IN A GAME OF LIFE AND DEATH—HE DEFIED MORGAN THE PIRATE

THE NAKED BLADE

FREDERICK FAUST
An Offer from the Governor

"If you lead us to the places where that treasure was buried," said the governor, "we will spare your wretched life, and give you over to imprisonment."

Kildare sneered into the waiting, eager faces. "I'd rather feed human flesh to dogs than such riches to the Spaniards," said he.

"Your excellency," said Larreta, "nothing will shake him except fire . . ."

The guards dragged him swiftly from the hall . . .

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THE NAKED BLADE
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Chapter ONE:

The dream of Ivor Kildare swiftly accommodated itself to facts. The devil that had been breathing hot steam upon him seemed to leap suddenly upon his back and drive a spur into his ribs; so Kildare, wakening, saw the gaoler leaning over him with a long, sharp-pointed staff in his hand, and realized that he was a prisoner in the hands of the Spaniards and lodged in the prison hut of Porto Bello. The Indian woman was whimpering, as usual, and the man who groaned at every breath was the Negro who had been flogged the evening before.

"Get up," said Juan Capote, the gaoler.

Kildare pushed himself into a sitting posture with the force of his arms. His leg-irons and his wrist-irons chimed softly. The hut of wattles thatched with palm leaves was exactly long enough to hold sixty prisoners, and it was full. All lay prone, some on their backs, some on their sides, some on their faces, except Luis, the Mosquito Indian. The polished bronze torso of that giant, who sat crosslegged as usual, seemed as lofty as that of an ordinary man standing.

"Get up!" commanded Juan Capote, and jabbed with his pointed stick again.
Kildare rose with a motion so dexterous that the point of the stick missed his ribs. The length of his chains allowed him to stretch his lean arms above his head, and he stretched them now. His torn shirt let every rib be seen; the belly flattened against the backbone.

Juan Capote leaned to unlock the legchain from the staple to which it was fastened.

“Go out by the back door!” he commanded.

Kildare picked his way among the tawny limbs that were stretched on the earthen floor. Here and there he avoided bits of mud, also.

When he came to the back door and stepped outside, he paused a little to snort from his nostrils the stench of that prison room and to look about on the hills that surround Porto Bello like the sides of a cup. He could not see them very clearly because of the mist that went up from the dank ground and from the flat, greasy waters of the harbor; but he could discover the outlines, and the gleam of two or three of the creeks that vainly pour their waters, all year round, into the desolate sink of the bay. The forested slopes of those hills were jungles, but freedom moved in them, though like a snake.

Kildare, as he looked about him and took a breath of the fresher steam of the outside air, sidestepped, deftly, and the long goad of the gaoler shot by him.

“When I have you tied to a whipping post one day, then I shall not miss you, English dog!” said
Juan Capote. "Turn to the right. Go to the lieutenant's house."

Through the fog which covered the town with dimness and the rotting odors of the mud of the harbor, there moved many sounds of voices, for it was the season of the fair, which had run half its course. Porto Bello was a hushed and dying little village at other times of the year, but during the six weeks of the fair death battened more rapidly. Two hundred were already dead; two hundred more would die before the end of the trafficking. But commerce is more fearless than war. From the harbor came the noise of screeching ropes and Kildare saw, above the roof of the prison hut, the three masts of a great galleon which had just drifted into harbor. The fore topsail was being lowered, at this moment, into immense, pot-bellied folds. Little dark figures ran out along the yard. And beyond the mist, eastward, lay the free blue sea where every Englishman was a king!

A servant was ready to open the door of the little log house of Lieutenant José Urquija, who commanded in the prison, and whose face, half hardened by cruelty and half loosened by drink, was so dreaded in the long prison hut; but Kildare entered with a tread as light as that of a barefoot boy coming home. His chains jingled a musical quick-time, as he halted in front of the table which put a certain official dignity between Lieutenant Urquija and the luckless people whom he interviewed.
A man and a girl sat with Urquija at this table. As for the man, he looked like an Inquisitor, for it was not a smile that made the hollow in his cheeks, and his moustaches were drawn out in a line as straight as that of his compressed lips. His eye seemed as fierce as his body was weary. He wore a plain blue coat buttoned up to the neck, but the long and careful curls of black hair showed that he was a man of place or of money. Kildare noted him as one notes a storm cloud in a sky that is not quite overcast. The sun that looked through the dark was the girl. She kept her eyes, at first, upon the table, so that Kildare could see only half of her, as it were. But being a connoisseur, in that half he delighted. Even Kildare could not venture to stare at her, but by glances he took her image into his mind.

“Well, Señor Larreta,” said the lieutenant. “This is the man you want to see.”

Larreta stretched out a forefinger on which a jewel trembled and shone.

“He is the man I want to see,” he exclaimed. “I know him! I know him!”

There was enough savagery in his voice to take all the attention of most men, but Kildare was able to notice that at this moment the girl looked up, and the blue of her eyes was as cold as interstellar space. He was no more than an ape on a chain, to her. It was better to look away from her to the Indian woman who stood behind, her copper face hammered all awry and the dents left by the ham-
mer showing as purple pock marks. With both hands she wielded a large fan, moving it ceaselessly so as to cool her mistress with a gentle breeze.

"I know him now," said Larreta, "his face is not something to skip out of my memory, for when I last saw it my ship, the Madre Dolorosa, was heeling before the wind with every sail set, and a few leagues off the Infanta which I had loaded so heavily in Lisbon had already surrendered to the damned pirate. And now he came after us like a savage hound after a deer. His teeth were already in us. His ship was small but its guns were big, and every time they fired, the Madre Dolorosa quivered like wounded flesh. It seemed that half my soul had been lost in the Infanta; and the other half was about to die! They were gaining on us fast. We were twice their size, but my poor men began to run from the guns, screaming. And while I watched, in an agony, I saw in the fore-rigging of the pirate this man! They were very close; I saw his face. I saw him laugh. I saw him shouting orders. By the grace of God, at that moment one of our shots snapped her foremast in two and we ran away to safety. But as I saw him then, I see him now. He is Captain Tranquillo!"

The energy of his speech brought him half out of his chair; the lieutenant sat up so straight that his breastplate which hung on the wall at that instant could have been clapped upon him and made a perfect fit; the fan was still in the hands of the
Indian woman; but still to the girl, Kildare was no more than an ape on a chain. She turned her head a little, and against the frame of the lace ruff, Kildare saw her profile as she looked calmly at the passion of Laretta.

It was the calm of the girl, not the fury of the merchant, that made Kildare exclaim: "You lie!"

The lieutenant raised a hand and nodded; the gaoler's staff sang in the air and whacked the shoulders of Kildare.

At this the girl stood up and drew her filmy mantle about her—not for warmth, to be sure!

"The fan, Angela," she commanded. Then as the fan again began to wave, she added: "I came to see the buccaneer, Uncle Mateo, not the beating of him."

Kildare felt the blow not at all. He was too busy wondering at red hair and blue eyes in a Spaniard. Over the hair passed two bands of what seemed yellow lace, but he knew they were strips of Mexican gold-work, delicate as a spider's web. The deep blue stain of her eyes made him think of the sea when it is calm, but a thousand leagues from shore. The thin mist of the handkerchief was held by fingers perfectly relaxed.

She was unmoved, and that instant a passion went up from the heart of Kildare and formed in his throat the words of a vow for which he would spend his life.

The lieutenant was on his feet. He had caught up, in rising, his long cut-and-thrust rapier, and
now he fumbled with both hands at the counterweighted hilt of it.

“If this should be Tranquillo——” he said, “if this should be Tranquillo——”

“If this should be Tranquillo,” broke in Larreta, “you will come to notice, and it will be a glorious day for Spain. Where’s the printed description of the pirate? Read that! But where was he caught?”

“In the great storm which blew last week,” said the lieutenant, “a ship sailed by Pedro Alvarado was fleeing south, far from here off the coast of Campeche, and found a small boat dying in the wind, and only this man for a crew. They took him aboard, found that he was a damned Englishman, and properly brought him here to the prison of his Sacred Majesty.”

“What name do you claim?” asked Larreta of the prisoner.

“Ivor Kildare.”

“How did you come in the boat in the storm?”

“I was cutting logwood in Campeche when the great storm flooded us out. Three of us took the boat, and presently a great wave whirled the boat over, and righted it again. It was full of water, but my companions were gone. I bailed it out, and was sailing at large when Alvarado took me.”

“He speaks clearly, Señor Laretta,” said the lieutenant. Before the girl and Mateo Larreta were two wine glasses with their contents untasted, but the lieutenant’s glass was already empty. He now held it out behind him, and an Indian crone arose
from the floor and filled it with painful caution, to the very brim. The lieutenant drank. Some drops spilled on his chin and ran down into his beard. He caused the red liquid to disappear in the hair with a rub of his hand.

"He would not be an Englishman, if he did not lie well. Lieutenant, you have a description of Captain Tranquillo. Read it aloud!"

"I haven't the paper at hand," said the lieutenant, "but I know it by heart. So does every Spaniard of the Mexican and the Caribbean Seas. A man of six feet or less, lean and hard, a swarthy skin, black hair, and very blue eyes."

"Look before you, then! This is the very man!" said Laretta.

"A thin, black line of a moustache," went on the lieutenant, "a mouth somewhat sneering——"

"Exactly! See with your own eyes, if they are open!" exclaimed Laretta.

"——and" continued the lieutenant, "a calm demeanor and assured. Also, there is a large white scar cut between the eyes."

"A calm demeanor—and what could be calmer than the behavior of this devil?" asked Laretta.

"There is also the matter of the scar," said the lieutenant.

"Scar?" cried Laretta. "There is a matter of doubting fools and halfwits, also. As though a scar cannot be put on with a strip of plaster and taken off again!"

The lieutenant grew crimson. His face fairly
swelled with the insults which had been so open. But suddenly he seemed to recall the importance of Larreta, and mastered his anger.

"I must have greater proof," said the lieutenant. "If I could be sure, he would burn tomorrow in the plaza."

"What is your proof, English bloodlapper," demanded Larreta. "What is your proof that your story is true?"

"It lies in a gesture of sweetness," said Kildare. A smile appeared faintly on his harsh face. He removed his battered hat with a wide and graceful sweep, and a delicate fragrance passed into the air of the room.

"He means the perfume," observed the lieutenant. "It is known that the logwood cutters of Campeche are apt to wear little bags of dried musk in their hats."

"His proof that his name is Ivor Kildare is a bit of fragrance in the air," answered the merchant. "My proof that he is really Captain Tranquillo shall be a bit of blood. Send him away, señor, and I shall open my mind to you. It will be worth hearing."

"Señor Larreta," said the prisoner, "it is true that I am not Captain Tranquillo. There are some little differences between us besides the matter of the scar. One is that he is Italian, while I am English. But even if you put his name on me and burn me for it, still I have good reason to be glad that I was brought to Porto Bello!"
His hat was still in his manacled hands; he pressed it now against his breast and bowed over it toward the girl.

The lieutenant sprang to his feet.

"Beat the dog from the room!" he shouted.

Juan Capote brought his staff down whistling on the back of the prisoner, again and again, but through the shower of blows Kildare straightened himself without haste.

He looked to see some break in the calm of the girl, but still she eyed him no deeper than the rags which clung about his nakedness. The staff still labored him as he turned toward the door, but he felt nothing except his rage.
Chapter TWO:

That afternoon, when the time of siesta had ended, when the sun was red gold through the western mist, and the promise of night began to draw people into the open from their houses, Juan Capote came again to Kildare. His slender length was stretched on the ground as before, but this time his eyes were open, though there was a dream in them.

“Stand up!” said Capote, and grinned all on one side of his fat brown face.

The starved body of Kildare arose with an effortless ease, though his hands had not touched the ground.

“Here’s the last day, Captain Tranquillo,” said Juan Capote.

“Are they about to kill me?” asked Kildare.

“They are.”

“Then God receive my soul!” said Kildare, quietly. “And so much for that. It’s the stake, I suppose?”

“If you miss the stake today, by proving that you’re Captain Tranquillo, they’ll burn you tomorrow because of the proof that you’ve given today. If there were twenty pounds more of you and a
scar, you might be Tranquillo, for all that!"

"Have you seen Tranquillo?"

"I have."

"Will you tell them, Juan Capote?" asked Kildare.

"They'd ask me where I saw him, and that would be a long story. Besides, why shouldn't the gentry burn an English devil, now and then, to warm their hands?"

"Ay, and why not?" asked Kildare. "But tell me how they can make me prove that I am Tranquillo?"

Capote signalled to two half-breed assistants who now unfastened the leg-irons of the prisoner and stripped them away.

"They'll do it by baiting you like a bull. They've got three condemned men waiting for you in the cattle pen, and you'll fight all three at one time."

"All three?" murmured Kildare.

"Ay, with the weapons they wore when they were captured. There's Martino and his cutlass. He's a Negro slave that escaped and worked with a gang of mankillers in the back country till he was caught a while ago. And there's Luis, that big Mosquito Indian that I've had in here. He has his spear and his knife. Last, there's Jan Van Osten, a Dutch buccaneer that would be enough for you. Yes, with his rapier and dagger, he'd serve out two like you."

"The whole thing is nonsense," said Kildare.
“But anything that means murder is a good thing, to you Spaniards!”

“I’d beat the teeth down your throat,” said Juan Capote, cheerfully. “Except that I want you fresh and sweet and fair for the fighting—you and your little splinter of a sword against the lot of ’em. What would you pay now for a real blade worthy of a man’s hand?”

He leered at Kildare, who merely answered: “Suppose I kill the three of ’em—with my splinter of a sword? Suppose I come off the winner, what happens to me then?”

“There’s the point of the thing. There’s the beauty of the idea. It came out of the head of that rich merchant, that Larreta. No wonder he has twenty ships trading on the seas, as far as China! He made the lieutenant burn with the suggestion, and the lieutenant convinced the governor. So you fight today as Ivor Kildare, an English cutter of logwood from Campeche. If you are killed, there is one less English hound in the world, and the man who finishes you will be given his freedom. But if you should win and finish the whole trio, then mark the sweetness of your reward. Having conquered today, you will have proved that you are in fact what Larreta says: the terrible pirate and tiger of the seas, Captain Tranquillo. Therefore, for your victory today, you will be burned to-morrow with proper torments beforehand. You see that the thing is perfect. Either way you die.
By the steel as Kildare, by the fire as Tranquillo. Do you admire the great mind of Larreta? Tell me freely what is in your mind? Could anyone else have thought of so perfect a scheme?"

With a grin, with a gaping hunger, he looked into the face of Kildare to find terror, and finding none, he pursed his lips as though he were about to spit, and ushered his prisoner out of the dark hut into the open.

His shackled hands were fastened to the arm of one of the prison guards, and in this fashion they went through the sandy, rutted streets to the big corral in which cattle were kept before being butchered to supply the town and the larders of outgoing fleets. The beef had been shunted out of it, on this occasion, and the whole population of Porto Bello had gathered as to a fiesta, packing in rank on rank around the high fence. Kildare, taken suddenly through a gate which was closed after him, found the interior of the fence lined with soldiers, and while he could see little of the ordinary people who were packed close against the palisade, all the notables of Porto Bello were in view. Planks raised on hurdles accommodated them with a low platform than ran all across one end of the corral. Beyond them, he saw the flat, leaden waters of the harbor, and the forts which guarded the mouth of the bay. The town was one of the strongest places in the possession of the king of Spain.

A squad of soldiers now came straight towards
him. He paid no attention to them, but muttered to his gaoler: “Juan Capote, I see her again—the same lady who called Larreta her uncle, today. Who is she?”

“Why, telling that costs nothing, and I’m one to be kind to dying men,” said Juan Capote. “That is the noble lady Ines Heredia, with plenty of blue Castilian blood, and not a penny to her name. She’s the ward, but no relation, of that Larreta who made this show for you—and the rest of Porto Bello.”

He laughed a little, as he came to the end of this speech. The squad of soldiers came up at the same time, and surrounded Kildare. Their officer was a square chunk of a man with the face and the eye of a fighter. He put his hands on his hips while he looked Kildare over.

“If you are Tranquillo, a sparrow is an eagle,” said he. “But I do the work assigned to me. You know why you are here?”

“I do,” said Kildare.

“Good,” nodded the officer. “There are the three.”

They stood at the farther end of the enclosure, the huge bronze body of Luis dominating the group. He was naked except for a loin cloth; but he was clad in dignity, besides, and he held in his hand a spear with an eight foot haft which nevertheless did not rise so very much above his head. The Negro wore only a pair of soiled white trousers with a sash about the hips, and carried a huge
cutlass which he was brandishing eagerly now. The sun gleamed on his sweating shoulders and made the blade of the sword a swinging flame. He was not a giant like Luis, but he was a powerful fellow, and so was the Dutch pirate who stood a little apart from his companions, twirling his long moustaches to points and leaning on a great rapier.

