

The Enchanted Guitar - Sans date

Auteur(s) : Malaquais, Jean

Les folios

En passant la souris sur une vignette, le titre de l'image apparaît.

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[Scénario](#)

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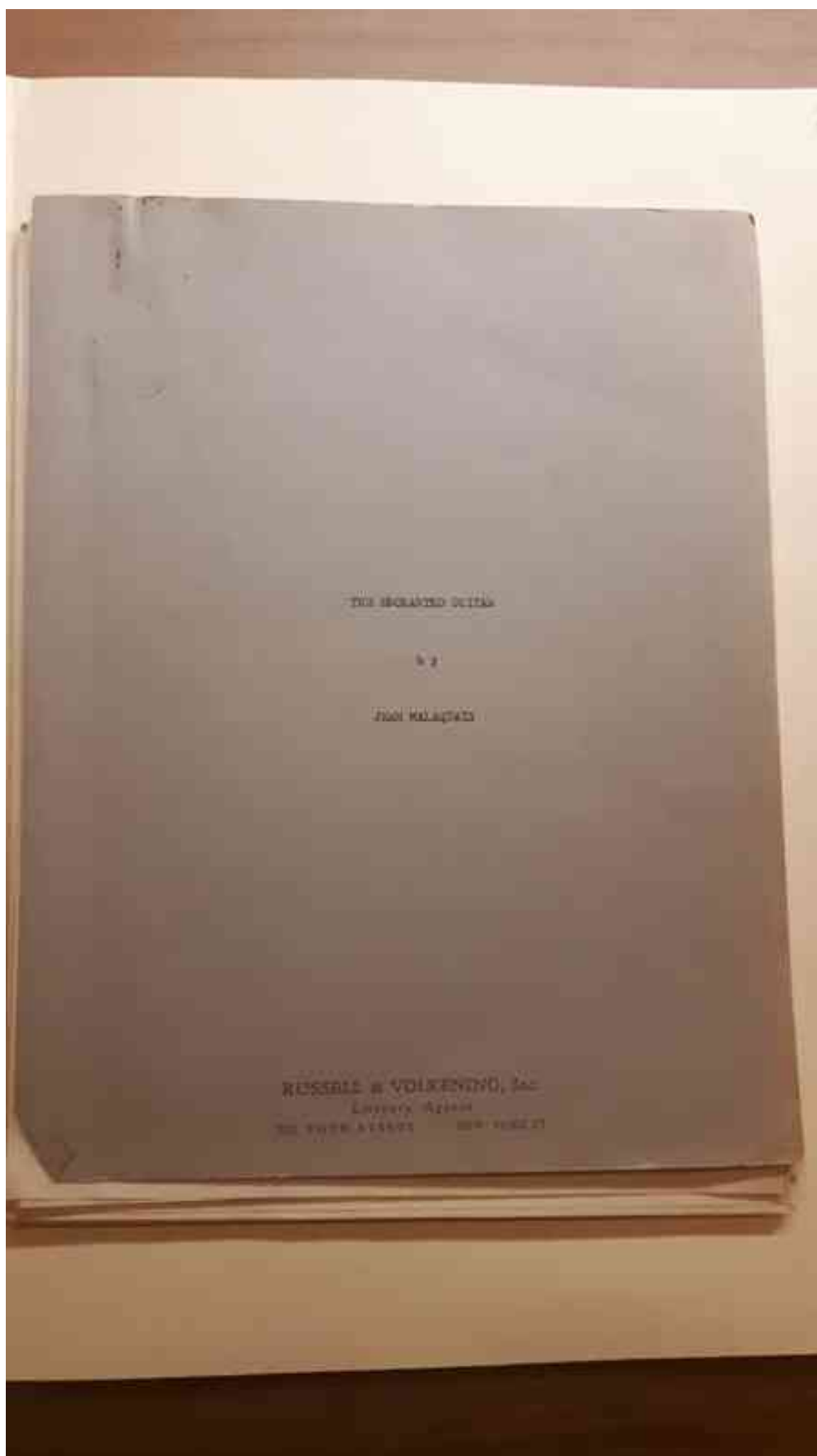
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"WOW! WOW!" "I could see a bear and a cowboy..."

"Wow! Wonderful!" Sophie called, throwing her jacket on the bed. "All you ever think about is stuffing yourself! I've got just enough to say for the pictures, and the strings if they come." He stared at her with a sort of belated admiration. "And all say the strings don't come, no velvet tonight, no velvet, and you'll not believe."

Then on the morning ^{day} ~~next~~ day they went. They looked at each other, holding their breath, then looked for the door. A small apartment, but Sophie called up, stood on the threshold. Behind her, holding a parcel, was a woman's face, her eyes red with weeping.

"This stack of paper for you!" the landlady asked. "You'll just see plenty to read..."

Without a word, Sophie and Jean examined the parcel and signed it over. ^{Then} ~~Next~~ ^{day} ~~the~~ landlady asked them examine the furniture and papers.

"There was another parcel, was there, Mrs. ~~Waller~~?" Sophie asked. "A little parcel on the wall, with things in it... strings?"

"Yes, strings, strings..." she repeated hesitantly. "Yes, yes, strings, like this..." He gestured as if recalling ~~some~~ else.

"String!" said the landlady, raising her eyebrows. She gave the two no inquisitorial glance. "String!" she exclaimed again, suddenly remembering, for a moment she had been staring a heavy spike which was driven into the wall. "Yes!" she hurried out, as if she had seen a mouse scurrying from the table. "Yes, you want the nail and here, not in my place... On somewhere else, if you're not up with life!"

She turned her back on them and started to go down the stairs. Then, below, from the depths of the spiral staircase, a tremendous voice came up like a shout.

"Yes, there's a notice from the post office for you!"

in fashion like a young, freshly shaven man. "I don't mind," he said, smiling a large part of the time.

"Is not," said exclaimed from the bottom of his heart. "All right of it. But the matter, the situation, I love the place. But not so much as the mountain, to tell you the truth. When I come from the city and mountains, I can tell you. But when you're in the mountains, like this, one atop the other. Mountains. And you know your heart and you know a mountain, like this, too... you can't imagine. Yes, sure, you'll get mountains very low, like these little hills you call the Delaware, but they can't match the real. In my opinion you wouldn't even see your Delaware. Put this matter respectfully, for instance."

"Respectfully..." the other repeated, seemed to smile at himself by the green hair's parting.

"Yes, indeed, definitely, upon my word! The highest mountain in the world. I know what I'm talking about, because I climbed it. It's the same, at your service."

He had come down behind travel party in a car station -- another, gallery, air, and carriages, carriages looking over like old trees, fishing pole like white waterlilies, greenish and somewhat and temples of pure gold... He asked him if he was after, before, before, or before again. He, he, he was smiling, and protested. "You'll just get to know the world," he said. "It'll be the end of the world for you there, definitely, indeed. You'll see, I'll show you the beauty of nature, where I live. It's the most beautiful in all nature. And the state of nature is the most beautiful state in nature. And it's the most beautiful... I mean it's the most beautiful. You'll see. To see it and this of this, your servant."

to be visited, according to the law and with in the name of the

and she looked back on the table, and noticing the handbill, picked
one up. As she sipped her drink, she glanced over the text of the ad-
vertisement.

"Suppose we go and hear this... this what's-it-called, that Mexican
quarrel?" she said, passing the leaflet to Stook.

He had squeezed a slice of lemon into his glass, took the leaflet,
and burst laughing. "Do you want to die of boredom, Amalia?" he ex-
claimed. "A quarrel?... This fellow is no more a Mexican than I am an
Arab. A broken-down man, to be sure..."

"You think so?" she guessed, patting her slender fingers to her
mouth. "However, what a dead place this is..." She took back the hand-
bill which Stook had left lying on the bar. "Is this how Mexican dress?
It's rather appealing... and elegant... You ought to take me for a trip
through Mexico. Anyway, let's go and hear this... this Andrés Borgeña
de las Borchas... Castillo de las Borchas. Oh, what a name. A nice name,
though."

"But dear, you can't imagine how bad a nightingale like this so-
called Mexican can be. I assure you that..."

"But, Stook, please... let's say it's a whim of mine. All you had
to do was not bring me to this wretched hole, on the pretext of getting
a rest. Now then, go and look the seals."

"Look the seals! You think there'll be a crowd!"

Retaliated looked at him with an air of almost comic supplication.
Stook lifted his hands to heaven, feigning to be shocked beyond measure;
and as Retaliated's eyes pretended to plead with him yet more earnestly,
he swallowed the contents of his glass and went out, followed by the
young woman's irrepressible yawn.

A little before eight o'clock Andrés, with José on his heels,

sprinted at full speed into the splendid library. The master, tall and
 listless in her transparent robe, opened her eyes as wide as a dream-
 maker's "daisy's"; but before she could gather her wits she was had
 plunged into the deserted library, leaped over the military alignment
 of white seats, and landed in ~~the~~ ^{an} ~~small~~ ^{office} where Mr. Jackson, the
 manager and owner, was striding back and forth (foot one wall of his knee
 to the other).

"Mr. Jackson!" blurted André, out of breath, waving the guitar with the broken strings. "A catastrophe... I have no instrument... I had wired for a set of strings, but then... this idiot just took them... dropped them..."

