

The Girl of the Golden West

by DAVID BELASCO



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INTRODUCTORY PAGE

The Girl of the Golden West is a theatrical play written, produced and directed by David Belasco and later made into an opera, *La fanciulla del West* by Puccini. The four-act melodrama set in the California Gold Rush opened at the old Belasco Theatre in New York on November 14, 1905 and ran for 224 performances. Blanche Bates originated the role of The Girl, Robert C. Hilliard played Dick Johnson, and Frank Keenan played Jack Rance. Bates was joined by Charles Millward and Cuyler Hastings for two-week Broadway runs in 1907 and 1908. William Furst composed the play's incidental music. The play toured throughout the US for several years, and was made into four films, in 1915, 1923, 1930 and 1938. Belasco wrote a novel based on the play in 1911. *Wikipedia*.

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The Girl of the Golden West

A Play, In Four Acts

“In those strange days, people coming from -- God knows where, joined forces in that far western land, and, according to the rude custom of the camp, their very names were soon lost and unrecorded, and here they struggled, laughed, gambled, cursed, killed, loved and worked out their strange destinies in a manner incredible to us of to-day. Of one thing only we are sure -- they lived!

Early History of California

The Girl of the Golden West

CAST

The Girl	Blanche Bates
Wowkle, the Fox, <i>Billy's squaw</i>	Harriet Sterling
Dick Johnson, <i>a stranger (Ramerrez, the road-agent)</i>	Robert Hilliard
Jack Rance, <i>gambler and sheriff</i>	Frank Keenan
Sonora Slim	John W. Cope
Trinidad Joe	James Kirkwood
Nick, <i>bartender at the "Polka"</i>	Thomas J. McGrane
The Sidney Duck, <i>a faro dealer</i>	Horace James
Jim Larkens	Fred. Maxwell
"Happy" Haliday	Richard Hoyer
"Handsome" Charlie	Clifford Hipple
Deputy Sheriff	T. Hayes Hunter
Billy Jackrabbit, <i>an Indian</i>	J. H. Benrimo
Ashby, <i>Well-Fargo agent</i>	J. Al. Sawtelle
José Castro, <i>ex padrona of the bull fights and horse-breaker, now with the Ramerrez's band</i>	Roberto Deshon
Rider of the Pony Express	Lowell Sherman
Jake Wallace, <i>a traveling camp minstrel</i>	Ed. A. Tester
Bucking Billy, <i>from Watson's</i>	A. M. Beattie
The Lookout	Fred Sidney
A Faro Dealer	William Wild
The Ridge Boy	Ira M. Flick
Joe	H. L. Wilson
Concertina Player	Ignazio Biondi

Citizens of the Camp and Boys of the Ridge

The Girl of the Golden West

TIME. *During the days of gold fever, 1849-1850*

PLACE. *Cloudy Mountain California, a mining camp.*

First Picture. In the Sierras. A glimpse of the home of the Girl on Cloudy Mountain

Second Picture. At the foot of Cloudy Mountain, showing the place of business of the Girl. The "Polka" saloon.

ACT I

In the "Polka" saloon. Twelve o'clock at night. The Girl and the Stranger.

ACT II

In the home of the Girl, one o'clock in the morning. "Two people who came from nothing.

ACT III

The dance-hall of the "Polka." A few days later. Nine o'clock in the morning

"No star is ever lost we once have seen,
We always may be what we might have been."

ACT IV

The Last Picture. The boundless prairies of the West. At the dawn of a day
about a week later.

"Oh, my beautiful West --
Oh, my California!"

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ACT I

The two scenes, which precede the dialogue of the play, are not drawn in detail, but are merely a few lines and lights to show the steep snow-tipped Sierras, the trail, the silent California night, deep ravines, and cabins of the miners of '49 hid amongst the manzanitas and pines; in fact, the scene represents a little world by itself, drawn in a few crude strokes, to explain more than the author could tell in a thousand pages.

The curtain rises to a glimpse of Cloudy Mountain, in the Sierras. The peak is white, the sky above very blue, and the moon which seems strangely near, shines on the steep trail leading up to the cabin of the Girl. A lamp, placed in the cabin window by Wowkle, the squaw, shows that the Girl has not yet come home from her place of business, the Polka Saloon.

This scene shifts to an exterior view of the Polka Saloon, and the miners' cabins at the foot of Cloudy Mountain. The cheerful glow of kerosene lamps, the rattle of poker chips, and an occasional "whoop," show that life in the Polks is in full swing. The strains of "Dooda Day" are heard from within, the singer accompanying himself on the concertina:

"Camptown ladies, sing this song,

Dooda! Dooda!

Camptown race track, five miles long,

Dooda! Dooda! Day.

G'wine to run all night,

G'wine to ruin all day,

Bet my money on a bob-tail nag,

Somebody bet on de bay."

As the scene shifts to the interior of the Polka, we see a large square barroom, built of rough pine boards. A pair of scales for weighing gold-dust, and a dice-box

used to “shake for drinks,” are on the bar. Behind the bar on a shelf are liquors, cigars, and chewing tobacco.

The till contains one and two bit pieces, Mexican dollars, and slugs of gold (\$50). The same is made out of an empty whiskey keg. Boxes and cans of provision lie on the floor, and strings of red peppers hang from the rude rafters. A stuffed grizzly bear graces the scene, a small green parasol in one paw, a battered old silk hat on its head. An odd collection of hats and caps are stuck on the prongs of a pair of elk antlers on the wall, and several saddles lie on the floor under the antlers.

The furniture is composed of pine chairs, a faro table, a poker table, and an old whittled desk at which the miners write their rare letters to those at home.

A \$5000 reward for the road-agent, Ramerrez, or information leading to his capture, signed by Wells-Fargo, is tacked to the back of the door. The platform on which a camp minstrel is singing “Dooda Day” is protected by a piece of sheet iron which the musician can lift as a shield to ward off stray bullets in case of a sudden quarrel. The room is heated by a blazing pine log fire in an adobe quarrel. The room is heated by a blazing pine log fire in an adobe fireplace. A square opening in the wall leads to the dance-hall left; a ladder, resting against a balcony over the bar, enables the bartender to ascend in case of trouble and cast a quick glance over both rooms.

As the interior of the barroom is disclosed, Sonora Slim, a tall, lanky miner with an emphatic manner, and Trinidad Joe, his partner, are playing at faro. The dealer is Sid," an Australian known as "Sidney Duck," fat, greasy, unctuous and cowardly. He is an expert at fancy shuffling. His even voice is heard from time to time, murmuring below the dialogue, as the game goes on. A case-keeper and lookout complete the group at the faro table. Billy Jackrabbit, a full-blooded Indian, lazy, shifty and beady-eyed, wearing moccasins, odds and ends of a white man's costume, and a quantity of brass jewelry, is watching the game. He frequents the barroom, picking up cigar butts, and occasionally, when the opportunity presents itself, he steals a drink.

Handsome Charlie, a big picturesque miner, is drinking at the bar with Happy Haliday, a long-legged fellow, high-booted and spurred. Nick, the bartender, is busy during the act carrying brings into the dance-hall and returning to those in the barroom. He wears 'Frisco trousers, very high-heeled boots, and a flashy necktie, a gay velvet vest. He combs his head over his forehead in a cowlick.

SONORA. *(Joining the singer who is accompanying himself on the concertina).* "Dooda!

Dooda! Day." *(To the faro-dealer)* What did that last eight do?

SID. Lose.

SONORA. Well, let the tail go with the hide.

(Nick, who has entered, sets a few fresh candles about and give a drink to the concertina player who does into the dance-hall.)

TRINIDAD. How many times did the ace win?"

SID. Three times.

BILLY JACKRABBIT. Give Billy Jackrabbit four two dolla-Mexican chips.

(Sidney gives some chips to the Indian. As the music starts in the dance-hall, and the shuffling of feet is heard, Happy, unable to resist, gives a long whoop.)

HAPPY. Root hog or die!

SONORA. Se here, gamboleer Sid, you're too lucky.

TRINIDAD. You be! More chips, Australiar.

(Sid gives some chips to Trinidad. The proprietor of a wheel-of-fortune, which is set in the dance-hall, is heard to call in a professional voice.)

PROPRIETOR OF THE WHEEL-OF-FORTUNE. And round goes the wheel!

HAPPY'S VOICE. *(Heard above the music)*. Git, you loafer!

(A muffled shot is heard. The music stops abruptly)

A VOICE. *(From the dance-hall)* Missed!

(Nick hastens off, not forgetting to take a bottle and glasses with him. During the excitement, Billy Jackrabbit steals four cigars from a box on the bar.)

PROPRIETOR OF THE WHEEL-OF-FORTUNE. The Lone star now rises!

(The music continues and Nick re-enters, giving the Indian a suspicious glance. Billy Jackrabbit decided to take himself off for a short time.)

NICK. *(Explaining as loud whoops are heard)*. Boys from the Ridge -- cuttin' up in the dance-hall. Hy're you, Jim?

(Jim Larkens, shabby and despondent, a minor who has not struck it rich, returns Nick's greeting, gets paper, a pen and ink from the bar, and sits at the desk to write the usual sad letter to his family in the East.)

SONORA. *(Looking towards the dancers with disgust).* I don't dance for men for partners. When I chassay, Trinidad, I want a feminine piece of flesh and blood -- with garters on!

TRINIDAD. You bet!

SONORA. I say, Nick. *(Going to the bar, confidentially.)* Has the Girl said anything more about me to-day?

NICK. *(Lying as usual).* Well, you got the first chance.

SONORA. *(Grinning).* Yes? Cigars for the boys.

(Nick brings a box of cigars to the faro table, and the men smoke.)

VOICE OF THE FIDDLER. *(Calling in time to dance music).*

“First lady swing with the right hand gent,
With the left hand gent, with the right hand gent,
First lady swing with the left hand gent,
And -- lady in the center, and gents all around!”

(During this, two men from the rival mining camp at the Ridge, enter -- dancing up to the bar.)

SID. Hello, boys! 'Ow's things at the Ridge?

ONE OF THE RIDGE MEN. *(Defiantly).* Wipes this camp off the map.

SONORA. What?

TRINIDAD. Say it again!

(Nick persuades the Ridge boys to retire to avert bloodshed, and they disappear with a final defiant whoop as Jake Wallace, a favorite camp minstrel, who journeys from one camp to another, is heard in the road outside, playing on his banjo and singing.)

JAKE WALLACE.

“Wait for the wagon -- wait for the wagon --

Wait for the wagon and we’ll all take a ride.

Wait for the wagon and we’ll all take a ride.”

NICK. *(Announcing in extravagant style)* Aw! Here he is, boys -- just up from the Ridge -- Jack Wallace, the camp favorite!

(Jake Wallace enters, carrying a banjo, his face half blackened. He wears a long minstrel’s over his heavy coat, flapping shoes, and a “stovepipe” hat. He is a typical camp minstrel.)

SONORA. Howdy, Jake!

HANDSOME. Hello, Jake, old man! How be you?

TRINIDAD, SID and the CASE-KEEPER. Hello, Jake.

JAKE. *(Nods, smiling, seats himself on the musician’s stand, in the musician’s chair.)*

Hello, boys! My first selection, friends, will be, “The Little -- “

SONORA. Aw -- give us “Old Dog Tray,”

(Jake tunes up.)

TRINIDAD. *(Apart to Nick)*. Nick, have you saw the Girl?

NICK. *(Confidentially)*. Well, I gave her your message. You’ve got the best chance.

(Digs him playfully in the ribs and winks at him.)

TRINIDAD. Whiskey for everybody.

(Nick sets out whiskey and glasses, and the men drink.)

JAKE. *(Strikes a chord, announcing impressively).* “Old Dog Tray,” or “Echoes form Home.”

(During the song, Billy Jackrabbit, who has followed Jake on, sits on the floor playing solitaire. The miners continue to gamble.)

“How often do I picture
Them old folks down to home;
And often wonder if they think of me!”

(Jim Larkens, dropping his letter in the box on the floor, chokes back a sob.)

SONORA. Slug’s worth of chips.

(Sid give chips to Sonora.)

JAKE.

“Would angel mother know me>|<
If back there I did roam?
Would old dog Tray remember me?”

(The singer pauses to take a drink from Nick.)

Now, boys!

(All join in the chorus, keeping time with their feet.)

ALL.

“Oh, mother, angel mother, are you a-waitin’ there,

Beside the littul cottage on the lea?"

JAKE. *(Alone)*. "On the lea --"

ALL.

"How often would she bless me, all in them days so fair --

Would old dog Tray remember me?"

SONORA. "Remember me!"

(Larkens breaks down and sobs. All stop playing and turn in their chairs to him.)

Why, Jim ...

LARKENS. Say, boys, -- I'm homesick and I'm broke, and I don't give a damn who knows it. I want to go home again. ... I'm tired o' drillin' rocks.... I want to be out in the field again. I want to see the grain growin'. I want the dirt in the furrows at home. ... I want old Pennsylvania. ... I want my folks. I'm done! I'm done! I'm done!

(He sobs on the bar, his face buried in his hands.)

JAKE. *(Quite used to these scenes)*.

"Oh, mother, angel mother, are you a-waitin'--"

SONORA. *(Motions Jake to stop singing. Jake, understanding, smilingly makes a gesture as though touching an imaginary hat brim, and collects his money)*. Here, Jake. *(Tosses a coin to Jake)*. Boys, Jim Larkens allows he's goin' back East. Chip in. *(The miners and gamblers throw money on the table. When the cash is handed to Sonora, he gives it to Larkens.)* Here you are, Jim.

JIM. *(Deeply touched)*. Thank you, boys -- thank you.

(Crying, he stumbles out of the room.)

TRINIDAD. *(Who has suddenly made a lunge at Sid's card box).* That ain't a square deal -- he's cheating!

(Billy Jackrabbit picks up a chair, and holds it up to protect himself; Jake Wallace hides behind the shield. The lookout steals out as though in league with Sid. Nick re-enters with a large tray of whiskey glasses. Handsome and the gambler seize Sid and bring him down in front of the table.)

SONORA. Lift his hand!

TRINIDAD. Hist his arms! *(Taking up the deck of cards and throwing it on the table.)*

There!

SONORA. String him up!

TRINIDAD. You begt!

SID. for 'eaven's sike!

NICK. Chicken lifter!

TRINIDAD. String him!

SID. Oh, Boys! Boys!

RANCE. *(Who has come in, stands impassively watching the scene. He is the cool, waxen, deliberate gambler. His hands, almost feminine in their whiteness, are as waxen as his face. He has a very black moustache. He wears the beaver hat of the times, and an immaculate suit of broadcloth. His boots are highly polished, long and narrow with high heels, his trousers strapped over them. He wears a white puffed shirt, with a diamond stud held by side chains, and a large diamond flashes on his hand. He smokes the Spanish cigarros).* Well, gentlemen, what's this?

