

CHAPTER SIX

Not even in memory am I willing to live over again those three days when Father Antonio, the old major-domo, and myself would meet each other in the galleries, in the patio, in the empty rooms, moving in the stillness of the house with heavy hearts and desolate eyes, which seemed to demand, "What is there to do?"

Of course, precautions were taken against the Lugareños. They were besieging the Casa from afar. They had established a sort of camp at the end of the street, and they prowled about amongst the old, barricaded houses in their pointed hats, in their rags and finery; women, with food, passed constantly between the villages and the panic-stricken town; there were groups on the beach; and one of the schooners had been towed down the bay, and was lying, now, moored stem and stern opposite the great gate. They did nothing whatever active against us. They lay around and watched, as if in pursuance of a plan traced by a superior authority. They were watching for me. But when, by some mischance, they burnt the roof off the outbuildings that were at some distance from the Casa, their chiefs sent up a deputation of three, with apologies. Those men came unarmed, and, as it were, under Castro's protection, and absolutely whimpered with regrets before Father Antonio. "Would his reverence kindly intercede with the most noble senorita?..."

"Silence! Dare not pronounce her name!" thundered the good priest, snatching away his hand, which they attempted to grab and kiss.

I, in the background, noted their black looks at me even as they cringed. The man who had fired the shot, they said, had expired of his wounds after great torments. Their other dead had been thrust out of the gate before. A long fellow, with slanting eyebrows and a scar on his cheek, called El Rechado, tried to inform Cesar, confidentially, that Manuel, his friend, had been opposed to any encroachment of the Casa's offices, only: "That Domingo-----"

As soon as we discovered what was their object (their apparent object, at any rate), they were pushed out of the gate unceremoniously,--still protesting their love and respect--by the Riego negroes. Castro followed them out again, after exchanging a meaning look with Father Antonio. To live in the two camps, as it were, was a triumph of Castro's diplomacy, of his saturnine mysteriousness. He kept us in touch with the outer world, coming in under all sorts of pretences, mostly with messages from the bishop, or escorting the priests that came in relays to pray by the bodies of the two last Riegos lying in state, side by side, rigid in black velvet and white lace ruffles, on the great bed dragged out into the

middle of the room.

Two enormous wax torches in iron stands flamed and guttered at the door; a black cloth draped the emblazoned shields; and the wind from the sea, blowing through the open casement, inclined all together the flames of a hundred candles, pale in the sunlight, extremely ardent in the night. The murmur of prayers for these souls went on incessantly; I have it in my ears now. There would be always some figure of the household kneeling in prayer at the door; or the old major-domo would come in to stand at the foot, motionless for a time; or, through the open door, I would see the cassock of Father Antonio, flung on his knees, with his forehead resting on the edge of the bed, his hands clasped above his tonsure.

Apart from what was necessary for defence, all the life of the house seemed stopped. Not a woman appeared; all the doors were closed; and the numbing desolation of a great bereavement was symbolized by Don Bal-thasar's chair in the patio, which had remained lying overturned in full view of every part of the house, till I could bear the sight no longer, and asked Cesar to have it put away. "Si, Señor," he said deferentially, and a few tears ran suddenly down his withered cheeks. The English flowers had been trampled down; an unclean hat floated on the basin, now here, now there, frightening the goldfish from one side to the other.

And Seraphina. It seems not fitting that I should write of her in these days. I hardly dared let my thoughts approach her, but I had to think of her all the time. Her sorrow was the very soul of the house.

Shortly after I had thrown O'Brien out the bishop had left, and then I learned from Father Antonio that Seraphina had been carried away to her own apartments in a fainting condition. The excellent man was almost incoherent with distress and trouble of mind, and walked up and down, his big head drooping on his capacious chest, the joints of his entwined fingers cracking. I had met him in the gallery, as I was making my way back to Carlos' room in anxiety and fear, and we had stepped aside into a large saloon, seldom used, above the gateway. I shall never forget the restless, swift pacing of that burly figure, while, feeling utterly crushed, now the excitement was over, I leaned against a console. Three long bands of moonlight fell, chilly bluish, into the vast room, with its French Empire furniture stiffly arranged about the white walls.

"And that man?" he asked me at last.

"I could have killed him with my own hands," I said. "I was the stronger. He had his pistols on him, I am certain, only I could not be a party to an assassination...."