"Three workmen, eh?" said the Spanish officer. "If you beat them, you are in fact Tranquillo, and we will burn you on another day."

"Thank you," said Kildare. "I have heard of Spanish courtesy, and now I am to taste it. If I win, I am Tranquillo. If I lose, I am myself. I understand."

"Very well, then. The light will grow bad in a short while. It is time to begin. But tell me—is this really your weapon, or only a child's toy?"

He took from one of the soldiers a scabbard strangely short and light. Kildare held out his wrists to let the irons be unlocked.

"That is mine," he admitted.

The key turned in the hand-irons; they fell with an abrupt crash into the dust. Then Kildare took the hilt of the sword and whipped out the blade. It was a mere needle, compared with most of the heavy rapiers that were used in that day; it was a mere line of light.

"If you fight with that," said the officer, "you are a madman this minute and will be a dead man the next. Do you hear me, Tranquillo, or whatever devil you are? If you were an angel from heaven,
those three would cut you to bits and eat what they carved, no matter how you were armed. But the odds against you are big and if I intercede with the governor, who has a noble heart, he will let you have a better sword, with some weight and reach to it."

Kildare flexed his body, straightened, and then made the slender thread of bright steel tremble in his grasp.

"My friend," he said, "you are so kind, for a Spaniard, that if you were in my hands I would give you any gift, even a painless death! Let me tell you a little story of an evening when I was cornered in a dark lane by some fellows who wanted the blood in my heart, and as I swung my long rapier it struck a stone wall and splintered lengthwise, so that I kept only the hilt and a long splinter of steel. Yet a very little later I left that alley, and was in no haste. The others were not running to find me! They had other things to think about. After that, I gave up heavy blades. This one is light, as you see, but so is thought, so is death."

"It is on your own head," said the Spaniard. "We have wasted too much time. Go to the center. The three will find you there soon enough!"

He stood aside. The soldiers moved sternly forward, but Kildare walked uncompelled, his head high, and what seemed a flicker of the sunlight in his hand. His three enemies came straight at him.

A roar of excitement from the crowd made the air tremble, but that shouting died away when it
was seen that the Dutch pirate was waving his arms and shouting for silence.

Then he could be heard crying, in very bad Spanish: "Excellency the Governor, give me a cheap gift. It is proper that a white man should die by a white man's hand, and not that filthy Negroes and Indians should have a share in the thing. Furthermore, I, Jan Van Osten, swear in the name of the devil and all brave hearts to lay this fool dead at the feet of His Excellency!"

Another shout rushed up through the misty air of Porto Bello. That in turn was cut short at the lips of the many when they saw Kildare take off his battered hat and wave it to the four quarters of the compass.

When he had secured silence, he turned his back upon the advancing trio as if they had been shadows, not armed men, and lifting his hat in one hand, his glimmering sword in the other, he faced the raised platform of the notables of Porto Bello. He was near enough to see their faces, though not clearly, and it seemed to Kildare that the lady Ines Heredia leaned forward a little as though to hear him the better.

He called: "In the name of God and all free men, I, Ivor Kildare, offer a gift and a cheap gift, which is the blood that I lay at the feet of the lovely lady, Ines Heredia."

Even men about to die should shun insolence. The crowd looked towards the gentry and became
silent. And from the notables there was heard a brief murmuring. Then total quiet followed.

Kildare tucked his hat under his left arm, made with the sword a salute that was accurately aimed at Ines Heredia. Then he saw that she was not even regarding him, but looking towards the harbor's mouth where the sail of a fishing boat shone like a metal shield.

That was why he turned suddenly, pinched by fury, and not because the three were advancing so close to him with their weapons, one of them free from death if he could take the life of Kildare.

Martino the Negro went a little ahead of the others. He was singing a love song as he flourished his cutlass. The Dutchman was close by him, and the long-striding Indian followed a step or two in the rear.

A wordless cry came out of the throat of Kildare, and he rushed straight at them.
Chapter THREE:

THE NEGRO, at that sudden attack, bounded like a great black cat to the side. Jan Van Osten made a gesture with both elbows, as though to assure himself of room.

"Keep away, Luis. Give me space, Martino!" shouted the Dutchman. "One stroke and I finish the battle for all of us!"

He had on heavy boots, the tops of which flared out as widely and clumsily as the fluttering ribbons of his trousers, but he ran lightly enough to meet Kildare. Luis, the Mosquito Indian, held back, but Martino had no desire to see Van Osten win the freedom that was the prize for one of them. He came rushing in on the left of Kildare with a broad sidesweep of his cutlass at the very moment that Van Osten lunged. No man on earth could have parried those simultaneous strokes. Kildare made no effort to do so, but at the exact last instant he slid underneath that double flash of steel and leaped out again. His sword blade was no longer silver but almost to its hilt ran glimmering red.

The Negro hurled his cutlass away in the same gesture with which he clasped his body round and round. He sank to his knees, then to the ground,
still clasping the life that was running from him, and kicking out with his legs.

Jan Van Osten had seen the length of his good cut-and-thrust rapier run out into the air over the Englishman’s shoulder. He had seen the Negro fall, also, and he now recovered himself and felt as though the mere wind of his thrust had sent Kildare lightly back before him. He was not prepared to see Kildare wheel and make a double gesture of hat and sword, crying: “One life for my lady!”

But Ines Heredia looked on as at a picture, with her slender fingers interlaced and dropping. A madness of voices was in the air. Behind Kildare came danger that he felt like a shadow over his mind, but still as he waited with lifted hat and sword, the girl gave no token.

He had to whirl. The sword of Van Osten was at his very eyes, blindingly bright, but as a dead leaf shifts before the hand that tries to strike it, so the breast of Kildare slid from under the point of the Dutchman’s rapier.

It was plain that there was to be no nonsense about fair play and that Van Osten was as willing to take a life from behind as from in front. He recovered himself from the lunge that might have spitted Kildare. Between the shoulder blades and stamped in a rage. Two dust clouds puffed out beneath his foot.

“You son of a black cat and a dancing master!” shouted Van Osten, and drove in with feint and
thrust and lunge. The slender blade of Kildare touched those furious efforts lightly away. Such fencing as this he knew. It was the formal art of Spain. There was also the graceful school of Italy and above all the quieter, more precise, more deadly fashion of the French. Kildare had learned a great deal from all three systems, but when he threw away nine-tenths of the weight of a rapier and much of its accepted length, he had to bring to the use of his more delicate weapon a more delicate craft. He showed it now. A ghostly hand seemed to flash before him and put aside the lunges of Van Osten. And he had time also to wonder at the Indian who, a little distance off, had grounded the butt of his spear and leaned on the haft of it like a disinterested spectator of boy’s play.

Van Osten had tried the point. Now he tried the edge with all his might. There was a red scarf tied around his head and the end that dangled behind his neck jerked and snapped with the violence of his blows. Yet he gained nothing. His heaviest strokes slithered away like falling water along the dainty rapier of Kildare. And the face of Van Osten, yellow as that of a Mongol, was patched with whiteness about the mouth.

“Am I Captain Tranquillo?” demanded Kildare. “Am I Tranquillo?”

“I’ve sailed with Tranquillo and seen the new moon on his forehead,” said the Dutchman. “I’ll sail with him again, and tell him how I slaughtered
you like beef in the cattle pen of Porto Bello. Stand and fight, if there's any man in you."

"I'll stand and fight," said Kildare. "Come in, Van Osten!"

Van Osten came, feinting at the head in a fierce thrust and then lunging full for the heart. Once more Kildare disdained a parry and matched the speed of his body against the speed of a striking hand. His shoulder slid under the point of the leaping rapier. In the face of Van Osten he flashed his own sword like a ray of light, half silver, half dripping red. Then he stepped back and stood at ease with the point of his blade resting against the thumbnail of his left hand. And Van Osten, dropping his long rapier and dagger, stood agape as though he were beholding a miracle. He dropped to his knees with one hand at his throat. He seemed striving to speak, but only a red froth bubbled on his lips. Then he dropped forward, struggling in the dust with an invisible antagonist for a moment. He was still convulsed in that agony when Kildare turned with hat in one hand and the red sword in the other, crying: "A second life for the pleasure of my lady!"

He could see the grinning, beastly joy of the soldiers. Even the governor, dignified by his grey beard and his splendid cloak, had stood up to watch. Larreta had the face of one who curses bad fortune. Only the girl was unmoved. He could guess at her expression rather than see it, but it seemed to him that Ines Heredia was looking
toward the harbor mist and smiling at her own distant thoughts. In her face he could read nothing of the moment.

Kildare ground his teeth and turned toward his last antagonist. Luis the Indian, moved by some sense of chivalry that no white man could have taught him, had held his hand during the first part of the battle. There is a golden lightning that may strike through the brain and through the heart as it struck now through Kildare when he realized that he had found such nobility in a savage. But now the giant came on like one who feels that he is the master, and Kildare knew his danger. In all the world such javelin men as the Mosquito Indians never have been seen, and in battle they were never known to go backward. The lucky captain of buccaneers who could bring one of them into his crew, knew that the man would keep the whole company in food by striking whatever fish came looming beneath them through the green waters of the coast, and in fight the Indian would not falter until the all-wise white men commanded a retreat. This fellow came on eagerly, now, with his terrible spear uplifted. Bronze in his color, like red bronze he seemed invulnerable to wounds. A wind from the hills lifted the long hair from his shoulders. He was to the slenderness of Kildare like one of those gods or kings of Egypt who on the temple walls are shown slaying whole ranks of Asiatics.

Well in spear-cast, Luis paused, exclaiming:
“White man, what is your nation?” The sound of good English was strange to the ears of Kildare. “I am English, Luis,” said he.

“I have sailed with your nation,” said Luis, “and we have been brothers together. But there is only one life between us, now. Englishman, I have a wife. I have one son to live for and one son to revenge. Be strong and be swift. A spear is longer than a sword! Are you ready?”

“Ready, Luis,” said Kildare, “I’d rather be killed by you than by the other two. But you’ll find in this sword a sting that can put the poison in your heart and the darkness in your eyes as well as spears and snakebite. Come in!”

They ran straight in on each other. The Mosquito, with a hand that could be swifter than the gleam of a darting fish, struck rapidly for the face and the body of Kildare; and as the shadowy fencer avoided the danger and leaped in, Luis sprang far away and brought the fight to spear’s length, again.

Something pulsed and stabbed in the brain of Kildare. It was the screeching of the people that seemed to be ringing inside his own mind, like a thought. He knew that death had just brushed him with its hand, and an electric tremor was working through his nerves. All his muscles twitching, like a cat that has missed its kill, he went wavering back before the spear, while the giant stepped on, offering either a thrust or the hurling of the spear. If the javelin were spent, there remained the long
knife at his belt. And always the bright flash of spearhead avoided the touch of the sword which might neutralize its striking power.

The blue eyes of Kildare began to burn. He circled. The dusky gold of the Indian’s body, now burnished with sweat, wavered against the background offered by the gentry of Porto Bello. They were so close now that Kildare could see their faces, and the glint of money in their hands as they laid wagers. The governor leaned eagerly forward from his chair; Larreta, with arms half folded, nursed his lean face with one hand; but the girl had turned indifferently, to speak with her attendant!

“Now!” cried Kildare, and seemed to be rushing straight in on the spear. But as a seagull may be hit by a sudden gust and struck off balance, so Kildare seemed to miss his footing in the deep dust, almost as treacherous as water, and staggered helplessly.

It was a trick, but a dangerous one. By the eyes and by the glinting white teeth of Luis, he saw that the Indian had taken the bait; then right at his throat came the point of steel. He managed to dodge it, barely. The flat of the lance-head kissed his shoulder; the wooden haft of it burned his skin. He caught that shaft with his left hand, and Luis, wrenching the weapon back, pulled the sword of Kildare right in at his breast.

But even as Kildare flashed in, he gave up the death that his sword was hungry for. He reversed
the blade, and the pommel struck Luis between the eyes, and leaped out to safety again, with the trembling rapier singing a small song.

But the Indian did not try to strike in turn. His face was that of one who sleeps, with open eyes. His hand, gradually relaxing, let the spear fall to the dust. Yet he did not crumble, but rather fell as a tree falls, his arms swinging out above his head as he pitched forward on his face.

And the crowd roared like a wind!

Kildare looked round on them with a savage contempt. Then he dropped to one knee, gripped the long hair of Luis, and raised the rapier like a dagger to strike into the senseless back. He looked to the ladies and the gentlemen of Porto Bello. They were a mass of gesticulation. Those who had lost wagers were cursing their luck one instant, and the next shouting to the victor to kill; the winners, with laughter, held out their hands to take the gold. Yet all their hungry eyes were waiting for the final stroke. Only the girl sat apart from the rest.

She was not human. She was stone. This glorious red-bronze giant under the knife was no more to her than a phantasy through which she looked carelessly.

Kildare, in a red rage, reached out his will and set it upon her like hands.

He shouted: “To color her cheeks and redden her lips, a third life for my lady!”

They hushed their yelling, all of them; they
risked a side glance toward her though by so doing they might miss the death. Kildare jerked his hand higher as though to deliver the blow, and that gesture seemed to draw her from her chair. She flung up her hands. They were stretched and rigid with protest, and Kildare saw the handkerchief, like a bit of translucent mist, fall from one of them. He could feel all those who waited in silence. Her voice came. He smiled. It was like the cry of any common woman who screams out in dread and in horror.

"Señor Kildare! Señor Kildare! In the name of God, be merciful!"

He stood up from the prostrate body. In his exultation, with his head thrown back, his sword seemed to salute some God of battle in the sky. Then he bowed to the lady until the point of the blade dipped into the dust.

Ines Heredia had covered her face. Larreta supported her. And Kildare would have paid rivers of gold to know whether or not she was weeping. He began to laugh through his teeth, softly. He was still laughing when the hard-faced officer and the soldiers came upon him. The manacles were clamped hastily upon his wrists. There was a tenseness upon these men, an anxiety until they made sure that his hands were helpless and his sword gone.

Beside him and behind him the soldiers formed. The officer walked ahead carrying the sword of Kildare in its scabbard and his own naked weapon,
as though he expected that he might have to clear a way through the crowd. So it seemed, too, when they came through the side gate of the corral. For the people came in waves, crying: “Captain Tranquil! Captain Tranquillo!” Some appeared merely curious to see his face at close hand. Others shook fists or weapons at him. A tall, gaunt half-breed woman followed all the way to the prison hut, screeching: “Burn him! Burn him! He killed the men and the women at Nombre de Dios! He tortured them. He murdered the babies.”

Others began to roar: “To the stake! To the stake!” but all of these were rabble and they dared not brush shoulders with the armed men of the guard.

So Kildare stood at last inside the long hut with the familiar stench in his nostrils and the familiar groanings in his ears. And Juan Capote said: “You fought for a famous name today, señor. Tomorrow you will burn for it!”

Juan Capote began to laugh loudly, but through the laughter Kildare heard the voice of a girl sobbing. She was new to misery, for there was still music in her throat; and as he listened to her, Kildare saw in his mind another face.
THE LEG-IRONS had not been fixed on Kildare before a messenger came panting, with word that the governor wished to see Captain Tranquillo at once, so Juan Capote led him out again. The sunset and the quick twilight already had passed. It was night, and the stars shone faintly down through the vapors of Porto Bello.

“Perhaps they will not wait,” said Juan Capote. “They may be of my mind, and I always prefer a burning in the dark. One can see the flames more clearly at their work. And there’s more meaning to screams that one hears at night, eh?”

“I could enjoy it,” said Kildare, “if all of Porto Bello were shrieking in one voice, while we stabbed the fat merchants and hanged up the women by their hair till they confessed where the household treasures were hidden. I could relish the chorus, but I would listen carefully through it to find the voice of Juan Capote, squealing.”

Juan Capote began to laugh at this delightful and absurd picture. And now they came past the old hospital where the sick from the ships were tended. Through an open window they heard a delirious patient expostulating, screeching, sing-
ing, laughing. Then they went by the cold and silent face of a church, and the top of it was almost lost in the foul mist of Porto Bello. They came to the houses of merchants built of cedar wood or stone, and at last reached the mansion of the governor. Soldiers took charge of Kildare at the entrance. They led him straight into the great hall of the house, where a dozen men sat with the governor around the ends and one side of a table.

There was plenty of light for this group, but the room was so large that Kildare was only dimly conscious of the big hand-wrought beams that crossed the ceiling, and of a balcony that was corbelled out from the end wall. A brocade of crimson and gold hung over the balcony railing and behind the drape he made out the faces of women. With the other grandees at the table sat Larreta; was not his ward, therefore, among the chosen few who were permitted to make an audience in that balcony? Kildare began to smile.