Myriam repeated a visit between Jankovic's eyebrows and long-lined
his face. "Shut! That's that!" he said, not grasping André's agitation.

"Mr. Jackson, I beg you, try to think..." said André, his instrument with his forefinger. "Where can we find a guitar in this town? Or some strings? You've got to find these things, please..."

"Adam dealt himself a slay on the thigh, followed by a blow of his fist on the table. "What?" he shouted. "I should find you a guitar! I should!" He pointed to himself, as if the hat man would know whom he was talking about. "No!" he shouted. "No, you're a couple of ———— bums!" "Go to hell, before I send you there myself! Do you know how many tickets I've sold so far? Well, do you know? ———— ~~four~~ three! Three! Three tickets, not one more!" and you have the guts to tell me your damned guitar is busted? and that I've got to get you ———— another one? Pull it out of a hat for you, eh? What I'm going to find for you is a fine warm wall in the town jail! Because if you don't pay the rent for the theater before eleven o'clock tonight, I'll have you locked in for vagrancy!"

"But Mr. Jackson, please... The customers will come flocking at the last minute. For heaven's sake, I've got to get a guitar. It wouldn't be so hard to find the same this time, even if it's only an old wreck or some attic..."

"Well, go ahead and search the streets' attics! This will teach us to give my theater to a couple of kids like you, without getting paid in advance, without even a deposit. A guitar today... you wouldn't want us to lend you a throat to sing with, while you're at it, would you?"

"I can always whistle, André..." said José steadily.

"And if you don't want us to strangle you... Mr. Jackson, please, please, time is short... Try to remember, try to think, a guitar, just one little guitar in somebody's house around here!"

"In somebody's house! A guitar in somebody's house! Right as well ask them to raise hands in their linen closets! But..."

"But..." said André and José in a single voice.

"Let us think..." said Jackson with his eyes on the ceiling.

"Yes, think, think," said the two men.

"It just came to me! That there's a little old fellow in Saint Street, an odd character he is, they say his hobby is collecting musical instruments. Nobody knows much about him, but... thirteen... nineteen Saint Street..."

He had not finished his sentence when the two musicians were on their way, riding across the sand. A few minutes later they reached a narrow street, deserted and dark. They found the house, rang the bell. No answer came from behind the closed door. André struck a match to get some light. A small square of paper, laid by a thicketski road, "Greece has lost tomorrow. This evening I am at the musical concert."

They closed, not knowing which way to turn, the two men traded looks

in the swerving light of the match. José opened his mouth to give vent to his idea, but already André fixing himself at a window and raised the match with a violent effort. For a moment they stood still, expectantly, then one after the other leaped inside. It was pitch dark. André struck another match. By its light they made out the furniture of a bedroom. Having no light they went into another room, as uninteresting as the first, and then went up to the kitchen. While André looked the place over, José, spotting an apple, grabbed it and crunched his teeth into it. André jumped at the sound and blew the match out. "If you hear that..." he whispered, striking his ears. "That..." loved José, his mouth full. "It's a damn rotten apple." "An apple? What rotten?" "A golden delicious, if you ask me," said José. They retraced their steps to the bedroom. It looked as if the expedition would turn out to be a wild goose chase, when André discovered a door hidden by a drapery. He turned the knob gently and went ahead with halting steps, followed by José, who was holding on to his elbow. Suddenly, the flickering matchlight fell on the most extraordinary collection of musical instruments -- violins, flutes, drums, harps, lutes, tablas, fifes, bagpipes, viola, tympanum... and in the midst of this marvelous heap of treasures, André's practiced eye made out a guitar the like of which he had never seen before. José slipped first through the open window; then came André, bearing the precious guitar. Their steps rang loudly in the deserted street, loudly and proudly. Such was their haste, such their jubilation, that they barely ceased colliding with a policeman who had stopped dead in the middle of the street to ascertain the reasons for this nocturnal, distrustful and suspicious, as is natural to a policeman, he ordered them

to the swerving light of the match. José opened his mouth to give vent to an idea, but already André flung himself at a window and raised the sash with a violent effort. For a moment they stood still, expectantly, then one after the other leaped inside. It was pitch dark. André struck another match. By its light they made out the furniture of a bedroom. Moving on tiptoe they went into another room, as uninteresting as the first, and then went up to the kitchen. While André looked the place over, José, spotting an apple, grabbed it and sunk his teeth into it. André, aware of the sound and blew the match out. "D'you hear that..." he whispered, straining his ears. "Yeah..." breathed José, his mouth full. "It's a comestible apple." "An apple? What apple?" "A golden delicious, if you ask me," said José. They retraced their steps to the bedroom. It looked as if the expedition would turn out to be a wild goose chase, when André discovered a door hidden by a doorway. He turned the sash gently and went ahead with halting steps, followed by José, who was holding on to his elbow. Suddenly, the flickering candlelight fell on the most extraordinary collection of musical instruments -- violins, flutes, drums, harps, lutes, balalaikas, fifes, bagpipes, xibla, tympanons... and in the midst of this marvelous heap of treasures, André's practised eye made out a guitar the like of which he had never seen before.

José slipped first through the open window; then came André, bearing the precious guitar. Their steps rang loudly in the deserted street, loudly and proudly. Such was their haste, such their jubilation, that they barely missed colliding with a policeman who had stopped dead in the middle of the street to ascertain the reasons for this footrace. Distrustful and suspicious, as is natural to a policeman, he ordered them

to halt; and as they did nothing of the kind, he showed a whistle into his mouth and gave chase -- in the pure tradition of policemen chasing the pick-pocket.

In a matter of moments the race grew dingy, then epic, then delirious. André and José in the lead, the policeman at their heels, and at the heels of the policeman a crowd which grew as they went, drawn on by the gregarious instinct of the herd. The whole town seemed engaged in a mad caration, and when the two assistants reached the Olympia Cinema and were ~~swallowed~~ swallowed up in the passage leading to the wings, the crowd -- the policeman at the head -- swept like a high tide into the theater, where exactly three people were seated: Amalind, Block -- her manager, and the collector of instruments. Crushed by the throng behind them, carried forward by the momentum, the first ones to arrive invaded the auditorium like the jet from a hydraulic combi, and willy-nilly they settled in the seats. No one knew what it was all about, nor why they were there rather than in the circus tent on the square; but the herd instinct acts quite independently of the will of the sheep, and so some pushed, and others dismounted over the seats and took their places -- up to the moment when the rising curtain made a hole of silence in the general uproar.

From the first step, from the first phrase, Alon stood at portier de l'orchestre, it was as if the breath of a great art had fallen on the packed theater. José, who was at André's side and should have been whistling an accompaniment, lost his power to whistle: -- What singing! What voice! What a guitar! He watched André, not understanding, not recognizing him. He knew that André had a fine, virile voice, but he had never seen him rapt in this godlike inspiration. One would have said that the guitar's profound resonance lifted him to and beyond the

appetite was beyond his understanding. He too was happy: he remembered the girl on the bridge, she would come and see him in prison, and the more contented he felt, the more his well-being increased his appetite. He ate and watched Stock, who talked and did not eat; the man must be sick, he must have an acid stomach, he gesticulated so much. "The worst," he was saying for the tenth time, "the contract I proposed is extremely advantageous to you. When we have finished preparing our repertoire, I shall arrange a concert tour of Europe for you..."

"Take it, take it..." said José, with a fried potato in his mouth.

"Take it, André, we'll go to Europe."

André did not reply. He held the guitar against his chest. "What is there you don't like about my offer?" Stock asked, using his hands to make himself clear. "I'm ready to spend a fortune on publicity for you."

"A fortune..." José approved, with his nose in his glass. "Of course, we're worth a fortune!"

Flushing the vigilance of the policeman and the hotel manager whom Stock had instructed that he did not ~~was~~ wish to be disturbed, the old collector of musical instruments suddenly came forward with winning steps. Leaning his back at André, he bleated in a cracked voice:

"Too, sister..."

"What?" said José, pointing at André with his fork. "What is there anyone who doesn't know the Maestro Don André Gregorio Castillo de las Indias?"

"He?" bleated the old fellow, putting his hand behind his ear.

"Yes!... Oh well, you are a great artist, a great... But the guitar, that guitar, is mine. You must give it back to me..."

José's swallow went down the wrong way. André's face turned white. He rose to his feet, almost knocking his chair off. Cradling the guitar,

13
The old man of Seville stood out against the
... turned and the same
... by

14
he cast a frowning glance toward the door. With astonishment,
Isabelle and Stook stared at Maurice and the little old man who held
his hand of an occasional horn.

"four... your guitar... I'll buy it from you..." Maurice exclaimed.
"How much?... Tell me how much you're asking. Two hundred?... Five
hundred?... I'll buy it..." he turned to Stook. "I accept your offer.
Give me an advance on my contract, I..."

"Golf..." croaked the old man. "No, no..." He bent his head so
as not to miss a word of any forthcoming reply. "That guitar is not
for sale. But... but wait, I shall tell you why. I'm going to tell
you the reason why..."

