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Inside, the scene was ordinary  
enough. There was a long bar against  
which were lounging half a dozen  
typical Mexican cowpunchers. There  
was a small space cleared for dancing  
at the farther end of which two per-  
formers were making weird but ve-  
hement music. Three girls were dan-  
cing with cowboys, not ungracefully  
considering the state of the floor and  
the frequent discords in the music.  
One of them—the prettiest—stopped  
abruptly and pushed her partner away  
from her.

"You have drunk too much, Jose!"  
she exclaimed. "You cannot dance.  
You tread on my feet and you lean  
against me. I do not like it. I will  
dance with you another night when  
you are sober. Go away, please."

Her cavalier swayed for a moment  
on his feet. Then he looked down  
upon her with an evil glitter in his  
eyes. He was tall and thin, with a  
black mustache and yellow, unpleas-  
ant looking teeth.

"So you will not dance any longer  
with Jose?" he muttered. "Very well,  
you shall drink with him, then. We  
will sit together at one of those little  
tables. Listen, you shall drink wine."

"I do not want to drink wine with  
you. All that I wish is to be left  
alone," the girl insisted, curtly. "Go  
and play cards, if you want to. There  
is Pietro over there, and Diego. Per-  
haps you may win some money. They  
say that drunkards have all the luck."

Jose leered at her.

"Presently I will play cards," he  
said. "Presently I will win all their  
money and I will buy jewelry for you,  
Marta—stones that look like diamonds  
and will sparkle in your neck and in  
your hair."

She turned disdainfully away.

"I do not want your jewelry, Jose,"  
she declared.

He caught her suddenly by the  
wrist.

"Perhaps this is what you want,"  
he cried, as he stooped down to kiss  
her.

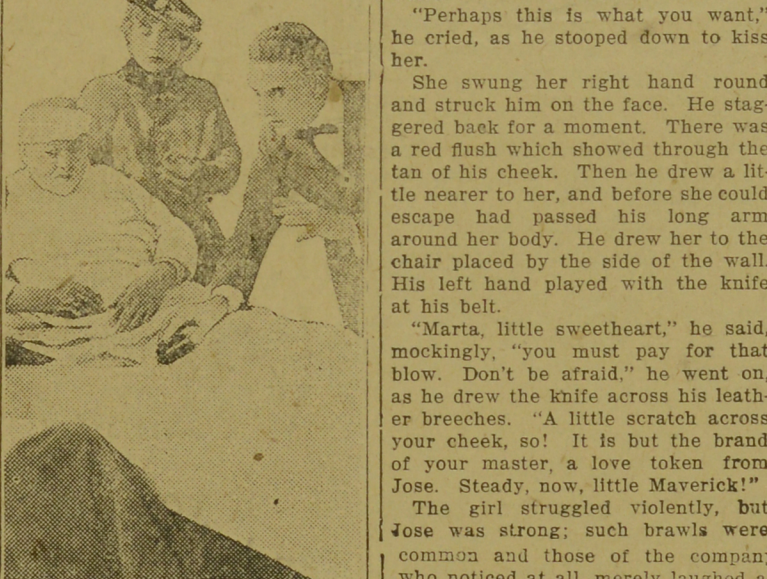
She swung her right hand round  
and struck him on the face. He stag-  
gered back for a moment. There was  
a red flush which showed through the  
tan of his cheek. Then he drew a lit-  
tle nearer to her, and before she could  
escape had passed his long arm  
around her body. He drew her to the  
chair placed by the side of the wall.  
His left hand played with the knife  
at his belt.

"Marta, little sweetheart," he said,  
mockingly, "you must pay for that  
blow. Don't be afraid," he went on,  
as he drew the knife across his leath-  
er breeches. "A little scratch across  
your cheek, so! It is but the brand  
of your master, a love token from  
Jose. Steady, now, little Maverick!"

The girl struggled violently, but  
Jose was strong; such brawls were  
common and those of the company  
who noticed at all, merely laughed at  
the girl's futile struggles. Jose's arm  
was already raised with the knife in  
his hand, when a sudden blow brought  
a yell of pain to his lips. The knife  
fell clattering to the floor. He sprang  
up, his eyes red with fury. A man  
had entered the door from behind  
and was standing within a few feet  
of him, a man with long, pale face,  
dark eyes, travel-stained, and with the  
air of a fugitive. A flood of incoherent  
abuse streamed from Jose's lips. He  
stooped for the knife. Marta threw  
herself upon him. The two cowboys  
who had been dancing suddenly inter-  
vened. The girl screamed.