His smile even continued when his escort jerked him to a halt facing the governor; and those stern councillors regarded the prisoner with stony faces. For a moment there was no stir among the images that floated in the polished surface of the table as if in tarnished water. The governor spoke first, in a voice as imposing as his appearance.

“Captain Tranquillo,” he said, “you have earned your name, today, and you have earned the stake for tomorrow. However, it is possible that fortune may still find a way to favor you. You
may be given slavery, instead of death if your answers to our questions are frank, open, and direct. I begin by asking if you were ever in San Lorenzo?"

"Your excellency," said Kildare, "has it been proved today that I am Captain Tranquillo?"

"It is proved to our satisfaction," said the governor.

"Then the world knows," said Kildare, "that Tranquillo stormed and sacked and burned San Lorenzo."

Every man at the table stirred suddenly in his chair. One of the officers stood up.

"Sit down, señor!" commanded the governor.

"Under your leave, your excellency!" muttered the soldier. "I cannot stay quietly in my chair when I see the face of this pirate and murdering dog, Tranquillo. By the saints, he smiles at us!"

"Sit down, nevertheless," said the governor. "Perhaps there is a time to come when he will smile no longer." He went on, as the man of war dropped sullenly back into his place: "Tell us, briefly, Captain Tranquillo, what happened in San Lorenzo."

"Certainly," said Kildare. "The buccaneers had landed ten miles below the town and hacked their way through the forest till they came out behind San Lorenzo. They saw the three forts on the hills. It was agreed to attack the middle fort first. The signal was the rising of the moon. So when that
moon rose, red with Spanish murders and dim with Spanish lies—"

"Do you hear?" cried Larreta.

"Be still, Señor Larreta," commanded his excellency. "You may speak later in your turn, if you please."

Larreta groaned. With both hands he strangled a ghost of thin air, and sinking his head low on his chest, he looked up fiercely toward the narrator. Kildare glanced toward the balcony.

"When that moon rose," he went on, speaking toward the balcony instead of toward the governor, "the buccaneers rushed the middle fort. An Indian saw them. Only an Indian, for every Spanish eye was fat with sleep. Three times the buccaneers were clubbed and shot from the walls and three times Captain Tranquillo rallied them. The fourth time he gained the top of the wall, cleared a space with his sword, and instantly his buccaneers were swarming up beside him. The Indians and a few Negroes fought to the last, but the Spaniards fell on their faces and screamed for mercy. They were knocked on the head as they lay!"

The smiling of Kildare turned into laughter. He looked into every eye of those who sat at the table and tasted the hate and the fear in their eyes.

One merchant with apple-red cheeks and a skin almost too brown to be European, cried out that the last statement was a lie, and that he knew of a gallant gentleman—here the governor stopped the
interruption and Kildare went on: “So the guns of
the middle fort were turned on the outer forts,
while Tranquillo went to one fort and then to
another, and drove the garrisons screeching down
the hill to the town.”

“Speak in the first person if you are telling your
own story,” directed the governor, annoyed.

“You know that I am Tranquillo,” said Kildare,
“but God forbid that I should speak of what his
hand accomplished that night as though I had
done it. For he was a glorious hero, and even men
could hardly have stood against him, to say noth-
ing of Spaniards!”

He heard a shrill, musical murmuring, and
turned his smile toward the balcony of the hall.

“Now when the defenders of the forts were
driven into the town, the buccaneers came down
on San Lorenzo like a flood. On the front of the
wave they carried like froth all who tried to resist.
Here and there a house stood out, but they were
soon kicked to pieces. The screeching of the men
soon ended, and the yelling of the women began.”

His eyelids closed. As he laughed, the pupils
were mere glinting bits of lapis lazuli. Some of
those men before him were grey-green. Some were
red. All were shining with sweat as they listened,
except the governor, who said calmly: “You
knocked the men on the head?”

“The Spaniards were knocked on the head, as
soon as the Indians and the Negro slaves had
stopped fighting,” said Kildare.
“And the women?” asked the governor.

“Some were put to one use and some to another,” said Kildare, “but the ugly wenches were made to talk.”

“And how was that managed?” asked the governor.

“Why,” said Kildare, “we are speaking of Captain Tranquillo, and you know his methods. Why else should you all be sweating? Why else should the ladies, yonder, be squeaking like mice underfoot?”

Someone groaned out a mighty oath that had the name of St. James in it, but Kildare went on lightly: “Much treasure had been flung into wells and cisterns, much had been tucked into odd corners, and why should noble buccaneers waste their manly time in such searching? The limbs of the prisoners were stretched with cords while their bodies were beaten gently to death. Some were tied up by the neck with weights attached to their feet. Some were tied up by the hair and toasted with burning palm leaves. Some were tied to four stakes by their thumbs and great toes, which was a very pleasant invention, and on some weights were laid which slowly stopped their breathing.”

“And they talked, Captain Tranquillo?” said the governor, while a shrill murmuring broke out from the women.

“They spoke volumes of words,” said Kildare, “which produced volumes of treasure, silver, in coins and in bars, gold, jewels, rich cloth, spices,
silks from China, all heaped in a room of the governor’s palace—a room very like this one, your excellency!”

“And then?” said the governor, stroking his beard.

“Then a storm smashed the fleet in that cursed harbor. A great army was coming overland from Panama, and the brave buccaneers were forced to carry their loot away. Many entered the forest. Few came out of it.”

“And the treasure?”

“All except a few keepsakes were buried among the hills, of course.”

“Therefore,” said the governor, “if you lead us to the places where that treasure was buried, because we know that it was very great, we will spare your wretched life, Captain Tranquillo, and give you over to imprisonment.”

Kildare sneered into the waiting, eager faces.

“I’d rather feed human flesh to dogs than such riches to the Spaniards,” said he.

“Your excellency,” said Larreta, “nothing will shake him, except fire, and fire burns as well by night as by day, and in a house as well as in the damp open air!”

“No,” said the governor. “You have heard some of his torments described. Perhaps we can think of still others. All that cruelty can do to him shall be done. Soldiers, take him away, and give him again to his keepers! Tomorrow is time enough. And the people must not be cheated!”
“My lady Ines, adieu!” called the clear voice of Kildare.

Then the guards dragged him swiftly from the hall, and Capote brought him again to the jail, where the same greasy leg-irons fastened him once more to the wall. A rag burned in a bowl of fat. The smell of the soot was stronger than the waves of light that came from it.

“Here comes the food,” said Juan Capote. “Eat well and sleep well, poor devil. Tomorrow you’ll need your strength. Besides, the crowd wants a lot of you, and not a quick death. You’ll see that we Spaniards have brains!”

He went out as the meal of the day was served. It was ladled from a bucket; a double handful of maize, stewed with rancid grease. But Kildare ate every morsel of his share, and licked his hands clean. Then came the water, borne in the same unwashed pail. Kildare, like the rest, bowed his head and sucked up as many mouthfuls as he could before the bucket was swung from him to the next prisoner on that side of the shed. Then he lay back, almost prepared to sleep but with his shoulders pillowed for a moment against the wall of the hut. So he passed into deep thought which the snarling of the others could not disturb. They fell asleep one by one, some groaning, some snoring, but the blue eyes of Kildare were still awake when Juan Capote kneeled softly beside him and whispered: “There is more luck in you than there is hair on the devil; you are a free man!”
Chapter *FIVE*:

Delicately Juan Capote worked the key in the locks and laid the leg-irons and the wrist-irons soundlessly on the ground.

“Now up,” he murmured, “and follow me. Be a shadow. Make no sound. No one must know!”

Kildare arose, and down the double line of dusky, sleeping bodies, he marked the glistening bronze of the Mosquito Indian. So he took Juan Capote by the arm and whispered at his ear: “Set Luis free, also, Juan Capote. Whatever price you’ve been paid for me, you can afford to throw him in, also.”

“What do you want him for?” demanded Capote, staring. “To cut his throat at your own pleasure after he’s free? Come on with me! Hush! If a sound is heard the guard will know——”

“Set Luis free,” said Kildare, “or I’ll shout. Then if I burn for a buccaneer, you’ll hang for a traitor!”

Capote wavered for an instant between fear and disbelief. Then he made at Kildare a gesture and a face of rage, but glided off to the Indian. Kildare, at the door of the hut, waited until the two forms came towards him. They passed with him into the
open, where Luis lifted his free hands to the sky. There they waited until Capote brought them each a cloak, to Kildare a feathered hat, as well. The sword belt and the sword of Kildare followed, and the spear and the knife of the Mosquito Indian.

"Now, as God loves you, go quickly!" said Juan Capote. "The watch will turn that corner at any moment. Besides, in a few minutes I must enter the prison and find you gone, and raise the alarm. The bloodhounds will be after you, then! Use your legs; put a distance between you; and bless Juan Capote all the days of your life!"

"I have to know two things before I go," said Kildare. "The first is: who bribed you to do this, and how much was the bribe?"

"I have sworn to tell nothing. No one bribed me. I pitied you, Kildare, and you have forced me to let the Indian go, also."

"As for your oath," said Kildare, "it is only the breath of the fat pig, Juan Capote, soon given and soon drawn again. I'll have the name, man! Out with it!"

"This is your gratitude, you English dog!" snarled Juan Capote, and he whimpered with the might of his suppressed passion. "Her name is Ines Heredia. Who else would pity your life, except a blessed angel? She gave me a hundred pieces of eight; which is small enough pay considering the danger I am in. The governor will strangle. Larreta will die in a fit, when they know you are gone!"

"One thing more," said Kildare. "When the day
comes for me to return to Porto Bello and purify it with fire, Capote, I would like to know the house of that Larreta. I owe him more than even fire could repay."

"I've told you enough," said Capote. "Hurry. I hear the watch coming now. Sacred Virgin guard and protect Juan Capote——"

"Tell me the way!" insisted Kildare. "Or we'll deal with the watch together, the three of us!"

"Damnation eat you in small morsels!" groaned Capote. "The house is beyond the church which we passed today. It is next to the church. Quickly! Quickly! Or we are all lost!"

"The good angel of bullies, cut-throats, and cowards watch over you, Juan Capote. Farewell," said Kildare, and instantly glided around the corner of the building, with the enormous bulk of Luis beside him. Kildare broke away at full speed; the Indian followed. The effort was so small to him that he could speak without panting, smoothly: "It is the wrong way. The harbor is the opposite way, and we must take to the water or the dogs will find us."

Kildare said nothing. He needed his wind for running and held straight on until he came to the strong palisade of the cattle market. Over that fence he vaulted and paused with his feet in the deep dust, breathing hard. The Indian stood beside him. One gesture had wrapped him in his mantle and turned him into a draped statue.
"The bloodhounds will have wise noses if they can follow our tracks across this trampled ground," said Kildare. "And now, Luis, you are right. The safest way is toward the water. That is the road for you. For my part, I have something else to do."

"I stay with you," said Luis.

"You can find some small canoa and slip out the harbor's mouth," said Kildare. "Or you can work your way up the coast through the forest until you come to your own country."

"I stay with you," said Luis.

"You have a wife waiting for you; you have a son who is waiting!" exclaimed Kildare.

"They may wait in peace," answered the Indian. "I should have died today with your sword in my heart. Instead, there is only a mark between my eyes to tell me that I have found my father. He took me from the Spaniards. He gave me my free hands again."

"Give me your hand," said Kildare.

The terrible grasp of Luis instantly crushed his fingers.

"My blood is your blood," said the Indian.

"My blood is your blood," said Kildare. "Follow me!" And he fled across the great corral where they had fought that day. He knew where the Negro had fallen and where Van Osten had lain. On the naked scantlings which had made the gallery, he could conceive again the crowd that
had looked on, laughing, wagering gold. And she also had sat there, she to whom his life was worth a hundred pieces of eight!

One could buy a very good slave, for that price—a woman able to embroider, to dress a mistress, to use a fan, and to hold her tongue.

They scaled the palisade on the farther side of the field. Kildare no longer ran, for other forms moved in the street. He went on at a rapid walk, and the Indian followed him one pace behind, with the lance in his hand like a staff.

They passed the hospital and saw a light glide across a window on some errand of mercy. The church loomed on their right, then the broad front of a house built all of stone. They rounded it. An unbroken wall faced them on every side, and as they reached the back of it, Kildare paused.

"Can it be climbed, Luis?" he asked.

The Indian dropped his cloak and his spear and swarmed up to the top. He made only a soft scratching sound as he found purchases for fingers and toes. Into his reaching hands, Kildare tossed the cloaks and the spear and his unbuckled sword. Then he grasped the butt of the spear that was lowered to him, and so came easily to the top.

It was a narrow terraced roof that enclosed a patio on three sides; on the fourth the main body of the house rose an extra story. Of the windows, only two were lighted, and Kildare considered them while he fastened into the crown of his hat the small sack of musk which he had taken with
him. Then, donning his cloak, he wrapped his sword in a fold of it and went to examine the lighted casement to his left. His head was well above the ledge of it, and he found himself looking straight into the eyes of Larreta!

That was all he saw, at first—the mouth pressed into a line, the inquisitorial eyes squinting as though they had just found Kildare at hand. But the gaze was fixed and did not shift with Kildare, so that he knew Larreta was beholding only some conception of the mind. He was at a writing desk well piled with papers. A bed, built like an ugly house, filled half the little room. All was dark and comfortless except a niche for a saint that was set with bright-colored tiles brought from Spain. The thought of Larreta seemed too grim to be put down easily in words; his pen remained suspended during the long moment while Kildare watched.

That eavesdropper moved to the next casement and found what he searched for. The lady Ines Heredia lay in a great chair among cushions. She was wrapped in thin Chinese silk, blue, and worked with a thread of gold. Her hand was as white as the throat on which it pressed. Her eyes were closed. Above her the dark hands of Angela moved the fan, and Kildare remembered that the night was warm.

Her eyes would not open, but her lips moved.

“What would you do, Angela?”

“Fate is the name for God and a stern father. It must be met,” said Angela.
"He is not my father," said the girl.
"He has the rights of one," answered Angela.
"But he hasn't a father's heart. I am merchandise, Angela. Today, salt water spoiled some of the cargo. I have damaged myself in his eyes and in the eyes of some of Porto Bello."

"When you speak to heaven, consider the welfare of your own soul," said Angela, who seemed an endless pattern of quotations. "Why did you talk to the governor and beg for the life of a pirate?"

"Perhaps I was a fool," said the girl. "Well, go to Señor Larreta and tell him that I am able to see him now."

"That is good!" said Angela, putting aside the fan. She hurried to the door and paused there to add: "Remember that words are like wind and rain. If you bow to them, they can do you no harm."

Then she vanished.

"Wait here!" whispered Kildare to the Indian, and was instantly through the casement.
HE WAS TAKING off his hat with a sweeping gesture that sent the fragrance of musk lightly through the room, when she opened her eyes. He expected swift action—a leaping up and an outcry—which might make an end of him. Instead, she sat up among the cushions. The trouble disappeared from her face and left it a cold stone of indifference.

"I have come to thank you," said Kildare.

"Thank my mother’s blood, not me," she answered. And he was vaguely aware of a picture against the wall, showing a golden-haired woman whose body was crushed in a green satin bodice as though in armor. Her cheeks seemed to be puffed and flushed by the pressure. "Senor Larreta is coming this instant, and he would have you murdered as cheerfully as you murdered the poor people of San Lorenzo. Will you go?"

"I came only to thank you," said Kildare, "but now I see that there are a few other things I must speak about."

"Bravos and bravado never amuse me," she told him. "will you go? If he finds you here, he will have you killed, and he’ll fling me into the street."

"To please you, I would do anything," said Kil-
dare, "but there is that English mother of yours, and I must stay here to find out how much of your heart is English, too. I hear Larreta coming. A thousand times forgive me while I withdraw to your bed."

He was inside it at once, and swept the curtains about him. They were still trembling and whispering when the door opened on Larreta. Through a slender gap between the bed curtains, Kildare saw the Spaniard enter with the step of one who is determined to advance to a goal; and though he attempted an expression of courtesy, it merely gave him the look of a sick man struggling against pain. Angela was behind him; he slammed the door in her face, and the echo went rolling through the house.

"I am sorry to break in on you, Ines," said he.

She pointed to a chair by the window. "Sit down, Uncle Mateo," she said, "I know how polite you are, but sit down and make yourself comfortable. I know how careful and gentle you are in your speech, but now please be frank and say everything that is in your mind."

He seemed about to take the chair, but checked himself suddenly.

"If I said everything at once," he replied, "my throat would burn!"

"Then breathe between the words, and cool yourself," suggested Ines Heredia. "I yearn to hear you!"
“Hatred is a foul thing!” exclaimed Larreta, “and to hate a benefactor is the foulest of all!”