SONORA. Ah! Here's Jack Rance.

TRINIDAD. *(Threatening Sid).* The Sheriff!

RANCE. What's the matter with the cyards?

(He takes out his handkerchief, delicately unfolding it, and flicks it over his boots.)

SONORA. The Sidney Duck cheated.

TRINIDAD. String him! *(To Sid.)* Come on, -- you!

RANCE. Wait a minute. Don't be hasty, gentlemen. I've got something to say about this.

I don't forget, although I am Sheriff of Manzanita County, that i'm running four games. It's men like him cast reflections on square-minded sporting men like myself; and worse -- he casts reflections on the Polka, the establishment of the one decent woman in Cloudy.

NICK. *(Indignant).* You bet!

SONORA. A lady, damn it! *(Turning on Sid.)* You lily-livered skunk.

TRINIDAD. String him up!

HANDSOME. Come on!

(The is a general movement towards Sid.)

RANCE. Hold on! Hold on! After all, gents, what's death? A kick and you're off. I've thought of a worse punishment. Give him his coat. *(Handsome gives a coat to Sid who puts it on.)* Stand him over here. *(Sid is pushed forward.)* Handsome, give me that deuce of spades. *(Sonora gives Rance the card. Rance takes a pin from Sid's cravat, and pins the card o ver Sid's heart.)* I place it over his heart as

a warning. He can't leave the camp, and he never plays cyard again. Handsome, pass the word to the boys.

(Handsome goes to the dance-hall to spread the news.)

SID. (*Sniffs imploringly*). Ow -- now! Don't say that! Don't say that!

NICK. (*Pointing to the door*). Git! Git!

(*Sid leaves the room hurriedly, followed by Billy Jackrabbit, who is never quite comfortable when the Sheriff is laying down the law. Jake Wallace, one eye on the would-be lynchers, is softly playing, Pop Goes the Weasel.*)

RANCE. (*Coolly, as though nothing had occurred*). Well, gentlemen, a little game of poker, just for social recreation? Nick, chips.

SONORA. Ha! I'm you're Injun!

(*Goes to the poker table as Nick brings down the poker chips.*)

TRINIDAD. (*Joining Rance*) That's me!

(*But before the game can proceed, a Deputy Sheriff enters, a gaunt, hollow cheeked, muscular man, with a heavy, sweeping moustache, his hair in a cowlick -- wearing a pale, faded beaver hat and a heavy overcoat, his pistol and power flask in his belt.*)

DEPUTY. (*To Rance*). Sheriff, Ashby, of Wells-Fargo, just rode in with his posse.

RANCE. Ashby? Why, what's he doing here?

DEPUTY. He's after Ramerrex.

RANCE. Ramerrez? Oh, that polite road-agent that's been visitin' the other camps?

DEPUTY. Yes, they say he has just turned into our country.

(*Nick gives Deputy a drink.*)

SONORA. (*Apprehensively*). What? Our country?

(Ashby enters -- a man to remember, -- nervous, dogged, white and closely-cropped hair, very black eyebrows -- thin lips. He wears 'Frisco clothing, which shows the wear and tear of the road. He is suave in his greetings, but quick in action and speech. He is never sober, never drunk, but continually drinking.)

ASHBY. (*Greeting Rance*). Hello, Sheriff!

RANCE. Boys, Mr. Ashby of Wells-Fargo.

(Ashby shakes hands with Trinidad and Sonora, then makes for the bar.)

ASHBY. Hello, Nick!

NICK. Hello, Ash!

ASHBY. (*To the Deputy*). How are you, sir? (*Deputy returns Ashby's greeting and passes off, as Ashby shakes hands warmly with Nick.*) Nick, give us a drink.

NICK. Sure.

(Takes four glasses and a bottle of whiskey to the poker table and then hastens off into the dance-hall.)

ASHBY. Everybody'll have the same. (*The camp minstrel joins the group as Rance pours the whiskey.*) Well, gentlemen, I trust the Girl who runs the Polka is well?

SONORA. Fine as silk, Mr. Ashby. How long you been chasin' up this here road agent?

ASHBY. Oh, he only took to the road three months ago. Wells-Fargo have had me and a posse busy ever since. He's a wonder.

SONORA. Must be, to evade *you*.

ASHBY. Yes, I can smell a road-agent in the wind; but, Rance I expect to get that fellow right here in your county.

RANCE. Is this Ramerrez a Spaniard?

ASHBY. No, can't prove it. Heads a crew of greasers and Spaniards. His name's assumed.

RANCE. They say he robs you like a gentleman.

ASHBY. *(Lifting his glass)*. Well, look out for the greasers up the road!

RANCE. We don't let 'em pass through here.

ASHBY. Well, boys, I've had a long ride. Wake me up when the Pony Express goes through.

(Takes off his coat, goes up to a table, and, setting a bottle of whiskey in a convenient spot, lies down on the table.)

NICK. *(Bringing in a kettle of hot water and glasses containing whiskey and lemon.)*

Regards of the Girl. Hot whiskey with lemming extract.

(He pours hot water into the glasses)

RANCE. *(Accepting a glass)*. Gentlemen, the Girl! The oly girl in the Camp -- the girl I mean to make Mrs. Jack Rance! *(Nick catches Sonora's eye, also Trinidad's.)*

SONORA. That's a joke, Rance. She makes you look like a Chinaman.

RANCE. *(Rising, at white heat)*. You prove that!

SONORA. In what particular spot will you have it?

(Instantly, Rance's right hand creeps towards his pistol as Sonora, anticipating his movement, has reached for his weapon. Trinidad runs to the bar and drops behind it as Nick crouches out of sight at one end of it. Jake Wallace hides

behind the shield.) NICK. (Seeing the Girl come in through the dance-hall). The Girl. ...

(Coaxingly.) Aw -- take your drinks. (Trinidad and Jake venture to peep out. The quarrel is over.)

RANCE. Ha! Ha! Ha! Once more, Friends, -- the Girl!

ALL. The Girl!

(They drink. Ashby snore peacefully.)

(The Girl enters. The character of The Girl is rather complex. Her utter frankness takes away all suggestion of vice -- showing her to be unsmirched, happy, careless, untouched by the life about her. Yet she has a thorough knowledge of what the men of her world generally want. She is used to flattery -- knows exactly how to deal with men -- is very shrewd -- but quite capable of being a good friend to the camp boys.)

GIRL. Hello, boys! How's everything? Gettin' taken care of?

SONORA. *(Who melts whenever he sees her).* Hello, Girl!

GIRL. Hello, Sonora!

TRINIDAD. Hello, Girl!

GIRL. Hello, Trin.

SONORA. Mix me a prairie oyster.

GIRL. I'll fix you right up, Sonora. *(As shots are heard in the dance-hall.)* Say, Nick -- you quiet things down. *(Nick leaves the room)* They've had about enough. Look here, Sonora: before I crack this egg, I'd like to state that eggs is four bits apiece

-- only two hens left. (*Giving a little push to Handsome, who has been leaning on the bar.*) Oh, run away, Handsome.

(*Handsome sits, watching The Girl.*)

SONORA. Crack the egg -- I'll stand it.

NICK. (*Re-entering, grinning, pouring out a drink, going to The Girl.*) Regards of Blond Harry.)

GIRL. (*Taking it*) Here: give it to me -- (*pouring it back into the bottle*) -- and say it hit the spot.

NICK. (*Whispering*) Say, Min: throw around a few kind words -- good for the bar.

GIRL. (*Good-naturedly*) Oh, you. (*Exit Nick to deliver The Girl's message to Blond Harry.*) Ha! Ha! (*As Ashby awakens.*) Hello, Mr. Ashby!

ASHBY. (*Rousing and gallantly picking up his glass, goes to the bar to toast The Girl.*)
Compliments of Wells-Fargo!

GIRL. Thank you. (*Shaking Sonora's drink.*) You see we live high shouldered here in Cloudy.

SONORA. You bet!

ASHBY. What cigars do you have?

GIRL. Regalias, Auroras and Eureka's.

ASHBY. Any'll do.

NICK. (*Entering hurriedly.*) Man jest come in threaten' to shoot up the furniture.

GIRL. (*Quickly giving Ashby a cigar.*) Who is it?

NICK. Old man Watson.

GIRL. Leave him shoot. He's good for it.

VOICE. *(From the inner room)*. Nick! Nick!

(Nick hastens off as several shots are heard. In the excitement, Billy Jackrabbit, who has re-entered, quietly steals down to the faro table and drains a glass of whiskey which has been left standing there.)

GIRL. Here, you Billy Jackrabbitt: what are you doing? Did you marry my squaw yet?

BILLY JACKRABBIT. Not so much married squaw yet.

GIRL. Not so much married? Come here, you thieving redskin -- *(Billy Jackrabbit goes up to the bar)* with a pocket full of my best cigars! *(She takes the cigars from him.)* You get up to my to cabin and marry my squaw before I get there. Git! *(Billy Jackrabbit goes out.)* With a papoose six months old -- it's awful! Here, Sonora: *(bringing him a drink)* here's yur prairie oyster. Hello, Rance!

RANCE. Hello, Girl!

SONORA. Here, Girl: clear the slate out of that. *(Giving her a bag of gold-dust.)*

NICK. *(Re-entering with a bottle)*. Say, they's a fellow in there wants to know if we can help out on provisions.

GIRL. Sure. What does he want?

NICK. Bread.

(Putting the cigar-box and bottle back on the shelf.)

GIRL. *(Behind the bar)*. Bread! Does he think we're runnin' a bakery?

NICK. Then he asked for sardines.

GIRL. Sardines! Great Gilead! You tell him we have nothing but straight provisions here: we got pickled oysters, smoking tobacco, an' the best whiskey he ever saw.

NICK. Yes'm.

TRINIDAD. You bet.

GIRL. Sonora. *(Gives him his change. Cleaning the slate on which she keeps the record of the drinks.)* Mr. Ashby, -- change. *(She hands Ashby some coins.)*

ASHBY. *(Throws the money back on the bar.)* Keep the change. Buy a ribbon at the Ridge. Compliments of Wells-Fargo.

GIRL. *(Sweeping it into the drawer.)* Thank you,

SONORA. Girl: (going to the bar) buy two ribbons at the Ridge. *(Throwing down a stack of silver dollars on the bar and facing Ashby. Insinuatingly.)* Fawn's my color! ...

GIRL. Thank you.

RANCE. Play cyards.

ASHBY, *(Changing -- raising his finger warningly.)* You, Girl! You must bank with us oftener, and then if this road-agent, Ramerrez, should drop in, you won't lose so much.

SONORA. The devil!

TRINIDAD. *(Thoughtfully.)* Ha!

GIRL. Oh, go on! I keep the specie in an empty keg now, but personally I've took to banking in my own stocking.

NICK. *(Who has brought in an armful fo wood and mended the fire.)* Say, we've got an awful pile this month -- makes me sort o' nervous. Why Sonora alone has got ten thousand in that keg fer safe keepin'. *(Pointing to a keg at the end of the bar.)*

ASHBY. And Ramerrez' band everywhere!

GIRL. Bet if a road-agent come in here, I could offer him a drink an' he'd treat me like a perfect lady.

SONORA. You bet he would, the darned old halibut!

NICK. Tobacco.

GIRL. Solace or Honeydew?

NICK. Dew. *(He takes it and is about to exit when the Deputy enters wildly.)*

DEPUTY. Boys! Boys! Pony Express!

(The sound of the approaching pony has grown louder, and now stops quickly.)

DRIVER OF THE PONY EXPRESS. *(Heard off)*. Hello!

(Nick runs out.)

DEPUTY'S VOICE *(Outside)*. Hello!

DRIVER OF THE PONY EXPRESS. *(Unseen, speaking through the open door, as though on horseback)*. Big hold-up last night at the forks.

TRINIDAD. Hold-up?

DRIVER OF THE PONY EXPRESS. Ramerrez!

(Enter Nick with several letters and one newspaper. He gives the mail to The Girl and goes to the bar.)

SONORA. Ramerrez!

ASHBY. *(To The Girl)*. You see?

DRIVER OF THE PONY EXPRESS. *(Still out of sight)*. Look sharp! There's a greaser in the trail.

RANCE. A greaser? Deputy, go find him.

GIRL. *(Looking over the mail)*. Sonora, you got a newspaper. *(Sonora receives it joyously.)*

DRIVER OF THE PONY EXPRESS. So long!

ASHBY. *(Going to the door -- calls)*. Pony Express: I want you!

HANDSOME. *(Leaning over Sonora -- enviously)*. Sonora's got a newspaper.

SONORA. Yes -- damn thing's two months old.

HANDSOME. *(Wistfully)*. Still, he *did* get a newspaper.

(The Driver of the Pony Express enters, coming quickly towards Ashby. He is a thin young fellow of twenty -- his skin deeply tanned by the wind -- smooth-faced but unshaven. His clothing is weather-beaten and faded by the wind, rain, dust and alkali. A leather patch is stitched over the seat of his breeches. His shabby leather gloves proclaim hard service. He is booted and spurred, and has a pistol in his belt. He carries a mail pouch.)

ASHBY. You drop mail at the greater settlement?

DRIVER OF THE PONY EXPRESS. Yes, sir -- tough place.

ASHBY. Know a girl there named Nina Micheltoreña?

GIRL. *(Laughs)*. Nina Micheltoreña? Oh, they all know her. Whoo! She's one of them Cachuca girls, with droopy Spanish eyes. Oh, ask the boys about her! *(She slaps Handsome and Trinidad on the back.)*

(The music starts in the dance-hall and The Girl runs off to see that her patrons are enjoying the evening. Handsome, Sonora and Trinidad follow her off.)

ASHBY. *(To the Driver of the Pony Express)*. Hold her letters.

DRIVER OF THE PONY EXPRESS. Yes, sir. *(He hastens off to ride to the next camp.)*

ASHBY. *(To Rance)* Sheriff: I expect to see this Nina Micheltoreña to-night -- here- in the Polka.

RANCE. You do? Well, the boys better look out for their watches. I met that lady once.

ASHBY. She wrote about that five thousand reward I offered for Ramerrez.

RANCE. What! She's after that? (*Shuffling the cards.*)

ASHBY. She knows something. (*Getting his coat. To The Girl who has re-entered and gone behind the bar.*) Well, I'll have a look at that greaser up the road. He may have his eye on the find in that stocking of yours.

GIRL. (*Good-naturedly.*) You be darned!

(Ashby goes out.)

RANCE. Say, Minnie --

GIRL. (*Polishing glasses*) H'm?

RANCE. Will you marry me?

GIRL. Nop.

RANCE. (*Going to the bar.*) Why not?

GIRL. 'Cause you got a wife in Noo Orleans -- or so the mountain breezes say.

RANCE. Give me some cigars.

GIRL. (*Handing him cigars from a certain box.*) Them's your kind, Jack.

