

greed and joy, planned how they should commit the robbery.

"Look you, Mateo! We shall hide by *La Santita*—in the mesquite! As you pass by, I and Mendel will appear. See that she does not shoot. These northern *senoritas* are often quick with the gun. You shall have something for your share. Don't fail us! If you do—" José's teeth clicked hollowly behind his lips, and he went through the pantomime that suggests the knife thrust.

Mateo shook and sweated and hung back. "By Mary, I will do it!" he swore.

José grinned as he saw the other's fear, and nodded. "Now go. Remember!"

Mateo slid out the back door and around to the street. All his life, game for the children, their shrill voices greeted him with laughter as he limped along, and a piece of decayed fruit landed flatly upon his back. He turned with a threat, but paled as a few of the youngsters started belligerently toward him, and hurried on.

"Hail, Mateo, the Brave!" a musical voice chanted laughingly, and he, glancing around, saw the smiling face of a girl through an aperture in the adobe wall. His head dropped at the mirth in her eyes.

A few steps brought him to the bank door, and there Miss Marston was waiting. She looked at him with pitying eyes.

"Why do they make so much fun of you, Mateo?"

"I am nothing, *senorita*, just a dog of the streets," he answered.

She smiled as she swung into the saddle. "Mr. Eason told me that you wouldn't be of much use in protecting me, but I think you would."

Mateo glanced up furtively at the bank window, and he saw the keen eyes of the American cashier looking at him anxiously. He was evidently worried if she were not.

The door opened, and Eason said, "Miss Marston, I think I had better go with you."

She looked back, and her eyes were tender. "I'm safe with Mateo."

"I shall ride out to-night, however, or earlier!" he said quietly.

"Do," she answered smiling; and Mateo, watching under his eyebrows, knew that there was love between the two, and he guessed more—perhaps she did not have the money; perhaps Eason was to bring it out. Mateo was nervous.

They rode slowly to the outskirts of the town, and the horses picked up their pace.

A few miles farther, and, as if with one glorious sweep of a gigantic wand, the bright day changed into a golden dusk of moonlight and shadow. Now and then the girl stopped, breathless with the beauty of the change; and often on a ridge she would pause long to call Mateo's attention to the mountains far in the distance, their silvery snowy tops weirdly wonderful in the far flung moonlight.

Mateo listened and looked in silence. He saw not the mountains but *La Santita*, rising like the figure of a robed saint, beyond them. José and his partner were hiding in the shadow of the mesquite thickets at its base. Mateo knew his life was safe, but he was worried for two reasons: perhaps, she did not have the money after all; perhaps Eason might decide to follow immediately.

Thinking of these things, Mateo suggested that they hurry on, and she reluctantly agreed.

*La Santita* rose higher and sharper in outline as they drew near, and suddenly the shadow of the towering rock fell upon them. They turned to take the downward trail to the flats, and the horses slowed up. Here was the place!

The blood was pounding through Mateo's weak body. He watched with strained eyes and taut nerves; perhaps—

Two figures darted from the bush. The horses reared. The girl exclaimed sharply, then screamed in a voice that went through Mateo like