“You should be grateful for it, Uncle Mateo,” said the girl. “It adds charm to me. What is a woman without the color of emotion in her? So by hating you, I raise my price.”

“Two years of watching and warding over you!” exclaimed Larreta. “Two years of patient care. Two years of faithful devotion to the promise I made to your father. And now I begin to reap my harvest!”

“The soul of my father, poor, kind gentleman! —will thank you one day, Uncle Mateo, for bringing me to the pure, sweet air of Porto Bello and offering me for sale among the merchants of the town.”

“I see your method, Ines. You know what you have done, today, and you try to shield yourself by attacking me. You have made yourself a byword and a talking point in the streets! A pirate, a murderer, and a devil has addressed you in front of the crowd, has spoken your name, has leered at you, and by my soul, you have answered him! Oh, Ines,” he went on, suddenly turning his voice from rage to something like sorrow, “when I saw you standing in front of the governor, and when I heard you appealing for the life of the villain, I thought it was madness or magic working in you!”

“No, no!” said she. “My head is a great deal too sound to be bothered by magic.”
“Your head and your heart were both turned by Tranquillo. It’s the English blood in you, that hates all Spaniards, though your poor father was one! And for Tranquillo—with the air of the room still shuddering from the list of deviltries he had named!”

“That poor, ragged starved body? That Tranquillo?” said the girl. She laughed a little, scornfully. “That wretched little jackanapes with his romantic ways which he considers a grace to him, though it sets the world smiling? He lacks the scar and he lacks the mind of a Tranquillo!”

“You saw him fight today!” exclaimed Larreta.

“Juggling, juggling!” said the girl. “A trickster’s sleight-of-hand, and three poor, dull-witted fellows.”

“You heard him speak before the governor; you saw him sneer at any death we could give him.”

“A little soul with an enormous vanity,” answered Ines Heredia. Kildare set his teeth hard and freshened his grip on the hilt of his sword. She went on: “He was so flattered to be called Captain Tranquillo that he was willing to die a thousand deaths. And as for revealing where Tranquillo buried the treasure of San Lorenzo, he knows no more about the hidden gold and silver than my cat here!”

A grey cat that Kildare had not seen before came and rubbed against the silken mantle. Larreta smiled or seemed to smile, and then lifted one finger at her.
“You are a cunning little spider, Ines,” said he, “and you can make all sorts of webs and deceptive traps with your words, but by one thing I prove that the pirate is really in your heart. You have always hated the odor of musk, until Tranquillo bowed and grimaced and made a fool of you in the lieutenant’s house, and waved the perfume through the room. And now, by my blood and honor, I find the same fragrance in your own room, to recall him to you!"

“Angela is growing old and half-witted,” said the girl. “She forgot that I detest it and she was wearing some of the stench when she came to me this evening. That is why I ordered her out of the chamber. That is why I shall keep her out, tonight.”

“If you despise and loathe this pirate so much, tell me, then, why you appealed to the governor for him?”

“Because I pitied the miserable starving,” said the girl. “Because it touched my heart to see him gesturing and using his vocabulary as though he could make the world think him a gentleman. He was such an actor that people should have thrown coins to him and applauded. Instead of that, they take the silly sham seriously and determine to burn him at the stake. That is too bad! But tomorrow you’ll see that I can laugh while the flames cover him.”

“There is enough devil in you for that,” agreed Larreta. “You could make yourself laugh and be
gay while your heart is bleeding. But after this day and what you have done, you may thank God as I thank Him, that I already have contracted you for a fine marriage!”

“You have contracted me for a marriage?” she exclaimed. “Has someone met your price?”

“You speak as though you were a branded ox!” exclaimed Larreta.

“You could not make a beast suffer so!” said the girl.

“Poor fellow!” murmured Larreta. “All that he knows is the voice and the sweet face. But afterwards, what will his life become? Well, well, one must do what one can. You don’t ask his name?”

“What do names matter to me?” asked the girl. “I am bought, sealed, ready for delivery. Nothing I can do will change the future. I must only keep some little hope until the last moment. I would rather have the false hope than the true name!”

“I should let you writhe in the torment,” said Larreta, “but I am kinder than you deserve. It is Don Pedro! There, Ines—you see what a prize I found for you? Now bless God and your kind guardian!”

“Is it poor young Alvarado?” exclaimed the girl. “Is it Pedro Alvarado?”

“He can be pitied,” said Larreta, “but he cannot be saved! I have his money to bind the contract. You are as good as married this moment. No matter what he finds out about you, my girl, not even
an Alvarado can afford to throw away five thousand pieces—not in these days."

She slipped back in the chair.

"Pedro Alvarado!" she murmured. "I'd rather be sold to a man I hate, than to an honest gentleman I cannot love. Pedro Alvarado!"

"A month from today," said Larreta, "he sails in the _Hispaniola_ of thirty guns. It brings cannon and powder for the forts at Porto Bello, and it brings young Don Pedro to the arms of his love!"

He laughed, as he ended, but resumed, angrily: "What more could you ask for? When the _Hispaniola_ sails from The Havana, what better husband could it bring to you?"

"Uncle Mateo," said the girl, "you are very wise as a merchant; I cannot expect you to understand that nothing between heaven and earth is as dear to me as my own free choice. In place of my thanks, you have five thousand pieces. What merchant can complain of that exchange? But now I'm very tired. Will you let me sleep?"

"I should have brought you words like whips!" said Larreta. "Instead of that, I bring you the promise of Pedro Alvarado—and this is your return! I curse the day when your father gave me you and the wretched pastures in Castile to have in charge. May the pride in you wither your body, and the devil show in your face!"

He strode from the room, and the door crashed behind him.
Chapter SEVEN:

There was not time for Kildare to move before the door opened again and old Angela entered, wreathed in smiles, that made her more hideous than ever.

"Don Pedro!" she cried. "Young, rich, glorious Pedro Alvarado. Oh, happy, happy, happy, happy!"

She clasped her hands together and put them against her old breast.

"Angela, leave the room!" said Ines Heredia.

"Ah, my lady," babbled Angela, "why are you angry with me? You will not tell me that you could find a finer husband? You will not tell me that you are not the happiest girl in the world? He will take you from Porto Bello away to Castile. You shall have a castle in the Land of Castles."

"With one carpet, three chairs, and no pictures in the whole fifty rooms. I've seen castles," said the girl. "And every castle has three maiden aunts in it, and every one of them fuller of proverbs than you are!"

"Do you mean that you would not choose Don Pedro? But why? But why?"

"Why do horses eat grass, while birds prefer
fruit, and fish live on the river mud, for all I know? Angela, I wish to be alone."

"I'll only open the bed. How have the curtains come to be closed?" said Angela.

"I closed them to make one place dark against the mosquitoes."

"I'll just turn down the covers, then," said Angela. She actually had her hand on the curtains when her mistress called, sharply, and the old woman turned away.

"Leave the bed as it is; and go out of the room!" exclaimed the girl. "You've been bribed by my uncle to bait me and enrage me! I see how it is!"

"Bait you?" exclaimed Angela, "Ah, but listen, listen!"

She pointed upwards to gain attention, and into the silence as into a great bowl poured a distant sound, musical, mournful, and dismal.

"The bloodhounds!" said Angela. "Why should they loose them? Have more slaves broken away? Have more prisoners escaped?"

Ines Heredia had run to the window.

"Angela, go quickly and find out what has happened!" exclaimed the girl. "No, never mind. I want to be alone. Whatever has happened is no interest of mine. My head aches, and I'm sick at heart. Don't bother me again, but goodnight!"

"Poor child!" murmured Angela. "I've never seen you like this, before. But a girl is half grandmother the instant she's betrothed. Ah well, ah well, goodnight and good dreams!"
She went out, shaking her head, and Kildare appeared from inside the bed. He shrugged his shoulders to make the cloak fall in better folds around his body, smoothed the feather of the hat that was in his hand, and brushed back his long, black hair.

“Are you going to stay pruning yourself like a bird on a branch, when the hawks are over your head?” demanded the girl. “Do you hear, Captain Kildare?”

She pointed through the window.

“I thought that the dogs would be singing on the trail, before long,” said Kildare.

“Then give yourself wings out the window and over the wall!” she exclaimed. “Suppose they should find you here?”

“The dogs would not take long over me, because as you say I’m a starveling sort of a wretch, but the story would fill the mouths of the Porto Bello gossips for a few days. You’d make a sweet morsel for the old ladies. They’d roll you over their tongues till all the sweet was gone, I suppose.”

“Would that please you?”

“Would my own death please me?”

“You love danger and the hard chance,” said the girl. “You are one of those fellows who would undertake to parry bullets with your sword and run through fire before it could burn you. So you’re standing here, in the fire, waiting for the bullets.”

“Who do you think I am?” asked Kildare.
"I hope that you’re a poor harum-scarum English adventurer. The sort of a lad who was shipped because he couldn’t learn Latin, and so he went to sea. That’s my hope about you. But I fear that you’re really Tranquillo."

"I give you my word that I am English."

"Still you may be Tranquillo."

"Tranquillo or not, am I worse than that fellow Alvarado who buys a wife the way another man buys a horse?"

She kept a thoughtful way about her and seemed to put him and his words together as an entity that could be studied in an impersonal way. A judge might examine a criminal in such a way, disgust and interest going hand in hand.

Her mouth was smiling, faintly, but not her eyes. "You are romantic."

"That’s a word you’ve found in a book," suggested Kildare, savagely.

She turned to the window again.

"They’re closer, now. I’ve seen them. They’re a dozen, with a great brindled beast to lead them. They run like greyhounds and they fight like tigers."

He could hear them clearly, like mated bells pealing through the night in a chorus.

"That baying would make quite a noise, inside a room like this," said Kildare. "But I’d rather talk about you, than about dogs. When I saw you in the distance, I thought you were a glorious creature, if only the stone could be turned into flesh."
And here in this room I've heard you talk like a very human, spiteful girl. But now you've stuffed yourself out with manners and words that don't belong to you. The woman goes out of you. You're like a foolish boy."

"They are coming closer," said the girl.

The bloodhounds were so much nearer that he could distinguish the individual voices in the pack. Had they passed the cattle compound so soon?

"I hear them," said Kildare, "and I'll continue to enjoy them from this window so long as you're a vain, stiff-backed, high-headed, Spanish grandee. Bah! You have your mother's hair and eyes. There's more English in your little finger than Spanish in all the rest of your body. Confess it. Be honest!"

"Suppose that I did?" she suggested.

"Then go one honest step further and confess that I am more to you than a poor carrion crow with half its feathers molted away. I'm not a beauty, like that Don Pedro. I'm covered with the prison grime, now, and my hands have not been clean all the days of my life, but my heart has been clean, and that heart could love you. Not as you are now, with your chin up and a sneer on your pretty lips, and your eyes like blue stones; but I could love the truth of you that's inside. I could worship it, and serve it, and find you a happiness that would keep you singing the rest of your days, by God."
“Mother of heaven!” groaned Ines Heredia. “Listen!”

For the dog pack seemed to have turned a corner not very far away, and the clamoring rang out close to them.

Kildare sank into a chair and laid his sword across his lap.

“They have throats,” said he, “I suppose they have teeth to match, also.”

Suddenly the strength seemed to crumble out of her. She threw out her hands, crying in a changed voice: “What do you wish me to say?”

He stood before her.

“Strike your hand into mine like an honest soul, and say: ‘Ivor, Englishman or Spanish man, there is something in us that cries out to each other. God give us the luck of a second meeting!’ ”

The door flew open. A great yellow-faced half-breed broke into the room, crying: “Señorita Ines, the town is up and Captain Tranquillo has escaped and——”

He saw Kildare, as it were, by the light of the sword that was flashed in his face, and his knees sagged under his weight.

“Go to the window,” said Kildare.

The terrified servant obeyed, cringing along the wall, whining:

“Lady Ines, speak for me! Speak for me!”

“I’ll not hurt him,” said Kildare, “but I’ll take him where his tongue cannot do any harm with
telling what his eyes have seen tonight. Luis, take him out through the window, and muzzle him!”

Instantly the vast bronze hands of the Indian reached into the room, seized upon the half-breed, and drew him out. There was a muffled outcry, and silence. Only the yelling of the bloodhounds now seemed to be ringing under the very wall of the house.

Kildare turned to the girl. She was the color of fire. Like flame she was trembling, but she caught his hand suddenly and stammered: “Ivor, Englishman or Spanish man, there is something in us that cries out to one another. God give us the luck of a second meeting!”

Kildare put his arm half around her, so near that he could feel the shuddering of her body.

“Whether God gives it or not, I’ll find that fortune for us,” he cried.

He dropped on his knees. He kissed both her hands. He looked up once into her face. And then he was through the window and beside the Indian.

Running lights came up the street, dancing, swimming. The footfalls were so many that they made a sound like the heavy beating of rain on a roof.

The forward part of that wave reached the side of the house of Larreta, and there the cry of the pack was muffled away into snuffling, whimpering noises. Kildare heard them clearly as he dropped to the ground on the farther side of the building. The mulatto fell sprawling beside him, and then
came Luis, making small of that leap like a great yellow mountain lion. And like a mountain lion picking up a lamb, so Luis raised the Negro by the scruff of the neck.

"The way to the best canoa in the harbor—show us that!" commanded Kildare.

The mulatto made a faint yelping sound like a rabbit that cannot utter the death screech because the teeth of the hound are in its throat; then he raced through the darkness of Porto Bello, swaying with speed. High over them the alarm bells broke out with a frightful clamoring. From windows and from opening doors pale whips of light lashed the trio as they ran, Kildare and the house servant first with Luis striding easily at their heels like a grown man who pursues two scampering boys and may take them when he will.

They slopped through the mud of an alley that was black as the throat of a cannon and threw them out suddenly upon the open beach. The stench of the rotten slime on the mud banks was in their nostrils and the harbor waters were beyond. Lights gleamed in smooth shallows under the lee of the hills, but a strong landbreeze darkened all the rest of the bay, and slapped the waves against the shore in a hurrying rhythm.

There were no sails in view, only naked masts in threes or twos and the tapering, bending poles of felucca rigs. A number of these were close by, moored at the little piers which fishermen had built, and toward one of these the mulatto led the
way. It was a forty-foot canoa, with a wattled awning built aft and the long whip of the mast swinging slowly back and forth.

Kildare slashed the mooring ropes as Luis and the mulatto leaped aboard. Two frightened shadows, a man and a boy, ran out from beneath the awning, but they had not thought of resistance. The fisherman began to moan out broken prayers and vows; the son closed his teeth and sobbed behind them with a sound like that of a deserted puppy complaining far away. Yet the pair of them were instantly at work getting out the sweeps, thrusting the canoa from the pier, and loosing the sail.

"I am Captain Tranquillo. You live with me or you die with me tonight!" Kildare shouted at them, and that was enough to make them burst the tendons of their backs with their efforts, for the bloodhounds were on the beach, now, the deep notes of their baying spreading out with echoes over the bay, and behind them came the staggering lights and the shadowy bodies of the pursuers. It seemed as though all of Porto Bello were pouring out on this quest, and to urge them on the alarm bells beat from the church towers like so many hearts that race with fear.

When that crowd of manhunters at last saw the quarry on the pierhead, they loosed the bloodhounds and the great beasts came with a rush, their feet pounding, their nails scratching on the wooden planking of the pier.
Black water was already widening between the landing and the canoa's side when the pack reached the end of the pier and slid to a halt. One or two were knocked into the bay by the weight of those to the rear, but that monstrous leader who had come first cared for nothing but the scent of his quarry, which was no longer on the ground but in the air, and he leaped far and high towards the boat.

He fell on the point of Luis' spear and his death cry was choked by the salt water; the struggling body came to the surface again as Luis pulled his lance clear.

They were at the foot of the pier, now, that throng of armed men, but meanwhile the wind filled the lifeless bag of the sail, rounded it to a hard cheek, and slid the canoa swiftly away through the water. Half a dozen vain shots followed them; the roar of the angry voices diminished; and now with the useless sweeps pulled in, Kildare was blowing toward the open sea.

The danger has not ended, he knew, but this pause in the battle was doubly sweet for that reason. He looked back on the town as it dwindled and gathered behind him into a picture, the church towers rising behind the long front of the customs house, and lights still coming on in windows, everywhere, until he saw the sheen of them on the little river that split Porto Bello into two halves. And ahead, he saw Castle Gloria and Castle Jeronimo which stood on the sand-bank off the Guinea town.
Those forts mattered little to him, but the guns of the Iron Castle which stood on the western point of the harbor entrance could sweep those narrow waters.