RANCE. (*Putting the cigars in his case.*) I'm stuck on you.

GIRL. (*Lightly.*) Thank you.

RANCE. I'm going to marry you.

GIRL. Think so?

RANCE, H'm (*Lighting a cigar.*)

NICK. (*Entering hurriedly.*) One good cigar.

GIRL. *(Handing a cigar to Nick)* Here's your poison. Three bits. *(To Rance.)* Why look at 'em. There's Handsome: got two wives I know of somewhere East -- *(Turning suddenly to Nick.)* Who's that cigar for?

NICK. Tommy!

GIRL. Give it back. He don't know a good cigar when he's smoking it. *(She puts the cigar back in the box, takes another and hands it to Nick.)* Same price. *(Nick goes off with the cigar)* And Trin with a widder in Sacramento; and you -- Ha! Not one of you travelin' under your own name.

NICK. *(Comes back grinning)*. One whiskey.

GIRL. *(Pouring out the whiskey and giving it to Nick)*. Here you be.

NICK. With water.

GIRL. *(Putting the bottle back)*. No, no, you don't: no fancy drinks here.

NICK. Feller just rode in from the Crossin' -- says he wants it with water.

GIRL. He'll take it straight, or git!

NICK. But he won't git.

GIRL. You send him to me -- I'll curl his hair for hi!

NICK. Yes'm. *(Exit.)*

RANCE. *(Earnestly)*. Give you a thousand dollars on the spot for a kiss.

GIRL. Some men invite bein' played.

RANCE. Well, what are men made for? *(Putting down a gold piece.)*

GIRL. *(Taking it)*. That's true.

RANCE. You can't keep running this place alone -- it's getting too big for you. Too much money circulating through the Polka. You need a man behind you. Marry me.

GIRL. Nop.

RANCE. My wife won't know it.

GIRL. Nop.

RANCE. Now, see here, Min --

GIRL. (*Firmly*). No -- take it straight, Jack -- nop! Ah, come along: start your game again, Jack. Come along. (*Going to the faro table, Rance following her.*) Whoop la! Mula! Good Lord, look at that faro table!

RANCE. Listen: we may not have another chance.

GIRL. Look here, Jack: let's have it right now. I run this Polka alone because I like it. My father taught me the business, and -- well, don't worry about me -- I can look after myself. I carry my little weapon-- (*Touching her pocket to show she has a pistol.*) I'm independent -- I'm happy -- the Polka's paying an' -- ha! -- it's all bully! Say, what the devil do you mean proposin' to me with a wife in Noo Orleans? Now, this is a respectable saloon -- an' I don't want no more of that talk.

RANCE. I didn't say nothin'.

GIRL. (*Tidying the faro table*). Push me that queen. (*Rance slowly hands the card to her and, going to the table, leans thoughtfully against a chair.*) Thank you, Jack. No offense, Jack; but I got other idees of married life from what you have.

RANCE. Aw! Nonsense!

GIRL. (*Leaning against the faro table, facing Rance*). I dunno a out that. You see I had a home once, and I ain't forgot it. A home up over our little saloon in Soledad. Ha! I ain't forgot my father an' mother an' what a happy married couple they was. Lord! How they loved each other -- it was beautiful!

SID. (*Entering, snivelling*). Ow, Miss

GIRL. Say -- I heard about you -- you git! (*Sid hastily takes his departure. To Rance.*) I can see Mother now ... fussin' over Father an' pettin' him, and Father dealin' faro -- Ah, but he was square ... and me, a kid as little as a kitten, under the table sneakin' chips for candy. Talk about married life! That was a little heaven. I guess everybody's got some remembrance of their mother tucked away. I always see mine at the faro table with her foot snuggled up to Dad's an' the light of lovin' in her eyes. Ah, she was a lady! No; (*Getting up from the table and going behind the bar*) I couldn't share that table an' the Polka with any man -- unless there was a heap o' carin' back for it. I couldn't, Jack, I couldn't.

RANCE. (*Restraining his anger*). Oh, the boys were right. I *am* a Chinaman! (*Following her to the bar.*)

GIRL. No, you're not, Jack.

RANCE. (*Following her*). But once when IU rode in here, it was nothing but Jack -- Jack -- Jack -- Jack -- Jack Rance! God! I nearly got you then.

GIRL. (*With playful sarcasm*). Did you?

RANCE. Then you went on that trip to Sacramento and Monterey ... and you changed ... Who's the man?

GIRL. Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!

RANCE. One of them high-toned Sacramento shrimps? (*As she laughs.*) Do you think he'd have *you*?

GIRL. (*Suddenly serious.*) What's the matter with me? Anythin' about me a high-toned gent would object to? Look, here, Jack Rance, ain't I always been a perfect lady?

RANCE. Oh, heaven knows your character's all right. *(He goes back to the faro table.)*

GIRL. *(Sarcastically)*. Well, that ain't your fault. Adios. *(She starts to leave the room, then pauses and looks at him.)* Jack ... *(As he will not look at her, she turns again to go into the dance-hall, but looking off, she sees an unexpected guest and exclaims in surprise.)* H'mp Utopia! *(She goes behind the bar.)* *(Mr. Johnson enters the room from the dance-hall. He is a young man of about 30 -- smooth-faced, tall. His clothing is bought in fashionable Sacramento. He is the one man in the place who has the air of a gentleman. At first acquaintance, he bears himself easily but modestly, yet at certain moments there is a devil-may-care recklessness about him. He is, however, the last man in the world one would suspect of being the road-agent, Ramerrez.)*

Johnson. Where's the man who wanted to curl my hair?

(Rance turns to the stranger.)

GIRL. *(Who remembers Johnson as a man she met on the road to Monterey. Hello -- er -- stranger. Johnson looks at The Girl.)*

RANCE. We're not much on strangers here.

JOHNSON. I'm the man who wanted water in his whiskey.

GIRL. You, eh? *(To Nick who comes back with a bottle and glasses.)* Oh, -- er -- Nick, this gentlemen takes his whiskey as he likes it.

NICK. Moses.

JOHNSON. Coming to the bar). In the presence of a lady -- I will take -- nothing. *(Bows to her with formality.)* Pardon me, but you seem to be almost at home here.

GIRL *(Amused)*. Who -- me? *(Leaning on the bar.)*

NICK. *(Laughing)*. Why, she's the Girl who runs the Polka *(He passes off, still laughing.)*

JOHNSON. *(Staring at The Girl)*. You?

GIRL. Yup.

JOHNSON. *(Meditating)*. The Girl who runs the Polka ...

(There is a merry twinkle in The Girl's eye as she looks at Johnson, but he is disconcerted. This news interferes with Mr. Johnson's plans.)

GIRL. Yes.

RANCE. You're from the Crossing, the bartender said. I don't remember you.

JOHNSON. You're mistaken: I said that I rode over from the Crossing. *(Turning to The Girl again.)* So you are the Girl?

GIRL. Yes.

RANCE. *(Aggressively)*. No strangers allowed in this camp. *(A pause.) (The Girl and Johnson speak in such low tones that Rance is unable to hear them.)* Perhaps you're off the road. *(A pause.) (The Girl and Johnson are still talking.)*
(Sneeringly.) Men often get mixed up when they're visiting Nina Micheltoarena on the trail.

GIRL. Rance!

JOHNSON. *(Sharply to Rance)*. I merely stopped in to rest my horse -- and perhaps try a game of -- *(coming to the table)* er -- poker. *(Picking up a pack of cards.)*

GIRL. Nick, bring in his saddle.

(As Nick goes for the saddle, Rance rises, annoyed.)

RANCE. A game, eh? I haven't heard you're name, young man.

GIRL. *(Laughs)* Oh! Names out here!

JOHNSON. My name's Johnson. (*Throwing down the cards.*)

GIRL. (*Cynically*). Is -- how much?

JOHNSON. Of Sacramento.

GIRL. Of --how much? (*Coming down to Johnson and shaking hands -- not believing a word he says.*) I admire to know you, Mr. Johnson of Sacramento.

JOHNSON. Thank you.

RANCE. (*Angrily*). Say, Minnie, -- I --

GIRL. (*Aside to Rance, Lightly*). Oh, -- set down. (*Turning to Johnson as Rance indignantly sits on the end of the faro table.*) Say, do you know what I think of you? I think you staked out a claim in a etiquette book. So you *think* you can play poker?

JOHNSON. That's my conviction.

GIRL. Out of every fifty men who *think* they can play, one ain't mistaken.

JOHNSON. (*Following The Girl to the bar*). You may be right.

GIRL. Say, try a cigar.

JOHNSON. Thank you.

GIRL. Best in the house -- my compliments. (*She lights a match.*)

JOHNSON. Thank you -- you're very kind. (*In a lower voice*) So you remember me?

GIRL. If you remember me.

RANCE. (*Muttering to himself, glancing over his shoulder*). What the devil are the talking about, anyway?

JOHNSON. I met you on the road to Monterey --

GIRL. Goin' and comin'. You passed me up a bunch of wild syringa over the wheel. You asked me to go a-berrin'. but I didn't see it.

JOHNSON. I noticed that.

GIRL. And when you went away, you said -- (*embarrassed*) Oh, I dunno ...

JOHNSON. Yes, you do -- yes, you do. I said: I'll thin of you all the time!" Well, I've thought of you ever since.

GIRL. Ha! Somehow I kinder thought you might drop in, but as you didn't ... of course (*with a sense of propriety*) it wasn't my place to remember you -- first.

JOHNSON. But I didn't know where you lived ... I

GiRL. (*Confidentially*). I got a special bottle here. Best in the house. Will you?

JOHNSON. Why --

GIRL. (*Get a bottle and a glass*). My compliments.

JOHNSON. You are *very* kind. Thanks.

(*Rance rises and, going up to the bar, proceeds to dash athe glass to the floor as Mr. Johnson is about to take it.*)

RANCE. (*Livid*). Look here, Mr Johnson: your ways are offensive to me -- damned offensive. My name is Rance -- Jack Rance. Your business here -- your business! (*Calling,*) Boys! Boys! Come in! (*Trinidad, Handsome, Sonora and Happy come in.*) There's a man here who won't explain his business.

SONORA, TRINIDAD, HAPPY, HANDSOME. (*At the same time*). What? He won't?

Oh, we'll see. Guess we'll make him.

GIRL. Wait a minute. I know him.

THE BOYS. (*As one man*). Eh?

GIRL. *(To Rance)*. Yes, I didn't tell you, but I know him.

RANCE. *(To himself)*. The Sacramento shrimp, by God!

GIRL. *(Comes from behind the bar)*. Boys, I vouch to Cloudy for Mr. Johnson.

(All the men except Rance salute Johnson, who makes a sweeping gesture.)

JOHNSON. Boys!

THE BOYS. Hello, Johnson.

SONORA. Boys: Rance ain't runnin'

(As a waltz is played, Nick enters.)

NICK. *(To The Girl)*. The boys from the Ridge invites you to dance with them.

JOHNSON. May I have the honor of a waltz?

(Trinidad, Sonora and Handsome are overcome by the manners of Johnson.)

NICK. Moses! *(Retreats to the dance-hall.)*

GIRL. Me Waltz? Me? Ha! Oh, I can't waltz. Ha! -- but I can polky.

JOHNSON. Then may I have the pleasure of the next Polka?

SONORA. *(To the boys)*. He's too flip.

GIRL. Oh, I dunno. Makes me feel kind o' foolish, -- you know -- kind o' retirin' like a elk
in summer.

JOHNSON. *(Amused)*. Yes, they are retiring.

GIRL *(Unconsciously wipes her hands on her dress)*. Well ... I don't like everybody's
hand on the back of my waist; but somehow -- *(She looks at Rance recklessly.*
Johnson offers her his arm. Unused to this formality, she looks at his proffered
arm two or three times, half ashamed, then she looks at the boys, who stand

watching her with twinkling eyes.) Oh, Lord, must I? (Then making up her mind.)

Oh, come along.

JOHNSON. Thanks.

GIRL. *(Dances off with Johnson, calling to the Fiddler).* A polky!

(In the dance-hall they are acclaimed by loud whoops.)

SONORA. *(To Rance.)* Chink!

RANCE. Ha! Ha! Cleaned out, by God! by a high-toned, fine-haired dog named

Johnson. Well, I'll be damned! *(As Nick comes in with a saddle.)* What's that?

NICK. Johnson's saddle.

RANCE. *(Knocking the saddle out of Nick's hands).* You know, Nick -- I've got a great notion to walk out of this door, and --

NICK. *(Scenting the loss of a good customer).* Aw, she's only kiddin' him. *(He removes the saddle to a place of safety.)*

ASHBY. *(Outside).* Boys!

RANCE. What's that?

TRINIDAD. Why, that's --

ASHBY. *(Outside).* Come on -- you!

TRINIDAD. What's the matter?

THE DEPUTY SHERIFF. *(Is heard to call)* Run him in.

(He enters with Ashby and several men. They bring in José Castro. Billy Jackrabbit follows them on.)

(Castro is an oily, greasy, unwashed Mexican greaser of a low type. His clothing is partly Mexican. He is yellow, sullen, wiry, hard-faced, tricky and shifty-eyed. He has the curved legs of a man who lives on a bronco.)

(Ashby is completely transformed. His hat is on the back of his head, his hair is ruffled and falls over his forehead in straggling locks; his coat is thrown open and his face is savage and pitiless.)

ASHBY. *The greaser in the trail.*

RANCE. *(Takes Castro by the hair, throwing him over and forcing his head back).* Here, you -- give us a look at your face.

NICK. Nick, come -- give us a drink. *(Going to bar,)*

RANCE. Tie him up.

(Billy Jackrabbit goes to the fireplace, gets the lariat as Rance pushes Castro to the floor.)

ASHBY. *(Inviting all to drink).* Come on, boys.

(The boys, with the exception of Sonora, join Ashby at the bar.)

CASTRO. *(Seeing Johnson's saddle on the floor -- to himself).*

Ramerez' ... *(He pauses -- overcome)* Taken ...

ASHBY. *(To Sonora, who is watching the Girl dance).* Say, my friend, don't you drink?

SONORA. Oh, occasionally. *(He joins Ashby.)*

RANCE. *(Looking at The Girl).* Polkying!

(Nick lets down the pelts which screen off the dance-hall, as Billy Jackrabbit and the Deputy throw Castro into a chair. Castro, who has caught a glimpse of Johnson dancing with The Girl is relieved.)

ASHBY. *(Having tasted his drink -- going to Castro)*. Come now, tell us what your name is.

HAPPY. You bet!

ASHBY. Speak up! Who are you?

SONORA *and* HANDSOME. Speak up. What's your name?

CASTRO. José Castro, ex-padroña of the bull-fights.

RANCE. But the bull-fights are at Monterey. Why do you come to this place?

CASTRO. To tell the Señor Sheriff I know where ees -- Ramerrez.