"Oh, my son, it would have been no sin to have exerted the strength which God had blessed you with," he interrupted. "We are allowed to kill venomous snakes, wild beasts; we are given our strength for that, our intelligence...." And all the time he walked about, wringing his hands.

"Yes, your reverence," I said, feeling the most miserable and helpless of lovers on earth; "but there was no time. If I had not thrown him out, Castro would have stabbed him in the back in my very hands. And that would have been-----"
Words failed me.

I had been obliged not only to desist myself, but to save his life from Castro. I had been obliged! There had been no option. Murderous enemy as he was, it seemed to me I should never have slept a wink all the rest of my life.

"Yes, it is just, it is just. What else? Alas!" Father Antonio repeated disconnectedly. "Those feelings implanted in your breast---I have served my king, as you know, in my sacred calling, but in the midst of war, which is the outcome of the wickedness natural to our fallen state. I understand; I understand. It may be that God, in his mercy, did not wish the death of that evil man--not yet, perhaps. Let us submit. He may repent." He snuffled aloud. "I think of that poor child," he said through his handkerchief. Then, pressing my arm with his vigorous fingers, he murmured, "I fear for her reason."

It may be imagined in what state I spent the rest of that sleepless night. At times, the thought that I was the cause of her bereavement nearly drove me mad.

And there was the danger, too.

But what else could I have done? My whole soul had recoiled from the horrible help Castro was bringing us at the point of his blade. No love could demand from me such a sacrifice.

Next day Father Antonio was calmer. To my trembling inquiries he said something consolatory as to the blessed relief of tears. When not praying fervently in the mortuary chamber, he could be seen pacing the gallery in a severe aloofness of meditation. In the evening he took me by the arm, and, without a word, led me up a narrow and winding staircase. He pushed a small door, and we stepped out on a flat part of the roof, flooded in moonlight.

The points of land dark with the shadows of trees and broken ground clasped the waters of the bay, with a body of shining white mists in the centre; and, beyond, the vast level of the open sea, touched with glitter, appeared infinitely sombre

under the luminous sky.

We stood back from the parapet, and Father Antonio threw out a thick arm at the splendid trail of the moon upon the dark water.

"This is the only way," he said.

He had a warm heart under his black robe, a simple and courageous comprehension of life, this priest who was very much of a man; a certain grandeur of resolution when it was a matter of what he regarded as his principal office.

"This is the way," he repeated.

Never before had I been struck so much by the gloom, the vastness, the emptiness of the open sea, as on that moonlight night. And Father Antonio's deep voice went on:

"My son, since God has made use of the nobility of your heart to save that sinner from an unshriven death-----"

He paused to mutter, "Inscrutable! inscrutable!" to himself, sighed, and then:

"Let us rejoice," he continued, with a completely unconcealed resignation, "that you have been the chosen instrument to afford him an opportunity to repent."

His tone changed suddenly.

"He will never repent," he said with great force. "He has sold his soul and body to the devil, like those magicians of old of whom we have records."

He clicked his tongue with compunction, and regretted his want of charity. It was proper for me, however, as a man having to deal with a world of wickedness and error, to act as though I did not believe in his repentance.

"The hardness of the human heart is incredible; I have seen the most appalling examples." And the priest meditated. "He is not a common criminal, however," he added profoundly.

It was true. He was a man of illusions, ministering to passions that uplifted him above the fear of consequences, Young as I was, I understood that, too. There was no safety for us in Cuba while he lived. Father Antonio nodded dismally.

"Where to go?" I asked. "Where to turn? Whom can we trust? In whom can we repose the slightest confidence? Where can we look for hope?"

Again the padre pointed to the sea. The hopeless aspect of its moonlit and darkling calm struck me so forcibly that I did not even ask how he proposed to get us out there. I only made a gesture of discouragement. Outside the Casa, my life was not worth ten minutes' purchase. And how could I risk her there? How could I propose to her to follow me to an almost certain death? What could be the issue of such an adventure? How could we hope to devise such secret means of getting away as would prevent the Lugareños pursuing us? I should perish, then, and she...

Father Antonio seemed to lose his self-control suddenly.

