

"The cabin is our only hope," she said. "Our pursuers are close upon us now."

"Let us make a break for it, then," I said, taking her hand. The next moment we dashed out into the clearing. As we did so a hoarse shout echoed from the rear, and a rifle shot rang out clear in the cool air of the gray morning. But the aim was poor, and a minute later we had gained the coveted shelter and barred the door. From what we could see, we were the only occupants of the dwelling, which consisted of four mud walls, with a single door and four small windows, placed one in each side. But my attention was too much engrossed in watching the movements of my enemies to notice more of my surroundings.

There were apparently some ten or more of them, all well armed, as I could see by the gray light of the new-born day. Very evidently, too, they thought I was unarmed, for a moment later they advanced and demanded an entrance and surrender.

This I calmly refused, at which they retired as if for consultation. Carmen and I watched them apprehensively. From the narrow window we saw them emerge from the woods carrying a heavy timber. Their plan was at once evident. They intended to beat down the door, and then, supposing that we were defenceless, to take us captive again.

"They shall not take us," I said, "as long as I have this," at the same time tapping my weapon.

"Nor while I hold these," said Carmen, reaching into a pocket and drawing out, to my astonishment, a pair of small silver-mounted revolvers. I smiled grimly and led her across the room, till we stood directly opposite the door.

"Carmen," said I, "they will be in in a moment. I do not know what may happen then, but I have something to tell you if you have not already guessed it. It is that I love you, Carmen. I don't know how you feel toward me, but I hope that I hold at least some small spot in your heart. How is it, darling?"

The blushes deepened on her cheek and then she looked up for one short moment. In that look I read her heart and I knew that there was hope.

At the same instant there came a patter of feet on the outside, and I knew that the crisis had come. Gently I pushed Carmen behind me and faced the door, weapon in hand. As I did so, she stepped to my side, at the same time leveling both her glitter-