He pulled a chair and sat with the others. A circumspect smile
wandered over his wrinkled features. "Golf..." he repeated with in-
finite tenderness. "Oh no. I am a passionate collector, not a business-
man. The objects in my collection are unique, their value is incalcul-
able. But what makes them so valuable is not simply their quality;
it's also, perhaps especially, the story which is attached to each of
my instruments. A history -- a past -- like that of a living person.
Would you permit me to narrate to you the history of that guitar? If
you still want to buy it after you have heard so, well then, well then,
I won't sell it to you, I'll give it to you. A long time ago, over
two hundred years ago, there was in Andalusia a gipsy prince, an in-
comparable singer and guitarist -- and, yes, as dangerous a Don Juan
as he was a great musician..."

15.

In the waning light of day, high above the trees which surrounded

the nave, the towers of the Cathedral of Seville stand out against the sky. A little apart from the saguaro, the bearded horses and the camp-fires with the copper bottles swinging above them, stands the richly decorated tent of Pedro, the chief of the tribe and a gipsy prince. Squatting on a bearskin and looking at himself in a fragment of mirror, Pedro is putting the finishing touches to his attire. As he looks, he sees his sleek, curly hair. His bearing, his gestures, the brightness of his eyes, reveal pride and strength. He puts on his hat, smooths his mustache, picks up his guitar, strums the strings -- five lines of double strings -- tightens one way, then another, and suddenly notices a superb young gipsy girl standing in the entrance of the tent.

A shadow of annoyance hardens Pedro's face. He adjusts the guitar-strap on his shoulder, takes a last look at himself in the bit of mirror, and as if the gipsy girl had no existence of her own he orders her to clear the way. But instead, she throws her arms around his neck and kisses him on the mouth.

"Away, woman!" he growls, pushing her aside.

Amber and frowning, she blocks his path. "Take me along, Pedro," she says in a warm voice. "Take me along with you. You're going to Seville, to sing, to amuse yourself in the cabarets. Take me with you. Am I not Juanita, your wife? Your wife, Pedro, your wife..."

"Well then, what more do you want than being ~~apocryphal~~ the wife of Pedro? Enough! Get it out!"

He seizes her by the shoulder and throws her out of the tent. She falls on a carpet of moss, her multicolored skirts spread out around her like a fan. "Beware, Pedro!" she says, raising herself slowly from the ground. But Pedro has already turned his back on her, calling:

"Buenaventura! Juanita! Come along!"

the nave, the towers of the Cathedral of Seville stand out against the sky. A little apart from the waggon, the bottled horses and the camp-fires with the copper kettles swinging above them, stands the richly decorated tent of Pedro, the chief of the tribe and a gipsy prince. Squatting on a bearskin and looking at himself in a fragment of mirror, Pedro is putting the finishing touches to his attire. As he moves, he sees his sleek, curly hair. His bearing, his gestures, the brightness of his eyes, reveal pride and strength. He puts on his hat, smooths his mustache, picks up his guitar, strums the strings -- five lines of double strings -- tightens one key, then another, and suddenly notices a superb young gipsy girl standing in the entrance of the tent.

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"Away, woman!" he growls, pushing her aside.

Jealous and frowning, she blocks his path. "Take me along, Pedro," she says in a stern voice. "Take me along with you. You're going to Seville, to sing, to amuse yourself in the caharets. Take me with you. Am I not Juanita, your wife? Your wife, Pedro, your wife...."

"Well then, what more do you want than being ~~your~~ the wife of Pedro? Enough! Get it out!"

He seizes her by the shoulder and throws her out of the tent. She falls on a carpet of moss, her multicolored skirts spread out around her like a fan. "Beware, Pedro!" she says, raising herself slowly from the ground. But Pedro has already turned his back on her, calling:

"Bonaventure! Juan! Come along!"

Two men who had been leaning against a tree ^{near} ~~passed~~ to their feet and join Pedro. All three across the camp swarming with children and dogs and squatting old women. Frank has a cult, a cane in his hand and a smile on his lips; Pedro deals a friendly tap to now, a shove to another, a slap on the hindquarters of a horse; he winks at an old woman playing solitaire, pats the cheek of a girl, plants a kiss on the cheek of another. The songs, the dancing, the drinking that await him in town so completely occupy his imagination that he doesn't notice Juanita, who follows the three men at a distance. Pedro has neglected her too long, too long trampled her pride: she is no longer going to let him humiliate her -- as he has humiliated most of the girls in the tribe.

Fanting and feverish, she peers into a flamenco café. Bonaventura and Bunk with their fiddles, Pedro with his guitar, lead a company of men and women in dancing and singing seguitillas and malagueñas, tangos and jaleos. Juanita resents the gaiety from which she is shut out -- a gaiety which gradually gains in enthusiasm what it loses in decorum. Isolated, ignored, conscious of being the target of infatuated women and pale jealous men, drunk with his own music as well as with the glasses he tosses off, Pedro feels like a designed. Two women begin to dance and click their castanets, with Pedro in the trail of their flying skirts -- Pedro with his golden voice and his early seductiveness. No longer able to check himself, yielding to her pride and to thoughts of revenge and murder, Juanita pushes the door open and hursts into the café with cries of rage in her voice.

She does not have time to yell her curses. At a sign from Pedro, a smiling wisp from the eyes of the master, Bonaventura and Bunk lay hold of the gipsy girl and with a flip of their wrists toss her face down onto the filthy pavement outside. Up with a bound, she hursts

herself once more at the door of the sufferer: the laughter, the music, the clicking of heels and castanets, cut her short: for a second she remains in utter defeat, unable to pull herself together; then, as if the fiends within were threatening her life, she flies from the place and begins to run wildly through the deserted streets.

At the shop, beneath the smoldering ashes, the fires are slowly dying. The barking of dogs greets Juana's return, silencing a distant chorus of frogs. Out of breath, she alights the steps of a wagon, calling into the darkness:

"Padre! Padre!..."

A match strikes in the dark, a hand gropes for a candle. Juana falls on her knees beside a cot on which an old woman lies cuddled up. "Padre, padre..." she sobs:

"You have trouble in your heart," says the old woman. "Trouble in your heart, I know, my daughter."

"Trouble!..." Juana explodes. She crushes her breasts under her clenched fists. "I've here a fire that's killing me. Oh, padre, how long will he go on seducing our prettiest girls and throwing them aside when he is through? Throwing them aside for the women of the town!... I hate him, I hate him!... Oh, help me, padre. Make his wife grow ugly, make him lose his voice, make the light die in his eyes, make the proud laughter in his throat! Help me, help me!... I want his miserable, despised, deformed, hump-backed, legless!..."

"But he is our chief, my daughter. Our prince. And you love him..."

"What do I care if he is our chief, our prince? It's because he's handsome, and young, and a prince, and spoiled by the town women, that he has no use for us. But if you think I love him, if you want him to live, make him pull in the shut, make him come to serve his knees, begging for a wife..."

"Four wishes will be fulfilled, Juana," says the old woman in the prophetic tone of the practiced spellthunder. "From this minute on, Pedro, our prince, and this guitar, are one and the same being. Pedro is the body, this guitar is his soul. Without this guitar Pedro our prince will be a nobody. He will not be a great musician, nor a great singer. He'll be a nobody. He'll be yours. He'll be a poor miser. I curse till the day he finds his soul again. And it'll be long before he finds it. A long, long time. And he'll search for it far and wide, in every land. Wherever the guitar goes it'll draw ~~after~~ him after it. For as long... through as many lives..."

Her voice trails off across the centuries to time. Suddenly Juanita's eyes widen in horror. "Padre! Padre!" she shrieks. "I... I held the guitar to my breast! I held it tight, here, here, with my two hands, the left and the right!"

The old woman raises herself against the glass of the candle. She seems to grow in size.

"Wretch..." she rasps in her theatrical voice. "I warned you... I warned you! Now you too must follow the guitar. You too are under the spell."

Caught by the fascination of her own magic, she bends over her daughter as if to curse her. It seems to Juanita that the wagon, the trees, the night, are falling in upon her. She wants to catch hold of her mother's arm, as one who yearns to hold back the destiny, but the old woman steps over her and leaves the wagon. She walks for a long time. Dawn is breaking when she comes to rest before a tall weeping willow. Here, performing a ritual, she throws the guitar up into the tree. The instrument recoils among the branches, groans, and disappears among the

be blood on the floor of the wiggam! with adventure and later at a respectful distance, he disappears down the road to Deville.

He is hailed, flattered, surrounded at the very threshold by a court of women. Pedro seizes a flask of wine to drown his anger but when he sounds his g and goes through the first verse of a song, a murmur arises in the salaritr his voice breaks, his attack is too high, he is hoarse, he cracks before reaching the desired octave, and even the accompaniment when he plays on his guitar is off key. The surprise is so great that the audience believe the whole thing is a joke. Pedro himself laughs at it, the dissonance of his own voice sounds so musical to him. He begins again, and produces a caricature of a melody. Catcalls and hisses are heard: the silly good joke is a short joke. Once again Pedro renews his attempt, pale this time, discomfited in his face. The voice... his voice is gone. Inaf to the jokes thrown at him, forgetting where he is, he begins to yell scales, to try his throat -- and nothing but hoarse sounds issue from his lips. A cool sweat runs into his eyes, he sees the crowd through a curtain of distracting prism -- now they laugh, laugh to burst their sides! He looks at the guitar, puts his hand to his throat, and like an animal with the hounds at his heels, flees toward the forest where his tribe is encamped.