(The men would surround Castro to question him, but Rance motions to them to a stand back.)

RANCE. You lie! *(Raises his hand for silence.)*

CASTRO. Nay, paaanty Mexican vaquero -- my friends Peralta -- Vellejos -- all weeth Ramerrez -- so I know where ees.

RANCE. *(Pointing at him quickly to take him off his guard)*. You're one of his men yourself!

CASTRO. *(Quickly with childlike innocence)*. No -- No ...

RANCE. *(Pointing to Ashby)*. That's Ashby -- the man that pays out that reward you heard of. Where is Ramirrez camp?

CASTRO. Come with me one mile, and, by the soul of my mother, -- the blessed Maria Saltaja -- we will put a knife in hees back.

RANCE. One mile, eh?

SONORA. If I thought ...

RANCE. Where is this Trail?

CASTRO. On the Modroña Canyonada.

A MAN.. *(Entering the dance-hall)*. Hello, boys! What's --

ALL. *(Warning the new-comer to silence)*. Sh! Git! Git out! Shut up! Go!

RANCE. Go on.

CASTRO. Ramerrez can b e taken, if many men come weeth me ... forty minutes there
and back ---

RANCE. What do you think?

ASHBY. Curious ... This is the second warning we have had from here.

RANCE. *(To Ashby)*. This Nina Micheltoreña's letter to you? You say she is coming here
to-night? *(As Ashby nods.)* Looks as though he was known around here.

ASHBY. All the same, I wouldn't go.

SONORA. What! Risk losin' him?

RANCE. Boys, we'll take that chance. *(He rises.)*

NICK. Want a drink? *(He goes up to the bar, clearing off the bottles and glasses.)*

*(Ashby has gone out. The men put on their overcoats, hats, etc., and prepare to
leave in search of the road agent.)*

THE BOYS. *(As the leave, they exclaim:)* "Ready, Sheriff!" "Come on, Boys!" Come on,
Happy!" Careful, boys!" etc.

RANCE. *(At the open door, sniffing he air)*. I don't like the smell of the air. Snow. *(He
goes out.)*

DEPUTY. Load up.

TRINIDAD. Get out the horses.

HAPPY. We'll get this road-agent.

SONORA. *(As he passes Castro)*. Come on, you oily, garlic-eating red-peppery, dog-trottin' sun-baked son of a skunk!

(The men hasten off, followed by Billy Jackrabbit, leaving Castro, Nick and the Deputy in the barroom.)

DEPUTY. Come on, you!

CASTRO. *(His teeth chattering)*. One dreenk -- I freeze --

DEPUTY. Give him a drink, Nick. Watch him. *(He goes out.)*

NICK. *(Contemptuously)*. What'll you have?

CASTRO. *(Rises)*. Geeve me -- *(loudly, suddenly facing the dance-hall and speaking so that his voice may be heard by Johnson)* aguardiente.

NICK. Set down!

(Castro, looking off, seeing that Johnson has seen him, sits, as Johnson hastens on from the dance hall.)

JOHNSON. So -- you did bring my saddle in, eh, Nick?

CASTRO. *(In a low voice)*. Ramerrez! ... Master...

JOHNSON. Don't talk ...

CASTRO. I let them take me, according to your beeding.

JOHNSON. *(Looking toward Nick)*. Careful, José ... *(Puts the saddle on the table.)*

NICK. *(Coming down with a drink for José who bolts it)*. Here.

VOICES. *(From the dance-hall)*. Nick! Nick!

NICK. Oh -- the Ridge boys goin' *(Goes back to the bar with the glasses -- then speaks to Johnson.)* Say -- keep your eye on him a minute, will you?

JOHNSON. Certainly. You tell the Girl you pressed me into service, will you? (*Touches his pistol pocket.*)

NICK. Sure. Say, she's taken an awful fancy to you.

JOHNSON. No!

NICK. Yes. Drop in often -- great bar.

JOHNSON. It certainly is. (*Nick hastens off.*) Ha! Ha! Ha! (*To Castro.*) Go on ...

CASTRO. Bueno! Our men lie in the bushes hear, I lead the sheriff far off ... then I slip away. Queeckly rob this place now and fly. It is death for you to linger. Ashby see here.

JOHNSON. (*Without looking*). Ashby. Wait a minute. (*As Nick sticks in his head to cast a watchful glance at Castro.*) All, right, Nick. Yes, everything's all right. (*Nick goes out again as a cuchuca is gaily played.*)

CASTRO. By tomorrow twilight, you must be safe in your rancho.

JOHNSON.No -- we'll raid on

CASTRO. An hundred men are on your track.

JOHNSON. One minute's start of the devil does me, José.

CASTRO. I fear the woman, Nina Micheltoreña ... terribly I fear. Close at hand ... knowing all ... fresh from you four weeks' quarrel with her ... still loving you.

JOHNSON. Loving me? Oh, no. Like you, Nina loved he spoils, not me. No, I raid on.

SONORA. (*Heard outside*). Bring along the greaser, De[.

(*The boys are heard offstage and the glare of torches is seen through the windows.*)

DEPUTY. (*Heard Outside*). All right.

CASTRO. *(To Johnson)* We start. Queekly give he signal.

GIRL. *(Calling in the dance-hall)*. Good-night, boys -- good-night. *(The music ends)*.

Remember me to the Ridge.

VOICES OF THE RIDGE BOYS. *(Off Stage)* You bet! So Long!Whoop! Whoope!

CASTRO. All Gone. Only the woman there -- and her servant. ... Antonio awaits your signal.

DEPUTY. *(Entering)*. Com on.

CASTRO. Adios.

JOHNSON. Adios.

DEPUTY. Come on.

(He drags Castro off. We hear the boys moving away. Johnson takes up his saddle.)

GIRL. *(Entering from the dance-hall)*. Nick, you can put the lights out. *(Nick puts out the candle over the table.)* Put the lights out here, too. Oh, you ain't goin'?"

JOHNSON. Not yet, no, but ...

GIRL. I'm glad of that. Don't it feel funny here? It's kind of creepy. I suppose that's because I never remember seeing the bar do empty before. *(Putting a chair in place.)*

NICK. *(Putting out the candle on the mantelpiece)*. I'm goin' to close the shutters. *(He loses the shutters.)*

GIRL. *(Crossing to the table)*. What for -- so early?

NICK. *(In a half whisper)*. Well, you see, the boys is out huntin' Ramerrez -- and they's too much money here.

GIRL. Oh, all right. Cash in. Don't put the head on the keg. I ain't cashed in m'self yet.

NICK. *(Rolling out the keg)* Say, Min ...

GIRL. Huh?

NICK. *(Looking uneasily at the keg, and then darting a glance towards Johnson)* Know anything about -- him?

GIRL. Oh, sure.

NICK. All right, eh?

GIRL. *(Nick blows out the lights at the door, and goes into the empty dance hall.)* Well, Mr. Johnson: it seems to be us a-keepin' house here to-night, don't it?

JOHNSON. Strange how things come about ... Strange to be looking everywhere for you, and to find you at last at the Polka. *(Sitting on the table.)*

GIRL. Anything wrong with the Polka?

JOHNSON. Well, it's hardly the place for a young woman like you.

GIRL. How so?

JOHNSON. It's rather unprotected, and ---

GIRL. Oh, pshaw! I said to Ashby only to-night: "I'll be if a road-agent come in here, I could offer him a drink an' he'd treat me like a perfect lady." Say, won't you take something? *(Going back of the bar for a bottle.)*

JOHNSON. No, thank you. I'd like to ask you a question.

GIRL. I know what is is -- every stranger asks it, but I didn't think *you* would. It's this: am I decent? Yep, I am -- you bet!

JOHNSON. Oh, Girl: I' not blind -- that was not the question.

GIRL. *(Leaning over the bar, looking at him)* Dear me suz!

JOHNSON. What I meant to say was this:I am sorry to find you here almost at the mercy of he passer-by ... where a man may come, may drink, may rob you at will; and where I daresay more than one has even laid claim to a kiss.

GIRL. They's a good many people claimin' things they never git. (*She is putting her money in a cigar box.*) I've got my first kiss to give.

JOHNSON. (*Studying her*). You're clever. Been here long?

GIRL. Yep.

JOHNSON. Live in the Polka?

GIRL. Nop.

JOHNSON. Where do you live?

GIRL. Cabin up the mountain a little way.

JOHNSON. You're worth something better than this.

GIRL. What's better than this? I ain't boastin', but if keepin' this saloon don't give me a sort of position round here, I dunno what does. Ha! Look here:say you ain't one of them exhorters, are you, from the missionaries' camp?

JOHNSON. My profession has its faults, but I am not an exhorter.

GIRL. You know I can't figger out jest exactly what you are.

JOHNSON. Try,

GIRL. (*Getting a chair from behind the poker table*). Well -- you ain't one of us.

JOHNSON. No.

GIRL. Oh, I can tell -- I can spot my man every time. I tell you, keepin' a saloon is a great educator. (*Sitting.*) I dunno but what it's a good way to bring up girls. They git to know things. Now, I'd trust you.

JOHNSON. You would trust me?

GIRL. Notice I danced with you to-night?

JOHNSON. Yes.

GIRL. I seen from the first you was the real article.

JOHNSON. I beg pardon.

GIRL. Why, that was a compliment I handed to you.

JOHNSON. Oh ...

GIRL. (*Confidentially*). Your kind don't prevail much here ... I can tell -- I got what you call a quick eye.

JOHNSON. I'm afraid that men like me -- prevail, as you say, almost everywhere.

GIRL. Go on! What are you giving me? Of course they don't. Ha! Before I went on that trip to Monterey, I thought Rance here was the *genuine* thing in a gent -- but the minute I kind o' glanced over you on the road -- I -- I seen he wasn't. Say -- take your whiskey -- and water. (*She rises.*)

JOHNSON. No.

GIRL. (*Calling*). Nick? (*Changing her mind.*) No, I'll help you to a drink myself.

JOHNSON. No, thank you.

GIRL. (*Leaning against the bar, studying him*), Say, I've got it figgered out: you're awful good, or awful bad ...

JOHNSON. (*Half-amused*). Now what do you mean by that?

GIRL. Well, so good that you're a teetotaler -- or so bad that you're tired of life an' whiskey.

JOHNSON. (*Rising and going up to her*). On the contrary, although I'm not good -- I've lived, and I've liked life pretty well, and I'm not tired of it: it's been bully! (*Leaning on the bar.*) So have you liked it, Girl, only you haven't lived -- you haven't lived. (*He attempts to take The Girl's hand, but she retreats.*) Not with your nature. You see, I've got a quick eye, too.

(*Nick enters slowly and prepares to seat himself in a chair back of the poker table.*)

GIRL. Nick, git. (*Nick casts an inquisitive glance at the pair and hastens out.*) Say, what do you mean by -- I haven't lived?

JOHNSON. (*Insinuating, half under his breath*). Oh, you know.

GIRL. No, I don't.

JOHNSON.. Yes, you do.

GIRL. Well, say it's an even chance I do and an even chance that I don't.

JOHNSON. (*In a low voice*). I mean life for all it's worth ... to the utmost ...to the last drop in the cup ... so that it atones for what's gone before, or may come after.

GIRL.No, I don't believe I do know what you mean by them words. Is it a -- (*She crosses to the poker table and sits down on her revolver which is in her pocket. She rises hastily.*) Oh, Lord! Excuse me -- I set on my gun. (*Impulsively.*) I can't pass you on the road. I take your dust. Look here: I'm goin' to make you an offer.

JOHNSON. On offer?

GIRL. It's this: if you ever need to be staked --

JOHNSON. Eh?

GIRL. Which of course you don't, -- name your price -- jest for the stule, I'll git from you an' the deportment.

JOHNSON. Deportment? Me?

NICK. *(Re-entering)*. Oh, er -- I'd like to say --

GIRL. *(Annoyed)*. Oh!

(Nick goes off hurriedly)

JOHNSON. Well, I never heard before that my society was so desirable. Apart from the financial aspect of the matter -- I --

GIRL. *(Admiringly, half to herself)* Ain't that great?"Ain't that great?" Oh, you got me to let me stand treat *(Calls.)* Nick?

(She slips down from the table where she has been seated.)

JOHNSON. No, really, Say, Girl: you're like finding some new kind of flower.

GIRL. You know the reason I made you that offer is -- we're kind of rough up here, but we're reaching out. Now, I take it that what we're all put on this earth for -- every one of us -- is to rise ourselves up in the world -- to reach out.

JOHNSON. *(With a change of manner)* That's true -- that's true. I venture to say there isn't a man who hasn't thought seriously about that. I have. If only a man knew who to reach out for something he hardly dare even hope for. It's like trying to catch the star shining just ahead.

GIRL. That's the cheese. You've struck it.

(Nick enters.)

NICK. I *have* been a-tryin' to say --

GIRL. What *is* it, Nick?

NICK. I jest seen an ugly lookin' greaser outside a winder.

GIRL. (*Going up to the door*). A greaser? Let me look.

JOHNSON. (*Who knows that it is his man, awaiting the signal -- speaking with a air of authority*). I wouldn't.

GIRL. Why not?

NICK. I'll bolt all the winders (*He goes off.*)

(*A whistle is heard outside. Johnson recognizes the signal.*)

GIRL. Don't that sound horrid? (*Getting behind the counter.*) I'm awful glad you're here.

Nick's so nervous. He knows what a lot of money I've got. Why, there's a little fortune right in that keg.

JOHNSON. (*Crossing over to the keg and looking at it*). In that keg?

GIRL. The boys sleep round it nights.

JOHNSON. But when there gone -- isn't that a careless place to leave it?

GIRL. (*Coming down to the keg*). Oh, they'd have to kill me before they got it.

JOHNSON. I see -- it's *your* money.

GIRL. No, it belongs to the boys.

JOHNSON. Oh, that's different. Now, I wouldn't risk my life for that.

GIRL. (*Putting the bags of gold-dust in the keg, and closing the keg, and standing with her foot on it*) Oh, yes, you would -- yes, you would -- if you see how hard they got it. When I think of it -- I -- I nearly cry. You know there's something awful pretty in the way the boys hold out before the strike it -- awful pretty -- in the face of rocks and clay and alkali. Oh, Lord, what a life it is, anyway! Why, they eat dirt -- an'd they sleep dirt, an' they breathe dirt till their backs are bent, their hands

twisted, their souls warped; they're all wind-swept an' blear-eyed -- an' some of 'em just lie down in their own sweat besides the sluices, an' they don't never rise up again. I've seen 'em there. I got some money of lod Brownie's. (*Pointing to the keg*) He was lyin' out in the sun on a pile of clay two weeks ago an' I guess the only clean thing about him was his soul -- an' he was quittin' -- quittin' right there on the clay -- and quittin' hard ... (*Remembering the scene with horror.*) Oh, he died -- jest like a dog -- you wanted to shoot him to help him along quicker. Before he went, he sez: Girl, give it to my old woman," and he -- left. She'll get it. (*Slight pause,*) An' that's what aches you. They ain't one of these men working for themselves alone. The Almighty never put it in no man's heart to make a beast or a pack-horse of himself -- except for some woman, or some child. ain't it wonderful? Ain't it wonderful, that instinct, ain't it? -- What a man'll do when it comes to a woman. Ain't it wonderful? Yep, the boys use me as a -- ha -- sort of lady bank. (*She wipes her eyes.*) You bet I'll drop down dead befoe any one'll get a dollar of theirs outter the pokla!