That, however, was a peril some minutes distant; others were closer at hand. Several boats had put off in pursuit; they were leaning in the wind with their haste, but so long as the good breeze held, Kildare was willing to trust the little boat that carried him. Yet he called to the fisherman to know if she were staunch and fast.

"I, and my son and my brothers built her," said the fisherman. "We hollowed her out of a perfect cotton tree. She is not a month old, and every day she leads in the fishing fleet!" He stood up and shouted in a sudden glory of enthusiasm: "Do you feel her leap like a fish?"

Kildare, standing at the steering oar, laughed, and waved an understanding hand.

Lights were moving in the three forts. That din of the alarm bells, now softened and harmonious with distance, had carried the warning to the soldiers, of course. It had roused the sailors of the ships that lay in the harbor. Their forms were like black knots in the rigging to which they had climbed to gain a better lookout and struggle with their eyes to learn the cause of the excitement.

The canoa passed under the stern of a craft of four hundred tons, an old ship, so high aft that it towered in the sea like a house on the land. Lights burned in the afterports and brightly touched the
gilding, here and there. Then down the blackside of the merchantman the canoa slid. There was a loud hail from above.

“Drop your sail and come close in!” shouted the officer.

“What ship is that?” yelled Kildare in answer.

“The Scipion of Cadiz, thirty guns, Captain Onate master!” came the automatic answer. “What are you? What devil is loose in the town?

“We are the Esperance, canoa, of Porto Bello,” shouted Kildare, “no guns, Captain Tranquillo, master, and the devil is free to hunt you again!”

A furious shouting of orders answered him. He heard the slapping of many bare feet along the deck. But that honest wind was sliding the canoa off like an eel through the dark waters. From the bowsprit top a single musket was fired. A bow-chaser roared and sent a round shot plumping into the water far to their leeward. The boys, at that, screeched sharply with fear; but the fisherman laughed. Plainly his heart was rising to his work.

The wind was full behind them, now, and freshening every instant until a tremor ran through the liteness of the hull. They had cleared the shipping and raced towards the narrow mouth of the harbor. They were almost on it before Kildare saw the guard boat slide out from the feet of the Iron Castle. With its many oars and its frail body it ran like a centipede over the water, and then paused.

A hail came short and hollow against the wind; a single musket was fired to bring the canoa to;
and then the guard boat waited, with the oars raised, ready to shoot the narrow, lance-like craft aft or ahead, accordingly as the canoa might try to dodge. But to dodge was helpless, and Kildare knew it.

It was merely a feint when he nosed the boat up wind a little, and then shouted: “Every man down, flat on your faces!” He thrust the steering oar over and let the wind hurl them straight at the Spaniards.

Still they could not seem to understand. Half the oars were dropped. The officer, standing tall in the stern sheets, raised his naked sword for a signal. Muskets went off in a blast of flame and thunder. Sounds like the tearing of paper passed the ear of Kildare but still the canoa, gathering speed, lifting with the gale, aimed straight at the midships of the guard boat.

They understood, at last. By their screeching they showed it. But while some seized the oars, others tried to reload the guns. The long blade of the officer rose and fell as he beat the frightened crew with the flat of it. One poor fellow leaped far out into the water to escape the coming disaster; and then the sharp bow of the canoa struck.

The shock flung Kildare to his knees, stole the headway of the craft, and let her almost broach to in the trough; but as Kildare rose and straightened her on the course, he saw behind him a swirling welter in which forms struggled and men pulled down one another as they fought for life.
He had something else to think of, however; not the small craft whose sails pursued him up the bay, but the guns of the Iron Castle that now began to roar from the western height. If he had been even a ten ton craft they would have found him, surely; but to fire on the canoa was like shooting a musket at a sword blade by the light of the stars.

Twice the plunging of a heavy shot made the boat heel far over, but she righted by force of her own speed. She was finding herself every minute in the wind and now she went winging out into the freedom of the open sea and all on board breathed easier.
Chapter EIGHT:

Wind and sun had burned them for many a day before they raised the landmark of Kildare's desire. The humped back of the island sprawled on the sea like a swimming turtle, and from that similarity it had won its name of Tortuga, though it was now beginning to be called Petit Guaves, also. It turned from purple haze to the green of trees, and now a harbor opened before them with three tall ships riding at anchor, and a number of piraguas and canoas drawn in against the wharfs or careened on the beach.

"Are they Frenchmen, Dutchmen, or English, those ships?" asked Kildare, straining his eyes from a distance, while they were still black against the sun.

"Frenchmen are tall and thin," said Luis. "The English are wider and lower, and the Dutch ships are the lowest and fattest of all. Those are three French ships."

"On land or sea," said Kildare, "the French still have better looks and better manners. But all I really envy them is their wine. That is what makes France a promised land. Here's the town. Do you see? It has not changed!"
“No,” said Luis. “It is the same. The jungle is still trying to grow in the middle of the street. And see where it lifts the roof of that house!”

In fact they could see a flimsy thatched roof pushed up and askance like a hat on a boy’s head while the green of the jungle showed through the gap.

The land blanketed the wind; the fisherman and his son dropped the useless sail and the boat ran on through the glassy water. For the first time in those many days the wind was no longer in the ears of Kildare or the crashing of the water against the bows. A softness like sleep came over him, and the human voices at the wharf, where a big canoa was unloading, were sounds in a dream to him. He looked back to the fisherman, and saw a face like that of one who beholds running water in a desert. And the fisherman’s son stood on the edge of the gunwale, swaying with laughter, fearless of the sea. He had a coil of rope in his hand to throw over one of the mooring posts. Even Juan, the stolen mulatto, began to thrust out his head like an awakening rooster, and stare.

At the canoa which was already beside the wharf, the Negro stevedores paused in their work of transporting the cargo to the store. It was boucanned meat that they bore, and the mouth of Kildare watered as he recognized the rosy red which is the true color of the smoked flesh when a real buccaneer has prepared it. Their arms loaded with the meat, the Negroes turned to watch the new
craft land. Their overseer stood up, too, with his long whip hanging over his shoulder. He took the pipe from his mouth and considered the ragged vagrants who were bringing to beside the wharf.

Kildare eyed him calmly. He was big. Almost all of the meat hunters on Tortuga were large, for that matter. By his high cheekbones and hollow cheeks, he was French. And by his dress he was one of those half-wild hunters. Kildare knew beforehand the leggings of boar’s hide, worn with the hair outwards. They were necessary when stalking game through the brush of Hispaniola, but they were hardly the thing for this clear, hot weather in town. Above the leggings was a pair of knickerbockers stained dark with the blood of a wild bull, and above the knickerbockers grew a linen shirt almost as dark, for it never had been washed, and it never would be washed if the fellow were a true buccaneer.

"Halloo!" shouted Kildare. "Halloo, brother! Run up to the town and tell my friends that Captain Tranquillo is just making the port!"

The overseer took his pipe from his mouth, pointed the stem of it at Kildare as though to fix a thought in his mind, and then broke into laughter. He grew drunken with mirth. The joints of his legs were as sawdust stuffing while he reeled back and forth, yelling: "Captain Tranquillo! Captain Tranquillo!"

Then he began to run up the slope toward the
town, still staggering with mirth. He actually fell down, but continued to bawl out the name: "Captain Tranquillo!" as he disappeared up the street.

The fisherman turned his head toward Kildare a little. He said nothing. His face could not be seen, and yet in the angle of that fisherman's head there was an eloquent question. Juan was frankly agape with the same interrogation.

"The Negroes are laughing, too," said the Mosquito Indian. "That is not very good—when Negroes laugh at white men. My father, we are children, we know nothing; but it is true that the real Captain Tranquillo must have come to Tortuga many times."

"Of course he has been here," said Kildare, "but in a place like this a bad introduction is better than no introduction at all."

The boy looped the rope over a pier; the motion of the canoa was gently quenched; and all five clambered out on the wharf. Kildare said to the fisherman: "I've stolen your boat and yourself and used you for a hard voyage, and if I had a penny of money, I'd pay you in full. These people of Tortuga are a rough lot and if you're afraid of them, you can start sailing back. But if you'll wait a while, it may be that I can find money for you."

The fisherman had a face like a frog; it was chiefly mouth, and now he grinned prodigiously as he answered: "I wait for you, master!" That touch of confidence made Kildare smile in turn. He was still smiling when he started up the street with Luis
and the lance of Luis beside him, and Juan capering like a child before them.

Over their heads a cloud was trying to flee across the sky, but as fast as it blew away at the one end, it reformed again at the other above the central hills of the island. It was like a flag that snaps itself away to flying tatters and is continually rewoven from the mast head. And the driving cloud fragments sent rapid little waves of shadows over the town of Tortuga, and whipped up the blood with excitement. The street itself pointed back on the nearer hills towards some strips of cultivated land where little figures of men swayed up and down, making their hoes flash like silver in the sun. Those strips had been hardly won from the jungle which was already reclaiming some of them with the rank green of its own growth, that same green which burst to pieces with a slow explosion the deserted shacks of the town, and heaved through the very center of the street. Before and behind the village the jungle was rising and curling over in a wave of which the forward reaches were the extended arms of the palm trees with the denser masses of the forest immediately behind, clouds of foliage woven together by the climbing vines. Man had only to remove his care for a few months and that suspended wave of jungle would close over little Tortuga. For the town was composed of the most negligent shacks and houses of wattle and thatch that ever men have devised. There were some fairly stable buildings near the
wharf, where the European merchants stored away the things that were desired by those who practiced the boucan, in the woods of Hispaniola. Axes, muskets with barrels four and a half feet long and spade-shaped stocks, knives, the finest gunpowder in the world, from Normandy, bullets of an ounce or two ounces, small shot, clothes, hats very wide in the brim and high in the crown, but above all those thrifty merchants brought French brandy, and wine in big casks. So the warehouses were very tolerable buildings, but the rest of the place was hardly more stable than a Bedouin camp.

Now Tortuga roused itself to welcome Kildare. It was a laughing howling welcome. There was a rush of Negro, Indian, and half-breed slaves, in the first place. They yelled and danced around the trio. Then came a number of valets of the buccaneers, apprentices who sailed out from France to spend three years learning the art of hunting and boucanning meat, in the meantime treated worse than slaves, beaten for imaginary faults, cursed and kicked and cuffed with no redress, and at the end of the three years of service paid for their time of endurance with a shirt, a gun, and permission to join the gentle band of buccaneers. If these men were as dogs before their masters, they were as gods among the real slaves, and these gave way before them and allowed the youths to take the first rank in molesting the strangers.

They used no violence, however. There was
such a good jest in the air that they contented themselves with snapping their fingers under the nose of Kildare, and hooting always the name: “Captain Tranquillo!” until they led him into a great open-faced shed where a number of the buccaneers were sprawling at ease. There was a pipe of wine in the center of the space, with its head staved in; dripping pannikins were here and there in the hands of the men, and their unshaven faces and filthy shirts were beslobbered with the good red Bordeaux. All of these fellows got up to welcome Kildare. They shouted and whooped with their laughter, and bellowed out: “Captain Tranquillo! Captain Tranquillo!”

The point of the jest was directly in front of Kildare. It was a man seated behind a table upon which rested his wine flagon, a man with a feathered hat on his head, ribbons at his knees, and the sweep of a crimson velvet cloak coming down from his shoulders; but what mattered most was a face that might have served as a portrait of Kildare grown older and bigger, with the sign of the beast upon it. There was the same swarthy skin, the high cheekbones, the thin line of the moustache, but there was also a white scar in the middle of the brow, and the blue eyes stared at Kildare like a tiger's. Here, smiling, Kildare raised his hand above his head and snapped his fingers.

“Have you forgotten me, you fool?” he asked. “Have you forgotten to jump from your chair when you see your master?”
Chapter NINE:

All the whooping and laughter ended. Kildare heard a sound of drawn breath as though many men were tasting that moment of danger like a wine.

As for the real Captain Tranquillo, his stony blue eyes considered Kildare for a long moment, and then he held up his hand.

"My sword!" he said.

Behind him there was the black face of a Negro, one of those strong men who are created with vast shoulders and a tiny head. A ripple of muscle went up the cheeks and seemed to cover the head, also. He had his great arms folded and resting on the back of his master's chair. And at the command which he received, he turned a little, picked up the scabbard, drew out the length of blue-bright steel, and laid the naked blade before Tranquillo.

"What, Tonio? What?" said Kildare, cheerfully. "You rascal, have you been playing gentleman again? So long as you wear the scar between your eyes, will you forget the hand that put it there?"

He laughed, pleasantly.

"You dog!" said Tranquillo, and rose, lifted the sword and passed around the end of the table to-
wards Kildare. Perhaps he was a pirate, but certainly he was no less a dandy. The heels of his boots were stained red; a cloud of lace dropped over his formidable hand. "I am going to cut you," said Tranquillo, "into fish-bait! And then I'll let the dogs lick you off the ground!"

He kept his voice soft, as he said this, only at the last words the devil leaped out of his throat and his eyes, and he shot the sword point at Kildare with the long, fluid lunge of the perfect fencer. But the sword of Kildare came into his hand as swiftly as light comes into the eyes; and he parried the stroke. Tranquillo had made such a hearty effort that his head was brought very close, and Kildare slapped his cheek with the flat of his left hand.

"Manners, Tonio," said he. Remember your manners! Are you drunk?"

The shock of this sight, the echo, as it were, of the blow that they had seen, brought a yell of fierce excitement from the buccaneers, from their valets behind them, from the crowd of Indians and Negroes who kept dodging their heads here and there in the background to get a clearer glimpse of the central scene. No matter how they respected and admired Tranquillo, they respected and admired a good fight still more.

"It was always this way," said Kildare, to the onlookers. "He was always a brave lad, as you see, but now and again he has forgotten his manners——"
“Thunder of hell!” shouted Tranquillo, leaping in again.

The slender blade of Kildare met the rapier, and put it harmlessly by.

“Come, come,” said Kildare. “Have you really forgotten me? Have you forgotten the dirty hut and the empty hearth that I took you from, and taught you manners with a whip? Are you as drunk as all this?”

Then he added, to the bystanders again: “It was sunny Italy, but Tonio had a hard life of it. Drinking was always his fault, and his father’s, before him. Often their padrone had to beat them both into tears and sobriety.”

The buccaneers, as men entranced with joy, had looked from the splendor of the great Tranquillo to the rags of Kildare; now they roared with delight. Tears of pleasure stood in their eyes.

Tranquillo had drawn back a little. Now he said: “Not dogmeat. No, I’ll not cut you to dogmeat. I’ll knock that spindle out of your hand and burn you alive, little by little. I’ll roast you to a cinder, for the greatest liar outside of hell! You——”

His rage closed his throat before oaths could issue from it, and he came in for a third time. He was more cautious now, however. The shock of the first two disappointments and the torment of Kildare’s speeches had burned away the fumes of alcohol. Now he showed himself as what he was, a well-tutored and long-practiced master of his
weapon. He had shrugged off his cloak, pulled his sleeve up to the elbow of his sinewy right arm, and came in with a deadly earnestness.

Kildare met him almost casually. His eyes seemed more for the crowd than for Tranquillo. Very gradually he retreated around the narrow circle whose wall was formed by the closely packed bodies of the spectators, and as he moved back he touched away the thrusts and heavy cuts of Tranquillo’s rapier with negligent gestures.

He seemed hardly to heed the efforts of the pirate, but talked to the crowd as he made play: “I made him into a good valet, but I had to beat him every Friday. And the fool tried three times to run away and pose as a gentleman. Each time I had to draw blood from him with a whip. But at last he slipped away from me. Do you remember how you danced and howled when I beat you, Tonio?”

“Beat me?” groaned Tranquillo. “Death!”

He came in so violently that, when his lunge was put aside, he almost spitted himself on the slender ray of steel which Kildare held.

“Come!” said Kildare. “Did I not give you fencing lessons? By the Lord, unless you do better than you have been doing, I’ll prick you once or twice and take your big sword away from you. Mind your feet. Mind your feet, and step lively——”

At that very moment a buccaneer who perhaps took pity on the desperate and vain labors of Tranquillo, tripped Kildare as he was stepping back from a wild attack; and as Kildare fell sprawling,
Tranquillo rushed in with a convulsed face to nail his man to the ground.

The lance of Luis, levelled at Tranquillo's breast, checked him, and Kildare was instantly on his feet again. He marked the buccaneer with a single side-glance, and then wiped the dust from his sword by drawing the lithe blade through his fingers.

"Now then, Tonio," said he, gently, "as sure as ever you leaned on a hoe, and wiped the sweat from your forehead, and looked up to the cool blue and white of the Carrara mountains, I am now going to teach you a few little intimate secrets of the sword. Guard yourself!"