"Yes," he cried. "The sea is a perfidious element, but what is it to the blind malevolence of men?" He gripped my shoulder. "The risk to her life," he cried; "the risk of drowning, of hunger, of thirst--that is all the sea can do. I do not think of that. I love her too much. She is my very own spiritual child; and I tell you, Señor, that the unholy intrigue of that man endangers not her happiness, not her fortune alone--it endangers her innocent soul itself."

A profound silence ensued. I remembered that his business was to save souls. This old man loved that young girl whom he had watched growing up, defenceless in her own home; he loved her with a great strength of paternal instinct that no vow of celibacy can extinguish, and with a heroic sense of his priestly duty. And I was not to say him nay. The sea--so be it. It was easier to think of her dead than to think of her immured; it was better that she should be the victim of the sea than of evil men; that she should be lost with me than to me.

Father Antonio, with that naïve sense of the poetry of the sky he possessed, apostrophized the moon, the "gentle orb," as he called it, which ought to be weary of looking at the miseries of the earth. His immense shadow on the leads seemed to fling two vast fists over the parapet, as if to strike at the enemies below, and without discussing any specific plan we descended. It was understood that Seraphina and I should try to escape--I won't say by sea, but to the sea. At best, to ask the charitable help of some passing ship, at worst to go out of the world together.

I had her confidence. I will not tell of my interview with her; but I shall never forget my sensations of awe, as if entering a temple, the melancholy and soothing intimacy of our meeting, the dimly lit loftiness of the room, the vague form of La Chica in the background, and the frail, girlish figure in black with a very pale, delicate face. Father Antonio was the only other person present, and chided her

for giving way to grief. "It is like rebellion--like rebellion," he denounced, turning away his head to wipe a tear hastily; and I wondered and thanked God that I should be a comfort to that tender young girl, whose lot on earth had been difficult, whose sorrow was great but could not overwhelm her indomitable spirit, which held a promise of sweetness and love.

Her courage was manifest to me in the gentle and sad tones of her voice. I made her sit in a vast armchair of tapestry, in which she looked lost like a little child, and I took a stool at her feet. This is an unforgettable hour in my life in which not a word of love was spoken, which is not to be written of. The burly shadow of the priest lay motionless from the window right across the room; the flickering flame of a silver lamp made an unsteady white circle of light on the lofty ceiling above her head. A clock was beating gravely somewhere in the distant gloom, like the unperturbed heart of that silence, in which our understanding of each other was growing, even into a strength fit to withstand every tempest.

"Escape by the sea," I said aloud. "It would be, at least, like two lovers leaping hand in hand off a high rock, and nothing else."

Father Antonio's bass voice spoke behind us.

"It is better to jeopardize the sinful body that returns to the dust of which it is made than the redeemed soul, whose awful lot is eternity. Reflect."

Seraphina hung her head, but her hand did not tremble in mine.

"My daughter," the old man continued, "you have to confide your fate to a noble youth of elevated sentiments, and of a truly chivalrous heart...."

"I trust him," said Seraphina.

And, as I heard her say this, it seemed really to me as if, in very truth, my sentiments were noble and my heart chivalrous. Such is the power of a girl's voice. The door closed on us, and I felt very humble.

But in the gallery Father Antonio leaned heavily on my shoulder.

"I shall be a lonely old man," he whispered faintly. "After all these years! Two great nobles; the end of a great house--a child I had seen grow up.... But I am less afraid for her now."

I shall not relate all the plans we made and rejected. Everything seemed impossible. We knew from Castro that O'Brien had gone to Havana, either to take

the news of Don Balthasar's death himself, or else to prevent the news spreading there too soon. Whatever his motive for leaving Rio Medio, he had left orders that the house should be respected under the most awful penalties, and that it should be watched so that no one left it. The Englishman was to be killed at sight. Not a hair on anybody else's head was to be touched.

To escape seemed impossible; then on the third day the thing came to pass. The way was found. Castro, who served me as if Carlos' soul had passed into my body, but looked at me with a saturnine disdain, had arranged it all with Father Antonio.

It was the day of the burial of Carlos and Don Balthasar. That same day Castro had heard that a ship had been seen becalmed a long way out to sea. It was a great opportunity; and the funeral procession would give the occasion for my escape. There was in Rio Medio, as in all Spanish towns amongst the respectable part of the population, a confraternity for burying the dead, "The Brothers of Pity," who, clothed in black robes and cowls, with only two holes for the eyes, carried the dead to their resting-place, unrecognizable and unrecognized in that pious work. A "Brother of Pity" dress would be brought for me into Father Antonio's room. Castro was confident as to his ability of getting a boat. It would be a very small and dangerous one, but what would I have, if I neither killed my enemy, nor let any one else kill him for me, he commented with sombre sarcasm.