From that day on there is no more Pedro. Indifference and shame slowly take hold of him little by little, reducing him to a wandering shadow. (shameful, hairy, idle, he hangs around the wiggam with an old guitar in his hands. The gipsies, silently, keep out of his way. Sometimes, as if he recalled something long forgotten, he strikes a chord, tries to sing a verse, listens to himself, then sits out again on his errand-pointless idle. Juanita alone dares to come near him. He abandons himself to her caresses, not replying to her questions, his eyes

instrument and found it crashing against a wall. There is a moment's silence, only the sound of the shattered guitar can be heard; then comes the brutal laughter of the men. Without a glance, Feire's straightens up painfully and walks away.

Pressing himself against a wall of the castle, he shuffles along. It seems that the last chords of will-power have left him, that even his eyesight is failing him. — Yet not quite. — All of a sudden, through an open window, he catches a guitar hanging against a velvet drap. He stops as if nailed to the spot, gripped by a violent emotion. He doesn't know what is happening to him, except that his guitar has been crushed and that here is now, here, within reach of his hand. He makes a tilted man's posture, as if he could seize the instrument from where he stood; then, lifted by a strength which he would have believed was in him, he climbs the sill of the window and lands in the music room of the castle. That guitar — he knows it, feels it irresistibly — that guitar is his, his own, his guitar born in the days when he was Feire the prince. He takes down the instrument, sounds his A and all at once begins to sing — to sing as of old.

In the castle — throughout the castle — in the master's chambers and in the servants' quarters, in the stables and in the kennels, everyone who has a soul and a pair of ears raises his head. The song, a prodigious song of joy, sounds and resounds and stirs the heart. On the floor above, the squire, perplexed and carried away, is listening.

A majordomo, armed with a rifle, shows his distraught features at the half-open door.

"Your lordship..." he babbles; "Your lordship... it's downstairs... it's... it's a ghost... I... Well... it's the ghost of his lordship the Duke, your lordship's great-grandfather..."

"The ghost of the Duke! In broad daylight! Are you mad?"

The two of them rush to the broad staircase which leads to the ground floor. Just as he is about to descend, the squire takes thought, turns back, grabs a pistol from a recess in the wall, loads it. Several other persons, troubled and ill at ease, have gathered on the landing. All tiptoe down the steps. The word "ghost... ghost..." spreads through the castle, while the marvelous singing goes on a-screaming. From all the outbuildings people come hurrying, looking uncertain despite their carbasses, pistols, poniards and cudgels, all whispering: "A ghost... the ghost of his lordship the Duke..."

Little by little the music room is invaded by the armed throng. Whispering in his master's ear, the majordomo reminds him that the guitar which the "ghost" is playing is the very one the little shepherd of the castle had brought in one day, having discovered it in a tree while he was hunting birds' nests. Seeing nothing, hearing nothing, Pedro sings as he never sang before, and it is only when he has come to the last note of the melody that abruptly he becomes aware of his surroundings. A deep hush falls over the room. Flipping the guitar, Pedro looks around in search of an exit, an escape. He takes a step -- and all the others fall back a step with a scraping of shoes on the waxed floor. Suddenly, from behind the throng, the mocking voice of Manuel the servant rises:

"That one, a ghost?... A ghost, that barefoot trick! That fellow, his lordship the Duke! Why, only ten minutes ago he was gawling over him he hasn't eaten since Christmas!"

As now and the courageous multitude turns toward Manuel who, with a pikestaff in his hand, is pointing at the singer. Taking advantage of the situation, Pedro leaps for the window. He cannot reach it. A rain of blows falls on him -- daggers and staves and cudgels. The guitar slips from his hands, giving out a mournful sound. Pedro has long lain

retirement to the floor, before the blow was falling upon his lifeless body.

III. The old collector, who was now alone, took up the guitar and played a few chords.

"Look at that guitar," said the old collector. "It's Pedro's guitar you have in your hands. Just beside the bridge, on the left side, you can see the talismanic symbol carved by Juanita's mother. I've never heard how the old story's curse was fulfilled. So, don't interrupt me, about fifty years later, towards the beginning of the last century."

The old collector then took up the guitar and played a few chords.

IV. Somewhere in the Argentine pampa, after having herded in the cattle and watered their herds, a number of gauchos are on their way back to the main building of the rancho.

Their talk, livelier than usual, even somewhat feverish, is about the imminent arrival of Don Fabian, the owner of the rancho, and his daughter Juanita, who are coming home from Spain, where they have spent three years. In fact, a horseman came in a couple of hours earlier, yelling at the top of his voice that Don Fabian's carriage was making good speed only ten leagues away. Hearing the news, Jorge, the head gaucho, has ordered his men to get into their smartest outfits to welcome the master and the daughter as they deserved; and while some proceed to dress up, and others put the finishing touches to the decoration of the great hall, he himself goes over to the preparations, gives orders, checks the appearance of the enormous table which rises up beneath a variety of seats, bottles and fruit. In the patio the fires are stirred up, sheep are stirred to be broiled on the spit, grain is ground to make ponche -- a favorite beer in the region. Making

a round of the stables, Jorge enters the stall of a magnificent white stallion. "We'll win the race tomorrow, the two of us, won't we, Catalina?" he says to his horse, giving him a carrot in addition. In answer to the call from outside, Jorge leaves the stall to meet the carriage which has just rolled noisily through the portal of the rancho, turning sharp on its great iron-shod wheels.

Quickly joy spreads all over the rancho. The master throws his arms around the men, Conchita gives a valuable account of her travels in Spain, and everyone drinks rest and talks loud, rejoicing over Don Fabian's splendid appearance and the exquisite freshness of the refreshments. The dishes pass from hand to hand, the drinks gurgle in the beakers, and laughter shakes the flame of the chandeliers. Silence falls, however, when a team of ponies, puffing mightily, arrives in two heavy trunks and deposit them in the middle of the vast room. "My dear friends," says Don Fabian, pushing up the ends of his mustache, "no one is happier than I to see us all together again under this roof. During our long journey through the noble land of Spain, Doña Conchita and I often dreamed of this moment. For we never forgot any of you. In the two chests which you see here, there is a souvenir for each for you. Do us the favor of accepting these little presents as proof of our friendship."

A chorus of exclamations greets Don Fabian's speech. Forming a circle around the hacienda and his daughter, the guests open their eyes wide, and each new object that comes out of the chests receives their noisy approval. There is a set of pistols for one, a belt richly decorated with silver for another, carbines, knives, embroidered jackets, sumptuous umbrellas, spurs -- and shawls, mantillas and bracelets for the women present. To the pleasure of receiving the gifts is added

that of accepting it from the hands of Cocchita.

"And for you, Don Jorge," says Cocchita, blushing, "this is what I have chosen..."

With joy in his eyes, Jorge takes the guitar the young girl holds out to him. From the mere look and feel of the instrument he at once perceives its extraordinary quality.

"You must pardon Cocchita for this little white lie," says Don Fabian. "She is the one, not I, who chose this gift for you. Oh, I must admit, I could not help ~~my~~ agreeing with her choice -- a rather selfish one, it's true. I do know, my dear Jorge, how much we love to hear you sing. When Cocchita chose this jewel for you, she was thinking above all of the pleasure of hearing you use it. And I can see that you have already recognised the exceptional breed of this instrument. I don't think I'm wrong in comparing it to a Stradivarius. I bought it from a gang of pillagers, imagine! God knows where they got it, in what robbery they picked it up..."

"Don Fabian... beforitz Cocchita... it's a princely gift," says Jorge, moved that it was the young lady who had thought of giving him the guitar. "I'm more than happy over your choice."

"I was sure you would like it," rejoined Don Fabian. "An Argentine man would rather hold a fine guitar in one arm than a pretty woman."

A flattering mirror grows these words of wisdom. The celebration continues far into the night. Amid the fires and the quarters of meat, amid the floods of beer and the cascades of laughter, Jorge again and again has to sing tangos and love-songs of the pampa. Hardly concealing her emotion, Cocchita watches him with the eyes of an eighteen-year-old girl; she knows, she feels that he is singing for her above all. She is sure of it, when, Jorge having seen her a little way off from the others, manages to slip up to her side.

(Jorge goes on singing, and she looks at him with all the passion of

"I'm know, definitely," he says with the air of a conspirator, "there will be a fiesta tomorrow too, and a horse race. I will race for you, definitely. For you I will try to come in first..."

She would have liked to answer, to thank him, perhaps to let him hold her hand, but already there are fall-throated calls of "Jorge! Jorge!..." and he has to go back to the whirl of music and food and liquor.

When Don Fabian and his daughter have retired, when the fires are out and the revelers scattered, Jorge, as is his custom, makes sure that all things are in order. Passing by the stables, he feels like giving a pat to his horse. As he comes up to the animal, it seems disturbed. He strokes its neck and, as usual, begins to talk to his horse.

