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rage at Rimrock. After scheming for months to prove her superiority, and arranging every possible detail, she had been cut down in her pride and seen her triumph turned to nothing by his sudden decision to sulk. Just at the very moment when she was preparing to be gracious and give him his precious mine back he had balked like a mule and without sense or reason stormed off on his way to Old Mexico.

She returned to her packing and was brushing away a tear that had fallen somehow on a fresh waist when there was a trampling in the lobby and she heard a great voice wafted up from the corridor below.

"Come on!" it thundered like the hoarse rumbling of a bull. "Come on, I tell ye; or you'll tear my arm loose where it's knit. You dad-burned cub, if I had two good hands—Say, come on; ain't you got a lick of sense?"

It was L. W. Lockhart and, from the noise in the hallway, he seemed to be coming towards her door. She listened and at a single rebellious grunt from Rimrock she flew to the mirror and removed the last trace of the tear. He was bringing Rimrock for some strange purpose, and—yes, he was knocking at her door. She opened it on a struggle, Rimrock begging and threatening and trying gingerly to break away; and iron-jawed L. W. with his sling flying wildly, holding him back with his puffed-up game hand.

"Excuse me, Miss Fortune," panted L. W. brokenly, "but I just had to fetch this unmannerly brute back. He can't come, like he did, to my place of business and speak like he did about you. You're the best friend, by Gregory, that Rimrock Jones ever had; and I'll say that for myself, Miss, too. You've been a good friend to me and I'll never forget it, but Rim is just naturally a fool!"

He stopped for breath and Rimrock set back sullenly without raising his eyes from the floor.

"Now!" said L. W. as he winced at the pull, "you can decide what you're going to do. Are you going to bust my arm, where I got it shot in two jest by fighting Ike Bray for your mine; or are you going to stan' up here and apologize like a gentleman for saying Miss Fortune sold you out."

"I'll apologize, doggone you," answered Rimrock between his teeth, "if you'll shut up and let go my coat."

"Well, all right, then," sighed L. W. as he cradled his injured arm, "I'll wait for you at the head of the stairs."

"You do and I'll kill you," returned Rimrock savagely. "Go on, now—and don't you come back."

HE waved a threatening hand at the belligerent L. W. and watched him till he passed down the stairs. Then, turning to Mary, he set his mouth and looked her over grimly.

"Well, I apologize," he said. "Does that make you feel better? And now I hope I may go."

"No, you can't," she replied. "Now it's my turn to apologize. And I hope you have good luck."

She held out her hand and he glanced at it questioningly, then reached out and took it in his.

"I mean it," he said with sudden earnestness. "I sure-enough apologize. I'm sorry for what I done."

She patted his hand where it still held hers fast and bowed her head to keep back the tears.

"It's all right," she said. "We could

never be happy. It's better to have you go."

"I'll come back!" he said with impulsive gladness. "I'll come back—if you say the word."

"Well—come back, then," she answered. "But not to quarrel; not to haggle, and backbite and scold! Oh, it makes me so ashamed! I used to be reasonable; but it doesn't seem possible now. I can't even save your mine, that you killed a man over and went to prison to defend; I can't even do that but in such a hateful way that you won't accept it as a gift."

"Aw, you take it too hard," protested Rimrock feebly. "Say, come on over her and sit down." He led her reluctantly to the ill-fated balcony, but at the divan she balked and drew back.

"No, not there," she said with a little shudder, and turned back and sank down in a chair.

"Well, all right," agreed Rimrock, but as he drew up another he suddenly divined her thought. "Say, I apologize again," he went on abjectly, "for that time—you know—when she came. I was a Mexican's dog, there's no use talking, but—oh, well, I've been a damned fool."

"You mustn't swear so much," she corrected him gently; and then they gazed at each other in silence. "It's strange," she murmured, "how we hated each other. Almost from the first day, it seems. But no, not the first! I liked you then, Rimrock; better than I ever will again. You were so clean and strong then, so full of enthusiasm; but now—well, I wish you were poor."

"Ain't I broke?" he demanded, and she looked at him sadly as she slowly shook her head.

"No, you're rich," she said. "I'm going to give you back the mine, and then I'm going away."

"But I don't want it!" he said. "Didn't I tell you to keep it? Well, I meant it—every word."

"Ah, yes," she sighed. "You told me—I know—but to-morrow is another day. You'll change your mind then, the way you always do. You see, I know you now."

"You do not!" he denied. "I don't change my mind. I stick to one idea for years. But there's something about you—I don't know what it is—that makes me a natural-born fool."

"Yes. I make you mad," she answered regretfully. "And then you will say and do anything. But now about the mine. I left Mr. Stoddard in the office just biting his fingers with anxiety."

"Well, let him bite 'em," returned Rimrock spitefully, "I hope he eats 'em off. If it hadn't been for him, and that Mrs. Hardesty, and all the other crooks he set on, we'd be friends to-day—and I'd rather have that than all the mines in the world."

"Oh, would you, Rimrock?" she questioned softly. "But no, we could never agree. It isn't the money that has come between us. We blame it, but it's really our own selves. You will gamble and drink, it's your nature to do it, and that I could never forgive. I like you, Rimrock, I'm afraid I can't help it, but I doubt if we can even be friends."

"Aw, now listen!" he pleaded. "It was you drove me to drink. A man can get over those things. But not when he's put in the wrong in everything—he's got to win, sometimes."