

CHAPTER FIVE

I remember walking about the room, and thinking to myself, "This is bad, this is very bad; what shall I do now?" A sort of mad meditation that in this meaningless way became so tense as positively to frighten me. Then it occurred to me that I could do nothing whatever at present, and I was soothed by this sense of powerlessness, which, one would think, ought to have driven me to distraction. I went to sleep ultimately, just as a man sentenced to death goes to sleep, lulled in a sort of ghastly way by the finality of his doom. Even when I awoke it kept me steady, in a way. I washed, dressed, walked, ate, said "Good-morning, Cesar," to the old major-domo I met in the gallery; exchanged grins with the negro boys under the gateway, and watched the mules being ridden out barebacked by other nearly naked negro boys into the sea, with great splashing of water and a noise of voices. A small knot of men, unmistakably Lugareños, stood on the beach, also, watching the mules, and exchanging loud jocular shouts with the blacks. Rio Medio, the dead, forsaken, and desecrated city, was lying, as bare as a skeleton, on the sands. They were yellow; the bay was very blue, the wooded hills very green.

After the mules had been ridden uproariously back to the stables, wet and capering, and shaking their long ears, all the life of the land seemed to take refuge in this vivid colouring. As I looked at it from the outer balcony above the great gate, the small group of Lugareños turned about to look at the Casa Riego.

They recognized me, no doubt, and one of them flourished, threateningly, an arm from under his cloak. I retreated indoors.

This was the only menacing sign, absolutely the only sign that marked this day. It was a day of pause. Seraphina did not leave her apartments; Don Balthasar did not show himself; Father Antonio, hurrying towards the sick room, greeted me with only a wave of the hand. I was not admitted to see Carlos; the nun came to the door, shook her head at me, and closed it gently in my face. Castro, sitting on the floor not very far away, seemed unaware of me in so marked a manner that it inspired me with the idea of not taking the slightest notice of him. Now and then the figure of a maid in white linen and bright petticoat flitted in the upper gallery, and once I fancied I saw the black, rigid carriage of the duenna disappearing behind a pillar.

Señor O'Brien, old Cesar whispered, without looking at me, was extremely occupied in the Cancillería. His midday meal was served him there. I had mine all alone, and then the sunny, heat-laden stillness of siesta-time fell upon the

Castilian dignity of the house.

I sank into a kind of reposeful belief in the work of accident. Something would happen. I did not know how soon and how atrociously my belief was to be justified. I exercised my ingenuity in the most approved lover-fashion--in devising means how to get secret speech with Seraphina. The confounded silly maids fled from my most distant appearance, as though I had the pest. I was wondering whether I should not go simply and audaciously and knock at her door, when I fancied I heard a scratching at mine. It was a very stealthy sound, quite capable of awakening my dormant emotions.

I went to the door and listened. Then, opening it the merest crack, I saw the inexplicable emptiness of the gallery. Castro, on his hands and knees, startled me by whispering at my feet:

"Stand aside, Señor."

He entered my room on all-fours, and waited till I got the door closed before he stood up.

"Even he may sleep sometimes," he said. "And the balustrade has hidden me."

To see this little saturnine bandit, who generally stalked about haughtily, as if the whole Casa belonged to him by right of fidelity, crawl into my room like this was inexpressibly startling. He shook the folds of his cloak, and dropped his hat on the floor.

"Still, it is better so. The very women of the house are not safe," he said. "Señor, I have no mind to be delivered to the English for hanging. But I have not been admitted to see Don Carlos, and, therefore, I must make my report to you. These are Don Carlos' orders. 'Serve him, Castro, when I am dead, as if my soul had passed into his body.'"

He nodded sadly. "Si! But Don Carlos is a friend to me and you--you." He shook his head, and drew me away from the door. "Two Lugareños," he said, "Manuel and another one, did go last night, as directed by the friar"--he supposed--"to meet the Juez in the bush outside Rio Medio."

I had guessed that much, and told him of Manuel's behaviour under my window. How did they know my chamber?

"Bad, bad," muttered Castro. "La Chica told her lover, no doubt." He hissed, and stamped his foot.

