

# Rainbow's End

A NOVEL by REX BEACH

Author of "THE IRON TRAIL," "THE SPOILERS,"  
"HEART OF THE SUNSET," Etc.

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## O'REILLY MAKES LOVE BADLY, BUT WELL ENOUGH TO WIN THE HEART OF ROSA.

**Synopsis.**—Don Esteban Varona, a Cuban planter, hides his wealth—money, jewels and title deeds—in a well on his estate. The hiding place is known only to Sebastian, a slave. Don Esteban's wife dies at the birth of twins, Esteban and Rosa. Don Esteban marries the avaricious Donna Isabel, who tries unsuccessfully to wring the secret of the hidden treasure from Sebastian. Angered at his refusal, she urges Don Esteban to sell Evangelina, Sebastian's daughter. Don Esteban refuses, but in the course of a gambling orgy, he risks Evangelina at cards and loses. Crazy by the loss of his daughter, Sebastian kills Don Esteban and is himself killed. Many years pass, and Donna Isabel is unable to find the hidden treasure. Don Mario, rich sugar merchant, seeks to marry Rosa, who has returned from school in the United States.

### CHAPTER III—Continued.

"Good!" Don Mario rose to leave, for the exertion of his ride had made him thirsty. "You may name your own reward for helping me and I will pay it the day Rosa marries me. Now kindly advise her of my intentions and tell her I shall come to see her soon."

It was quite true that Johnnie O'Reilly—or "The O'Reilly," as his friends called him—had little in the way of worldly advantage to offer any girl, and it was precisely because of this fact that he had accepted a position here in Cuba, where, from the very nature of things, promotion was likely to be more rapid than in the New York office of his firm.

A dancing eye speaks every language; a singing heart gathers its own audience. Before the young Irish-American had more than a bowing acquaintance with the commonest Spanish verbs he had a calling acquaintance with some of the most exclusive people of Matanzas. He had adjusted himself serenely to his surroundings when Rosa Varona returned from school, but with her coming, away went all his complacency. His contentment vanished; he experienced a total change in his opinions, his hopes, and his ambitions.

He discovered, for example, that Matanzas was by no means the out-of-the-way place he had considered it; on the contrary, after meeting Rosa once by accident, twice by design, and three times by mutual arrangement, it had dawned upon him that this was the chief city of Cuba, if not, perhaps, the hub around which the whole world revolved; certainly it was the most agreeable of all cities, since it contained everything that was necessary for man's happiness. Yet, despite the thrill of his awakening, O'Reilly was



"You May Name Your Own Reward."

not at all pleased with himself, for, as it happened, there was another girl back home, and during his first year of loneliness he had written to her more freely and more frequently than any man on such a salary as his had a right to do.

Inasmuch as her father was O'Reilly's "company" it may be seen that Rosa Varona's homecoming seriously complicated matters, not only from a sentimental, but from a business standpoint.

It was in a thoughtful mood that he rode up La Cumbre toward the Quinta de Esteban, late on the afternoon of Don Mario's visit. Instead of going directly to the house, as the merchant had done, O'Reilly turned off from the road and, after tethering his horse in a cluster of guava bushes, proceeded on foot. He did not like Donna Isabel, nor did Donna Isabel like him. Moreover, he had a particular reason for avoiding her today.

Just inside the Varona premises he passed an instant to admire the outlook. The quinta commanded an excel-

lent view of the Yumuri, or the one hand, and of the town and harbor on the other; no one ever climbed the hill from the city to gaze over into that hidden valley without feeling a pleasurable surprise at finding it still there. We are accustomed to think of perfect beauty as unsubstantial, evanescent; but the Yumuri never changed, and in that lay its supremest wonder.

Through what had once been well-tended grounds, O'Reilly made his way to a sort of sunken garden which, in spite of neglect, still remained the most charming nook upon the place; and there he sat down to wait for Rosa. The hollow was effectively screened from view by a growth of plantain, palm, orange, and tamarind trees; over the rocky walls ran a profusion of flowering plants and vines; in the center of the open space was an old well, its masonry curb all but crumbled away.

When Rosa at last appeared, O'Reilly felt called upon to tell her, somewhat dizzily, that she was beyond doubt the sweetest flower on all the Quinta de Esteban, and since this somewhat hackneyed remark was the boldest speech he had ever made to her, she blushed prettily, flashing him a dimpled smile of mingled pleasure and surprise.

"Oh, but I assure you I'm in no sweet temper," said she. "Just now I'm tremendously angry."

"Why?"

"It's that stepmother—Isabel. If she dreamed that I see you as often as I do—Well—" Rosa lifted her eloquent hands and eyes heavenward. "I suppose that's why I enjoy doing it—I so dearly love to spite her."