He leaped in. The light shuddered on the vainly parrying sword of Tranquillo. And as Kildare sprang back, a trickle of crimson blood appeared on the bare forearm of the pirate. Once more, his whole body in flexion as swift as the gesture of a hand, Kildare dipped in past the rapier and with a twitch of the point scratched deeply the old scar between Tranquillo's eyes.

Perhaps the blood that ran down from the wound half blinded him, but the next instant the supple blade of Kildare had wound about the heavy rapier and plucked it from the hand of Tranquillo. It whirled above the heads of the crowd and slammed against the wall. Tranquillo stood with that empty hand still before him, bending his knees back and forth as though still on guard, a totally bewildered man.
“Give him his sword, Luis,” said Kildare. “Poor Tonio has red blood in him, at least. I was afraid it had grown thin since he left me, and took to wandering.”

He dropped his sword into its sheath, as he spoke, and slapped the shoulder of Tranquillo. The latter, his eyes desperately rolling, listened to the frantic uproar of the buccaneers. They had seen a miracle, and he had felt one. But here was the man within his grasp, so he flung his long, powerful arm around the shoulders of Kildare and would have closed on him. A wasp sting touched his ribs. It was the point of a dainty knife which Kildare had conjured into his hand, unseen.

“See, lads,” said Kildare, “what a hearty embrace Tonio gives his master. An affectionate thief, this Tonio! How far he has climbed up in the world! What clothes! And who would think that his father was a nameless man until the padrone praised his patience under the whip, which the padrone said was as great as the calm of a saint, or of a donkey. So he gave the name of Tranquillo, and this lad inherited it. Yet see him now with his glorious great long sword. You only need to learn its use to be a man among men! Come, come! We drink together.”

“I’ll see you damned and choking, first!” said Tranquillo. “Choking in soot, and in the cinders of hell!”

“Ah, Tonio,” said Kildare, “you have been
away from me too long; you have forgotten your manners completely, and I have no time or strength to beat you into good behavior again. Therefore—Luis, strip him of his clothes and turn him out into the street.”

He put the point of the knife at the hollow of Tranquillo’s throat and smiled into the face of that famous man until Tranquillo closed his eyes. A sound like music came from his throat. It was the faint moaning of curses, yet he had to stand like a stone while the rapid hands of Luis stripped away all of that finery. The great Negro, Pedrillo, crouched in the corner of the shed with the look of one who sees ghosts; he winced at every touch that fell upon his master as though at the same instant a whip had lashed him.

Those buccaneers who had stood before the greatness of Tranquillo like children before a master, lost their reverence as swiftly as he lost his clothes. They filled their pannikins and stood about, drinking, commenting, pointing, laughing.

“See the scars!” they roared. “There’s where the whip cut the skin. This is a naked dog, and he has dared to call himself Tranquillo! Whip him out of the town. Whips! Whips!

A dozen lashes were instantly in the air. But Tranquillo strode through the blows with his eyes fixed straight before him, like a sleepwalker who sees nothing. He crossed the street; the green wave of the forest closed over him and over the huge
Negro who slunk behind him. The half-drunken crowd returned to find that Kildare was already wearing the garments of the pirate.

They hoisted him onto the table. They filled the flagon of Tranquillo and placed it in his hands.

"To the true captain, to the real Tranquillo!" they shouted.
Chapter TEN:

Kildare walked up and down the top of the table in his new finery. Behind him stood Luis, whose leaf-shaped spear-head burned behind Kildare like the flame of a great candle.

"Are there any here who followed me to San Lorenzo and sacked the town with me?" asked Kildare.

"I was at San Lorenzo, and I, and I!" cried several voices.

"I was at San Lorenzo, but I never saw your face at the taking of the town," shouted a louder voice.

Kildare looked down and saw the man who had tripped him during the fight.

Mange never stripped the back of a dog more bare than was the top of the head of this buccaneer. The hair that grew above his ears, he had braided in two short pigtails which, when he turned his head in talking, were always whipping over his shoulders. He ever had in his capacious mouth a twist of tobacco leaves which he was either smoking or chewing, and generally there was a broken fragment of a leaf stuck to his lip and drying on the skin. He was the color of dirty
vellum which many hands have soiled. And now he stood with a pannikin of the claret in one hand, and the other resting upon a musket whose muzzle came above his shoulder. He was drinking so eagerly that a double drip of the wine spilled down on his shirt and made the breast a great round patch, like blood from a wound.

"You, there," said Kildare. "I want your name."

"My name is for my father confessor," said the buccaneer, and laughed all on one side of his great mouth.

Kildare turned to the others.

"All my friends," said he, "this is the black-hearted son of a she-wolf and the devil who tripped me up. That time I forgave him, for one joke can be laughed at; but two bring a beating. I say: is there one man here who denies that it was I who led at the sacking of San Lorenzo? Answer me, gentlemen!"

He pointed the fragile gleam of his sword at the big fellow with the bald head. The buccaneer grunted like a pig, but he was silent, and so were the rest.

"Now, lads, hearts of fire, jolly buccaneers," said Kildare, "listen to me, because I’m worth hearing. Good luck follows me like a house-dog, and licks my heels. You saw me come out of the sea in rags, and you see me now dressed as I should be, with money to spend that I never sweated to earn. And spend it I shall, brothers. I am no swine that lays up its food in fat bacon, for
I know where more money shall be had. I shall lead you to it. I am no savage dog to keep all my good fortune to myself. You have given me good claret, here, and a table to walk on, and I'll give you a ship that's a queen of the sea. Do you hear me?"

"We hear you!" shouted many voices.

The man with the red, bald head, forgetting any reason for animosity, suddenly pulled out a machete and brandished it wildly above his head.

"Lead us!" he roared. "You can be Tranquillo today and the Devil tomorrow, for all I care. I'm tired of killing beef and I'm sick of the smell of rotting blood. I want the sea. I want a thousand leagues of good salt water to wash me clean again. Tell me your port, Tranquillo, and I'll follow you!"

"There is a ship——" cried Kildare, lifting his sword.

"A ship! A ship!" bellowed the chorus. "There is a ship for one and all of us!"

"Eight days from now it will put out from The Havana. Eight days from now. And on board of it there are woolens from Holland, and pike heads and cutlasses and rapiers from Spain, there is iron work of all sorts, there is lead in great sheets, there is Norman powder by tons and tons, and a hundred thousand pieces of eight to sweeten the rest. There are casks of Bordeaux. I tell you, the ship's awash with wine, do you hear? And there is fine brandy that goes down the throat like oil and takes you through fire and smoke to heaven, afterward."
“We’ll have that ship!” shouted one man. “We’ll have it!” echoed others.

“And why not?” cried Kildare. “Is it not kept by Spaniards and slaves, only? And are you not gentlemen of the boucan? And above all, is there not Captain Tranquillo here to lead you?”

“There is! There is! Tranquillo!” they yelled, “Tranquillo, Tranquillo!”

Suddenly a tall buccaneer, half drunk, or more than half, stepped nearer and pointed a grimy hand at Kildare.

“I once saw a starved little Englishman called Ivor Kildare,” he called. “You are the man, brother! You have lied to us. You are not Tranquillo!”

Most of the buccaneers had streamed out to shout their derision in the street.

“Am I not?” said Kildare, smiling.

“No,” said the other. “I begin to remember a great many things. I remember when I sailed with Tranquillo, and we took a little frigate loaded with pork and bound for Mexico, and I remember that out of her we took the pork and several men, and one of them was that Englishman, Ivor Kildare. You are the man!”

“Am I the man?” said Kildare, still smiling.

“You can grin if you please,” remarked the buccaneer, “but the fact is that you are the man. I remember how Tranquillo talked to you on the main deck, and asked you if you wanted to join the crew, and you said that you would rather be
dead than a pirate. I remember how he swung his fist and knocked you flat on the deck. I remember how he dragged you afterward by the hair of the head and dropped you over the side, like a senseless lump of dead beef. I remember how the boat was cut adrift, and how it went off, turning around slowly. I remember how you stood up in it, at last, with a streak of blood down your face. The wind came up and carried us along. You stood in the skiff with your arms folded, and the blood on your face. I remember it, by God, better than I can remember the taste of brandy.”

“A lie is like a time-thrust, brother,” said Kildare, laughing. “It is only good when it succeeds. But if I have put a famous name on my shoulders like a velvet cloak, let me see the man here who dares to try to strip it away? Gentlemen, am I Captain Tranquillo?”

“You are! You are!” they cried. “Tranquillo, Captain Tranquillo!”

“All of you lads,” said Kildare, “who wish to be dressed like princes of the Empire, and to drink like rich Flemish burghers, and to fill your pockets with heavy gold, call out, call out!”

They put up a universal roar.

“There are boats in the harbor,” said Kildare. “And I have enough money with me to buy them.” He took out the great, heavy money belt of Tranquillo, laden with gold, and slapped it across his hand. “I saw there a piragua and a canoa that would leap like horses at a touch of the oars, and
fly like birds if the wind so much as breathed on them. They will take us to The Havana like hawks through the soft skies. What can fail us? You have me for a leader, and we only need a surgeon to plug the leaks in our wounded, and a good carpenter to plug the leaks in our boats.”

“Stand up, Pierre Chaptal!” called voices in unison.

Up stood a buccaneer with hair of iron grey, a man as lean, as fierce, as red-eyed as an old werewolf.

“I was a doctor so long ago,” said he, “that now I don’t know a purge from a lancet.”

“You know the words,” said Kildare, “and that’s enough for us. Above your share, a hundred pieces of eight to you, Pierre Chaptal, and you shall be our surgeon.”

“Well,” said Chaptal, “God help the sick!”

“Bah, Pierre!” called a buccaneer. “You know how to chop off a smashed leg or arm and fire the stump to stop the bleeding. And what more should a surgeon know?”

“Chaptal is our surgeon,” decreed Kildare. “And to a good carpenter, fifty pieces of silver over and above his share. But he must be a master of his art. We may have a rude surgeon to patch our wounded, but we must have a good carpenter to patch our boats or it may be the death of us all. Who’s a carpenter?”

“There’s Dutch Peter, of course!” shouted several men in a chorus.
“Stand up and let me look at you, Dutch Peter!” commanded Kildare.

There stood up a fellow with a face as round and as golden red as a harvest moon.

“I’ll patch a boat or I’ll build one for you,” said Dutch Peter, “that will sail into the very teeth of the wind. I’ll be your carpenter. Hand me that pan of brandy, friend!”

“Now, then,” said Kildare, “the next thing is our mates. We’ll have no odd men in this voyage, but each of us must be one of a pair to sit on the rowing benches side by side, to eat from the same pot, to stand watch and watch together, to fight at the same gun, to go shoulder to shoulder in boarding a ship or storming a town, and never one to go back when the other goes forward! Are you all mated, my friends?”

A silence answered him, while each man turned and gave a final glance toward his selected companion. It was the one glory of the buccaneer life, the friendships that grew up among the ruffians; for a man could not live alone in the great woods of Hispaniola without going mad. If life might depend upon a good musket and a good knife, how much more it depended on a proper comrade, with a heart of steel in the time of danger!

One man stood up and looked about him. He was a big youth with a handsome face and a fine, steady pair of eyes.

“Some of you know me,” he said. “I’ve worked five years in the woods. My mate was gored by a
bull three months ago and died of it. Who’ll be a friend to me now, while I take this voyage and help to make it?”

He looked eagerly around him, but all men avoided his eyes.

“I’d as soon have the fever as his bad luck tied to me,” muttered a man near Kildare.

The young fellow waited an instant, found no answer, and straightway picking up his musket, with knife and machete at his belt and with a heavy knapsack over his shoulders, he strode out of the assemblage.

“And who is mate to the Mosquito Indian?” called one.

Here Dutch Peter cried loudly: “His harpoons and his fish-spears can be his mates. We must have him. One of those fellows can keep fifty men fat!”

There was applause for this.

Kildare went on: “We understand the rules for the wounded, which are: for the loss of a right arm, six hundred pieces of eight, or six slaves; for the left arm, five hundred pieces of eight, or five slaves; for a right leg, the same amount; for a left leg, four hundred pieces or four slaves; for an eye one hundred pieces, or one slave. For a finger, the same as for an eye.”

“Suppose it’s a man’s last eye?” asked one of the men, lifting the leather patch which covered the blank and discolored hollow that had once been an eye.

“If he only has one eye, he ought to have more
luck. And if he loses it, his luck is gone, and we
don't want unlucky men," said Pierre Chaptal,
savagely. "But the old rule is the best rule, and the
old rule is a hundred pieces for an eye or a finger;
and a crown a day for two months, if a man lies
sick of his wounds as long as that."

"Now make an end," said Kildare. "The wind is
fair for us. There's still the loading of the boats to
be done. And the quick start is the lucky start. So
we'll swear the oath. Put up your right hands and
say it after me, with your own names; I, Captain
Tranquillo, swear by my soul and my blood and
my honor to be true to my shipmates in this cruise;
I shall not fail a comrade; I shall not run from
trouble; I shall not steal or hold out loot from the
general treasure; I shall not turn back or desert
until this voyage is made."

He ended speaking. The forest of arms dropped.
And the voyage had in reality begun, though never
a sail was yet spread to the wind.
Children could not be persuaded more easily to rob an orchard when apples are ripe or the cherries blacken, than those hunters of wild beef were persuaded to take to piracy and the sea. They went with a rush to find muskets and ammunition, and to get quantities of the boucanned meat, and wine and brandy to wash it down. Eight days was the length of their voyage, and eight days of sailing made no more than a step to them.

Kildare went down to the wharf to buy or rent boats. There had been some two-score of auditors. Others of the townsmen might wish to join, but two good piraguas or canoas would serve his purpose and his crew, no doubt.

On the wharf he found Juan, Larreta’s mulatto slave, and José Mureno, the fisherman who had brought them all the way from Porto Bello.

That good sailor sat cross-legged with his back to a bale of unknown merchandise and smoked a crooked black twist of a cigar. All about him was calm and still except the wreaths of smoke that blew away from his lips and the impatient wriggling of his toes in the sun. Salt water had puckered and puffed the skin of those feet. Kildare poured
ten pieces of gold into his hand, and the fisherman looked at the sheen of the money without daring to close his fingers over it. It was almost sacrilege to touch so much wealth. It was like handling a human soul. It was a larger price than the fisherman would have set upon his own head.

“That’s yours,” said Kildare.

“You laugh at me, master,” said the fisherman.

His son came, laughing, running; but the sight of the gold struck him dumb.

“Take that money and sail home,” said Kildare, “before some of these people of Tortuga steal your canoa. When you come to Porto Bello again, split the gold into little pieces of silver. The people may ask you many questions.”

“They shall learn nothing but lies!” said the fisherman, leaping to his feet, and clutching the money with both hands against his breast. And he began to look over his shoulders, fearful of the world.

“Tell them no lies,” said Kildare.

“No,” broke in Luis. “A lie makes a troubled face. The Spaniards understand lying better than they understand truth, José Mureno.”

“Tell them no lies,” said Kildare. “Tell them that you brought me to Tortuga—but if your neighbors ask more questions that this, take some of the little pieces of silver and buy wine for them till they stop talking. Do you understand?”

José Mureno looked down at the gold and then back into the face of Kildare.
"As I would obey an angel from heaven, so I shall obey you in all things, master," said he.

"Then start back at once," said Kildare. "But first tell me, José, if you see in this harbor any piragua or canoa that looks to you as though your own hands had shaped it? Are there any you would rather sail in than your own?"

"Do you see that man with the withered face, who sits on his heels at the end of the wharf?" asked Mureno. "He owns this canoa at the right, and the piragua beside it. They would fly through the water like fish, like tarpons."

"Take this money," said Kildare, giving the money belt freely to Mureno, "and go to him, and buy the boats at once."

"If they cost you the price of a dead fish more than their worth," said Mureno, "may my right hand wither."

He went off and squatted at the side of the old man, and Kildare said to the son of José: "Do you know the Lady Ines, who lives in the house of that rich merchant, Larreta?"

The boy grinned, as all boys have grinned since the beginning of time, when they hear men speak of pretty girls.

"I know her so well, señor," said he, "that I have tried to carve her face in the wet sand when the sea is ebbing."

"When you come again to Porto Bello," said Kildare, "she will know that you have been sailing
with me. And if you should be able to speak three words to her, tell her that you fear that a great storm may turn Pedro Alvarado away from his course toward Porto Bello, but that no storm of men, no storm of winds and seas even with the devil behind them, can keep me from returning to her. Tell her that by day or night, by sea or land, I shall see her again before I die. And here is a token to keep you from forgetting.”

He took from the belt the short, keen dagger of Captain Tranquillo and put the hilt in the eager grip of the boy. “Hush!” said Kildare.

“Not a word of this even to your father. Not a word except to Ines Heredia.”

Before the boy could speak, his father had returned, grinning.