She was pretty, but flighty. The lover was a silly boy of decent, Christian parents, who was always hanging about in the low villages. No matter.

What he could not understand was why some boats should have been held in readiness till nearly the morning to tow a schooner outside. Manuel came along at dawn, and dismissed the crews. They had separated, making a great noise on the beach, and yelling, "Death to the Inglez!"

I cleared up that point for him. He told me that O'Brien had the duenna called to his room that morning. Nothing had been heard outside, but the woman came out staggering, with her hand on the wall. He had terrified her. God knows what he had said to her. The widow--as Castro called her--had a son, an escrivano in one of the Courts of Justice. No doubt it was that.

"There it is, Señor," murmured Castro, scowling all round, as if every wall of the room was an enemy. "He holds all the people in his hand in some way. Even I must be cautious, though I am a humble, trusted friend of the Casa!"

"What harm could he do you?" I asked.

"He is civil to me. Amigo Castro here, and Amigo Castro there. Bah! The devil, alone, is his friend! He could deliver me to justice, and get my life sworn away. He could-----Quien sabe? What need he care what he does--a man that can get absolution from the archbishop himself if he likes."

He meditated. "No! there is only one remedy for him." He tiptoed to my ear. "The knife!"

He made a pass in the air with his blade, and I remembered vividly the cockroach he had impaled with such accuracy on board the Thames. His baneful glance reminded me of his murderous capering in the steerage, when he had thought that the only remedy for me was the knife.

He went to the loop-hole, and passed the steel thoughtfully on the stone edge. I had not moved.

"The knife; but what would you have? Before, when I talked of this to Don Carlos, he only laughed at me. That was his way in matters of importance. Now they will not let me come in to him. He is too near God--and the Señorita--why, she is too near the saints for all the great nobility of her spirit. But, que dia-bleria, when I--in my devotion--opened my mouth to her I saw some of that spirit in her eyes...."

There was a slight irony in his voice. "No! Me--Castro! to be told that an English Señora would have dismissed me forever from her presence for such a hint. 'Your Excellency,' I said, 'deign, then, to find it good that I should avoid giving offence to that man. It is not my desire to run my neck into the iron collar.'"

He looked at me fixedly, as if expecting me to make a sign, then shrugged his shoulders.

"Bueno. You see this? Then look to it yourself, Señor. You are to me even as Don Carlos--all except for the love. No English body is big enough to receive his soul. No friend will be left that would risk his very honour of a noble for a man like Tomas Castro. Let me warn you not to leave the Casa, even if a shining angel stood outside the gate and called you by name. The gate is barred, now, night and day. I have dropped a hint to Cesar, and that old African knows more than the Señor would suppose. I cannot tell how soon I may have the opportunity to talk to you again."

He peeped through the crack of the door, then slipped out, suddenly falling at once on his hands and knees, so as to be hidden by the stone balustrade from anybody in the patio. He, too, did not think himself safe.

Early in the evening I descended into the court, and Father Antonio, walking up and down the patio with his eyes on his breviary, muttered to me:

"Sit on this chair," and went on without stopping.

I took a chair near the marble rim of the basin with its border of English flowers, its splashing thread of water. The goldfishes that had been lying motionless, with their heads pointing different ways, glided into a bunch to the fall of my shadow, waiting for crumbs of bread.

Father Antonio, his head down, and the open breviary under his nose, brushed my foot with the skirt of his cassock.

"Have you any plan?"

When he came back, walking very slowly, I said, "None."

At this next turn I pronounced rapidly, "I should like to see Carlos."

He frowned over the edge of the book. I understood that he refused to let me in. And, after all, why should I disturb that dying man? The news about him was that he felt stronger that day. But he was preparing for eternity. Father Antonio's

business was to save souls. I felt horribly crushed and alone. The priest asked, hardly moving his lips: "What do you trust to?"

I had the time to meditate my reply. "Tell Carlos I think of escape by sea."

He made a little sign of assent, turned off towards the staircase, and went back to the sick room.

