroot. Nobody else moved. Paula sat frozen. It was clear, horribly clear now, why only silence and no quicksilver had come from Alamos. Her worst apprehensions had been justified. Roger had been playing ducks and drakes with the Five Apostles, and carelessly letting things get out of hand, as if he thought its bodies of ore were unfailling. The great Spanish mine in which he and his father had learned their profession had been running since the time of the Caesars.

“The balance, you say, is eight thousand?”

“It was, Mr. Cope, three weeks ago.”

Val paced angrily, muttering. Damn little for a mine to scrounge along on, that was! Eight thousand dollars! Hardly enough for blasting-powder, or pump oil! He complained aloud and sharply. Why hadn't some of these home-staying people kept an eye on things, instead of letting them get all snarled up.

His mother and Father Vargas went into the study adjoining, followed by Crossett.

“Isn't any more to hear,” said Esmey, slipping his arm through Paula's. “That's all there is.”

In the hallway, Val flung himself upon her.

“Lord, don't go yet!” he pleaded. “I hadn't any chance to see you at all! I just got rubbed a bit the wrong way tonight. Doesn't mean anything, Paula. I'll get it straightened out. When am I seeing you?”

“It'll have to be tomorrow, Val. The flood's on. We'll be marooned if we don't get away quick.”

Esmey helped her with her mackintosh, and Val pressed his dark, curled head against her cheek.

“Tomorrow, then, Cousin! And don't mind the row! You know, when the roof caves in, you've got to blast a lot before you can crawl out from under.”

“Clope's worrying about an engine he's building,” said Esmey. “To shove trucks around on the top. All right for him to go ahead with it?”

“All right with me.” Val nodded. “See you, tomorrow. *Adios.*”

Smiling and gay-hearted again, he waved them a farewell from the veranda. Paula saw the glitter of his white teeth in the lamplight, and watched him dash back exuberantly into the house. It was the old quip of the family that Val was the most mercurial of them all. The car churned on, hub deep in

water that sloshed at the windshield. The clashing of the immense trees overhead was lost in the strife of the gale. Esmey, his strong hands keeping the car on the road, peered into the rain.

“Half expect to see Cloke waiting for us to come by. He’ll get little sleep until he hears about that engine of his.”

“Cloke’s lucky. He’s hipped on something he can already see in his mind’s eye whole and perfect. And you, you’ve got the vineyard. As for the rest of us, we’re not free. We’re tangled up with the mine like Laocoon with the serpent.”

“I broke away early.” Esmey pointed at the undrowned cluster of lights, above the hoist, blinking like fireflies. “There was only one that had that creature eating from his hand. There can’t be another Don Pablo. He just happened!”

“Val’s the nearest to him. He’s got a brain, even if he is lazy. Crossett gave him a facer, I thought.”

Esmey, staring out into the rain, gave her a quick glance.

“I think he can straighten things out at the mine.”

“And I hope so. For everybody’s sake,” she said.

But she wished her father were alive and at Alamos at this moment. He was not of the parent stem of these Copes but no one after Don Pablo had such a deep feeling for the mine. There should have been a Galleria Gervase. When the property was lost in the borrasca of thin ore, he and his firm had saved it with money lent without interest. Another time he bought all the metal lying flaked in storage, bought it at a rate that even Roger thought more than fair. The Casa knew that in any trouble it could turn to the China side of the house. Gervase himself had returned in these emergencies; and now she had come in his place. But what could she do!

Her hands tightened. In that moment she resolved, no matter what the act might bring—rebuff, antagonism, or jealousy—to act for him and his firm as if she were his son instead of daughter. She owned as much of the mine as did Aunt Ysabel and Val.

She closed her eyes, and saw again the figures in the dimly-lighted parlor listening to Crossett, and Val, his face tightening with anger. A fair, even a goodly, share of the estate had come to him, but he must have expected more. Some of it had gone to others, to strangers. That apartment house could have been sold for a fortune. His anger and his protests had startled her, like an outburst of ill manners. With his own engineering practice, which took him

here and there to look down inside mines for a thumping fee, he must, indeed, have been doing more than reasonably well. Assuredly he could not have been banking on getting all of Roger's holdings in the mine. There was a sharp-set, envious streak in the Machado tribe, her father had once or twice remarked. "Val's got free of it, I believe," he said, with a laugh. "He's not at the Casa much."

Oh, certainly, he was right. Val was generous, tolerant and open. But she wished she hadn't been at the Casa this night.

The house loomed before them; they waded to the steps and tramped into the kitchen, where Esmey turned on the light and poked the fire. He heated up a pot of coffee whilst Paula threw off her coat and shook her wet hair loose. They sat down to their cups at the table.

"That was a night to linger in the memory," he said, stirring his coffee with great sashes. "A renewing of family ties. I can't say I feel any closer because of it."

He wondered if Paula had equally been as shocked as himself by Val's acrimony. Surely, at the reading of wills in which one was concerned, there were some canons of good taste to be observed, especially with a lot of people around. Val hadn't come off so badly, either, with that bite of the mine. The lad had been spoiled. He had always grasped at things with both hands. But it wouldn't do to bring this up at the moment, not with Paula here, who had come to marry him. He must have got into another hole, some racetrack or trading debts, and his father was not around to buy back a fat handful of I.O.U.'s

"I'm not exactly the head of the Casa," he said wryly, putting down his cup. "Mother is."

"You're a world removed from the Five Apostles, Esmey. I'm not," Paula said, in a matter-of-fact way. "For better or for worse, I'm tied to it. Doubly tied."

"Then the mine's got you, too?"

"That's exactly it, my pet. I hope nothing's frightfully wrong with the inside of that hill. My China people," she whispered, "have got to have their quicksilver. It's worrying me somewhat. And I can't be pestering Val right now, with all this confusion the boy's fallen heir to. It'll have to be straightened out first before we get the flasks. I can't let them down. I dare say you're right. The mine *has* got me. I can't escape it now. Not with Father gone. We're all born lashed to something. You to this vineyard, and I," she waved towards the hill, "I'm lashed to that yonder."

And to Val also, thought Esme, as she said “goodnight” and mounted the stairway to the room where Tai-Ling was waiting. He sat there a long time, reflecting. He thought with some grim amusement of that scene in the parlor. Queer to have a couple of mistresses turn up like that—Angie Delambre, Julie Something-or-other. It was just like having them walk right in. They sounded like musical comedy actresses, and it must have given Father Vargas a turn. Well, they had been one way out for Roger Cope. Life couldn’t have meant anything to him in the Casa, nor in the mine, either. It had been too much for him. It was like being buried alive, and beating one’s hands out against a lid of stone. He had got out, in a way; but it had left a mark on him, as mad panic always does, and he never could quite get away from himself. Who could?

He hoped Val would do better, but he was not sure. Behind that dashing front the lad was weak, weak and greedy. Paula was a thousand times too good for him. She had brains, she had will. If the mine was in a bad way, not Val, nor his mother, but Paula was the one to look up to as the real head of the Casa, which was nothing without the Five Apostles.

Before the cottage Paula dismounted, tied the pony to a ring, left him in charge of Cloke's foxhound, and went in. She had promised Kathy to stop for tea that Sunday, if she should happen to be riding by. Kathy bustled in from the kitchen with a glad shout that brought Faro from the garden, and made much over her. They brought up chairs to the window, and a side-table. The cottage looked exactly as Paula had left it. The same bouquets of flowers on the melodeon; the same cinnabar ornaments on the shelf, and the same Toby mug and big, ugly and fascinating platter on edge, covered with cigar-bands, varnished and splashed over with a gilt legend, "Present from Santa Cruz Beach." Nothing had changed, except that the mastiffs were gone, and the Capitan and his wife were stouter—though Kathy looked better plump, and more domestic in her big apron, and the Capitan had always managed his great bulk with ease. He rocked slowly in his chair, the one from the Casa's summer-house, and which Mrs. Roger had sent down to him, because it had belonged to Don Pablo.

There was the same teapot, and the same tea (purveyed by the grocers in San Francisco that had supplied the Casa since the year one, or at least since the Comstock days) and Faro sipped it from a little cup without lifting it from the saucer, as if it were glued on. He seemed larger in his living-room than he did in the mine. "In the parlor he's like a displaced Ajax," Val used to say. And he looked graver, but perhaps, the girl thought, that was because he was in his chapel-going blacks. It was, after all, Sunday, when he did nothing but rest, and he had left untouched on the melodeon the day's newspaper. Kathy and Paula talked; Faro rocked and listened, and now and then turned an ear to the yelp of Blazer, who was now camping on the doormat.

"Cloke's foxhound?" he asked. "I'd never known her to tack after anybody else before. Mighty particular, Blazer is! But you watch your company, Paula. I've known her to pull down game that she shouldn't, like her master."

"I'm not sure she has taken a deer in many seasons," Kathy said. She favored Cloke, whose attentions to the pump kept water flowing in the garden, which was half her life. It was full of stock, jasmines and herbs, just such a garden as she had dreamed of when she was a girl in Nevada. "And Blazer's well-behaved."

“Oh, aye, I’ll say for her she’s got manners. As much as you’d expect from any dog.”

“She’s worth a nicer compliment than that, Capitan,” said Paula. “She’s got a pedigree. Cloke said she was a Virginia hunting dog, and he had some notion—he and Esme—of starting a pack with her.”

“Well, it’s time somebody did get after these foxes around here.”

“Mrs. Garcia lost half her Leghorns the other week,” interposed Kathy. “They say the upper end of the canyon is alive with foxes.”

“That Blazer,” said Faro drily, “will need to be broken in again to land hunting. About the only game she has seen lately is swordfish, or tuna—in season, and out of it.”

Then he broke off to talk of the concert at the lodge next month.

“The Auxiliary is coming in, too, Paula,” said Kathy. “It’s a joint tea and concert for the Benefit Fund. We’re getting up a music committee. Will you be on it? Will you play a piece?”

“I’m rusty. But I’d be glad to accompany on the piano. What’s the program?”

“There isn’t one yet,” said Faro. He rose and from under the whatnot pulled out a box of music scores. “I brought it down from the lodge to go through. There’s some more up there—all of it Don Pablo’s. These are more simple, and they’re in English. Some hymns, but maybe hymns won’t quite do for a concert. And there’s some country songs, quite old.”

Paula put a handful on the rack, sat down to the melodeon, and thumped through them without a hitch. She had always liked those songs. They were like evergreens, transplanted from Cornwall, their roots still packed in native earth. Then there was “The Death of Nelson” and “D’Ye Ken John Peel.” Her hosts listened to the end without stirring.

“Those are good chorus pieces,” smiled Paula. “We can turn the Knights loose on these! And Robin Sim used to do them solo, without any music. You’re getting Sim, aren’t you?”

“We’ve got better tenors,” said Faro. “Robin’s voice has gone crackety. Where he comes in is with the trumpet or a French horn. A horn gives you a full effect like an organ. And when it comes to the reeds, Sim has got everybody backed off the planks.”

“I hope you’ll come in when we have the committee here,” said Kathy.

“I shall be free,” said Paula. “Though we have all been busy lately, ever since Val came here. He’s been going back and forth with Mr. Crossett. The papers and papers they’ve been going through!”

She was aware that Faro had turned in his chair to watch her with a steady and enquiring gaze. There was a trouble behind it. The Five Apostles, the return of Val, and the change it portended, were on his mind. She looked at him, and read his thoughts in a flash. The mine was a part of him. He was closer to the mine than Don Pablo had ever been. The responsibility for the underground workings, which no one else knew so thoroughly, he had taken over from the first Capitan, Jose Mendoza. It was as if an ordination had been laid upon him. The workmen he guided himself; he looked after the distilling of the metal and its delivery in flasks to the siding. He watched her, his eyes unmoving in a face seamed like a rock.

“My uncle’s will was read,” said Paula. “He left his half-share in the mine to the Casa—to Val and Aunt Ysabel, evenly divided. So they have one half, and I have the other. The Five Apostles,” she smiled, “is still the Copes. And the Copes have never been partial to any change.”

Faro breathed deeply again. “No. The Casa has always been steady, when it came to the mine. It’s been many years since there’s been change.”

“And very little underground,” said Paula. “I think you’ll be having a talk with Val one of these days. He’ll be staying here much of the time now, and soon he ought to be through with that legal business.”

“He will still be the engineer?”

“I haven’t heard he’ll appoint anybody else. And like Uncle Roger and Don Pablo, Val’s rather stubborn about leaving well enough alone.” She got up and pulled her gloves on. “It’s been a nice tea. And I shall be seeing you tonight, Capitan. Val wants me to remind you there’ll be a meeting at the Casa.”

They went out to the gate with her; Faro, unbowed and towering, like a big baulk of timber, watching her until both rider and loping hound were gone.

“Now that was a visit,” said Kathy. “And such a surprise. Still the same little Yin-Chiu, but grown up, somewhat. Come, we’ll finish our tea.”

“Aye,” agreed Faro, back in his chair, “she’s the same. She was always the hand for twisting folk around to do as it pleased her. There I was, near singing a hunting ballad without even a thought it was Sunday.”

“But she’s a little deeper, I thought,” Kathy said. “And she’s got her father’s way of talking about the mine. If she queened it around here, I’m sure it wouldn’t do the Five Apostles any harm.”

He shook his head. “Nor any good, either. That would be a change in itself. And I don’t want to see any more changes.” His eyes were fixed through the window at the mine. “It’s no place for a woman, nor should it ever be a concern for them. You know what that would mean? Two queens in Alamos! As if one weren’t enough.” His voice was harsh and perturbed. “And there’s Val again. He’s yet to come down into the mine and see what there is—and what there isn’t.” Something like a tremor ran through his frame. “Where are we going to turn to now? It’s something I’ve asked myself a hundred times as I’ve gone through the workings. There’s little enough new or visible, and when that is gone——”

“You’d always been worrying about it, Joab,” said Kathy placatingly. “Even long ago, when there was plenty.”

“Aye, but there’s something more to worry about now. He’s too much like his father.”

“What if Roger did find time for playing around a bit, you needn’t worry that——”

“But I do! Horses are more expensive than women, even Roger’s women. And it takes ore, plenty of ore, to make the mare go.”

“Val may find it for you.”

“What can he find that I can’t?”

“You can’t tell,” Kathy returned. “He’s grown up, too, and ready for settling down. They’re very much in love with each other—Val and Paula. I saw them yesterday, going up the road. Like a pair of doves.”

“Doves!” Faro shook his head, and rose. “No two Copes that amounted to anything ever got along together. It hasn’t ever happened yet. And it can’t now.” He reached for his hat. “I’ll be going up to the mine, and walk around for a spell.”



Paula rode towards the maze of hills and gullies across from the ranch. Trails and wagon-roads always led to something, with a reward for the

traveler, if only a song, her father used to tell her when she was very young, and they went sketching in this wilderness.

Over there beyond the haze was her ancestral home, or what might be left of it after it had been abandoned by the Jiminez family. If she got there and back by nightfall, well and good. If she could but see the Jiminez ranch from a distance, then she could go on another day; but tonight she would have to return before seven or so, for Val, herself, Tai-Ling, and Crossett, who was still at the Casa, were to have a meeting at the mine office.

The pony clattered over a footbridge, and once across, Paula pulled up to look at it. She had always thought of it as a bridge across a wide stream shaded by elms or willows—and these were mere shrubs. How shrunken they looked! But she had been small when she saw them last. The hills, swathed in blue haze, appeared larger than before. Blazer scented out a road for her, a winding one, hidden under grass and brambles, leading her up through chaparral on the other slope. Here she entered a meagre wood and the road had kept its ancient wagon-ruts. Something of its tale she knew, had learned it in the odd way she absorbed history when she was small: hearing someone talk, or having a rock or a tree or a stranger pointed out to her, with a name that gathered details as filings cling to a magnet. It was a road forgotten since the Civil War, when mercury and its fulminate were clamored for, and the red ore that was its matrix was dug in every gully of the Santa Cruz mountains; and long ago it had been worked out.

She rode on, saw vestiges of dwellings, and gnarled apple-trees lost amid brush. The road curved; she had come about half-circle, and down the pass she caught a glimpse of the fog-veiled horizon, and knew that beyond was egress to the sea. Here the road was so wide that a wagon and four horses could have turned upon it; then she saw she had come upon the flat top of a dump. Earth and rock had been cast down this apron of a gully, in a fan of debris grown over with toyon and fennel.

There must be an old mine hereabouts, was her thought. Somewhere in the undergrowth the hound was bugling, stirring up echoes. She charged for the tumult. Within a ring of firs was a brick building. A coyote tore out, then another, with Blazer hot on their necks, and the trio of them spilled down the fan into shrubbery.

She tethered the pony, and looked into the building. Solidly made, with a round-arched doorway, it had the aspect of a chapel, save that it was longer, with partitions of rubble-in-mortar, and had a tall chimney. The “Jews’ House,” as folk called it, had the oldest smelter in this region, older by far than the ovens named after the Apostles. Hardly anyone now alive in the

village knew it had last been worked secretly by Mendoza in his last days. But it was an old furnace, Paula saw at once. The fuel chamber was littered with blown-in grass and leaves, and generations of coyotes must have whelped in it. Blazer panted up, shamefaced.

“Gave you the slip, did they?” she asked. “Trouble is, Blazer, you dud, they’re on their own earth. And you’re just a stranger and not on to their little tricks.”

She pulled open the iron door again, and held it ajar with a stone, ready for the homecoming of the tenants. Not far to one side, by some firs, a stand of grass waved high in the breeze. She walked over, reclined under a tree and watched the circles flicker across a pool edged with mint. It was redolent in the afternoon sun. On this arid hillside the little oasis was a miracle. She watched the spring and a frog as still and green as if it were carved from malachite. She wondered if the frog and the mint had been transplanted or had always existed here, and stayed on after the surrounding world had dried up like a stone; and after wondering, she gave herself up to the tranquility of the scene and her thoughts.

That footbridge, had it really shrunk, or was it she that had changed? So many mutations had befallen Alamos since she was a girl. Esme was tall, bulky and gangling; Val sleek and self-centered; Aunt Ysabel, frigid and ceremonious, looked smaller and harder, as if her energy had been compressed into an intense, cruel flame. The mine, instead of being hardly noticeable, like a gopher burrow but less interesting, had become something gigantic and oppressive. There had been too many strangenesses, too many shocks. In their wake had come a shifting of values.

“I’m older,” she said aloud.

There might be a disillusion if she rode down the bare and splendid valley past Salinas to the hacienda of the Jiminez. It was empty now. Life had been simple, hearty and feudal with them at their Salinas hacienda. There was one to mediate for their good, and command, and many to obey. She admired that feudal simplicity.

Why go on there now and see nothing? This was far enough for today. She sat under a tree with the luncheon of meat, bread and grapes that she had brought in her knapsack. The old furnace was in partial shade; it reminded her, with its brick-work, of a building on the Tai-Lings’ country estate high up in the mountains, where her father had been so fond of staying in the Summer. The whole family went up with them; and sometimes they went up for a fortnight in the Winter, with servants to build log fires, and horses to

pull sledges over the frozen lake. It had been a monastery once, that baronial mountain house, and Mr. Wu had rebuilt the inside of it, to make it Western. The difference was that brick-work in China was bluish-grey, as in garments, and that the Chinese oaks were larger. California in Summer was like that countryside, save that it lacked villages, greenness and the bluish masonry. That mountain house was where she had fallen in love with Val.

Her father had always been fond of Val, thought him a genius, and had been pleased at their betrothal. He would have been glad to see her settled in California, "among your own people," he used to say. And that had mystified her, for Little Wu, Chan and Pichi were as her own brothers. And she liked their wives, and Tai-Ling was the nearest to her of all.

"But aren't these my people?" she asked him once.

"They are, yes," he said quietly, and he looked at her with an eyebrow lifting under the brim of his helmet. "In a relative sense. You may not want to stay here always. It's different with me. I'm rooted here—as rooted as I could be anywhere—and I brought a wife with me, from somewhere else.

"You'll have to know how to live in either place, without feeling like a stranger. And you'll have to know Alamos and that mine. Roger's a good fellow, but he wasn't a heavyweight to start with. He never had the least notion of foreign trade, and not much of business of any sort. His warmest interests lie elsewhere. Old Mr. Wu and Don Pablo made a good team. Son Wu and Roger don't. Something may happen that'll be just too bad for the Tai-Ling factory. It needs mercury as much as a fish needs water. It may turn to you for help some day. And you won't be able to do much for it this side the Pacific."

He must have had his forebodings. She felt that her father was wiser than Roger, wiser than all the Tai-Lings together, except her foster-mother. He felt that Alamos should be drawn closer to the China house. So he contrived it that Val came over at least once a year. They went hunting together, and on business and prospecting trips into some far province, often with Son Wu. Val enjoyed travelling with them, for they went in their own caravan, like rich merchants. He liked hunting, he liked the scenery of the mountain regions not far from Canton, where there were peaks dusky with pine forests, and gullies with brooks that flashed with trout. He was generous, and he was also selfish and pleasure-loving. Gervase outfitted him with everything he needed, horses, Morocco-leather boots, English shotguns and rifles, liquor and fine cigarettes. He kept Val's purse filled with money—for Val's allowance from home was never quite enough for him. And Val, for all his selfishness, regarded him with genuine affection.

Then she and Val became engaged, and the Tai-Lings gave them a two-day party on their river-boat.

Knee-deep among the bulrushes the pony flung up his muzzle, and the water dripped off in sunlight that broke through the tall, old firs. Their heads had been blighted in youth by vapor that had drifted up from this furnace. That must have been years ago, long before anyone in Alamos was born, she thought as she gathered up thin shards of brick, vitrified by heat, and sent them skipping over the pool.

If anyone now alive knew of this furnace, it must be Joab Faro. How silent he had been when she was in the cottage, and opened his mouth only to speak of tunes. When she mentioned the mine or Roger, he turned to stare at her and listen with dreadful intensity. It would be useless to ask anything of him. Those old mine captains never told a woman anything. She had learned from Esmey that Faro never told Aunt Ysabel anything she wanted to know of the Five Apostles.

A premonition came to her. Something was happening to the mine. It might be months, or a year, before she was to know what it was. Faro knew, but he distrusted her, he distrusted everyone, and most of all Val.

Perhaps the mine was dying out, if it wasn't already dead. Whatever the truth was, here she was going to stay until the Tai-Lings had got their needed metal. Meantime, everything depended on Val. And he was far more concerned over the property, and the vanished estate, than over the mine itself. He had not yet gone down into it, nor yet seen Faro.

She reached over the pool, and drew the pony out by the bridle. Blazer trotted ahead down the path, and mounting into the saddle, she followed.



Esmey, filing a saw by the window of his workshop, had been at his bench ever since he returned from the Casa where he had called for Val, only to be told by Ah Moy that Val had left for a walk directly breakfast was over. That had always been Val's way. He disappeared at whim, whether over the next hill or over seas on a Grand Tour of the obscure by-ways of the continent, never leaving word where he had gone.

A report thudded on the hillside. Dismayed rooks wheeled from an oak. Rios had blown up a stump, being reconciled to a spell of labor, for a handful of angleworms would come up with the roots; and this afternoon he had promised himself some fishing down Hermanos creek. Esmey heard it as a

clean blast, the force going deep, stirring the earth beyond reach of the deepest plow-share. He had aspirations for that piece of wilderness. A little further on, he had planted a few Sylvaner vines in that gravelly soil, and they had flourished, bearing grapes in sparse clusters no larger than an infant's fist. It was not a vine grown to rival in bearing the varieties that yielded so heavily in the floor of the valley, the coarse Barbera and Alicante. This was on a plane nearer Heaven; it was visited by the mist, but also it lay under strong sunshine and it could not be plagued by mildew. Some unaccountable quality had got into the wine made from that Sylvaner. Could it be matched again? Or was it a flash in the pan, a will-o'-the-wisp? It had been a freakish summer, for one thing, with nights of damp in August, then mildewing fogs and so little sunshine that the vineyard had the dankness of a charnel vault. The spoons in the ranch-house went green with verdigris, Angel lost half his chickens from croup, and the tile roof of the winery was flecked with moss. Then in September came a season so intensely hot and long that the grapes raisined on the vine. That summer was a prodigy, and its return not to be counted upon. But suppose that quality in the wine had come from the earth?

Mr. Paschino, who had been running a winery at Hermanos as long as anyone could remember, would assuredly know, and Esmey called upon him, with a bottle. To Mr. Paschino, who was eighty and had acquired much wisdom, wine was far less matter for talk than something to drink. It was a small bottle, and he drank it in ten gulps, standing in his orchard.

"A Sylvaner, and a young one." He fixed a cherry-red eye on Esmey. "You grew it last summer?"

"I did. It was the heat, you think, and the mildew?"

Mr. Paschino, his face lifted skyward, like a bird drinking, savored with eyes closed the last drops from the bottle. Then he stretched out a fist, and pointed the thumb to the ground.

"It tastes of Mendoza soil. Where did you plant it?"

"On the ridge," said Esmey. "Below that long windbreak."

"You plant more! You were lucky in picking the right grape."

"Lucky?" Esmey laughed. "I pulled up three other kinds before I got this. You didn't taste those failures."



So he had been clearing the rest of the ridge.

It was not in his nature to enquire too deeply into its soil. His fondness for vines was the stronger for the mystery that surrounded all things that grow. But there was no reason for haste; some new vine grown on a farm in San Benito, in a region as cool as this, might come into his hands when the field was ready for planting. To hunt for a good tract was chancy, like prospecting, but to find a new vine of sure quality was to run into fortune.

Someone at a distance was whistling, and Esmey looked out of the window. His brother was coming down the path.

“Halloo,” Val called. “Heard all that bloody din up there, and I thought it might be you after a rabbit. I went to the house, but nobody was there except Tai-Ling.”

Esmey joined him outside, and they sat on a bench against the stable wall. Val, in brown shirt, tweeds, and cloth hat with a feather, tapped his boots with a stick.

“I missed out on a ride with you. Felt like a stroll, and I went over the mine to poke around a bit. Then I walked up to that hill there, where the woods are, and came back this way. I saw Cloke a minute. Told him it’s all right about the engine. Didn’t see Faro. I’ll be going down below with him in a day or two. I don’t expect I’ll find out more than I know already. But I may have to muck about the place a week or so.”

“So you’ve a fair guess how things are?” asked Esmey.

“Pretty near. Crossett gave me a notion, though he knows less about mining than a jackdaw. He must have gathered some information from Father. I wouldn’t be surprised if he wanted to run the mine himself. Maybe as a receiver! Jolly thought, eh?”

“Did Crossett run across anything?”

“Not much. Three bank passbooks turned up, but all rather skimpy. I didn’t look up his two charming heiresses, who got the community apartment-house, and I went into the apartment he left me. On the top floor, with a grand view over the Bay. It had polychrome beams, and tons of Spanish stuff that wasn’t half bad—you know, paintings, red leather chests, cabinets, tapestries. And some old wine. Crossett and I sat there a while, trying the wine and cigars. We felt like a pair of Cardinals. Father did himself pretty well there.”

“It won’t be too expensive to keep up?”

“A flea-bite of expense.”

An obligation or two had been left for the Casa to meet, but these were trifling—like the bill for the liquors in the wine-room, which ran to about two thousand. If the dealer grew insistent, then he could take the wine back. Val had rather pressing debts of his own. He had five thousand to pay for his holdings in a new racetrack; some stable bills to meet; and there would be those two colts to train. Those colts were an investment. Their dams were already pulling in money at Tanforan.

It was a damn nuisance that Roger should have had to shuffle off when things were getting to be involved. For Esme, everything had been always simple. Esme should have taken more of the burden of the family upon his shoulders; or at least helped with the stewardship of the mine, the heritage and the responsibility of the Copes. These homekeeping people could easily have put a hand to some of the tasks whose urgency must obviously have leaped to the eye. And but for the Five Apostles, which was again going, as Val knew, into lean rock, Esme could not have been the master of this farm which had twice before in bad times come to the help of the mine. The farm could do the dutiful thing again. Val, with that thought in mind, had surveyed the farm on his walk this morning. He had walked across it twice, taking in the changes. In the three years of his absence, a large, stone winery had been built, more fields had been put under grain; the vineyard was flourishing, another had been planted, and the slope was being cleared for a third. The slope towards Hermanos had been rented out to grazers. It was a paying farm. Dull and jog-trot though his brother might be, he was not without shrewdness and industry.

“We’ll have to do a lot of clearing up,” said Val. “And first, I must go all through the mine with Faro. I’ve a notion where a couple of veins are to be picked up. They’re almost in sight. They’ll just take a little development work, and it might as well be paid for as we go along, instead of piling up for us. You have some funds that can be used in the emergency, haven’t you? Five or six thousand?”

That sum would take care of the horses for the next few weeks.

“I haven’t the collateral,” said Esme.

“Well, then, the farm itself.”

“It’s easier to raise money on ore in sight than on crops that aren’t yet growing.”

“Not at all,” Val said. “I can arrange that through my bank. It’ll take a mortgage or notes for that amount.”

“I’ve already given notes,” said Esme.

“You can get an advance on the crop. The crops of half the vineyards in the county are usually bought ahead at the time of plowing.”

“I’m not selling any crop. What I got on the notes—seven thousand—built the winery, and got in a new press and more cooperage. We had been using Mendoza’s press, which was old when Andrew Jackson was President. And it really was a gamble, sinking all that into equipment. I expect the market will drop any minute. There’s an avalanche of inferior grapes heading in, to make wine for popular sale. It will be most popular and profitable, and tenth-rate. But I’m not obliged to make any of it. Except in a racehorse, hardly anybody wants quality in anything. You see those vines over there? They are Aramons, and——”

“What we have to consider is the mine,” Val said, a shade irritably. He disliked that reference to horses. “We can’t let the Five Apostles sag. You got the farm from it, and that imposes an obligation upon you. It’s more than anybody else has to show.”

Esmey sat on a box, with hands clasped behind his head.

“Yes, it is something now,” he laughed.

The Mendoza place, a run-down farm valued by the county assessors at three thousand, had not been much to look at when he compounded for his share of the estate by taking it and turning farmer. After his mother had calmed down, he borrowed a thousand dollars from her at eight percent, and repaid it with the returns from a crop of tomatoes he sold to a Monterey cannery.

“A loan can be raised more easily now,” Val went on. “And there are those trees. Grown for mine timber. You’ve got acres of them, a heavy stand.” Those trees were always a sore point with the Casa. Faro, who shook his head over them in talks with Mrs. Roger, said they were worth six thousand at least, and she felt that Roger had made another of his gross mistakes in letting them go with the farm. “They could be cleared off, and bring in something.”

“I’ll hang on to them,” said Esmey, quite mildly. “I dislike the idea of having a farm without any trees.”

“Hang the farm!” shouted Val. “The mine is more important to all of us than the farm. The Copes have never been tomato grubbers—or never until you took it into your head to be one. You must know that the Five Apostles comes first!”

“It seems to me that it usually has come first. A thousand acres of the ranch was fed to it before we were born. Then half as much again. And most

of the trees. Once it was a half league, and——”

“Ancient history!” Val broke in. “It never amounted to anything! What matters now is to get the mine going full again—into bonanza. It depends on us. So do the Alamos men who have worked in it for generations. Also the village.”

“Also the Tai-Lings,” Esmeý added. “But why you, who have been away from Alamos and the mine, should come back and give me a wiggling about my duties to the damned mine, I don’t know.”

“We’ve been here a hundred years.” Val was dogged now. “There’s the family honor!”

“I’ve heard of that,” said Esmeý. “*La honra de la Casa!* It’s been one of the chief ornaments around here for quite a long while. Since Don Pablo’s time it didn’t do anyone very much good. And he didn’t take it too much to heart. He pawned the mine a couple of times when he was trading in stock. I suppose if he had lost, *la honra* would have gone with it. *La honra* was a good dog. It was gratifying to have around, to point at, like the family portraits. I imagine Father was bored with it towards the end. He let the Casa have it. And he left his lady friends, Angie Delambre and Julie What’s-her-name, something more tangible and above ground, that apartment-house.”

Val’s laugh was rueful. “You’re not much concerned, I think, over the mine. Nor whether it keeps going or not.”

“I shouldn’t care to have the Tai-Lings lose in it. They put into it more than they ever got out.”

“Oh, there’s ore enough!”

“If it weren’t for them I’d have no concern at all,” said Esmeý, rising from the box. “But about that subject again, I’ve got enough put up to keep the ranch going until the end of next summer. Five hundred dollars. If you can make use of that——”

“It isn’t much, no.” Val checked his irritability with a smile. “Not at all what I had reason to expect.”

“So I feared. Though it is much—for a tomato grubber.”

Val stood in the doorway, looking over the fields, and whistled, his hat-brim drawn down to his nose. After some desultory remarks on the grass and the fences, he gave a nod, and left. Half way down the vineyard he was blithe again, whacking at tarweed with his stick.

Esmey watched him vault a fence, and push his way through some chaparral to the road, with that stalking, Indian tread that reminded him of his father. Val had the same easy-humored, devil-may-care fatalism, but he was brainier and had a saving cleverness that his father lacked. He was not one to be cast down for long. He had already forgotten his pique, and not again would he ask a leg-up from the ranch, for he knew it would be futile. He knew the mine, and he knew his family.

A flight of rooks was making for the slope, as if disturbed. Esmey went out. Far off he saw Paula riding towards him.

Red-haired Paula, loping down the hill and taking that barred gate at a jump, instantly filled for Esmey half the universe, and his brother filled the other half. Headstrong, both of them, but an evenly matched pair. Val, spoiled, the wonder of the village and the county, the crown prince before whose smile and manners doors fell open, was born fortunate, just as he was born to the purple. Never a shade lacking in resolution once he had made up his mind, what he wanted from the world, he got, and at his own terms. He had been born, also, with a passion for the rock under his feet. Even the old Capitan, who begrudged anyone praise, had remarked once that Val could snuff out more rock in a week than his father could in half a year.

Val was far more harum-scarum; his leisure activities more doubtful, but when he did buckle down to work for a week—though it was likelier to be for a day—he had a keener spirit for it than his father ever had. Esmey knew that Val, without telling anyone, had spent the night in the old workings of the mine, to find out things for himself. He trusted no one's judgment half as much as he did his own. And he had always felt that his father had inclined to be hasty, depending more on snap judgment than on a long mulling over of data when it came to guessing the limits of an ore body.

“It was the right economy all right, in those days,” Val had said last Spring, when he was at the farm. “The place was rotten with ore. Paying streaks were as thick as blackberries. And there were more and bigger blackberries on the next bush than on the one being picked. But I wish now he hadn't killed the bushes by pulling out the timber. The roofs are down in half a dozen drifts that should have been gone into further. Take the Rico Duro and the Indian drifts—why, they hadn't been half picked. What I'm going to do some day is clear them out to rework. There's big salvage in 'em, and so I told Faro.”