"I see!" O'Reilly puckered his brows and nodded. "But why, in that case, haven't you seen me oftener? We might just as well have made the good lady's life totally unbearable."

"Silly! She knows nothing about it." With a flirtatious sigh Rosa added: "That's what robs the affair of its chief pleasure. Since it does not bother her in the least, I think I will not allow you to come any more."

After judicious consideration, O'Reilly pretended to agree.

"There's no fun in wreaking a horrible revenge, when your enemy isn't wise to it," he acknowledged. "Since it's your idea to irritate your stepmother, perhaps it would annoy her if I made love directly to her."

Rosa tittered, and then inquired, naively, "Can you make love, senor?"

"Can I? It's the one ability an O'Reilly inherits. Listen to this now." Reaching forth, he took Rosa's fingers in his; "Wait!" he cried as she resisted. "Pretend that you're Mrs. Varona, your own stepmother, and that this is her dimpled hand I'm holding."

"Oh-h!" The girl allowed his grasp to remain. "But Isabel's hand isn't dimpled; it's thin and bony. I've felt it on my ears often enough."

"Don't interrupt," he told her. "Isabel, my little darling—"

"Isabel!" exclaimed a voice, and the lovers started guiltily apart. They turned to find Esteban, Rosa's twin brother, staring at them oddly. "Isabel!" he repeated. "What's this?"

"You interrupted our theatricals. I was rehearsing an impassioned proposal to your beloved stepmother," O'Reilly explained, with a pretense of annoyance.

"Yes, Senor O'Reilly believes he can infuriate Isabel by laying siege to her. He's a foolish person—" Rosa's cheeks were faintly flushed and her color deepened at the amusement in Esteban's eyes. "He makes love wretchedly."

"What little I overheard wasn't bad," Esteban declared; then he took O'Reilly's hand.

Esteban was a handsome boy, straight, slim and manly, and his resemblance to Rosa was startling. With a look engaging in its frank directness, he said: "Rosa told me about your meetings here and I came to apologize for our stepmother's discourtesy. I'm sorry we can't invite you into our house, but—do you understand?—Rosa and I are not like her; we are quite liberal in our views; we are almost Americans, as you see. I dare say that's what makes Isabel hate Americans so bitterly."

"Wouldn't it please her to know that I'm becoming Cubanized as fast as ever I can?" ventured the caller.

"Oh, she hates Cubans, too!" laughed the brother. "She's Spanish, you know. Well, it's fortunate you didn't see her today. Br-r! What a temper! She'll

walk in her sleep tonight, if ever." Rosa nodded soberly, and O'Reilly, suppressing some light reply that had sprung to his lips, inquired, curiously, "What do you mean by that?"

Brother and sister joined in explaining that Donna Isabel was given to peculiar actions, especially after periods of excitement or anger, and that one of her eccentricities had taken the form of somnambulist wanderings. "Oh, she's crazy enough," Esteban concluded. "I believe it's her evil conscience."

O'Reilly scanned the speaker silently for a moment; then he said, with a gravity unusual in him, "I wonder if you know that you're suspected of working for the insurrection cause."

"Indeed? I didn't know."

"Well, it's a fact," O'Reilly heard Rosa gasp faintly. "Is it true?" he asked.

"I am a Cuban."

"Cuban? Your people were Spanish."

"True. But no Spaniard ever raised a Spanish child in Cuba. We are Cubans, Rosa and I. I go everywhere, and the Spanish officers talk plainly before me. Somebody must be the eyes and the ears for Colonel Lopez."

"Colonel Lopez?" exclaimed O'Reilly. Esteban nodded.

Rosa's face, as she looked at the two men, was white and worried. For a time the three of them sat silent; then the American said, slowly, "You'll be shot if you're caught."

"Some one must run chances," Esteban averred. "We're fighting tyranny; all Cuba is ablaze. I must do my part."

"But sooner or later you'd be discovered—then what?" persisted O'Reilly.

Esteban shrugged. "Who knows? There'll be time enough when—"

"What of Rosa?"

At this question the brother stirred uneasily and dropped his eyes. O'Reilly laid a hand upon his arm. "You have no right to jeopardize her safety. Without you, to whom could she turn?" The girl flashed her admirer a grateful glance.

"Senor, you for one would see that she—"

"But—I'm going away," O'Reilly felt rather than saw Rosa start, for his face had turned ashen. "I came here for some time, I—I don't know when I can get back."

"I'm sorry," Esteban told him, with genuine regret. "We have grown very fond of you. But you will come back before long, eh? You're one of us. In the meantime I'll remember what you say, and at least I'll be careful." By no means wanting in tact, Esteban rose briskly and, after shaking hands with O'Reilly, left the two lovers to say farewell as best suited them.

But for once O'Reilly's ready tongue was silent. The laughter was gone from his blue eyes when he turned to the girl at his side.