"The folly of it," I thought. How could I think of it? Escape where? I dared not even show myself outside the Casa. My safety within depended on old Cesar more than on anybody else. He had the key of the gate, and the gate was practically the only thing between me and a miserable death at the hands of the first ruffian I met outside. And with the thought I seemed to stifle in that patio open to the sky.

That gate seemed to cut off the breath of life from me. I was there, as if in a trap. Should I--I asked myself--try to enlighten Don Balthasar? Why not? He would understand me. I would tell him that in his own town, as he always called Rio Medio, there lurked assassination for his guest. That would move him if anything could.

He was then walking with O'Brien after dinner, as he had walked with me on the day of my arrival. Only Seraphina had not appeared, and we three men had sat out the silent meal alone.

They stopped as I approached, and Don Balthasar listened to me benignantly. "Ah, yes, yes! Times have changed." But there was no reason for alarm. There were some undesirable persons. Had they not arrived lately? He turned to O'Brien, who stood by, in readiness to resume the walk, and answered, "Yes, quite lately. Very undesirable," in a matter-of-fact tone. The excellent Don Patricio would take measures to have them removed, the old man soothed me. But it was not really dangerous for any one to go out. Again he addressed O'Brien, who only smiled gently, as much as to say, "What an absurdity!" I must not forget, continued the old man, the veneration for the very name of Riego that still, thank Heaven, survived in these godless and revolutionary times in the Riegos' own town. He straightened his back a little, looking at me with dignity, and then glanced at the other, who inclined his head affirmatively. The utter and complete hopelessness of the position appalled me for a moment. The old man had not put foot outside his door for years, not even to go to church. Father Antonio said Mass for him every day in the little chapel next the dining room. When O'Brien--for his own purposes, and the better to conceal his own connection with the Rio Medio piracies--had persuaded him to go to Jamaica officially, he had been rowed in state to the ship waiting outside. For many years now it had been impossible to enlighten him as to the true condition of affairs. He listened to people's talk as

though it had been children's prattle. I have related how he received Carlos' denunciations. If one insisted, he would draw himself up in displeasure. But in his decay he had preserved a great dignity, a grave firmness that intimidated me a little.

I did not, of course, insist that evening, and, after giving me my dismissal in a gesture of blessing, he resumed his engrossing conversation with O'Brien. It related to the services commemorating his wife's death, those services that, once every twelve months, draped in black all the churches in Havana. A hundred masses, no less, had to be said that day; a distribution of alms had to be made. O'Brien was charged with all the arrangements, and I caught, as they crept past me up and down the patio, snatches of phrases relating to this mournful function, when all the capital was invited to pray for the soul of the illustrious lady. The priest of the church of San Antonio had said this and that; the grand vicar of the diocese had made difficulties about something; however, by the archbishop's special grace, no less than three altars would be draped in the cathedral.

I saw Don Balthasar smile with an ineffable satisfaction; he thanked O'Brien for his zeal, and seemed to lean more familiarly on his arm. His voice trembled with eagerness. "And now, my excellent Don Patricio, as to the number of candles...."

I stood for a while as if rooted to the spot, overwhelmed by my insignificance. O'Brien never once looked my way. Then, hanging my head, I went slowly up the white staircase towards my room.

Cesar, going his rounds along the gallery, shuffled his silk-clad shanks smartly between two young negroes balancing lanthorns suspended on the shafts of their halberds. That little group had a mediaeval and outlandish aspect. Cesar carried a bunch of keys in one hand, his staff of office in the other. He stood aside, in his maroon velvet and gold lace, holding the three-cornered hat under his arm, bowing his gray, woolly head--the most venerable and deferential of majordomos. His attendants, backing against the wall, grounded their halberds heavily at my approach.

He stepped out to intercept me, and, with great discretion, "Señor, a word," he said in his subdued voice. "A moment ago I have been called within the door of our senorita's apartments. She has given me this for your worship, together with many compliments. It is a seal. The Señor will understand."

I took it; it was a tiny seal with her monogram on it. "Yes," I said.

"And Señorita Dona Seraphina has charged me to repeat"--he made a stealthy

sign, as if to counteract an evil influence--"the words, 'Two lives--one death.' The Señor will understand."