JOHNSON. (*After a short pause*). That's right. (*Taking The Girl's hand.*) I'm with you. I'd like to see any get that. (*They shake hands over the keg -- not heroically, but very simply.*) Girl, you make me wish I could talk more with you, but I can't. By daybreak I must be a long way off. I'm sorry. I should have liked to call at your cabin.

GiRL. (*Wistfully.*) Must you be movin' -- so -- soon?

JOHNSON. I'm only waiting till the posse gets back and you're safe. (*Listening.*)

There ... they're coming now....

GIRL. I'm awful sorry you got to go. I was goin' to say: *(rolling the keg up stage, she takes a lantern off the bar and sets it on the keg)* if you didn't have to go so soon, I'd like to have you come up to the cabin to-night, and we would talk of reaching out up there. You see the boys will come back here. .. We close the Polka at one -- any time after that.

JOHNSON. I -- I should ride on now -- but -- I'll come.

GIRL. Oh, Good! *(Giving the lantern to Johnson.)* You can use this lantern. It's the straight trail up -- you can't miss it. Say, don't expect too much of me -- I've only has thirty-two dollars worth of education. *(Her voice breaks, her eyes fill with tears.)* P'raps if I'd had more -- why, you can't tell what I might have been. Say, that's a turrible thought, ain't it? What we -- might have been? And I know it when I look at you.

JOHNSON. *(Touched.)* God knows it is! What we might have been - and I know it when I look at *you*, Girl -- I know it -- when I look at you.

GIRL. *(Wipes away a tear.)* You bet. *(Suddenly collapses, burying her face on her arm on the bar, sobbing, speaking through her tears.)* Oh, 'tain't no use -- I'm ignorant -- I don't know nothin' and I never knowed it till to-night. The boys always told me I knowed so much -- but they're damn liars.

JOHNSON. *(Comes up and leans on the bar. Earnestly, with a suggestion of tears in his voice.)* Don't you care -- you're all right, Girl -- you're all right. Your heart's all right -- that's the main thing. As for looks, -- to me you've got the face of an angel. I -- I'll just take a glance at my horse. *(He takes up his saddle, crosses to*

the door, then turns back. To himself.) John, what the devil's the matter with you?

(He goes out hastily, carrying the lantern and slamming the door behind him.)

(The Girl stands immovable for a moment, then calls suddenly.)

GIRL. Nick! Nick! *(Nick enters quickly. She turns her face away, wiping off a tear.)* You run over to the Palmetter rest'rant an' tell 'em to send me up two charlotte rusks an' a lemming turnover -- just as quick as they can -- right up to the cabin for supper. *(Nick goes off.)* Ha! *(She crosses to the poker table and sits on the edge, the light above shining down on her face. Strumming on a guitar and mandolin is heard as though the musicians were tuning up for the boys.)* He says ... He says ... *(sentimentally)* I have the face of an angel. *(A little pause, then turning her face away.)* Oh, Hell!

CURTAIN

ACT II

"Two people who came from nothing."

SCENE: *The home of The Girl on Cloudy Mountain. One o'clock in the morning.*

The interior of the cabin has but one room, square and made of logs. It is half papered as though the owner had bought wall-paper in camp and the supply had given out.

There is but one door, and that leads to the trail. This door in the center at back, is double boarded and fastened by a heavy bar. It opens on a rough vestibule, built to keep out the storms and the cold.

The windows, at which are calico curtains provided with heavy wooden shutters and bars. The barred door and windows give an air of security to the room as though it could be made into a little fortress.

The furniture is rather primitive. A bed, screened off by calico curtains, stands at the right side of the room. Below the bed is a bureau covered by a Navajo blanket on which a few crude toilet articles are set about. A cheap black framed mirror, decorated with strings of Indian beads and white cambric roses, hangs over the bureau. A wash-stand, backed by a "splasher" of white oil-cloth, is near the bed. On the opposite side of the room, a pine wardrobe, rudely painted by a miner, contains The Girl's clothing. A sunbonnet and a shawl hang on a peg driven into the side of the wardrobe. A calico curtain covers a few garments hanging on the peg. In an angle, formed by a fireplace, is a row of shelves, holding tin cups, Indian baskets, two plates, a tin can, knives, forks and spoons. A rocking-chair, made of a barrel, set on rockers and dyed with blueing, is embellished with calico cushions and an antimacassar. There are four other chairs in the room. A pine table is almost in the centre of the room. It is covered with a red cloth and over this is a white table cloth. Three dishes are on the table; one contains the charlotte "rusks." one the "lemming" turnover, and the other holds biscuit and chipped beef. "A sugar brown with brown sugar is placed in the centre of the table. A fire burns in the fireplace, which has an iron hood, a big black log, and a smaller log in front. A pile of wood lies on the floor close at hand. A kettle hangs over the fire and a coffee pot is set on a log. A few china

ornaments, a bunch of winter berries stuck in a glass jar, a bottle of whiskey and two glasses, are on the mantle. A box is nailed on the wall to form a bookshelf for a few well-worn old books. A wolf skin and moccasins are in front of the bureau, a large bear-skin rug is on the floor opposite the fireplace. A few pictures taken from "Godey's Lady's Book," one or two old prints and a large sombrero hat hang on the wall. A horseshoe over the door and the head of a small antelope, an old pair of snowshoes over the window and a lady's night-dress on a peg, complete the decorations in the lower part of the room. Above is a loft reached by a ladder which is swung up out of the way. By standing on a chair and reaching up, the ladder may be pulled down to the floor. Some old trunks and a few little boxes are neatly piled on the floor of the loft. Blankets screen off one end of the attic. A lamp hangs from an arm (swinging from the loft above) and shines down on the table. The winter is now beginning, and, although there is no evidence of snow in the early part of the act, cabin windows are heavily frosted. When the curtain rises, the scene is lighted by the lamp and the glow from the fireplace. The moon is shining brightly through the window.

At the rise of the curtain, Wowkle, a squaw, is seated on the floor, singing, her papoose on her back. She is dress in a long cloth shirt, a short red calico skirt hanging over it. She wears moccasins. Her hair is parted in the middle and drawn into two tight little blue-black braids, crossed in the back, low in the neck. She wears a number of glass bead necklaces and small silver hoops in her ears. She is young, beady-eyed, sweet-faced, and rather plump -- the lax, uncorseted,

voluptuous type of squaw. The is perfectly good-natured, at times quizzical, but utterly unreliable and without any ideas of morality.

(Billy Jackrabbit enters.)

BILLY JACKRABBIT. Ugh!

WOWKLE. Ugh! *(As Billy Jackrabbit comes towards Wowkle, he sees the food on the table, looks at it greedily, picks up a plate and is about to sick his finger into the contents.)* Charlotte rusk -- Palmetto rest'rant. Not take.

BILLY JACKRABBIT. *(Putting the plate back on the table).* H'm ... H'm ... Me honest.

WOWKLE. Huh!

(Billy stoops and picks up a piece of paper to which some of the food [which has been wrapped in it] still clings. He rubs his fingers over the paper and licks them during the following conversation.)

BILLY JACKRABBIT. *(Grunting, sitting down bedside Wowkle).* Send me up from Polka -- say p'raps me marry you ... Huh?

WOWKLE. *(Impassively.)* Me don't know.

(Pause.)

BILLY JACKRABBIT. Me don't know. *(A slight pause. They are sitting side by side on the floor -- unlike lovers -- just two Indians.)* Me marry you, how much me got to give fatha -- Huh?

WOWKLE. *(Indifferently with a black look).* Huh! Me don'tknow.

BILLY JACKRABBIT. Me don't know. *(Pause.)* Me give fatha four dolla -- *(indicating with his fingers -- licking one as he speaks)_* -- and one blanket.

WOWKLE. Betta me keep um blanket for baby.

BILLY JACKRABBIT. (*Grunts.*) Me give fatha three dolla and babyu.

WowKLE. We keep um baby.

BILLY JACKRABBIT. Tawakawa.

(Tearing off a piece of sticky paper and handing it to Wowkle.)

BILLY JACKRABBIT. Toanimbutuc. (*Billy offers to let the baby lick the paper, but Wowkle draws the child away.*) Aie! Missionary woman at Battla Ridge him say marry first -- then baby.

BILLY JACKRABBIT. (*Who has licked the paper clean, and is now smoking his pipe.*)

Huh!

WOWKLE. Me say baby first ... him say all right, but marry -- get plenty bead.

BILLY JACKRABBIT. (*Eying her beads and giving his pipe to Wowkle who takes a puff.*)

You sing hymn for get those beads?

WOWKLE. Me sing -- (*Singing softly but in a fairly high pitched voice with a slight nasal quality of tone.*)

“My Days are as um grass -- “

BILLY JACKRABBIT. (*Recognizing the air, gives a grunt and joins in with Wowkle.*)

“Or as um faded flowa --

Um wintry winds sweep o’er um plain,

We pr’ish in -- um -- ow-a -- “

(Taking his pipe from Wowkle.) By Gar, to-morrow we go missionary -- sing like hell -- get whiskey. (*Rises.*)

` Pr’ish in -- um -- ow-a -- “

(He goes to the door and stands there.) Al-right -- go missionary to-morrow -- get marry -- huh?

WOWKLE. Billy Jackrabbit: *(she rises)* p'haps me not stay marry with you for long time.

BILLY JACKRABBIT. *(Unimpressed)*. Huh! How long -- seven monse?

WOWKLE. Six monse.

BILLY JACKRABBIT. *(Taking a red handkerchief from his pocket, and sticking it between the papoose and the board)*. Um ... for baby. *(Nudging Wowkle with his elbow.)* You come soon.

WOWKLE. Girl eat suppa first -- me come.

(The Girl appears outside the door, holding up a lantern. There is a certain suppressed excitement in her manner as she enters, yet she shows a new thoughtfulness and speaks quietly. She looks about as though to see what effect this little cabin will have on Johnson.)

GIRL. Turn up the lamps -- quick. *(She hangs her lantern on the outer door. Wowkle turns up the lamp on the table.)* Hello, Jackrabbit: fixed it?

BILLY JACKRABBIT. Me fix.

GIRL. *(Who is seated)*. That's good. Now git. *(Rising -- going to the table.)* Wowkle: it's for two to-night.

WOWKLE. Ugh.

GIRL. Yep.

WOWKLE. Come anotha? Neva before come anotha.

GIRL. Never you mind. He's coming -- he's coming: Pick up the room. What time is it, Wowkle? *(She has hung up her coat and now shakes Wowkle. Wowkle gets plates, cups, etc.)* Wowkle, what did you do with them red roses?

WOWKLE. Ugh!

(Pointing to the bureau.)

GIRL. Good. *(She finds the roses and arranges them in her hair.)* No offense -- but I want you to put your best foot forward *(takes the pistol out of her pocket and puts it on the lower end of her bureau)* when you're waitin' on table to-night. This here comp'ny of mine is a man of idees. Oh, he knows everything -- sort of a damn-me style. Wowkle, how's the papoose? Father really proposed to you?

WOWKLE. Yep -- get married.

GIRL. *(Taking a ribbon from a drawer)* Here: you can have that to fix the baby up for the weddin'. Hurry Wowkle. I'm going to put them on, *(she sits on the floor and puts on a pair of new slippers which she has taken from the bottom drawer)* -- if I can git 'em on. Remember what fun I made of you when you took up with Bill Jackfrabbit? "What for?" sez I. Well, perhaps you was right. Perhaps it's nice to have some one you really care for -- who really belongs to you. Perhaps there ain't so much in the saloon business for a woman, after all -- an' you don't know what livin' really is. Ah, Wowkle: it's nice to have some one you can talk to, some one you can turn your heart inside out to -- *(As a knock sounds on the window.)* Oh, Lord! here he is, Wowkle!

(She tries to conceal herself behind the foot of the bed -- one slipper in her hand. Sid opens the window and peers in.)

WOWKLE. Ugh!

GIRL. (*Disgusted at seeing Sid*). What are you doin' here, you Sidney Duck? You git!

SID. Beg Pardon, Miss. I know mean ain't allowed up here.

GIRL. No.

SID. But I'm in grite trouble. The boys are 'ot. They missed that road-agent Ramerrez -- and now they're tiking it out on me. (*Sniffs,*) If you'd only speak a word for me, Miss.

GIRL. No! Wowkle, shut the winder.

SID. (*Pleading.*) Ow, don't be 'ard on me.

GIRL. Now, look here: they's on kind of men (*gesticulating with a slipper*) I can't stand -- a cheat and a thief, and you're it. You're no better than that road -agent Ramerrez. (*Putting on the other slipper.*) Wowkle, close the winder. Close the winder.

SID. Public 'ouse jide!

I

GIRL. I got 'em on! I Say, Wowkle: do you think he'll like 'em? How do they look? Gosh! They're tight. Say, Wowkle: I'm going the whole hog. (*She has taken a lace shawl from the bureau drawer and puts it on; then she sprinkles some perfumery over a large lace handkerchief and starts to draw on a pair of one-button gloves.*) Look here, Wowkle: does it look like an effort?

WOWKLE. (*Understanding at last*). H'm.! Two plate ...

(*There is a knock on the door. The Girl hastily adjust her belt, pulls up her stockings and opens the door.*)

JOHNSON. (*Surprised*). Hello!

GIRL. (*Embarrassed*). Hello, Mr. Johnson...

JOHNSON. (*Noticing her gloves*). Are you -- going out?

GIRL. Yes -- no -- I don't know. Oh, come on in.

JOHNSON. (*Setting his lantern on the table*). Thank you.

(*Attempting to put his arms around her.*)

WOWKLE. Ugh!

(*She shuts the door which Johnson left open.*)

JOHNSON. (*Eying Wowkle*). I beg your pardon. I didn't see --

GIRL. You stop jest where you are, Mr. Johnson.

JOHNSON. I -- I apologize. But seeing you standing there, and looking into your lovely eyes -- well, the temptation to take you in my arms was so great -- that I -- I took it.

(*Wowkle, blowing out Johnson's lantern, goes to the cupboard with her papoose.*)

GIRL. You must be in the habit of taking things, Mr. Johnson. I seen you on the road to Monterey, goin' an' comin' -- I seen you once since, and passed a few words with you; but that don't give you no excuse to begin this sort of game. Besides, you might have prospected a bit first, anyway.

