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By and by the moon swam into the clear void; it looked in on the serene face of the Father President, sleeping with his hands clasped on a crucifix lest death surprise him; on Delgado, gaming with the young bloods of Monterey; on Escobar, sleeping in his silver-fringed mantle, and on El Zarzo, watching him in the wakeful pauses with black, deep-lighted eyes. But in the house of the Comandante lay shadow of darkness; where no moon could pierce, a man rolled face downward on his bed, who moaned and bit his hands, and cried only "Ysabel! Ysabel! Ysabel!"

## VI

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HE rain was over and gone when Isidro woke in the grapevine hut of Peter Lebecque. It was clear day overhead, and the sun coming up resplendent. Peter Lebecque was busy about the cooking pots; said he, —

"Well, señor, are you for the road?"

"Most assuredly, señor; the sooner the better."

"It is so," said Lebecque; "the Padre Presidente is not a man to be kept waiting." They broke their fast in silence; the boy, Isidro judged, had been fed; the sheep jangled their bells for the start. El Zarzo came up with Escobar's horse and a kicking pinto saddled for himself. He gave no greeting, but his eyes were distinctly friendly. He was dressed more in the fashion of the time, and showed more slenderness. He wore no hat, but the kerchief on his

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head was black and new. Rid of the fantastic garnish of leaves, his brows showed under it a fine black line meeting across the thin high nose. Straight black locks clipped his face around and fell under the chin like a veil; so much of his skin as showed had a deep touch of the sun. He was to ride with Isidro and the sheep to find Mariano's men, who would be by this time in the place called Pastería.

There was no ceremony of parting other than this: the trapper called the lad aside and thrust a packet in his bosom; there passed some words between them in a strange tongue, — French, guessed Isidro, — but no farewell.

Escobar, who, now that he was fed and astride of a horse, felt the world to go very well with him, sang as they passed out of the cañon of the vines.

Rain still shook from the laden trees; it lay heavily on the slanting grass, heaviest on the folded poppy buds. Little runnels lined the gravelly slopes; the streams were over-full. Woolly patches of cloud clung about the shouldering hills and flocked in the cañons. Where

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their horses trod among the wild oats there was a sound of showers. It was a morning of deep, unmastered joy. They went slowly by dim, sweet trails, for the lambs made small progress in the wetness.

The sun warmed and dried them soon enough; warmed the blood of the lad, who played a thousand impish tricks, — scurried on steep hillsides, went needlessly about in the scrub to increase the way, chased the hill creatures, and gave them call for call. He rode one of the wild horses native to those hills, on a saddle of Indian make, lacking the high pommel of the Spaniard, and rode like an Indian, indifferently on one side or the other, on neck or rump. With all he watched Escobar with alert intentness.

At mid-morning they struck into a belt of chaparral in the wash of a sometime flood, very gaudy at this season with wild gourd and cactus flower. Rabbits herded here, scarcely fearful of men or dogs. In the clear vault above them eagles swooped and hung. Suddenly one dropped with a great spread of pinions on the cactus scrub. It struck and halted, sweeping forward slowly for

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the rise, and from its pierced quarry came a cry anguished and human. Isidro, startled out of a muse, clapped spurs to his horse. As the eagle rose to his level, he struck it sharply with his silver-handled quirt. The great bird, amazed, loosed his hold upon the rabbit, which made off in the chaparral, squealing pitifully. The eagle showed fight for a moment, thought better of it, sailed off to new depredations.

El Zarzo rode up astounded. "What!" he said.

"My faith," said Isidro, "but I can never hear one of them scream for pain and be quiet." He was ashamed of his weakness and ashamed of his shame.

"Rabbits were made to be eaten," said the shepherd lad, "and eagles to eat them."

Isidro recovered himself.

"It is not fitting that a priest should see killing done," he said.

The boy edged up his pony and slacked rein; clearly this fine gentleman was not to be feared, and might repay study.

"Are you a priest, señor?"