"Yes," I said, looking away with a pang at my heart. He touched my elbow. "And to trust Cesar. Señor, I dandled her when she was quite little. Let me most earnestly urge upon your worship not to go near the windows, especially if there is light in your worship's room. Evil men are gazing upon the house, and I have seen myself the glint of a musket at the end of the street. The moon grows fast, too. The señorita begs you to trust Cesar."

"Are there many men?" I asked.

"Not many in sight; I have seen only one. But by signs, open to a man of my experience, I suspect many more to be about." Then, as I looked down on the ground, he added parenthetically, "They are poor shots, one and all, lacking the very firmness of manhood necessary to discharge a piece with a good aim. Still, Señor, I am ordered to entreat you to be cautious. Strange it is that to-night, from the great revelry at the Aldea Bajo, one might think they had just visited an English ship outside."

A ship! a ship! of any sort. But how to get out of the Casa? Murder forbade me even as much as to look out of the windows. Was there a ship outside? Cesar was positive there was not--not since I had arrived. Besides, the empty sea itself was unattainable, it seemed. I pressed the seal to my lips. "Tell the señorita how I received her gift," I said; and the old negro inclined his head lower still. "Tell her that as the letters of her name are graven on this, so are all the words she has spoken graven on my heart."

They went away busily, the lanthorns swinging about the ax-heads of the halberds, Cesar's staff tapping the stones.

I shut my door, and buried my face in the pillows of the state bed. My mental anguish was excessive; action, alone, could relieve it. I had been battling with my thoughts like a man fighting with shadows. I could see no issue to such a struggle, and I prayed for something tangible to encounter--something that one could overcome or go under to. I must have fallen suddenly asleep, because there was a lion in front of me. It lashed its tail, and beyond the indistinct agitation of the brute I saw Seraphina. I tried to shout to her; no voice came out of my throat. And the lion produced a strange noise; he opened his jaws like a door. I sat up. It was like a change of dream. A glare filled my eyes. In the wide doorway of my room, in a group of attendants, I saw a figure in a short black cloak standing, hat on head, and an arm outstretched. It was Don Balthasar. He held himself more erect than I had ever seen him before. Stifled sounds of weeping, a vast, confused

rumour of lamentations, running feet and flammings doors, came from behind him; his aged, dry voice, much firmer and very distinct, was speaking to me.

"You are summoned to attend the bedside of Don Carlos Riego at the hour of death, to help his soul struggling on the threshold of eternity, with your prayers-- as a kinsman and a friend."

A great draught swayed the lights about that black and courtly figure. All the windows and doors of the palace had been flung open for the departure of the struggling soul. Don Balthasar turned; the group of attendants was gone in a moment, with a tramp of feet and jostling of lights in the long gallery.

I ran out after them. A wavering glare came from under the arch, and, through the open gate, I saw the bulky shape of the bishop's coach waiting outside in the moonlight. A strip of cloth fell from step to step down the middle of the broad white stairs. The staircase was brilliantly lighted, and quite empty. The household was crowding the upper galleries; the sobbing murmurs of their voices fell into the deserted patio. The strip of crimson cloth laid for the bishop ran across it from the arch of the stairway to the entrance.

The door of Carlos' room stood wide open; I saw the many candles on a table covered with white linen, the side of the big bed, surpliced figures moving within the room. There was the ringing of small bells, and sighing groans from the kneeling forms in the gallery through which I was making my way slowly.

Castro appeared at my side suddenly. "Señor," he began, with saturnine stoicism, "he is dead. I have seen battlefields-----" His voice broke.

I saw, through the large portal of the death-chamber, Don Balthasar and Seraphina standing at the foot of the bed; the bowed heads of two priests; the bishop, a tiny old man, in his vestments; and Father Antonio, burly and motionless, with his chin in his hand, as if left behind after leading that soul to the very gate of Eternity. All about me, women and men were crossing themselves; and Castro, who for a moment had covered his eyes with his hand, touched my elbow.

"And you live," he said, with sombre emphasis; then, warningly, "You are in great danger now."