And all that Spring Val had wriggled into the most dreadful places, a hundred yards this way and fifty yards that, squeezing through like a lizard. He had no nerves. He enjoyed groping face down through labyrinths as some men enjoy climbing sheer mountain peaks.

“That was a belly-crawl in the Indian,” Val said with a grin. “I got into a cave that was thirty feet high if it was an inch. The timbers had been snagged, but the roof held. It was one of those Mendoza specials. Interesting to see

how those Spanish chaps worked in 'fifty-two. Be damned if it didn't take me almost an hour to find that rathole to crawl back through! I came out without my shirt."

The very thought of it threw Esmeý into a cold sweat.



Paula cantered up, the pony lathered, and she leaped down.

"Got lost on the Jiminez road, did you?" he asked. "I should have warned you the trail's overgrown."

"I didn't make it. I found some old brick ruins, and had a picnic to myself. And I had stayed too long at Kathy's. We had tea. And I told Faro there'd be a meeting. A quite grown-up visit. Last time I was there I was in pigtails. Kathy was jolly, and Faro looked as sour as a quince."

"That's often his state," said Esmeý, taking off the saddle. "He must be thinking of the wood he can't get from me!" The pony he turned loose in the corral. "That's where we'll keep the pinto. News for you! Angel says you can keep him as long as you want."

"Tell Cloke to thank him for me. And if I'm found missing, I'll be up in the woods there, making a hunter of that pinto. Just rehearsing. We may work up a pack yet! If Cloke can find another hound and a fox. And some sporting gentry."

"Val will take care of the gentry. If anybody can round them up, he can."

"And what's wrong with that?" she asked as they strolled on towards the house. "Someone's got to look after the social element." She bent forward as he held a match to her cigarette. "Seems to me you two must have had a devil of a big row. I saw Val cut across the vineyard as I was coming down. He always stamps off after a particularly hot one."

"It wasn't any more of a row than usual," he said easily. "I was just trying to bring him round to my point of view, which was quite reasonable. But he couldn't see it. We've just got different ideas. He thinks that crops are easier to get out than ore."

They walked through the eucalyptus trees in the yard, Blazer stalking before them. The light was dimmer here, but Esmeý saw that Paula smiled with rather an effort.

“You told him quite different, I’m sure. And that you’d rather gamble on a crop than on any blasted mine?”

That relieved him. She knew Val better than he had thought. But she was still short of knowing him as well as he did. The Five Apostles, an established concern, was collateral on which plenty could be raised at any of the banks behind the pool. It was good for at least ten times what the Mendoza place would fetch at a sheriff’s sale. Val had other quietly guarded little interests outside of the blasted mine.

“That’s close to it,” he assented, with a grin. “Fairly close to it.”



The sunlight fell obliquely on the plants in Mrs. Roger’s side-parlor, where Val had been waiting after he came back from the ranch. He sat by the window, looking into the garden where Ah Moy was tilling among the poinsettias against the stable wall. The garden was the showplace of Alamos; tinted postcards of it were to be bought at the village news-room. Sometimes his mother walked in it, and Father Vargas liked to sit on the parapet of the summer-house and watch the water-lilies and fish in the pond. No one else sat there now, and it had a neglected air, for beech leaves had blown in, and the pagoda-like roof with its wide, projecting eaves was faded. The coat of vermilion that Don Pablo had given it had been worn by sun and rain to a soft coral, with the gray of the wood showing beneath, but it was in harmony with the dusty green of the foliage. The garden, too, had retired from the world behind a dense, high wall of bamboos. Val looked at the pond on which he, Esmeý and Paula had fought off pirates and been shipwrecked in the eventful and amphibious summers of their childhood.

He had no sentimental affection for the place. It was remote and lifeless, the long guest-house as empty as the half-dozen rooms upstairs in the old, commodious wing of the Casa, where only he and Crossett were staying. That made it damned awkward, having all that room, and Paula and Tai-Ling camping out at Esmeý’s farm.

His mother, who assuredly was not bowed down with grief, could have very well taken them into the house. Even after he had told her of their engagement, she had not relaxed in her harsh attitude towards Paula, and she cared still less for Tai-Ling. It was as if she thought any manifestation of interest unworthy of her dignity. She was not tactful, not diplomatic. And her disregard of them had been more of a mistake this time. The Tai-Lings might be good for another loan. Those old Chinese firms were wealthy in the worst

of times; they had tons of silver in their vaults; they kept reserves in the export banks in San Francisco, and their credit was unshakable. Meantime, he would have to be cautious, and not ruffle her feelings. She had wealth in her own right, and apart from land and buildings in Alamos, she had bought with her share of her father's estate a whole block of shops in Monterey. It was a very ordinary block down near the fish wharf, but it was solid property, and the income from that alone would suffice to keep up the Casa.

Mrs. Roger came in from her upstairs room. She sat by the window, took up her knitting, and Val brought over to her a carafe and a plate of caraway biscuits.

"You'll be coming in tonight, won't you, Mother? For that discussion? Faro's to be here, also; and the women."

"Yes. I will attend."

"I was over at the ranch, and I saw Esmey a moment. Paula was out riding. And Crossett's gone for his hike. We are going back tonight, the both of us. I shall have a lot to do. It may be a fortnight before I can get here again.

"And there's something I've got to talk to you about. I've run pretty short of funds. I had to drop a couple of experting jobs to get here in time. The fees would have helped carry me through. It was a loss to me. I have a lot of obligations, and several bills to meet. I didn't expect to find things so dreadfully tied up when I came home, either. I've got to have a checking account. So I asked Esmey for a loan."

She put down her knitting. "Did he offer——"

"He offered me five hundred dollars! Which is nothing. Then he got to talking about his ranch, what he had put into it, and so forth. I had to remind him it was the Five Apostles that started it. And that all that fine timber belonged to it by rights."

No reference to those trees which had been lost through Roger's mistake ever failed to rankle her. His mistakes had been several and egregious. He had practically made the Five Apostles the bond-maiden to the Tai-Lings. And by allowing Esmey to have that ranch she herself had been deprived of a property that she could have cut up into two or three farms and leased out on a crop-sharing arrangement.

"It does," she said. "I never approved of that gift, as you know. About your funds—how much will you need?"

"Ten thousand."

“That is a large sum,” she said after a pause.

It was a large sum, but to ask for less would be unwise. It would be wiser to ask for it now, before the meeting, for there was no telling what might be revealed. And it was not likely her balance would greatly increase before the settling of the estate.

“I am not sure I can give you all of that.”

She had always been generous with him. When he was away at school she had habitually forwarded him gifts of money, and checks when he was abroad, in Germany, Spain and China. He had been gratified—but those letters she sent with them! Those fond and tedious letters that pursued him wherever he went! If she had only inflicted them upon Esmey instead of himself! He cast them unread into the waste-paper basket after ripping open the envelope and pocketing the check. That she knew; and she knew also how wildly the money was spent on cars, horses and dissipation. But her love for him was the stronger for her awareness of his weaknesses, which she forgave. To whom else could he turn? He was her favorite, and that was enough. He had need of her, and she had need of him.

“I must have it,” he was saying. “My obligations are most pressing. I can’t do with less.”

She unlocked a carved writing-cabinet, and drew up a chair. For some time she pored over a ledger, scratched notes, and went through a sheaf of bank statements. She swiftly wrote out and blotted two checks, and turned to him.

“Here are checks for eight thousand. You must give me a little time—a week, ten days—and I will see that you get the other two thousand. I may have to go to the bank first.”

“Thank you, Mother. *Mille gracias!*”

The tone of gratitude, the smile as he folded his arms about her, and the kiss upon her forehead were reward enough.

“I hope you will make that go as far as you can,” she said. “I wish the sum were larger, but for a while we shall have to be careful. Very careful,” she repeated bitterly, thinking of Roger’s freehandedness elsewhere. “There is more. But it is down in the mine. You will have to bring it up for yourself.

“Since our income derives from the Five Apostles, you should now begin to put the mine into shape. It must again bring us returns. You will have very much to do, I think. But you should be comfortable here. You can have all the lower wing for yourself, and Don Pablo’s room for your study.”

“Yes, yes; but don’t trouble too much about me, Mother.” He laughed easily, and tucked the checks into his pocketbook. His thoughts were already on what he had to do in the city; and he would have to hurry on to his stable at Pleasanton, and spend a day with his trainer, looking over the colts.

“I can’t be here all the time, though. There is the market to watch, and the business end of things, and the warehouse. I shall want to be at the office early.”

He walked about the room. The very notion of living here in the Casa, with its gloomy furniture, Roger groups, the ormolu lamp on its shaft by the staircase, the portraits of ancestors garrotted in frilled stocks—it stifled him. His interests would be bounded by the mine, the village, and the parlor, where he would have to spend a dreary succession of nights at bezique with his mother, Father Vargas and relatives from Monterey. Unless, of course, his mother went to visit with the Miuras, or opened her house in Monterey. She owned a town house there, a square adobe amidst pepper trees, and with not a glimpse of the sea. It was a bequest to her from some friend he had never heard of, a Doctor Hunnicutt, a gaffer who had done well with a hospital, now closed, in Alamos.

“You will have much to do, Heaven knows, bringing about some order where for a long time there has been none. But the real business of the Five Apostles is nearer home. When will you be returning?”

“In a week or so. We’ll soon be having order back again!”

He went up to his room, which had been Roger’s, and had an alcove made into a study, and there he went over his correspondence and wrote letters. His mother, in her chair again, looked into the garden and at the pool on which the chill evening mist was falling. She could hear the typewriter upstairs. Val was home; that was enough. Her dissatisfaction with life was so much lessened when he was near that she was almost content. It grieved her whenever he left for the city, even for the ranch; she was as jealous of the city as she was of Gervase’s daughter. Mrs. Roger was capable of renunciation and sacrifice, but her maternal affections now centered upon Val—her “Spanish son,” as Father Vargas referred to him—were as possessive, as greedy as her instinct for property. She could no more forgive Gervase’s daughter than she could those infamous, painted women in the apartment-house of which Roger had deprived her.

She thought of Madame Tai-Ling, who belonged to a family still rich, still influential in the trade. It crowed much over a loan it had once made to the Five Apostles. If another loan, and on far better terms, would help Val, then

she might be able to arrange a stay in the Casa for them, when the days of formal mourning were over.



“This contract,” said Crossett, leaning forward under the hard light of the table lamp, “this contract was drawn up so long ago that I don’t recall its precise terms.” Turning to the Chinese lady he ventured, “You have it with you?”

“It is in our factory at home,” she replied. “I did not think of bringing it, for the Five Apostles has its own copy.”

“Isn’t it in Father’s office?” Val asked Crossett.

“It could be. I haven’t made search. Your father looked after such papers himself.” Crossett lowered his grizzled bison-like head, fingered his glasses, and turned again to Tai-Ling. “It would be hard to discuss this contract intelligently, if it is not here. But you say you got no metal at all from here in—how long did you say?”

“Twenty-six months. We enquired, we wrote, we cabled, but there was only one response. That was two years ago, when Roger Cope said fifty flasks were on the way. The shipment never came to us. Our business suffered.”

“And how, may I ask?”

“It suffered,” Paula broke in, “because vermilion was what drummers would call our ‘leader.’ And since we couldn’t sell vermilion, our trade in paints, pottery glazes, and enamels fell off. To almost nothing. Some of our merchant clients went bankrupt. We had to close five depots. We——”

“But I fail to see,” Crossett interrupted, leaning back in his chair, “why you couldn’t have got metal elsewhere. What’s that place again—Szechwan?”

“Three thousand miles away,” said Paula. “With bandits and revolution between.”

“You could,” demurred Crossett, “have got metal from the quicksilver pool.”

Roger, he thought, had certainly let the Casa in for something. And he had thrown that apartment-house to his charmers in the nick of time, almost with his dying hand. They had been more to him than his wife and all his family.

They had looked after him all these years, had brought him home from the marshes ill, and attended him with the utmost devotion to the end. A remarkable menage! There had always been something engaging, warm and tolerant about his late client—disliked by his wife, but by nobody else in the world.

This red-headed girl of Gervase's, and she was clever, would have to be staved off somehow. He tapped with his pencil, like a schoolmaster, and frowned. He did not quite like the way things were going. Both Mrs. Roger and this grim old Titan of a foreman, Faro, were watching him. Did they expect a lawyer to work magic, and pull rabbits out of a silk hat?

“Why, Miss Cope, in this emergency, didn't your firm buy some metal from the pool?”

“It did, to meet its commitments. And it did at a loss. It bought here and there in the high market, to sell its goods in Chinese silver dollars.”

Tai-Ling silenced her with a touch on the arm, and spoke:

“That was an unnecessary question, Mr. Crossett. Our firm did not have to buy from anywhere but from the Five Apostles, with which it has a contract. We were to get all the flasks we wished at ten percent below the domestic price. That was most reasonable.”

“Reasonable!” Mrs. Roger spoke with contempt in a rising inflection. “Ten percent below the market quotation is not reasonable, Madame Tai-Ling!”

“It was just,” said the Chinese lady with firmness. “And it left the mine with a reasonable profit. And our firm took metal when it could not be sold anywhere else. I must remind you also that in this manner, and without hardship, the Five Apostles was paying off its interest on a four hundred thousand dollar loan—made outright in specie. Paying off its interest and a little on the principal. Tai-Ling's does not have to throw dear money into the pool. Eleven hundred more flasks are due the firm. May we have it?”

Mrs. Roger drew herself up white and rigid, like an icicle. She looked at Tai-Ling as if at an insect beyond her comprehension.

“You think that is due you, Madame?”

“There is something I'd like to know,” resumed Tai-Ling in her silvery twang. “It has to do with those fifty flasks for which we were billed, but never came to us.” She looked at Faro. “Were they shipped, like all our metal, to our broker at China Basin, Mr. Chuen Toy? All our metal was delivered to him, was it not?”

Faro's hand rose to his beard uncomfortably. "Aye, ma'am. It went straight to the dock for you. And then we got a memorandum here from the city office saying that henceforth all metal, for anyone, was to be shipped to the warehouse, and nowhere else."

"Those fifty flasks, too?"

"It'd be hard for me to remember that far back, ma'am."

"Twenty-six months ago?" pressed Tai-Ling. "It was then that you got Mr. Cope's memorandum to ship everything to the warehouse?"

"It would be all of that," said the unhappy Titan, feeling Mrs. Roger's eyes upon him. "I haven't the export books here, to be sure. They're at the office."

"That was skewering the old gaffer, and everybody else, too," thought Val. "Neatly, too."

He was irritated, for all that. He glanced at his mother, and almost quailed at her aspect of cold, mute rage. Crossett was a good deal to blame for letting things go this far. He must have known a lot of what had been going on. Any fool would have guessed there had been a—well, a mishandling of bills, manifests, or whatever they were called. Just damned, rotten bookkeeping!

"That still leaves us eleven hundred flasks," said Tai-Ling.

"If there is proof," sneered Mrs. Roger, "that amount is owing, and we shall, of course, request proof, then the metal will be sent to that Canton firm. And we shall exact receipts for it."

"Well, then," said Val, with a laugh, "they shall have it. And as soon as the stuff comes to hand!"

His rage equalled his mother's, but he had restrained himself. He had to look airy, for Paula's sake.

Everyone but his mother looked relieved—even, surprisingly, Crossett, who threw his pencil upon the table, and sat up, thankful that the meeting was over. It had been as explosive as a hearing in a dog case. He held the door open for Mrs. Roger. She went past him, eyes straight ahead, still implacable, and he felt smaller than when he came in.

Val walked with Paula across the road to where the station-wagon stood, lighted.

"What a squabble that was!" he said to her. "It did clear the air a trifle, though. And Tai-Ling gave old Crossy a facer! He should have known better,

really.”

He had to make light of it, but he was nevertheless angry—at having those debts to clear up when he had debts of his own quite as harassing; and angry at his mother for flaring out so at Tai-Ling. His mother was quite right: it was unjust that the burden of his father’s mistakes should be put on their shoulders; but she should not have slammed the door in Tai-Ling’s face for that. If a loan was to be got from her firm, he would have to patch up things himself.

“Oh, I don’t mind a row myself,” she laughed. “I mean, I don’t take it seriously.”

“That’s heartening. I wasn’t sure how you’d feel about it.”

He did feel lightened. And he was glad, too, he had thought of getting those checks from his mother when he did. If her mood returned, it was quite possible he would get that third check. The trainer was waiting for it. A little flattery, or a little deference, on the part of the women, and it would come. “Will you call on Mother in a day or two?” he asked. “It might smooth things. And I’d like it.”

“You think she would?” asked Paula, with a mocking smile. “You might. But I don’t think Aunt Ysabel would. Nor I!”

The car lunged up the road, and with a shrug Val went back into the Casa.

The draw of wind over the bay was strong, and Paula stood muffled and in belted coat at the prow of the ferry, holding to the guard-rail. November had run half its sunlit days, and the air was sharp with the cloudless gale that roared in her ears with the tromboning of sirens and the waspish complaints of the tugboats. Across the mile of hummocky green water was the line of wharves, the sea pounding yeastily at the base of the black pilings. The docks with their warehouses were like a row of elephants under howdahs kneeling along the waterfront. Beyond them slanted the ramps of San Francisco; they seemed to be all windows, all glowing like opals in the red blaze of the horizon. The faces of the voyagers about her were tinted with the sunset glow as the city drew nearer. She was going to meet Val. She had managed to reach him at the office that morning, telephoning from Pudgy Venn's, where she had been staying a few days with Tai-Ling.

"That's gorgeous!" he said. "You must come over for dinner, and then we'll go on to the beach. I may be delayed. I've been up at the mines ever since I left, and I've still mail to go through."

She was feeling herself in love once more. And she was glad to escape from an evening with college friends of Pudgy's, for these alumnae parties could be tiring. Tai-Ling, a little upset after her brush with Aunt Ysabel, had wanted her company in Berkeley, and Pudgy, who had arranged a program of drives, tennis games, and luncheons, wanted them to stay a week longer.

"We just can't," Paula told her. "The Knights and Auxiliary are expecting us at a tea and concert they're getting up. It's some kind of benefit. And they would like it if someone from the Casa were to be there. Aunt Ysabel positively refuses to go; Val hates singing; and Esmey isn't in with either crowd at all."

That was a perfect excuse; and tomorrow afternoon she and Tai-Ling were going down by train, and Esmey would meet them at San Jose to whisk them back to the ranch. Val would have to stay up another week, and go up again to Sulphur Bank or somewhere, and attend another pool board meeting.

The ferry jolted into the dock-cradle with screeching of timbers, and a jangle of chains as the apron dropped on the runway. She walked through to the street and into a taxi. She had her overnight bag, for she was to stay for

the night at a hotel where a sister of Pudgy's had a suite. The sky was now soft green, there was dusk yet to come, and at upper Grant Avenue she got out to look at the windows. She wandered in and out of shops, bought some Chinese books and a pot of ginger for Tai-Ling, and at seven, when it was darkening, she got into another taxi and had herself whisked to the restaurant where she was to meet Val. It was in one of those dark and hugger-mugger alleys that in San Francisco conceal restaurants of the uppermost rank. This one was less findable than most, and the taxi-driver had to enquire once or twice. She entered, gave her name, and the waiter, bowing, convoyed her to the remotest corner of the place.

"Mr. Cope phoned to say he would be here in a minute. This is his usual booth."

Val came in a quarter of an hour, and the waiter brought martinis on the instant.

"Grand to have you here a whole evening, Paula! And it was a good thing for me I got your message when I did. I was just about to dash up into Lake County again and have a look at some new diggings. They're opening up that old mine at Mount Konocti."

"I didn't upset your plans, I hope?" she asked.

"Hardly! It can wait. It's been there a long time."

He had all this while been at his stable in Pleasanton, trotting off the yearlings, and now and then going about with his trainer to visit other stables. Two of the ponies they had sold; and up near Mount Konocti there was, apart from the old mine, another horse farm where his trainer had been much impressed by an animal.

"It isn't mandatory for you to go back to Alamos tomorrow, is it?"

"It is. They'll be expecting me at the cottage. And Pudgy's given me a stack of part-songs to take down."

"That's a bore! There's a musical comedy opening, and you're leaving me flat! You must find Alamos soothing. I don't! Now how about another martini? May I ring?"

"Do. And while you're about it, you might order me a cutlet or something. I got famished in that ocean wind."

"This joint is above cutlets. It prides itself on catering to especial tastes of the Copes ever since elk quit Alamos, and there's still a case of Grandfather's wine left down cellar. It likes to be flattered by requests in the way of fish,

like black oysters and bootleg crabs from Eureka. Also venison. The illegal is its specialty. What would you like?"

"Still the cutlet. And a sole."

These, with contraband for Val, came. The waiter poured claret with the unction of an archbishop, and drew the curtains as he retired. A horn lantern lighted the booth. Fog began mantling the dark panes of window—a swirling fog from the tules—and the cable-car gongs were being louder and most imperiously thumped.

"I still don't see much sense in it, Yin-Chiu, your leaving to hole up again on the ranch. Why don't you stay up here a while? Do you really have to work your head off on that silly concert thing?"

"I do," Paula said stoutly. "For two reasons. First, because I like to; and, second, because it means something to Kathy. She's head of the committee. I mean, she's running the whole show. And its success means a lot to her. If it goes over, she'll be elected chairman of the Ladies Auxiliary. She's running for the office again this winter."

"She'll be elected anyway," said Val. He gave a short laugh. "There has never been a winter in which she didn't run."

"Kathy's a dove!" Paula came back, fiercely. "And who else should run? I'd like to know who!"

"Nobody, I'll admit," he said, with meekness. "I hope she'll be chairman forever. I think she will. So it isn't imperative that you go down. Wild horses wouldn't drag me to another of those concerts. I don't like music, to begin with. And they always have something from 'Elijah.' It's very lugubrious." He groaned miserably. "I had to put up with a lot of that as a child."

He filled the liqueur glasses. "Yin-Chiu, I wonder——"

"Not yet," she said firmly. "Twice since I came you began with 'Yin-Chiu'—so I knew what was coming. I just don't want to be married yet. We can stay on being engaged another while longer. You won't mind?"

"As you say," he remarked. "I'll have to learn to keep on making the best of it."

"It isn't that I love you any the less, Val; and don't think I'm wanting in feeling. I don't feel at all like settling down. I can't even pretend to; and it's no use my trying. Not until all is straightened out again."

"I wish you weren't tangled up in that business!"

“Well, I am. And I’m in it deep. Tai-Ling brought me up. I made mud pies with this generation of the firm. You know what we went through. Things are not so bad now, but they’re not an awful lot better. They won’t be until the Pigment Makers’ Street and the factory are out of the doldrums. Tai-Ling’s come to get metal, and I’m helping her.”

“What’s the least the factory could do with?”

“Right now? Two hundred flasks.”

And if that were paid, Val thought, there would still be a debt of nine hundred flasks. What a muddle his father had left him! To keep on—or to resume—selling flasks to China at a cut seemed wrong, somehow. The four hundred thousand dollars had vanished long ago. It was senseless to be paying ten percent on vanished capital. There was a demand, not brisk, but steady enough, for mercury at home, and not to keep the Five Apostles going on it would be a form of insanity.

Gloom welled through him. If only that contract were out of the way! What had become of his father’s copy? No trace of it anywhere in the office, nor in the security drawer at the bank. Angie Delambre had ransacked the apartment for him when he and Crossett called there, and they had found not so much as a shred of paper.

At the office there was nothing left to be looked into, except some old volumes of reports. Don Pablo had written them. They might be odd reading; perhaps helpful, like the early maps, if they were still there.

“I still can’t find that contract,” he said. “Crossy almost went out of his mind, hunting for it.”

“The factory’s copy will be here in a couple of months,” said Paula. “Tai-Ling wrote for it at once.”

Val had the fantastic hope that the ship would sink, and the contract lost as utterly as his father’s.

“If you don’t mind hearing my opinion,” Crossett had told him when they were coming away from the apartment, “I think he burned it.”

“We’ll have to be getting you those flasks, Yin-Chiu,” he said cheeringly, “after we have a house-cleaning.” He pushed back in his chair. “What about a turn in the air? Or shall we go on to the beach?”

“Just a walk, no more than that.”

They bundled out into the fog. Street-lamps prinked the night like fireflies in a hedge. Arm in arm they walked down California Street, which was a rift

in the woolly darkness where the underground cable rattled and clapped like a gust of wind. They turned up Sansome.

“The office is right here.”

They came to the building, mounted three flights of stairs that spiralled about a dead elevator, and Val unlocked the heavy door to the inner room of the office. He built a fire in the grate, and topped it with a log. The blaze crackled; Paula sat before it, feet on the andirons, and lighted a cigarette. She looked at the square whitewashed beams, and at the deep Chinese rug on the floor. Shelves were stuffed with books, reports and chunks of rock. For seventy years the loft had been the headquarters of the quicksilver dynasty of Alamos.

“It is rather higgledy-piggledy,” said Val. “There’s enough for three museums here. Father used to say it was a private way-station, where geologists and engineers had left their baggage.”

The aroma of it, a compound of fumes from a wine depot below, the oiled leather of the armchairs, and the coffee-roasting establishments down the street, swept her back through the years to childhood. She had been here before. She was seven; she wore a blue coat with brass buttons, and Tia Ana was with her. Uncle Roger gave her two cartwheel dollars, one for each pocket. That was the time she made her first visit to see the seals out at the cliffs.

“We still own it,” Val was saying, with a laugh. “It belongs to nobody in particular, but to the mine in general.” He was walking about the room, hands in pockets. “I haven’t gone through everything in here yet. It would take years. But there used to be some maps. I hope they’re not lost, or eaten up by mice. They were on parchment.”

At the far end of the room a cabinet had been built into the thick wall. It was unlocked, and he pulled open the doors, to see only stacks of dusty account books. He groped in the bin below them, and pulled out maps. As he unrolled them they crackled with the report of pistol-shots.

“Yes, the parchment’s held up. All mutton, and a yard wide.”

One by one he spread them out on the rug near the fireplace, and pored over them, tracing the lines with a finger. The smallest of them was very old, with legends in Castilian script, and designs of crossed pick-and-shovel to denote the compass points. It bore the seal of a Mexican governor.

“Must be the family coat-of-arms,” ventured Paula. “A strict lot, I’m sure. I don’t see any bar sinister.”

“Oh, they were proper, all right. I wish we had parchment like this nowadays. A lot of people would turn it into lamp-shades, but these ought to be framed.”

He spread out the largest map, and with more interest, for it was signed, “P. Cope.”

“Hmm! Off the Number Five level. And that was the first.” He put a finger down. “They began here, where the portal is. The Indians had been there before them, digging war paint.” His finger travelled. A laugh came from him. “This *is* an early one. Here’s the Mendoza gallery, and not much bigger than a cellar. They were just starting real work then!”

He knew this level. Mendoza and his workmen had taken out everything that they saw with their own eyes, but mostly they had stayed there, hacking out that gallery. He pored over dark bands of cross-hatching. That meant ore—quite a thick band of ore. There were early drifts that nosed towards it: the Rico Duro and Indian drifts. Then, for some reason, the workmen had marched elsewhere. Why?

Don Pablo must either have done some guessing, or else he had x-ray eyes. Val stared. He breathed deeply. No, there was no guessing in this map. Behind that workmanship, the fine drawing in enduring black ink, was knowledge—prescience, even.

“What do you see?” the girl asked.

“Penwork. Like an etching. Look how small the Mendoza cave is here! About the size of Faro’s cottage!”

“It does look small. Who could have dreamed it was to grow so large?”

“Don Pablo perhaps,” he laughed. “They stayed with it. Nothing but the gallery mattered then.”

They talked before the fire until the log was consumed. His car was by the door, and he drove Paula to her hotel. At the office again he bent over the map and his own practice charts of the Mendoza level, and a survey of the portal, which opened into the old trucking road, long hidden under brush and juniper. He made no tracing of the maps, for the level was clear in his mind; but he worked over figures until it was five o’clock, then drove out.

The highway past Cupertino and Los Gatos was devoid of traffic, and he sent the car hurtling at ninety miles an hour. The horizon was furrowed with red by the time he readied Coyote, and it was dawn when he was racing up into the hills above the vineyards. It was too late to turn in, and leaving the

car by the portal he walked on to the ruined furnace three quarters of a mile away.

This was good poaching weather, the morning damp and misty. Esmey flung the rope to the deck, scrambled up from the wharf, and the *Apostle* nosed slowly down the inlet in fog. Paula, nautical in slacks and mackinaw, hummed at the wheel.

“Low bridge! Glory, I hope we can make it!”

They did, with hardly a scrape of the mast-tip, though the tide was flowing into the estuary.

“Coast is clear,” said Esmey, straining his eyes ahead. Even the bridge, right over the stern, was hardly visible in the ectoplasmic grey of the fog. “Small chance anybody’d have of finding us out in that! We’ll be as lost as a dime’s worth of radium. It may clear up by noon. The trouble we’re giving ourselves for a fish!”

A gunshot below the old whaling station, they emerged through ripples that set the *Apostle* bouncing into open water. Cloke, in the pit, poked at the engine with a yard-long oilcan, and after a nod of satisfaction, mounted to the pulpit atop the wheel-house, where he devoted himself to his pipe and a mild vigilance. Marlin was to be watched for, and kelp, of which there should be acres after the storm; and lastly, the Fish Patrol.

“No sign of ’em yet, Esmey,” he called down. “But I’ve got a hunch they’ll be on our tail.”

“Old pals of his?” asked Paula.

“Quite. His game is to play with them and not get tagged. Since he’d pay heavily if he lost, it’s as good as winning triple if he wins. He expects luck today with that new harpoon. Swordfish is ten dollars a hundredweight, that’s what he’ll get from Angel. The out-of-season price.”

“It used to be all marlin about here, I remember,” Paula said. “And swordfish—or broadbill—was scarcer than Great Auks.”

“Still is. It didn’t come north of Santa Cruz Island until four years ago. The mackerel showed up, and broadbill strung after them on some warm current. Cloke’s keen on broadbill.”

“Brutal, rather—harpooning ’em,” said Paula. “And I’m afraid I’m going to be awfully squeamish.” She laughed, bearing on the wheel, a veer of wind thrumming the hair over her eyes. “It’ll be your fault, Esmey, wrenching me away like this.”

That was exactly what he had contrived. He wanted a whole day with her, away from the ranch, away from Val, at close quarters, and miles out at sea. What with that fox-hunt coming, and all this dashing up to the city, the chances of seeing much of Paula were getting less.

“Yes, it was a kidnapping,” he admitted cheerfully. “But for a land bird, you’re doing well. And don’t get too early sickish about broadbill. There mayn’t be one. And if there is, Cloke may miss as often as not.”

The *Apostle* rose, dropped, then swayed helpless in a broad hollow of water, to rise and drop into the next deep saucer. Esmey stood and looked through the porthole. The monotone of slow, heaving sea, green in the veil-haze, was flecked with white. Great depths were below them now, under the thin boards underfoot. He gripped the frame of the porthole as he looked out, the *Apostle* plunging every two or three breaths, the rim of sea hollow walling off view of the horizon.

In the grey silence there was but the purring of the engine. The *Apostle* had been Don Pablo’s yacht. Hard-favored and cramped, it had been built staunchly in the whaling days, though rot had got in, and Esmey felt it was only the tar that Cloke had laid on patiently, layer upon layer, like the skins of an onion, that kept the old derelict afloat. Anywhere at the water-line, he could have kicked a hole through the planks. Don Pablo had sailed in her to Baja California, where he visited the old towns, attended bullfights and fiestas and prowled through the silver mines. Usually on those voyages, he took his lieutenant along, the spectral Mendoza, and a cook and steward to wait upon that genial duo of pirates. “Cortes and Mephisto,” the head wharfinger at Monterey once joyfully called them, when the boat pushed out, Don Pablo on deck with his telescope, and Mendoza, who loathed the sea, gulping brandy in the cabin. The *Apostle* was a vestige of those heroic days.

Esmey shouted up to Cloke. “Has the Padre been coming around?”

“I saw him with Robin and Faro yesterday,” the voice came down. “Getting ready for the Mass, I think.”

“Would that be the Mass in the gallery?” Paula asked, hauling down at the wheel.

“That’s it,” said Esmey.

“Then I’m for going. Father had seen it when he was a child, and often told me about it, the flares and the echoes.”

“I saw it twice, a long while ago,” said Esmey, “and a sight it was!”

“Will you take me in?” she asked.

“I shall. I still know the way.”

Val had gone on to the city, and she would be his for the evening likewise.

“Hullo, there’s a sign,” Paula said. “There—that bird!”

He stared as a pelican flapped creakily past the porthole, and winged towards a line of green, shrouded with seagulls uttering their cries. Floating kelp that line was, and the congregated birds a sign of fish.

“Mackerel ahead!” Cloke sang out. “Head for the gulls!”

Paula swung the wheel. The *Apostle* rocked sideways, dipping right and left, without taking water, as it headed diagonally for the kelp. A glissade, then breaking waves; as they neared the line she swung again, went in straight and through without fouling the propeller.

“Rough going, but you’re holding it pretty,” Cloke remarked.

For all her ugliness, the *Apostle* was responsive and staunch. It was Cloke’s boat—Roger had sold it to him for almost nothing—and he kept it in trim.

“Mackerel it is,” he shouted. “Keep in a circle.”

For another hour they cruised, then moved northward, guided by Cloke’s shouts, to another patch of kelp under a body of thicker vapor.

“A fin!”

Paula lowered the speed and put her face to the porthole. Cloke fitted the harpoon. The fin and the tail emerged purple from the heaving field of grey. The back lifted, and the *Apostle* came nearer, her engine barely on the turn. Esmey held his breath, waiting for the report. He counted up to fifty. Cloke was still waiting. Sometimes the fin was clear, and the next instant lost in opaque vapor, for the wind was fickle. Esmey heard again a remote throbbing, unevenly audible. It faded, then grew louder.

Cloke hurried down, bearing his tackle, which he stowed under the engine-boards.

“The patrol,” he said, swiftly assembling a rod and line. Baiting the hook with a sardine, he jolted it far out towards the kelp, and lolled over the rail,

pipe in teeth.

“Fin was abeam, the other side,” said Esmey. “I’ll throw a marker.”

He plopped a keg overboard, and joined Paula at the rail. They could hear the boat advancing. The *Apostle*, with engine idling, jounced prodigiously as sleazy planes of water rose and slid under her. They were in open sea, far out of the sheltered bay, and somewhere between Godola and Cape Año Nuevo. A siren hooted through the fog, a white prow loomed at them, turned, and the patrol was riding abreast. The officer, a martinet in laced cap, darted out a question like cold steel.

“What’s that keg out there? A marker?”

“You don’t catch marker-size fish with a tom-cod pole,” said Cloke.