A truce of God had been called, and the burial was to take place in the evening when the mortal remains of the last of the Riegos would be laid in the vault of the cathedral of what had been known as their own province, and had, in fact, been so for a time under a grant from Charles V.

Early in the day I had a short interview with Seraphina. She was resolute. Then, long before dark, I slipped into Father Antonio's room, where I was to stay until the moment to come out and mingle with the throng of other Brothers of Pity. Once with the bodies in the crypt of the cathedral, I was to await Seraphina there, and, together, we should slip through a side door on to the shore. Cesar, to throw any observer off the scent (three Lugareños were to be admitted to see the bodies put in their coffins), posted two of the Riego negroes with loaded muskets on guard before the door of my empty room, as if to protect me.

Then, just as dusk fell, Father Antonio, who had been praying silently in a corner, got up, blew his nose, sighed, and suddenly enfolded me in his powerful arms for an instant.

"I am an old man--a poor priest," he whispered jerkily into my ear, "and the sea is very perfidious. And yet it favours the sons of your nation. But, remember--the

child has no one but you. Spare her."

He went off; stopped. "Inscrutable! inscrutable!" he murmured, lifting upwards his eyes. He raised his hand with a solemn slowness. "An old man's blessing can do no harm," he said humbly. I bowed my head. My heart was too full for speech, and the door closed. I never saw him again, except later on in his surplice for a moment at the gate, his great bass voice distinct in the chanting of the priests conducting the bodies.

The Lugareños would respect the truce arranged by the bishop.

No man of them but the three had entered the Casa. Already, early in the night, their black-haired women, with coarse faces and melancholy eyes, were kneeling in rows under the black mantillas on the stone floor of the cathedral, praying for the repose of the soul of Seraphina's father, of that old man who had lived among them, unapproachable, almost invisible, and as if infinitely removed. They had venerated him, and many of them had never set eyes on his person.

It strikes me, now, as strange and significant of a mysterious human need, the need to look upwards towards a superiority inexpressibly remote, the need of something to idealize in life. They had only that and, maybe, a sort of love as idealized and as personal for the mother of God, whom, also, they had never seen, to whom they trusted to save them from a devil as real. And they had, moreover, a fear even more real of O'Brien.

And, when one comes to think of it, in putting on the long spectacled robe of a Brother of Pity, in walking before the staggering bearers of the great coffin with a tall crucifix in my hand, in thus taking advantage of their truce of God, I was, also, taking advantage of what was undoubtedly their honour--a thing that handicapped them quite as much as had mine when I found myself unable to strike down O'Brien. At that time, I was a great deal too excited to consider this, however. I had many things to think of, and the immense necessity of keeping a cool head.

It was, after all, Tomas Castro to whom all the credit of the thing belonged. Just after it had fallen very dark, he brought me the black robes, a pair of heavy pistols to gird on under them, and the heavy staff topped by a crucifix. He had an air of sarcastic protest in the dim light of my room, and he explained with exaggeratedly plain words precisely what I was to do--which, as a matter of fact, was neither more nor less than merely following in his own footsteps.

"And, oh, Señor," he said sardonically, "if you desire again to pillow your head upon the breast of your mother; if you would again see your sister, who, alas! by

bewitching my Carlos, is at the heart of all our troubles; if you desire again to see that dismal land of yours, which politeness forbids me to curse, I would beg of you not to let the mad fury of your nation break loose in the midst of these thieves and scoundrels."

He peered intently into the spectacled eyeholes of my cowl, and laid his hand on his sword-hilt. His small figure, tightly clothed in black velvet from chin to knee, swayed gently backwards and forwards in the light of the dim candle, and his grotesque shadow flitted over the ghostly walls of the great room. He stood gazing silently for a minute, then turned smartly on his heels, and, with a gesture of sardonic respect, threw open the door for me.

"Pray, Señor," he said, "that the moon may not rise too soon."