I looked around, as if expecting to see an uplifted knife. I saw only a lot of people--household negroes and the women--rising from their knees. Below, the patio was empty.

"The house is defenceless," Castro continued. We heard tumultuous voices under the gate. O'Brien appeared in the doorway of Carlos' room with an attentive and dismayed expression on his face. I do not really think he had anything to do with what then took place. He meant to have me killed outside; but the rabble, excited by Manuel's inflammatory speeches, had that night started from the villages below with the intention of clamouring for my life. Many of their women were with them. Some of the Lugareños carried torches, others had pikes; most of them, however, had nothing but their long knives. They came in a disorderly, shouting mob along the beach, intending this not for an attack, but as a simple demonstration.

The sight of the open gate struck them with wonder. The bishop's coach blocked the entrance, and for a time they hesitated, awed by the mystery of the house and by the rites going on in there. Then two or three bolder spirits stole closer. The bishop's people, of course, did not think of offering any resistance. The very defencelessness of the house restrained the mob for a while. A few more men from outside ran in. Several women began to clamour scoldingly to them to bring the Inglez out. Then the men, encouraging each other in their audacity, advanced further under the arch.

A solitary black, the only guard left at the gate, shouted at them, "Arria! Go back!" It had no effect. More of them crowded in, though, of course, the greater part of that mob remained outside. The black rolled big eyes. He could not stop them; he did not like to leave his post; he dared not fire. "Go back! Go back!" he repeated.

"Not without the Inglez," they answered.

The tumult we had heard arose when the Lugareños suddenly fell upon the sentry, and wrenched his musket from him.

This man, when disarmed, ran away. I saw him running across the patio, on the crimson pathway, to the foot of the staircase. His shouting, "The Lugareños have risen!" broke upon the hush of mourning. Father Antonio made a brusque movement, and Seraphina sent a startled glance in my direction.

The cloistered court, with its marble basin and a jet of water in the centre, remained empty for a moment after the negro had run across; a growing clamour penetrated into it. In the midst of it I heard O'Brien's voice saying, "Why don't they shut the gate?" Immediately afterwards a woman in the gallery cried out in surprise, and I saw the Lugareños pour into the patio.

For a time that motley group of bandits stood in the light, as if intimidated by the great dignity of the house, by the mysterious prestige of the Casa whose interior,

probably, none of them had ever seen before. They gazed about silently, as if surprised to find themselves there.

It looked as if they would have retired if they had not caught sight of me. A murmur of "the Inglez" arose at once. By that time the household negroes had occupied the staircase with what weapons they could find upstairs.

Father Antonio pushed past O'Brien out of the room, and shook his arms over the balustrade.

"Impious men," he cried, "begone from this house of death." His eyes flashed at the ruffians, who stared stupidly from below.

"Give us the Inglez," they growled. Seraphina, from within, cried, "Juan." I was then near the door, but not within the room.

"The Inglez! The heretic! The traitor!" came in sullen, subdued mutter. A hoarse, reckless voice shouted, "Give him to us, and we shall go!"

"You are putting in danger all the lives in this house!" O'Brien hissed at me. "Señorita, pray do not." He stood in the way of Seraphina, who wished to come out.

"It is you!" she cried. "It is you! It is your voice, it is your hand, it is your iniquity!"

He was confounded by her vehemence.

"Who brought him here?" he stammered. "Am I to find one of that accursed brood forever in my way? I take him to witness that for your sake-----"

A formidable roar, "Throw us down the Inglez!" filled the patio. They were gaining assurance down there; and the ferocious clamouring of the mob outside came faintly upon our ears.

O'Brien barred the way. Don Balthasar leaned on his daughter's arm--she very straight, with tears still on her face and indignation in her eye, he bowed, and with his immovable fine features set in the calmness of age. Behind that group there were two priests, one with a scared, white face, another, black-browed, with an exalted and fanatical aspect. The light of the candles from the improvised altar fell on the bishop's small, bald head, emerging with a patient droop from the wide spread of his cope, as though he had been inclosed in a portable gold shrine. He was ready to go.

