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and staggered, began to cry out chokingly, threw up her hands, shook and struggled as with an invisible wrestler, and at the same time began to move with extraordinary rapid stumbling toward the horseman who had appeared opposite them on the sand. He drew toward the girl as she drew to him and showed dimly a naked Indian through the dusk.

Delfina saw him approach the girl, lift her to the horse in front of him, and choke out her cries and the beating of her hands upon his breast. Delfina, too much astounded to cry out, was running heavily up the sand toward him, but only rapidly enough to see the Indian riding at a gallop toward the mainland, reeling in his riata, as he rode, about the body of the girl, who seemed still to twist and struggle in his grasp without outcry. A very little such pursuit warned the older woman of its futility; she stood at last staring and panting as she watched the man and his burden ride away into the soft dark.

XIV

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IGHTS of early summer along the coast of Monterey are damp and heavy with sea-dew. It hangs on the blossom tops in the wild pastures, and drips down the fine brown needles of the pines. Swift passage among the close thickets of the hillslopes shakes out the moisture with a sound of rain. If the moon rides in the seaward sky it will be dim and ghostly white with mist, or wholly quenched in a floating bank of fog. A night rider through the wood wakes querulous jays in the oaks and deer from the deep fern. He must pass by sea marsh and spongy meadow to stony ridges and thin, dark clumps of pine, and in an earlier time of scant and ill-kept trails must have had great faith in his horse and his luck. So rode Mascado on a line that led directly inland from the peninsula. He drove hard and wildly, careless of the trail he left; keen whips

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of the underbrush slapped against his bare legs as he rode. He was all bent on holding fast what he had got, and making the shortest going. As he rode he felt what the woman Delfina had felt, — the young budding breasts crushed against his bosom, and thrilled to the passion of the primal man, double joy of the huntsman and lover.

He rode east, leaving the Mission to the right, labored through a stretch of rolling dunes, lifted his horse carefully from the bog of back sea water, passed the wild pastures, and struck on to rising ground. At every shift of the rider the girl struggled shrewdly, but neither wept nor cried out. Once he spoke to his horse and she grew instantly quiet. He trembled through all his naked body at the sudden loosening of the tension of hers. Had she recognized his voice? was this the quiescence of submission? They rode; he felt her breast heave and fill under his hand; the weight of her body was sweet upon his arm. The sea wind blew about his face; wet, pungent-smelling leaves brushed against his horse's sides. He had expected protest, had been led on and advised to this point

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by the effort of his spirit to match with hers. Now the cessation of struggle daunted him. His passion had reached that state where it was necessary for his ease to know how she stood toward it. Cautiously he loosened the blanket with which her head was covered and met the girl's level, unfluttered gaze.

"I wish to sit up," she said; there was hardly a shade of interest in her tone. Mechanically the man raised her until she rode more at ease. "Unbind the rope, it cuts me," she said again, with a terrible matter-of-factness that sent his passion receding from him like a wave from a rock. He fumbled at the rope a little, and got no thanks for it. The girl looked about her quietly by the dim, watery moon. "Where do you go?" she said at last, but not at all as if she supposed she was going with him.

"Far enough from Monterey."

"But where?"

"Las Chimineas."

"And what will you do there?"

"Keep you." There was a sudden tightening of the arm about her slim young form; it met

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with no answering movement of repulsion or complaisance. Mascado saw he had still to deal with Peter Lebecque's graceless boy. Many a time in the last year at the hut of the Grapevine he had tried to betray her into some consciousness of himself as a lover through her consciousness of herself as a maid, and had been beaten back by the incorrigible boyishness of her behavior. He had begun by allowing the child to browbeat and revile him, and afterwards found himself in no case to deal with the woman, being swamped by the embarrassment of his own passion and Lebecque's contemptuous perception of its futility. His desire throve best in absence, and suffered a check in the moment of personal contact. He had hours of doubting whether he should ever be able to take her, not being able to put her on the defensive, and he was savage enough to need a hint of fleeing to whet the courage of pursuit. Vaguely, though he had resented the hand of Escobar upon her, he expected that experience to have made a short cut to his desire, for he had believed the most concerning that relation; Lebecque had seen to that out of

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a rascally humor to pay the mestizo for his presumption, and, believing the girl gone quite out of the range of the half-breed's life, had not spared innuendo. And Mascado without the old Frenchman's hint would have come to the same conclusion, seeing that the girl passed everywhere as a lad and the servant of Escobar, slept at his door, and companioned his solitary hours. Probably no other conjunction would have braved Mascado for the capture and the sally at dusk, for he had a servile taint of his Mission upbringing, and the girl's spirit was imperious. But greatly as his passion had exalted her, the passion of Escobar, for so Mascado understood their relation, had brought her down. There was even an appeal to his savage sense in bearing off what had been the prize of another, and he suffered a check in her unconsciousness of the situation. She sat indifferently under the pressure of his arm, drew even breaths, and looked about her. Half in response to her unconscious carriage, Mascado relaxed his hold.