"Now, now, Caballero," he says in a tone of feigned reproach, "are you nervous about the race tomorrow? But we're going to win, old boy, aren't we? And you know, definitely Conchita thought of me. She's the one who chose this guitar for me. Look, see what a wonder it is..."

He strums the strings; but the horse, now completely unmoved, rears on his hind legs. It takes Jorge some effort to calm Caballero, and he realizes that it is the guitar which upsets the horse.

"Come, come, Caballero, what's the matter with you?" he says. "You're so nervous, old boy. You don't know about guitars. This is the nicest thing that the prettiest girl can give a man when she... Come on, don't be stupid, Caballero! Look, I'll leave the guitar here, so you can get accustomed to it. Because after today, you'll be ^{seeing} a lot of it..."

He hangs the instrument on a nail near the door. As he goes out, he hears the stallion whinnying and lashing at the sides of the stall with his hooves.

Several days later, the following day, when the fiesta is in full swing and

The steeplechasing and horse-breaking goes on in a deluge of falls and shouts and dust, Jorge is giving his final care to his horse in preparation for the steeplechase. Conchita has come to meet him in the stall.

"Imagine, Seforita," says Jorge, "my horse Caballero, who isn't afraid of a thing, is afraid of your guitar."

"Indeed, as soon as he takes the instrument from its case, the horse shies away, trying to get free. 'There, you see!'" says the gaucho. "What can be the matter with him?"

"Now that's not nice, Caballero," says Conchita. "He's not... you're not jealous, are you?"

Jorge turns his face away to hide the emotion he feels at these words. "Jealous, maybe..." he says, massaging the animal's pasterns. "But so reliable. We're sure to win the race, Seforita. For you. For you alone. Would you mind keeping the guitar, while Caballero and I... He'll give it back to me after the race, and so I'll have the feeling that you have given it to me twice..."

To Conchita's and Jorge's great confusion, Caballero is left in the track as soon as the race begins: he really seems too unstrung to take first place. But toward the end of the second time around he starts to overtake his rivals, and, at the beginning of the fourth, he has passed them all. Standing on her seat, full of excitement, with the guitar in her hands, Conchita waves and shouts encouragement to the white stallion. The departure of the race has been in front of San Fabian's and his daughter's logs, and the finish is also there. When Jorge crosses the line a decisive winner, Conchita, carried away by her enthusiasm, waves the guitar as if it were a bouquet of flowers — and the horse, whom Jorge is riding back to salute, stiffens suddenly and takes a savage leap, throwing his rider. Like a stone from a sling Jorge goes over

the head of his sword and, falling with all his weight, is impaled on the pinets which form a fence along the racetrack.

"As there, young man, is how the old witch's malediction was accomplished a second time. So, if you please, be patient a little longer. This new guitar which you are clasping so tightly to your heart was in blame for the death of Jorge, the handsome Argentine gaucho. But did the bloody trail end here? One day, long afterwards, in Mexico City, at the time of Maximilian's execution, about 1866..."

"Patience, young man, be patient. I am not a doctor, but I am a storyteller."

"So then, Angelina, you aren't willing to take me into your confidence?" asks Count von Arns, an Austrian officer in Maximilian's army. He is standing near the window of the saloon-parlour of a fine old Mexican home, looking at his young mistress, who is seated before a peyote, polishing her nails.

"Impatient as a boy, aren't you, my dear Count?" Angelina replies.

"Do have the courtesy to allow a lady the secrets of her dressing room, especially as regards a masquerade costume. Anyhow, since you are going to call for me in an hour or so, you will soon see how I am going to dress."

"In an hour or so?... Why, my dear Angelina, it takes me longer time than that to dress."

"Impatient as a boy, vain as a dandy... Go to, Count, go to. Even though I don't need three hours to disguise myself as a... oh, I almost gave myself away! to get into my costume, it will still take me a little time. And try to look as swift as possible, for I shall be beautiful."

"Be so it, Angelina. I shall wait for you in three hours -- at ten, if I see." He pushed the curtain aside, peering into the darkness. "But it's raining terribly hard, and I had to send my carriage to have a gripping spring repaired. Would you be so kind as to send for a fiacre?"

Angelina comes to the window and looks out. "Why, yes," she says. "What a downpour! In such weather it isn't easy to find a fiacre promising about empty. Take my carriage instead, and send it back as soon as you get home."

She rings at the bell-pull and orders the lackey to have the Austrian officer driven home. As the lackey is leaving, she calls him back:

"Firmly, I am expecting the bootmaker. When he comes, don't bother to announce him; show him in directly." And with a smile to von Arnim: "Adieu, Count."

The carriage issues from the porte-cochère at a full trot. The rain is falling in sheets. It seems as if no living soul would venture out of doors, and yet von Arnim has the impression that some strange agitation is abroad in the now black deserted streets. He tries to gather what its causes ~~may~~ might be, but the sneaking and bounding and the splashes of water beneath the iron-shod wheels prevent him from seeing anything clearly. He does, however, make out a noise which resembles the foot-falls of running men, then shouts and calls, and suddenly two or three rifle shots at intervals. But his thoughts are full of the long night of pleasure to come: he good sits back against the cushions of the carriage, and when he reaches his door, throws a coin to the coachman and orders him home.

In a hollow of the wall, sheltered by the darkness, someone is trying to hide. Two soldiers pass by on the run, then two more, then still others, going in the opposite direction: hence, ready to spring

out, the man who is the object of the stare wipes his streaming face and bends his ear to the approaching sound of a carriage bounding in the cobble street. At the instant Angeline's lamplight-bombardment comes up at full speed, the man who stands flat against the wall leaves his refuge and reaches the carriage with a lightning bound. The speed of its motion lifts him from the ground. With an agile swing he gains his feet on the step, opens the door and tumbles upon the seat. The barouche halts. After a quick turn the door bangs shut. The coachman reacts at the sound; but seeing nothing suspicious he whips his team onward through the driving rain.

When the carriage passes under the porte-cochère, yet before it comes to a full stop, the man slips out. For a fraction of a second he hovers, but seeing the entrance, he leaps up the steps four at a time and makes his way into the hall. He barely has time to see where his is, when the landlady snaps out in a domineering voice:

"You're late, shoemaker! Have along, the doña is waiting for you!"

He peered the man in. Speechless, the fugitive stops; this, beyond a doubt, is an unlooked-for opportunity to escape his pursuers. The landlady opens the door halfway:

"Here's the shoemaker, doña!"

Angeline is at her dressing table, wearing a Japanese kimono, arranging her hair in geisha fashion. Without turning, she orders the "shoemaker" in. The stranger, motionless and taken aback, is mute with astonishment. With her eyes for nothing but her hair, Angeline says:

"Well, shoemaker, what are you waiting for? Come and try the famous pompadour!"

The man steps forward over the deep-piled carpet, looking at the

young woman with an air of surprise and amazement. Angelina thrusts out a foot from among the folds of the kimono. "Hurry, shoemaker, hurry..."

The man kneels, takes the foot which is offered him, removes the shoe. Entering the spirit of the game, entering it with an infinite pleasure, he holds the lady's foot as he would a precious ~~amp~~ amp. After a moment of contemplation, he puts the shoe back on the foot and the foot back on the carpet. Putting the shoe on, Angelina covers her ankle, wiggles her toes, and again fixes her ankles.

"Congratulations, boatman," she says, still busy with her hair. "Believe have I worn a pump which fitted my foot better."

"I am overwhelmed, Señorita," says the man.

At the sound of this unknown voice Angelina turns her head, looks at the stranger, rises hastily to her feet and puts her hand to her mouth to smother an outcry. The man, seated on the floor, has difficulty concealing the impression the young lady's charm makes on him.

"Who are you?" gasps Angelina. "How dare you! Get up immediately!"

"Allow me to remain at your feet, Señorita," the stranger begs. "I admire you..."

"Stand up!" she takes a step toward the bell-pull. "Stand up and leave!"

In a second the stranger is beside her, incessantly her not to give him away. His garments soaking wet and the anxiety of his composure call to mind the image of a wanderer on the run; and although his language and manner belie his appearance, Angelina is quite determined to have the intruder thrown out. Yet -- either the man's respectful attitude or her own curiosity -- she seems willing to give the unexpected visitor a chance to explain himself.

"Señorita, I entreat you to hear me," he says. "My name is Octavio

Camarillo drops. "I am a liaison officer in the army of General Jaurez, on a secret mission to Mexico City. This morning I fell into an ambush, was wounded in the arm and arrested. Only an hour ago Maximilian's soldiers were taking me wherever I was to meet my end. I escaped — there, did you hear that sound of boots, those calls? It's the ones they're looking for. A carriage was passing. It was yours. It might have been anyone's... I jumped into it. Fortunately there was nobody inside. Then this lackey... That's how I came to be in your room, Señorita. When I saw you, I thought... I really thought you were a Japanese lady. But now I know you are a Mexican. You can't have me chased away, you can't throw me into the hands of the French..."

"Is it possible that the proud officer is afraid?" said Angelina half mockingly, struggling now against her sympathy as a moment ago she has struggled against her fear.