"It was Jose's fault!" she cried.  
"Jose was mad. He would have killed  
me!"

After the Wreck Another Warning.



self just in time. He flung himself  
from his horse and plunged into the  
stream. It was several moments be-  
fore he was able to reach Lenora.  
From the opposite bank Craig watched  
them, glancing once or twice at the  
bridge. One of the wooden pillars  
had been, sawn completely through.  
"Are you hurt, dear?" Quest gasped,  
as he drew Lenora to the bank.  
She shook her head.  
"Just my side. Did Craig get  
away?"  
Quest looked gloomily across the  
stream.  
"Craig's in Mexico, right enough,"  
he answered savagely, "but I'm be-  
ginning to feel that I could fetch him  
back out of hell!"

#### CHAPTER XXVIII.

From the shadows of the trees on  
the farther side of the river, Craig  
with strained eyes watched Quest's  
struggle. He saw him reach Lenora  
watched him struggle to the bank  
with her, waited until he had lifted  
her on to his horse. Then he turned  
slowly around and faced the one coun-  
try in the world where freedom was  
still possible for him. He looked into  
the wall of darkness, penetrated only  
at one spot by a little blaze of light.  
Slowly, with his arm through the  
bridle of his horse, he limped towards  
it. As he drew nearer and discovered  
its source, he hesitated. The light  
came through the uncurtained win-  
dows of a saloon, three long, yellow  
shafts illuminating the stunted  
shrubs and sandy places. Craig kept  
in the shadow between them and  
drew a little nearer. From inside he  
could hear the thumping of a worn  
piano, the twanging of a guitar, the  
rattle of glasses, the uproarious shout-  
ing of men, the shrill laughter of  
women. The tired men and the lame  
horse strofe reluctantly a little nearer.  
Craig listened once more wearily. "It  
was home he longed for so much—  
and rest. The very thought of the  
place sickened him. Even when he  
reached the door, he hesitated and in-  
stead of entering stood back amongst  
the shadows. If only he could find

Craig faced them all with sudden  
courage.

"As I came in," he ex-  
plained, "that man had his knife raised to  
the girl. You don't allow that sort  
of thing, do you, here?"

The two cowboys linked their arms  
through Jose's and led him off to the  
door.

"The stranger's right, Jose," one of  
them insisted. "You can't carve a girl  
up in company."

The girl clutched at Craig's arm.

"Sit down here, please," she begged.  
"Wait."

She disappeared for a moment and  
came back with a glass full of wine,  
which she set down on the table.

"Drink this," she invited. "And  
thank you for saving me."

Craig emptied the glass eagerly.

"I just happened to be the first to  
see him," he said. "They aren't quite  
wild enough to allow that here, are  
they?"

"Quien sabe? The girls do not like  
me! The men do not care," she de-  
clared. "Jose took me by surprise,  
though, or I would have killed him.  
But who are you, and where did you  
come from?"

"I have just crossed the border," he  
replied.

She nodded understandingly.

"Were they after you?"

"Yes! with a warrant for my ar-  
rest!"

She patted his hand.

"You are safe now," she whispered.  
"We care that much for a United  
States warrant," and she snapped her  
fingers. "You shall stay with us  
for a time. We will take care of you."

He sighed wearily.

Back in the camp, a spirit of devilry  
had entered into Long Jim and his  
mates. A tactless remark on the part  
of one of the deputies had set alight  
the smoldering fire of resentment  
which the cowboys had all the time  
felt against them. At a word from  
Long Jim they were taken by surprise  
and tied to the wagon.

The deputies spluttered with rage  
and fear. Shot rained about them and  
the canvas of the wagon was riddled.

Suddenly they all paused to listen.  
The sound of a horse's slow footfall  
was heard close at hand. Presently  
Quest appeared out of the shadows,  
carrying Lenora in his arms. Laura  
rushed forward.

"Lenora!" she cried. "Is she hurt?"

Quest laid her tenderly upon the  
ground.

"We had a spill at the bridge," he  
explained, quickly. "I don't know  
whether Craig loosened the supports.  
He got over all right, but it went down  
under Lenora, who was following, and  
I had to get her out of the river.  
Where's the professor?"

The professor came ambling from  
the tent where he had been lying. He  
stooped at once over Lenora's still un-  
conscious form.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed. "Dear  
me! Come, come!"

He passed his hand over her side  
and made a brief examination.

(To be continued.)

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