"The corporal of the guard looks for you in yonder hills," she said at last.

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"He will look far and long without finding me," said Mascado.

"So you said once before, I remember," remarked the girl.

Mascado had no answer to that.

"At Carmelo they showed me many things," she went on; "among other things the whipping-post;" she laughed low and amusedly.

The mestizo felt his gorge rise. "And among other things," he said, "you saw also the prison, you and your fine gentleman. He will see a rope, doubtless, before all is done, with his killing of silly shepherds and stealing of sheep."

"That is a lie, Mascado," said the girl simply, but she also shivered. "It is cold," she said; "put the blanket about me."

Mascado drew it clumsily across her shoulders. They were traveling slowly now, stooping under trees and picking the way on stony ground. Once they forded a stream where the water came gurgling to the horse's thighs. The girl fidgeted and made fretful noises of fatigue. Presently Mascado felt her weight sag against his arm; by gentle constraint he forced her head

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back upon his shoulder and saw that she slept. Mother of saints! here was a girl torn from one lover by another, who had come against her will from a delicate-mannered gentleman to be ravished by a renegade mestizo in the hills, and she slept, — by God and His saints, she slept!

The moon had come free of the belt of fog that hangs about sea borders, and poured clear and light on the shut lids and drooping mouth. Mascado looked, and, though he had no words for these things and believed otherwise, suffered a remote perception of unassailable virginity. He passed on, wondering, through the night. Two hours later the girl was roused by having a fold of the blanket drawn tightly across her mouth. Mascado bent over her and threatened with his eyes. He held the rein with the hand that constrained her, and with the other pressed the point of his knife against her breast. A little way ahead she saw a glow ruddier than the moon on the scrub. They had nearly stumbled on a camp in the dark. An Indian had risen up at the disturbance, and thrown fresh fuel on a dying fire, — stood listening and intent. The

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girl could see by the dress that he was of the Mission. She thought for a moment that it might be the corporal and his men, but as Mascado, guiding chiefly by the pressure of his knees, backed his horse away, she saw by the glow the face of the Father President, as he lay sleeping, turned toward Carmelo. Slowly, almost noiselessly, they backed away and around the camp; she could see the Indian still watching as long as the camp-fire served for a light. The glimpse of Saavedra set her thoughts back toward Monterey and Isidro; she slept no more that night. At moon-set Mascado drew up under an oak, and lifted her from the horse under the canopy of thick dark.

"What is it?" she said; "it is not Las Chimineas?"

"Here we rest," said Mascado; "there is no further going in the dark." Not the smallest star-beam showed through the close tent of the oak; the air under it was heavy and damp. Mascado heaped up leaves for her, and spread over them the folded pad of coarse woven stuff taken from his horse, all the saddle he used. She

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sat down, and he sat opposite her, holding the stake rope of his horse. So they sat for a space of two hours; the first gray dawning showed them watching each other with wide, regardful eyes.

Mascado took the trail again as soon as it was light enough to be moving, and by sunrise had come to the place of the Chimneys. Heading east among the highest peaks of the Monterey coast is a broad, shallow gorge, having in its middle a pleasant open glade, nearly treeless, walled in by a slaty formation weathering in huge upright pillars and nodules, standing singly or in files; or higher up tumbled and falling athwart one another, affording tunnels and draughty caves of shade. Among the standing boulders trickle clear, warmish springs to water the cañon floor. Here, from time to time, had harbored more than one distressed clan, the smoke of whose hearth-fires had blackened the bases of Las Chimineas. It was clear morning when Mascado rode into the cañon; wet shadows lay on the grass between bars of yellow light. The mid-meadow was succulently green and white

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with flower and leaf of *yerba mansa*. Its rosy pointed buds floated in the tops of the grass, dipped and bobbed with the motion of it in a rippling wind. Cool gray shadow spread among the caves, and small water chuckled on the stones. It was such a place and weather as might have served for a bridal morn. Mascado and the girl brought no bridal mood to it. Mascado was sure of nothing except that the girl seemed to have no hint of his purpose, which he should have to convey to her, and had no notion how he should begin. It seemed that he still held Peter Lebecque's boy within the circle of his arm, riding as unconcernedly as she had ridden in a bygone spring,—before he had known her for a maid,—and presently she might insist upon climbing up on his shoulders, as she had once done, to look at a hawk's nest in a blasted pine. And, in fact, the girl was farther from him in spirit than the child had been, panoplied by her love for Escobar,—though she did not call it by that name,—wrapt in it above the sense of all offense, so that if he had accomplished his intent upon her person in that exalted mood he

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could have left no stain upon her mind. He had expected protest and tears; rather counted on it to spur his lagging desire, always a little confounded by her cool assumption, now increased as she measured him by Escobar, whom she judged as far removed from him as the order of archangels or other blessed personages.

