

DAUGHTER OF THE SUN

A Tale of Adventure BY QUIEN SABA (Who Knou?)

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THIS BEGINS THE STORY
Jim Kendrick, a devil-may-care, but with some friends, was on his way toward Mexico. His party consisted of a mysterious woman, Zoraida, who calls herself the last princess of the Montezumas, her wretched "cousin" Marlow and West, Jim's comrade. Zoraida falls in love with the great bold her lover, and the offer of the great fortune in love with Betty Gordon, an American girl who is revealed in a story that into which is set Zoraida's savage plot, a drama Kendrick tells in his heart that Zoraida such a fear into her heart that she turns Betty, but with her own soul.

HE NOTED a slight restless stirring of Zoraida's foot and stopped to her side. "We are up through with you yet," he told her. "Miss Gordon will want some clothes."

"In her room," agreed Zoraida. "Come," she declared her answer the fraction of a second he might have followed her, suspecting nothing. But it was he remarked on her eagerness; Zoraida had so mysteriously set on treachery and he sensed it.

"No," he answered. "From here we go straight into the open. Zoraida had yielded to the pressure on her arm as though to continue in her new role of implicit obedience. But now his distrust was wide awake. There may have been a slight incoherence, stiffening of her muscles, his attention; there was something which warned him in the look she sought to veil. "What clothes Betty needs you can give her. Here and now."

"Oh!" cried Betty, with a look of abhorrence and a shudder. "I couldn't do that."

"It can't be helped," he retorted. And to Zoraida: "She'll want shoes and stockings."

They took her from Zoraida was one of utter loathing and at last after a long and painful struggle, she obeyed. Her little shoes she kicked off; she drew off her stockings and he handed them to Betty.

Zoraida goes barefooted at a man's command. "A first note of laughter was in Zoraida's voice. "What more? Am I to disrobe in a man's presence?"

"Your cloak," he muttered. "We'll make that do."

The cloak Betty accepted and threw about her shoulders. The shoes and stockings she held a moment, looking at them with repugnance in her eyes; they were too intimate, they had come too lately from Zoraida and in the end she threw them down.

"My sandals will do," she said. "I can't wear her things."

Kendrick picked them up and thrust them into his pocket.

"Later, then," he said. "God knows we can't be choosers. Now, go again and confront Zoraida. She will show us the way. Clear of the house. And we'll want horses. One thing, mind you: It is in my thought that if we allow you to hold us here, we'll both be dead inside a few hours. I've no desire for that sort of thing. The issue is clear-cut, isn't it?"

Zoraida merely lifted her brows at him.

"If it becomes a question of your life or ours," he told her sternly, "I'd naturally prefer it to be yours. Is that plain enough? For once, young woman, it's up to you to play square. Now, go ahead."

They went out silently through the door which had given them entrance into this ugly room. Zoraida leading the way, Kendrick holding guns at his side and allowing her the sight of the obsidian knife held under his coat, with the point within an inch of her side.

Betty close behind him, Kendrick felt a crying need of haste. For a few minutes he knew that the fear of death had been heavy on the spirit of Zoraida, paralyzing her will, freezing up the current of her thought. But she was still Zoraida, essentially fearless; her characteristic fortitude would not be long in reinstating itself in her heart; the mental confusion was swiftly being replaced by the activity and resurgent hatred. He must be watchful of every corner and door, most of all watchful of her.

Thus it was Kendrick's hand, one bolt were shot back that threw open each door, as he held himself in readiness to spring forward or back.

But as appeared customary here the house seemed deserted. He thanked his stars that the fellow he had struck down in Zoraida's room had fallen hard. Not even the dull explosion of the pistol just now had brought inquiry; no doubt the thick walls had deadened the sound. After what seemed a long

time they came into the wide dimly lighted hall. The door giving entrance to the patio was open; under the stars the little fountain played musically.

"Oh, this way," commanded Kendrick. "Then around to the front of the house. And if we meet any one, Zoraida, you'd best think back a few minutes before you start anything."

There was no one in the patio and they went through swiftly and out into the far side into the garden. Kendrick filled his lungs with the sweet air that was beginning to grow cool. The glitter in the stars was to him like a hope and a promise. Never had he been so sick of four walls and a smothering roof. Now the musty gardens of the golden king seemed to him infinitely far away, his shoulders aching and removed from the dancing lights in the heavens.