“Pretty far to go for tom-cod, isn’t it?”

“Not so far but somebody comes along and spoils the fishing.”

“H’m, the *Apostle*. Seems to me you’ve been in trouble before. Broadbill, wasn’t it? Better leave that alone. Season’s over. Safer to stick to tom-cod, my friend. Or grunion, if you use your hands only. Who’s aboard with you? Tourists?”

“Cope’s my name,” said Esmey. “I’ll refer you, for my general character, to anyone at Alamos.”

His wrecked cap, faded dungarees, and the run-down look of the boat did not reassure the officer. Still, that woman with loads of shiny red hair under her sou’wester could be somebody, and she was in a borrowed jacket far too large for her. The officer saluted, with a stab at gallantry, turned, and his craft plunged back and out of sight.

“Lost pretty near an hour,” said Cloke, dismantling his rod. He glanced at the keg. It was still near by. There had been no drift; it was only the surface of the water that had been undergoing convulsions. “Won’t do any harm to try out some of them albacore heads.”

He dragged up a tubful, and pitched them upon the sea, where they floated, tied in threes. Paula started the engine again and the boat went into its slow circling, in low gear. An hour went by; Cloke mounted to his pulpit, and polished his binocular.

Esmey fitted drinks in the galley, vermouth and brandy, chilled, the “vintners’ punch,” lifted one up to Cloke in his perch, put another before Paula on the rack, and curled up to look out upon the water. The girl sat perched on a stool, the engine all but dead, her arms folded atop the wheel,

listening to the hour-long stillness of the void. On the oily-green slopes the *Apostle* was a drifting gull asleep. The veil-haze was lifting before the wind drifting in warm from the interior valley; it curled and wheeled, leaving clearer the long, magenta tracery of kelp. The slow rocking lulled her, her glass slid back and forth on the moist rack, clicking like a metronome. Her chin was resting on her folded arms now as she looked out upon the sea as if hypnotized.

Perched beside her on a stool, Esmey looked coastward through his field-glass into the haze, studying the flight of a landbird and waiting for the break of a dolphin.

“What were you looking at?” she asked. “Your farm?”

“Not just then,” he said. “There are times when I don’t think of it.”

“There are, really?” she smiled, leaning back in her seat. “I can’t picture you thinking of anything but your farm. Nor that you ever believe others have feelings just as intense about something else.”

“Oh, I could believe, if I tried,” he said, with a wisp of a grin. “Others, I know, have their own peculiar type of madness. There’s Cloke, who insists on hooking broadbill out of season. That makes him a better fisherman than myself. And Faro, who is transported if he sees some rock that I wouldn’t look at even once.

“And Val, well—” Esmey paused a moment. “That’s coming round to the mine and rocks again. I can’t enter into his feelings, but I have envied him now and then. He knows a thousand times more about rocks and such than I ever shall.”

“All four of you are in your own dream worlds,” said Paula. “All locked up in them tightly!”

Esmey laughed. But it was not the mine that was Val’s chosen world. For that world he had been bred, but horses were his dream world. He moved about in that sphere with his eye open for profit, but he exulted in horses for their own sake—immortal, beautiful creatures of blood and fire compound. Even as a child he had form in the saddle.

“I’ve got to admit I’m rather pent-up,” said Esmey. “Quite selfish, quite egoistic. I’m half a Machado, that’s why. With time the Machados retire inwardly; a family trait, they say. My mother told me that once, when she was displeased at me. I don’t believe she recognized it in herself. It isn’t a generous trait—but there it is.”

“Heavens, is it going to make a hermit of you?”

“Not much,” he laughed. “I get around.”

“Even down to the mine, for once,” she mused.

“You shouldn’t have doubted I would. Into the mine, even! Because you asked me. The Five Apostles is worth a Mass,” he said lightly. “I’ve no other brief for it except that if it weren’t for the mine, you wouldn’t be here. Nor I, nor any of us, for that matter. I know it speaks to you.”

“You can understand. It means my father, my childhood, the family bonds —” And it did, and it took in all her world, with Val—and Esmey now—and China and the Tai-Lings, and the quietness of the village and the ranch. “It’s hard to explain——”

A wave pounded the hull, then another, and the *Apostle*, shivering, dropped sideways into a glassy trough. Esmey caught the chair and the girl before they toppled, and lifting her face he kissed her. She tightened her clasp, then relaxed it, and her hands fell, for both his arms were about her. He kept his mouth pressed on her upturned face. They heard nothing. The *Apostle*, left to the will of the breeze, strayed as in blind-man’s-buff. Combers shouldered it, the smallest waves mockingly led it into wrong paths. A still harder thump, this time at the prow, sent it pitching into the sink of another trough. Paula slowly disengaged herself.

There was a scurry on deck. Esmey, returning Paula to the chair, looked up, outward. A purple curve was rising above water.

Cloke’s shout and the bang, with a rushing of line, were simultaneous. The two scrambled to the deck, and clung to the rail, for the boat was scuppers under. The vibration was enough to jar loose every bolt. Paula leaped down to the wheel, and with engine going, turned with the fish, while Esmey pulled in the slack, winding it about a stanchion. The fish geysered. There was no mistaking the rounded sword, the dorsal fin running far down the back, nor the tail like a pair of compasses pulled wide. A marlin it was, and no broadbill. Esmey jumped for the gaff.

“Damn!” yelled Cloke, coming down from his pulpit. “It’s only a three-poler! And sore as the deuce!”

Seas poured over the fish as it tore for the hull. A splintering crash crowded on the jar that staggered them. The water boiled up, tinged with claret, and Esmey gaffed into the middle of it.

“Bring a rope!” he shouted.

Cloke brought him an end, and Esmey made a loop.

“It isn’t going to kick, now?” asked the girl, peering down. She withdrew, shuddering. “You can’t tell about marlins.”

“There’s not a kick left in the feller,” said Cloke. After having sworn himself hoarse, then mute, he was beaming. “The way that toggle opened out was a caution. Hit him like a shell! Would have killed an elephant.”

Esmey clung outside the rail, made tries with the lasso, caught the tail, and as he pulled, the tail released, drenching him with red. The sea boiled up, Esmey was lost in the deluge a moment, then visible again.

“Washed clean this time!” he grinned.

He flung the rope onto the deck, and climbed in, and Cloke made it fast at the stern. Chattering, with hair plastered over his face, he jumped into the cabin. Paula heated rum over a spirit lamp, whisked a drink out to Cloke, then returned and slid the door after her.

“D’you feel as pale as you look?” Esmey held a cup to her. “Get that down quick.”

“That was a massacre! I was afraid that sword would lash at you. What a monster it was!”

“Not quite.” Esmey buttoned a coat over his wet shirt. “A marlin’s a poor thing alongside a broadbill. Hardly more than a shad. A broadbill can offer a real fight.”

“That was fight enough. Quite horrible!”

“Well, it was sloppy.” Esmey filled a mug for himself. “Health! And here’s to Cloke, who made the harpoon that killed the marlin that’ll pay for the iron that’ll make the engine!”

“To the rebel!” countered Paula, laughing in her tall chair, her feet resting on the rim of the wheel.

Though the boat was still a good hour out, it had slid into the quieter field of the bay; the pitching was over, and they were making six knots, for all the drag of the big fish.

“We’re all rebels, I think,” said Esmey, wet and tousled, stretching himself out on the bench. “And you’re one, aren’t you? Rebelling against something in the dark. As much for the sake of the fight itself, I’ll bet, as for a horse-load of stuff to make paint of.

“And that’s all right, too. The struggle makes life vivid for you. It would be rather a pity if you no longer struggled. It would mean your love for what

you had been fighting for is no longer strong, or that it is lost, or that you've turned hermit, or quietist."

"Like yourself!" she laughed again. "You've dropped out of the struggle!"

"Sometimes I wonder if I have," he said, complacently, balancing one foot atop the other. "I'm fighting all the time against something. With stumps, boulders, and leafhopper, mildew, this fungus or that, and some queer bug that gets into the vines. Or into the fermenting vats.

"But I don't mind, because I like it. Give me sunshine, and the wind pulling at my neck. There I was the other morning, chopping up stump-wood, and whistling for all I was worth. I heard another tune. Atop a rock close by me was a whiskey-jack—one of those Canadian blue jays—flapping his wings, whistling like mad, as if he were drunk with the sudden, hot glory of the morning. I knew how he felt. Two of a kind, that whiskey-jack and me. One was a bird, down from the cold. The other was a farmer, swamping. We were both lucky, I thought. I wouldn't have changed places with anyone in creation. It may go all contrary with me, but I like farming—that is, my kind of farming. It's fighting, of a kind."

"More like a half-lazing in the sun, you lotus-eater!" said Paula, watching through the window the approaching shore and the inlet.

"If the Five Apostles meant as much to me as the vineyard, I'd be down in those burrows," observed Esmey. "But it never did. I like to be above ground, and see what I'm fighting."

He sat up, flung back his touse of wet hair, and listened. Above the purr of the engine was no sound, nor any tread of foot on deck. Cloke was at the stern, eyes on the marlin that rolled in the creamy wake of the boat. He whistled, then stopped with a grin. "Never could whistle down below either, nor pound in a drill counterclockwise. And if I had to encounter Mendoza, I'd rather it were among the vines than in those deep veins." He stopped again; she turned, and she met his sombre and questioning look.

"I've told you a lot more today than ever I told anyone in my life," he said, resignedly. "I didn't get you out to sea for nothing! I shanghaied you as my confessor. Your father never told you about Mendoza highjacking a lode, did he?"

"That demi-god!" she laughed. "Heavens, no! What's all this—did you run across a skeleton in the closet?"

"I did. And nobody in the family knows it but myself. Nobody shall, except you. I was about eleven then, or perhaps twelve. I had broken a tooth,

and the Faros took me at night to San Jose, where a dentist tinkered on it, and we came back quite late. I curled up in the back of the car, all but dead asleep, and full of cocaine.

“Faro must have had a bad day. I could hear him talking very low with Kathy, so that I shouldn’t hear. ‘The Capitan,’ he said, ‘was working.’ And I knew he was talking of Mendoza, which I never knew him to do before or since. So I listened. A boy would. Seemed that as he was going through a drift, bits of rock fell in a sprinkle on him.

“‘That’s a warning,’ he was telling Kathy. ‘Like a Johnny Knocker. And I couldn’t see anything wrong, either. The pillars weren’t taking weight, nor could you hear a single one groan. So it wasn’t as if the whole country was sagging down on us.

“‘I felt that Mendoza was around, trying to say evil was afoot, to make up for what he did under temptation, smelting out that high-graded ore. And he paid for that by getting blown up. There’s been no high-grading since, but Mendoza’s forever on the watch. I don’t know what anybody’s up to now, disturbing him. Unless it’s Don Roger, who’s gone away again, shooting in the marshes, or getting himself some new Jezebel, and letting the mine go hang.’

“Then the two of them talked under their breath, about that secret they had, which would die out with themselves.”

“That was a burden for a child to carry,” said Paula. “Did he—did he know you had overheard?”

“Faro turned his head, and when he saw that I was sitting up, watching him, an impact went through his frame, and his jaw trembled. His look I cannot describe; it was something between fear and shock. He knew he had lost something that he thought was safe forever. It was a look that haunted me for years after I had left childhood behind. He stopped the car, put out his giant hand, and caught my shoulder.

“‘Were you awake?’ he asked. ‘What did you hear?’

“‘Excuse me, Capitan,’ I said, ‘but I just woke up.’

“I thought the man was going to weep from chagrin. Then Kathy calmed him down. ‘No, Joab, he didn’t hear anything. I looked around only a moment ago, and he was fast asleep.’

“But I’m not sure he was convinced. I don’t think that from that day to this he forgave me. I never breathed a word of it to a soul until now. I believe

there's a mark still on my shoulder," said Esmey half lightly, "as if it were burned into me by a branding-iron.

"I think none the less of Mendoza, however; though certainly I don't think any the more. I think he was a bloody-minded satrap, more than half mad, with a squalid mind; and what passed for a soul with him was a force like a hurricane. It was a force that had to blow itself out, and along its own path. I suppose Grandfather just shrugged and stepped aside; he always had a respect for the manifestations of nature. Well, Mendoza's long been gone, and he would be forgotten if it were not for that gallery, and the Mass. Few know of that Mass, anyway, except the village, and particularly the Knights. It gives a tincture to their body of ritual, and they feel with pride they are the stewards of a mystery from which all the rest of the world is shut out.

"And now, what was this Jose Mendoza? Merely an obscure foreman of a gang of miners who worked far down in a crack underneath a mountain. Quite unimportant in the scheme of things. A two-legged ant. I am sure the mail-carrier on the next route, back of his ranch, had never even heard of him. And yet there were some to whom Mendoza was gigantic and sacred. Faro, for one; and he hasn't forgiven me for knowing the truth—or one truth—about him. Faro's a bad one to surprise a secret from."

"I think he's quite as mad as that old Spaniard," said Paula.

She hauled at the wheel; the estuary was only a harpoon-shot away. Soon they were at the wharf. Cloke slid open the door, and spoke.

"I'll be staying on a while, Esmey, cutting up the marlin. You phone Angel when you get to the camp, and tell him to come down with his big truck."

"I'll do that, Benjy."

They manoeuvred the boat so that the stern came under the derrick beam, tied up, and Esmey mixed a final round of grog.

"Fancy steering that was, Miss Cope," said Cloke. "You didn't get upset none, did you?"

"It was murder. But you don't tell me I'm still pale?"

"Well," said Cloke, wrinkling up an eye, "a smidgin, maybe." He lifted his glass. "Health!"

Esmey helped him drag up the marlin with block-and-tackle. It was as solid as a mahogany log, and they dropped it with a jar on the planks.

"A fair haul, Benjy. It ought to cut up five hundred pounds."

Paula brought the car round, and she and Esme drove off into the mid-afternoon sun, turned on the highway, and left behind them the sea that tumbled on the beach. They mounted into the hills, through woods dark with the nipping shadows of winter, and then raced into Alamos. Esme went into the tavern; she heard him crank at an old telephone box.

“He’ll be down there soon,” he said, coming out after a minute. “Said he had already sold the fish. He must have rushed about for orders after one look at that new harpoon. We’re going to Angel’s tonight for dinner. We’re guests.”

“I’m giving you warning,” said Paula, as they sped on for the ranch. “I’ll eat nothing that ever swam with fins!”

“I told him. He said you won’t have to, he’s got venison.”

“Angel’s, then.”

The rest of the afternoon Paula sat with Tai-Ling on the veranda, writing letters. Esme worked at a table by the window in the barn, trimming vine cuttings, which he packed away in boxes of moist sand, to throw out roots in readiness for the Spring planting. As he whetted his knife on the stone, he glanced out of the window, for a moment before he had heard the sound of a car on the road near the gate. Faro was coming down the path from the house. He was in dark clothes and wore a square-blocked hat of the kind affected by Methodist elders, and which he wore on important days, at church meetings, and funerals outside the fold of the Knights: it was the lay mitre of the Grand Master of the Knights. His tread was leaden, his shoulders were stooped. He was carrying a valise of pigskin, staunch and brass-bound, which Robin Sim used in bringing pay-roll money from the bank.

At the door he spoke. “I spoke with Madame Tai-Ling at the house, and she said you’d be here. I didn’t know you’d be working so late, and on Sunday.”

“And so it is!” smiled Esme. “A farmer would have to be reminded of that.”

“I wanted to see you alone for a minute,” said Faro, putting the valise on the table. He seated himself on an upturned box, wiped his forehead with a handkerchief, and looked at him with a touch of perplexity. “You weren’t here this morning when I dropped in after the service.”

Was it about that firewood again? Esme wondered.

“Mrs. Faro is being put up once more for Secretary of the Ladies’ Auxiliary,” Faro began. “It can’t be said by the members that she has not

been faithful in her post, and I shouldn't wish to see any change."

"That is a reasonable wish, Capitan. The Ladies couldn't think of anyone else as their Secretary, I am sure."

"That's as may be. But a re-election is like any election. It is something to be worked for. There are many that believe that a change must, because it is a change, be for the better. And I have lived long enough to know that doesn't hold. If you should speak to Mrs. Roger, and remind her Mrs. Faro's name is up before the members, I'd be more than obliged to you."

Esmey blinked. No one in the village was more completely aware of the estrangement between his mother and himself than the Capitan. It must have cost the old foreman a great effort and a setting-aside of his pride to ask for this intercession. Faro had visited the Casa never less than once a month for years. Did he feel that this time, should he visit with her to speak on so personal a matter, he would be coldly received? That was quite probable. The comment he had made at the meeting on the delivery of flasks to the warehouse could not have endeared him to the mistress of the Casa.

"If you want me to talk to her, I shall," said Esmey. "My mother has never cared to interfere in the affairs of the Auxiliary, and least of all before any election. But I do happen to know what a high regard she has for Kathy Faro."

The pathetic gratitude of the old foreman, his muteness, and suddenly welling eyes, touched him. He turned to look at the brass-bound valise.

"That valise of yours looks sort of caved in. You'll be wanting some wine for the Mass? It must be two or three years since you last came for some."

"Aye. And there was a Mass every November since."

"We'll look in the cave."

They walked through the dusk to the cave with its clean redolence of mortar, and felt their way behind the vats to a cave at the far end, an excavation in the hillside, which had also been the cellar of the ramshackle winery that Esmey had torn down. He carried a lighted candle-end. In the last niche was a tier of shelves resting on pegs driven into the rock. The light shone upon a double row of bottles covered with sacking.

"More than I thought," he said, running his hand over them. "About three dozen. I had almost forgotten what we had here," he mused, examining by the glow the strip of paper glued on a bottle. So dry was the air, so dark the cave, that the writing in ink was unfaded.

“Ninety-six,” Esmeý read aloud. “Vino de Aramon.”

“Aramon?” said Faro. “It was not a name known around here, or not in my time.”

At the cottage, it was Kathy who bestowed care on the garden, and who loved all plants, even the weeds. Her husband disregarded them, and for vines and the syrup of the vine, he cherished a stubborn dislike.

“Name of the grape,” smiled Esmeý, weighing the bottle in his hand. “Grapes have names of their own, like rocks. You don’t see much Aramon any more. It’s Spanish. The Spanish stock in vines as well as in men is dying out in these hills.

“That’s the oldest we’ve got here. Grown by a caretaker named Luis, I think. This wine came from a row of Aramons down there by that chestnut tree near the gate. Only four vines were left when I came to this farm, and I raised more from those stocks. Their grandfathers came over from Talavera—a village in Spain.”

“Aramon.” Faro uttered a guttural sound, almost a grunt. He was again in his normal humor, Esmeý surmised. “Hmm. I thought I knew as much as anyone, and more, of what concerns the Five Apostles. But——”

“You still do,” said Esmeý, as the Capitan, with what might have been a grimace in anyone else, but which with him betokened interest, hefted a bottle. “No one knows the Five Apostles better, underground.”

Esmeý packed the bottles with straw in the valise, and they walked to the gate through the old vineyard with its black, scraggly wood etched against the light green of the winter turf knobbed with puffballs. The foreman drove off slowly, the valise at his side, avoiding every possible rut and pebble. Esmeý was watching as Paula came to join him at the gate.

“You’d think it was dynamite,” she said. “It’s the Mass wine?”

“That’s what it is.”

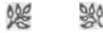
“He came to the house, and Tai-Ling told him where you were. He was dour, or more so than usual.”

“Kathy’s running for Secretary again. And I’m supposed to ask Mother to back her for the office. A pleasant time I’ll have! He’s in an unsure state of mind, and Heaven alone knows why. He must be seeing omens, and he’s cautious. It’s a good thing for a miner to be cautious, and able to see trouble ahead.

“But Faro’s perfectly safe, though. He carries an old Queen Victoria penny for luck. If Kathy breaks a needle patching his clothes, he says it’s a good sign he’ll outlast them. And he won’t carry a candle, because the tallow gutters down in folds like a winding-sheet. Joab Faro will still be Capitan when he is a hundred.”

“I hope he isn’t concerned about Kathy. He hardly answered Tai-Ling when she asked how Kathy was.”

“And yet,” said Esmey, “he might be concerned. There’s always Verity Sim.” He looked at his watch. “You’d better put on your coat. Tai-Ling, too, if she’s coming. I’ll bring out the car.”



The tavern loomed before them with a burst of light, and they went through the crowded bar into the kitchen. Angel greeted them with a bellow, with hospitality that was overpowering, and put them at the table in the corner.

“You sit here where it’s warm!” He stuck his head into the dining-room and shouted clear through to the bar, summoning Cloke and drinks. “And now I cook you some pigeons!”

Cloke joined them, followed by Rios, a helper at the bar on busy nights, who came in with a tray.

“He worked overtime, our friend Benjy!” roared Angel. “Haar-ha!” His mirth boomed, and his unbelted corpulence, in a red undershirt, spotted with grease from the stove and plashings of wine down his front, shook jovially. “Cloke—he was fighting swordfish—and he had to plug them sword holes! Cloke—*amigo mio*—we drink health to the Senorita and Esmey!”

There were more toasts. Angel, at each round, lifted high an *olla* with a spout, and aimed the stream of claret into the gap in his front teeth.

In the hilarity and warmth of the kitchen, spirits rose to unbounded heights. Angel bent over his stove, which oozed flames like a volcano threatening eruption, and shook the casseroles. He dished up the pigeons, flaming with brandy, salad, a ring of bread, and clapped on the oilcloth pitchers of dark wine. It was a dinner over which they sat a long time.

“And that marlin—when he take the harpoon—what you do?”

“Thought we’d have to swim for it,” said Paula. “It was like hooking a whale.”

The battle had to be fought over again for Angel, who roared as he cut up his pigeons, spluttered as he engulfed tumblers of Barbera, shed tears of uncontrollable mirth, and wiped his eyes with a hairy forearm.

“Next time—next time, *amigos mios*—I go with you!”

“Won’t be any next time,” averred Cloke, “if I don’t patch up that leak. It’ll take me all next Sunday, driving in a plug and caulking two joints. And there’s my engine being held up at the mine.”

“I tell you where we go for some big ones—” Angel lowered his voice a tone, drew a map with his finger, and sketched out a campaign of attack on marlin. What he knew of the currents off Point Lobos only a liquor smuggler could have known. Cloke jeered. No marlin had ever been caught in those coves, and Angel had never brought home anything larger than a pilchard.

“They’ll bow to you, huh? And climb inside your boat!”

“Sounds illegal to me, and just plain slaughter,” said Esmey, looking at his watch. “Now, are you fellows coming to the gallery, or not?”

The debaters pulled on their overcoats. Paula drove out first. The night had a lively coolness. The road that joined the foothills to the mountain was so steep that it hung before them like a ribbon of silver. They purred up as if to the stars, dropped at Alamos and went past the dark Casa. Above the gallows-frame of the mine the lantern was burning, and they could hear the purr of the hoist. Those attending the Mass were going down in the skip.

“We’ll go the longer way,” said Esmey. “Through the portal.”

They left the car in the shrubbery, and trudged to the opening, picking their way by the light of a flash-lamp, for unless they stepped on the rocks they might sink over the boot-tops in red mud. The path was not perilous tonight; the seepage had been run off in a trench, a shallow one, no deeper than a shovel.

“Been cleaning up here,” said Esmey. “And there’s some survey stakes. Taking off firewood, I guess, and they’ll want to scrape a road to the canyon.”

Even the tunnel seemed easier of ingress, as if it had been cleared of rocks. Beyond was the line of flares, all the way on to the shaft; they reached the first light, and turned down a short ramp into the gallery. Its interior took form as Paula’s eyes adjusted themselves to the change from the darkness to the glare of oil-pots flaring and smoking in the immensity of that cave with

its vault as high as the roof of a cathedral. She breathed fustiness, for the air was close, tainted with odors of mildew, rust and decaying wood. On the right of the entrance, where the rock was banked high above the floor, were two rows of plank benches, where the Knights sat.

Esmey found her a seat lower down, at the foot of a pillar. There were many pillars, three times a man's girth; great squared timbers joined with bolts and hoops of railroad iron, and they reared to fan out under the arched roof. They upheld a mountain, but they had in this murky light, with bats flitting through the smoke, a grace, an almost fragile, Saracenic grace, so cunningly had strength been worked into line and curve.

The altar, at which Father Vargas was intoning the *Kyrie Eleison*, was in a niche cut into the wall. The rock of it, dripping wet and red-stained, reflected like velvet the candles guttering in the draught. The vaulting above echoed back his voice, and to Paula it seemed as if the first Capitan, the exiled from Talavera, so memorably locked in the stone, was uttering the response. And there were other sounds: the invisible river of air moving in the tunnel, and the hollow, tearing flutter of the burning oil-pots.

Notes belled out. Angel, treading in the smoky light of a flare, was smiting a row of iron mercury flasks hung from a beam, each flask answering to its place in the scale. They vibrated in a disciplined tumult, magnified, repeated in many-faceted echoes, but the sound had pureness, the splintering clarity of cymbals.

On the bank the Knights rose. Faro, in front of them, dashed up his arms, his white cuffs fell, and the voices of the Knights poured out in the *Gloria in Excelsis*. The smoke clouds, the reverberating hosannas, the unearthly music of the flasks, the entire movement, surcharged the vast, rock-girt space with transcendent power, and the wonder of it lifted the girl above the torrent. She wondered if the voice of the first Capitan were not audible in these thundering diapasons, the waves of exaltation, the joyous certitude of the *Gloria*. The thought of it as silence fell, with the last echoes tinkling like bits of glass, had pathos.

The ordinary of the Mass unfolded to the end. Father Vargas spoke a small homily, not looking down at his hearers, but talking up to them on their height. Soon the gallery began to empty. Angel extinguished the flares one by one, and the Knights moved out into the tunnel. They lighted pipes and drifted on towards the shaft. Esmey and Paula, with their flash-lamp, went on to the portal and their car.

“The Knights will be wetting their throats at Bastian’s,” said Esmey, “and Father Vargas will sit up a while, taking snuff, at Faro’s cottage. And all will be planning for the Mass next year. A pleasing custom, I think.”

“Even if Val does call it a mummerly,” said Paula.

Esmey drove on in silence. “It was a curious thing,” he said, as they passed the solitary Casa, “and it only struck me just now. Faro was talking about the Mass and old days, when we were at the winery, and neither of us so much as mentioned Jose Mendoza.”

“The old fellow still does have a grip on the Five Apostles,” laughed Paula.

“He does,” agreed Esmey, and then thought of Val, the rebellious one, who looked upon the mine as a property held in mortmain, but in the more fatal grip of his father.

Mrs. Roger led her guests to the parlor for after-dinner coffee, then a round or two of bridge, and Val, excusing himself, left for the mine. He had telephoned Faro from the city that morning, saying he wished to see him briefly at the adit that night. How could he have guessed that his mother would be surprising him with a party when he got home? And with Paula there, of all people in the world! He drove on like a rocket, fuming. A rabbit, dazed by the light, leaped blindly, and the radiator thudded it into the ditch. The wind was moist and cold, the sky clear, with a promise of hoar-frost in the morning. Inland, far up at Pleasanton, where hills shut off the ocean wind, it would be still warm and balmy, with a light track, and his trainer was set to try out the legs of Nobody's Fool and Sangrail.

Val left his car at the path-head, and kicked his way through the briars, whistling, his ill-humor gone at thought of his cherished yearlings. They were his now, and he remembered that when he visited his stable the day Sangrail was brought in from the farm, along with her dam, Clarion, both trainer and rider came over and thumped him on the back to catch some of his luck. And it was luck! There hadn't been such a yearling in the county since the war. The price was thumping, a bit stronger than Val had counted on; but neither his owner nor anyone but himself knew that Sangrail at twice the money would have been a gift.

Rouosting up enough to pay for both yearlings—that check from his mother was already spent in paying off bills here and there, and putting the stable on its feet—had been a devilish task. A hundred and twenty flasks that his father had cached away in an Oakland warehouse—and a windfall it was, finding that storage receipt among the papers in the apartment—had given him a leg-up. It helped, but he would need twice as much to keep things going, and the horses up to the mark, before the races opened. Meanwhile, he would have to play mole, and take out what he could, discreetly, from this back door of the workings.

The portal had been cleared, widened, with a truck runway between a couple of new timbers. His share would be taken out through here. A truck was already going up into the canyon. Faro was by the adit, watching, huge under his sombrero, and resting on his spiked staff, for he had come down by way of the shaft and the length of the tunnel, this end of it deep in litter. Val's

eye took in the wagon-road, repaired and crowned, the smooth band of it turning beyond the pines into the canyon. A rickety log bridge had been removed and replaced with a culvert. The county road men could hardly have done a neater job. He was trustworthy, the old fellow, a stubborn and plodding wheel-horse.

“The smelter, you’ve got that fixed, too?” Val asked.

“Aye. It took plenty of iron and masonry-work. The fumes had eaten out all the inside. It’s tight now, and the draught steady. If you’ll find trouble, it won’t be there; not at the Jews’ House.”

“And the ore? You’ve hauled over enough for the first charging?”

“I’ve got it loosened down. You can see for yourself.”

Faro waved into the tunnel with an air of defiance, and went in, Val following. Above the mound of loosened ore a scaffold held a platform under the roof; Val climbed to where a driller had been working, and looked at the exposed face, a pale area in an expanse of darker rock. It was wider, the showing of visible ore; wider than before by at least three hands’-breadths. That meant something.

“This has got the earmarks of a lode to me, Capitan,” he said. “In this andesite rock you won’t look for lodes, and if it’s a bonanza, then it’ll be a short and merry one, no more than a flash. It’s a pocket, I’d say; but a pocket worth going after.”

He could have told the guardian of the Five Apostles what he had seen on that mutton-skin map: the indication of the *hijillo*, “the Little Son” as the miners in the first Capitan’s time called such strings of ore that had been found, then lost again. But if Faro believed him gifted with prescience, then so much the better.

After this, Faro asked himself, what would be ahead for the Five Apostles? In the second level a fair quantity of ore had been blocked out, and it was thin rock, hardly paying its scot, and it might be all gone by early summer. The money was in this thread of ore near the portal, which was to be worked almost clandestinely. On this thread depended everything. He had been watching that band for days: that *hijillo*, after it had feathered out, might expand again and yield, perhaps for months, even more than in its first run.

“You think we’ll be finding another vein or two?” he asked.

“Another?” Val echoed.

He scrambled down, and dusted off his hands. The Capitan, watching the frowning jut of Val's forehead, held his breath fearfully. He had not only the hard-rock miner's respect for the adept, but also an awe of the gift of divination that ran through the Copes.

"By the looks of things," said Val, "I'd say we'll not find another. Not in a hundred years."

Faro stood immovable. He did not believe it, and he could not believe it. Val might have thus spoken to lead him to work more thoroughly that vein, until the last knife-point of ore had been taken out. There might be more ore somewhere; it was possible Val in his survey had seen more, but had kept the knowledge to himself. He was a tight-mouthed one. He had squeezed everywhere, into the very oldest and most dangerous corners of the mine, even wriggling through the mud, the debris and the snakes' nests under the collapsed roofs of the Indian and the Rico Duro drifts, making a survey that no other man in his sane wits would have dared attempt. What had he seen?

"We've found *hijillos* before," demurred Faro. "I'm not looking for any end to development. More than three times the Five Apostles has gone through rough water without going down."

"But not so deep as this," said Val.

He was cheerful, nevertheless. Fifteen or twenty thousand tons of ore might come out of that vein. The canyon oven was primitive, but in fair shape now. And with discreet working, and a half dozen men, none from Alamos, it was inconceivable that any difficulty should crop up.

Faro looked worried.

"But that's just an opinion," Val remarked, smiling. "A lump or outcrop of ore doesn't always advertise what's beyond it. A chap can be wrong. There was an old two-foot deep bore up there, near the roof. Somebody drilled there—perhaps under Mendoza's eye—and then gave up. Orders, I guess. Mendoza might have been wrong, or perhaps he was right. We shall see!"

He laughed again. "Now, how much of this stuff have you sent to the furnace on top?"

"Ten loads." Faro pointed with his staff to the end of the pile. "From here to where that timber is. A good run of it. That was work, taking down this ore. We fired one blast. Rock's soft. You see where the crack runs." He poked with his staff. "We'll be timbering before the week ends."

Val gave ear with the respect due an old campaigner who knew the trickiness of this rock, but he had seen enough at first glance, and his

thoughts ran on the fortunes of tomorrow. No bonanza was ahead, but this was a good pay streak, and better left to the hands of the Capitan, who was both judicious and taciturn.

“The help?” he asked.

“I’ve got them,” said Faro. “They’re all-round workmen, who can do their own hauling and firing. Mexicans from down Hollister way. They’ll come in for the night shift, starting at ten. That’s the quietest time here, with nobody about.”

“That’s a good start, Capitan. Thanks.”

“I want no thanks,” said Faro, stubbornly. “It’s not good doing. The long end of this pile is sorted and ready for the canyon oven, and these men I’ve got for you know their job. I don’t know that more can be expected of me.”

“But I do!” came Val’s assurance after that quick, gay and flattering smile that made nearly everyone his fellow-conspirator. “You are, after all, the Capitan. You’re not going to drop all this now, when we’ve only started. You’ll work that lode to the pinch, and watch that oven for me.”

The old Cornishman’s face went dark. Val had known that he would be a little difficult. About the set of those vast shoulders, and the boring of those eyes that honored him with a steady look, there was a hint of something impregnable, challenging and obdurate. Wheedlings and blandishments could no more budge him than could snowflakes. He would require goading, and Val was ready with the goad.

“Why,” he asked gently, “why should you want to drop it?”

“I don’t like the turn of things. The Five Apostles was always run fair and aboveboard. I saw to that for the Casa. What is going on in this tunnel and the canyon does not seem to me for anyone’s good.”

“For no one’s good?” asked Val, tolerantly.

“That is for you to answer. To look after the underground is my care. I can’t but feel that if Don Pablo or Don Roger were here there’d be no night running of ore to the canyon.

“You are the Casa head now. You are speaking for the family, and it’s a solid family that we of the mine have believed in all our lives. In a way we sort of feel we’re a part of it.

“It may not be for me, the steward of the mine, to speak of this. But I will. I’m an older man now, and I still want to feel there’s a Cope that I can be proud to look up to as its head. And there is something more.” Faro’s voice

was harsh and troubled. "I'm not one for listening to idle talk. There's nobody alive can say that of me. I can't bide gossip. But talk has been going about. You are buying racetracks, they say, and horses and stables.

"It's been in the papers, with mention of the Five Apostles. It's your private matter. I don't gainsay that. But I don't think it is what Don Pablo or Don Roger would have liked. You are a free moral agent, but——"

Val broke in with a quick laugh. "Quite free. And quite as moral, I think, as either! People say I take after my father, but that's stretching it. He was a real highflyer. He gave his women so much from the Five Apostles that the office has only its roof left!