Don Balthasar, who seemed to have heard nothing, as if suddenly waking up to his duty, left his daughter, and muttering to O'Brien, "Let me precede the bishop," came out, bare-headed, into the gallery. Father Antonio had turned away, and his heavy hand fell on O'Brien's shoulder.

"Have you no heart, no reverence, no decency?" he said. "In the name of everything you respect, I call upon you to stop this sacrilegious outbreak."

O'Brien shook off the priestly hand, and fixed his eyes upon Seraphina. It happened to be looking at his face; he seemed to be ready to go out of his mind. His jealousy, the awful torment of soul and body, made him motionless and speechless.

Seeing Don Balthasar appear by the balustrade, the ruffians below had become silent for a while. His aged, mechanical voice was heard asking distinctly:

"What do these people want?"

Seraphina, from within the room, said aloud, "They are clamouring for the life of our guest." She looked at O'Brien contemptuously, "They are doing this to please you."

"Before God, I have nothing to do with this."

It was true enough, he had nothing to do with this outbreak; and I believe he would have interfered, but, in his dismay at having lost himself in the eyes of Seraphina, in his rage against myself, he did not know how to act. No doubt he had been deceiving himself as to his position with Seraphina. He was a man who in his wishes. His desire of revenge on me, the downfall of his hopes (he could no longer deceive himself), a desperate striving of thought for their regaining, his impulse towards the impossible--all these emotions paralyzed his will.

Don Balthasar beckoned to me.

"Don't go near him," said O'Brien, in a thick, mumbling voice. "I shall-----I must-----"

I put him aside. Don Balthasar took my arm. "Misguided populace," he whispered. "They have been a source of sorrow to me lately. But this wicked folly is incredible. I shall call upon them to come to their senses. My voice-----"

The court below was strongly lighted, so that I saw the bearded, bronzed, wild faces of the Lugareños looking up. We, also, were strongly shown by the light of

the doorway behind us, and by the torches burning in the gallery.

That morning, in my helplessness, I had come to put my trust in accident--in some accident--I hardly knew of what nature--my own death, perhaps--that would find a solution for my responsibilities, put an end to my tormenting thoughts. And now the accident came with a terrible swiftness, at which I shudder to this day.

We were looking down into the patio. Don Balthasar had just said, "You are nowhere as safe as by my side," when I noticed a Lugareño withdrawing himself from the throng about the basin. His face came to me familiarly. He was the pirate with the broken nose, who had had a taste of my fist. He had the sentry's musket on his shoulder, and was slinking away towards the gate.

Don Balthasar extended his hand over the balustrade, and there was a general movement of recoil below. I wondered why the slaves on the stairs did not charge and clear the patio; but I suppose with such a mob outside there was a natural hesitation in bringing the position to an issue. The Lugareños were muttering, "Look at the Inglez!" then cried out together, "Excellency, give up this Inglez!"

Don Balthasar seemed ten years younger suddenly. I had never seen him so imposingly erect.

"Insensate!" he began, without any anger.

"He is going to fire!" yelled Castro's voice somewhere in the gallery.

I saw a red dart in the shadow of the gate. The broken-nosed pirate had fired at me. The report, deadened in the vault, hardly reached my ears. Don Balthazar's arm seemed to swing me back. Then I felt him lean heavily on my shoulder. I did not know what had happened till I heard him say:

"Pray for me, gentlemen."

Father Antonio received him in his arms.

For a second after the shot, the most dead silence prevailed in the court. It was broken by an affrighted howl below: and Seraphina's voice cried piercingly:

"Father!"

The priest, dropping on one knee, sustained the silvery head, with its thin features already calm in death. Don Balthasar had saved my life; and his

daughter flung herself upon the body. O'Brien pressed his hands to his temples, and remained motionless.

I saw the bishop, in his stiff cope, creep up to the group with the motion of a tortoise. And, for a moment, his quavering voice pronouncing the absolution was the only sound in the house.

Then a most fiendish noise broke out below. The negroes had charged, and the Lugareños, struck with terror at the unforeseen catastrophe, were rushing helter-skelter through the gate. The screaming of the maids was frightful. They ran up and down the galleries with their hair streaming. O'Brien passed me by swiftly, muttering like a madman.