"You say you are going away?" Rosa inquired, breathlessly. "But why?"

"I'm going partly because of this war and partly because of—something else. I tried to tell you yesterday, but I couldn't. When the revolution started everywhere I thought it was merely a local uprising, and I wrote my company to that effect; but, bless you, it has spread like fire, and now the whole eastern end of the island is ablaze. Business has stopped, and my employers have ordered me home to find out what's happened to their profits."

"You said there was something else—"

O'Reilly's hesitation became an embarrassed silence. He tried to laugh it off.

"There is; otherwise I'd stay right here and tell my penurious friends to whistle for their profits. It seems I'm cursed with a fatal beauty. You may have noticed it? No? Well, perhaps it's a magnificent business ability that I have. Anyhow, the president of my company has a notion that I'd make him a good son-in-law."

"Oh!" cried Rosa.

And at her tone O'Reilly hurried on: "These rich men have the most absurd ideas. I suppose I'll have to—"

"Then you are in love, senor?"

The young man nodded vigorously. "Indeed I am—with the sweetest girl in Cuba. That's the whole trouble. That's why I'm hurrying home to resign before I'm fired." Not daring to look too long or too deeply into Rosa Varona's eyes until she had taken in the whole truth, he waited, staring at his feet. "I'm sort of glad it has come to a show-down and I can speak out. I'm hoping she'll miss me." After a moment he ventured, "Will she—will you, Rosa?"

"I? Miss you?" Rosa lifted her brows in pretended amazement. "You are amusing, of course, but—I won't have much time to think about you, for I am so soon to be married."

"Married? What? Nonsense!"

"Indeed! Do you think I'm so ugly nobody would have me? The richest man in Matanzas has asked for my hand this very afternoon."

"Who? Mario de Castano?"

"Yes."

O'Reilly laughed with relief, and though Rosa tried to look offended, she was forced to smile. "He's fat, I know," she admitted, "and he makes funny noises when he breathes—but he

is richer than Croesus, and I adore rich men." "I hate 'em!" announced O'Reilly. Then for a second time he took Rosa's dimpled hand, saying, earnestly: "I'm sure you know now why I make love so badly, dear. It's my Irish conscience. And you'll wait until I come back, won't you?"

"Will you be gone—very long?" she asked.

O'Reilly looked deeply now into the dark eyes turned to his, and found that at last there was no coquetry in them anywhere—nothing but a lonesome, hungry yearning—and with a glad, incoherent exclamation he held out his arms. Rosa Varona crept into them; then with a sigh she upturned her lips to his.

"I'll wait forever," she said.

### CHAPTER IV.

#### Retribution.

Although for a long time Donna Isabel had been sure in her own mind that Pancho Cueto, her administrator, was robbing her, she had never mustered courage to call him to a reckoning. Nevertheless, De Castano's blunt accusation, coupled with her own urgent needs, served to fix her resolution, and on the day after the merchant's visit she sent for the overseer, who at the time was living on one of the plantations.

Cueto was plainly curious to learn why he had been sent for, but since he asked no questions, his employer



"Will You Be Gone—Very Long?" She Asked.

was forced to open the subject herself. Through dry, white lips she began:

"My dear Pancho, times are hard. The plantations are falling, and so—" Pancho Cueto's eyes were set close to his nose, his face was long and thin and harsh; he regarded the speaker with such a sinister, unblinking stare that she could scarcely finish; "—and so I—can no longer afford to retain you as administrator."

"Times will improve," he said.

"Impossible! I tell you I'm bankrupt!"

"So? Then the remedy is simple—sell a part of your land."

Although this suggestion came naturally enough, Donna Isabel turned cold, and felt her smile stiffen into a grimace. She wondered if Cueto could be feeling her out deliberately. "Sell the Varona lands?" she queried, after a momentary struggle with herself. "Esteban would rise from his grave. No. It was his wish that the plantations go to his children intact."

"And his wish is sacred to you, eh?" Cueto nodded his approval, although his smile was disconcerting. "An admirable sentiment! It does you honor! But speaking on this subject, I am reminded of that dispute with Jose Oroz over the boundary to La Joya. I have promised to show him the original deed to La Joya and to furnish him with the proofs about the boundary line. That would be better than a lawsuit, wouldn't it?"

"Decidedly! But—I will settle with him myself."

Cueto lifted an admonitory hand, his face alight with the faintest glimmer of ironic mirth. "I couldn't trust you to the merits of that rascal," he said placidly. "No, I shall go on as I am, even at a sacrifice to myself. I love Don Esteban's children as my very own; and you, senora—"

Isabel knew that she must win a complete victory at once or accept irrevocable defeat.

"Never!" she interrupted, with a tone of finality. "I can't accept your sacrifice. I am not worthy. Kindly arrange to turn over your books of account at once."