"Don Pablo was a stricter type. He had a smooth upper lip, and wore good broadcloth. He had discretion, and he kept in the background. Nobody ever flung a paving-block at his carriage, as they did at the carriages of Messrs. Flood, Mackay and Fair and the rest of the Comstock big shots. But he was a hellion in the stock-market game. There's many a man walking the streets of San Francisco tonight, Capitan, because his grandfather didn't know that Don Pablo's sleeve was packed full of aces. He was no example to me, either!

"I may like a horse, but I'm sticking to my mine. I think I'm more of an engineer than either of my forebears ever dreamed of being. So I'll thank them," Val went on crisply, "not to interfere with my running the Five Apostles as I damn well see fit."

It was blasphemy, and a mocking of all honor. Faro glared at him with shocked indignation; his jaw clamped, and that twitch, that swallowing of inward fury, again went down behind his beard. There was another, and a final, example that he could hold up—that of the unhappy Mendoza; but his promise to Don Pablo had bound him to silence.

The goad, now, thought Val. A mere thrust of it into Faro's skin, which was thick enough—thicker than a mule's hide! He had heard in more than one Nevada camp of Faro's exploit of knocking down a bartender and stealing from him his dance-hall girl. And that girl—was she anything more still than his common-law wife?—he had maintained, to gratify his own vanity, as the pillar of the Ladies Auxiliary. Even Betts had heard that story at the bars and in the Miners Club at Tonopah.

"Tongues may clack here, Capitan, as in any Nevada mining camp. Mrs. Faro will bear me out on that, I dare say. It doesn't take much to start the gossips going in Alamos. Verity Sim, for one.

"The Auxiliary is to have an election very soon, I understand. Mrs. Faro"—it was never "Kathy" with Val—"Mrs. Faro should be re-elected,

barring, of course, some untoward hitch, like idle talk that need have no bearing on the case whatever.” Val gave a confident laugh. “Like her Nevada days, or the Golden West.”

A tremor went through the Capitan’s frame; his gnarled hand closed white on his staff. He could have driven the sharp ferrule of it through the skull of the young man who was now his enemy. A blow from the staff could also fracture a skull as easily as a collision in the dark against a stone pillar, and such accidents were not infrequent in old mines.

“No,” an inward voice whispered to him, and he heard it above Val’s halt-jesting voice. “This is no time to strike. The Five Apostles has its own way of protecting itself. Think of Mendoza, and think of Roger and his strumpets. Leave him alone. Do nothing for a while. Think of Verity Sim’s tongue. Think of Kathy.”

Val had fallen silent. He was waiting, looking at him with the smile of a player who had thrown down the last trump.

“I’ll work this for you,” said Faro quietly. “You are responsible.”

“I am,” said Val, pulling on and strapping his trench-coat. “You can begin on that now. I’ll go up the canyon for a walk.”

He left, and Faro, calm once more, glanced at his watch. It was time to inspect the upper level workings before others of the overlapping shift came in for the night. Neither anyone in the mine nor Kathy must suspect that all was not well with him, though his spirits were leaden, and the outlook was black beyond his darkest reckoning. He rang for the skip, rose to the upper level, and went mechanically at his duties. He flashed his bright lamp on the roof in signal, and the workmen lowered their tools to stand by in respectful attention as he moved along the wall, scrutinizing the rock from top to bottom with a gaze as sharp as a drill. The inspection of workings was less a matter of routine with him than a direct act of conscience, and in requital for his solicitude the miners regarded Faro with a respect and affection that were proverbial.

“Safe,” he said, and the picks began to lift and drop.

Faro walked towards his cottage, head bent, trailing his staff. Val was against him; but on his side were time and the Five Apostles that in some devious way would strike again and visit the last engineer of the mine with Mendoza’s fate, and again in a way no man could foresee. But he would have to be wary. Those tongues in Alamos needed but a whisper to be set clacking.

In the larger things, Faro's profound faith in justice made him patient. If he delayed in the game and saw to it that the cards were played but slowly, much could happen. Val might change his mind. And there were Paula and Madame Tai-Ling—both come for their share of the quicksilver which Val manifestly planned to sell undercover to the pool, or even in the Eastern market—who might be the hands of destiny. The Casa had always resented its obligation to the alien house in China, which Faro looked upon with the retainer's sharp yet confused distrust.

Kathy had gone to bed; but a log was burning in the fireplace. He sat for an hour before the blaze, with his pipe and thoughts. Mrs. Roger was to hold a tea for the Auxiliary in less than a fortnight. Esmey had asked that much of his mother; he could be counted on to do anything if a promise were wrung from him. A pity that the gifts heaped upon Val—dash, smartness, learning and charm—had been denied the younger son, but he was not a lad of whom much had been expected. He was blind to anything beyond the end of his plow-furrow. He had not, so far as anyone could learn, come to the help of his brother. He had never lifted a hand on behalf of the Five Apostles, not even flung it a log for its grates. Still, he had spoken to his mother about that tea. Kathy, it seemed reasonably sure now, would again be re-elected to her post, and the Auxiliary would look to her for a speech.

Faro, considering the burden he bore alone, sighed and tapped out his pipe. He went over to the table, lighted the reading-lamp, and set himself to writing.



Half way down the road Val thought he heard a shout above the clamor of the trees, then saw Paula in the headlights, smiling, bundled up in scarf and reefer against the sea wind. He pulled the car up with a flourish, and she leaped in.

“It's gorgeous, the wind and the moon, Val, and I went tramping. Pretty quiet in the Casa. I thought I'd go on a hunt for you.”

“Glad you did. It was a shame I had to dash off like that,” he said, with an arm around her. “But the Capitan was around, and I had to see how things were going. Cold and dampish in the tunnel. I hope you'll give me some coffee before we have that whist game.”

“Tai-Ling and Aunt Ysabel are playing parchesi. If we have sense, we'll leave well enough alone. But there is coffee. The urn's still hot, and we can

have the cactus room to ourselves.”

They went in through the kitchen from the garage. Ah Moy brought the cups to them as they sat by the window overlooking the garden and the pool by the summer-house. The light from the parlor shimmered over Paula as she sat in a low rocker facing him. He looked beyond her at the two figures sitting upright in their ormolu chairs, making their moves over the board. They were alike at this distance, the two matriarchs, so dissimilar in race, so similar in their fine-boned profiles, their carriage and spareness of frame, the precise, graceful movements of their outstretched hands. Like automatons in ivory, he thought, and as he half closed his eyes, the dissimilarity between them vanished. He had observed them at dinner; they were friendly, as if they had struck a common chord. They were of an age, of equal breeding, shrewd, detached, each the watchful head of a family.

The outcome of his talk with Faro was what Val had expected. The old Cornishman had taken with hardly a wince the blow to his pride. He had spoken out, of course, with some tactless remarks about stables, but that was his prerogative. Just where he had learned of the stables, Val did not quite know. From Cloke, perhaps. Cloke knew more of the turf and of illicit sports than anyone in Alamos. He and Esmey were as thick as thieves; what one didn't know, the other could tell him. He was a man to be watched, Benjy Cloke.

“There's ore coming up, from the second level,” he said in a low voice. “Not a very great run, but a start. I can't see a thousand flasks going to China, or not for a while.”

“How many then, do you think?” asked Paula, keeping very still, her hands clasped.

“I don't know how much the rock will run to the ton. Eight pounds, I fancy, but six may be nearer. It's only fair rock. In a month or so Tai-Lings' may get two hundred flasks.”

“That's only a handful of millet,” she said hurriedly, keeping her voice at a whisper. “Can't we make it a thousand?”

“We'll try, Yin-Chiu.” He smiled reticently. “It's an old mine that goes its own slow pace, and is not to be hurried.”

If only the girl were out of that Tai-Ling group, it would all be so much simpler, but Gervase had lodged her in it firmly. More and more he resented the Tai-Lings. What the Casa would lose in selling them only two hundred flasks would be enough to pay off the most pressing of his notes.

“We’ll have to wait until all the metal is flaked,” he said, wondering if somehow the pool could let the mine have a load of flasks on credit. But they were a tight crowd, and his father had already borrowed from the pool, and given them a note on ore yet to be dug.

“There is the market pool, of course. I’m not sure, but we might be able to draw from it.”

“Is the demand so very frantic?”

From the wall he took down one of his father’s tennis rackets, polished, taut-strung, with shining haft. Paula watched his cat-like tread, his sinewy, easy-moving frame, for which a well-chosen tailor had done his utmost, and remembered that at college he had been a champion at sports. Val rang the stringing with his knuckles, listened to the full twang, and put back the racket.

“The market’s steady,” he said, brightly. “The paint trade’s up. Electric heaters, automatic boilers and such have mercury gadgets to control ’em. The old Moor’s prescription for a certain widespread and stubborn malady is still effective after seven centuries, judging from the drug trade’s reports. The demand’s there. And the pool is waiting for the Five Apostles to make up its arrears. We’re in debt to the pool.” He strode up and down the room. “We’ll have to refund the debt, of course, and it will be a strain.”

To the Canton house also the mine was in debt, Paula thought, as she turned her face to look into the garden. She saw on the dark window-pane her own frightened image. The strain was far greater on the Tai-Lings, whose storehouse had been empty of flasks for so long. Chan and Little Wu, with the colormen, had dug below the floor deeper than a broom to salvage the escaped globules of mercury. The very old colormen, who were pensioners, sat in the orchard, scraping off mercury from bits of broken mirrors and toys.

She had spent much from her reserve in paying a bonus to brokers who had bought metal for her from small factories elsewhere in the province. It was a risky turn of business, and often she had felt panic, for the cost was half as high again as the cost of the mercury they would ordinarily have got from Alamos if her father and old Mr. Wu had been alive. But the firm had wriggled out of the squeeze. She knew that no one else in the firm, not even Madame Tai-Ling, could have played so perilous a hand.

“It has been a strain, too, on the Tai-Lings,” Paula said, turning about with a smile. “And they, also, got the Five Apostles out of a fix. It ‘fed the hungry goose,’ as the saying goes.”

“And it did,” Val laughed. “But it was still a plump goose then!”

He had a gay-hearted way of dismissing as trifles whatever she thought grave. Gay-heartedness was part of Val's charm, but it was so often close to irresponsibility that it disturbed and pained her. Because she was so much in love with him, to be pained caused her as much shame as a disloyal thought.

"We're out from under, now. I think we'll turn the mine over to the spooks and Joab, and give ourselves a holiday. Some golf, and a look at the mudlarks. And I thought of a run up to Monticello, other side of Mount St. Helena. I hear some chaps there are working cinnabar in a vertical vein. But golf, first! We can do it all in a week."

"There's the Auxiliary tea," said Paula. "I'll have to attend that."

"A tea!" exclaimed Val, turning. "Isn't that rather a dismal way of amusing one's self?"

"Teas can be pretty flat. But Kathy's in this one, and I've promised her I'd show up."

Ah Moy shuffled in with a light and some wine, and shuffled out. The candle was a tallow dip—the Casa burned no other kind, except at dinner table—and Val saw the reflections of it, two minute flames, in her pupils. He filled two small glasses and brought them over.

"I was going to say—before we got sidetracked—that it's time we set about getting married."

"We've discussed that before, haven't we?"

"I believe in marrying you more than ever!"

"Do you?" she laughed.

The minute candles vanished, lit up again, dancing as she smiled, and he bent over and kissed them out. She put both her hands to his shoulders.

"Haven't I told you often enough?" he asked. "Why should we wait again?"

"Please, Val, do be patient with me!" she breathed, still with her hands resting on his shoulders. "I've said yes, haven't I? And you must wait until I am freer, until I have done what I came here to do. I've promised the family back home that I'd do it. And until then I can't be really myself, and act as I want to."

"Yourself?" he laughed. "You've never been other than yourself!"

"Perhaps I haven't, but——"

He sat down with her, puzzled. With heads together in the shadowed candlelight, their voices, pitched low so as not to disturb the women in the parlor, their talk, with urgencies, hesitations and moments of perturbed silence, for half an hour flowed on. She was in love with him as she had never been in love with anyone else.

“I know how you feel about it,” Val assured her. “I know how you feel about it just now.” He seized her by the wrists and looked deeply into her eyes, though her head was turned slightly away as she gazed into space. The tiny candles reflected in them were perfectly still. “But tell me when it shall be?”

“Later, Val. Not now.”

“But you’ll come up, so I shall see you again next week after that—that tea affair?” he pleaded anxiously, taking her by an arm. “You *are* coming, aren’t you? Here it is now, holiday season, and you sticking in the village while I’m poking around alone. It isn’t right. I’m hardly seeing any more of you than if you were in China!”

“Now there, Val, you’re getting really upset!” she threw at him with a laugh as she stood by the piano, and with her disengaged hand struck a chord of finality. “Of course I’ll come. That’s a promise. I’ll come as soon as Kathy’s tea is over.”

The game in the parlor was finished. They heard a crystalline, small laugh, and Tai-Ling spoke.

“Paula, I think you’ll have to take me away. I have been a most unendurable guest; I’ve been allowed to win all the games but one. Dona Ysabel, you’ve been far too gracious.”

“Indeed, you were far the better player,” said Mrs. Roger. “And one of these evenings we must fetch you over to play with Father Vargas, who is the champion.”

She smiled formally, and before she could tug at the bell-rope, Ah Moy appeared, as if at some occult prompting, with his arms full of wraps. The guests went down to their car, and Val, gathering up stick and trench-coat, joined them.

“Do give me a lift as far as the village,” he implored. “I’d like a walk before I turn in. And it’s a night to walk, with the gale coming off the sea-wall.”

They crowded into the seat of Esme’s old runabout, and the car scuttled on into the salt wind, Paula driving fast with a happy disregard of ruts. The

evening had not wound up as a success for Val, but the spin was giving him another moment in her company. Still, there was a triumph. She was, after all, coming up to the city. Her hesitation meant nothing. He knew her temperament and heritage. Like her father, she was tyrannized by a sense of obligation. She had inherited the Tai-Ling family—quite a raft of them, with a lot of old uncles and poor relations in the background—and she had to bring their affairs into the clear. And that was rather a bewildering job.

For himself, life was simpler. He had one way out of every difficulty—follow the lodestone of interest. He looked upon his selfishness without the least regret; it was the motive power behind him; it drove him without qualms or hesitations through to a clear solution, and so he trusted it without reserve. It was hard for him to be frank with others, but with himself he was perfectly candid. His own failings he knew, and they amused him. He had humor, and conflict he met gladly, for it sharpened the game. And the game now was to get all that could be got out of the Five Apostles. Something would have to be paid out, but there would be enough left over for himself, and, naturally, for Paula.

“Shall we go by the west road, Val?” she asked. “It’ll be a change, and the sea’s kicking up like big guns.”

“Any which way, Yin-Chiu. I’m lost.”

“Well, that’s Burkett’s wood. And over there is the village.” She pointed to clumps in the faint starlight. “That’s Folwell’s ranch. I used to go there to see the lambs. He was some kind of dowser—you know, going about with a forked switch, and mumbling a spell with coins in his mouth.”

The names rose to the surface of Val’s mind from a forgotten past. He had known very few in Alamos who were not visitors at the Casa. And Paula knew everyone, the small farmers and everyone who had anything to do with the mine. It was like having a village mind. He did not care for that; the sooner he got her clear away from Alamos, and from Tai-Ling, who was really an obstacle, something between them, and the cause of this delay on Paula’s side, the sooner he——

“I asked the Capitan once if Folwell ever divined anything,” she laughed. “Once,” he said. “Robin lost the mouthpiece of his trumpet and he was ready to tear his hair. So Folwell came over with the switch and found the mouthpiece in the cabbage patch.”

The vagaries of Alamos folk had no interest for him. He wondered what Paula saw in those people, and why she troubled with the Auxiliary wives,

the dullest of all. Here she was, plopped back from China, and content to putter about the village and the ranch.

“Sim, I’ve heard,” he remarked indifferently, “is a wizard on the trumpet. After a round of shots at Bastian’s, to fortify himself.”

“It’s the audience that will need fortifying this time,” laughed Paula. “Robin is down for two solos. ‘Take Back the Heart That Thou Gavest’ and ‘Cherry Ripe.’ To say nothing of the encores. He blows notes so long that you just hang on, tensely, knowing that something’s got to give way. I am to accompany him. And I know it will be awful. The Capitan asked me a fortnight ago. He may have forgotten, but I am down on the list. I don’t think I have seen him once since then. He hasn’t been coming to the rehearsals.”

“And why?” asked Val, idly.

“All tied up in something else, I suspect.”

They came into the yard, and pulled up in the square of the tall blue-gums, their peeled trunks whitish-blue in the glare of the headlights. A lamp shone in the kitchen window, for Rios had come back from a visit at Hermanos. Tai-Ling got out, and with a “goodnight,” went up the lighted path to the house.

“It still isn’t late,” said Paula. “Shall I take you back?”

“As far as the village, if you like. No further. I haven’t yet had my walk.”

She backed out the car, and drove up to the road.

“I’ll have to get you out of all this”—he waved over the farm—“you just don’t belong here. I can’t see you as a country girl, at the beck of everyone in the village. ’Tisn’t right! You don’t even act like your real self. And not at all as if we were going to be married.”

“Val, dear, both you and I have a terrible lot to do before we can think about ourselves. We’ll just have to put off things a little while longer.”

“I can’t see why,” he said, unyielding. “But next week, then. And you choose the day. You’ll feel differently, I know, when you’re away from here, and from Tai-Ling.”

“Maybe I shall. But I couldn’t love you any more, nor any less, no matter where I am.”

They came to the village street, kissed a goodnight, and parted. Val watched her car to the vanishing point at the turn among the trees. He looked at his watch. Two hours more and he would walk on, going by way of the

shortcut over the hill to the other side of the mine. The wind had dropped, but fog was coming in. He would wait at Bastian's.

Val strolled down the uneven sidewalk under the trees, feeling his way in the obscurity by the tread of the wet gravel underfoot, and an occasional tap with his stick at the sycamores. Alamos had been sodden by a brief and sudden downpour, and its one street was deserted, and unlighted except by some shop still open. The entire village seemed to have fallen into that decay peculiar to old California mining camps, a mellow decrepitude without squalor, and a somnolence with houses and trees dozing under vines and fallen leaves. The Lodge building was hidden under mimosas dripping after the rain; the two shops on its ground floor were vacant; planks were nailed across the doors and windows, and the long porch with its rail was sagged. Alamos had suffered a shrinkage in the number of its dwellers. Bastian's was open, with a light above the door, and it was the gloomiest of taverns. The sole abode of gaiety in the region was Angel's, far down the creek, and near the vineyards and Mr. Paschino's winery.

But at this moment Val could have been cheerful anywhere, after that talk with Paula. What a vein of sense that girl had! When it came to hard sense and tolerant understanding, no woman he had ever known, and no one in his family now, was in the same street with Paula.

He entered Bastian's, and he was reminded that he had not been in it since he was eleven or twelve. When the Five Apostles was at the height of its fame, everyone in the world turned up at Bastian's; and even in his boyhood it was still magnificent, with its carved teakwood, chandeliers, and silver-bound mahogany bar. There one met the politicians of the Coast, the engineers, the metal buyers, and the Spanish visitors with monocles and distinguished heads. It prided itself on its wines from the Mendoza ranch, very old wines and scarce, for Mendoza was gone; and sherry from Talavera in oaken casks. It was exciting for Val to be taken there by his father for a glass of port when the Spanish visitors were to be picked up and driven to the Casa for dinner.

"Senores," his father used to say, with pride in his eyes, "my son, Valentine."

The place was empty, for it was late, and threat of rain was still in the air. "Whiskey," he said. "A tall one." It was served him. "Quiet tonight," he remarked.

“There was a few here that just left, sir,” said the bartender, wiping off the bar with a retired shirt. “On the way home from the mine, or the Lodge. And Cloke was here with his dog. That was some dog. Full-blooded, and one of them foxhounds. It had a bark like a auto horn.”

“Hunting season,” observed Val.

“That foxhound don’t trouble much about seasons.” The bartender’s face creased in a smile. “Nor its owner, either. But you’re right there, about hunting. Cloke’s rounded up a parcel of them hounds, a dozen maybe, and they’re boarding down at Angel’s. Ready for some kind of fox hunt, he says.”

Val had two more drinks, and then the bottle was left on the bar for him. Some patrons entering, he carried his bottle and glass over to a round card-table.

It was even quieter here than at the Casa, which would be gloomy now with Paula out of it. He was tiring of the village, tiring of the Casa, with its dull evenings over the parchesi board with his mother, and the wearying talk of her relatives and friends in Monterey, who did nothing, and whom nothing ever befell that interested him.

Father Vargas, a cut above the rest, knew tobacco, was an antiquarian, and played whist with fiendish skill. Don Joseph Palacios, whose aunt had eloped with a Machado, was a neat-stepping little *hidalgo*, like a goat, with a pincenez ribbon in his whisker, and two large and ugly sisters in elastic side-boots. They were aristocrats in direct line of descent from some Alcalde who had either lowered a flag or hoisted one when the Americans landed in Monterey and ended a regime. There were a couple of elderly majors from the Presidio, who snoozed after dinner and woke up in time for a round of bezieque. None of them lively but all respectable, and held in the utmost esteem by his mother and by Ah Moy, who never hastened with their wraps when they talked of leaving.

His father had had a livelier crew about him: painters up from Carmel, some engineers from Hollister or Grass Valley, or a writer or two from San Francisco, with a poet-divinity. Then they gathered for uproar and abalones at a rookery in Monterey, built on pilings over the surf. How the liquor flowed in that air blue with smoke, and the windows shook to mirth and song! Or his father would transport them all to Angel’s for a feast of barbecued deer, a chowder of broadbill head, and flagons of dark, old claret. And returning, they had the Casa to themselves, his mother staying away for no less than a week.

There could be life in the Casa yet, but the grand phase was over. And the mine was dead now. Faro was picking the last bones of it for him. The flasks to pile up at the Jews' House could be hauled by night to Salinas, and sent direct by freight to the East, and sold outside of the contract with the pool and the Tai-Ling firm.

Apart from that, there was little to detain him at the Five Apostles now, save the duty of keeping up an appearance of interest. His mother had annuities, enough to keep her comfortably. The Tai-Lings were rich; Paula drew her share of the yield from the paint firm; and since they were to be married, what he took from the mine, all his by right of discovery, would be to an extent held by them both.

He leaned back in his chair, gratified. The last shadow of concern was gone; he had never, it occurred to him, had cause to reverse his judgment. He refilled his glass. The liquor was going to his head a little. He looked at the pictures on the wall before him: a painting of the Casa, with figures in top hats and crinolines; a large photograph of the mine head, Don Pablo in high boots with lantern and staff—the personification of will and intelligence; and President Grant, and the Governor and his staff, in over-large tarpaulin hats and coats.

Val looked at the photographs of mines at Cherokee Flat and Grass Valley, and those on the Comstock Lode, whose names were a litany: the Potosi, Gould and Curry, the Belcher and Yellow Jacket—customers all of the Five Apostles, whose mercury entrapped gold for them in their amalgam boxes at the mills.

“That’s a mine on fire,” said the bartender, pointing at a lithograph on the wall. “They do catch fire sometimes. I don’t know her name.”

That mine, burning bright, had held Val spellbound as a child. This lithograph, a huge one as large as a map, he always remembered. It was like a cross-section of Vesuvius in eruption, the shaft and all the levels lighted up by flames, and figures darting through them, or falling like motes in a sunbeam. It was the timbering that now held his attention. With its split lagging, stulls hitched to the footwall and wedged to the back, it was handsome timbering, and the capped pillars were spaced eighteen feet along the strike. He smiled as he recognized the design. The “Mendoza frame” it was called by the profession, and it had been first built in the slopes of the old tunnel of the Five Apostles, off the portal, by his grandfather and Mendoza, giants who liked plenty of elbow room, and got it.

“She was the Rose of Peru on the Comstock,” said Val, paying at the bar.

“So that’s her! Well, there’s more pictures down the wall, without names. I don’t know anything about them. You got to be born to those things. The place belonged to my uncle—Bastian, his name was—and I took over, and sort of keep the place up, and the things in it.”

Val looked at a curved double-shell of thick glass behind the bar; it held mercury, a flaskful of it, and it was like a fantastic, dark mirror. It was a souvenir of the Mendoza gallery. It was the congealment of the breath of rock that had been sleeping for aeons of geological time, and was mystery made visible. It shone with the sleekness of a flake of obsidian, or the hollow of a wave in that moment of suspended, exquisitely perfect and hypnotic beauty before it breaks.

“You have something to keep up,” said Val. “You won’t find many who can name you those mines. They faded out with their owners. Their relics have outlasted them both.”

He thumbed a yellow-specked specimen of rock. Pyrites, he reflected. The rock must have come from that hill across the San Benito line. He had gathered a few samples there as a schoolboy, and ground them at a lathe to the finish of marble.

“That’s a gold nugget,” said the bartender. “They put a few real ones to salt a mine down here a way, at Hermanos.”

“Pretty,” said Val, with a nod. “But it wouldn’t work now. People are smarter than they used to be, or so I’m told. The best salting now is done with the tongue. Talk will give any hole-in-the-ground a fancy value.”

“Mines are your line?” the man threw at him, giving the bar another wipe.

“I thought I owned a mine once,” Val smiled back, belting his coat. He looked at the clock. “Good-night.”

He walked briskly for twenty minutes, and as he reached the edge of the mine the lantern above the gallows-frame went out. No one was above ground. Going to the further edge of the top he looked down into the canyon road, and stood watching; he had not long to wait: a truck moved out from the old adit below, and sped up the road. As it reached the culvert, another truck—its rattle apprised him that it was empty—came down the road, and went straight into the adit.

His doubts had been unfounded. The Capitan was obeying orders, already charging the smelter, and keeping the ore moving like a lava flow. He turned back in the direction of the Casa. His mother was in the library, waiting for

him, as was her custom when he was home. She put down her Spanish novel, and rang the bell for Ah Moy to bring in the hot chocolate.

“After midnight,” he said. “The mine went black as I came up.”

“I hope Tai-Ling and Paula found their evening pleasant,” she said in a note of inquiry.

“I’m sure they did. It was rather an event for them. The ranch isn’t exactly in the center of things. Very few people call in there.”

The night had come to a propitious close for him, but after the visit to the tunnel, and the long walk, he was feeling weary enough. He drank his hot chocolate in silence.

“Your brother sees that they get about now and then,” she said. “And they are interested in the music at the Lodge.”

“They should have come here to the Casa more frequently,” he said, speaking quietly.

“I prefer my quiet. The Chinese lady will remain what she always was, a stranger to me. And the girl is more at ease in the ranch-house, going to cowboy dances, than she would be here.”

“That has made it difficult for me, Mother. There were times when I thought she and Esmey were seeing too much of each other.”

“You don’t mean to tell me that he, too, is in love with her?” she asked painfully.

“I never hinted that much,” he said tersely. “But it is giving Esmey the advantage of me. Paula, after all, is a relative, Tai-Ling is an old connection of the family, and I feel that, despite the inconvenience, you could somehow have put them up at the Casa.”

“I did what I believed was right in the circumstances,” she said coldly. “They came here on a business footing. They came here for selfish reasons. The Casa has always drawn a line between its social life and business.”

“It is very well to see things in that severe view. But the Casa was otherwise once. It was hospitable enough to overlook the line on occasion, and it did so without injury.

“Paula and I are going to be married,” Val continued.

“I never could believe you really meant to,” she said in a voice from which all trace of feeling was excluded. “I looked—I still look upon her as a designing woman. The Jiminez were all common and grasping.”

“But Paula——”

“The most designing of all! As selfish as Gervase himself. She wants to marry you for what you have.”

“I can assure you that the girl——”

“I knew what she and her scheming duenna came for! That was why I wouldn’t have her in the house.”

“My dear mother!” Val sat back in his chair, crossed his legs, and despite his misery, for her rigidity touched him with fear, he gave a laugh of despair. “It is I that am the scheming one, if you will look on a marriage for love as scheming! And you forget that the Tai-Lings are rich, and that Paula is rich with them.”

“There is the mine.”

“The Five Apostles is playing out. Five months more—seven at the most—and it will be utterly dead.”

“I was never told.” She stared at him, motionless. “Why was I not?”

“That was something I had to find out for myself. I had thought to see a well-run, paying mine when I came here. I was aware of the responsibilities that would be laid on me, but I did, quite reasonably, expect to find myself in clover. Don’t think it wasn’t hellish for me when I was disillusioned! Why the mine wasn’t better run in the first place, is beyond me! Not a penny spent on exploration in a mule’s age, and just three slopes working.” Val was nettled. “Forty thousand dollars or so, when the mine had it, and metal was up, and the Five Apostles could have run into something worth taking out.”

“There is still ore,” she insisted.

“A pocketful. And it will have to go to the Tai-Lings.”

“What do you mean?”

“They’ve a contract for just so much quicksilver every year. They haven’t been receiving it. That’s why Paula and her duenna are here.”

“To rob us of what we have!”

“Rob? Well, rob is what Crossett would call a bit strong. They didn’t get what they should have got—and paid for years ago—so the Tai-Lings shouldn’t be blamed, exactly. Father made a few blunders. That was one of them. It should be rectified. There’s a small vein we’re working on. That’ll take care of them, and we’ll get our share. We might call that salvage.”

Mrs. Roger was calm as only an inflexibly resolute and selfish woman can be calm. One could hardly have imagined her, even when young and courted, to have the indirectness of her sex in approaching the object of her desire. Her will was iron-bound.

Val wondered if his father had not kept the state of the mine in the dark because he feared her temper.

“And then?”

“We can pull out the pumps.”

“You will continue work—explore and find more cinnabar!”

“There’s not enough capital. If there is assessment, we shall have to come up with one half——”

“The way out is to take hold of the work and develop the mine anew!”

She was still obstinate, direct and pragmatic. That small-boned frame housed the resolution of a zealot. Val could not match it; his mind was more feminine, more adroit and supple at taking advantage of the least opening, and now he had found one.

“Or by marrying,” he said quietly. “The Machados didn’t do so badly marrying into the Copes.”

She was unmoved. “The Copes received more than they gave. They came as aliens. The Machados were a far older family.”

Val shrugged. “I am leaving for the city in the morning. Paula will join me next week. When we are married, we shall live in the apartment. I hope you will understand her better, and that you will see more of her.”

“That is not likely. I shall remain here in my own home.”

She breathed deeply, moved now for the first time. The mine and half of her life were lost. To what was left she clung fiercely, and parted her lips, as Val rose, to utter an entreaty that he return to the Casa with his wife. The struggle was harsh, and for a moment her pride was uppermost.

Val kissed her forehead. “*Buenos noches, madre mia.*”

He went upstairs, and she listened to his footsteps along the corridor, fear and loneliness settling about her heart. The house was silent, except for the ticking of the English banjo clock atop the bookcase. She threw a mantilla over her head, went out by the side door into the garden, paced up and down the path, then, going to the summer-house, sat on the step and wept. The tears assuaged her. She was too restless to sleep. Will had been her mainspring,

will and the primary urge to dominate that overlaid the love for her son. She found herself out in the road, stumbling miserably in the direction of the ranch, where his heart was. She could only grope in the darkness, and by the time she reached the clump of chaparral at the turning of the road, she sank with fatigue. When she was somewhat recovered, she returned to the Casa, opened the door, and after a glance at the sombre hulk of the Five Apostles, with the slits of light over at the furnace, went in and pulled herself up along the banister to her room.

“Evening,” said Cloke, opening the door. He was the most frequent visitor at the ranch. Blazer crashed in first, to leap upon Paula with wet and frantic greetings. It was only on the field, with business ahead of him, that Blazer displayed his pedigreed restraint.

“Take this chair, Benjy,” said Paula. She and Tai-Ling were finishing their meal at the kitchen table. “There’s the coffee-pot on the stove.”

“Had dinner over at Angel’s.” Cloke laid on the sideboard a dressed rabbit. “Worked late tonight on the engine. I put in the brake-gear. Be giving you and Mrs. Tai-Ling a ride one of these fine days.”

He filled his pipe, and tipped back against the well-box. It was a farmer’s kitchen, with guns, bunches of corn, and bootjacks on the wall. The stove, supported on pillars of brick for legs, was at a cherry-red heat, the evening being raw.

“That ride will be something to live for,” said Paula, happily. “How you caught that rabbit this late, I’m sure I don’t know.”

“Back of that fig tree. Took him with a string-trap I put down this noon. And I skun him out in the yard before I came in.” Cloke shaded his eyes from the lamp with his hat-brim, and spoke modestly. “Easy hunting. They’re thicker’n hoptoads by that fig tree.”

His eyes followed Tai-Ling who carried the monolithic crockery from the table as if it were of spun glass.

“Esmey phoned from Salinas,” he said. “He’ll be in tomorrow, with a tractor he bought at a farm sale. Says he wants Rios to fire the brush at sun-up on those cleared three acres, first thing, so they can begin plowing.”

“Rios has gone to a wedding,” Paula said, “and I don’t know when he’ll be back. You know how those Monterey weddings are. There isn’t any rehearsal at the Knights’ lodge tonight, so I’ll be turning in early, and getting up early. I’ll fire the brush.”

Cloke poked scraps of chewing-plug into his pipe, lit a match with his blackened thumbnail, and the tobacco burned with a cozy sputtering. Then, doubtfully, he tugged at an ear-lobe.

“You’ve been hearing Faro sing these days?”

“Not lately. He wasn’t at the last rehearsal, either. You can hear Robin and Folwell every night, pretty near, when you go past their houses. ’Tisn’t like Faro to let down before a concert, but I haven’t heard a tune from his place in more than a week.”

“I don’t say anything’s wrong. But he must be off his vein—and I don’t know that it’s a cold, either. He came in grumpy to the shop, with an armful of drills, and didn’t say a word. Just flung ’em down, like he was in a black cloud. Garcia, at the ore-shed, don’t look for him to show up at all.”

“I do,” said Paula. “It’s just temperament. He’s that good a singer.”

“The best,” said Cloke, rubbing his chin. “I’ll bet, myself, he’ll be there, and singing like a bull-fiddle.”

“Well, then, in which case—” said Paula, and she determined to go to the city instead.

Cloke tamped his pipe. “Esmey’s going, I guess. I’ve got some work down to the boat, fixing that patch. Sunday after next, reckon we’ll pull out again for some fish.”

“No more harpooning for me!”

“Won’t be any. Kelp bass is beginning to run off the point at Capitola. Another storm, and seaweed will be in by the acre, and the bass as plentiful as ticks. We’ll take them with the rod. You’ll come along, Miss Cope?”

“I’ll come,” she said after a moment’s pause, “if I’m here.”