With his hand gripping Zoraida's forearm they skirted the house. Presently they came to the front driveway and Zoraida must have wondered as he forced her to go with him to a clump of bushes. He stopped, groped about a moment, and then straightened up with a little grunt of satisfaction; the rifle was in his hands.

"Now the horses," he said, and the three walked out into the starlight and toward the double gates. "Whatever you will say will go with the men out here. And he says you say we are to be allowed to go for a ride."

Zoraida did not answer and Kendrick wondered, not without uneasiness, what she would say. His grip tightened on her arm, she did not appear to notice.

The watch towers on either side of the gate were lighted as usual. From one came the low drone of two men's voices; the other was silent. No other sound save that of the rattle of the chains as a horse somewhere shook its head.

A man appeared from nowhere, with the air of having suddenly materialized out of the atmosphere. He came made out that one of the three was Zoraida and backed away, sweeping off his hat. They came to the gates which the newly risen figure threw open; they went through, Kendrick having the air of a man leading his arm to a lady.

Betty with the cloak drawn close about her, following. They were out; now nearer than ever came the friendly stars, sweet and horseman following them. Kendrick looked swiftly about, taking note of the darkness lying close to the earth, thanking God that there was no moon. If one could keep for a little in the shadows of the walls, there and he get clear of the house, and out into the fields lying at the rear, it was but a short run to the mountains.

They had turned and already were under one of the watch towers, the one whence came the men's voices. The saddled horses stood, tethered to rings set in the wall. Zoraida turned toward Kendrick and in the starlight her eyes shone strangely, bright with mockery. But tonight was Jim Kendrick, and he was still bent on playing out his hand.

"Qua hay, amigos!" he called familiarly to the men in the square below, his voice sounding careless and indifferent. "La Senorita is here. She wants horses."

A head appeared at the little opening that served for window above, a hat was doffed with exaggerated deference, someone uncovered head was thrust out. Kendrick stepped back half a pace so that they could see plainly that it was Zoraida.

"Bueno," said one of the two men. "Venga la Senorita!"

Already Kendrick was undoing the two ropes. He regretted the necessity of stepping two paces from Zoraida's side, but realized that inevitably that necessity must come soon or late and he lost no time grieving over it. The horses were at hand, saddled and bridled; Betty was with him; the night was too dark to doze near at hand. Well, his luck had befriended him thus far and for the rest it was up to Jim Kendrick. And they were out in the open!

Thus he was ready for Zoraida's outcry, he saw her whip back so as to be beyond the sweep of his arm, he heard her crying out wildly, commanding her retainers to stop the flight of her prisoners, shrieking at them to shoot, or shoot to kill!

"Betty!" cried Jim. "Quick!"

Then he saw that Betty, too, had been ready. Just how she managed it, encumbered as she was with Zoraida's

cloak, he did not know. But she was already in one of the saddles.

"Jim!" she cried wildly. "Run!"

He went up to the back of the other horse, his rifle in his hand. And as he struck saddle leather his horse and Betty's shot forward and away. He heard Zoraida's scream of command, breaking with rage. He heard men's voices shouting excitedly; there came the well-remembered shrilling of a whistle and then drowning its silver note the popping of rifles.

"There'll be a dozen of them in the saddle and after us!" Jim shouted at Betty. "Swing off to the right. We've got to make for the mountains. Ride, ride, Betty! Ride for all that it's in it!"

He glanced over his shoulder. Only



Zoraida

a flare here and there as a rifle spat its red threat, that and a blur of running stars, save no horseman following them. That would take another minute or two. He looked at Betty. She rode astride and wild; no need to bid her make haste. She leaned forward in the saddle, the loose ends of her reins whipping back and forth regularly, lashing her horse's shoulders. He looked ahead. There the mountains rose black and without detail against the sky. He looked up; the stars were shining.

Abruptly, as though at a command, the rifles ceased firing after them. And, instead of the explosions which had concerned Kendrick little, came another sound fully to be expected by now and of downright serious import. It was the scurry and race of hoofs, how many

there was no guessing. Pursuit had started and it was certain that the numbers of the pursuers would swell swiftly until perhaps a score of Zoraida's riders were on their track. Kendrick settled down to hard riding, drawing close to Betty's side.

"We got a couple of minutes on them," he called to her. "That means we're ahead of them between a quarter and a half mile. In the dark that's something."

Betty made no answer. They sped on. He tried to see her face but her hair was flying wildly. He wondered if her terror were reaching the heart in her. His own sensation at the moment was one of a strange sort of leaping gladness.

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