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"I am about to be."

"What is he, a priest?"

"A priest, *Virgen Santisima*! A priest is a very holy man, in the service of God and our Saviour and St. Francis, or other of God's saints. Hast never seen one?"

"One. He was fat, and had small hair, and wore a dress like a woman's. You look not like such a one. When my mother lay a-dying she was all for a priest. 'A priest, a priest!' she would cry, but when one was fetched she was already gone."

"She was, no doubt, a very good Christian."

"She was a Cahuiallas," said the boy.

"A Cahuiallas! Thou?"

"Of that tribe."

Isidro looked at the fine, small face under the fall of hair. "Nevertheless, you are no Indian," was his thought.

"But what does he do, a priest?"

"My faith, the boy is a stark heathen!" cried Isidro. "A priest is for marrying and christening and burying. He doeth on earth the works of our Father Christ."

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"My mother had a Christ," said El Zarzo, "silver, on a black cross. In the sickness it is a great comfort."

Isidro had a fine feeling for situations; he tuned himself to the boy's key. Their talk was all of the wood and its ways, trapper's and shepherd's talk, suited to their present shift. For food the boy had brought jerke of venison, barley cakes, and dried figs. They took their nooning under an oak with great content.

El Zarzo pushed the sheep shrewdly; their way lay by high windy slopes, by shallow cañons under a sky of leaves. They worked up water courses reeking sweet with buckeye bloom; they forded streams swollen with the rain. So evening brought them to the place called Pastería, — a long valley running north and south between broken ridges full of lairs. Spare branched pines spiked the upper rim of it; oaks stood up here and there; along the shallow groove that sometimes held a stream, a fringe of birches. The sheep passed down the shore of the valley, and the purple glow of evening lapped them like a tide; burrowing owls began to call; night hawks

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set their dusky barred wings above the scrub. Far across the pastures a rosy flame blossomed out against the dark, and settled to a glow. It was the camp-fire of Mariano's men.

"They come this way," said the boy. "Rest here, and by the third hour after sunrise they will come up with us." They lit a fire of sticks, and had a meal. Pastería flooded with soft dusk, and the rim of it melted into the sky. Noé and Reina Maria kept their accustomed round.

"Señor," said the boy as he lay in his bright serape by the dying fire, "do you like it, being a priest?"

"It is a great honor, and greatly to the soul's salvation to serve God and Holy Church."

"But do you like it?"

"Yes," said Escobar, forced to deal simply in the face of such simplicity. As well, put on airs with Noé or Reina Maria.

"Do women become priests ever?"

"Sacramento! Women! It is a man's work, being a priest, though there are many holy women who serve God and the saints in con-

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vents. Santa Barbara was such a one, and Santa Clara."

"What do they do?"

"They say prayers and do penance; also they do the work of the convent, and visit the sick."

"Is that all? Do they never go out?"

"There may be other matters requiring their attention, but I do not recall them. For the most part they pray."

"Do they never marry?"

"Santisima! They are the brides of the church."

"Nor have children?"

"Never!"

El Zarzo brooded over these things for a space, and Isidro settled himself for sleep.

"It is stupid, I think," said the boy, "to get married."

"Ah, no doubt you will come to think differently."

"You are not for marrying?"

"I am to be a priest." Isidro said his prayers and crossed himself; El Zarzo did the same;

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it appeared he was a Christian, though somewhat lacking in instruction. The deep velvet void closed over them, blurred with stars; the coyotes were beginning their choruses.

Shepherds are a simple folk, slow of wit, little wondering, accustomed to mysteries. They have an affinity for sheep. Those who had the care of Mariano's flock came up with Isidro and the lad about mid-morning. It is doubtful if Nicolas and Ramon understood their part in the affair, but they made no objection. Here were sheep of Mariano's lacking a shepherd, and shepherds of Mariano's hiring. They met and mingled as of duty bound. Further than that the matter furnished them material for days' thought and night talks by many a coyote-scaring fire. The adventure of Noé and Reina Maria passed into the Iliad of the hills. By the week's end Nicolas and Ramon, who had traversed the length and breadth of the affair, concluded that they should go and look for Mariano.