“Then that’s settled.” He looked upon her as a kindred spirit, on Esmey’s and the right side of the Casa. “You can have my best rod.” He rose. “Sunday after next, then. And I’ll be getting you the right bait, and that’s kelp flies.”

At the door he turned. “I saw Kathy Faro at the store. She’ll be up noontime with a salad and cake, and says she’s giving you and Mrs. Tai-Ling a picnic. It’ll be nice and warm tomorrow.”

“Now, that is very good of her,” said Paula.

“We were going to see her today and take some ginger and flowers. She is the secretary again,” said Tai-Ling. “That is a happy election.”

“It’s no more than we could expect, ma’am,” Cloke agreed, revolving his hat. “We couldn’t think of anybody else having it.” He hesitated. “I did come pretty near bringing her a brace of rabbits.”



Even before the night stars had gone, Paula was on the slope, setting fire to the windrows of slashings on the long, cleared part of the new field. In the dark, the lines of fire were furrows of carmine that had taken on a life of their own, thrumming with a dirge-like sound, helped on yard by yard by the favoring low wind. The solid wood had been taken away, stacked near the barn and the house; only thin branches and tendrils of roots were left, and these, as she went along the rows, she threw into the fire. The armfuls of pine trimmings, like withered wreaths, gave out a noise dry and papery; then, as the branches, gemmed with resin, caught fire, they went up with a shout and a release of incense. A streak of light etched the horizon, to widen slowly, growing to an unreal rose tint that bathed the slope. Some cedar trash was burning, charging the air with the sweetness of pencil-wood, and on the wind came full the California winter smell, a compound of earth and grass, tarweed and anise, crumbled walnuts, the sharp rankness of wild oranges, and the medicinal tang of blue-gum leaves. After the night's rain the smell was pungent. More powerfully than any familiar sight or voice, it swept her back to her young days in Alamos, with Ah Moy tending the picnic fires on Loma Prieta, or down the creek below Angel's, with herself and her cousins fishing, or playing at being Indians.

From this point she had a glimpse of the stream, a streak of jet that turned to cerise as she watched, and then to silver. A water ouzel dropped into it like a plummet, but it was too remote for her to see the splash. That ouzel was the sign; a wakening influence was astir. This edge of the continent was wheeling from dark into the light of the sun. The sprinkling of black motes above the valley began to converge at Hermanos. That was the feeding ground of the birds. A pair of blue herons, legs trolling, drifted over her head.

It was here that she belonged, but of that conviction, so completely merged was she with her surroundings, that she was no more aware of it than that she was breathing. A tree or a boulder could not at that moment have been more deeply rooted, so tinged by surroundings, as she stood watching the fires gilding her face.

Suddenly it was day. She came out of her reverie, and moved about the slope, stirring up more fires. Where it still lay piled, the brush was damp and slower to burn. For a week after Val had gone, battering rains and cliffs of fog had come in from the sea. The ranch yard was still half a swamp, the feet of the red eucalypti deep under water and heaps of bark and leaves.

After a swallow of coffee at the house, she returned to her work. Tai-Ling was still asleep. She had been quieter lately, and perhaps she was homesick. She sat up until midnight by the window of her room that overlooked the ridge between herself and the sea, and with a lamp on the table she wrote much, letter after letter, writing with brush dipped on a block of India-ink. She started many letters, Paula fancied, not often finishing them. Now and again one got itself done, and then Paula rode out on the pony to mail it. It would be a letter for her sons, and once—no, twice—the envelope was addressed to Mr. Chuen Toy, her family broker.

A dull little man, Paula thought, living in bygone days. But he knew the trade and ships. He had also promised to get them the tickets for their return. No, Tai-Ling didn't finish many letters. She couldn't have very much news to say. There was little, indeed, to say of the Five Apostles, of the prospect of metal to come. But to write at all was an activity. So little depended just now on herself—and so much upon others and the loom of time.

The firing was almost done. The last clouds of smoke, nibbled at by vagrant winds, were blundering up the slope and out to sea. By noontime, the ashes were as cold as if they were of last year's fires.

She heard the sound of a tractor. It was already at the yard gate, and Esmey, waving, got out to meet her on the path.

"That was a welcome with bonfires," he said. "And you, against the skyline, standing like Lot's wife. You must have been up since midnight."

"A surprise, wasn't it? I was aghast at what I'd touched off. The place must have looked like a volcano."

"Nothing less. Where's Rios?"

"Back over there somewhere. Unless he went to the post-office."

"Well, I want him to get that gang-plow chain that Benjy has fixed for me. It's at the mine."

"I'll ride over and get it. I shan't be getting out of overalls the rest of the day."

"Any time this afternoon will do." Esmey turned. "Hullo, there's Kathy. Luncheon and all. Benjy said she was coming up. A good sign, that is."

"She's in again! Elected!"

Paula flitted towards the gate. Esmey scrubbed at the tap in the yard, and came in shining and combed. It was a balmy day with the brightest of skies, and the table was spread on the veranda where the honeysuckle was still full

and showy. Tai-Ling had arranged the spread, with lantana twisted about the plates. She helped the salad. Then Esmey filled the glasses.

“Here’s to the permanent Secretary!” he said.

“Well, that is nice,” Kathy responded, “a toast like that.”

“I’m glad you’re in—still in. That’s fine, Kathy. It’s no more than anyone expected, though.”

“I wasn’t minding for myself.” She laughed nervously. “It was for the Capitan that I cared. There’s others in the Auxiliary who would be better. Sometimes I think I’ve been in too long.” She put down her glass, and her smile was indulgent. “But the Capitan is always worried about these elections, and he was never more so than this time. When I came out of the lodge after the balloting, there he was—not in the car, but standing outside under an umbrella, and it was raining just terrible. He had been waiting there all the time, to know if I had won.”

“They should have given you a serenade,” said Esmey.

“Benjy Cloke had one all planned with the Auxiliary, but the Capitan didn’t want the band at the cottage. I don’t know whether it was he didn’t feel like music, or thought it might come to rain. And he had to work anyway. After we got home, he went straight back into the mine. He’s there now so many nights.”

Faro would have been desperately cut up if some of those females of the Auxiliary had run in somebody else, Esmey knew. Mrs. Laken, of the hardware shop, and Verity Sim had been trying to get in for years. Kathy was the prop of the world for him. It was she who kept him going. Above those women of the Auxiliary, who had no mind for anything but gossip and village chitchat, Kathy, with her character, large heart and unaffected grace, towered like a mountain. Esmey thought her admirable; if she were unattached, he would have had her run the house for him, and even the farm. She was too good for the village, too good for the Auxiliary, and too good for ponderous Joab Faro, with that ridiculous devotion of his for the Casa and the mine.

“This afternoon I want to show you my garden,” Kathy was saying to Tai-Ling. “I’ve got a bush of lilacs in bloom. I kept them dormant all summer by withholding moisture. Do you like lilacs?”

“Mrs. Faro, I’d rather see lilacs than any flower, I think.”

Kathy called here every other day, to whisk Tai-Ling off in her car for rides to Salinas or Santa Cruz or along the Twenty Mile Drive; but not often to the cottage, and never at night, for Faro might come home, and Tai-Ling

was not in favor at the Casa. That amused Esme. Kathy, wife of the mine foreman, had taken Madame Tai-Ling, head of the fabulous Chinese house, under her protection. It could not have endeared Kathy to the Casa, but it did reveal her independence of character.

“Then we shall go straight away, after I’ve helped with these dishes,” said Kathy.

Esme slid a packet of cigarettes towards her, but before he recalled that she did not smoke outside of her home. She put her hand to it with the merest shade of hesitancy. She withdrew it when footsteps were heard on the path. It was Rios, holding out a letter. Esme glanced at it, then handed it to Paula.

“For you,” he said, pushing back his chair. “And now I’ve got to tinker on that gang-plow. Don’t mind about the chain. Rios——”

“I am going for it,” said Paula, with a frown bent on the note. “I also have to go to the Casa, it seems. You might read this.”

The note was from her aunt, a message curt and almost peremptory, requesting her to come to the Casa that afternoon. Esme half bridled at it. He would have urged Paula to wait a day or two before going; the note had been posted that morning, and his mother could at least have allowed Paula the civility of time for a reply.

“I’ll call upon her, of course,” she said.

She was displeased, but it might have to do with a tea for Kathy—or something concerning Val. Either would have been reason enough to answer the summons, though the brusqueness of the note was not to be condoned.

“You must wear your dark-grey dress with the green shoes,” said Tai-Ling.

“I’m not dressing. I can stop in as I am, on the way to the smithy.”

“But that—it is unthinkable! I will not see you go to the Casa as a farm girl!” cried Tai-Ling, her small hands a flutter of gold. “Yin-Chiu, consider that this is a visit to the Casa and Mrs. Roger Cope——”

Her protest sped into a singsong in Chinese, wanly entreating, but at Esme’s grin and Kathy’s worried, placating smile, she broke off.

“Tai-Ling, my love, it isn’t a formal tea I’m going to,” soothed Paula, rising. “Look over this note. It’s a business note. So I’ll just stop in for a moment, and see what it’s about. And Mrs. Roger Cope is ‘Aunt Ysabel’ to me.”

“It is still a call,” said Tai-Ling. “And those are rough clothes, like a serving-maid’s.”

“Aunt Ysabel has seen me in rougher and worse,” said Paula. “But I’ll promise not to drag the chain in with me!”

The pony was readied for her at the stable, and she cantered out along the Mendoza strip, and took the ditch instead of the bridge. The wind was strong this afternoon, and blew her hat back over her shoulders. It was a helter-skelter ride, a zigzag gallop across the hill and the boggy tract, and she got back to the main road breathless.

She reined in beside the Casa, and from her saddle looked down into the garden. It was in a bowl of wintry sunlight, with bougainvillea pouring red and green over the tiles and the long stucco wall. Under a carob tree sat Ah Moy, the long pipe to his lips, watching the flash of bluejays, and the drift of goldfish beneath the leaves on the pool. She saw the rusty croquet-hoops on the plot where she had played when she was small, and her old window under the eaves. She was touched by the beauty of the garden, lovelier now since its formality had gone into wildness. The front of the house was in shadow, the shutters closed, and she mounted the steps in a chill. The Indian girl cleaning the brass opened the door for her. The salon, too, was half dark, and the darker to Paula who had stepped in from the brightness. Her aunt came into it from the cactus room.

“I came directly,” said Paula. “I only just got your note.”

“It was written yesterday,” Dona Ysabel said. She motioned to the lounge, and herself sat in her carved chair near the piano. “But no matter, you are here. You intend to marry Val shortly, I understand.”

“It is our intention to be married, yes.”

“The engagement, such as it was,” Mrs. Roger went on stiffly, “has on a number of occasions been broken. I cannot say I was displeased by that. To me, it had never been more than an infatuation. But if this time there is a real considering of marriage, I must say I disapprove of it. Some days have gone by since I talked with Val about it. And now I feel more strongly than I did before. I do not believe Val knows himself well enough at this juncture, nor is aware of the gravity of the step. It would be a marriage to which I could not give my sanction.”

Paula curbed herself, and a flush surged hotly up her throat. She drew her head back, waiting. The voice went on frigidly: “I wish my son to marry, naturally, but he should marry on his own plane, and it must be a marriage

that would be fitting. He has been brought up and trained to administer the Five Apostles and to take his place as head of the Casa.”

“In place of his father?” Paula thought. “Poor Roger wasn’t a striking success at that, either! Oh, Lord! And what did she mean by ‘fitting’? Marrying money, perhaps?”

She was amused, she even stifled a laugh, but she looked about her a little faintly, her eyes straying to the portraits on the wall: the high-stocked grandees, whose eyebrows were arched like Aunt Ysabel’s, and the Cornish gentlemen-venturers in tin, less dashing, more grim-mouthed, like a row of chapel elders. It was not likely there had been a single bullfighter or tenor in that lot, nor any tin-venturer who had married for love. Well, her father had. The most impulsive youth in the world, he had even fallen in love with the Senorita Machado.

The reception was as unpleasant as Paula thought it would be. Ysabel Machado Cope was arrogant, small-minded, and proud, with a pride as hard as granite. Perhaps she was resentful. Gervase, who had saved the Five Apostles, and saved the roof over her head—Gervase had done much for her, more than Roger had done. Or perhaps she had forgotten.

She had not forgotten. She remembered it well, with jealousy and bitterness, and as sharply as she remembered the ranch-girl Gervase had married instead of herself. And there was that Jiminez tomboy again, sitting before her—the same lithe figure in shirt, overalls, vaquero hat and boots, with the same eyes and the steady, level glance. Mrs. Roger looked at her in cold, disdainful wonder. No one had ever worn a vaquero hat while occupying a chair in this salon.

“I might remind you,” said Paula, lighting a cigarette, “that it has been some time since I became twenty-one. Val is a little older than I am. We are of age. I can marry whomsoever I please.”

“I am against your marrying my son.”

“I am free to marry any man I please. Val, if he wants me.”

“You are mad!” Mrs. Roger burst out in scorn. “You are mad to consider it for a moment! Val has no love for you! He has nothing but tolerance! He does not know you for what you are! You are a selfish, scheming woman. You came here—and at the unhappiest time—to seize what you could from the salvage of the estate. You wish to marry, you wish to be settled, you wish position. Desire and greed are your motives. Nothing else counts in your scheme of things!”

Paula had lifted her hand when her aunt began, then it fell upon her lap, and she looked helpless about her as if for some means of escape. She felt as if all the Copes and all the Machados, whose effigies looked down upon them from the opposite wall, were in league against her. Then she saw her father's portrait, above the grand piano, and she felt reassured.

"I suppose," she said, after the last thunderbolt had smitten at her ears, "that by 'the Casa' you mean yourself and Val."

Paula got up and adjusted the hat-thong under her lip, drawing it tighter. That twisted her curious little smile, and brought out the dimple in her cheek. Levelling her grey-green eyes she said, as she turned in the doorway:

"There are two things I must assure you of. I have received nothing yet that is rightfully mine from the Five Apostles. And whatever your sentiments are towards me, I can't feel wholly"—she pointed to Gervase's picture—"like an outsider in my father's old home."

Aunt Ysabel, shaking in the storm of her outraged pride, rose from under the clump of pampas grass, and flushed even more darkly.

"My sentiments will never change. No more will my principles. I see more clearly now than before how near my son came to making a mistake he would forever regret!"

"Roger had assuredly made such a mistake," was Paula's thought as, after inclining slightly to the storm, she left the parlor, opened the front door, and closed it without a sound. Mrs. Roger, turning her face to the garden, with open hand pressing upon her jet beads, knew she had lost.

It was a relief to be out in the frost-dashed air. Paula was unaware of the steps and the earth under her feet; she flung herself upon her pony, and with the bound of a hare, he sped up the road, wheeled at the fierce tug of the bit, and galloped to the mine-top. She released her breath in a hysterical sob, gasped in a mirthless laugh, drew a sleeve fast across her eyes, and rode on to the smithy.

Well, that was over. She had almost lost her temper, but was glad she had not. No outburst of mere temper could have been adequate to the occasion. Perhaps she had not been angry enough to lose it.

"Oh, what does it matter!" she said, looking at herself quickly in a little mirror she fished from her coat-pocket. "It wasn't much of a battle," she thought irrelevantly, "but it was the best you could do—wasn't it, Yin-Chiu?"

Cloke was thudding into a white-hot snub of iron on his anvil as she went in.

“Hullo, Benjy! Got that chain fixed for Esme yet?”

“There, by the door. I saw you coming up the road. Like a bolt out of hell! You’d be a great ’un at hunting.”

“I’m not that good, old-timer, but the pony is.”

Cloke poked the iron back into the coals, and nursed his pipe gravely. “He can take any fence, that fellow, even if he is chunky for a two-year old. You ought to get after some foxes. Blazer had a run after a pair up there beyond the canyon a couple of days ago. Where there’s a pair, there must be a litter.”

“Think I ought to be hunting with the pack?” she smiled. “I’m off form, out of practice really. And besides, I don’t belong to Alamos Hunt. Benjy, I’m a rank outsider!”

He whisked out his iron, and clouted it into the shape of a drill bit.

“Must be a whole litter up there, now. Told Val about it, and he figured we might work up a kind of a hunt. They’re worse’n skunks or opossums around hen-houses, foxes are. Mrs. Garcia lost five chickens last month.”

“Chasing them can’t be any worse than hunting broadbill, I’m sure.”

They spoke about the tractor Esme had brought in, and the plowing. Paula liked the talk and the wisdom of simple people; above all, the people who had this mountain country in their blood, and Cloke, with his slow, acrid humor, the rectitude of the glance over his steel spectacles, and his loyalty to the mine and Esme—loyalties far apart but never conflicting—was one of her chosen favorites.

She rode back, more at ease, with the chain looped about the pommel of the saddle. She had the sense of having been away for hours, but her stay in the Casa was brief, and she had ridden fast. Esme was back in the kitchen, chatting with Tai-Ling, when she entered.

“There’s the chain!” Paula sang out. She let fly and the chain crashed hideously into a pan by the door. Sailing her hat into a corner, amid boots, she flopped into a chair, head and arms dangling, in the attitude of one stabbed through the heart, and moaned weakly. “Esme, be a good fellow, and get me something!”

“There, there,” he muttered with solicitude, bringing her a tumbler from the sideboard. “What was all the row about the chain?”

“The chain’s all right. So was Cloke. He gave me an earful about foxes—a whole pack of ’em—eating Mrs. Garcia or somebody out of poultry-yard and home. But it wasn’t that. I went to the Casa.”

“You’ve come back a bundle of nerves.”

“I haven’t either.” She sat up, and waved her empty glass a trifle feebly, but she had recovered. “There was a storm; a touch of real winter, I must say. It didn’t do me any harm. Good rather.”

She fished a cigarette from a crumpled package, and with the most solicitous gallantry, he lighted it for her.

“What was the topic of conversation? Or shouldn’t I have asked?”

“I don’t know why not,” she said, stretching out her legs. “It was about the Casa and its honor and old family trees on both sides—and my tree, which it seems was rankly scrub.

“It’s a pity, of course, I had no ancestors. Nothing except old Grandfather Jiminez, who was just an old cow-hand. She as good as rubbed that in. I didn’t remind her my father was Gervase Cope. Nor that she had hurled herself on his neck. Sorry if I am rattling old bones, Esmey, but you asked for it. I want you to know how ladylike I was in not bringing that up in the Casa.” She laughed. “But I had to tell her a few other things.”

“You mean you told her off?”

“Naturally. She wasn’t for my marrying your brother. She seemed to feel I had designs on him. That I had come here carpet-bagging, to haul off what I could.”

“There—there wasn’t enough, did she think?”

“Enough what, I wonder? The mine is nothing one can run off with.”

They stared at each other. Tai-Ling glanced up with a start. With eyes closed, as if she had relinquished the external world, she had been as still as a carved figurine, and often they were unaware she was in the room with them. Neither of them saw that she was drifting up the stairway.

“She did not want me to marry Val. And so——”

“Yes?” He bent over her, his hands on the top of the chair, and in the intensity of his grip the fingers turned white.

“So—I suppose I shall marry him.”

“When?”

“Whenever I choose. Perhaps not now. I am neither to be goaded away from marriage—nor into it!” She turned her head away, and it was Esmey who was breathing heavily now.

“I know,” he said. “And once you’ve made up your mind, something’s got to give way—but it isn’t you.”

“I think I’ll go away a while, Esmey. Only for a few days, perhaps. I must go!”

“Steady now,” he urged. “You’re feeling a bit rattled. But don’t think matters are going to be settled just by your packing out. You’d be only trying to get away from yourself.”

“I’ll have to go. It’s a little too much for me, staying here in Alamos, just now, but I’m not running away from anything. I suppose I’d only make it worse by staying. There’s that tea at the Casa for Kathy, too. Everybody will be looking for me there. Aunt Ysabel will not, but the village would, if I were here.”

“They would.”

“Tai-Ling!” she called. “We’re putting our heads together. You’ll come up to the city with me?”

“I’ll come, Yin-Chiu,” the voice drifted down, like a splinter of crystal.

“Four o’clock, nearly,” he said, looking at his watch. “If you start now, you’ll be past Castrovilla before the fogs nose in. I’ll bring you the roadster.”

“Won’t take us long to pack.”

He went round to the shed by the winery where he kept the better car. He polished it, filled the tank, and leisurely tuned up the engine. By the time he drove up to the veranda, the women had their luggage out on the step. He stowed it, helped them in, and sped them up the road with a cheerful wave. He stood in the warmth of the sun by the fence, watching the car vanish downhill. For a long time he stood motionless, then with thumbs tucked into his belt, moved slowly on to his waiting tractor.

The car winged like a hawk from the world of mercury, larches and vines to the flat by the sea and the robust, salty air pounding in from the tumultuous, white-flecked indigo plain. The girl, staring far ahead, drove on wordless, the wind blowing its threnody in her teeth, and thrumming through her hair that streamed back like a gonfalon. It was heavenly, the escape from the present. The wind, the roaring speed, and the splendor of the ball of fire wheeling from the east, with the air flamboyant and warm, bringing out the scents of aniseed and moist earth, brought her back to herself from escape, and she lived in Time and exultant and happy madness of youth.

“We are going altogether too fast,” cautioned the dowager quietly, in the voice of eternal wisdom. “And will you tell me why? You are not Val. Neither are you drunk.”

“I’m really getting my wits back, Tai-Ling, though you mightn’t think so,” Paula averred, slowing down a half notch. “I lost them when I was in the Casa with Aunt Ysabel. And I felt I had to leave Alamos.”

“But so hastily!”

“It came over me all of a sudden that things were not as right as they should be.”

“With whom? The Five Apostles, you, or——?”

“That is what I must find out, Tai-Ling.”

The table in the suite was laid for tea. Mr. Chuen Toy was to arrive shortly. Tai-Ling stood by the window, in long contemplation of the Bay, looking at its dark channel and the white lines plowed upon it by the slow outgoing liners, deep-throated, but looking from this height like toys pulled by an invisible thread. The rattle of the cable-car line was hardly audible in the boisterous wind. Seagulls and paper were tumbling above the roofs. Lanterns, like pallid fruit, dangled and swayed above the balconies in the Chinese quarter, its gilding softened in the oblique light of dusk, for evenings still came early. Tai-Ling stirred, drew up the blind of the other window, and resumed her seat and needlework.

Ever since she and Paula arrived, she had kept very much to herself, seldom leaving the hotel, and then only to walk about among the pigeons in the little park on the slope of the quarter. As for Paula, she had been dashing in and out, cheerful and hurried, bound urgently for a trip, a football game, a theatre, or a dance. Val had whisked her off again, this time for a drive to some vineyard in Napa Valley, where a new vat-room was to be opened with a dance. The two were so much together, and Tai-Ling rejoiced.

By now, she was sure, they must have agreed on the date of their marriage. Paula had not said just when, and Tai-Ling had not asked. Paula's ebullience—she was untrammelled, joyful and busy, as unguessable in her next, swift tangent as a kite—meant that a strain was over, or some impasse with Val had been smoothed out, and all was going well. Tai-Ling thought much of the approaching wedding, and had even worked a magic to hasten the event. In quest of things to buy for gifts, she had gone all through the quarter, armed with letters from Mr. Chuen Toy.

She found a shop where a seal-cutter, after a mild dispute over the design, a pelican, carved her a ring for Mrs. Roger, the mother-in-law to be, who had to be provided with a good-luck present first.

In a fusty emporium, a gnome of a merchant showed her Canton-ware and opium bowls, then silk, perfume bottles in carved jade, and after an hour requited her impatience by exhuming the most ducal of trunks. It was of red leather, sewn with thongs of bull-hide, and plashed with gold. An augury! She was enchanted. The merchant was a dealer in sorceries and witchcraft. At once she got the trunk for Paula, and with it bought assurance of a favoring

wind. The trunk portended a voyage. It would mean a farewell voyage for Paula, home to the house and bamboo garden in Canton, and a long stay before she left to return to her husband.

Lightened at heart, she went out, and invading one lane after another, came into a small courtyard to which she had once taken Pudgy Venn. Up a tall stairway she climbed, then down a corridor to the temple of Huan Dai. The handful of people in the dim altar room were of country and river-port speech, colonials, tentatively of her own race, but somehow alien, as if grown from strange roots. Somewhere in another chamber was a funeral, and the wailing of reeds in the mourning song for bachelors drifted into the temple. Two or three figures were about; one by one, perhaps after seeing her there, motionless, they withdrew.

Alone now, she went behind the altar to the table where she cast the divining blocks. On the screen a hare by a cassia tree sat pounding, under the moon, roots for the elixir of immortality. The moon here was a round white lantern. Its light was dim, and to read her blocks she put on her glasses. She cast again, and discerning good portent, lighted two joss sticks, one for a groom, one for a bride, and watched them burn.

When these had fallen to ashes in the sand, she lighted another pair, gave the bonze a coin to propitiate the hundred lesser deities, and as she went down the stairs he smote the gong and honored them in a lump. The clamor poured down after her in hoops and waves, in a deafening imploration of brass. It fell out to a murmur, as of an upset hive, and the bonze roused the tongue again, though Tai-Ling was gone. At a corner stand under an awning she bought ginger and leafy rice-cakes for the tea, and walked up the hill.



Tai-Ling opened the door. A bald cherub in black and a watch-chain ambled in. Mr. Chuen Toy acknowledged her greeting with a bow of deference.

“How good you are, Mr. Chuen, to honor me with your visit.” She took his hat and stick. “I am fortunate in that my message came to you when you were in the city.”

“I waited until I should hear you were coming.”

He was a very diffident man, and after these amenities, said no more until after she had poured him another cup of tea, and deflected her remarks to the outlook for trade. It was touching the right spring. His fingertips met, and

drooping his eyelids, he sank back in the chair, and a soliloquy on metals began, and to the dowager it seemed as unending as a river.

When young, Chuen Toy had the berth of traffic agent for the Cathay Mail Company. A firm that long ago had receded into myth, the mine at Alamos had put him in the way of some business. He had gathered for it a carload of quicksilver, and the venture, coming off well, led him to open a brokerage on his own hook. In a short while it prospered. Bills of exchange, negotiable paper, futures on ore and metals—he dealt in these, and in as impersonal a fashion as if he were playing chess, or some chill form of music akin to mathematics. That expansive black hat of his, they said, was his only known office. The rest of the time he was on the Coast Range, up as far as the Lake County pits, or even to the jade workings on the upper Trinity, or else down among the one-flask mercury claims in San Benito. He was a guerilla broker, and shippers in need of flasks to piece out an order could always turn to Chuen Toy, who supplied the lack at a price like a dagger-thrust, or else at the pool figure, depending on their place in Mr. Chuen's esteem.

"Glory be!" Roger had exclaimed once. "That Chinaman is a slick one! The pool was empty one morning, and there were no bottles loose anywhere in the State. I called up Toy, and he had the stuff going out by express before nightfall."

Tai-Ling and he began their talk in Cantonese, then changed to English, the language of trade.

"Five Apostles—it has not sent you many flasks yet?" he ventured. "Tai-Ling's will be getting a shipment now?"

"Shortly, yes. There have been improvements, and a great change, too, I think. Valentine is the new manager. He knows the mine better than anyone."

Mr. Chuen folded his hands and listened, unblinking. The dowager's eyes had brightened, as if in speaking of the mine which had played a part in both their lives there had come to her a renewal of spirit. She believed in the house of Cope and the unflinchingness of the Five Apostles.

"Valentine is working a new vein," she went on, "and we shall be getting our shipments. He is clever, and he is a very good engineer. You know him?"

Mr. Chuen stood before the window, looking into the lamp-flecked chasm of Chinatown, and slowly rolled a cigar in his palms. He knew the young man, who was engaging, but even craftier than his father, far more crafty than any of the Alamos tribe he had known. Everyone in the trade knew why Roger had not been shipping flasks to Canton. Women and lean rock! His heir, who had been bequeathed still leaner rock, was trying to recoup with

horses. Mr. Chuen was touched by the solitude of this fragile aristocrat, so hopeful, so courageous, so remote from her home. He wished he were not here at this moment. He watched the tail-lamp of a cable car drop below the hill, then lighted the cigar, his face creased in perplexity; but it was smooth again when he turned.

“Yes, I know him,” he said. “But Five Apostles is an old mine, not a young engineer. It is a very old mine. There are others now, not so old. And pits in Sulphur Creek district. The Creek men take ore out with steam-shovel, and get metal cheaper. Low price for a long time. But higher price,” he added gently, “in the East than in China market.

“Ships go out to Asia with freight,” he continued. “I have my warehouse, with good quality metal from Del Norte and Sulphur Creek district. It is all sold, but any time Tai-Ling’s want a parcel of flasks——”

“Thank you,” the dowager broke in. “There has been a change now, a very great change. We shall have our flasks—and from the Five Apostles. It is Valentine who is running the mine now, not his father.” She rose and drifted to the dark end of the room and back. “You know the Five Apostles, and you knew both father and son.” She spoke thornily. “So you must know, Mr. Chuen, what that change means!”

“The young Cope,” said he, “is a man of instruction. Yes, he knows that mine, and many other mines.” Mr. Chuen fingered the brim of his hat and smiled absently. “But there is no change. The father bought apartment houses and women. The son buys stables and racehorses. That, too, takes plenty of flasks. The son, he stays more about at the Five Apostles than his father? No. But Joab Faro is still there. That is good for the Five Apostles.”

The leave-taking on her part was cold. Alone again, she stood rigidly in the middle of the room, and a chill mangled about her heart. Why could she not have believed what she had heard of Roger, and why could she not have guessed what, since her arrival, had been unfolding before her eyes, so that she could have warned Paula? She was mortified; she was even more chagrined. Her family and Paula had looked to her for guidance, and she, the matriarch of the Tai-Lings and the girl’s protector, had been so humiliatingly deceived, and had bungled affairs in the worst manner possible. She groped for the sofa, and sank upon it, her eyes filling.



Seven o'clock; eight. Frozen and still, as if something had been smashed within her, she had not moved since the flask broker left. She had believed in young Cope as she had believed in the enduringness of the Five Apostles. The loss of her belief was like a sundering flood that had flung her isolated on a reef. But she had suffered often before, even more intensely, in the war tumults on the border, the bleak and lone journey home, and the dispersal of her kin. Being accustomed to faith, she waited for the return flood to lift her back into the calm above the whirlpool. Slowly, her small ivory hands unclenched.

She had, perhaps, believed too much. Clan-pride at Alamos was not so strong as it was among her own people, the Tai-Lings, princes in commerce, but of an old rural hierarchy, simple and direct, shrewd guardians of their patrimony. The family at Alamos had been, however clever, contemptuous of their gifts, and they had let the Five Apostles die, life tramped out by horses, its body eaten by foxes and wildcats.

The sadness of it, more than her anger, pained her, then that diminished, and she felt only the traveler's lone sorrow, and a desire to return home. Spring came early to her garden, and she saw the young peach trees, buffeted by the warm breeze, casting their petals on the tiled wall. This was the season when the governess had taken the solemn-faced, small Yin-Chiu, with her wondrous red hair, out to the pool to fish for carp. Yin-Chiu should return where she belonged. What was there, now, her dreams being over, to keep her here?

The door flung open, and Paula dashed in.

"Did you think I wasn't coming? You're going to dress up, Tai-Ling, and come along with us."

"I can't go, Yin-Chiu."

"You've got to come out just once! Day after tomorrow, we're going back to the ranch. Val has a table ready for us—place up in North Beach. And afterwards we're going to a dance, with Skippy Perrin and Fenner Hart and their wives."

"There is something I must tell you," said Tai-Ling, directing her low voice into the bedroom. "I've had a visitor."

"Who?" demanded Paula. "What did he talk about?"

"The mine. He's a broker, who knows the mine—and the Copes, too—better than either of us. What he told me was not good. Its affairs were bad under Roger, and they are not better under—Val."

Paula whirled out in a fresh, pleated skirt. “Indeed? Well, anyone will hear strange things if he listens to them. What’s wrong with the Five Apostles? And what’s wrong with Val?”

“It is a pity,” breathed Tai-Ling. “It is not the Five Apostles that interests him. He has stables and racehorses that he has been buying. You do not buy horses for a string of beads.”

Paula cast herself into a chair and stared at her.

“How could your visitor tell you that! It isn’t true, Tai-Ling! It’s most beastly untrue!”

“True or untrue, when you hear the cry of ‘Hawk!’ you look to your quail. If it is true, then many flasks of quicksilver from the Five Apostles——”

“How can you believe that?”

“Do we believe that Roger bought apartment houses for his women, or do we not? He had no more hope for the mine. Has Val? Is he not as seldom at Alamos as his father was? Why have we not yet had our lawful share of the flasks?”

Paula spread out her hands, with a quick intake of breath.

“Oh, that can’t be!” she said, faintly. “It must be something else!” Then she started up like a hare, with a mute glance at Tai-Ling, and darted to her room, where she dressed frantically.

“Don’t go anywhere, Tai-Ling! Be here when I come home!”

She flung herself out of the room, in the lobby met Val, and they piled into the cab which rushed them through fog and over cobbles to the Latin Quarter, and the shabby quietness of the Fior di Napoli. It was still quieter behind the curtains of their booth. Her shock was vanishing, and in Val’s company—his sunshine—the fear distilled into her heart by Tai-Ling’s words vanished as if it had been mist. How foolish she had been to listen to her at all! It had not been fear that had shocked her, she assured herself, but anger. No one knew the man she loved better than herself, and it was mingled with a strong admiration. Poor Tai-Ling, she believed everything she heard—even the gossip of her chattering parlor-maids, who rehearsed every absurdity they picked up in the village and the market-place.

Paula was quieter than her wont, almost placid after that moment of turbulence, and Val, throughout the dinner and over the liqueur, subdued his exuberance to the pitch of her own mood. She had not seen him since the night before.

“Fenner’s in the trade, you know,” he mused. “Great fellow, Fenner. We’ve got an idea. We’ll have a fox hunt! Blazer will be the Alamos pack, and Fenner and Hart will bring their hounds down, and we’ll start out from the Casa. Holiday idea, what?”

“Like a Christmas card.”

“I’ll have to dash up here, though, Wednesday night. A pool meeting. Won’t seem very gracious of me, though.”

“Don’t let that trouble you. You’ll be down for the holidays.”

He nodded. “But that reminds me,” he said, frowning. “My mother will be staying down in Monterey a fortnight until the holidays are over. They never did mean anything to her. And they’ll mean still less this year, after what she’s gone through.” Bending forward, smiling, with arms folded, “Do you think—” he began. He appeared to be invoking his determination.

“I’d like to see the Casa lighted up, as if Don Roger were still about. Red-berry wreath on the open door, and candles and more wreaths at the windows. Alamos folk will be coming round to wish the compliments of the season. Tea and cake for the ladies of the Auxiliary. Gifts for the children. *Aguardiente y cigarros para los hombres*. Grappa and stogies for the men. The old Alamos custom!”

