

looking a long time at his son tenderly. "Of course," he said, "I'm pleased about — the other young lady. Any reason why I have n't been told?"

"Except that nothing has happened; that is, nothing formal. Miss Rutgers wants me to meet her people before anything's announced."

"Oh, quite right, quite right. We must do the correct thing. You must let me know what's expected of me." His mind ran to diamond bracelets or a sapphire pendant or even a tiara. He had an idea a present from the young man's father was the proper thing. He was immensely pleased that his son had done so well for himself. "I hear her people are quite the top-notchers," he hinted.

"If you please — I'd rather not . . ."

Well, that was quite right, too; showed the boy had a decent feeling.

"I heard you tell Anne that we've done with Tierra Longa. I suppose we may as well go the whole figure. I'll speak to Straker. What'll you tell Ken? I suppose you'll have to tell him."

"I suppose so; at any rate, he's not to be told that Anne has been here. You understand, father. I'll tell him you've withdrawn the suit because you've become convinced of the sincerity of his motives."

"The hell you will . . . Oh, well, go ahead, I suppose that'll please Anne — I suppose I can eat dirt if my own son tells me to . . . Hifalutin young beggar! If he'd have stayed with me I'd have made his fortune." He settled to his desk again. "And tell Anne — tell her the next time I want to pull off anything in Tierra Longa my first move will be to make her a partner."