"I say he trembling, Señorita. But it's because I am cold. My clothes are wet through. And if I were afraid at all, it would be of failing to carry out my mission. I can tell from your eyes, Señorita, that you could not betray a man who is working for a cause which is yours as well as his. Señorita, I must, I must deliver my message to General Jaurez."

Angelina hesitates. The distant tramping of the soldiers sounds more clearly amid the pounding of the rain. The officer grips his left arm, which must be giving him pain. All at once Angelina remembers von Arnim.

"Heavens!" she exclaims. "Count von Arnim may be here any minute now..." Octavio looks at her incomprehendingly. "He is an Austrian officer in the army of occupation. He is coming to take me to the masquerade ball at the Castle of Chapultepec. If he finds you here!... Ah, wait, I have an idea... You will come to the ball with me, in disguise!"

"You won't be recognized! It's the only way you can leave here without arousing suspicion. Quick, quick..."

She looks him over from head to foot. Despite their singular appearance, his rain-soaked clothes would hardly pass for a ball disguise. "Couture is my brother's wardrobe is a tumbler's wardrobe," she says with animation. "Antonio is your size, the costume will fit you. If only I can find it. Don't move, and don't make any noise. I'll be back in a moment."

Alone now, Octavio looks around, glancing at the furniture, the portraits on the walls, the bric-à-brac, the toilet articles on Angelina's dressing table. Suddenly a sound is heard, coming from the hall. Octavio hardly has the time to slip behind a drape, when the lackey shows his side-whiskered face.

"There's a man there who claims ~~he~~ he's the Deforita bootmaker," he says to Angelina, who is coming into the room by another door, laden with clothing. "But I already showed in the Deforita's bootmaker a quarter of an hour ago."

"A quarter of an hour ago, exactly," says Angelina. Then, catching herself, "What? Whom did you show in? You have visitors, my friend! Have the man give you the sheet and bring them here."

"But, Deforita, I'm sure I showed a bootmaker into the Deforita's presence..."

"Fixin, I see you've been drinking again. If this happens once more, I shall have to disown you."

"But, Deforita... Yes... Yes, Deforita... Right away, Deforita..."

He disappears, then comes back, carrying Angelina's dressing jacket. When Octavio emerges from his hiding place, she greets him with a smile: the little dialogue with the old servant has introduced a note of complicity between her and the Marxist officer.

"Quick, Señor. Quick. Go into the next room and change."

Octavio takes the clothes without a word. During his absence Angelina puts on the dancing shoes. From time to time she looks with interest toward the door behind which Octavio is changing. Ten minutes later, when he comes back, Angelina is fully dressed in her Japanese attire. Seeing the new shoes on her feet, Octavio kneels and makes as if to try their fit.

"I could wish for nothing better than to be your shoemaker till the end of time," he says; and as she laughs, he becomes bolder and touches her feet. "Even if all time were filled with pain, and and and and and. Each day from now to the end of time I should come and beg you to examine my collection of shoes -- ~~some~~ high shoes and low shoes, domestic shoes and imported shoes, shoes of the day and shoes of a hundred years ago, shoes with elastic and shoes with laces, to say nothing of pompos, ribbons, buckles..."

"Stand up, Señor," says Angelina, laughing aloud. "Stand up. You look the part of a troubadour admirably. All you need to complete your outfit is a musical instrument. Troubadours were wont to sing to their own accompaniment. Do you sing?"

"Some people think so, Señorita."

"Perfect. And do you know how to hold a guitar?"

"It seems so. As a matter of fact, they say I was born with a guitar in my hands."

"Imperfect. It just happens that I have a guitar which my brother brought back from one of his trips to Argentina. It was given to him at the ranch of friends of his, by an old lady who had brought it from Spain in her youth. The instrument was a precious keepsake of hers. Troubadours didn't play the guitar, but, oh, well... Here it is."

She goes to a wall and takes down a guitar. Octavio examines it

with interest. "What a magnificent thing," he says. "I doubt I shall be worthy of it."

A carriage drives into the courtyard. Angelina looks anxiously at Octavia. "Remember," she whispers, "remember that my name is Angelina not that you are my brother Antonio... Put up a good front. Stand over there."

Von Arnau, dressed as a General, adorned with a false mustache and carrying a huge sword, makes his entrance in a riot rattle of skirts. Seeing Angelina attired as a prince, he makes his sword and exclaims:

"Now, if that isn't intuition! It's as if I had guessed that you would be disguised as a Japanese! Ah, the heart is a great diviner... Angelina, our hearts are in tune with each other."

He is about to give a salute, which he supposes a proper General would do, when he notices Octavia. Surprise, astonishment and displeasure mark his countenance.

"Allow me, Count, to present my brother Antonio," says Angelina with her most charming smile. "He just got home unexpectedly, to my great joy, and he is coming to the ball with us."

The two men bow ceremoniously. Von Arnau rests the point of his sword on the floor. "Antonio, your brother!..." he says. "What a pleasure, dear Angelina. But didn't you tell me that your brother was in France?" He turns toward Octavia, shifting his sword in the movement. "I thought you were in Paris, dearest?"

"Yes, of course, I did tell you that," cuts in Angelina. "But he writes so seldom when he is travelling. And even when he is not travelling... While I thought he was in Paris, he was landing ^{at} La Vera Cruz." She walks over to Octavia, puts her hands on his shoulders, then draws up close to him. "What a naughty brother you are, Antonio... not let me know, not to write..."

Taking advantage of the situation, Octavio holds Angelina in his arms. "You know, my sweet, that writing is the saddest thing in the world for me. I'd rather give up my passion for travelling. But you will pardon me, won't you? Kiss me, in show me that I have your forgiveness."

Angelina raises herself on tiptoe and kisses him on the cheek. Still holding her close to him, he turns to von Arnim.

"Have you a little sister like this, Monsieur? No? Ah, I am sorry for you."

At that instant voices are heard in the courtyard. The door opens on Firmin, behind whom loom the figures of several soldiers. Seeing two men with Angelina, Firmin looks from Octavio to von Arnim. Taking the bull by the horns, Octavio says:

"What's the matter, my friend? Why this commotion?"

The lackey stares at him wide-eyed, making a visible effort to think, as if trying to remember something. Freeing himself from Octavio's embrace, Angelina asks:

"Well, then, Firmin? Have you swallowed your tongue?"

"Yes... yes... no..." stammers the lackey, pointing a hesitant finger at Octavio.

"How now!" says Angelina severely. "Don't you recognize the gentleman? Didn't you show him in yourself?"

"Yes, Señorita... Yes indeed, Señorita..."

"Firmin, for the last time, I forbid you to drink. And have the carriage brought around."

"But, Señorita... There are soldiers... They... they..."

"Firmin, you are stuttering. What soldiers, Firmin?"

The lackey makes a series of vague gestures in the direction of the hall. A lieutenant of the French army presents himself on the threshold, salutes, and gates crashed at the three in their exotic costumes.

"I beg to be excused," he says. "My men and I are under orders to look for an extremely dangerous fugitive. So pardon me. I thought he might have taken refuge.... So sorry to have disturbed you, but the service.... A thousand pardons."

Paralyzed by Angelina's gaze, the lieutenant has wound up stammering like Firmin, and finally takes his departure. Von Armin has remained silent, his keen observant eye going from one to the other. He does not withdraw until Firmin announces the carriage.

Dancing, music, confetti, at the costume ball at Chapultepec castle. Splendid uniforms, gilded chaperlains, high potentates -- Turkish, Arabian, Chinese, Moldavian.... Angelina the gipsy, in the arms of Octavio the troubadour, sways to the rhythm of a Viennese waltz. Bending back a little against her partner's arm, she smiles to von Armin the Harmer, who at the moment is all the world to a lady disguised as a circus rider.

"How lucky we are, dear Count," says his partner, archly. "Could one be jealous of a brother just back from his travels?"

Von Armin would retort, but his lady has spun him into a whirlpool of girations proper to a circus rider. Finally he manages to escape her, and sets out in search of Angelina and Octavio. He finds them in the midst of a multicolored, multiform press of people, who, stirred by loud gaiety, are demanding a song of the troubadour -- since troubadour there is. Octavio would not yield to the crowd's vociferous wish, but a look from Angelina -- a look expressing her desire to hear him -- wins his assent. For a moment he remains pensive, as if still hesitant, as if looking for words, then bursts into a chariot song. At first the crowd sways, seized by a movement of surprise and uneasiness, but as pure as the troubadour's voice, so astounding the sonority of his guitar, that, their hearts melting within them, the Mexicans present impose silence on

Those who are inclined to whisper. Von Arnau is just about to protest against the king, when a suspicion strikes him. He peers intently at the singer, then at Angelina, and coming to a sudden decision he leaves the room, descends the broad staircase, and crosses the wide esplanade in front of the castle. A few moments later he is in conference with the military commander of the palace.

A half hour has elapsed when von Arnau, having consulted with his superiors, is back in search of Angelina and her "brother". He discovers them in the park, leaning elbow to elbow on a carved stone balustrade. Octavio's guitar is slung over his shoulder. He has already communicated the exits of the palace, but, finding guards posted at each, has decided that it would be safer and simpler to escape in the confusion of the general departure an hour hence. Meanwhile the boy preferred the quiet retirement of the park to the brilliance -- and danger -- of the great ballroom. A vague smile flickers on von Arnau's moustache when he accosts them:

"If I had a merry mind, dear Angelina, I might think badly of the love that a ravishing young lady can feel for her brother... But such is not the case. Far from me any such thought. As for you, Sir Troubadour, you have a fine voice... and ~~as~~ a still finer nerve! Quartet songs in the castle of His Majesty the Emperor! Carabai as you Mexicans say. I could have you arrested..."

