

As I would as lief have been skewered on my feet, I crawled out of the ditch. Another flare came from the ship as I stood up before the man. Then there was silence. The Spaniard swayed on his heels awhile. I heard him laugh—a merry, derisive laugh. I suppose he must have seen that I was a boy, barefooted and kilted.

“Your name, little one?” he asked in English, but uttered as if he had had a heavy meal.

“Rorie,” I quavered.

“Pass, Rorie,” said he with a chuckle. “And,” he added, “tell them you met Don John.”

As I walked away, I heard Don John hum a lively, lilting air.

I went home in a kind of dream. Had every tree concealed a Spaniard I do not think I should have run. Up to that moment I had been taught to regard a Spaniard as something fearful to behold and blood-thirsty. Now, what with the things I had seen my own people do that night, and my encounter with the amiable, chuckling, bare-headed gentleman, my whole idea was changed.

Yet, when I told my mother that there was a real, live Spaniard down by the Long Pasture, and that he was Don John—a nice-spoken man—she barred every door and window till my father came. He looked even more alarmed when he heard my story, and sat up all night with a pistol before him on the kitchen-table and a naked claymore across his knees.