Isidro and El Zarzo, once they had done with them, struck across the valley for the outposts of the Santa Lucia. On leaving Las Plumas it had

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been the purpose of Escobar to drop into the public road at the Mission San Antonio de Padua de Los Robles. From there he could reach San Carlos in a day's riding. This business of Noé and Reina Maria had set all his plans awry. He was now out of his own riding and all at sea. El Zarzo, who knew the land like an Indian, led him a sharp pace. They rode hard, made a hunter's camp that night, and slept the clock around on stacked dried grass.

From that the directions for the way were plain enough: keep to the trail as long as it ran west, where it broke and wavered in stony ground cut straight over the hill crest. It did not matter greatly how; take the easiest going and keep a certain bulk of blue hill always to the left. So you came to a valley with a river; the ford was by the road house; the rest was open highway. Isidro rose early, slipped a silver piece under the shepherd lad's serape, and gave him a friendly pat. The boy breathed lightly in sleep.

The way was long, and Escobar struck out with a light heart. Lilac and laurel bloom brushed

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his saddle-bow and at times engulfed him. The Santa Lucia rose up, blue and sparsely wooded slopes; seaward on those high and lonely altars bloomed the tall spike of yucca, called the Candles of our Lord. He pricked forward singing. The wood was very still. It came upon him once or twice that something moved behind him in the trail. Twigs snapped; a stone rolled clattering to some leafy deep. His horse grew restless, cocked an ear back upon the path. It might be deer or bear. Too noisy for one, Isidro judged, too still for the other. His horse whinnied and halted. Wild horses, no doubt, or an Indian riding at random in the scrub. He had come to the end of his trail and was forced to pick his way. Once in the pauses of this business he heard the clank of bridle bit, but nothing came up with him. By this he became sure he was followed. Little hints of sound, a pricking between his shoulders, the unease of his horse, kept him on the alert. Covering the rise of the hill, he looked back to see the scrub moving where a horse, led by his rider, came after him. His own horse saw and whinnied; the led horse

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answered. Then began a conversation between those two; it seemed of friendly import, but conveyed no information to the rider. Isidro cleared an open space at a gallop, backed under a hanging rock, and waited.

It was by this time noon, hot and dim; a bank of white cloud hung low in the west above the sea; purple haze lay like a web along the scrub. No birds broke silence but the telltale jays. Isidro could hear the horse slowly breaking his way up the steep. Since the rider had dismounted Isidro could make nothing of him until he came full into the cleared space before him. It was El Zarzo. He must have expected to come up with Isidro hereabout, for he gave neither start nor sign when the other hailed him. Said he, —

"How goes the trail, señor?"

"My faith, lad, you gave me a turn. Where go you?"

"I, señor? I go to the Presidio of Monterey in your company." The lad was imperturbably impudent.

"Caramba! I cannot take you; it is ridiculous! What will the old man say?"

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"That you are very discourteous, since I have guided you so far, and you refuse me the same."

"Eh, it can prick, this Briar," said Isidro. "Did he bid you follow me?"

El Zarzo looked calmly out across the lilac bloom. "It grows late," he said.

Isidro became grave.

"Think, lad, there is no friend there to do you a kindness. As for me, I know not how I shall fare where I go, nor how long remain."

"There have been few to do me kindness, that I should look for it."

"Your father" —

"He is not my father."

"I refuse to take you."

"The trail is free, señor." The lad breathed deeply and his face was troubled, but he was not to be shaken.

"Peste!" cried Isidro. He wheeled his horse about, and made off at a keen pace; his mount was of good blood, and proved the mettle of his pasture, but the hill pony had the lighter load. He was never a full cry behind. On a stony

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slope, Isidro, doubling on his trail, came once face to face with him.