Unobtrusively, Angelina utters a low cry of fear. Bare smiling then over, with an exaggerated solicitude, von Arnau inquires:

"Why this emotion, dear Angelina?"

But, without waiting for her answer, he suddenly snatches at Octavio's left arm and tears open the sleeve of his jacket. A bloody handkerchief is wrapped around the troubadour's forearm. The two men stare at each other, mute and threatening. Under the pressure and the violent

movement, Octavio's arm begins to bleed.

"A very fine nerve agent, Señor Octavio Gonzalez Oropesa," says von Arman. "and a very fine lack of vigilance. This time you will not escape."

Angelina moves to interfere, but without, even favoring her with a look, von Arman strikes his hand as if to push her aside. Octavio in turn puts his hand out to keep the Austrian from touching the young woman -- and in a flash the fight starts. Hangered by his General's sword, von Arman cannot profit by the advantage which his adversary's wound gives him. In a few seconds he finds himself ~~on the other side of the stone balustrade~~ ^{in the shrubbery on} the other side of the stone balustrade.

"I shall come back, Angelina..." says Octavio, taking her hand.

"Come back, Octavio, do come back..." she whispers.

She kisses him on the mouth. He looks around to get his bearings, and plunges into the darkness. Having extricated himself from the shrubbery, von Arman is giving the alert to the soldiers posted at various points in the park. Dashing through the dark tree-bordered alleys, Octavio seeks to throw off his pursuers. Although surrounded, he would no doubt have made good his escape had it not been for the loss of blood from his open wound. A bullet whistles by his ear, then others, but he does not obey the repeated ~~order~~ command to halt. He is completely exhausted when a blow from the butt of a rifle strikes him between the shoulder blades and sends him face downward. He struggles to get up again, but other blows nail him to the ground -- layonet blows in his by now ~~exhausted~~ body. One of the soldiers gathers up the guitar which lies near the dead fugitive. "Hijo..." he says. "Here I was just going to buy one!"

VII.

"So, there... Pedro the prince's guitar grasped a new victim and added a name to the register of fate. I don't blame you for looking at the guitar the way you do. I don't blame you, because it's a venomous snake you are holding to your breast. So, no, a little patience, young man. Only a short time ago, before the war, in Lima..."

VIII.

An elegantly dressed young woman comes to a halt before the entrance of a large hotel in the capital city of Peru. Her eyes fall on a poster advertising a series of concerts in a famous cabaret, the Mariposa, to be given by Arturo Lopez Cruz, renowned singer and guitarist who has returned to the country after two years of a triumphant concert tour abroad. After asking for information at the desk, she gets into the elevator. Landing on the floor she has been told, she is about to ring the bell when the door opens. Not wishing to be seen, she steps aside and flattens against the wall. An old man, whose appearance betrays his modest means, is leaving the suite. He pauses, his hand on the doorknob. His features are disconcerted and his speech gives evidence of great excitement.

"For years..." he says, speaking to someone whom the young woman cannot see, but who she guesses to be Arturo Lopez Cruz. "For two years you have left your son in my care -- me, an old man with neither health nor fortune, and but once did you think to send your son a little money, not even enough for a pair of shoes... And now, back in Lima, it didn't occur to you to come and see your child, or even to inquire whether he was alive..."

There is silence. Getting no reaction from the person he is in

addressing, the old man goes on in a trembling voice: "It isn't enough to have driven ~~your~~ my daughter, the mother of your child, to suicide... Now you must abandon your son to poverty... an orphan three years old... Ah, I wouldn't touch a penny of yours if I had what I needed to raise my grandson decently..."

"Finish your sermon, old fool!" comes the contemptuous ~~xxxxx~~ voice of Arturo Lopez Cruz. "And enough of your perorations! I'll come and see the little one this evening. Goodbye!"

The old man leaves the door open and goes off without a word. The young woman waits till he is out of sight, then makes her presence known. Arturo Lopez Cruz, who has just finished shaving and is drying his face with quick dabs of the towel, shrugs a trace of disturbance at the sight of his visitor. But ^{he} recovers his composure, and an ambiguous smile comes to his lips.

"Hello!" he says, continuing to dab his face. "Enfeyta Rosalba Fuentes... What a charming surprise!"

Direct and immobile, the young woman looks at the singer with a coldness tinged with contempt. Under the weight of her look, Arturo emphasizes the haunting note in his voice.

"Charming as ever..." he continues, snipping his suspenders. "Time doesn't touch you, Rosalba. Is for me, time eats me up; you, it makes younger!" As Rosalba maintains an entrancing silence, a look of hard-earned cynicism replaces his ambiguous smile. "Well, what can I do for you? It seems to me I had given you to understand that all was over between us." He flicks at the sleeves of the coat he had just put on. "As I stand before you, I have become an orderly person. Orderly and serious. Flirtations and love affairs no longer interest me..." Suddenly he stares at the young woman as if appraising her figure. Despite herself, Rosalba ~~xxxx~~ draws back. Her words are dry and biting:

"If I say retail a detail at the risk of wounding your playboy sensibility, you will remember that it was I who broke off -- it was I who dismis-
^{don't be}
 sed you. But ~~don't be~~ afraid. I am not here to talk about our former relationship." She steps forward, and there is something humble in her approach. "I have a request to make of you. Not for myself. For your friend. For the man who was your best friend -- Doctor Serrano."

Arturo's look grows heavy. "Doctor Serrano..." he says, drawing out the name. "What's become of the worthy physician? Does he still squander his life studying parasites? Is he still glued to his blackboard? Between ourselves, he isn't very bright, poor Doctor."

"Doctor Serrano is my husband. He is the father of my child."
 The laugh freezes on Arturo's lips, then ^{breaks out} ~~breaks out~~ afresh. "Your husband?... Congratulations! You haven't done badly for yourself since... since I left you. Again, congratulations!"

Emilia's cheeks flush, but she controls herself with an effort. She sees by his eyes that he is regarding her as a wife -- another man's wife. Her voice is flat and as she bites off her words:

"Your congratulations ring false. I want none of them. Doctor is -- he believes ~~that~~ you are a friend of his. We grew up together. Together you planned your future. In the name of your common friendship I come to ask you... to ask you a little discretion, a little decency, in his regard. Doctor is remote from the vulgarities of the world. You know very well how vulnerable he is. He would be terribly hurt if he were told about the past... as far as you and I are concerned, it would be needless cruelty to shatter his happiness. He knows that you are performing tonight at the Mariposa. He has told me how much he wants to come and hear you and give you his good wishes. He has reserved a table. I beg of you to do nothing and say nothing which would cause him

no, please, do not let him see you tonight. Do not let him see you tonight. Do not let him see you tonight.

disagreeable. I have no great confidence in your generosity. But if there is a spark of humanity in your heart, then don't trouble us this defenceless man."

"What an ideal!" says Arturo, puffing his cheeks. "I'm very fond of good old Hecater, bless him. Why should I want to hurt the poor old? Come now! Of course, of course, I like him a lot. And you too, Rosalia. I'm very fond of you, you won't doubt it..."

He makes as if to put his arm around the young woman's waist and draw her to him; but, devoid as he is of any moral sense, Rosalia's look restrains him. There are tears in her voice:

"I have often wondered how a great artist can dwell in a being like -- like you. And I have often wondered how I ever could have loved you. You are the rarest, basest man in the world."

"You're on, Arturo," says the manager of the Baritone, coming into the singer's dressing room. "I've just announced you, and the audience is getting impatient. An audience worthy of a great premiere. Oh, is that the guitar you told me about? What a gem!"

"It's the very one! I'm breaking it in this evening. It will bring luck to the Baritone. Can you really see what an instrument it is? Never in my life have I had such a guitar in my hands. That box must be centuries old. I discovered it in an antiquarian's shop in Mexico City, the very day I left. With that to accompany myself, I shall work miracles."

Even as he sings, he spies the Barranco's title. Several times he tries to catch Rosalia's eye, but she gives no sign of looking at him. On the other hand, Hector Barranco does not conceal his enthusiasm, especially when Arturo gives him a friendly nod from the platform. So, when he has finished his performance and satisfied those who called

for encores, his first visit is to Hector's table. He orders champagne, is introduced to the two or three persons who accompany the Gorrans. He seems joyous at seeing his friend Hector again.

"Arturo," says the scientist, "some time I hear you sound more extraordinary. ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ His wife and adds jokingly: "Really, Rosalba, I feel like picking a quarrel with you. How could anyone resist Arturo's style?" Arturo's eyes harden, and a vengeful gleam comes into them; but Hector, unaware of the effect of his words, goes on: "Well, I maintain that he is a great artist, and I'll never tire repeating it. To your health, Arturo; to your happiness!"