JOHNSON. I see how wrong I was. May I take off my coat? (*She does not answer.*)

Thank you. (*He lays his coat on a chair.*) What a bully little place you have here -- awfully snug. And I've found you again! Oh, the luck! (*Holding out his hands.*)

Friends, Girl?

GIRL. (*Withholding her hand*). Are you sorry?

JOHNSON. No, I'm not sorry.

GIRL. (*Bashfully -- half to herself*). That damn-me style! Well, look here: (*going towards he chair at the table*) down to the saloon to-night, you said you always got what you wanted. Well, of course I've got to admire you for that -- I guess women always do admire me for gettin' what they want. But if huggin' me is included, cut it out, Mr. Johnson.

JOHNSON. (*Facing her across the table*). That was a lovely day, Girl, on the road to Monterey, wasn't it?

GIRL. Was it? Oh, take a chair an' set down.

JOHNSON. Thanks.

(*But he does not sit.*)

GIRL. Say, look here: I've been thinkin' ... You didn't come to the saloon to seem me to-night. What brought you?

JOHNSON. It was fate.

GIRL. Was it fate -- or -- the back trail?

JOHNSON. (*Coming to the table and attempting to embrace The Girl*). It was fate.

GIRL. (*Retreating to a corner*). Wowkle: git the coffee. Oh, Lord, take a chair.

(*Starts up to place a chair near the table, but Johnson intercepts her before she can pick up his coat which lies across the back of the chair.*)

JOHNSON. Careful, please! Careful.

GIRL. (*Peering at the revolvers in his coat pockets*). How many guns do you carry?

JOHNSON. (*Hangs his coat on the peg*). Oh, several -- when traveling through the country.

GIRL. (*Apprehensively*). Set down.

(He sits.)

JOHNSON. Ha! It must be strange, living all alone way up here in the mountain. Isn't it lonely?

GIRL. Lonely? Mountains lonely? H! Besides -- *(Sitting in the barrel rocking-chair)* I got a little pinto, an' I'm all over country on him -- finest little horse you ever throwed a leg over. If I want to, I can ride right down into the summer at the foothills, with miles of Injun pinks just a-laffin' -- an' tiger lilies as mad as blazes. There's a river there, too -- the Injuns call it a "water road" an' I can git on that an' drift an' drift, an' smell the wild syringa on the banks -- M'n! And if I get tired o' that, I can turn my horse up grade an' gallop right into winter an' the lonely pines and firs a-whisperin' an' a-sighin'. Oh, my mountains! My beautiful peaks! My Sierras! God's in the air here, sure. You can see him layin' peaceful hands on the mountain tops. He seems so near, you want to let your soul go right on up.

JOHNSON. *(Who has been listening, nodding his head slightly in appreciation)*. When you die, you won't have far to go, Girl.

GIRL. *(After a pause)*. Wowkle, git the coffee.

(The Girl and Johnson sit at the table. Wowkle pours the coffee into cups, and set the pot back on the fireplace.)

JOHNSON. But when it's cold up here -- very cold and it snows?

GIRL. Oh, gthe boys come up an' dig me out of my front door -- ha -- like -- a --

(Spearing a biscuit with her fork.)

JOHNSON. Little rabbit, eh?

GIRL. I get dug out nearly every day when the mines is shet down and the Academy opens.

JOHNSON. (*In surprise*). Academy? Here? Who teaches in your Academy?

GIRL. Me. I'm her. I'm teacher.

JOHNSON. You teach? Oh --

GIRL. Yep, I learn m'self -- (*Putting sugar in Johnson's coffee*) an' the boys at the same time. But, of course, Academy's suspended when they's a blizzard on.

JOHNSON. (*Seeing that she is continuing to put sugar in his coffee*). Hold on ... hold on.

GIRL. -- 'Cause no girl could git down the mountain then.

JOHNSON. Is it so very severe here when the blizzard's on?

GIRL. Oh, Lordy! They come in a minute -- all of a sudden -- and you don't know where you are. It's awful! (*Offering a dish with an air of pride.*) Charlotte Rusks!

JOHNSON. (*Surprised*). No!

GIRL. And lemming turnovers.

JOHNSON. Well.

GIRL. Will you have one?

JOHNSON. You bet! Thank you. Let me send you some little souvenir of to-night -- something you'd love to read in your course of teaching at the Academy. What have you been reading lately?

GIRL. Oh, it's an awful funny book, about a couple. He was a Classic an' his name was Dant.

JOHNSON. He was a Classic an' his name was Dant? Oh, Dante! Yes, I know. And did you find it funny? Dante funny?

GIRL. I roared. You see, he loves a lady --

(Rising to get the book.)

JOHNSON. Beatrice --

GIRL. How?

JOHNSON. Go on.

GIRL. He loves a lady. It made me think of it what you said down to the saloon to-night about livin' so you didn't care what come after. Well, he made up his mind -- this Dant -- Dantee -- that one hour of happiness with her was worth the whole da -- *(correcting herself)* outfit that come after. He was willin' to sell out his chances for sixty minutes with her. Well, I jest put the book down and hollered!

JOHNSON. Of course you did. All the same, you knew he was right.

GIRL. I didn't.

(Putting the book back on the shelf.)

JOHNSON. You Did.

GIRL. Didn't.

JOHNSON. You did.

GIRL. Didn't.

JOHNSON. You know he was right!

GIRL. I don't.

JOHNSON. Yes, you do. You do.

GIRL. I don't. That a feller could so wind himself up as to say: *(sitting at the table)* "Jest give me an hour of your sassiety -- time ain't nothin' -- nothin' ain't nothin' -- only to be a da -- darn fool over you." Ain't it funny to fel like that? Yet I suppose there are folks who feel like that; folks that love into the grave, and into death -- and after. Golly! It jests lifts you right up by your book-straps to think of it, don't it?

JOHNSON. *(Looks at her intently, not smiling. One can see that he is fascinated).* It does have that effect.

GIRL. Yet p'raps he was ahead of the game. Ha -- I dunno. Oh, say, I just love this conversation with you. I love to hear you talk. You give me idees. Wowkle, bring the candle. *(Wowkle give the candle to Johnson.)* Say, look here: one of your real Havanas.

(Wowkle knows now that Johnson is the chosen man. She eyes him with great curiosity.)

JOHNSON. No, I --

GIRL. *(Handing him the cigar).* Go on.

JOHNSON. *(Looking her through and through, his eyes half closed).* Thank you. How I would love to know you, Girl!

GIRL. You do know me.

JOHNSON. *(Lights his cigar).* Not well enough.

GIRL. What's your drift?

JOHNSON. To know you as Dante knew the lady. To say: One hour for me -- one hour -- worth the world" ...

GIRL. He didn't git it, Mr. Johnson.

(Drinking her coffee.)

JOHNSON. All the same, there are women we can die for ...

GIRL. How many times have you died?

JOHNSON. *(Lays the cigar down on the table)*. That day on the road to Monterey, I said: "Just the one woman for me." *(Taking The Girl's hand.)* I wanted to kiss you then. *(She rises, pulls her hand away and starts to clear the table.)*

GIRL. Wowkle, his the winder. *(Wowkle goes to the window and stands there.)* Mr. Johnson, some me think so much of kisses, that they don't never want a second kiss from the same girl.

JOHNSON. That depends on whether they love her or not. All loves are not alike.

GIRL. No, but they all have the same aim -- to git her, if they can.

JOHNSON. You don't know what love is.

GIRL. Nop, I don't. My mother used to say, Mr. Johnson, "Love's a tickling sensation at the heart that you can't scratch. *(Johnson rises and goes up to the door, laughing heartily.)* We'll let it go at that.

JOHNSON. *(Turns to embrace The Girl)*. Oh, Girl, you're bully!
(Wowkle clears the table.)

GIRL. *(Retreating)*. Look out or you'll muss my roses.

JOHNSON. Hadn't you better take them off, then?

GIRL. Give a man an inch, an' he'll be at Sank Hosey before you know it.

JOHNSON. *(Following The Girl)*. Is there any one else?

GIRL. *(Taking off her roses.)* A man always says: "Who was the first one?" But the girl says: "Who'll b e the next one?"

JOHNSON. But when the time comes, there will never be a next one.

GIRL. No.

(Takes off one of her gloves, blows into it and puts it in the bureau drawer.)

GIRL. I'd hate to stake my pile on that. Git to you wigwam, Wowkle.

(She takes off the other glove. Wowkle, who has put the dishes in a pail, grunts, hangs the papoose on her back and puts on her blanket.)

JOHNSON. Must I go, too?

GIRL. Mm -- not just yet. You can stay -- a - a hour or two longer.

JOHNSON. Yes? Well, I'm like Dante: I want the world in that hour, because I'm afraid the door of this little paradise may be shut to me afterwards. Let's say that this is my one more hour - the hour that gives me that kiss.

GIRL. Go long ...

(Wowkle has reached the door and opened it. A gust of wind and a little snow blows in. The wind has been rising for some time, but The Girl and Johnson have not noticed it.)

WOWKLE. Ugh -- come snow.

(The Girl and Johnson do not hear her. All through the following scene they are so engrossed in each other, that they don't notice Wowkle.)

GIRL. *(To Johnson)*. You go to grass.

JOHNSON. *(Embracing her -- trying to kiss her)*. Listen ...

WOWKLE. Ugh! It snow ... See ...

GIRL. Why, if I let you have one, you'd take two.

JOHNSON. No, I wouldn't.

WOWKLE. Very bad.

JOHNSON. I swear I wouldn't.

WOWKLE. Ugh!

(She is disgusted and goes out the door.)

GIRL. *(Retreating)*. Oh, please ...

JOHNSON. *(Steps back a little and stands with his arms open)*. One kiss -- only one.

GIRL. 'Tain't no use. I lay down my hand to you.

JOHNSON. *(Embracing her and kissing her)*. I love you! *(The wind blows the snow against the windows. The vestibule doors slam. The curtains of the bed flap in the wind. A small basket on the wardrobe blows down. A flower-pot topples over. The blankets in the loft flap. The lamps flicker. Suddenly the wind dies down. The clock on the mantle strikes two. The wind begins to rise again. The Girl and Johnson are absolutely oblivious to the storm. After a little pause, Johnson speaks, still holding her in his arms.)*

What's your name, Girl -- your real name?

GIRL. Min -- Minnie. My father's name was Smith.

JOHNSON. Oh, Minnie Sm ---

GIRL. But 'twasn't his right name.

JOHNSON. No?

GIRL. His right name was Falconer --

JOHNSON. Minnie Falconer. That's a pretty name.

(He kisses her hand.)

GIRL. I think that it was. I ain't sure. That's what he said it was. I ain't sure of anything -- only --jest you.

(She snuggles closer.)

JOHNSON. I've loved you ever since I first saw you ... So you're sure of me -- sure.

(He gently puts her away, remembering what he is.) You turn your head away,

Girl, and don't listen to me, for I'm not worth you. Don't you listen. You just say,

"No -- no -- no!"

(He turns away.)

GIRL. Say, I know I ain't good enough for you, but I'll try hard. If you see anything better in me, why don't you bring it out? I've loved you ever since I saw you first ... cause I knowed that you was the right man.

JOHNSON. *(Conscience-smitten)*. The right man. Ha, ha!

GIRL. Don't laugh.

JOHNSON. *(Seriously)*. I'm not laughing.

GIRL. Of course, every girl kind o' looks ahead.

JOHNSON. Yes.

GIRL. And figgers about -- bein' -- Well -- Oh, you know --

JOHNSON. Yes, I know.

(He is standing so she cannot see his face.)

GIRL. She figgers about being settled ... and when the right one comes -- why, she knows him -- just as we both knew each other standin' in the road to Monterey. I said that day: "He's good -- he's grand -- he can have me!"

JOHNSON. (*Meditatively, with longing -- turning to her*). *I could have you ... (With sudden resolve.)* I have looked into your heart, Girl, and into my own, and now I realize what this means for both of us -- for you, Girl, for you -- and knowing that it seems hard to say good-bye -- as I should ... and must ... and will.

(*He kisses her, and then turns to go.*)

GIRL. What do you mean?

JOHNSON. (*Collecting himself*). I mean it's hard to go -- andf leave you here. The clock reminded me that long before this, I should have been on the way. I shouldn't have come up here at all. God bless you, dear -- I love you as I never thought I could.

GIRL. (*Troubled.*) But it ain't for long you're goin'?

JOHNSON. For long? (*Resolving not to tell her the truth.*) No -- no; but I've got to go now while I have the courage. (*Taking her face in his hands -- kissing her.*) Oh, Girl! Girl! (*Kissing her hands.*) Good-bye ... (*Getting his hat and coat and opening the door, he looks out.*) Why, it's snowing! (*As the door opens, all the sounds of the storm-swept woods are heard -- the whispering and rocking of the storm-tossed pines, and the winds howling through a deep cañon. The Girl runs up and closes the outside and inside doors, goes to the window, pulls back the curtain, wipes the frost from the window-pane, trying to peer out.*)

GIRL. Snowing ... It's the first snow of the winter. You can't see an inch ahead. That's the way we git it up here. Look! Look!

JOHNSON. (*Looking through the window.*) This means ... No ... it can't mean that I can't leave Cloudy to-night. I must.

GIRL. *(Turning to him)* Leave Cloudy? You couldn't keep to the trail. It means you can't git off this mountain to-night.

JOHNSON. *(Thinking of the posse)*. But I must!

GIRL. You can't leave this room to-night -- you couldn't find your way three feet from the door -- you, a stranger ... You don't know the trail anyway, unless you can see it.

JOHNSON. *(Apprehensively)*. But I can't stay here.

GIRL. Why not? It's all right. The boys'll come an' dig us out to-morrow or day after. Plenty of food here -- and you can have my bed.

JOHNSON.. I couldn't think of taking it.

GIRL. I never use it on cold nights. I always roll up in my rug in front of the fire.

(Amused.) Think of it storming all this time, an'd we didn't know it!

JOHNSON. *(Pre-occupied -- gravely)*. But people coming up and finding me here, might

GIRL. Might What?

(Two shots, fired in quick succession, are heard in the distance at the foot of the mountain.)

JOHNSON. What's that? .. What's that?

GIRL. Wait ... *(More shots are heard in the distance, fired at intervals.)* They've got a road-agent ... it's the posse. Perhaps they got Ramerrez or one of his band.

(Johnson rushes to the window, vainly trying to look out.) Whoever it is, they're snowed in -- couldn't git away. *(Another shot is heard.)* I guess that time another thief crept into camp.

(Meaning eternity.)

JOHNSON. (*Wincing.*) Poor devil! But, of course -- as you say -- he's only a thief.

GIRL. (*Who has thrown her pillow in front of the fire.*) I ain't sorry for him.