We went swiftly down the colonnades for the last time, in the pitch darkness and into the blackness of the vast archway. The clumping staff of my heavy crucifix drew hollow echoes from the flagstones. In the deep sort of cave behind us, lit by a dim lanthorn, the negroes waited to unbar the doors. Castro himself began to mutter over his beads. Suddenly he said:

"It is the last time I shall stand here. Now, there is not any more a place for me on the earth."

Great flashes of light began to make suddenly visible the tall pillars of the immense mournful palace, and after a long time, absolutely without a sound, save the sputter of enormous torches, an incredibly ghostly body of figures, black-robed from head to foot, with large eyeholes peering fantastically, swayed into the great arch of the hall. Above them was the enormous black coffin. It was a sight so appalling and unexpected that I stood gazing at them without any power to move, until I remembered that I, too, was such a figure. And then, with an ejaculation of impatience, Tomas Castro caught at my hand, and whirled me round.

The great doors had swung noiselessly open, and the black night, bespangled with little flames, was framed in front of me. He suddenly unsheathed his portentous sword, and, hanging his great hat upon his maimed arm, stalked, a pathetic and sinister figure of grief, down the great steps. I followed him in the vivid and extraordinary compulsion of the sinister body that, like one fabulous and enormous monster, swayed impenetrably after me.

My heart beat till my head was in a tumultuous whirl, when thus, at last, I stepped out of that house--but I suppose my grim robes cloaked my emotions--though, seeing very clearly through the eyeholes, it was almost incredible to me

that I was not myself seen. But these Brothers of Pity were a secret society, known to no man except their spiritual head, who chose them in turn, and not knowing even each other. Their good deeds of charity were, in that way, done by pure stealth. And it happened that their spiritual director was the Father Antonio himself. At that foot of the palace steps, drawn back out of our way, stood the great glass coach of state, containing, even then, the woman who was all the world to me, invisible to me, unattainable to me, not to be comforted by me, even as her great griefs were to me invisible and unassuageable. And there between us, in the great coffin, held on high by the grim, shadowy beings, was all that she loved, invisible, unattainable, too, and beyond all human comfort. Standing there, in the midst of the whispering, bare-headed, kneeling, and villainous crowd, I had a vivid vision of her pale, dim, pitiful face. Ah, poor thing! she was going away for good from all that state, from all that seclusion, from all that peace, mutely, and with a noble pride of quietness, into a world of dangers, with no head but mine to think for her, no arm but mine to ward off all the great terrors, the immense and dangerous weight of a new world.

In the twinkle of innumerable candles, the priceless harness of the white mules, waiting to draw the great coach after us, shone like streaks of ore in an infinitely rich silver mine. A double line of tapers kept the road to the cathedral, and a crowd of our negroes, the bell muzzles of their guns suggested in the twinkling light, massed themselves round the coach. Outside the lines were the crowd of rapsallions in red jackets, their women and children--all the population of the Aldea Bajo, groaning. The whole crowd got into motion round us, the white mules plunging frantically, the coach swaying. Ahead of me inarched the sardonic, gallantly grotesque figure of true Tomas, his sword point up, his motions always jaunty. Ahead of him, again, were the white robes of many priests, a cluster of tall candles, a great jewelled cross, and a tall saint's figure swaying, more than shoulder high, and disappearing up above into the darkness. For me, under my cowl, it was suffocatingly hot; but I seemed to move forward, following, swept along without any volition of my own. It appeared an immensely long journey; and then, as we went at last up the cathedral steps, a voice cried harshly, "Death to the heretic!" My heart stood still. I clutched frantically at the handle of a pistol that I could not disengage from folds of black cloth. But, as a matter of fact, the cry was purely a general one; I was supposed to be shut up in the palace still.

The sudden glow, the hush, the warm breath of incense, and the blaze of light turned me suddenly faint; my ears buzzed, and I heard strange sounds.

The cathedral was a mass of heads. Everyone in Rio Medio was present, or came trooping in behind us. The better class was clustered near the blaze of gilding, mottled marble, wax flowers, and black and purple drapery that vaulted over the two black coffins in the choir. Down in the unlit body of the church the riff-raff of

O'Brien kept the doors.

I followed the silent figure of Tomas Castro to the bishop's own stall, right up in the choir, and we became hidden from the rest by the forest of candles round the catafalque. Up the centre of the great church, and high over the heads of the kneeling people, came the great coffin, swaying, its bearers robbed of half their grimness by the blaze of lights. Tomas Castro suddenly caught at my sleeve whilst they were letting the coffin down on to the bier. He drew me unnoticed into the shadow behind the bishop's stall. In the swift transit, I had a momentary glance of a small, black figure, infinitely tiny in that quiet place, and infinitely solitary, veiled in black from head to foot, coming alone up the centre of the nave.