I, also, got down into the courtyard in time to strike some heavy blows under the gateway; but I don't know who it was that thrust into my hands the musket which I used as a club. The sudden burst of shrieks, the cries of terror under the vault of the gate, yells of rage and consternation, silenced the mob outside. The Lugareños, appalled at what had happened, shouted most pitifully. They squeaked like the vermin they were. I brought down the clubbed musket; two went down. Of two I am sure. The rush of flying feet swept through between the walls, bearing me along. For a time a black stream of men eddied in the moonlight round the bishop's coach, like a torrent breaking round a boulder. The great heavy machine rocked, mules plunged, torches swayed.

The archway had been cleared. Outside, the slaves were forming in the open space before the Casa, while Cesar, with a few others, laboured to swing the heavy gates to. Hats, torn cloaks, knives strewed the flagstones, and the dim light of the lamps, fastened high up on the walls, fell on the faces of three men stretched out on their backs. Another, lying huddled up in a heap, got up suddenly and rushed out.

The thought of Seraphina clinging to the lifeless body of her father upstairs came to me; it came over me in horror, and I let the musket fall out of my hand. A silence like the silence of despair reigned in the house. She would hate me now. I felt as if I could walk out and give myself up, had it not been for the sight of O'Brien.

He was leaning his shoulders against the wall in the posture of a man suddenly overcome by a deadly disease. No one was looking at us. It came to me that he could not have many illusions left to him now. He looked up wearily, saw me, and, waking up at once, thrust his hands into the pockets of his breeches. I thought of his pistol. No wild hope of love would prevent him, now, from killing me outright. The fatal shot that had put an end to Don Balthasar's life must have

brought to him an awakening worse than death. I made one stride, caught him by both arms swiftly, and pinned him to the wall with all my strength. We struggled in silence.

I found him much more vigorous than I had expected; but, at the same time, I felt at once that I was more than a match for him. We did not say a word. We made no noise. But, in our struggle, we got away from the wall into the middle of the gateway I dared not let go of his arms to take him by the throat. He only tried to jerk and wrench himself away. Had he succeeded, it would have been death for me. We never moved our feet from the spot, fairly in the middle of the archway but nearer to the gate than to the patio. The slaves, formed outside, guarded the bishop's coach, and I do not know that there was anybody else actually with us under the vault of the entrance. We glared into each other's faces, and the world seemed very still around us. I felt in me a passion--not of hate, but of determination to be done with him; and from his face it was impossible to guess his suffering, his despair, or his rage.

In the midst of our straining I heard a sibilant sound. I detached my eyes from his; his struggles redoubled, and, behind him, stealing in towards us from the court, black on the strip of crimson cloth, I saw Tomas Castro. He flung his cloak back. The light of the lanthorn under the keystone of the arch glimmered feebly on the blade of his maimed arm. He made a discreet and bloodcurdling gesture to me with the other.

How could I hold a man so that he should be stabbed from behind in my arms? Castro was running up swiftly, his cloak opening like a pair of sable wings. Collecting all my strength, I forced O'Brien round, and we swung about in a flash. Now he had his back to the gate. My effort seemed to have uprooted him. I felt him give way all over.

As soon as our position had changed, Castro checked himself, and stepped aside into the shadow of the guardroom doorway. I don't think O'Brien had been aware of what had been going on. His strength was overborne by mine. I drove him backwards. His eyes blinked wildly. He bared his teeth. He resisted, as though I had been forcing him over the brink of perdition. His feet clung to the flagstones. I shook him till his head rolled.

"Viper brood!" he spluttered.

"Out you go!" I hissed.

I had found nothing heroic, nothing romantic to say--nothing that would express my desperate resolve to rid the world of his presence. All I could do was to fling

him out. The Casa Riego was all my world--a World full of great pain, great mourning, and love. I saw him pitch headlong under the wheels of the bishop's enormous carriage. The black coachman who had sat aloft, unmoved through all the tumult, in his white stockings and three-cornered hat, glanced down from his high box. And the two parts of the gate came together with a clang of ironwork and a heavy crash that seemed as loud as thunder under that vault.