"Boy, boy!" he cried, "do you know what you do?"


"I go to Monterey, señor."

Isidro unbent suddenly with laughter.

"So," he said; "we will go better in company." They struck into the valley presently, and jogged on comfortably side by side.

## VII

### THE ROAD TO CARMELO

HE riders were now upon the main ridge of the coastwise hills; from this vantage they saw the land slope, by terraces unevenly wooded, to the floor of the valley where the Salinas ran. Here was a sag in the ridge that gave easy passage. North and south the range showed brokenly; west, the valley rolled up into blunt rounded hills; beyond them lay the sea. They watched the shift and play of light above it all day long. Between the trees on the slope the scrub was thick and close; all the gullies were choked with the waste of years. There were deer here, but no antelope; even at this distance they could make out a number of bears feeding on mast under the wide oaks. The riders steered by the road house that made a white speck by the river; an hour later they heard the singing of the ford.

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They had shrewd shift crossing, for the river ran full and swift; the horses had to swim for it. The Escobar finery was hardly so fine by now. They slept early at the road house, where the lad passed for a servant, and lay at Isidro's feet; dawn end saw them riding forward in a weeping fog, saddle weary, but very good company. Isidro turned questioner in his turn; the lad told him freely of himself and his way of life. That was not much; he stuck to it that his mother was an Indian, a Cahuiallas; Peter Lebecque no kin of his, — "my mother's man," he said. Their life was all of the hills, hunting and trapping, following the shifting of wild creatures for their food and housing. They had never gone into the settlements; it seemed there was some obscure reason for this. Isidro made a shrewd guess that the woman might have been enticed away from one of the Missions, and was wary of a forced return. The lad had seen only Indians, vaqueros, and some such wayfarer as Escobar. It had been a rough life, but he showed no roughness; he had been servilely bred, but used no servility.

Of his errand at the Presidio of Monterey, if

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errand he had, he would say nothing. He showed Isidro a package of coin, curious concerning the value and use of it, avowing that he had it from Peter Lebecque; upon which the young man made sure the trapper had sent him, but he gave over trying to probe that affair.

"Keep your own secret, lad," he said good-humoredly. "But you are young to be seeking your fortune in this fashion. Where will you go in Monterey?"

"Ah, with you, señor," breathed the lad, with something quick and wistful in his eyes. Isidro laughed. Priest or no priest, he had a good deal of the zest of life in him; the sense of companionship quickened it. If the lad took kindly to him, it was no more than the kindness he showed to the lad. By Our Lady, they would see something of the world, even out of a cassock. Their blood sang to a pretty tune; they rode forward merrily. By noon they saw below them the chimes in the east tower of Carmelo. They saw the sea, and, that being new to them, stayed rein to snuff the wind of it like a strong wine of excitement. Riding into the Mission grounds Isidro grew grave.

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"Look now," he said, "here is the end of my going at my own will. I shall find the Padre Presidente here or at Monterey and give myself into his hands. Whatever I am able to do for you, that I will do, but you must be obedient in all things; so you will win the Padre's good will, and in any private concern I will bespeak you fairly. More I cannot promise. Here let us rest."

By a brook under an oak Isidro braided his hair and set his dress in order. They fell in with a band of neophytes going to dinner from a meadow where they had been marking calves. The Indians had stripped to the work, but they had each a shirt which they put on as they went. They wore little else, — a loin cloth and a strip of kerchief about the brows. Some of them had protected their legs with strips of hide wound about and about.

A great body of white cloud brooded over the land; the shadow of it dappled the hills. A wind came up from the sea and brought the breath of orchard bloom. The neophytes fell into lines two and two; another band came in from the fields and streamed alongside them. They raised

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a crooning chant, timing their feet as they went. The bell cried noon from the tower.

The Father President came out of the church, and Isidro knelt to receive his blessing. At the meal which followed he was made acquainted with the resident Padres, — Pablo Gomez and Ignacio Salazar, — and with Fray Demetrio.