JOHNSON. (*After a slight pause.*) You're right! (*Then, as though he had made up his mind, he takes down his overcoat and puts it on.*) Girl, I've been thinking ... I've got to go -- I've got to go. I have very important business at dawn -- imperative.

GIRL. Ever sample one of our mountain blizzards? In five minutes you wouldn't know where you was. Your important business would land you at the bottom of a cañon - about twenty feet from here. You say you believe in Fate: well, it's caught up with you. You got to stay here.

(*She puts the tablecloth in the cupboard as though putting the house in order for the night.*)

JOHNSON. Well, it is Fate -- my Fate -- (*throwing down his coat*) that has always made it easy for me to do the thing I shouldn't do. As you say, Girl, if I can't go, I can't ... (*looking at her intently*) but I know as I stand here, that I will never give you up.

GIRL. (*Not quite understanding.*) Why, what do you mean?

JOHNSON. (*Deliberately -- speaking above the crying of the wind.*) I mean ... suppose we say that's an omen -- (*pointing as though to the falling snow*) that the old trail is blotted out and there's a fresh road ... Would you take it with me, a stranger -- who says: "From this day I mean to be all that you would have me?" Would you take it with me? Far away from here -- and -- forever?

GIRL. Well, show me a girl who would want to go to heaven alone. (*Johnson kisses her hand.*) I'll sell out the saloon. I'll go anywhere with you -- you bet!

JOHNSON. You know what that means, don't you?

(He sits by the table, looking at The Girl.)

GIRL. Oh, yes. They's a little Spanish Mission Church here ... I pass it 'most every day. I can look in an' see the light burnin' before the Virgin -- an' all the saints standin' round with glassy eyes an' faded slippers - an' I often thought: what'd they think if I was to walk right in to be made -- well, some man's wife. That's a great word, ain't it -- wife? It makes your blood like pin-points thinkin' about it. There's somethin' kind o' holy about love, ain't there? Say: did yu ever ask any other woman to marry you?

(She sits down on the floor, leaning towards Johnson, in his arms.)

JOHNSON. No.

GIRL. Oh, I'm glad! Ah -- take me -- I don't care where -- as long's it's with you. Jest take me.

JOHNSON. So help me heaven, I'm going to, Girl. You're worth something better than me, Girl: but they say love works miracles every hour: it weakens the strong and strengthens the weak. With all my soul, I love you *(He notices that she is dozing.)* Why, Minnie Minnie ...

GIRL. *(Waking with a start)*. I wasn't asleep ... I'm jest happy an' let down, that's all. Say, I'm awful sorry -- I've got to say good-night.

JOHNSON. Good-night.

(Ke kisses her.) (They rise.)

GIRL. That's your bed over there.

JOHNSON. I hate to take it. Hadn't you better take the bed and let me sleep by the fire?

GIRL. Nop.

(She moves the barrel rocking-chair away from the fireplace.)

JOHNSON. Are you sure you will be more comfortable there?

GIRL. You bet I will -- don't worry.

JOHNSON. Very well.

(He throws his coat and hat on the bed.)

GIRL. *(As she spread rugs on the floor in front of the fire)*. This beats a bed any time.

There' one thing. *(Reaching up and pulling down a quilt from the loft)* -- you don't have to make it up in the morning. *(She puts a lighted candle on the hearth, blows out the lamps on the mantel, the stand and the bureau. She climbs up on the table, turns down the hanging lamp, steps to the floor, notices she has turned it too low, glances at Johnson, making sure he does not see her, gets up on the table again, turns the wick higher, then goes into the wardrobe where she makes her toilet for the night.)* Now, you can talk to me from your bunk, and I'll talk to you from mine.

JOHNSON. Good-night.

GIRL. Good- night.

JOHNSON. *(Starts to go to bed -- turns quickly -- listens -- then goes towards the bed -- pauses --runs to the door and listens. His face is full of resolve. He shows the desperado's ability to meet all emergencies. He speaks quietly -- in fact, the scene between these two, from this moment until the door is opened, must be done in the lowest audible tones -- to convey the impression that those outside do not hear)*. What's that?

GIRL. That's snow slidin' ... Good-night.

JOHNSON. God bless you, Girl. Thank you. *(He goes behind the curtains of the bed. A pause.)* H'm there is something out there ... sounded like someone calling.

GIRL. That's only the wind. *(She comes out of the wardrobe.)* It's getting colder, ain't it?
(She sits on the floor, takes off her slippers and puts on moccasins, then rises and comes down to the fire, arranges the rugs and pillows, says a brief prayer, lies down and tucks herself in.) Good-night again.

JOHNSON. Good-night.

GIRL. *(lifting up her head)*. Say, what's your first name?

JOHNSON. Dick.

GIRL. *(Sentimentally)*. So long, Dick.

(She snuggles again in the folds of the rug.)

JOHNSON. So long, Girl.

GIRL. *(Half rising)*. Say, Dick, are you sure you don't know that Nina Micheltoreña?

JOHNSON. *(After a slight pause)*. Sure.

GIRL. *(With a satisfied air)*. Good-night

(She lies down again.)

JOHNSON. Good-night.

(Suddenly a voice is heard to call and someone knocks on the door.)

(The Girl rises and sets the candle on the table.)

(Johnson throws open the curtains and pulls his revolvers from his pockets.)

GIRL. There is some one calling.

NICK, Hello!

GIRL. Listen What could that --

JOHNSON. *(In a low voice)*. Don't answer.

GIRL. Who can it be?

JOHNSON. You can't let anybody in here -- they wouldn't understand.

GIRL. Understand what?

(She goes to the window. It never occurs to her that the situation is compromising.)

JOHNSON. Sh!

GIRL. It's the posse. How did they ever risk it in this blizzard? What can they want?

JOHNSON. *(Low, but very distinctly, above the rising wind, his hands on his pistols)*.

Don't answer.

NICK. *(Voice outside)*. Min! Minnie! Girl!

GIRL. *(Calling off through the door)*. What do you want? *(Turning quickly to Johnson.)*

What did you say?

JOHNSON. Don't let them in.

SONORA'S VOICE. Are you all right, Girl?

GIRL. *(Calling loudly through door)*. Yes, Sonora, I'm all right. *(Turning to Johnson.)*

Jack Rance is here -- If he was to see you here -- he's that jealous -- I'd be afraid of him. *(Listening at the door.)* And Ashby's there and --

JOHNSON. *(Now sure that they are after him)*. Ashby!

NICK. *(Outside)*. We want to come in.

JOHNSON. No.

GIRL. *(Glibly, calling)*. You can't come in. *(To Johnson.)* What will I say?

JOHNSON. *(Quietly)*. You've gone to bed.

GIRL. Oh, yes. *(To Nick outside)* I've gone to bed -- I'm in bed now.

ASHBY, *(Outside)* We've come to warn you.

GIRL. They've come to warn me.

NICK. *(Outside)*. Ramerrez ...

GIRL. *(Calling through door)*. What?

NICK. Ramerrez is on the trail.

GIRL. Ramerrez is on the trail. *(To Johnson.)* I got to let 'em in. *(Johnson gets behind the curtain where he is entirely concealed.)* I can't keep them out on such a night. *(Calls to men outside.)* Come in boys.

(She opens the door, and the men enter - Rance first.)

(Rance, wearing a luxurious fur coat, his trousers tucked into his high-heeled boots, goes to the candle, warming his hands over it, taking off his gloves, brushing the snow off his handkerchief. Sonora, wearing a buffalo overcoat, cap, ear muffs, and high boots, comes down to the fireplace. Ashby follows with a lighted lantern; he is dressed as before, but wears an overcoat over the one in which he first appeared. Nick comes down to The Girl, then crosses to the fire; he has pieces of blanket tied round his legs and feet. Rance turns up the wick of the hanging lamp. All are snow-covered.)

SONORA. *(As he goes to the fireplace)*. Ow! Glad you are safe. I'm froze.

(He stamps his feet and rubs his hands together.)

NICK. The Polka has had a narrow squeak, Girl.

GIRL. *(Seated)*. Why, what's the matter, Nick?

RANCE. (*Suspiciously*). It takes you a long time to get up -- and you don't have much on you, either.

GIRL. (*Indignantly*). Well, upon my

(She rises and, picking up the rug on the floor, wraps it around her knees and sits. The wind rises and falls, crying in the cañons.)

SONORA. We thought you was in trouble. My breath jest stopped. ...

GIRL. Me -- in trouble?

RANCE. See here -- that man Johnson ---

SONORA. Fellow you was dancin' with --

RANCE. (*With a grimace of pleasure, spreading his stiffened fingers before the blaze*).

Your polkying friend Johnson is Ramerrez.

GIRL. (*Blankly*). What did you say?

ASHBUY. I warned you. Bank with us oftener.

GIRL. (*Dazed*). What did you say?

RANCE. We say -- Johnson was a --

GIRL. What?

RANCE. Are you deaf? That fellow you've been polkying with is the man that has been asking people to hold up their hands.

GIRL. (*Lightly, yet positively*). Go on! You can't hand me out that.

RANCE. You don't believe it yet, eh?

GIRL. (*Imitating his "yet"*). No, I don't believe it yet, eh! I know he isn't.

RANCE. Well, he is Ramerrez, and he *did* come to the Polka to rob it.

GIRL. But he didn't rob it.

SONORA. That's what gets me -- he didn't/

GIRL. I should think it would get you.

ASHBY. We've got his horse.

SONORA. I've never know one of these me to separate from his horse.

RANCE. Oh, well, if we've got his horse, with this storm on, we've got him. The last
seen of Johnson he was heading this way. You seen anything of him?

GIRL. Heading this way?

SONORA. So Nick said.

(The Girl gives Nick a glance.)

NICK. He was. Sid says jhe saw him, too.

RANCE. But the trail ends here -- and if she hasn't seen him -- (he looks at The Girl) --
where was he going? *(Nick, syping Johnson's cigar, recognizes it as on their rare
dollar Havanas. The Girl eyes follow Nick's glance. Unseen by Rance, there is a
glance between Nick and The Girl.)*

NICK. *(So himself)*. Oh, my God!

SONORA. *(Answering Rance's question)*. Yes, where was he going?

(Rance looks at The Girl, now intercepting Nick's glance.)

NICK. Well, I thought I'd seen him -- I couldn't swear to it. You see, it ws dark. Oh, That
Sidney Cove's a liar, anyway. *(Nick puts the tell-tale cigar in his pocket, looking
furtively about to make sure that he is not seen.)*

ASHBY. He's snowed under. Something scared him off, an' he lit off without his horse.

GIRL. *(Sitting down)*. Ha! How do you know the man is a road-agent?

SONORA. (*Warming his hands and breathing on his fingers*). Well, two greasers just now was pretty positive of it before they quit.

GIRL. (*With scorn*). Greasers! Oh!

RANCE. But the woman knew him -- she knew him.

(*Sitting at the table.*)

GIRL. (*Quietly, for the first time impressed*). The woman? What did you say?

SONORA. It was the woman who first told of that Ramerrez was here -- to rob the Polka.

RANCE. She's down at the Palmetto now.

ASHBY. It will cost us the reward.

RANCE. But Ramerrez is trapped.

GIRL. Who is this woman?

RANCE. (*As though to excite her jealousy*). Why, the woman from the back trail -- that damn --

GIRL. Nina Micheltoreña?

RANCE. H'm, h'm.

GIRL. Then she knows him. She *does* know him ...

(*She rises again.*)

RANCE. He was the sort of man who polkas with you first -- then cuts your throat.

GIRL. (*Turning on Rance*). It's my throat, ain't it?

RANCE. Well, I'll be --

NICK. (*Going to Rance and speaking to him in a low voice*). Say, she's cut up because she vouched for him. Don't rub it in.

GIRL. Nina Micheltoreña ... How did she know it?

SONORA. Why, from what she said --

RANCE. She's his girl. She's --

GIRL. His girl?

RANCE. Yes, she gave us his picture -- *(taking a picture from his pocket and turning it over)* with "Love" on the back.

GIRL. *(Takes the picture, looks at it, and laughs)*. Nina Micheltoreña, eh? Ha! I'm sorry I vouched for him, Mr. Ashby.

RANCE. Ah!

GIRL. *(So that Ashby shall not suspect)*. I suppose they had one of them little lovers' quarrels that made her tell you, eh! He's the kind of man that soft o' polkys with every girl he meets. Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!

RANCE. What are you laughing at?

GIRL. *(Turning to Rance again)*. Oh, northing -- only it's kind o' damn funny how things come out, -- ain't it? Took it! Nina Micheltoreña! Nice company he keeps. One of them Cuchuca girls with eye-lashes at half mast, ha! And she sold him out -- for money. Ah, you're a better guesser that I am jack.

RANCE. *(Grimly)*. Yes.

GIRL. Well, it's gettin' late. Thank you. Good-night, boys.

SONORA. Hell, boys! Come on and let a lady go to bed. Good-night, Girl.

SONORA. Good-night, Sonora. Good-night, Mr. Ashby. Good-night, Jack.

SONORA. Lordy! Will we ever get down again?

NICK. *(As the others are outside, looking at her meaningly)*. You want *me* to stay?

GIRL. *(Going to the door)*. No. Good-night. *(The men all go off calling "good-night," etc. The Girl shuts the door, and stands with her back against it. With a change of manner, her eyes blazing.)* Come out of that -- step out there! *(Johnson appears between the curtains of the bed.)* You came her to rob me.

JOHNSON. *(Quietly)*. I didn't.

GIRL. *(Viciously)*. You lie!

JOHNSON. I don't.

GIRL. You do.

JOHNSON. I -- I admit that every circumstance points to --

GIRL. Stop. Don't you give me any more of the Webster Dictionary Talk -- but git to cases. If you din't come her to steal -- yu came to the Polka to rob it, didn't you?

JOHNSON. *(With a sudden determination)*. Yes, I did, but when I knew it was you who --

(He goes towards her.)

GIRL. Wait! Wait! *(Johnson pauses.)* Don't you take a step -- look out, or I'll -- a road-agent ... a road-agent! ... Well, ain't it my luck. Wouldn't anybody know to look at me that a gentleman wouldn't fall my way" A road-agent ... Oh! Oh! Oh! *(Then with a revulsion of feeling.)* You can git now -- git! You -- you thief! You imposer on a decent woman. I ought to have told the boys -- But I wasn't goin' to let on I cold be so took in. I wasn't goin' to be the joke of the world, with you behind the curtain, an' me eatin' charollte rusks and lemming turnovers and a-polkying with a road agent. Ha! But now you can get! Now you can git.!

(She sits on the table, looking straight before her as though to forget the sight of the man.)