I stood hidden there beside the bishop's stall for a long time, and then suddenly I saw the black figure alone in the gallery, looking down upon me--from the loggia of the Riegos. I felt suddenly an immense calm; she was looking at me with unseeing eyes, but I knew and felt that she would follow me now to the end of the world. I had no more any doubts as to the issue of our enterprise; it was open to no unsuccess with a figure so steadfast engaged in it; it was impossible that blind fate should be insensible to her charm, impossible that any man could strike at or thwart her.

Monks began to sing; a great brass instrument grunted lamentably; in the body of the building there was silence. The bishop and his supporters moved about, as if aimlessly, in front of the altar; the chains of the gold censors clicked ceaselessly. Seraphina's head had sunk forward out of my sight. All the heads of the cathedral bowed down, and suddenly, from round the side of the stall, a hand touched mine, and a voice said, "It is time." Very softly, as if it were part of the rite, I was drawn round the stall through a door in the side of the screen. As we went out, in his turnings, the old bishop gave us the benediction. Then the door closed on the glory of his robes, and in a minute, in the darkness we were rustling down a circular narrow staircase into the dimness of a crypt, lit by the little blue flame of an oil lamp. From above came sounds like thunder, immense, vibrating; we were immediately under the choir. Through the cracks round a large stone showed a parallelogram of light.

In the dimness I had a glimpse of the face of my conductor--a thin, wonderfully hollow-cheeked lay brother. He began, with great gentleness, to assist me out of my black robes, and then he said:

"The senorita will be here very soon with the Señor Tomas," and then added, with an infinitely sad and tender, dim smile:

"Will not the Señor Caballero, if it is not repugnant, say a prayer for the repose

of..." He pointed gently upwards to the great flagstone above which was the coffin of Don Balthasar and Carlos. The priest himself was one of those very holy, very touching---perhaps, very stupid--men that one finds in such places. With his dim, wistful face he is very present in my memory. He added: "And that the good God of us all may keep it in the Señor Caballero's heart to care well for the soul of the dear senorita."

"I am a very old man," he whispered, after a pause. He was indeed an old man, quite worn out, quite without hope on earth. "I have loved the senorita since she was a child. The Señor Caballero takes her from us. I would have him pray--to be made worthy."

Whilst I was doing it, the place began to be alive with whispers of garments, of hushed footsteps, a small exclamation in a gruff voice. Then the stone above moved out of its place, and a blaze of light fell down from the choir above.

I saw beside me Seraphina's face, brilliantly lit, looking upwards. Tomas Castro said:

"Come quickly... come quickly... the prayers are ending; there will be people in the street." And from above an enormous voice intoned:

"Tu.. u.. ba mi.. i.. i..rum..." And the serpent groaned discordantly. The end of a great box covered with black velvet glided forward above our heads; ropes were fastened round it. The priest had opened a door in the shadowy distance, beside a white marble tablet in the thick walls. The coffin up above moved forward a little again; the ropes were readjusted with a rattling, wooden sound. A dry, formal voice intoned from above:

"Èrit... Justus Ab auditione..."

From the open door the priest rattled his keys, and said, "Come, come," impatiently.

I was horribly afraid that Seraphina would shriek or faint, or refuse to move. There was very little time. The pirates might stream out of the front of the cathedral as we came from the back; the bishop had promised to accentuate the length of the service. But Seraphina glided towards the open door; a breath of fresh air reached us. She looked back once. The coffin was swinging right over the hole, shutting out the light. Tomas Castro took her hand and said, "Come... come," with infinite tenderness.

He had been sobbing convulsedly. We went up some steps, and the door shut

behind us with a sound like a sigh of relief.

We walked fast, in perfect blackness and solitude, on the deserted beach between the old town and the village. Every soul was near the cathedral. A boat lay half afloat. To the left in the distance the light of the schooner opposite the Casa Riego wavered on the still water.

Suddenly Tomas Castro said:

"The senorita never before set foot to the open ground."

At once I lifted her into the boat. "Shove off, Tomas," I said, with a beating heart.