It was a very comfortable meal, — soup with force-meat balls, chicken, beef dressed with peppers, a dish of spiced pumpkin, another of fried beans, fine flour cakes, and light sour wine of the Mission's own making. An Indian servitor stood at the Father President's back; the napery was white and fine. Isidro gave the news of Las Plumas, the progress of his father's malady, the tale of the flocks, the growth of the vine cuttings Father Saavedra had sent the year before; but of his journey, of the incident of the Indian under the oak, of Noé and Reina Maria he said nothing; these were matters too small for the Father President's ear. Neither did Saavedra say anything of his schemes, nor what he would advise for the young man; the time was not ripe.

They walked out afterward in the pleasant air.

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The neophytes were getting back to their work, children lay asleep, and women sat spinning and weaving in the sun. The Mission San Carlos Borromeo stands on an elevation, its buildings inclosing an imposing square. On the north side the church, which was built in a single aisle, reared its two towers, brooding above the first foundation of Junípero Serra, el Capella de los Dolores. Adjoining the church were the cloisters of the priests, opening into the long dining-room; beyond that the kitchen. The store-rooms, shops, smithy, the quarters of the major-domo, and the huts of the neophytes made up the four sides of the quadrangle, in the midst of which stood the whipping-post and stocks. All the walls were of adobe, whitewashed, shining in the sun; all the roofs of tile, brick red; all the floors, except that of the church, of stamped earth, swept daily. Two bells hung in the west tower, three in the east, reached by an outside stair. One was rung for meals, for rising, for beginning and quitting work. For the offices of Holy Church they rang the chimes. So Padre Vicente explained to young Escobar.

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Very pleasantly, very much at ease in the golden afternoon, they went from storehouse to smithy, from chapel to orchard. They saw the rows of huts of the married neophytes, orderly and four square like a village street; saw the carved Christ above the high altar flanked by the patron of the Mission, and San Antonio with the Child. They said a prayer by the bones of Serra, and bowed before the Stations of the Cross. Then they went out into the quadrangle to see a man flogged for stealing a hen.

The fellow had fifteen lashes, and bore them stolidly, putting on his shirt again with the greatest good-humor; doubtless he thought the dinner worth it. Isidro looked out to sea; he felt a little queasily at the sound of blows, and so missed the point of the Padre's observation on the Church's duty of rendering spiritual relief according to the fault. At Las Plumas they had Indian servants who did about as pleased them, except when the old Don was in a passion, and threw things at them. If the women misbehaved, their husbands dealt with them in a homely fashion, but they never called it spiritual relief.

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Isidro had a moment of doubting if he should really make a good priest.

He walked after that for a space with Saavedra in the Mission garden, where young fruit was setting on the trees, and the vines blossoming. The Padre showed him some experiments in horticulture newly under way, grafting of delicate fruits on wild stock. They flourished hardily. "So," said the Father President, "is the vine of Christian grace engrafted on this root of savagery, fruitful unto salvation."

Isidro was not thinking of souls just then. He was suddenly smit with a sense of the material competency of the Brotherhood of St. Francis. He remembered his life in old Mexico with his mother, where all his thoughts of the priesthood had gathered about the cathedral and the altar services. Now it occurred to him that to be a good priest in this new land one must first be a better man. It was not by blinking the works that men do that the Padres had established themselves among the heathen, but by doing them, — making themselves masons, builders, artists, horticulturists; dealing with sheep-scab,

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weeds, alkaline soil, and evil beasts. It appeared that God was also served by these things. This prompted him to put some question to the Father President concerning the disposition of himself. Saavedra responded with an invitation to Isidro to make with him the round of the missions of Alta California, which progress should begin within a fortnight. The proposal fell in with the young man's mood of adventure. The Father President and Escobar began to be well pleased with each other.