JOHNSON. *(In a low voice)*. One word -- only one word ... I'm not going to say anything in defense of myself. It's all true -- everything is true, except that I would have stolen from you. I am called Ramerrez -- I have robbed -- I am a vagabond -- a vagabond by birth -- a cheat and a swindler by profession. I'm all that -- and my father was all that before me. I was born, brought up, educated, thrived on thieves money -- but until six months ago, when he died, I didn't know it. I lived in Monterey -- Monterey where we meet. I lived decently, I wasn't a thing I am today. I only learned the truth when he died and left me with a rancho and a bad of thieves -- nothing else -- nothing for us all -- and I ... I was my father's son -- no excuse ... it was in me -- in the blood ... I took to the road. I didn't mind much after -- the first time. I only drew the line at lying. I wouldn't have that. And that's the man I am - the blackguard I am *(With feeling.)* But, so help me God, from the moment I kissed you to-night, I meant to change. I meant to change.

GIRL. *(Sniffing)* The devil you did!

JOHNSON. *(Advancing a step)*. I did, believe me -- I did. I meant to go straight and take you with me -- but honestly ... when I could do it honestly. I meant to work for you. Every word you said to me to-night about being a thief, cut me like a knife. Over and over again, I said to myself: "She must never know." Now ... *(A slight pause.)* Well, I've finished.

GIRL. Is that all?

JOHNSON. No. Yes. What's the use. That's all.

GIRL. *(Half crying)*. Well, there's jest one thing you overlooked explainin', Mr. Johnson.

It shows jest exactly what you are. It wasn't so much bein' kissed by a road-agent

I got against you -- it's this: you kissed me. You kissed me. You got my first kiss.

JOHNSON. Yes, damn me!

GIRL. You said you'd been thinkin' of me ever since you saw me at Monterey -- an' all

the time you'd walked straight off and been kissing that other woman. You've got

a girl. It's that I've got against you. It's that damned Nina Micheltoreña that I can't

forgive. But now you can git -- you can git. *(Rushing to the door and opening it.)* If

they kill you, so much the better. I don't care -- I don't care!

JOHNSON. You're right. You're right. By God! You're right.

(He takes out his pistol, but, not much caring whether he lives or dies, he looks at

the pistol, puts it back in his pocket and goes out empty-handed -- head bowed.)

GIRL. That's the end of that -- that's the end of that. *(She goes to the door, closes it.)* I

don't care. I'll be like the rest of the women I've seen. I'll give that Nina

Micheltoreña cards and spades. *(Wipes her nose.)* There'll be another hussy

around her. *(At that moment, we hear a shot outside, close at hand.)* They've got

him ... *(With a bravado toss of her head.)* Well, I don't care -- I don't care.

(Johnson falls against the door outside. The Girl, with a revulsion of feelings,

rushes to the door, opens it, and he staggers in, her arms about him. Johnson

eans against the wall. The Girl closes the door.)

JOHNSON. *(Holding his hand to his right side)* ... Don't lock the door .. I'm going out

again ... I'm going out... *(He swings round, lurches and nearly falls as The Girl*

pushes him onto a chair.) Don't bar the door. Open it ... Open i ... By God! I won't hide behind a woman.

GIRL. *(Leaning over Johnson).* I love you an' I'm goin' to stand by you. You asked me to go away with you. *(Crosses for the whiskey bottle and a glass.)* You get out of this, an' I will. If you can't save your own soul -- *(There is a rap on the window. Rance is peering through, but he cannot see Johnson. The Girl sets down the bottle and the glass and pauses. She looks at the ladder to the loft, gets on a chair and lets it down. Rance goes from the window to the door.)* -- I'm goin' save it for you. You're the man who had my first kiss. Go up there!
(In a lower voice she urges Johnson to the loft.)

JOHNSON. *(His handkerchief pressed to his side).* No - no - no - no -- Not here.

GIRL. Do you want them to see you in my cabin? Hurry ... Hurry ...

JOHNSON. No -- No --

(There is a rap on the door. She gives him a push, and with an effort Johnson gradually climbs up the ladder, reeling asww he goes.)

GIRL. Yes, you can do it -- you can -- you're the man I love. You've got to show me the man that's in you. Go on ... Go on ... *(There is a second rap on the door.)* Just a step -- a step.

JOHNSON. I can't ... I can't.

(He reaches the loft, collapses, falling to his knees. He lies on the floor of the loft, one outstretched hand holding the handkerchief. The girl swings the ladder up.)

GIRL. *(Looks up, calls softly).* You can. Don't move. *(There is another rap at the door.)*
The cracks are wide -- take that handkerchief away. *(He draws the handkerchief*

out of sight.) That's it. (There is another knock. The Girl calls off.) Yes, yes, in a minute. (In a whisper to Johnson.) Don't move. (The door opens and Rance appears. He slams the door behind him.) Well, what do you want now? You can't come in here, Jack Rance.

RANCE. No more Jack Rance. It's the sheriff after Mr. Johnson.

GIRL. What?

RANCE. I saw him coming in here.

(He cocks his revolver.)

GIRL. It's more than I did. *(Rance glances at the bed, opening the curtains.)* and the door was barred. Do you think I want to shield a man who tried to rob me? If you doubt my word, go on -- search the place; but that ends your acquaintance with the Polka. Don't you ever speak to me again -- we're through.

RANCE. Wait a minute ... What's that? *(He listens -- the wind is calling. After a slight pause, Rance comes down to the table. The Girl is leaning against the bureau. Rance uncocks his revolver, puts it in the holster, takes off his hat, shakes the water from it, and drops it on the table. His eyes never leave The Girl's face.)* I saw someone standing outside -- there -- *(He crosses to the fireplace.)* against the white snow. *(Taking off his overcoat.)* I fired. *(Shaking his coat.)* I could have sworn it was a man.

GIRL. Go on -- go on -- finish your search, -- then never speak to me again.

RANCE. *(Seeing that he has gone too far -- turning to her.)* Say, I -- I don't want to quarrel with you.

GIRL. Go on - go on - and then leave a lady to herself to git to bed. Go on and git it over.

RANCE. I'm crazy about you. I could have sworn I saw -- You know it's just you for me -- just you -- I can't -- *(starting to put on his coat)* get over the queer look on your face when I told you who that man really was. You don't love him, do you? *(A pause. He throws the coat down on the floor and advances towards her.)* Do you?

GIRL *(Lightly)*. Who? Me?

(With a forced laugh, she eyes Rance disdainfully.)

RANCE. *(His feelings somewhat relieved, takes a step towards her)*. Say, was your answer to-night final about marrying me?

GIRL. *(Coyly, flirting with him)*. I might think it over, Jack.

(With another somewhat artificial laugh.)

RANCE. Minnie ... *(Coming close to her.)* I love you. *(Putting his arms about her, kissing her.)* I love you.

(She struggles to escape from him, and, picking up the bottle from the table, raises it to strike him, then sinks to the floor, sobbing.)

GIRL. *(Nervously)*. Oh, my God, I --

(Rance stands looking down at her.)

RANCE. *(With a nasty laugh of a man whose vanity is hurt)*. Ha! Ha! Ha! God! I - I didn't think it was that bad, -- I didn't. I am much obliged to you. Thank you. *(Taking his cap from the table and going to the door.)* Good-night. *(Taking up his coat and*

starting to put it on.) Good-night. Much obliged. Can't you -- can't you even say good-night?

(He has his coat in his left hand, his cap in his right. The Girl rubs her hands on her dress and comes reluctantly towards him. He drops his cap.)

GIRL. Yes. Good-night, Jack Rance. Good0-night, Jack Rance, I --

(As he holds out his hand, a drop of blood from the loft falls on it.)

RANCE. *(Slowly, after a pause)*. Look at my hand ... *(Pulls out his handkerchief and wipes his hand)* ... my hand. *(Looking at the blood.)* That's blood.

GIRL. Yes, I must have scratched you just now. I'm awful sorry.

RANCE. There's no scratch there. There isn't a mark.

(More blood falls on the outstretched hand, holding the handkerchief.)

GIRL. *(Quickly)*. Yes, but there will be in the morning, Jack. You'll see in the morning.

RANCE. *(Looks towards the loft. Placing his hand on his pistol, he puts his handkerchief in his pocket)*. He's up there.

GIRL. *(Holding his hand which grasps the revolver)* No, he isn't, Jack. No, he isn't. No, he --

RANCE. You go straight to the devil.

(He picks up a chair to climb up -- then he sees the ladder.)

GIRL. *(Trying to stop Rance)*. No, he isn't, Jack. Not there, Jack. Not there, Jack. He is not there --

(Drawing down the ladder.)

RANCE. Mr. Johnson, come down.

GIRL. Wait a minute, Jack ... Wait a minute ...

RANCE. *(As Johnson moves towards the top of the ladder).* Come down , or I'll --

GIRL. Wait, jest a minute, Jack -- jest a minute ...

RANCE. *(His revolver leveled at Johnson).* Come down here ... *(Step by step, Johnson comes down the ladder, his eyes fastened on Rance. The Girl stands watching Johnson. Johnson's hands, which are up, slowly fall, with unseeing eyes, he lurches to the chair behind the table, falls forward, his head resting on the table -- unconscious, half in the shadow. Rance puts his revolver in the holster.)*

GIRL. Don't you see he can't hold up his hands? Oh, Jack, don't make him. Don't you see he can't? Oh, Jack, don't make him. No, No, wait, Jack, jest a minute -- wait!

RANCE. *(Leaning over Johnson).* Wait a minute? What for? *(Laughs -- a low, unctuous laugh.)* So you dropped into the Polka, Mr. Johnson, to play me a little game of poker to-night? Ha! Ha! Ha! Funny how things change in a hour or two. You think you can play poker? That's your conviction, is it? Ha! Ha! Ha! Well, you can play freeze-out as go your chances, Mr. Johnson, of Sacramento! It's shooting or the tree. Speak up -- which will you have?

GIRL. *(Who has picked up her pistol -- in a low voice, but quite tense).* You better stop that laughing, or you'll finish it in some other place where things ain't quite so funny. *(Something in her voices strikes Rance and he stops laughing.)* He doesn't hear you. He's out of it. But me -- me -- I hear you --I ain't out of it. You're a gambler -- he was, too -- so am I. *(Having engaged Rance's attention, she throws the pistol back into the drawer.)* I live on chance money -- drink money -- card money -- saloon money. We're gamblers -- we're all gamblers! *(Leaning over towards Rance.)* You asked me to-night if my answer to you was final. Now's

your chance! I'll play you a game -- straight poker. It's two out of three for *me*.

Hatin' he sight of you -- it's the nearest chance you'll ever get for me.

RANCE. Do you mean --

GIRL. With the wife in Noo Orleans -- all right. If you're lucky, you git him an' me; but if you lose, this man settin' between us is mine -- mine to do with as I please -- an' you shut up and lose like a gentleman.

RANCE. (*Looking in her eyes*). You must be crazy about him.

GIRL. (*Briefly*). That's my business.

RANCE. Do you know you're talking to the sheriff?

GIRL. I'm talking to Jack Rance, the gambler.

RANCE. (*Quietly and coolly*). You're right (*Standing upright*.)

And I'm just fool enough to take you up. (*Looks for a chair*.) Ah! (*Brings the chair down, placing it before the table*.) You and the card have got into my blood. I'll take you.

(*He pulls off the table-cover and throws it on the floor*.)

GIRL. Your word?

RANCE. I can lose like a gentleman. (*She starts to draw back her hand, but he grasps it*.) But, by God! I'm hungry for you - and, if I'm lucky, I'll take it out on you so long as God lets you breathe.

GIRL. (*Draws away from him*). Fix the lamp. (*Rance, his eyes still on her, reaches up to the lamp, does not find it at first, looks up, turns up the wick*.) Wait, jest a minute -- jest a minute. (*She goes into the wardrobe with a candle*.)

RANCE. What are you waiting for?

(He takes out a pack of cards from his picket, sits at the table and shuffles them.)

GIRL. *(In the closet.)* I'm jest gettin' the cards, an' kind o' -- steadyin' my nerves.

RANCE. I've got a deck here.

GIRL. *(Coming out of the wardrobe, blowing out the candle, and throwing it on the floor.)* We'll use a fresh deck. *(Laying a pack of cards on the table.)* There's a good deal dependin' on this, Jack Rance. *(The Girl sits. Rance looks at her, then lays aside his own cards and takes hers.)* Are you ready?

RANCE. Ready? Yes, I'm ready. Cut for deal. *(She cuts. Rance shuffles.)* This is a case of show-down.

GIRL. Show-down.

RANCE. Cut. *(Begins to deal)* The best two out of three.

GIRL. Best two out of three.

RANCE. *(As he glances over the cards he has drawn -- in a low voice -- colloquially).*

What do you see in him?

GIRL. What do you see in me, Jack? *(Taking up her cards.)* What have you got?

RANCE. King high.

GIRL. King high.

RANCE. *(Showing her the hand).* Jack next.

GIRL. *(Showing her hand to Rance).* Queen next.

RANCE. You've got it. *(Throws down his hand. She shuffles.)* You've made a mistake on Johnson.

GIRL. *(Dealing).* If I have, Jack, it's my mistake.

RANCE. One pair -- aces.

(Showing her the cards.)

GIRL. Nothing.

(Throwing down her cards.)

RANCE. *(Shuffles the cards)*. We're even. We're even.

GIRL. It's the next hand that tells, Jack, ain't it?

RANCE. Yes.

GIRL. I'm awfully sorry it's the next hand that tells. I -- I want to say that no matter how it comes out --

RANCE. Cut.

(She cuts the cards and picks them up and deals.)

GIRL. -- that I'll always think of you the best I can, and I want you do to the same for me.

RANCE. You heard what I said.

GIRL. *(Starts to draw her cards towards her. He reaches across, places his hand over hers and the cards)*. Yes.

RANCE. But I have got a feeling that I win -- that in one minute I'll hold you in my arms.

(He spreads out his cards, still holding her hand and looking at her. Then, as though resolved to face the consequences, he looks at the cards. She is leaning forward and her hand is being drawn towards him. As he sees his cards, he smiles. The Girl collapses with a shudder. He leans forward very calmly.) I win.

GIRL. *(Very anxiously)*. Think so?

RANCE. Three kings and it's the last hand.

(Showing his cards to The Girl.)

GiRL. Oh, Jack, quick -- get me something -- I'm fainting!

RANCE. *(Throws his cards face down on the table).* Where? Where?

GiRL. There.

RANCE. *(Finds the bottle but not the glass).* Oh, yes, here it is -- here's the bottle.

Where's the glass? Where's that damn glass?

GiRL. Hurry ... Hurry ...

RANCE. *(Dropping the bottle, turning and leaning forward as if to impress her, his arms around her neck).* You're fainting because you lost.

GiRL. *(Rises, laying down her hand on the table).* No, Jack -- it's because I've won -- three aces and a pair.

(He looks at her hand. There is a slight pause.)

RANCE. Good-night.

(Always the gambler, he picks up his hat and coat and goes. The girl drops the cards and takes Johnson in her arms.)

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE: The interior of a typical mining camp dance-hall of the period.

END OF FREE PREVIEW