Val looked almost wistful as recollections of past gaiety stirred within him. He was young enough to be conservative when it came to upholding traditions.

“You remember how it used to be at the Casa, Paula, when you were small. ‘Home was home then, my dear, happy for the child.’ ” His smile grew pleading. “The Casa Alamos turns to you, Paula. Here’s where you come in.”

“Where do I come in?”

“I’d like you to be the hostess at that party. The duenna of the Casa!”

“Sorry, my dear. I couldn’t set myself up for that!”

He sat back, awkwardly. He had been warm with sentiment, and her refusal was like a dash of chill water.

“But why? I never thought you’d mind!”

“I do mind,” she returned. “It happens that I am not the duenna of the Casa. The Casa is your mother’s house, not mine. A few mornings ago, she called me there, and I went, though I should have known better than to go. When I was under her roof, she told me what a scheming thing I was,

thinking of marrying you. That all I wanted was the Cope money and the Five Apostles. I wasn't approved of at all!" Her smile was resigned. "When I left, I felt as if I were being turned out of the Casa. I suppose I ought to be thankful I'm even allowed to stay in the village."

"You two clashed!"

"We did." She smiled, in confidence. "As I said, it was all pretty much my fault, going in there. And most impolitely rigged up like a cowboy. I can imagine her distrust. It must have been the first time anyone with turned-up Levi's and Jack-boots ever sat in that parlor. A prospective mother-in-law should have been treated with more respect. It's better for me to stay out of the Casa, Val."

"You'll come into it as Mrs. Cope the Younger. And how much longer are you going to make me wait?"

"Until we get Tai-Ling home with her flasks."

"She'll be going! Faro's deep into that band, and soon we'll be on the heels of another."

"Then there won't be anything in our way. Not anything!"

He smiled at her admiringly. She had will, she had humor. Her nature, that never by so much as a tone or a glance threw a bait for commiseration, he felt as akin to his own. He could meet her on the level of reason and hard sense.

"We'll be getting Madame her flasks in a month or so," he added. "And some, perhaps, a bit earlier, to keep her shop fires burning."

Two or three of the chaps in the pool he could shake down for a load of bottles. They were good fellows, and he had looked into their mines for them, and figured out a way of roasting their ore cheaper. For one mine he had got a used rotary furnace from Nevada at the cost of mere junk. And as for a token shipment, to keep Tai-Ling in hope and spirits, Faro could help, for he knew plenty of cinnabar diggers back in the hills who had a flask or two they would be glad to turn in.

The waiter brought in coffee, retired and slid back the curtain.

"I really ought to take her back to Alamos. Cloke's going fishing for kelp bass tomorrow. I'd promised to go with him, but I may beg off. I still think of that harpooning."

"We might stop by on the way to the beach," said Val, "and coax her a little. She really ought to meet Mrs. Alison."

“She won’t go. She’s not in a reasonable mood. I had a most uncomfortable time with her when you were waiting in the lobby.”

“The mine’s got on her nerves? That’s a frequent complaint among people who think a mine should be all ore, as a cow should be solid beefsteak.”

“Not with Tai-Ling. She knows more about rocks than I do. But she has been listening to something that has upset her. And it wasn’t about the mine.”

“What, then?”

Paula lowered her cup. Val watched her with a fixed gaze, but deferentially, fumbling for a cigarette. After the steps of the waiter hurried down the passage, she spoke.

“Horses.”

“No more than that?” he laughed. “And what did she have to say about horses?”

“She’s quite a Puritan. Racing is not her notion of the correct sport—not for a young engineer who has a sick mine to nurse back to health, but happens to be deeply interested in a stable of horses.”

“Who could have been talking with her?”

“I can’t imagine. I was upstairs only for a moment. It was clear somebody had come for a visit, I don’t know who. Cups were on the table, and the place reeked of cigarette smoke. But she must have been sitting blank for hours, as if something had gone out of her.”

Val laughed again, with easy candor.

“No wonder! Whoever it was must have given her a fright. Making me out to be a plunger! It’s just a barn on a ranch, with a chap looking after a mare and her foals!”

“Then you do have horses?”

“Oh, yes. Nothing alarming in a fellow who’s grown up with them. And these are something else again. They’re an investment, quite promising.”

“Isn’t it speculative?”

“Not so much as running a mine with flasks offering at seventy-five.”

“That was rather a gamble,” she agreed with hesitation.

“Well, this isn’t. Not with Clarion’s breed. She never let anybody down. Her oldest son—the leggy fellow—I wouldn’t trade him for all of the town of

Alamos, and the Casa thrown in. One race, and he'll bring in more than my father got out of the Five Apostles in two years!"

"Racing is chancy," said Paula. "But if you think you're safe——"

"Absolutely safe!" Val smiled. "I happen to know horses as well as I know rock. And I learned about them earlier. They were something I didn't learn at my mother's knee. Father began taking me to Tanforan and Shellmound when I was five—which isn't any too young to learn the turf business. I used to squeeze my coconut head between the bars and watch 'em run."

"He took us both along once," said Paula. "We were horse-mad from the start, I imagine. And I don't think I was ever without a pony of some kind—a Sheltie at Alamos, or a polo Waler in China."

Her love of horses was even stronger than his own, for he had never genuinely loved a horse since his pet, Red Flame. Alamos was then full of horses. The mine stable was a cave of glistening Percherons, mighty haulers of flask-carts. And in the stable at the Casa lived not only Don Pablo's mounts, but Parader, Magic and Val's Red Flame, whom he rode at the Salinas Fair, and always to win a prize for himself, and a ribbon for the handsomest animal. Parader and Magic were Roger's, and he had reared Red Flame especially for Val. When Roger left the Casa, and Val was away at school near San Francisco, Mrs. Roger sold all three of them. Val, hearing of it, rushed home, frenziedly upbraided her, and his passion over, stalked out, not to return for a year.

Val looked at Paula steadily. He was thinking of Red Flame, and his smile was unforgiving and hard.

"I never could have a horse until I was more or less settled. An engineer's is a roving trade, and you can't pack a horse along like a duffel-bag. Mother hated the creatures, you know. As for Father, he thought a stable too expensive a hobby. Said it would cost a galleryful of money." Val gave an inaudible laugh. "He did back a couple of fillies, but neither of them brought him in a purse."

"How has your stable done?"

"It has only just started. It'll begin to run this spring."

He drew snapshots from his notebook, and spread them out before her. They were of the Pleasanton stable, and of Clarion with eye of fire incarnate, and neck curved like the rainbow; about her were her foals, mallet-headed

sons of lightning. One, bridled, was held by his trainer, with arm pulled skyward. That foal touched her heart.

“Oh, what’s he called?”

“Clarinet. The others haven’t any names yet. You must think up names for them—names to bring luck.”

“Sight unseen? Oh, well—Yin-Chiu, Cinnabar? That may do for a start. I’m not good at naming, really. It’s risky tacking names on very young things, who may either outgrow them or not live up to them. There was that old battered tomcat of Cloke’s that was called Fluff, and it seemed incredible that it had ever been a kitten.”

“The Capitan, though, had quite a nice system. Kathy told me he would never let anyone but himself name a mine pony. As soon as it was born he’d look into the Old Testament, come up with a name, and for the rest of its life the horse would plod resignedly through the tunnels as Maranatha, Tarshish, or Kariah, or something else Biblical. He picked names that sounded like a curse from a book of incantations,” said Val, with a shrug. Why was it that Paula’s thoughts were always running on the mine?

The waiter at the far end of the room opened a piano, lifted out and uncorked a wine-bottle, from which he took a long draught, eyes fixed on the ceiling. He replaced it, and wiped his mouth.

“That piano’ll be dumb all evening,” Val observed. “It’s a dead night, anyway. So we can’t have a dance.”

“I’ve still to be convinced it’s livelier here than in Alamos,” she said cheerfully, pulling on her gloves. “Let’s walk and stretch.”

The air was robust and maritime, and there was enough fog in it to make the stroll like an adventure. It went to her head; her spirits were high. Val talked of their marriage plans, and of the honeymoon journey, which would be either to Europe or to Chile—somewhere far, of course. She would be content—nay, enchanted—with a drive less far from home; up to the foothills, or the Trinity trout stream, would do very well. She was too happy to be restless. Her past and the sense of an ineffable tomorrow were fused in so intensely happy a present that her feet rode on clouds. California Street was before them, and they climbed the steep ramp of the hill to the built-over plateau, where they paused to breathe, half-winded, in the briny air, and looked below at the fireflies that were the lamps of ships in the Bay. On the moon was etched the spire of a cathedral.

“It’s a walking night,” he said. “And I hate to think of your going back so soon. I shan’t be seeing you again for a whole week.”

“Four days, Val. I’ve a lot of gift things to wrap up. I ought to help Kathy bake up the simnel cakes. And I’ve promised Tai-Ling to drive her and Father Vargas to the Santa Lucia hills, and get some fir incense. She’s had her heart rather set on that jaunt. And with your mother gone, the Casa will have to be readied for the party. If there’s to be any kind of a dance, Ah Moy will have to wax the salon floor. He must be grotesquely out of practice.”

“Four days, then,” said Val, as they reached the port-cochere of the hotel. The ordeal of parting was brief and sharp; Paula ascended to her suite, and he struck out into the night, hat tugged over his forehead. There were cabs handy, but he trudged downhill, frowning. Why on earth couldn’t Tai-Ling have stayed at the farm, instead of mooning in her hotel, forever hanging on to the girl like a chaperone?

Who could have been talking to Tai-Ling about the horses? Faro, perhaps? It must have been Faro. No one else in Alamos had spoken to him, right to his face, about the stable—a personal matter that had nothing remotely to do with the mine; and it was probable that Faro had got word somehow to Tai-Ling in the vague hope that it might start some trouble at the Casa, and help him squirm out of his fix. Val smiled a little grimly. If Faro went any further, he would be pulling the props down about his ears. Val was not angered at Faro—the old wheel-horse, very useful at the moment, was entitled to one kick.

It was just that the kick came at an awkward time. But Paula understood, and Paula would set things to rights with Tai-Ling. It would, for all that, be the devil of a job now to coax a loan from the Tai-Ling house, unless he put himself out of pocket to buy an imposing stack of flasks for it, twenty thousand dollars’ worth at least. He would be at the mercy of these guerilla brokers who worked outside the pool. Chuen Toy, that hatchetman, would demand cash on the nail, and no discount. And there was the stable to look after. Mares ran on money.

Val tramped through Chinatown on the short cut to the office, went down Clay Street, and seeing a bonfire in the gutter, paused moodily to watch it. A group of Chinese merchants, as in an obscure tableau, stood looking down at the blaze, a pyre of goods—toy parasols, jumping-jacks, puzzles, tawdry lace things, and cartons of incense. The air reeked with the perfume of those incense pastilles; a merchant poked with a broomstick to hasten the burning, and from a cardboard box a doll fell out. It was a Japanese doll.

That cremation and the quiet were ominous. This small gutter blaze portended a bonfire that would some day lap in flames and choke out the Eastern world, thought Val as he trudged on. He reached the office and let himself in. It was chilly, he lighted the wood that the janitor had piled in the grate, and dropped into the armchair to read the mail and papers on the side-table.

Not much in the letters and reports this time. A few nations were stocking up on the metal, and the market was steady. The Spanish dictator was forcing the miners at Talavera to work night and day instead of their traditional sixty-four days a year. Looked as if that fellow had something up his sleeve. Going in for fulminate caps, no doubt, and a breaking-loose of hell. That sort of thing had a way of spreading. Mercury boilers, to hook up with Diesel engines, were being more and more liked; and a damp year in Europe, with abundance of insect pests, with a demand for quicksilver treatment of seeds, was telling on Exchange.

Often he spent a night in the office, where he could work in quiet, and then sleep late in the morning, undisturbed. His secretary did not appear until noon. She worked until six, drew an honorarium for a full day, and spent long holidays at Inverness, where the sea winds blew in keen and full.

“Mercury is the deuce,” his father told her once. “Breathe the dust of it in these letters, and it drifts into your bones, and you get salivated. Fresh air, Miss Mountjoy, is a great prophylactic.” And being a hypochondriac, Miss Mountjoy had believed him.

He mused over the geological reports. There was activity up at Lake County, and down in San Benito some new properties were being opened. As soon as money came in from the horses, he would hunt around for a real mine to buy into. Useless to work anything about Alamos, for no prospect hinted at anything but low grade ore. Time for him to pull out of the village. The children of the Five Apostles would have to drift elsewhere. Some had already gone, and a good half of the rest had worked at other mines—though they would work nothing below the scale of mercury, gold and silver—to leave Alamos and return a dozen times.

Quicksilver mines were as often visited by slumps as any other mines, and then the Alamos workmen, except the few who stayed home to garden, went up with their fishing rods to Guerneville or along the Trinity. A passion for dabbling hooks in water uplifted the souls of those whom fate had thrust into the dankness of the Five Apostles. It might, after all, be the right honeymoon trip for himself and Paula—a week up at those streams.

He started up, nearly upsetting his glass, and answered the telephone call. It was only the switchboard girl at Crossett's hotel who told him that Mr. Crossett had not yet returned, and that it was not likely he would be back before the end of the week.

"Thanks," he said. "I'll try again then."

He settled back after refilling his tumbler. Perhaps it was little use bothering Crossett with ideas on where to hunt for that wretched contract. The two of them had got together here the other evening and talked over the vanished thing until midnight. Val had been quite peevish, and had even lost his temper.

"It's illegal, Crossy! And unjust!"

Crossett seemed more impressed with the excellence of the cigar he was smoking, one of the stock put away by the late Roger Cope, than with Val's knowledge of law, which was anything but massive.

"Yes, yes. That's quite right from your viewpoint. But from the viewpoint of equity, no. The Tai-Lings, I believe, have the original paper. It's valid, and has teeth in it like the jaws of a wolf-trap. The point is, it is as binding on the party of the first part as on the party of the second part.

"That agreement is a verifiable fact. As I recall, it favored Alamos more than a trifle. It was tightly written." Crossett regarded his ash, and shrugged. "Even dynamite couldn't break it. I can only repeat what I've said before. The party of the second part have the bite on you."

A painful evening, and Val, thinking back upon it now, himself shrugged. The bite hadn't hurt him yet; it was still being staved off. And in a fortnight or so, when no one was about, he would again crawl into the Rico Duro—to the end this time, and find out exactly how much ore Mendoza and those old chaps in the flush days had spat at and passed by.



Paula, up in her suite, took off her coat and flung it upon the divan, which was heaped up with packages. The lamp at the escritoire had been left on. By the side of the ink-tablet and the horn of writing-brushes were three or four letters, which showed that Tai-Ling must have been sitting up for many unquiet hours, and she was fast asleep now in the next room.

A pity Tai-Ling was not awake, so that she might have her misgivings dispelled. It wouldn't do to rouse her, and besides, they were to leave early in

the morning. That heap of packages spoke of the events of the week and the duties ahead of them. Those tea-things were still there on the stand, and Paula frowned. If she could only learn who it was that drank out of that other cup, she would know who had uttered that wretched gossip about the horses and Val.

It was very late. She sat at the window overlooking the dark bay and the parade of lights winking along the docks. The great unseen bowl of the harbor, streaked with the glow of moving craft, was like a stage where a drama was playing itself out on the heavy tide and the seething near the islands. The fog was growing denser, and the voices of the craft were louder. Above the tremolo cries of the ferry-boats rose a siren. It transported her at once to the Mendoza place, and she remembered that hazy noontime when she and Esmeby by the fig tree were listening to the siren of the Five Apostles.

She had a warm affection for that ranch. She was at home in it; and she had suggested to Val the hunting crowd might gather there instead of at the Casa. Fenner, Perrin and the rest, with their wives to match—those tailored, youngish matrons, with their rather hard faces and paddock manners, so direct and free—would seem out of place in the Casa, Aunt Ysabel's home; but he had laughed and said, "Heavens, no, Yin-Chiu! Not there! We'll let the old Casa be itself again, for a change!"

And he had spoken of the hunt again on their way to the hotel. Her thoughts raced over the wonderment of the evening; the walk up and down the hills from the Basque quarter, the laughter, the wind and the veiled stars, and she recaptured again that fulness of bliss, as if she were still close to that bright and magnetic presence she loved.

Val's own tailor had outfitted her with a new riding costume, and it would be sent down in time for the hunting-breakfast. That was all arranged; and the pony, too, had been re-shod. She had taken the pony to the smithy, and while Cloke was pounding in the nails, she strolled about the mine-top. A flash of light took her in the eyes as she passed close by a building. That was the condenser-shed, which had been a mystery to her as a child, for none of the Casa youngsters were permitted to go into it alone. She looked in through the window; the plane of metal in the storage-pot was like a mirror of black crystal. She shielded her eyes with both hands, to see inside more clearly. The Capitan was at the scale, and his head turned slowly. His gaze was as of one startled from a mood of dark pondering.

That gaze, it struck her as she walked back thoughtfully to Cloke's shop, was a look, also, of fear. It haunted her.

She did not know why it should come back to her now, but it did. Over her spirits crept again that insidious, chill fog of doubt. She suddenly felt lost, as if she were drifting in a boat without light or compass down in the harbor.

What had Val said about the quicksilver and the mine? There was a vein, and it was being worked. What else had he said that she could tell Tai-Ling, except his talk of Clarion and her foals? She remembered nothing else but his smile and gaiety, and the attraction he had for her, so overpowering that over the doubts rose triumphant once more her belief that the things she believed in would come true. Why should it not remain always steadfast?

An hour later weariness came upon her, and she fell asleep in the chair by the window, hands over her face.

The morning was diamond bright; the fog had pushed north in a solid bank, up to the Peninsula and into the valleys, leaving Alamos fresh, green and moist in its wake, with the turf springy. Paula, after her ride down the creek, scampered up to the ridge. It was a nipping wind that came off the ruffled sea; a holiday feeling was in the air; dew and hoar-frost glistened on the toyons, red with berries, and on ochre soil where the vines stood out scraggly and black. From the chimneys at the Five Apostles not a puff of smoke lifted to mar the flawless sky. A flock of linnets turned a juniper into a green frenzy of song.

A pile of cordwood was below her. No jump at tomorrow's hunt would out-top that hazard, and no pony, not even Fenner's, could beat her mount at any jump; for Esme had for days, when she was up in the city, cantered him on a boggy field, fed him on oats, and taken him over every fence on the ranch.

"One more before you get home," she said, bringing down her quilt.

The pinto made the leap cleanly over that cordwood, and she galloped towards the house. It was quiet; Esme and Rios were sharpening stakes at the barn. There was Kathy now, driving through the trees atop the hill road, and heading down for the gate. Paula turned the pinto into the yard, and then helped Kathy pull sacks from her car. They were a gift for the horses at the mine, and that ceremony was the only old custom, after the Christmas reception at the Casa to the villagers, kept alive at Alamos.

"Two sacks of apples," said Kathy, "and I got them from the Garcias. There'll be enough left over for the children. You got the pears?"

"Right here," Paula said, "on the veranda. And I fixed up a basketful of those, too, for the youngsters. Autumn pears. They taste a bit like hair-wash, but with pears nobody seems to mind. They'll make a pretty show. And I've got a box of toys. We'll take everything straight up in the station-wagon. You'll come into the house a while?"

"I'm going down to the Casa and see how Ah Moy is coming along. And there's the bird to get ready. The Capitan is home today. Late work has been too much for him, and he's all tuckered out. It wouldn't be so bad if he had

his sleep, but it's after midnight when he comes in, and by seven in the morning he's gone again."

"They must be terribly busy."

"Seems as if things just run in spells. Last time was when the Queen pump broke, and it was a month before Benjy could get a new part from San Francisco. That was the hot summer our garden dried up, and there wasn't any water from the mine, because the garden depends on that old level water where the Queen is. We lost our mint and the white azaleas."

"Now you try and keep him in today, Kathy! After all, it is Christmas."

Kathy departed, still a little breathless and hurried, and Paula watched her car sweep uphill to the trees. Kathy had been greatly in the public eye; the news of her election had been printed in a San Jose paper, with a picture of her, lustrous in marcel and new evening gown, with an orchid corsage, and a reference to Mrs. Joab Faro, "a notable figure in Alamos society life." The metropolis of San Jose had batted on the tidings of her election; it was impossible for any woman in Alamos to be more famous, and for the moment even Verity Sim and the malcontents of the Auxiliary were stunned. But Kathy was modest and unspoiled, her head unturned by the picture which had been taken by the newspaper cameraman who made a trip to Alamos for that purpose.

"It was because of the Capitan," she explained. "He's well known in the outside world."

Paula, sitting on the veranda steps, resting a while before she joined Esmey in the vineyard, was grateful to her. Kathy had put the house in order, almost single-handed, with some help from Ah Moy. Val had not been able to come down and see about the reception, nor to supervise the larger plans for the hunting-breakfast. He had telephoned down early this morning to say that his guests were still having trouble finding vans to convey their horses and dogs to Alamos, and he would be down with them early tomorrow.

"That's the very devil!" Esmey had exclaimed. "We just can't have the Casa locked up on the holiday! We've got to hold open house, somehow, even if Val isn't around. Take over, will you, Paula?"

"I don't think I should!" she protested. It was thoughtless of Val to leave everything to her at the last moment. "Why should I be hostess at the Casa? I won't know half the people! It isn't as if it were the hunt, with Val there as head of the Casa. But for me to crash in, and sit in her chair and pour tea—that would be shocking! I'd feel ridiculous, which is worse. And suppose Aunt Ysabel heard of it?"

“What if she does?” said Esmey. “It’ll all blow over. And if she does hear of it later, and gets huffed, that can’t be as bad as letting everybody down. I’m no host. And Kathy—well, it isn’t her place to be the hostess.

“And in a way the whole thing is impersonal. It’s the Casa that’s the real host, not anybody in particular. So you just be awfully sporting about it and just see that everybody gets fed cake and tea and the kids don’t get underfoot but romp in the yard. I’ll pass out the cigars and keep that punch-bowl filled.”

“Noblesse oblige—is that it?” she laughed. “Well, if you’re going, I shall. You’re sure Aunt Ysabel won’t be coming in the middle of the jinks?”

“She won’t. She won’t stir out of Monterey for a month, until the last echo of the holidays is over.”

After that talk she went down, went over the plans with Ah Moy, and turned the rest of the work over to Kathy, who aired the place, had the carpets rolled up, and drove up to the bake-shop and ordered cakes.

Paula got up, changed into high boots, and went down to the lower edge of the vineyard. It was still early forenoon, and Esmey would not have to be up at the mine until one o’clock. He and Rios were now driving stakes.

“We had a visitor when you were gone,” he said. “The Chinaman.”

“Anything wrong at the Casa.”

“Only himself. He was boiling! He wasn’t going to stand for any damn outside person—least of all a woman—ordering him around. It’s the blood royal or nobody! He wanted to be sure you were turning up.”

“You told him I would, I suppose?”

“I did, and said you’d be there at three. He grumbled because it wouldn’t be earlier. Anyway, I gave him a demijohn of red wine, and away he tramped, reasonably calm in mind. At least, he wasn’t so frantic,” said Esmey, and began thumping a stake into the earth.

“Tai-Ling is still asleep. I think I’ll make myself generally useful, if you don’t mind.”

“I can do the lashing.”

“You’ll find some raffia in that oil tin.”

She worked about in the moist earth, binding vines to stakes. They were rootlings that he and Rios had prepared in the kitchen these long winter evenings, while she and Tai-Ling read or played cards. The rows were very long. She rose to straighten her back. The heat was stronger, the wind less

biting. Against the sun the rows of the vineyard deployed like the ribs of a fan up and down the rolling field, the older plants lifting skyward their gaunt, black arms. Already she saw them in their spring array, glad and opulent, their mantles flouncing silvery-green in the sunlight.

Paula, all the vines bound in the two new rows, came up, swinging her tin. Esmey and Rios thwacked in the last stake. Louder than the echoes came a report from the direction of the Five Apostles.

“Glory, what could that be? A blast?”

Esmey stood looking at the hill, shielding his eyes.

“Sounds like a musket.” He listened again. “Over in that chaparral, isn’t it? I’ll bet it’s Cloke! He must be beating up the foxes. Driving them into the scrub beyond the footbridge, towards the flat this side the mine. They’ll lie doggo there in the brush until morning, if he keeps a string of flares going. It’ll be up to me to blow the flares out.”

He looked regretfully far out to sea, and the dark line near the Point that was an island of kelp. At daybreak Cloke would be out there, going after the bass. “For two-bits I’d go along with him in the *Apostle*.”

“So should I,” said Paula, “if it were a toss-up. A fox has feeling, but I’m not sure about fish—not about bass, anyway.” She glanced at the sun. “It’s almost noon. Time to start.”

“I’ll go for the station-wagon.”

“You’re going to throw some alfalfa in it? To go with the apples and pears? The horses might like some.”

“We can do better than that. Rios has stuffed a lot of sacks with fresh grass,” said Esmey, and set off for the barn.

She sat to wait on a wheelbarrow. It was warmer, a haze was forming, and it gave the farm almost a summery look. Strongly at this moment she felt herself a sharer in this sun-bathed vineyard, and the old Mendoza home with its worn furniture, the piano of the spinet voice, and the crickets under the veranda; and she knew it better than she knew the Casa, which was so bound up with the mine. She looked over at the Five Apostles. Boughs of fir had been tied atop the gallows-frame, and there was a stir of persons about the workings, like colored specks; but the mine seemed far away and unknowable, perhaps because of its hidden life, the cubic miles of hard rock, and its maze of perverse and dripping tunnels; and yet, somehow, it was in her thoughts inseparable from Val.

The station-wagon came up, Rios at the wheel. She climbed in and sat in back with Esmey. At the house they paused to stow in the apples and pears, and wine for the bandsmen, and then drove on to the Five Apostles. On the mine-top the sunshine had the least tang of winter, and the children with their pink cheeks sat wrapped on the benches brought up from the Lodge. A band played spurts of music that in the open air sounded knockety and gay.

The bandsmen played a tone higher as they drove up to the smithy, the drummer pounding harder, and Robin Sim in his long coat gave a nod of welcome as he blew rosily on his trumpet. The hoisting-engine droned, and a skip appeared from the depths with the surprised head of a horse. Cloke, unfamiliar in a suit, led it forward. More horses came up, and soon there were seven, blinking in the sunlight, sniffing at the odors of salt air and distant grass. Seven more were underground, and there they stayed, being sightless. Then Faro rose, the last of all. He came forward, stood before the line of horses, and unfolded a paper he took from a greasy notebook.

“Ozias, Tarshish,” he read, “Maranatha, Rambler, Clatterfoot, Keriah, Benion—greeting to you all on this day.”

He was reading the names, thought Esmey, and his hands as he gripped the paper were not very firm. And that was strange, for he remembered when the Capitan used to recite them as if he were boxing the compass. Esmey’s glance drifted to Kathy who was watching him from her chair near the hoist, head forward, sitting very still. The Capitan looked at the miners standing about, at small girls in pigtails, and equally small boys in a high state of soap-and-water, knees blueish in the cold. A rush of blue wings carved the air. A pair of seagulls perched on the gallows-head to look down. Over by the ore-shed hens scabbled in a clump of milkweed. As many fowls, Paula reflected, as in a painting of St. Francis preaching a sermon in the woods. But this sermon could not be a joyous one. Faro, towering above the tallest of the miners, locked his hands behind him and gazed at the winter-bright sky.

“We have brought the horses up here because we can do no more to show our gratefulness to these quiet friends,” he began. “They, their parents and grandparents have pulled the trams for us through the tunnels for years before most of us were born.

“They are not used to light, and their hides twitch in the cold wind from the sea. They are content with the only life they have ever known. Darkness is light for them, and after the long day’s haul, right good is the rest on straw. We have brought them up so we can manifest our gratitude to them, and share with them the sentiment of the holiday.

“They, too, like all of us here, are children of the Five Apostles—dependent on it, and clinging to it, as a child to its mother’s gown. They are—they are—perhaps, more fortunate—more fortunate——”

He hesitated, broke off altogether, and from his pocket took out the crumpled bit of paper. Clearing his throat, he read from it: “‘Emily Ann Garcia. An address to our four-footed friends.’ Will Miss Garcia kindly come forward?”

“Emily Ann!” “Emily Ann!”

A button-nosed elf trod out stiffly, after propulsion from maternal hands, curtsied to the horses, to Faro, spread out her frock, and chanted her piece.

Old King Neptune’s horses,
They play and roar afar,
But Joab Faro’s horses,
They pull the oreman’s car.

Old King Neptune’s horses,
Go roar and float away!
But Joab Faro’s horses,
Shall have their holiday!

Faro patted her head, and gave her a quarter. Amidst din of handclapping and shouts, the elf fled to her parents.

“That wasn’t half bad, really,” said Esmey. “That’s a good bit of verse, and enough to last one a year.”

Paula, watching Faro, who had withdrawn and was now going down the path to his cottage, Kathy at his arm, the mastiff at his heels, slowly lighted a cigarette. “Thanks,” she said. “I fixed up the rhyme, because I was on the committee.”

Rios broke out with a rod of lily cups, and, with a wicker jug under his arm, poured claret for the crowd, and Esmey shook out the apples and grass for the horses. Emily Ann Garcia gave the first apple—it was as big as a coconut—to bony Ozias, a descendant of Ozias the First, who had been Don Pablo’s coach-horse. His velvety nostrils quivered and blew upon the gift, then the teeth crunched in. The horse feast began. Miners lighted their pipes, and wives fell into easeful talk with their neighbors. Robin blew a long, golden note; drum and flute came in, then the horn, all a shade wobbly after the claret, and played “God Rest Ye, Merry Gentlemen.”

Soon the provender was gone, and the crowd thinned. A pipe at the engine-house spat steam, and the horses, all shivering now, with muzzles to the ground, were returned one by one to their labyrinths. The pulley slept again; half the crowd began to liven, and the other half moved down the trail with the bandsmen, on their way to the Casa.

“It’s over,” said Esmey as he drove off, for Rios had followed the music downhill. “It was worth coming to see, though I never remember a horse-greeting as short as that was. I’ve missed a lot of them since I grew up. It’s quaint—there’s a sense of old continuity, and all that. Heavens, that must have been keeping up now for more than sixty years. No, longer!”

Paula, curled up in her corner, was biting her nails.

“I’m not sure it went off very well,” she said. “Except for the children and the horses, and that really should be all that mattered. But I do wish now I hadn’t gone, and that I had stayed at the ranch.”

“I’m going to take you straight to the Casa for a cocktail. It’s nearer, and _____”

“I’m in no mood for the Casa,” she snapped.

“That’s precisely where you’re going,” he said firmly, “and right now. What’s the sense of going on to the ranch and back again when we’re already here—and we have to go to the Casa anyway? I’m not going to drive you all over the map when your nerves are frazzled, and there’s punch at the Casa or anything else. Nobody’s gone in yet. It’s still early.”

“I don’t want to see anyone, nor do anything!” she said definitely, her mouth set. “You take me straight back home!”

They were on the road where it forked off for Alamos and for the Casa. He looked up at the trees. “She’s in a vermillion temper, our young lady,” he informed them.

“I’ll be in a hotter one in a second! Will you please go on, or must I walk?”

“Left, right,” he debated. “Right, left—right it is!”

He nosed the station-wagon for the ranch, and drove with an exaggerated nonchalance and a speed that was criminal. The trouble with Paula was that she was getting frightfully bored with these small festivities of the village, the stupidity of the Casa, and the apparent futility of waiting any further. Perhaps it was this long engagement; he had heard of such cases before. Or she was in

a fury over Val's thoughtlessness. She was still biting her nails when he got down to open the gate.

"Thank you," she said, as the car stopped by the veranda. "I wanted to get away from all that in a hurry. Don't mind my rotten disposition, and just you trot in and bring me out a drink."

Esme obeyed. Bewildered, and yet a shade amused, he watched her sip her drink. She triumphed over her feelings well enough to manage a weak smile. It was all gone now, but a shred, that dreadful and creeping fear that had enmeshed her when she was at the ceremony. She looked at the house, but did not see Tai-Ling about.

"Did you notice Faro?" she asked quietly, giving him a steady glance. "I couldn't help feeling all the time that there was something dreadfully wrong."

"Well," he laughed, "the sermon was a bit chopped off, I thought. The old man used to do better sermons, and round them off rather prettily."

Her glance pinned him, and there was no wriggling out of his predicament. She was waiting for him to say more.

"It was rather a wash-out, the whole thing," he admitted. "He just wasn't up to his usual pitch. He stumbled around as if his mind were elsewhere. He couldn't remember the names, not even of old Ozias. I don't think he could have got through with the business if Benjy hadn't been there. And there was something else. He sent the beasts down again without any blessing. I'm not sure that blessing any critter does it much good. But it's the custom, and he omitted it this time. What I think is that he just wasn't in the mood for blessings, and wanted to wash his hands of the whole show. I don't know how it struck anybody else."

"Oh, it struck a number of them, all right! They watched him drag himself off to the cottage, and it wasn't as if he had been taken ill, either."

"He's always been a great looker-out for omens. Perhaps he has seen or heard something quite unpleasant."

"Esme," she laughed suddenly, "I do think you're acquiring sense!"

"I'm not sure," he grinned. "But I feel you're inclined to imagine things. Faro's no prophet. I never looked upon him as a great hand at foreseeing calamities. Last winter some fool horse kicked over a lantern and set its straw afire. The Queen pump busted some of her inner springs. These were both surprises to him. He didn't foresee that Father would go, either. Divination isn't his long suit. Unless in rock."

“Suppose he has looked into rock?”

“And saw nothing? Then it wasn’t that that fazed him. It would take something more than poor rock to get Faro into a mental slump. He’s seen a lot of it in his lifetime. So fret not, my lady!”

She got out of the car. “I’m going to change into shoes. And we’ll go back to the Casa.”

It took her only a few minutes to re-shoe herself and come down in a beige dress with belt and a navy-blue coat, and Esmey raced out.

“I’ll just drop you there, and call for you at six,” he informed her. “I’ll have to tidy up around the barn, and hone an axe. Around seven we’ll pull out for Angel’s with Tai-Ling. Benjy won a bird at a turkey shoot, and that’s what we’re having.”

“It’s too late for you to change your mind now. You’re coming into the Casa with me, and there you’ll stay, doing the family honors, until everybody’s gone,” she said firmly.

“I’m looking sloppy,” was his protest.

“No more than anybody else who will be there,” she pursued. “But you’ll really be in for it tomorrow. And right at daybreak, too. You must be in tweeds,” she said thoughtfully. “You’ll be taking Val’s place if he should be late, and that’s something I can’t do. Tweeds, then, and a sports shirt. You ought to wear a tie. I’ve got a tie I can lend you, a brown, knitted one. It’s formal to be informal at a hunting-breakfast. There’s to be kedgeree, crumpets and bloaters and a lot else, on that long Spanish buffet.”