She had, in fact, very little thought to spare for Mascado at that moment, thinking that by now Father Saavedra would be moving toward Carmelo with the promised relief, and a few hours later, say by the time the shadow had gone up from the floor of Las Chimineas, he would be at Monterey. Comforted in that, though wearied of her bonds and hard riding, she was able to respond a little to the morning note of freshness and delight, and keep the ascendancy over Mascado as she had done in the hut of the Grapevine, flooding him with lover's delight at the nimbleness of her wit, with embarrassment at her gibes, and secret fuming that he made no better way with her.

"Your mother at Carmelo prays for your soul," she said, as he went about to prepare a

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meal of food he had brought, "but I shall tell her to pray for your wits; you have burned all the cakes."

And again, "Mend your fire, Mascado; it smokes like a lazy mahala's." But when he brought a fagot on his shoulders for its plenishing, "Oh, spare your back, Mascado; you will need it when the corporal of the guard comes up with you."

"Where now, Mascado?" she said with the greatest cheerfulness when the meal was done, and she sat loosely bound against a broken tree.

"Here," said Mascado; "it is safe enough. Did you think your fine gallant would be looking for you?"

"Why should he?" said the girl coolly; "he has better things to do than looking for stray serving lads."

"For a serving lad, yes," said Mascado with a secret and insulting air. "But a wife" —

"What talk is this?" said she, yawning in his face; "here are no wives, unless you have a fancy yourself for turning mahala, as seems likely."

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"But there will be one," he said, ignoring the taunt with deep insinuation.

"Big talk," she said; "but where there is no bride and no priest how will there be a wedding?"

"I have never heard that there was any lack of weddings among my people before the priests came," said Mascado, with something of a grin. "As for a bride" — He stopped full, and let his desire burn upon her from his eyes.

"Mascado, you are a fool, and Peter Lebecque will kill you," said the girl.

"I am a free man. What will Peter Lebecque know of my doings?"

"All that I can tell him," said she.

Mascado let his gaze wander pointedly along her bonds.

"And is it your purpose to keep me tied up forever and a day that you may cook and clean for me, like *el cojo viejo* in the Mission, scouring pots and tending a tame squirrel in a cage? For look you, do you so much as slip the knots of my rope and turn your back, and you have seen the last of me. Do you remember the time I sent

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you and Peter Lebecque seeking and crying through half the day and night while I lay in a crypt of the vines almost under your noses? Eh, you are a fool for your pains, Mascado."

The girl had him there: she had the tricks of an Indian for making her way in the hills; but she was no Indian, who, once the subjection of her body was accomplished, would bring her mind into accord, sit by the fire, and follow at the back of him who had made himself her man and the father of her young. Mascado's notions of the married state partook of the earth, but, such as he was, he wanted no prisoner, but a wife. There would be small satisfaction in keeping her bound, and no safety in letting her go free.

"Well," said the girl, much as if she had disposed of the whole matter, "if we travel not, I sleep, though the bed is none of the softest." Stolidly, to hide a certain shamefacedness, he brought her an armful of leaves and young boughs, which she took indifferently enough with her face turned away. Mascado staked his horse in the wet meadow, and set snares to catch quail and rabbits for their food. His Mission training

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had lost him the familiar use of the bow, and he had no gun.

The girl spent most of the day upon her bed of leaves, her head hidden in her arms to hide the quivering of her face. She felt herself in desperate need of succor, but knew not from what quarter it could come. Supposing the Father President to have brought Isidro his freedom, would he be of a mind to follow his errant lad? and who but the woman Delfina should tell him that El Zarzo had gone against his will? and if Delfina told him that would she not tell all? Ah, never all, never tell him all! Better Mascado should have his will of her at present, and trust to finding some better shift at the last. For she had no thought of marriage with Escobar, — was he not dedicated to God and His Church? All that she asked for herself was to stand at his door and serve.

Then seeing no better issue of her affairs she would fall a-trembling with nameless dread, and feeling safe for that day, resolve to sleep, the better to wake and watch against the terrors of the night. She could trust to holding Mascado