“That is a wise fisherman, but a fool about money,” said José Murenio. “Now count your money, señor, and see what those two good boats and all the tackle in them have cost you.”

“Whatever the money, it has been little enough,” said Kildare. He pointed toward the first of a rabble of buccaneers who were beginning to stream down toward the harbor from the town. First of them all was the bald-headed ruffian, burdened by a heavy pack. “Into your boat and away, José,” said Kildare. “Here are thieves coming, and you have money, now!”

“I am gone with the wind, oh, my master!” cried the happy fisherman.
He ordered his son back into the boat, saying: "Hurry, Gil! We are fat fish, now, and the fish-hawks may swoop at us at any moment!"

The canoa was unmoored; the long sweeps bore her out from the wharf until the wind took hold of her gently. And José Moreno stood high in the stern holding the steering paddle and raising his right hand in a farewell salute.

"He's a happy fellow, now," said Kildare.

"He is a good man," answered Luis, gravely. "Men who have big mouths are always kind and good!"

He had a way of making absurd generalities of that sort, contentedly, with an assured and placid brow; and Kildare always knew that he was not speaking his own mind, at such times, but the wisdom of his fathers.

Kildare gave to Juan three gold coins, saying: "Your present is freedom, Juan. Accept yourself from me. Here's a bit of money to start you, and you'll find work enough in Tortuga. If you want to travel, ships will sail from here to all parts of the world. You can be an honest man or a thief, and thieves are as much valued in Tortuga as honest men in other places. Are you contented?"

The big, yellow face of Juan convulsed with laughter. In his gratitude, he tried to throw his arms around Kildare, but Luis with a grunt of displeasure, put the heel of his javelin against Juan's breast and so saved his master from that embrace. To turn the current of Juan's joy was not
to stop it, however. He merely ran off up the street, dancing and shouting, holding up the golden coin like a bright yellow eye of fire to the sun, so at last he disappeared.

The noisy stream of the buccaneers was flowing down toward the wharves, now. Kildare took two men to the merchant’s warehouse and turned the rest of Tranquillo’s gold into leaden bullets and Norman powder, and when he returned he found that the loading of the two boats was almost finished. Counting Luis and himself, there were thirty-nine men, all told. None of the other towns-men or buccaneers offered to join; only those who had first fallen under the spell of wine and Kildare’s tongue were entering the boats, for to the others this looked like a far cry and a small crew. But the sworn men of Kildare had gone ahead with the arrangements precisely and capably. Twenty-two men were in the larger piragua; fifteen were in the canoa, when Kildare and Luis entered the smaller boat and gave the signal.

At once they pushed off and a great cry went up from those who remained on the wharf. A stillness came upon the mind of Kildare; the whole picture entered into him, never to be dimmed. Most of the towns-men began to cheer and wave; a few were singing drunken songs; but quite a number felt the pull of the parting moment and yelled out for the boats to wait—they, also, would join the expedition. They stood on the edge of the wharf with angry faces, clamoring. But beyond
the wharf on the beach with the children prancing with excitement, the Negro wenches and the pretty half-breed girls followed down the sand, holding out their arms and calling by name on their lovers. All of these had a single gesture of despair, in the end, for at different places they dropped down on their knees, shut their arms over their heads and faces, and so remained, bowing up and down in their grief.

It was the golden time of the late afternoon, when the oars were manned and the expedition started, with the piragua in the lead. That grey wolf of a Norman, Chaptal, had been chosen to handle the piragua by common assent, but with Kildare went as steersman the best sailor in the little fleet, Dutch Peter. Across a bay covered with golden oil they moved, the blades of the oars leaving swirls of purple behind.

They cleared the harbor, with Kildare already laboring at an oar as heartily as any common hand; for the fire was burning up in him. These other fellows were laboring for the fun of a battle, for the money they could make from the prize, and finally for the long brandy debauch in Tortuga or Port Royal that would follow; but to Kildare the goal was far away under the stifling mists of Porto Bello. Ines Heredia was there in the coolness of a patio with the sound of running water near her and the dark hands of Angela moving the fan; and here in the far sea were two score men rowing into the darkness and set in motion for her sake.
It pleased Kildare, the indirectness and mystery of it. Half of a moon came out of the eastern ocean, a red torch that burned silver white, presently, and gilded the wake of the canoa, and shone on the polished, vast shoulders of Luis to whose strength had been given the place of honor next to the steersman.

Hour by hour they rowed on into the night, now silent, now breaking into the short chorus of a French boat-song. Presently two men shipped their oars, worked forward, and fell asleep in the bows. After a time they came back to their places, and two more rested. There were no complaints; no man grumbled at the length of his shift; no man suggested lying on the oars for a breathing space; there seemed to be one mind among them all. At least, all knew that they had barely eight days to make The Havana, and there were two hundred and fifty leagues of weary salt water between them and that goal. It was well after midnight before a favorable wind darkened the path of the moon, struck the sail they spread, and made the oars unnecessary. They ate bread, drank wine, and fell asleep, all except Kildare and Dutch Peter.

“A good beginning is half the voyage,” said Dutch Peter.

But he was wrong. They had wind enough, most of the time, but they had rain, also; so much of it that the clothes began to rot on their bodies. When they raised Cape St. Nicholas on the east end of Cuba, such a storm struck them that they scudded
before it, working the oars desperately to keep the pointed stern of the canoa to the wind. They whipped by the mouth of Baracoa Harbor in a squall that covered them with twilight, and they could barely make out Baracoa's one lofty hill. Twelve leagues further that storm blew them with one long, screaming gust until they saw the single palm tree that stood like a sail on the flat point of Moa. There the wind left them for half a day, the sky cleared, the sun turned the sea to fire, and old sailors put grease on their lips and on the lower lids of their eyes, while they labored again at the oars.

In faint winds or none at all, the two boats kept company to the triple rock of Camoloquea. Then the storm struck them, and when Kildare's boat passed the island of Croppeda, there was no sight of the other craft. His canoa was half filled with water despite the constant bailing; the piragua might be sunk, for all he knew. But laboring straight onward with the oars presently they raised a speck before them and found the piragua once again.

They passed the point of Matanzas, where the piragua drew alongside and asked for water. Chaptal had filled the cask with rain water, of course, but the sea had entered the cask also when a great wave almost buried the little boat. They gave Chaptal water and rowed on. It was the only time in the course of that voyage that one boat spoke to the other.
From Point Matanzas they had to creep in close to the shore in order to avoid that great current which sweeps the coast and bears into the north-east, but though they lost the sea wind a great part of the time, land breezes helped them.

So they came at last to a rock on the evening of the seventh day. Beyond the rock was a low hill, running east and west, with two hummocks on top.

“Havana!” cried Luis, whose eyes were the sharpest of all. They lay on their oars, at that, and started cheering. Chaptal’s boat picked up the shout. Only Kildare was silent, but his blue eyes burned like sapphires in the sun.
Chapter TWELVE:

They would wait off the harbor’s mouth and try to pick up the ship when it sailed the next day. There were very few leagues to go; therefore all rowing ended, while a favorable breeze came off the land and pushed the two boats steadily on their way. Kildare took the helm. Luis squatted cross-legged before him. Out of the bottom of the canoa arose the snoring of the men on many keys, like the squealing of pigs, big and little, when they are hungry for food.

Happiness filled Kildare. The finery he took from Captain Tranquillo had been rolled in a tarpaulin long ago. He stood at the steering oar in a short pair of breeches, only, his wiry body as naked as a plucked crow, while the tropical sea-air flowed over his skin like water. Off on his starboard the canvas of the piragua was pale with starlight. All went well, and he had little to do with the steering oar except when a stronger wave tossed the canoa and made it jump like a horse that rises to a barrier and sails far before it strikes the smooth turf again.

The quiet voice of Luis spoke. He said: “Master, it is not gold that you are thinking of.”

“It is gold,” said Kildare. “And gold that you
have seen. Do you remember the roof of Larreta’s house in Porto Bello? Do you remember the room of the girl and how her hair shone like metal?”

“All of this for a woman?” said Luis. Then he began to laugh, gently, having the sleepers in mind. “Well,” he said at last, “I have sailed with the English before this!”

They were off The Havana before that night ended. The current bore them northeast, and the wind bore them southwest. They had hardly to touch an oar in order to keep in place, but all the while the two boats were gradually turning, not in the same rhythm, but as though they were governed by two wildly differing clocks.

Then, in the sudden, wild flush of the dawn, a fleet of fishing boats blew out of the harbor mouth. The sun came up. They saw clearly the great rock that tells the mariner of The Havana harbor, and the little shining white tower on the top of it.

As the sail of a fishing boat inclined toward them, sweeping on like half of a gleaming bubble, Kildare had the oars manned, and slid the canoa toward the little craft. There were three men in it who at the last moment screamed out, and tried to put about. But the canoa caught them with ease, as a big fish catches a lesser. Luis picked the oldest of those men out of the fishing boat and put him down before Kildare.

The poor old withered Indian had no strength in his knees. He dropped before Kildare, lifted his face toward the sky, shut his eyes tight, and prayed
aloud that God would not permit the wild men of the sea to eat him alive! Kildare took him by the chin, jerked his mouth ajar, and set a silver coin between his teeth. Something about the feel of it brought back the Indian’s wits. He dropped the coin into his hand, looked from it to Kildare, and then began to smile like a child.

“Can you stand up?” asked Kildare.

“Yes, my lord,” said the Indian, and rose to his feet, suddenly strong again.

“If you answer my questions truly, you live and return to your people. If you lie, we shall burn you between the fingers and the toes. Now, then, do you know of a ship in the harbor called the Hispaniola?”

“No, lord,” said the Indian, gravely and instantly.

“She was not there when you came out this morning?”

“No, lord.”

All the blood in Kildare’s body leaped into his brain.

“You never have seen her?” he muttered, hopelessly.

“Yes, lord.”

“You have seen her?”

“She was lying in the harbor on the eastern side for three weeks.”

“And when did she sail?”

“Last night, when the wind was fair for the west. Toward New Spain she sailed.”

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“Last night!” said Kildare. “Luis, throw him back into his boat. Lads, pull away for the west. In such a wind as this, God will not let us miss the Spaniard! Luis, stand up and shout the news!”

They left the fishing boat drifting with the current, while the old man, restored to his friends with a silver coin in the grasp of each hand, was being felt and handled cautiously by his two companions, as though they expected him to fall to pieces each moment after his visit to the dragons.

In the meantime, the trumpet cry of Luis informed Chaptal of the news. Yells of angry resolution broke from the buccaneers. It was a sin and a Spanish trick for the Hispaniola to sail by night! Straightway a man made a vow. He got up and tore the shirt from his back, and swore that he would never wear clothes above his hips, until he walked the deck of the Hispaniola. That was a dangerous vow to make, considering the strength of the tropic sun. Another man sprang up in the piragua, to yell that he would never taste wine till a cask was broached on the Hispaniola. In a fury the crew fell to the long labor of the pursuit. Over the cedar thwarts they thrust the long oars and through the grummets or against the tholes of twisted manatee hide, they pulled with all their might, driving westward ho! The wind helped them a little; the oars helped them more. Then all the wind died down, and under the pouring fire of the sun, they labored westward up the endless blue hills and the short, swinging valleys of the sea.
It was the hawk eye of Luis that spotted the sail at last. He shouted and pointed. They all saw it, then, a little blue white form above the edge of the sea. It might have been a cloud, except that its edges were too sharp. The thing grew. It rose magically out of the becalmed ocean, a tall three-master, with all its sails hanging helplessly down like the wrinkled, flabby cheeks of age.

They walked up on her hand over hand, while the sails turned from blue to white and the hull mounted out of the ocean.

“She’s a good one,” said Dutch Peter. “I like the look of her, and the rake of the masts. She’s sound and new, too, I’ll warrant. She’s all of the best, or my nose cannot smell her. She has good oak for her timbers, straight and curved and knee. She’s planked with elm or beech below the water line. All the hemp of her will be good Riga band! And now she sees us, and gets ready to show her teeth!”

Out went the flags and streamers of the tall ship, and the great colors. The sprit-sails disappeared; the main-sail was furled and slung. The close-fights, a heavy wall of canvas, was set up all the length of the deck, a wall against boarders, and as the ship heaved on the swell of the sea, they could see that the deck was being covered with canvas, also, to prevent the damage made by falling spars in the course of a battle.

While the oars were groaning, Kildare stood up in the sternsheets, and called out his instructions. “Are you thirsty, lads?” he called. “There’s our
tavern, and we’ll pay for our drinks before we enter the doors of it.”

His voice seemed greater than his body. As he shouted, all the bones of his chest and ribs were showing. But if his body was lean, so was his sword, and they knew what that could do. He looked like a fever-starved beggar, but they knew he was a man.

“Put your best marksmen in the bows, Chaptal,” he called, “and let ’em rest from the rowing so that their hands won’t be trembling. Steersmen, keep your boats in line with the Spaniard’s masts. He’ll have only his stern chasers to use on us, then.

“We ought to have our teeth in this fellow and the best of him down our throats in short order. There is no wind for him to yaw by and give us the whole weight of his guns. He can only warp her about with his boats, as he’s doing now, and that’s a murderous slow business, as he’ll soon find out. But we have no long time for this work. Look north and west where that thunderhead begins to crawl up out of the sea! There’ll be a wind before long, friends, and perhaps there’ll be so much of it that we’ll want to dance on something bigger than our own decks!”

He broke off, waved his hand, and they gave him one brief yell of approval as they rowed. In Kildare’s own boat, the men shifted automatically. The best marksmen were perfectly well known, it seemed. These experts gathered into the bows, looking to their long barreled muskets, and some-
times trying the sights long before the ship was in range.

Dutch Peter steered well off to the starboard, trying to keep the three masts of the ship in line so that the broadside would not bear. The rowers, in the meantime, put out their best efforts. That thunderhead which crawled out on the sky like a black smoke, told them that the season for fighting might be very short. They hastened to make the most of every minute. They stood up to strain the oars, and finished each stroke by sitting down with a thump on the benches. The canoa jumped at every impulse. Someone started a French boating song that the whole crew took up with a roar. Even the boat seemed to do better with music to help it. The waves slapped the bows in a more rapid rhythm; the wake spun out more swiftly behind them. And Ivor Kildare stood up in the sternsheets, laughing for joy, holding up that bright splinter of a sword. He gave a foxhunter's halloo.

"Brave hearts, jolly boys!" shouted Kildare. "Now a last run and at them. They cannot wear ship as quickly as we can dodge 'em. We'll be in and have them by the heels. We'll hamstring the Spanish beeves and cut their throats while they bellow. Make in! Make in! Give way! Hai! They have missed now, and they'll miss again."

Perhaps the commander of the Spanish ship felt that it was vain to bring his ship around by the head quickly enough to use a broadside. At any rate, he gave the first blast from the stern-ports.
Four shot, great and small, plumped into the water well ahead of Kildare and where they fell the sea leaped up in green sheets. The buccaneers yelled loudly, and pressed on.

The flag of Spain was loosed over the stern of the ship, rippling down to the full of its length, and there hung in the windless air as though it were painted on the blue of the sea. The Spanish gunners were laboring desperately to reload as soon as possible and pour in a second volley, while the buccaneers stood on their oars, giving up the best of their strength and the last of their breath with a barking yell at the finish of each stroke.

Murmurs, then shouts of joy broke out from the boats. For the more sharp-sighted had been able to spell out the golden letters of the ship’s name. Kildare, making out the dim gilding of the name, pinched his lips together and drew a breath. An armada loaded to the rails with precious stones was nothing to him compared with his hope of finding on the Hispaniola the betrothed of his lady. The buccaneers began to spring on the oars as though their lives depended on their work.

Dutch Peter suddenly threw his steering oar to starboard; the sharp bows of the canoa veered far off to the port, as the Spaniards tried a second volley. Some small shot ripped into the sea in front of the canoa; the big round shot tore the air above the heads of the buccaneers. And as they saw what the maneuvering of Peter had saved them, they
yelled at the pitch of their throats, then ran the boat straight in, in a furious silence.

No wind struck the Spaniard, but such a frenzy of excitement, such a shouting burst from her, such a scurrying of men aloft into the round tops, that she trembled like a living thing, like a stag bogged in mud when the hounds come swiftly upon it.

Through the rear ports, as the gunners labored to reload, as the long ramrods jerked back and forth, Kildare could see the white gleam of the faces, so near had they drawn.

"Now, fire!" he called to his musketeers. "Lie on your oars, lads. Fire, musketeers, while the boat's still running. Fire before she's lost her way and feels the pitch of the sea!"