“Great fish-hooks! You put Ah Moy up to that!”

“I did. And you’ll have to look spruce—the cool, perfect gentleman, dear boy. You just can’t be running hog-wild all the time.”

“The prospect is terrible,” sighed Esmey, in anguish of mind. “And all for a mob I shall never want to lay eyes on again.”

But he did contrive to muster up a grin as he turned down the hill and pelted for the Casa in another quite desperate burst of speed.

The sky that at noon had been hopeful with islands of blue was now cleared of mist. Some patches of it lingered still on the rough flat towards Guadalupe which was still knee-deep in vapor, where Paula, leaving the Casa on her pinto, could hear the jagged symphony of the dogs.

“A grand day however the hunting goes,” she thought.

A ride in a thunderstorm would have been a delight after that pent-up morning in the Casa with the three-hour breakfast, phenomenal success though the breakfast had been. She was sorry that Esmey had to leave. He left promptly as Val arrived at ten with all his party, twenty-five guests in all, and the vans that carried down the horses and dogs. The vans had traipsed all over the foggy countryside to pick up the animals at this farm and that, and, taking the indirect coast road, had got themselves lost. It was a bigger mob than she had expected. Val had spoken of fifteen, not twenty-five—but it was not his fault, for the mob had grown like a snowball. And their party had started at a dinner up the Peninsula the day before. A durable crew, however, and they were thicker around the punch-bowl than at the buffet. There were also the servants and stablemen to look after, and the van-drivers, for whom a table had to be spread in the old coach-house; and somehow they had been looked after, for she had help and comestibles rushed down from the village hotel. After this terrific affair and the confusion of dogs and horses in back, Paula had climbed upstairs for a moment to herself. Then she came down right after the mob had left for the field, spoke a little with Kathy and Verity Sim who were to stay until the party was over—and here she was.

She had talked for a while on the landing with Val before that rest.

“You’re quite the most marvellous girl that ever was,” he said, admiringly. “Magnificent of you to stand up like that in the scrimmage! And to forget so much! After all, you do belong right under this roof!”

“I got over all that!” she said.

She could not have told him that she would not have remained in the Casa an hour if Esmey had not been there. She did not distrust her courage, but the thought of Aunt Ysabel appearing in the Casa any instant half froze her; and when Val finally did come, she was so relieved that her exasperation fled. “And it does happen that I’m in love with you!”

A bang echoed on the hillside. Cloke had relinquished his musket to Rios, who had been firing it indolently at hour-long intervals ever since daybreak. He had also kept a line of flares burning all night. The general hope was that all animal life would abandon its stamping-ground and flee towards Guadalupe and into the arms of the hunters. But she was sure now that everything on four legs had gone straight into earth to lie hidden until the uproar had roared itself out.

She heard Blazer's tremolo over in the scrub. Riders were crowding behind the impatient and crying hounds. Etherbridge's halloo started the run.

The dogs poured into a mist-filled gully, as if into a cauldron. They boiled out, and up the further slope, and down and up after them went the riders, following a chaos of black-and-tans, Kerry beagles, and foxhounds that cast forward howling and bugling through the underbrush. They were a "Barbary pack," a pick-up lot that had never before run together. And only Blazer knew the ground. She was leading the field, coursing as if alone, lifting one scent after another from a tangle of scents—the pack coming after her like a dragged comb. Red, fat Etherbridge, master of the hunt, was the noisiest rider, and he and his hostler were the whippers-in.

"I think they'll be coming out that side," remarked Paula. "No use chasing after them. We can make a short cut."

Together they leaped the gully. She pointed ahead.

"There's Blazer. You watch her divide!"

"Oh, she's a solo player," laughed Val. "A poacher's dog. But they're all solo players, more or less. They're not a County Pack—they're lone Westerners. That's all right. You ride with the scrub pack if you want the real fun of hunting."

Howling singly and in chorus the pack, muzzles down, was moving like an avalanche. The fringe of it chopped a rabbit, then another, and Paula did not turn her head to look. She closed her ears to the screams and went up after Cloke's dog who was stringing along on her own.

They came to a wagon-road, and Etherbridge was forward, cantering happily. He was the veteran, the leader by rights, for he had long been with the San Mateo Hunt, and would ride nothing but a wise quondam racer that avoided every possible leap or hazard.

"You just follow my hat, Val! I know where she headed for!"

He did follow her hat. It was a cowboy felt, though the other women wore hunting toppers. But her riding wasn't cowgirl style; it was show form. Her

pinto was used to a perpendicular world, like its rider. It took the stiff ramps with the agility of a deer; she even seemed to float up, lightly, as if she were a bit of cobweb blown onto its back. She was as fastidious in riding as she could be in dress; she was in the right-fitting coat and breeches of whipcord, with a jade-green shirt, her hat flat on her coiled-up red hair. And Val was impressionable to style. He rode less well than she; it was his pony, one of Fenner's polo mounts, an Argentine, that followed her; it did its utmost, but it had been bred to the level.

Up on a flat they all hurtled through briars, Blazer first. Paula swung fast after her, both of them after a tawny creature that streaked under a fence. The pinto hurdled it, and clattered down on shiny rock, hooves slithering. Blazer drove like a rod into a clump of green, and Paula lashed at it with her quirt.

"Tarweed," she said, and Blazer crawled out, with the eyes of a chided spaniel. "Might as well be red herrings, and she'd lose her scent. Let's get out of here and join the mob, and play some Queensberry rules. What d'you say?"

Blazer, as mute as a will-o'-the-wisp, led the way as they jogged downhill, mirthful, with a clanking of stirrups. The path was a channel of pearl-grey vapor, scented with resin and firs.

Paula listened. "The hounds again. They must be headed down for Venosa. We'll make it in a five minute run."

"Ten minutes would be more like it. I hope there won't be a bloody scrimmage at the depot."

They galloped on the even slope, among saplings and pools of water black from the steeping of winter leaves. As they quitted the tract and skirted the flattened red hill of the mine dump, she had a glimpse of Faro standing on the brink with his staff, looking far off into the valley. She flung him a wave, but he had turned and was gone. It must have been the tuneable cry of the pack and the stir of old memories that had drawn him out into the sunlight, for there had been fine hunting afoot with dogs at Alamos in Don Pablo's time.

Over the bridge they pounded, Blazer leading, and as they sank to the lower, wooded shoulder of the hill they could see the mob.

"That's Ethy waving," said Paula. "Like Dumb Crambo."

She hallooed, and as the manikins hallooed back she cupped her ear. Then they talked in wigwags.

“They’re coming back,” she said. “Rather silly to be milling around the tracks down there. ’Tis a mob without a shout left in them. All halloo and dust, and no brush, I fancy. How about a prowling in that gully, Val? So they can catch up with us.”

“I’m for it. You go first.”

Sunset was hours off, and there might still be another fox—higher up. Nothing here in this gully, where the smoking thread of the Guadalupe rippled among the boulders. No fox in his wits would have dug a lair on these slopes, as steep as a roof. There was no forage, and a misstep on the slippery foptail grass would have dropped him into void.

“No, I don’t like the looks of it,” said Val. “I’ll go round by the bridge.”

Down went the pinto, by the haunches, Paula lying flat back. He rode to the opposite slope and looked down. Paula had landed on a flume, crossed over, briskly, charged up at a slant, avoiding the patches of foptail grass, Paula herself ducking under branches, and here she was now on the road, breathless, rapping down Blazer, and laughing.

She dismounted to give her saddle-girth a hitch. Just then the hounds tore by, the riders hard behind them.

“Now for the run home!” said Val. He warmed at the notion of sinking into a chair at the Casa, with a glass of something hot, and his feet on the andiron.

“I’ll race you for it!” answered Paula. She leaped into the saddle, with an impact and squealing of leather.

“All right then, at a canter!”

Again the chorus of the hounds, with a shout from Etherbridge. The field, a stone’s throw off, crowded and scurried into a clearing. Val groaned aloud. “What’s up now? We’ll have to string along, I suppose.”

“They’ve jumped a fox! Over there!”

Val turned. The field was heading in the direction of the canyon. That wouldn’t do. No telling how far it would run up, and it might go rummaging around where the Jews’ House was. He would have to head that off, and instantly.

“The day’s winding up in a heat,” he said, turning. “Looks like some fun.” He laughed happily. “Mind if I dash on?”

Down came his whip-stock. The pony went out like a thunderbolt. Val lashed, lashed again and heeled in his spurs, cruelly. He took the short line for the canyon, heading for the old adit, straight over boulders and cane and juniper shrub, riding like a maniac on a runaway.

Paula was puzzled a moment, then amused. That was so very like Val to crowd more energy into that last spurt than he had since the hunt began. She rode after him, getting to the chaparral as the riders came up with the dogs howling as if they smelled death in the air, but the riders were first.

Val, his pony foaming, stood posted behind a covert. That wasn't etiquette, either. But he was alert, laughing, eager to be in at the kill. Then the quarry slipped out, right past him, and sped uphill.

"A coyote!" shouted Paula.

"A coyote it is!" roared Etherbridge, pounding his knee in mirth.

It was a whelp, and Paula was nearest to it. A very young whelp, neat and bright-eyed, sitting with pricked-up ears, laughing at her. Just like somebody's puppy. Her heart warmed to it.

"Call off your dogs!" yelled Val, flourishing his whip. "Every one of them."

He wheeled, and helped drive back the hounds. Blazer, the freelance, skulked, then bolted into the thicket, and there was a scream as Paula sprang at her.

"Off there, lunkhead! Drop it! Let go quick!"

Her quirt whistled as she lashed the thicket, and Blazer slunk back, still getting reproaches hot from his mistress. The coyote limped on to the next thicket, a clump of toyon on a ledge above the road. Etherbridge rocked in his saddle, helpless from mirth.

"Fox into coyote!" roared the jovial Fenner. "That's perfect, Ethy! You'll have to tell the San Mateo chaps this. But you never had a better run through Crystal Springs than the Alamos hounds gave you, I'll bet!"

The chase, indeed, had been headlong, rough and jocund, and its end riotously in keeping. The hunters were riders and turfmen first, and the slaying of no wretched fox could have ended the pursuit with more pleasure. They clanked back gay-heartedly to the Casa for refreshment, the air was inspiriting and sharp, with promise of a frosty night, and great logs were crackling on the hearth at the Casa.

“It turned out not bad at all,” said Val, as he rode behind with Paula. “And there really was a fox, even if only you and I saw it.”

“A lively run,” she observed, “and the dogs did keep together. Ethy on one side, the hostler on the other, and Rios banging from the hill back of us.”

“Ethy’s quite taken with Alamos. He’s keen on starting a real pack here. The stable and yard are large enough; we can breed foxes in that chaparral. We think we can work up a grand hunt. Where else could it be done? Crystal Springs is all fences, the Peninsula is hemmed in and built over. And this is still wild and open country, and it can be wilder.

“They hunted grizzlies and stags here in Grandfather’s day. Those old fellows had the real sport. At hunting—and busting those millions out of the Five Apostles. They were kings on the loose! We’ll never have such a time!” He grinned ruefully. “As for us who come after, we can only pick up a few crumbs!”

“I don’t know that they were any the happier,” she said, determinedly. “And I’ll take Alamos as it is. I don’t want an awful lot more of hunting, either. Now, boy, I’m glad you gave that pup an extra chance! If you hadn’t scooted up and beat back that pack, the poor little beggar’d have been roughed or killed.”

She frowned. “I’ll be thinking of that little puppy-dog tonight,” she said. “And it’s going to be trying. It was limping, and I’m sure its leg was broken. I’m squeamish about small, young things getting hurt.”

“The coyote,” said Val, “is a low order of vermin. And he ranks lower than that with neighbors who’ve lost their hens to him. But he’ll pull through! And for once I’m glad. Little Fox-face was the comedian that ended the show with a laugh. It was the funniest jest that ever was in Alamos!”

He was again in his happy, infectious and boyish humor. He liked his company, and he liked being the host at Alamos, and the old mansion had never since it was so open and hospitable in Roger’s day housed so convivial a crowd. They had all liked Paula, and Paula, he was sure, enjoyed playing the hostess. It was she who had dispelled the sombreness of it with her generous spirit, the buoyancy of her youth, her easy and frank comradeship with everyone, overlooking none. Perrin was rather a stick, a little pompous; and so was Betts, with his stiff, business-like air; but she artfully played up to them, talked horses with them, and whisky brands, and they were conquered. They sat up and begged, and ate out of her hand. And what pleased him was they both agreed to stay on a couple of days with their wives. He had hoped they would. They were both in the mercury pool; and Betts, who had large

capital, and would take a shot at anything, had quite liked the idea of backing some development work in the Five Apostles. He knew little of ore, but he knew the mine, and he had known Roger for ages.

It all showed Paula's tact. Not once had she suggested bringing in Tai-Ling. She was as aware as himself of her mother's likes and antipathies—and seemed to feel that his mother was still the unseen and dominant figure in the old house. And it was her casual, though well thought-out suggestion that Father Vargas and Crossett, both of them in favor with his mother, be in for dinner and the whole evening.

At the Casa he held Paula's bridle. "I'll take the ponies round to the stable. You go right in and try the punch."



The dinner was as nearly perfect an affair as the morning repast. There were red-berry wreaths and candles, and the log was a driftwood trunk, impregnated with sea-salt, and it cast up colored flames and tendrils of smoke. The buffet had been turned into a bar; a bartender had been brought in from Angel's, and at nine, with the table removed, an accordeon player and a guitarist came in. The last carpet in the salon was up, and the dancing began.

Paula, in her riding-boots and breeches, danced with Val first, then with Etherbridge, Fenner, Perrin and all the unattached males of the party. An hour of that, and the zeal for dancing slackened off, and Etherbridge played the piano stoutly. Father Vargas, the blessed, helped her effect little coalitions among the quieter guests. Crossett, with his family solicitor air, became more genial under the influence of punch, and talked county politics. Etherbridge turned to song. He sang at the piano, indefatigably, one song after another—"Samuel Hall," "Rolling Down to Rio," and "Mandalay"—in a spectacular tenor voice, with mouth as round as his horn-rimmed glasses. Paula kept filled the glass of brandy-smash at his elbow. He sang as if he were wound up, like a phonograph, and after finding an album, buckled down to more old favorites.

"Good old Ethy's" voice held up marvellously, but the women had heard it countless times, and they talked. Paula got out card tables, set out four parties of bridge, and when these were under way—she knew they would last until three in the morning—she slipped out to Aunt Ysabel's small room overlooking the garden. Kathy was there, knitting, and Paula slumped into a chair.

“Not getting yourself all worked up, are you?” asked Kathy, over her needles.

“Am I? Have I been acting like a silly?”

“Well, you’re looking tuckered out, sort of. You dropped your fork at the table. And it’s a good thing there’s a bartender in. I really thought you were going to drop Mr. Etherbridge’s glass, too.”

“I was rather shaky,” Paula owned. “I’ve been up since five, and I’m used only to quiet country life, abed at nine, and up at ten. But don’t mind about me.”

“You’re looking faint. You put your coat on and go for a turn outside,” said Kathy. “I’ll be looking after things here.”

Paula left. The summer-house was not remote enough, and the pool reflected into it as from the mirror the lights of the salon windows. She walked down the garden path and into the long stable, which was dimly lighted. A row of heads hung over the top bar, and the pinto poked its muzzle at her face. It whinnied, and she clapped its neck.

“So you knew me, did you, Pinto? You want to come out? We’ll go up the road a way.”

A run as far as the crossroads might freshen her, she thought as she mounted and rode out to the sycamores in front. The salon was overcrowded and hot; she was wearied, and after two days of parties, her nerves were as frayed as the strings of an old mop. Her impulse was to ride back to the ranch, but there she would have to spend a whole hour at least telling Tai-Ling all about the hunt. She responded like a nerve to Tai-Ling’s moods, and they had been cloudy ever since they both returned from San Francisco. A run up the canyon, then. There was a cool outpouring of air down it at night, and the scent of firs. And, though it was foolish of her, she was still thinking of that coyote whelp with its broken leg. Perhaps she could find it in this moonlight.



No party at which Val was host ever rose to its peak before midnight, but this one, though young, was audible a furlong down the road, and the windows of the Casa were not open. Esmey drove up to the mimosa hedge, and remained in the seat of his station-wagon. He had no wish to enter; he would wait here until a lull came in the tumult, and then have someone from

the kitchen go in and speak to Paula. He had promised her he would call between eleven and twelve; she had the pony to ride, but after the hunt, she might have had enough of riding.

He lighted his pipe. That was good singing in the parlor now, he thought approvingly, and flung out the match. Etherbridge, wasn't it? That big fellow had lungs, and a way of drawing out a note with such beauty that it shocked one into awareness that there was pure loveliness in the world. He was headily singing:

D'ye ken that bitch whose tongue is death?
D'ye ken her sons of peerless faith?
D'ye ken that a fox with his last breath
 Cursed them all as he died in the morning?

Then here's to John Peel with my heart and soul,
Come fill to him another strong bowl,
And we'll follow John Peel through fair and foul
 While we're waked by his horn in the morning!

The song rang out clearly in a voice finer than any at the Lodge, even Faro's, and Esmey could have given it a cheer. The mob charged at the chorus, and after a moment someone struck for a key at the piano. It was not Paula's touch. "Smiles" followed on an accordeon, and the first bar flung Esmey into San Francisco and the Palace ballroom on a misty night, with a Governor in cowboy boots and a spray of mignonette in his lapel dancing with the debutantes and dowagers of the town. Small tables dragged, there was a shuffling of feet, and mourning or no mourning the hunting guests were continuing a revel that might last until dawn.

Surely, Paula must long have wearied of this. He got out and went round to the stable fence. He found a pine cone, and sent it rocketing at the kitchen door. That had been his old signal to announce he was home from school with his friends, and in high expectation of cake and milk. The crash of that cone, lodged with skill and weight among the buckets, never failed to send Ah Moy leaping sky-high out of his slippers.

The door opened, and Kathy stared into the moonlight.

"It's Esmey," he said. "I didn't know it would be you, Kathy. Would you let Paula know I'm here?"

"She hasn't come back. It's been an hour gone since she went out to get some air. Val, too, had been enquiring for her. I thought she was in the

summer-house, but I looked everywhere, and found she had gone somewhere on her pony.”

“Well, then,” he shrugged, “she must have gone home. I’m going straight there myself.” He looked into the kitchen. “Where’s the Chinaman? Abed?”

She was slow in replying. “No. Val sent him to Monterey for the evening—a night off. Verity Sim was here, too, but she left after dinner was put on.” Kathy closed the door and went with him as far as the gate. “Father Vargas has gone.”

“I can understand,” Esmey smiled, listening to the din in the salon.

“There was a call from the fish wardens,” she said quietly. “At eight. Val answered. I thought you should know, because Benjy was in trouble again.”

“That’s all straightened out now. They finally got me at Angel’s, about ten o’clock, and I had to do a lot of phoning. That’s how I got here late. Good-night, Kathy.”

It was not a very well-timed party, he thought as he drove on. But Val had been discreet enough to put Kathy, a trustworthy person, in charge, and to get Ah Moy, his mother’s servant, and Verity Sim, the loosest tongue in Alamos, out of the way for the night. And as for Val declining flatly to be responsible for Benjy, that was not surprising at all. He had hung up abruptly on the wardens. They had, an hour later, managed—no doubt after much pleading from the jailed Benjy—to get in touch with Esmey who had stopped in at the tavern. And Esmey had rushed down fast. They had found that harpoon aboard the *Apostle*; but there was no *corpus delicti*, no slain swordfish, merely a legally taken string of bass. Val, annoyed that he should have been troubled when he was busy with his guests, had disclaimed ownership of the harpoon.

“I claim ownership of it,” Esmey told the wardens. “And the damned boat, too! Make me out to be an illegal fisher, if you like. But this man you’ve got to let go at once!”

That released Benjy. It was nothing that Val couldn’t have done just as easily, but he hadn’t. Esmey shrugged. That was the difference between his brother and himself, but nothing that Val did ever surprised him.

The veranda light was on, a good sign, and Esmey entered the house. Tai-Ling was sitting alone at the table, watching the door, and her eyes seemed to interrogate him.

“Paula’s come home?” he asked.

“No. I thought you were with her, or that you had gone to bring her from the Casa.”

“She left an hour ago, Kathy said.”

The place was chilly, and it seemed even colder with Tai-Ling sitting there with her hands under her fur cloak. He put a match to a heap of vine roots in the fireplace, and stood watching the blaze. For a while she warmed herself at it, then looked at the clock. It was nearly one.

“That is late for me,” she said.

Then she withdrew, and went upstairs, her hand on the balustrade. She would rather have stayed by the fire, but Esmey was uneasy tonight, and once or twice he had seemed on the point of questioning her. There was much afoot that would make him more uneasy, but what it might be, he would, and that before very long, learn for himself. What she knew, she preferred to keep hidden. She had never been so weary; the long strain and the waiting had paralyzed the ardors of her spirit. There was to be no solitary walk for her tonight, when everybody else was asleep.

Esmey heard her door close. Perhaps Paula had returned to the Casa, and he was sure it would be a late party. The kitchen was now warm, and putting ledgers and pen on the table he settled down to the farm accounts.

The sky clouding again, the path was uncertain, and the pony trod warily amid the profusion of great pine-cones blown down by the night wind. Nowhere could she see a familiar mark. That toyon bush, umbrella-shaped in a patch of ferns, was gone, utterly. So, too, was the clump of laurel. The bush, the ferns, the whelp—they were all gone. She felt herself bewitched, as if she were a maid in a ghost story of foxes and wolves. She laughed half in vexation. It had been foolish of her to go hunting in the moonlight for an astral whelp—and without Blazer. This was far enough to go, and it would be better to return to the Casa before she was missed.

The moon was clear once more. She looked down at the road, winding among the trees below, and it appeared strange, almost white, as if it had been newly scraped. And where was that decrepit little bridge, that stopgap of logs? As she looked down at that curve in the road, a memory of a childish grief came over her. Cloke had forged her a hoop—a tall iron hoop, filed as bright as silver. She had trundled it back and forth on this road, and getting suddenly tired, she hung it in a bush below the road, her intention being to come back for it in the morning. In the morning she returned, but she could not find the hoop. The bushes were many and thick, a dense wall of leaves; and she was small and bewildered. And now, she mused, she had lost a toyon bush and a whelp.

She touched up the pinto. There was enough light now to go ahead by, and find a path to the road, a safer path than the one she had left behind. When she was still in the woods, a sense of old familiarity awoke in her. She came into a clearing, and there was the ring of large, blighted firs. Beyond was the pool, a patch of silver. Her eyes, as she looked upon the lower hillock upon which was the long bulk of the Jews' House, smarted. Smoke, was it? She rode on, to where path and road met below the rise, and she saw above the chimney a rim of sparks, then a glow from a heavy fire, crowning the stack as with a nimbus. Hearing the scrape of a shovel, she tied the pinto to a branch and walked round to the back of the smelter, which was in deep shadow. Where the large iron door was, she dimly made out a wall of cordwood, and she fancied that the still, faintly outlined figure near it was a man in sombrero. Her conjecture was that prospectors from those small canyons between here and Coyote had somehow made this furnace

practicable, and were smelting off batches of ore. They would probably warn her off, for a gulp of air in the wrong quarter would be unhealthful.

“Someone there?” she called out in Spanish. “*Ola, hombre!*”

Sombrero retreated into the denser blackness, and she heard the gravel crunch under his boots. Her call must have given him a fright, and she laughed to herself. Those prospectors might have felt that the less anyone knew of their work, the better for everyone. She was untying the pinto when she heard a car rattle up, and a large, familiar shape moved before the headlights.

“Is that you, Capitan?”

Faro it was, and he turned, the flash-lamp in his hand; she could see nothing of his features but his beard and his dourly set mouth. There was no reply. She knew she was being intently and distrustfully watched. He turned his lamp upon her.

“It’s I, Capitan,” she said, coming towards him. “I’ve been looking for a coyote whelp. Blazer got it by the leg in the hunt, and broke it, I think. I had that wretched pup on my mind all night, so I came out this way when I left the Casa for a bit of air.”

He seemed to be looking for Blazer; he swept the beam of light over the ground.

“You’ve been here the last few nights with that dog?” he asked skeptically. “And looking for the same whelp?”

“With Blazer?”

“Aye, Blazer,” he snapped.

Then it must have been Tai-Ling, who had come out here on her restless night-wanderings. It could have been nobody else, if it were a woman, and accompanied by Blazer. From the ranch to the end of the canyon and back was an arduous walk; but it could very well be her foster-mother, who was restless these days, a bundle of nerves, a late riser, and Blazer was forever tagging at her heels. But why had Tai-Ling said nothing of her dark journeyings?

“Tai-Ling, was it?” asked Paula. “You saw her?”

Faro bent his thatched eyebrows upon Paula, and hesitated. She could have burst out laughing. He appeared so reluctant to betray knowledge of anything so odd as the wanderings in this canyon of an elderly Chinese lady who should properly have been in bed. The long quietness was unbroken save

for the earnest chanting of frogs at the pool. The man in the darkness behind the furnace resumed his scraping with the shovel, first cautiously, then with force, as if he were trimming a charge of ore.

“One of the men working here saw her, and the dog. It was a foxhound, he said, and I knew it could only be Cloke’s; so I thought it was you.”

She listened to the scraping. “Why is this furnace being worked? Where is the ore coming from? Our mine?”

After a moment, “Aye,” he said.

“But why should it be smelted here? We have rotary furnaces on top that are unused. Why isn’t all the ore being roasted there instead of in here?”

Some frightful old story Esmey had told her flashed through her mind, and it troubled her. Then a greater fear left her trembling. Ore was being treated secretly, and for whose benefit? Val’s? He had that enterprise of the stable to keep up; he had been left no money by Roger; he had debts to pay—the greatest of all the Tai-Ling debt payable in metal, and he had been laggard in settling it. Was the mine pinching out, and the last thread of ore being reduced here away from the open?

Faro, standing before her with his pathetic dignity, was dumb, and looked at her as if in the extremity of pain. What could he say? What could he do but temporize—hold off the revelation of the truth until, somehow, things righted themselves? He had been succeeding until now. He was in a humiliating predicament. He wished only that he were not standing here before this woman. He opened his mouth, but he could not speak.

A small truck was rumbling up the canyon; it turned behind the furnace, and she heard its cargo tip onto the rock-faced ore patio. She waited until it was gone, tapping her riding-boot with her quirt.

“This is not a creditable business, Capitan! I do not like this night working!”

The thought that Val was concerned in it was so ungenerous, so hateful, that she despised herself for having harbored it a single instant. Her mind leaped to the hope that the Capitan was working the furnace for himself. The truck was gone down the moonlit road, cleared, scraped and visible to the far curve almost near the little bridge. It was not a secret road; anyone in the village could have heard of it. Many little episodes, suspicions and scraps of talk; the shadows on the faces of the Capitan and the mute Tai-Ling, who had been apprehensive ever since the visit of that stranger to her hotel-room in the city—these now stung her like a cloud of gnats.

She saw it all now! She saw it with the clear, terrible certainty that comes sharpest to a woman in love. Val had overplayed himself with his horses, and on the metals exchange. He was in a dilemma. Either he had to face ruin, or deflect the gains of the mine into his own pocket—to make one last throw at dice. It was always Caesar or nothing with Val.

Perhaps the Five Apostles was dead! Roger had known it was dead. Everyone had known it was dead, except herself! She had been living in a cloud-cuckoo-land, trustful, foolishly blind!

“Where is this ore coming from?” she stormed, turning upon Faro. “You tell me that!”

“From the old level—the *hijillo*.” He stared at her, appalled by the force of her distress. “By the portal, near the Rico Duro.”

“Why are you working at night?” She tried to steady her hands by pulling at her gauntlets, and as she looked at him she blinked hard and mistily. “Answer me! Why are you getting out metal here without my knowing it—and without Tai-Ling or anyone else at the mine knowing it? You are working under Val’s orders?”

“I can’t say anything. I am only the foreman at the Five Apostles. I can but do what I am told.” He gazed at her pathetically. “If you can trust me _____”

“I shall trust no one!” she exclaimed. “You let none of that metal leave this canyon! Not a flask of it must leave Alamos from now on—until I tell you it may!”

Humiliation swept over her in a hot, smarting flood, then anger, and she leaped into her saddle. The pinto settled into a gallop, clunking over the metalled road, its shoes sparking. A mad woman in the saddle—a mad woman in tears—was lashing with her quirt, head down. The lights of the Casa blinked ahead. A violent slash—a yank at the bridle—and the intention of the rider was communicated: a wild desire for escape, for safety, for haven. The pinto tore left at the fork, and with tail flying, drummed on to the Mendoza place.

At the crest of the hill where the road fell to the ranch was a blue-gum, a great solitary tree with its branches sheared off by lightning, so that it appeared taller than it was. On this elevated point it stood like a sentinel, overlooking the sea, the mine, the camp and the ranch. Paula drew up under it. The moon, already on its falling curve, hung over the winery like a disc of parchment. It was perhaps two o’clock, or even three. The bead of light above the mine hoist had long ago gone out. There was a wind moving, and she

heard the sough of it in the heavy top of the tree and in the looped telephone wires it was like the voice of the ocean. Down the road she caught the sound of a car advancing, taking the hill at speed. She turned, and thought it might be Esmey's station-wagon. No, it was a low car, singing with power, its lamp-beams like rods, and they blinded her so that she had to avert her face. The next instant it stopped beside her, and Val gave a gleeful shout.

"I could see your silhouette! Diana on horseback! I phoned the house, and Esmey thought you might be riding about the village. Won't you come right back, Paula! Everybody's waiting for you!"

"I'm not going back."

"Oh, don't say that!" he pleaded. "It isn't so dreadfully late. You've been missed. And Kathy's all upset."

"I am not ever returning to the Casa!"

"Great Scott, girl!" Aghast, Val scrambled up the bank. "Whatever's put you in such a tantrum? The party couldn't have been such a bore. And not all the chaps are a rummy lot. Do, do please be reasonable, and come back!"

She turned away, declining to answer.

"But what's happened, Yin-Chiu?" he was asking, wistfully. "You just bounced out and left me flat. We've all been on edge. We hunted everywhere, and phoned. You might have fallen down the shaft, or got lost."

"I did get lost," she said distinctly. "I got lost hunting for that whelp, and found myself up the canyon and at the Jews' House. Faro was anything but pleased. You can well understand!"

"It was hard for him to explain why the Five Apostles, with all its rotary furnaces, should send its ore to be treated by night a mile up the gully. But I know why! The mine is exhausted. That was something you never told me. And the metal from the *hijillo* you wanted to keep for yourself!"

Val's smile was disconcerting. "You've been listening to more nonsense, I can see," he answered quietly. "You must not believe all those vaporings of Tai-Ling. I could have told you all about the *hijillo* and the Jews' House if I thought it best for you to know, and——"

"I am not an infant," she broke in coldly. "I am half owner of the Five Apostles—so why should I be gulled? I don't want to know the best. I want to know the worst—and I've been finding that out for myself. You have let me know nothing. You have not yet told us the state of the Five Apostles. You did tell me of your horses and stable—after I asked you—but that's your

affair, not mine. The Five Apostles is my affair as much as it is yours—even more!”

He looked up at her, humorously bewildered. “You *are* in a tantrum, Yin-Chiu! And you surprise me! You’ve been believing too many wrong things. Dreadfully wrong! I am working for your interest. That *hijillo* is ours in common. I wanted it worked out quietly. Things have been a bit desperate. I’ll not admit I’ve made a hash of things. We’ve inherited it! And the money—the full market price—for those flasks up the canyon will pay off everything we owe on the stable, and give us plenty over. On the very first race we’ll get back twice what it cost.”

“I didn’t come here from China to see a horse race,” she said. “Nor did Tai-Ling. We’ve got to be aboveboard with her, and give Tai-Ling her metal at once!”

“Aboveboard?” he cried out passionately. “Was that aboveboard for the Tai-Lings to hold a pistol at our heads and force us to accept help at their own terms? That was a damnable contract! The Tai-Lings got their pound of flesh ten times over!”

“That is untrue,” she said in a low, vibrant voice. “The Casa has not fulfilled the contract. And it was made in the Casa’s favor. I have my father’s word on that. Twice the Canton house has put the Five Apostles on its feet and kept it going.”

Val’s smile had the chilly glint of quartz in moonlight.

“After putting a millstone around its neck! The Tai-Lings were the enemy of the Casa. They are now our enemy. The Five Apostles is ours to guard, our joint responsibility, and——”

“And yet you fling it on the turf in payment of stable debts!” she laughed, harshly.

His voice was steady now. “I think you are unfair,” it went on. “You are clever, as all the Copes were clever, even if you do have stubbornness. You and I have gone a long way together, and we are not going to fall out now over that.” He gestured at the mine.

She drew back, the blood surging to her face. It was not the mine that was the stumbling-block between them. It was his indirectness, his lack of candor, his deceptions, the wasting of his talent. Like his mother he had the knack of goading her to exasperation. But this time she was not going to be exasperated. She, too, had a parental trait, and that was her father’s poise and

ironic humor. The humor she found difficult to muster up at this moment, but she did recover her poise, and she looked at him with a remote, cold wonder.

“It’s property, that mine. There’s still value to come out of it,” he said. “Not for some time will we come to the end of that *hijillo*, though we are running out of values in the upper levels. We’ve already taken some flasks out of that vein. What it will yield in all, I can’t guess. And if your Cantonese friends were a shade less rapacious——”

“You’ll not find them unreasonable,” she observed.

“They’ll get their share. And now there’s the Rico Duro. I’m going into that in the morning. Mendoza and Grandfather were in such a damned hurry to get going at the easy stuff that they passed up something there, I believe. I’ll find out. If it’s just paying rock, then we’ll clear out that drift and get at it. If it’s picture stuff, then old Betts will back us in fast excavating. Not on shares, either; just expense money at three percent.”

She still could not believe him. She had lost all capacity for trust in him. If she had not by accident uncovered that secret busyness up the canyon all that metal smelted there would have been smuggled out without trace. It was all a hidden world, the Five Apostles, with labyrinths that she could never trace, and mazes she could never unravel, and she would have to accept it on faith. She kept silent, and her silence intensified his discomfort.

“I wish you would believe in me, Yin-Chiu!”

“I had always believed in you.”

“We seem now to be at cross-purposes, and it is so foolish!”

She tried to wrench away her hand, but his grip was firm, the smile flicking about his mouth still suave, but his eyes were pleading.

“We can’t let it end now!” he protested. “We mustn’t part like this, you and I!”