"To the Gorrans, who does not care for my art," says Arturo, raising his glass. "And yet, if my memory serves me, your wife didn't always think so little of my songs. -- Did you, Rosalba?"

The look of hatred which Rosalba bestows on him does not escape her husband. He shoots a glance of curiosity at the singer and at his wife, not knowing what to think.

"Well," says one of the guests at the table, "the other evening, as we were entertaining the Gorrans, I played one of your recordings. Rosalba did not seem to enjoy it very much, I recall."

"How tastes change," Arturo sighs. "I can remember the days when the Gorrans... when Rosalba -- you will allow me to call you Rosalba, won't you? -- when Rosalba couldn't hear enough of me. Ah, let us drink to fond memories... In those days one would have said Rosalba was in love with my voice."

"What's that?" asks the young man who sits next Hector.

"Oh, we were very good friends... and I hope we shall continue to be... Is it possible, my dear Hector, that Rosalba has never spoken of it? But maybe it's clumsy enough to seem indiscreet! Could the envy of my Gorrans be so disagreeable to you, dear Rosalba, that you...

Oh, Hector, the ingratitude of women... Take heed the word of a man who knows!"

Disturbed and disconcerted, Hector Herrera looks like a man who is trying to figure out the meaning of a double-edged gun. In Rosalba's contemptuous smile. Arturo, sipping his champagne, leans comfortably against the back of his chair. Playing the good fellow, one of the guests says stupidly:

"We know -- everybody knows -- about your amorous exploits, señor Lopez. But why boast? Surely doña Rosalba is not among your conquests."

"Don't make me reveal what it befits me to conceal," says Arturo over his glass, looking at Rosalba, who has stood up. "Discretion is the virtue of a gentleman, I was instructed this very afternoon. It surprises me, though, that doña Rosalba is ashamed of her old friendships... To your conjugal happiness, amigo Hector!"

Hector arises in his turn. He seems ridden with emotion and inner torment. Rosalba comes around the table and takes her husband by the arm. He makes no resistance. The guests stand up, silent and uneasy, turning their eyes from Arturo, who remains seated, holding his glass at the level of his lips.

"But in any case, Rosalba, the truth is..." he says, with sincerity in his voice and an ingratiating smile. "The truth is that we have been very much..."

"Yes... your singing... your guitar... a curse on you!" She seizes a glass from the table and throws its contents in the singer's face. "A curse on you..." she repeats, dragging her husband away. Waiters and maître-d'hôtel rush to the spot. Wiping himself lightly with a napkin, Arturo has not lost his smile.

At the Marinero, about the hour of dawn, among the returned tables

and chairs, two young women greet Arturo Lopez Cruz with exclamations of joy. They had been waiting to see him after the patrona left, and at last he is coming -- the singer with the marvelous voice, bearing his guitar and his conquering smile. -- "So terribly sorry to have kept you waiting," he calls gaily in reply to their outburst. -- "Let's go, little girls! Let's catch the fleeting hour!"

Putting their arms around him, rubbing against him like cats, the two women lead him out like a hero. On the sidewalk, Arturo hails a taxi. One of the women has already settled in the cab, when a voice is heard:

"Arturo, these women can wait -- your child awaits!"

Trembling, the old man has put his hand on Arturo's forearm. The second woman, who is about to get into the cab, passes:

"Arturo, my love," she says in the hoarse voice of one who has drunk too much, "who is that grandpa?"

"A tramp, that's what he is," says the other woman, leaning out of the taxi. "Here, catch this, grandpa!"

She tosses him a coin, which rolls away in the gutter. Arturo shakes his arm loose and shoves the old man away.

"A mighty insistent tramp," he says, pushing the woman ahead of him into the cab. "Come on, get in, my pet..."

Of a sudden the woman who has thrown the coin utters a cry. A knife blade flashes in the hand of the staggering old man. With all his weight he hurls himself on the singer, plunging the blade in his throat. Dropping his guitar, Arturo remains standing a second, then falls to his knees.

"And there, young man, is how our guitar stays faithful to its destiny. So, don't make any hasty decisions... My story isn't finished. Let me tell you the fifth exploit of this innocent guitar..."

"There'll be no fifth story!" said André in a voice which forbade a reply. He had left his chair, holding the guitar as if it were a grenade about to explode. Rosalind and Stock watched him with ill-concealed awe, while José plunged hastily into his food. The old collector smiled benignly:

"I see you no longer want my guitar... Too bad, too bad... I would have given it to you... Don't you really want me to tell you how it brought a young Brazilian to his doom a year ago?"

"Oh, for God's sake, no more!" blurted André. "I won't have anything to do with this guitar... I don't want to see it again!" He felt as if caught in a trap, as if a noose were tightening around his neck. The old man, with a hand behind his ear, listened with a kindly smile. José's face was purple with terror and over-eating. Stock's jaw hung open. Rosalind's eyes gleamed behind a veil of tears. "But then... I must... I must have been under the prints!" André said, fumbling for words, his eyes goosticking Rosalind as if she would surely know the answer...

"Then I was Jennith the gypsy girl!" she gasped.

"Oh, yes..." grunted the old man, rubbing his hands with satisfaction, as though at last the conversation were taking a reasonable turn.

There was a long pause. André and Rosalind, facing each other, seemed to be going through the long past which had been theirs in common.

Pedro and Januária, Jorge and Conceição, Octavio and Amelinda, Arturo and Rosalba, and now -- André and Marceline. The silence might have been drawn out indefinitely, had not the old man, fearful of being forgotten, stood up, intoning in a solemn prophetic voice:

"Far and wide... in many lands... wherever the guitar goes... it will draw you both after it... far as long... through as many lives..."

At that instant the girl who, on the bridge over the canal, had been José's delight and André's bad luck, walked rapidly up to the table. Seeing her, José blushed with pleasure. He was about to hasten to greet her, as if he were the man for whom she was looking, when she addressed the old gentleman:

"Grandfather! Where have you been? I've been looking for you for ~~hours~~ hours!"

Seizing the guitar which André had laid on the table, she looked inquiringly at the four persons present, then at her grandfather. The old man wore the expression of an artist caught in the wrong.

"Grandfather! Grandfather!" she exclaimed. "Have you been playing one of your unpleasant jokes again? Good heavens, won't you ever grow up?"

The old man laughed into his beard. The girl looked at the instrument on the table. "This guitar... why, it's..."

"It belongs to your grandfather, Miss," said Stock. "Tell him to keep it, tell him to take it away from here..."

"Oh yes, I recognise it now. My grandfather been telling you stories about it?"

"Grandful stories," said Amelinda.

Turn now to the girl's eyes. "Grandfather, you're incorrigible! Won't you ever stop inventing those horrifying tales about your salubrious of instruments?" She looked at André. "You seem scared to death,

Sir. Please, please pay no attention to whatever you've heard from my grandfather. He's so attached to his instruments... for what purpose his... For fear of being separated from them, he invents the most gruesome things, stories of ghosts, witchcraft..."

Their faces lit up in a flash. Rosalind came over to Andrés, putting her hand on his arm. José returned to his eating. Stock burst into a laugh:

"Of course, of course, Miss! Not for an instant did I take your grandfather's stories seriously. But between ourselves, what an imagination! And again between ourselves, you should persuade your grandfather to let Señor Andrés Gregorio Castilla de las Rochas keep his guitar, if only to make up for the fright he gave him. Even though the instrument is not so stained with blood as we were led to believe, it deserves to be in the hands of a great artist. How much!" He whipped out a check-book. "How much?"

The old man made a gesture of protest, but the girl had already taken the check which Stock gave her. "Let this be a lesson to you," she admonished her grandfather. "Goodnight, everybody!" She pulled the old man along as she would a recalcitrant child. In the act of following his grand-daughter ~~his grand-daughter~~ much against his will, he turned around at every step, as if in spite of hope he still hoped to get back his guitar. They were just about to disappear through the revolving door when the old man ran back, this time turning his grand-daughter to follow him. Sputtering with disappointment, he said:

"At least... let me hear my guitar once more... Would you? Would you be kind enough!..."

"No!" said Stock, putting a finger on the guitar. "Señor de las Rochas belongs to my stable now, and I forbid him to sing in restaurants.

But hold on, Sir: would you like me to tell you a story -- the fifth story in the life of this guitar? The one you didn't get to telling me? The fifth murder, the fifth sword-thrust of the guitar? Do you know whose heart it will pierce the next time? The spectators? The audience? For if you have a great deal of imagination, I, for my part, have..."

"No, no!" the old man cried. "I can't stand murder and ghost stories, they keep me awake at night..." He looked with a sort of sick terror at Stock and José at the table, at André and Emeline standing behind Stock. "But please, Sir, just one song, before I see the last of my guitar."

Stock's jaw was set in the hard expression of a businessman driving a stiff bargain. He raised his arm in a gesture of refusal, almost brushing aside the old man's pleading hands. But behind his back André, with a soft stroke of his fingers across the strings of the guitar, took up the words of a love song. Stock's gesture was frozen in mid-air. José's face lit up. The guests at nearby tables, only half understanding what was taking place, but sensing the drama of the singer and the lovely girl, began to gather around them. And as André came to the refrain of his song, Emeline blended her high sweet voice with his.

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