Returned to the Mission buildings the Padre found work cut out for him; a poor soul wanting the mercy of the Church. Padre Salazar was at a bedside in Monterey, Padre Gomez in the meadow of oaks overseeing the counting of calves; the Father President himself went into the confessional. Outside they heard the evening bustle of the Mission as of a very considerable town, — children crying, dogs barking, and the laughter of young girls. Men gathered in from the farthest fields; the smell of cooking rose and mixed with the smell of the orchard and the sea. It was the hour for evening service, and an altar

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ministrant crept up to snuff the tall candles that burned before San Antonio with the Child. The ringers in the belfry shook the chimes; a veil of fog came up and hid the sea.

The poor soul at the confessional rocked side-wise uneasily upon his knees; not much account to look at, a shepherd by his dress, young, low-browed, dark, with dirty, fidgeting fingers, a fresh cut upon his face running into the unshaven jaw. Most plainly of all he was in the grip of grief or terror too large for his shallow holding, that marred his smartness as the bubbling of pitch fouls the pot. The penitent's tale ran on, mumbled, eager, with many a missed word painstakingly recovered: "I accuse myself of the sin of envy — of drunkenness, of neglect of holy ordinances" — various sins of omission and commission. All this was merely perfunctory; counter to it ran the deep mutter of the priest, "What more, my son, what more?" At last it was all out, — envy and drunkenness and hate, ending in a slain man lying out on a pleasant heath with his mouth to the earth and blue flies drinking his blood.

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All judgments are mixed. Padre Saavedra might have bidden the man surrender to the civil authorities, but he thought perhaps the civil authorities claimed too much, and there are better uses to put a man to than execution. Besides, here was a reasonable doubt as to the degree of criminality; both men were drunken, one of them had suffered grievance, — without conscious fraud Ruiz had put that forward, — and no knowing whose had been the first provocation. Whatever Mariano's share in it, and the confessor judged it must have been considerable, he was now gone out of the Padre's jurisdiction. Perhaps he had known the Portuguese without finding in the knowledge any warrant for holding him blameless. Was it fair, then, that the other should bear the brunt of punishment?

"Is there any circumstance known to you," he had asked Ruiz, "by which it is possible that any other should come to suffer for the evil you have done?"

"None, none," protested the poor herder.

"But should any arise" —

"Ah, Padre, Padre," interrupted the penitent,

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"I am a poor man, and of but small account. Give me ease for my conscience, and if it should come to pass that any be falsely accused or suffer because of me, I am in your hands. Do you but come after me, Padre, and I shall make all things plain."

Ruiz had not much imagination. This was a safe promise, he thought, for once freed of blood-guiltiness he could not conceive how it should come up to trouble him again.

There was an art once of making cups so that if but clearest water was poured in them it became medicated, turgid, or hurtful, with the properties of the vessel; so, often, the saintliest soul takes a color from its human holding. Did the Padre, flinching a little at the abasement of his divinely derived authority before the encroachments of the state, and leaning always toward mercy for the sake of this simple people from whom he might yet be torn, appease himself with the secret exercise of priestly powers? At any rate, he made the shepherd an obligation of prayers and alms, masses said for the murdered man, no more drunkenness. This was

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hard, and, moreover, he should go back and bury the dead decently out of sight. This was harder, but here was no family to compensate, no restitution of stolen goods to make. What else? Then he made inquiry where the place of the unblest grave might be found, for he had it in mind to pass by it in his itinerary and do what lay within his holy office for the sake of the murdered man. And having concluded these things he gave Ruiz release.

"Go in peace, my son, and may the God of Peace go with thee. *Absolvo te.*" The penitent crept out into the dark with a mingled expression of cunning and relief.

Indians gathered in to the evening service; the candles glowed on the high altar. Isidro went in with the others. He had not attended service in a church since he had been a child in old Mexico; the recollection came back dimly, and with it a memory of his mother. He remembered why he was here and what it purported. The smell of incense and candle smoke, the rising and falling of the bent worshipers as they followed the ritual, the mellow droning voices