Then Pancho Cueto did an unexpected thing; he laughed shortly and shook his head.

Donna Isabel was ready to faint and her voice quavered as she went on: "Understand me, we part the best of friends despite all I have heard against you. I do not believe these stories people tell, for you probably have enemies. Even if all they said were true, I should force myself to be lenient because of your affection for my husband."

The man rose, still smiling. "It is I who have been lenient," said he.

"Eh? Speak plainly."

"Gladly. I have long suspected that

Don Esteban hid the deeds of his property with the rest of his valuables, and now that you admit—"

Donna Isabel recoiled sharply. "Admit! Are you mad? Deeds! What are you talking about?" Her eyes met his bravely enough, but she could feel her lips trembling loosely.

Casting aside all pretense, the overseer exclaimed: "Por el amor de Dios! An end to this! I know why you sent for me. You think I have been robbing you. Well, to be honest, so I have. Why should I toil as I do while you and those twins live here in luxury and idleness, squandering money to which you have no right?"

"Have I lost my reason?" gasped the widow. "No right?"

"At least no better right than I. Don't you understand? You have no title to these plantations! They are mine, for I have paid the taxes out of my own pockets now these many years."

"Taxes! What do you mean?"

"I paid them. The receipts are in my name."

"Heaven! Such perfidy! And you who knew him!"

"The deeds have been lost for so long that the property would have reverted to the crown had it not been for me. You doubt that, eh? Well, appeal to the court and you will find that it is true. Now, then, let us be frank. Inasmuch as we're both in much the same fix, hadn't we better continue our present arrangements?" He stared unblinkingly at his listener. "Oh, I mean it! Is it not better for you to be content with what my generosity prompts me to give, rather than to risk ruin for both by grasping for too much?"

"The outrage! I warrant you have grown rich through your stealing," Isabel's voice had gone flat with consternation.

"Rich? Well, not exactly, but comfortably well off." Cueto actually smiled again. "No doubt my frankness is a shock to you. You are angry at my proposition, eh? Never mind. You will think better of it in time, if you are a sensible woman. But now, since at last we enjoy such confidential relations, let us have no more of these miserable suspicions of each other. Let us entirely forget this unpleasant misunderstanding and be the same good friends as before."

Having said this, Pancho Cueto stood silent a moment in polite expectancy; then receiving no intelligible reply, he bowed low and left the room.

To the avaricious Donna Isabel Cueto's frank acknowledgment of theft was maddening, and the realization that she was helpless, nay, dependent upon his charity for her living, fairly crucified her proud spirit.

All day she brooded, and by the time evening came she had worked herself into such a state of nerves that she could eat no dinner. Some time during the course of the evening a wild idea came to Isabel. Knowing that the manager would spend the night beneath her roof, she planned to kill him. At first it seemed a simple thing to do—merely a matter of a dagger or a pistol, while he slept—but further thought revealed appalling risks and difficulties, and she decided to wait. Poison was far safer.

Constant brooding over the treasure had long since affected Donna Isabel's brain, and as a consequence she often dreamed about it. She dreamed about it again tonight, and, strangely enough, her dreams were pleasant. Sebastian appeared, but for once he neither cursed nor threatened her; and Esteban, when he came, was again the lover who had courted her in Havana. It was amazing, delightful. Esteban and she were walking through the grounds of the quinta and he was telling her about his casks of Spanish sovereigns, about those boxes bound with iron, about the gold and silver ornaments of heavenly beauty and the pearls as large as plums. As he talked Isabel felt herself grow hot and cold with anticipation; she experienced spasms of delight.

Then of a sudden Isabel's whole dream-world dissolved. She awoke, or thought she did, at hearing her name shouted. But although she underwent the mental and the physical shock of being startled from slumber, although she felt the first swift fright of a person aroused to strange surroundings, she knew on the instant that she must still be asleep; for everything about her was dim and dark, the air was cold and damp, wet grass rose to her knees. Before she could half realize her condition she felt herself plunged into space. She heard herself scream hoarsely, fearfully, and knew, too late, that she was indeed awake. Then—whirling chaos—A sudden, blinding crash of lights and sounds—Nothing more!

Esteban Varona sat until a late hour that night over a letter which required the utmost care in its composition. It was written upon the thinnest of paper, and when it was finished the writer inclosed it in an envelope of the same material. Esteban put the letter in his pocket without addressing it. Letting himself out into the night, he took the path that led to the old sunken garden. He passed close by the well, and its gaping mouth, only half protected by the broken coping, reminded him that he had promised Rosa to cover it with planks. In its present condition it was a menace to animals, if not to human beings who were unaware of its presence.

Esteban's support of the Insurrection cause brings disaster to himself and Rosa. The next installment tells of their plight.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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