

Tang of Life

was deputized and paid to do just what he was doing. The men were bandits who had robbed the paymaster of the Ortez Mines. To Waring there was nothing complicated about the matter. It was his day's work. The morning sun would be in their faces, but that was not his fault.

As Waring waited in the arroyo the faint clatter of shod hoofs came from above. He drew close to a cutbank, leaning his shoulder against it easily. With a slither of sand, the first horse took the pitch, legs angled awkwardly as he worked down. The second rider followed, the led horses pulling back.

At the bottom of the arroyo, the Mexicans reined up. The elder, squat, broad of back, a black handkerchief tied round his thick neck, reached into his pocket and drew out tobacco and cigarette papers. The other, hardly more than a boy, urged that they hasten. Fear vibrated in his voice. The squat Mexican laughed and began to roll a cigarette.

None had overtaken them, he said. And were they not now in the Land Where No Man Lived?

"Si!" said Waring softly.

The half-rolled cigarette fluttered to the ground. The Mexican's heavy lip sagged, showing broken teeth. His companion dropped the lead-rope and turned to gaze at Waring with eyes wide, wondering, curious. The led horses plunged up the back trail. Waring made no movement toward his gun, but he eyed the elder Mexican sharply, paying little atten-