He looked up at her with entreaty as she stood very still above him on the bank, like a statue, and he pressed her hand to his mouth. It fell, indifferently, by her side. Knowing her as well as he did, he knew this was the end, but he refused to acquiesce before her.

“As for our engagement,” she said firmly, “that is all over. Absolutely. It no longer exists.”

He backed his car, and turned, with a great spinning of wheels in the ditch, for he had managed awkwardly. This was not the first time she had said

that, but they had never quarrelled so before, nor had she spoken with such finality.

“Good-night, Yin-Chiu!”

The car raced up the incline at top speed, whipped like a comet's tail behind the trees, and out of view. She could hear it roaring down towards the Casa. For a long while she sat motionless, dry-eyed in a world of unreality in which all life had come to a halt for her. Nothing could happen to her after this, nothing.

The light was fading. The moon was gone, all but a chip of it above the ridge that cast a track over the slope where the vines held up their black arms. Since the pony was restless, she trod down wires in the fence, got into the field, and rode on to the far end of the ranch. Some water-birds were plowing overhead with cries strained in the wind from the sea. It was uneven riding over the pasture, but she did not notice the roughness; she felt nothing, her senses were exhausted. She rode through the gate to the dark house, dismounted, hung saddle and bridle on the corral fence, and went noiselessly by the front door up to her room. She sat by the window, numbed, feeling neither sorrow nor hate, as if her soul had left her; and she hoped it would not return. Perhaps the true balance of things had been struck, and it would endure. Her detachment as she sat there motionless for three hours was so complete that if a car had appeared at the gate, and a familiar voice had again called to her, she would not have turned her head.

Her senses awoke slowly. In the sky over the Mendoza strip and the unseen Five Apostles was a powdering of stars. In the marrow of silence out by the toyons she heard the cropping of the pony. The pre-dawn wind was rising; the twigs frayed over the roof-tiles, to spring back and fray again with reluctant stir of the branches.

Her mind groped back through the tangled events of the day. Had that really been a coyote whelp in the thicket? Perhaps it had been a fox put there to lure her on through the moonlight to a revelation in which she should find herself. It was a ghost, then; and all that had happened after was a nightmare. Her nurse at Thousand Willows had told her of fox-ghosts, and shown her the mossy, stone lantern in the garden where lights were put to ward them off. Some were evil, and terrible harm befell those luckless enough to follow those ghosts into the mountains. That lantern had not glowed since Son Wu was a child; and she and Little Chan used it as a cage for crickets and grasshoppers, and put their ears against the panes to hear the music inside. The memory of it made her homesick for Thousand Willows.

So much of what life had meant to her was gone. It had ended that night. She rehearsed again that quarrel by the fence, with Val in the right, and herself stubbornly wrong. Who had gained by her coming to Alamos? Not Tai-Ling, not Esme, and not Aunt Ysabel. She had come at an unfortunate time for everyone and herself.

A red line pulsed on the horizon, and she became aware of it as if it were a note on a flute. The hill was etched against the spreading glow. On a branch near the sill her squirrel was sitting up, paws to its mouth.



Betts was the sole reveller up when Val, shaking with fury and breathless—he had hurtled his car through the night with the velocity of a comet’s tail—got back into the salon. He was sprawled in his armchair, gazing at the ballet of flames on what was left of the log, and he was slow looking up. He was not lush, either, was old Betts. He had insides of iron, and since he liked stillness more than conviviality, he was enjoying the calm and his solitary Scotch.

“Sorry, old chap, I was so long,” said Val. “I had to be sure Miss Cope was all right. And she was. Everybody else turned in?”

“What’s left of them,” mused Betts. “They had a time! I sat up talking with Crossett, then *he* went. They’re not used to heavy nights, I fancy!” He chuckled. The night had left no trace on him. “But I thought I’d wait until you came in.”

He lolled back with his cigar, and watched Val charge a glass with brandy-and-soda. That was a double brandy, and the glass large. The lad was unsteady, too; pale as ash, with hand shaking. He was not the two-handed drinker his father was, but that was no reason for him to be so jumpy, so wound up.

“I’ve decided to pull out with Crossett in the morning, Val. He’s leaving early, and I didn’t bring my own car down.”

“Well, then, if you’re not staying over, then I shan’t! I’m pretty well cleaned up here for the time. And I’ll take you up.”

That had been Val’s decision on the way down after that hideous row with Paula. It had come near being the end of everything—and it would do her good to believe it actually was the end. The thing to do was to ignore her for a whole week—or two weeks—and that would bring her back to her senses.

And on that ride up with Betts they could talk business. Better have a look at that damned drift before going, and get some data. Betts, for all his commercial instinct, couldn't open his mouth about any deal until he was first primed with figures.

“What time d’you want to be up there, Bettsy?”

“Oh, ten, eleven. I’ll leave as soon as I waken.” He rubbed his chin. “I could do with a shave, though.”

“I’ll be waiting for you.”

Betts flung his cigar-end into the fire, and Val mixed up two night-caps. They clinked, drank, and Betts went upstairs.

Val drove out to the mine, and in the office changed into his rough clothes. He went round by the portal into the old tunnel, and came to the opening of the Rico Duro, which was like a filled-up archway, with a burrow in it that seemed no larger than a kennel for a Newfoundland dog. The Mexicans had gone home; no living creature was about, except the horses champing in their stalls beyond the gallery. He brought over and lighted an oil-flare. Though the burrow would run through low caverns and at the very end was room to stand upright in, and study the rock carefully, it would be a tight squeeze in spots. He could no more afford encumbrances than a gymnast, and he flung down his hat and jacket. He bound with jerking hands a kerchief about his head, tying the knots at the neck, pirate-wise.

Then he crawled in. The mud was rather a help; he could slither through it, like an eel. Ten yards ahead was a fair-sized hollow, and he wriggled onward with that in mind, pushing before him his slender, wand-like torch. He had made this expedition six or seven times before, but he had the uncomfortable feeling that he was off his accustomed trail. That was it—he had shifted sideways too far. He squirmed back, and found himself again in that familiar, miniature ravine. If he were only a few pounds lighter, or more agile! He hollowed out a space for his shoulders, scooping out handfuls of mud, and plastering them against the walls of this narrow ravine; then he turned over, face up. Useless to keep poking the lamp onward; he let it drag by the strap attached to his wrist. That made a heartening glow behind him. Inch by inch he squirmed on, his sharp boot-heels giving him purchase in the mud. He came to a collapsed baulk that had held up the roof, and it was on a slant over him. A cross-beam of rotten timber was all but grazing his forehead. The channel seemed narrower. If he could wrench himself out of this impasse, he would be in the clear, for the ravine would have to widen in

another foot. The lamp was gone; a nail had torn off the strap. Nothing for it now but to squeeze back again, but he was caught.

He was trapped! The blasting in the *hijillo* had settled rubbish and timber in this drift. He was squeezed as if inside a bottle, and terror settled upon him, freezing his blood: a terror as illimitable as the vast weight of the mountain that pressed on his forehead. He gasped frantically for air. There was no air at all, and he realized he would have to tear open his shirt-collar to keep alive. He relaxed his muscles, and anchoring his heels in the gravel beneath the mud, inched himself a hand's breadth outward. Beyond that he could go no further, for a bent spike had hooked him through his belt and shirt. With maniacal effort he tore his arm loose, and fought for breathing space above his head. The timber was rotten; the dry rot fell in handfuls, smothering him; then came the slow, inexorable sifting down of rock in powder, and the darkness beyond darkness.



A sound rang through the house, and flung Paula back in a stupor of wakefulness. It was the telephone bell. It rang again, pouring out its panic alarm, and she heard a stir in the corridor below. Someone was answering it.

“Mendoza Ranch, yes. Who is it?”

She had drifted back to sleep when Esmey came in, and Tai-Ling was beside him. Drowsily, she sat up. Esmey's mouth hardly moved.

“There's been an accident. In the mine. Val——”

“Killed?”

Esmey gave a nod. “There's nothing we can do. He was in the Rico Duro drift. The workmen are now bringing him out. Faro telephoned, and I'm going down there now.”

Paula flung back the clothes and got up; she was still dressed.

“I'm sorry, girl,” he said, taking her by the arm. But she was not faint; she had merely waked into another daze, and she was not conscious at all of any anguish.

“It's a pity,” she remarked. “A very great pity.”

“You had better go back to bed,” said Tai-Ling.

“No,” said Paula, and she stepped into her shoes. Then her head cleared. “I'm going out, to find the pinto. I'll ride down to Father Vargas' house. I

think he had better tell Aunt Ysabel.”

Paula, coming through the cottage, found Kathy on the back veranda, sewing. It was a brilliantly fine winter day, the sky powdered with gold, the sunshine plashing through the honeysuckle, the light flecking her hands and the mastiff asleep at her feet.

“Hullo, there!” Paula pushed open the screen door. “I’m calling on you for a change. It is a change, isn’t it?” she asked, smiling. “And I called at the post-office, but there wasn’t any mail, except some papers.”

“You didn’t have to bring anything but yourself! You set right down in that chair.” Kathy pointed to Faro’s tall, cushioned “porch reading” rocker. “And you make yourself comfortable.”

Paula slumped into it with a sigh, and put her feet on a bench among pots of marigold. She had walked from the ranch to the village, then all the way down here, because the day was perfect, and the country as bright as if it had been visited by archangels. It had been quiet everywhere, but here the quietness, except for some lost wasp and the lone refrain of the surf, was absolute. And Kathy, who had called on her every evening since the funeral, was so quiet, unstirred and serene there with her needlework.

Kathy had always been serene, and Paula, so much concerned with her own thoughts and putting together again her broken world, had not perceived that Kathy in the five days since the world broke, had been even more placid. For Joab was less sombre in mood. He had gone less to the mine, and for all the tragedy that had afflicted the Casa, his step, when he left the cottage in the morning, the smoke rising high from his pipe, was lighter than it had been in many weeks. It was as if the blow to the Casa had broken his fetters.

“There is less strain,” Kathy thought. “Valentine was hard, a very hard young man, a driver like his grandfather.”

Paula folded her hands tightly as she sat back in her chair. “You mustn’t mind me for a while, Kathy. I’ll just be talking to myself!

“You saw the papers, of course. About the inquest? I didn’t, because I couldn’t. But I heard what was in them. It was quite dreadful. And so wrong. It was a pity there happened to be a party in the Casa that night. It wasn’t a drunken nor a boisterous party, either—you know that, Kathy.

“And I didn’t like that getting about, making it a scandal.” She smiled bitterly. “I didn’t come off very well from it—even if I was the first to leave.”

“Don’t take it that way,” begged Kathy. Her smooth forehead wrinkled ever so lightly as she held up her needle and threaded it. “Why should you care if tongues clatter what isn’t so?”

“I didn’t like it. I had been hurt enough. But I know how Aunt Ysabel must have felt in reading in the papers of notorious goings-on at the Casa in a time of mourning. If it had been Angel’s, instead of her own home, it wouldn’t have been so bad.”

“It isn’t that you had anything to do with it, Yin-Chiu. You hadn’t. It was Val’s hunting-party.”

“In any case, it was notorious,” Paula smiled. “And I might as well resign myself to being half to blame. But I can live it down, I think. Even if I can’t be foolishly cheerful about it right now.”

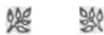
“There’s nothing for you to be blamed for,” pressed Kathy. “Nothing! And it’ll blow over.”

She gave a deep breath. Some of the women at the Auxiliary had not been charitable and really thought Paula was somehow to blame—she could have insisted, being an engaged girl, on Val putting off the hunting-party until the period of mourning was over. Kathy felt thankful that she herself had been overlooked.

“I’m glad you think so, Kathy,” said Paula, rising. “I wouldn’t have Val’s mother undeservedly hurt. It would hurt her more than it did me.” She took Kathy by the arms and looked at her with grave tenderness. Or was it envy, Kathy wondered. “You’ve never been caught up in anything dreadful, Kathy. Never, of course,” she smiled, “in the least bit of whispering. How tranquil and happy you are at Alamos!”

“It has always been happy here, for me.” Kathy walked with Paula to the gate, and kissed her. “I’ve much to be thankful for.”

And Kathy, returning to the back veranda, felt indeed thankful for Joab’s sake. They had always been happy at Alamos.



As the afternoon declined, the scents were stronger, and there was a breeze that carried the odors of balsam and fennel. The breeze, also, bore its

healing, like the tranquillity at the cottage. The mine lay under the trance of silence. The wheel above the gallows was again frozen, and a bird winged into an empty window-frame of the ore-shed. Work had ceased everywhere except in the old level, from which ore was still going to the Jews' House, and the Five Apostles was almost as dead as a mine could be.

The wheel of Destiny had jammed, and the shutdown was a catastrophe. Old Alamos miners who remembered Don Pablo when his beard was black kept to their homes, pattered in their gardens, and nightly, missing the drowsy roar of the crusher, dressed and walked about in the road, hands in pockets, pipes in teeth. It was as if the creek had ceased to flow, or the cliff had sunk into the sea.

Paula herself was oppressed by the silence. She had been aware of it even at the post-office, and as she left she knew, too, that eyes were following her as she walked down the street. Mercifully, folk did not trouble her with useless remarks of sympathy, and for that she was grateful. She preferred to carry alone the burden of the terrible remembrance of that colloquy at midnight, the disillusionment, and the tragedy. No one should ever know—no one, except Esmey, perhaps.

The funeral had been very like Roger's all over again. Tai-Ling and Kathy accompanied her, Esmey first driving them all down to San Jose and the chapel, before he sped back for his mother and Father Vargas. And then she slipped out with Tai-Ling. They stood by under a palm tree on the sidewalk to watch the cortege going outward, the Knights marching first, with the Capitan in his uniform and plume, then the band, distilling slow music on fifes, brass and drum. "Hail to the Lord's Anointed." The march went, the fifes in skirling lamentation to the heavens. In the very last car rode Ah Moy, alone, holding upright on his knees a tall gilt frame draped in white silk. It was an enlarged, colored photograph of Val. Val at the age of twelve, as she had know him when they played together in the summer-house of the Casa.

"*Adios, querido,*" she whispered to herself as the ensign of the young prince of Alamos went past. "It's Yin-Chiu. Do you remember her?"

Tai-Ling took her arm, and finding a motorcar, they rode back to the Mendoza ranch.



The light was dimming, for it was near five. Up on the ridge, there was a brisk firing of trash, the flames as red as the red on the horizon beyond the

sea of dark steel-blue. The fires were vigorous enough, though a week of rain had dampened the rubbish, and the smoke lifted densely in mushroom-shaped clouds. Esmey was there with his pitchfork. He had come back from the city where he had spent the day with his mother, talking over Val's affairs with Crossett. After climbing the slope, she walked along the ridge toward him.

The portent was for a full moon tonight. She had never concerned herself much with the weather, but here she was on earth, between sky and sea, and the changes and moon shifts affected the routine of life in the fields. It was the sea that was masterful tonight. For a moment she paused, looking down at it, hands thrust into her trench-coat belt, listening to the surge of the combers that furred in, to break in unending regiments, and retreat with a resigned monody as they creamed over the black, kelp-hung rocks. That was the sound of sea past high tide.

Esmey leaned on his pitchfork and waited for her.

"You went for a hike? We thought you'd be getting tired, so Rios took along the station-wagon to pick you up."

"I was staying with Kathy a while. I had to see her. We talked over that hunting party. There had been some talk, as you'd expect. The papers were full of it, I gather, though I didn't see them. But Kathy got out of it, unscathed."

"She should," observed Esmey. "She should—being just the temporary housekeeper! Not even a guest." He scowled. "And there wasn't any reason, either, why you should have been drawn into it in the first place. And having to be questioned, too! The verdict at the inquest gave everyone a clean bill of health. 'An accident.' There wasn't any question of it being otherwise. It was a narrow opening, but Val had squeezed through worse. And he was in his right senses that night. As sober as myself."

Paula walked back and forth, not heeding him, then turned.

"There is something you ought to know," she said distinctly. "You, and no one else. It is I who am to blame. I killed Val. We had a quarrel. Over by that gate at midnight. It was a quarrel that ended everything.

"I could never have loved him again—not deeply enough to want to marry him. It was a quarrel over the mine—among other things, a great tangle of things in which we were both snarled. I would listen to nothing he had to say. I spoke to him cruelly—in a way no one had ever spoken to him before. He left in a blind rage, and drove off furiously on two wheels—faster than the wind.

“Was he in his right senses! Could he have been? No! I am sure he was not. I killed him, I drove him into the Rico Duro to hunt for ore. I drove him to his death.”

She put both hands to her face, sat heavily on a log, and wept uncontrollably.

“Yin-Chiu—please don’t!”

Esme was frightened at the vehemence of her grief. But after the first shock, his own senses returned, and he let her sob her heart out, unrestrained, save for a touch on the hand, and she wept for long, over a love that had begun when she was a very young girl, and was now lost forever. After her grief had subsided, and she had wiped her eyes, he took her in his arms to console her, the ocean and the moon the witnesses to her comforting. And in the ranch-house was another, Tai-Ling, sitting by her window, who had been looking at the ridge since the horizon turned carmine.

She lighted her lamps, and began a letter. She would be coming home soon, she wrote her sons, and was not sure that Paula, who had been talking so much of the ranch, would be returning with her. For a long while she wrote, in her flowing script, dipping and dipping the brush into her ink-slab, her doubts forgotten in a new rejoicing, as she wrote of the many acres and the vines, and she did not hear the arrival of Rios and his car.

He came in as Esme and Paula reached the house, and spoke a message. It was from the Capitan, whom he had met on the road.

“Queer,” remarked Esme. “I don’t know why Faro didn’t come right up himself. Anyway, he’s expecting you at the Jews’ House.”

“What in the world for?” asked Paula. “And we’re having the meeting in the Casa tomorrow night. Perhaps that’s the reason.”

The two of them rode out to the canyon, silent both, Paula’s mind on nothing but the meeting, and the presence of Aunt Ysabel, whom she had not seen since the funeral. And most coldly, too, her aunt had looked upon her, Paula remembered, with a shiver. Wind from the sea was blowing saltily up the road, and cloud-wrack was obscuring half the field of stars. The Jews’ House was not to be come upon this night as a surprise. A scattering of mine flares had been set out, and they were thrumming smokily, their red tongues blown down flat on the gravel. The car turned round by the pool, where the frogs were tuning up their orchestra. Next moment, Esme pushed open the door of the office, and Faro rose from behind a deal table. Spread upon it, with a lump of rock at each corner, was a chart of the old level. In the warmth

flung out by the sheet-iron stove, vapor was trickling down the black squares of the window.

“I came over flying,” said Paula. “And brought Esmeý along.”

They sat down in office armchairs. Faro said nothing. His immense, gnarled hands lay flat on the table; he was impersonal and still; fine red lines streaked the expanse of his face, as cinnabar would streak dark granite: he seemed more like a cliff than a man. He had not expected Esmeý, Paula felt that. What was to be revealed now? What other revelation was to start again the pain of that heartbreak? His taciturn silence brought her to the edge of fear.

She tipped the kerosene lamp towards her, and lighted her cigarette. Faro resumed his pipe, and thin, slow jets of smoke, like tendrils, came from the cracked briar.

“Esmeý has been spending most of the day with Mr. Crossett,” she said, “and going over the books of the mine. We shall be needing his help now, Capitan.”

The words seemed to glance from him like a bird’s cry off a wall of rock. There is no vast and complex structure, like an empire, a cathedral, or a mine, but that men arise great and simple enough to incarnate it in its fullest meaning. The Capitan, the hulking, big figure in shabby coat, symbolized the long discipline, the grandeur and the mystery of the Five Apostles. He smoked on, silently, looking over her head, looking into space, into the past of seventy years, with the drill-sharp hardness of eyes accustomed to scrutinize rock.

Paula, waiting, could hear the souging of firs and the ringing twang of the frogs. And beneath these woodland sounds she could hear the scraping of shovels, the flurry of burning logs, and the thud of mercury dropping into the vat.

“Yes,” said Faro, finally, rising. He had transferred his allegiance to another Cope and another owner, and she was the last. “Come this way.”

They went round to the hanging door facing the road, and admitting them, he closed the door behind them. He lighted a mine-flare on the earthen floor, and pulled down a tarpaulin that hung from the cross-beams. Paula beheld a stack of round-ended iron flasks that ran the width of the store-room.

“From the last vein in the old level,” said Faro.

Esmeý stared. “You mean to say smelting had been going on all the time in this old ruin? And you got all that?”

“Two hundred odd flasks,” said Faro, his precise, deep voice filling the room. “The odd may run to thirty. And there’s more in the vat.”

“All we could find on the books Crossett got out for us was eight or ten dozen flasks—by the rotary on top.”

He whistled thoughtfully, pacing the chamber, hands in pockets. Eight or ten dozen—there hadn’t been any more than that in the report. Val must have been badly pinched for money, what with that horse deal, buying into that racetrack, and Heaven only knew what else. A supple lad, as deep as the sea when it came to hidden play in tricks. The shock of knowing all this must have floored Paula. But she took it like a thoroughbred. There she was now, talking with Faro as if she had discovered no more than a bird’s nest instead of this cache of flasks and dreadful proof of iniquity.

“And how much of the metal has gone out?” she asked.

“None has left the Jews’ House,” said Faro. “Not a particle. It is all here.” He nodded towards the stack. “I don’t say it was easy for me, to hold it back, when he thought it was being shipped—by night, up the road, to the storehouse in the city. An old cellar in Drumm Street.

“It was time I was playing for,” said Faro, wiping his forehead with his bandana. “Time for him to change his mind in, or his heart. I knew that before the metal went out, there’d be a turning, or an act of Providence. But the going-out had to be put off. I made out a wrong bill of lading. And once I shut the furnace down three nights for repairs, though it was as sound as a nut. And in the end there was no harm done, as you see. There was less against Val at the end than men held against the Capitan Mendoza.”

They made a fitting pair, the Sixth Apostle and the Redeeming Angel. The mine and Val had been in safe hands. But it had been a squeak, Esmey thought, huddled on a box in the corner, watching Faro and Paula as they talked over by the flasks. Val had hoodwinked Paula as he had hoodwinked everyone else. To be a partner with him in the running of the Five Apostles must have been like playing seven-up in the dark.

“Outside that vein, is there anything left to work?” she was asking quietly.

“None worth the powder and labor to get at.”

“Then the mine is indeed dead. It won’t open up again, and we shall just work that vein until it pinches in three or four months?”

“No more than that, perhaps sooner,” Faro said.

Paula was leaning against the stack, arms folded, and their talk was of the probable yield. Another two hundred flasks, the Capitan descried, and then dead rock. Their talk was in low voices, and the Capitan shook his head. His forthrightness was released again, and he was honest to the marrow. The stubborn nature of rock seemed to have got into the bones of all who had to do with the Five Apostles, thought Esme, groping for his pipe.

His mother had been stubborn at Crossett's office when the matter of that contract came up again. Val had left no will, just a mare's nest of obligations.

"We are bound by it," the lawyer told her. "Madame Tai-Ling had a copy of it sent to me from Canton. It is signed with names that are still remembered in the San Jose courthouse. And her firm agrees to pay for the metal the very day it is shipped. That should assure the mine enough capital to keep work going on the vein."

His mother shook in a white blaze of anger. "The Alamos mine seeks neither charity nor favor, and it will accept none. It has metal, and it will dispose of that metal as it sees fit!"

"Break that contract!" she ordered. "And sell those flasks to the pool, regardless! If funds are wanted to continue work, I and Val's estate will take care of them."

"There are certain rather pressing debts."

"What debts?"

Crossett hesitated. Perhaps, not being sure how much she might have known of her son's involvements, he had waded in too far. He leaned back, with pince-nez to his cheek. They had been spectacular enough, Heaven would witness! The girl, who was being overlooked here, knew of them, of course.

"What is the nature of those debts?" she asked again, sharply. "Gambling debts? Horses?"

That was the aristocrat speaking. The Casa people ever had a disregard of what the world thought of them, but none of them was more contemptuous of the world than Val's mother.

"You have come close to it, Mrs. Cope. He gave notes to back a racing enterprise. And he left a stable, not very large, but an expensive one. There is, I might say, no percentage in horses—unless they are running, and running to win. And a stable of horses that are not just now racing, and some of them haven't got their legs, is costly to keep up."

Esmey was shocked to his innermost depths. His mother sat as still as the Sphinx, listening. She had a deep-rooted objection to horses, to all gambling, and that also extended to all sportsmen and gamblers. But she condoned everything in Val.

“Have them sold off at once,” she said quietly. “Will you see to that?”

Crossett bowed. “I will. But it may take a little time to sell to our advantage,” he said. “A string of horses is not to be sold offhand. Even in the best of markets, I believe,” he coughed, “there may have to be a sacrifice.”

“I shall assume it,” she said firmly. “Just as I assume all my son’s obligations.”

It had all been very painful, and very bleak. Esmey lighted his pipe, and watching again the Capitan and Paula, remembered the long ride home, he driving the car, his mother at the back, sitting up rigid, not uttering a word, pondering her own thoughts behind her veil and closed eyes, until they reached the Casa.

Tomorrow night, no doubt, there would be another such tussle, whether he liked it or not. There was a saying in the village that two Copes in the Casa were one too many; and though he had laughed at that, he had found it more than partly true. Paula herself was as good as three or four, and if a tug of wills should start up over those accursed flasks, the girl would have the conquering pull.

“Three hundred in all, by the end of the month,” said Faro, giving the stack a kick by way of benediction. “That may be a start, if not the end. And they won’t be going into the pool, either?”

“Not those flasks. They’ll be traveling further than that, Capitan.”

He gave an abrupt nod, and carried the flare outside, where it lighted them into the car.

“We’ll have to keep it away from her,” said Paula with a half hysterical laugh as they tore down the canyon. “Not about the flasks, for she must be the first to know about them—but how they got there. I don’t want her to suspect for a minute that Val had other plans for them. She mustn’t, Esmey!”

“She won’t.”

“How could he have taken that risk?” she asked. “It couldn’t have been kept a secret. Nothing in Alamos could be kept a secret!”

“The lad either must have been mad or else a fool!” thought Esmey. “Either one in addition to being a knave. He would have wrecked himself

more completely with horses, and quite destroyed the Tai-Lings.” Then, to Paula: “Oh, that flask business will be kept hushed and forgotten. Dynamite and a legion of Johnny Knockers wouldn’t get a word out of Faro. It almost killed him to open his mouth when I came in.

“I’ll tell Mother something to make it perfectly innocent. I shan’t mind being at the Casa. We got along rather well today. If you like you stay home with a headache, and I’ll be your advocate.”

“My dear boy, I wouldn’t think of not going! I’m half owner, and I’m one of the Casa race, aren’t I? I don’t expect the evening will be a cakewalk, or a *kaffeeklatsch*. I expect it’ll be most especially gloomy. The right place for that last huddle, that requiem, would be down in the gallery, with the draught blowing on our necks, some batty horrors flying around, and the Knights’ band fetched in for a dirge. The Five Apostles gone full circle, the life and the tale of it winding up where it started.

“It wasn’t as if the Copes deserved it. It was something that just befell them. And in its day it was something wonderful. I would want to be there at the end of it, at the fall of the curtain, and the *adios*. My father would have liked me to, I think.”

“It’s quite fine of you, Paula. It won’t be very cheerful. And you’ve already gone through so much.”

“I’ve stood it, so far.” She looked into the windshield mirror, and powdered her nose. “I can stand anything now,” she thought.

It was a late dinner for them and Tai-Ling, who had been waiting for their return. Rios had set the dishes on the back of the stove, and gone riding on his Sunday horse to Monterey, so the three had the kitchen to themselves. It was sweet; logs had been tucked into the fire-box, and it was warm. Blazer, asleep in a box under the stove, whined fitfully in a dream chase after rabbits. In the wind, boughs overhead brushed drowsily on the tiles. Tai-Ling bent over her embroidery hoop, her needle following the curve of a bamboo.

“We were at the Jews’ House,” said Paula, slowly turning her face upon Tai-Ling. “All this time.”

She had not told the dowager of her visit to it the night when Val met with his accident, nor of her talk with Faro. And Tai-Ling need never know that two knew of her night visits to the canyon.

“Rios was saying you went there. It was working?”

“Yes. And there are flasks piled up in it.”

The clock on the wall banged out midnight. Tai-Ling heard the chime, lowered her needle, and heard the chime out. It was a decrepit old timepiece that Mendoza had brought with him from Spain, and it whirred and thumped like a trunkful of springs. There had, after all, been smelting in the canyon furnace. She had been in a nightmare, and she had misjudged.

“Enough flasks for a shipment,” Paula was saying, from a long, misty distance. “And there will be more, enough to pay back all the debt.”

Tai-Ling dropped her hoop on the table, unable to see the threads. She saw her sons in the Street of the Pigment Makers, the old colormen in the factory starting a fire in the oven, and the potter shaping clay for the little green pots to hold vermilion.

“Yin-Chiu, I am very glad. You have been the best of daughters. And if Gervase—” she spoke quietly on, in her own tongue.

“In a month or two,” said Esmey, blowing out a cloud from his pipe, “you will see the last of the flasks trucked to the wharf.”

“I think,” Paula said, putting her hand through the smoke to reach for the matches. “I think we will go up and see Mr. Chuen about a freight boat.”

Tai-Ling had seen the hand. The engagement-ring was gone. Yin-Chiu was finding a husband. And after the long waiting, the saving metal had come, like rain after a drought.

“A month?” smiled Tai-Ling. “I am going back to my sons, with the first of the flasks.”



“That many flasks!” Crossett stared for a moment, donned his pince-nez and stared again. “Do I understand there was smelting in the canyon, too—at that old shambles? From motives of economy, was it?” Eyes turned to him, but he looked away, and stared into the fire. “Economy, no doubt,” he said firmly. “That vein is near the canyon portal, the tram-rails had long been removed, and it was simpler to haul the ore direct to the Jews’ House. Sometimes—” he spoke to the Capitan, sitting there huge and white in the obscurity of the salon—“for some ores, isn’t firing with wood, if there is sufficient wood about, more advisable——”

“It could be best for some ores,” agreed the Capitan. He answered slowly. “Roasting them in the old-style furnace. It’s no more than we’d long done here in Alamos.”

Mrs. Roger only half listened. Madame Tai-Ling, who had come in the morning to pay her a farewell call, had not spoken of those stored-up flasks.

“I believe that metal should be held here in reserve,” she declared. “It can be disposed of to keep up work on the lode.”

“I feel it is out of our hands,” said Paula. “It is owing to the Canton firm.”

“Your first obligation,” said her aunt, looking coldly at her, “should be to the Five Apostles. How ready you have been to ignore that! And how stubbornly eager to show your authority, ever since you came to Alamos! You have allowed neither death nor any generous sentiment to stand in the way if it came between you and your selfish ends! Your loyalty has never been to the Casa, but to others who for so long, without assuming any responsibility in turn, have shared in the good fortunes of the mine!” Her voice rang out harshly. “You wished to marry my son so that the mine would get into your hands.”

“Mother, please!” said Esmey, with gentle force, taking her arm. “You don’t mean it. So don’t let them misunderstand you.”

“Forgive me,” said Paula, “if I remind you that half the risks are mine. When the flasks reach the factory, they will be paid for. Meanwhile, I can give the Capitan all that he needs to push the work in the tunnel.”

Whether that meant little or much, or even everything she had, mattered nothing. Anything to hasten the dragging end of the play. Tai-Ling would be going within a fortnight, and she with her—to stay a month, perhaps, or until the edge of summer. Paula glanced across the room into the garden. The sycamores and carob-tree were very white in star-fire.

“Neither of you need trouble about the risks,” Esmey broke in. “I shall want to help.”

His mother turned about in her chair. That haughty, small cameo head looked worn, old and fragile. Some of the arrogance was gone, Paula thought, for her aunt’s regard, though it might have been from fatigue, or because of the dim light of the candles thrumming on the mantelpiece, appeared softer.

“Thank you, my son.” She placed her heavily be-ringed hands on the table, and lifted herself.

Her tread as she left the room was firm. The door then closed, but Paula could hear the footsteps all the way up the stairs, where they halted for a moment, then dragged down the corridor to her chamber.

The purple finches had not yet returned, and the toyons heavy under their autumnal weight of berries were only just shading into red. She had come back before the birds. As if in welcome to her the sun was pouring down its hot, golden splendor on the farm. Paula walked lightly across the turf on the Mendoza patch, and up to the ridge. She stood under the juniper and looked upon the scene with fresh eyes, and with a sudden, grateful affection. She knew that she could not have expected Esmey to leave all untouched for her return. Under the bougainvillea the house was wearing a coat of mist-grey paint, the trunks of the giant gum-trees in the yard, though blueish in the shadows, had been newly whitewashed. Down by the stable, Father Vargas and Esmey were watching Rios sweep out the pole-wagon, ready for the pickers who were to come in the morning.

The wheeling ranks of the vines were flouncing their green, shimmering amplitude in the breeze from the sea. The young plants about her on the slope were ready for their first gathering; they were taller by a yard, for two growing seasons had waxed and waned while she was absent in China.

She could not have come any sooner to Alamos; nor could she have stayed away longer. She had taken Tai-Ling home, and slipped again into her accustomed life, glad to be with her foster-cousins and her friends. A duty had been done, and in the familiar haunts, at Thousand Willows with Mr. Wu's pomegranate garden and on the river and at the lodge in the hills, a measure of happiness had returned. An old love had died, and so much of herself with it. Then, slowly, the fierce ache had crept from her heart, and healing came. She grew restless; she wandered much, and early in the summer she had pushed out alone over the caravan route she had traveled with her father.

Esmey wrote unweariedly. One of his letters reached her when she was in a Szechwan village. "It has been fine growing weather. The vineyard is coming into full leaf. Next autumn, I think, we shall have our first harvest on the slope. I want you here. The sunset was fiery tonight, with a sputtering of red and gold. And there was a dark, little fog-cloud like a ship riding through it to the shore. It was the ship cloud that old Spanish folk here used to call 'the Manila Galleon,' and said it brought treasures. I wish it would bring you."

She was a hundred miles from the nearest river port, but she wrote swiftly, though it would be months before her reply reached him. “Hold back the harvest, if I should be a little late. Of course I am coming to you! And I want to come back to find all things and you unchanged. Wait for my galleon!”

Rios was bringing her pony up to her. The sound of a lone hammer rang out on the morning air. It was faint, but diamond-clear. She turned. There was no sign of life down at the shuttered Casa, but she saw a minute figure near the gallows of the abandoned mine. It was Cloke, the last of its children, still resolutely putting a stroke on the engine that was never to run: his offering to the Five Apostles to which, though all life within it had ceased, he was forever to be in thrall. And that, she thought with a smile as she walked down to the pony, that too was love.

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

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[The end of *Vermilion* by Idwal Jones]