The oarsmen lay on the long sweeps, twisting about to look over their shoulders at the game; Dutch Peter held her true on the course. And in a quick cluster the bowsmen fired. Through the shadows within the ports, Kildare could see the gunners struck into confusion; but more than seeing was the yell of woe and pain that sounded at them like a horn across the waters. Two of the rearmost of the larboard guns of the Spaniard fired, as though in aimless spite. The bullets skipped across the water far from the quarry. It made the buccaneers whoop with joy to see this vain bowling when they themselves should have been the nine pins.

But Dutch Peter shouted: "Starboard! Starboard! Starboard hard!"

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He flung the steering oar over, but it was too late. A single cannon spoke from the ship when the head of the canoa had barely begun to swing.

A dark streak flew at them.

“Flat! Fall flat!” thundered Dutch Peter. The ruin struck them as he spoke. A big shot clove through the bows as they tossed on a wave. It struck off the arm of one man at the shoulder, dashed through the body of another, and nipped off the head of the oarsman just in front of Kildare. The red blood flew in a fine spray, a thin red cloud that was snatched away by the wind. The boat lay wallowing; and a groan came up from the crew.

The man who had lost his arm stood up in the bows with the blood spouting from his shoulder.

“Go on, my hearties!” he called. “Wine and gold for all of you. Overboard with the dead hulks, and the living get on. Adieu!”

He picked up a heavy musket, hugged it to his breast with his remaining arm, and leaped from the boat before anyone could prevent him. The weight of the gun dragged him straight down, his course marked by a red streak and many bubbles.

His name was Pierre. He was a young buccaneer who was hardly a year from the floggings and the hard usage of his apprentice term. But he was a wild and merry companion, already famed for his delicate marksmanship.

His death sent the others into a frenzy. They hurled the two dead men over the side, gripped
the oars, and sent their craft straight in at the cheering Spaniards.

"No quarter!" they groaned, as they strained against the sweeps. There was no shouting. Their voices grated in their throats like rusted iron hinges.

The sight of them coming brought a confusion of yelling from the Spaniards. A number of small pieces were let off from the tops and from the stern-ports; but not a whit of damage was done by this close fire, and the ports were closed instantly afterward, since the gunners preferred barring the way to boarders to trying another shot.

As they came near enough to mark the pattern of the carved work over the stern of the ship, Kildare stood up and shouted in that voice which he knew how to make greater than his body: "Pedro Alvarado! Pedro Alvarado!"

Almost instantly there appeared above the roundhouse of the Spaniard a tall youth with yellow hair that flowed down over his shoulders. It seemed to Kildare that even from the distance he could see the blue eyes, too. He looked rather like the brother than the lover of Ines Heredia.

"I am Pedro Alvarado, in the name of God!" cried the big young man.

Kildare called to his men: "Mark him, brothers. All the rest of the prize is yours, treasure and all. But that man is mine."

Then he thundered: "Señor Alvarado, I have
sailed a thousand leagues to see your face and to cut your throat. I am Captain Tranquillo!"

At that dreaded and detested name, made infamous and terrible by the sack of San Lorenzo, a cry came out of the *Hispaniola* from all of the men who had herded back on the afterdecks, bringing the ship noticeably down by the stern.

Then the single voice of Alvarado floated over the water.

"Sea-murderer, and devil! Trust me to find you if——"

A small brass gun had been dragged back along the top deck, loaded to the muzzle with small shot, and the muzzle depressed as much as possible. Now it roared, but the buccaneers were too close, and the charge flew harmlessly over their heads.

The piragua, untouched so far in the battle, now swept up beside the canoa, and they struck the stern of the Spaniard at the same time. Through the torn bows of the canoa, water was pouring. The men rose dripping from the benches. With knives, machetes, pistols, they leaped for the prize.

They swarmed up the after chains, or strove to board her over the quarters. It was hard work. It took wind and nerve together. The stern of the ship arose as high as a house, and what is so hard as climbing when the cold stone of fear is a weight in the stomach? But the buccaneers mounted the *Hispaniola* like so many running flames.

Kildare, as he climbed the ship, saw at the top of the wall a hedge of steel, white and quivering
as fire. Two men, above him, reached that living hedge and struck at the face of it. One of them went down, the pike lodged through his body. The other began to screech like a madman, striking out with his machete as he reached the rail. Kildare came beside him. He made room for them both with the play of his sword, like the flicking of a snake's tongue. Luis stood by him, now, with a song in his throat, the brightness of the sun working on the great shoulders, as though from burnished metal. Blood dripped and dripped from the leaf-shaped head of his lance so that the Spaniards gave back a little, not so much in retreat but as though each man wanted elbow room to ply his weapons. A swarm of buccaneers instantly occupied all of the vacant space.

Now the men in the tops, seeing that friend and enemy were so close together, stopped firing and came running down the rigging to get into the battle. Though the press strode the captain, holding a long straight sword before him as a priest might hold a cross. He had a very white face and a very black beard. He wore a steel breast-plate with golden chasings over it, but that did not save him; for when he gained the front rank, rallying his men, threatening and cursing them for cowards, the head of Luis' spear slid through that beard and the soft of the throat. His sword fell down. The captain dropped beside it and beat the deck with his hands while his own blood strangled him.
Chapter THIRTEEN:

That was only the start of it. The captain was down, but there were other leaders. There was the navigator of the ship, a hardy Biscayan sailor whose head had been grazed by a musket ball and who now wore a blood-stained rag of cloth like a red turban. He gave directions with a bellowing voice, and fought with a half-pike in one hand and a pistol in the other. But more than the Biscayan, there was Pedro Alvarado. He leaped with the joy of battle. Excitement squeezed his big throat until a barking cry came out of it, shrill as the voice of a terrier. In fact, there was plenty of fight in the Spaniards, but the mere weight of their own numbers clogged their movements, whereas the buccaneers, with a professional coolness, never crowded their first rank men but fired pistols or muskets past their heads, or stretched out weapons to parry blows. They worked with a trained harmony until the defenders, seeing man after man fall, were caught by a sudden panic that swept them yelling down into the waist of the ship.

Kildare led the eager buccaneers. He almost got a yard of steel through his body to pay him for his forwardness. It was young Pedro Alvarado who
stood to him, fighting manfully. He had been an unwilling portion of the rout, carried along by it. Now he and the Biscayan rallied the frightened crew by good example.

There was plenty of fight left in the Spaniards. The flying yellow hair of Alvarado, as he lunged and hacked, striving to get in at Kildare, was like a battle flag that showed them the way to the front. They came swarming. The broader space in the waist let their numbers count. In two terrible minutes, the buccaneers lost seven men—all dead, since every one who fell had no chance to ask for quarter; axes, swords, pistols, knives, machetes tore at them, left them as shapeless red things to be trodden under foot as the battle continued.

Not even the courage of buccaneers could endure such losses. Kildare, sweating and straining to get at Alvarado, was caught in an ebb-tide and borne with it back to the round-house deck. Only Pierre Chaptal had remained there since the Hispaniola was boarded. He, with unaided hands, had worked on the little brass deck gun short of body and big of mouth, a frog among cannon. He had turned it about until it pointed back into the waist. He had double charged it to the very mouth with two bags of powder and handfuls of small-shot. Now, as the buccaneers reeled bleeding back from the fight, he snapped a pistol at the pile of black Norman powder over the touch-hole. The priming sent upwards a spurt of crimson fire; the little cannon coughed so mightily that all the afterworks of

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the *Hispaniola* trembled; and death showered in a vast triangle in the waist. A yell that was groan and prayer and death cry and screech of living agony went up. Before it ended. Kildare had led the charge, returning to the fight.

The voice of that small gun had been like the roar of doom. The Spaniards were stunned by it, even those who were untouched. Against the savage rush of the buccaneers they seemed unable to make resistance. They were for the most part pistolcd or stabbed like cattle. In a battle it often seems that there is but one heart in the mob. The heart of the Spaniards now stood still for a fatal moment; before it beat again, they were ruined. Only on the forecastle a little group of warrior souls remained with the red sword and the long yellow hair of Pedro Alvarado shining in the forefront. They were ruined, and they knew it; therefore they fought like lost souls and gave to every blow the strength of a dying effort.

Kildare came in at them with Luis the Mosquito on one side of him, the bald-headed buccaneer on the other, Chaptal swinging a machete, Dutch Peter wielding an axe and using the back of it to batter out brains. In a trice the Spaniards were down, except Alvarado.

Kildare shouted: “He is mine! Give me room, brothers!”

They gave back to watch. They stood there, grinning, sweating, leaning on their weapons. It had been a good fight. Every man had his wound
that stung now and would ache hereafter. It had been a very good fight, so they were willing to stand aside and watch a masterhand finish it.

Pedro Alvarado saw that the day was lost, the last day of his life, no doubt. But all the red Castilian blood rushed through his veins; his eyes glared; his lips parted, shouting: “St. James! St. James!” With that old Spanish war cry he rushed on Kildare, with a sweeping stroke. The heavy sword slithered harmlessly away along the blade of Kildare.

But while the steel clashed, the lust for battle failed to rise into the throat of Kildare, and he tried to rouse it with words, crying: “Guard yourself, Spaniard. You are known to me, Alvarado. You are one of those cattle merchants. You buy beeves today and a wife tomorrow. Is there blood enough under your skin to wash out the bargain?”

And he came swerving in with the foot of a dancer and that sun-ray of steel in his conjurer’s hand. To his rapid eye, the big rapier of the Spaniard seemed frozen in place; he avoided it daintily and lunged for the throat, but he stamped on a spot of blood and missed his aim. Still, as he leaped back, he hoped that he had fleshe his sword in a vital place; and shouted: “A death!” Then he saw that the rapier of Alvarado lay on the deck, while down the right arm of the young Spaniard ran a stream of blood.

“Kill!” roared the chorus of the buccaneers.

Alvarado did not flinch but drew himself up to
meet the final stroke. His eyes were as blue as the ocean in a calm; and Kildare stopped his hand.

Luis the Mosquito stepped in with his javelin raised. Blood freckled the Indian from head to foot.

“This is no longer a fighting man, but a fish that sleeps in the sea. I shall spear him for you, master,” said Luis.

“Let him be,” panted Kildare. “Take him into the cabin and then look about for your share of the plunder. Chaptal,” he added, to that old, grey werewolf, “you won a lost day for us. But half of our men who began it are dead. Take charge of the ship. Peter,” he went on to the Dutchman, “lay the course for Port Royal. That’s the only place where we can sell such a cargo and such a ship.”

He pointed at the sky.

“You’ll need to be a sailor, Peter, before we reach harbor,” he warned.

For the thunder-heads from the north had climbed almost to the zenith, black as a herd of elephants. Lightning gleamed like red, branching veins in the bellies of the clouds. Gusts from the approaching storm wrinkled the sea to grey and rattled the rigging of the Hispaniola, which, without a man at the helm, had fallen down wind into the trough. Yet the buccaneers paid no heed to any coming danger.

They had set about the plundering of the ship, the counting of the gains. First they stripped the dead, friend and foe, and hurled the bodies ruth-
lessly overboard. The prisoners were forced to join in this work. For quarter had been given, after all, to more than half the poor devils who stood about like sheep and let the *Hispaniola* be conquered. However hot the blood of buccaneers, they could not forget that white slaves brought at Port Royal a better price than black ones. So they drove the prisoners to the work of clearing the decks, and as the mutilated bodies were hurled over the side, several times wailing cries rose from the dying who were not quite dead. Their wailing voices were lost in the sea.

A heap of plunder was growing in the waist of the *Hispaniola*. Like ants plundering the nest of a conquered tribe, the buccaneers were continually running up from the bowels of the ship with loads of plunder which began to form a great heap in the waist. Before they descended again, they paused for refreshment. Eight days of wind and sun had dried them to the bone, therefore they had opened the main hatch and trundled up from the hold half a dozen casks of wine that were part of the cargo. The heads of the casks were knocked in. With the sway of the ship, may gallons of red wine flowed like blood across the white decks, but the plunderers thought nothing of waste. Some of them used ladles or cups but others gripped the edges of the casks with their hands and leaned to drink like cattle. Their yelling, their laughing, their singing, the pounding of their feet was nevertheless only a subdued chorus to Kildare, as he stood on
the high poop. Sometimes the wind blew all the noise of happy riot far away, wasting it across the sea; even in the lulls that tumult was to him a distant thing of no concern.

As a fishhawk picks a fish from the sea, so he had seized on that gallant young gentleman, Pedro Alvarado, but what should he do with the prize?

He went into the great cabin under the roundhouse. It had been a place of luxurious refinement, worthy of that Castilian captain with his white skin and black beard. The beams were fretted with hand-carving. There was a bright rug on the floor, but everything else, even to the blankets of the bed, had been swept away, for that pile of loot which had been heaped in the waist of the ship.

Luis was already there, winding a strip of cloth around the wounded shoulder of that tall young Castilian, Pedro Alvarado. He was calm as stone, now. His regardless eyes looked at Kildare, but saw him not.

“Later,” said Kildare. “Later, Alvarado, we must talk. Now it is time to let the storm blow, while we sleep.”

He stretched himself on the bare bed and slept. Alvarado lay down on the rug, pulled a corner of it over him, and slept in turn. The blood of the battle was still wet on them, and on Luis, who kept watch.

With the flat of its hand, the storm struck the ship. But Kildare was still sleeping. So was Alvarado. The wind grew until the screaming of it
made the soul of Luis tremble. He went out to look at the face of the norther. The sky was as dark as twilight with the gale. The flat crimson disk of the sun was pasted in the west. The *Hispaniola* was driving under a rag of head-sail hardly bigger than a hand, yet the wrenchings of it made the ship shudder and the foremast bow.

Three men worked the wheel under the eye of Dutch Peter. They were the only buccaneers who labored. Half a dozen others were on deck, but they merely relayed the orders of Dutch Peter and with pistol in hand forced the Spanish crew to perform every task. A dozen of them were aloft lowering the main top yard when a great sea kicked the stern of the *Hispaniola* to the leeward. The whole shoulder of the wind struck the lofty hull and bumped it over. Through the sky the three mast-heads swept down towards the sea, and from the dozen Spaniards, clinging to the ropes, a voice like the scream of a sea bird came through the storm. The ship righted itself slowly. All the waist was filled with white surges. The forecastle and the stern were tall islands.

She might have broken in two—she might be sinking at this moment. So thought the Spanish sailors, apparently, for they abandoned their work to come to deck. This was seen by the buccaneer who acted as foreman over them. He was that same fellow with the red, bald head and the two pigtails. Luis could see him laughing as he lifted
a pistol, sighting it with care—but still laughing as he fired.

The foremost sailor of the descending crowd instantly lost his hold. The sway of the mast pitched him sidewise. The wind filled his clothes as tight as sausages. He slid sideways in a long, slanting line that disappeared in the sea. His companions mounted up the mast again to resume their work. Then the *Hispaniola* lifted herself gallantly, flung the lurching seas from her decks, floated once more, birdlike and living.

Luis pulled open the cabin door by dint of force. The scream of the wind entered before him. He shut it out again, but still the ship quivered with the mighty sound. The deck leaped and staggered under his feet.

Alvarado was in a chair, but Kildare slept. Wonder came upon Luis. He had seen Kildare stepping lightly as a dancer into the fight on the crowded deck and then he had felt that a divine power turned bullets and steel from the body of the captain. Yet the sight of Kildare in battle was not so moving to him as this glimpse of him soundly asleep while the ship labored on the brink of ruin. At this moment, Luis solemnly opened his heart and accepted Kildare as his master.

Through anxious hours the crew waited and watched the plunging of the *Hispaniola*; when the storm had abated, Kildare wakened.

He got up and sat at the table with his sword
before him. He was dressed in knee breeches only. As he breathed, his ribs showed like great claws grasping his torso. The blood was dried on his hands, on his arms, on his breast, on his feet. But he sat regardless of this. Luis brought him a bucket of water that remained unused on the deck. The hollow eyes of Kildare were fixed upon the future.

Afterward, half a dozen of the buccaneers came to see their captain, but when they had opened the cabin door, they retired again as though they had blundered into a dark cavern and seen the eyes of the dragon inside it. Not once did Kildare stir from his day dream though he heard the drunken shouting on deck. His narrow black moustache bristled as his mouth compressed.

The Spaniard, young Alvarado, was perfectly calm and silent, also, yet he could not help knowing that his life depended upon the thoughts of Kildare who sat there so quietly with the blood of the battle still upon his hands, still on the sword that lay before him. At last Kildare stirred. There was ink, a pen, and paper. Kildare scrawled out a message in Spanish.

"Read it, señor," said he.

The Spaniard took it up in his left hand and read aloud:

"Noble Señor Larreta,

"Misfortune has overtaken me. The Hispaniola is gone from me. I am a plucked bird and I am flying away until I grow new feathers."
"The grief of my heart is that I must give up all claim on the hand of the noble lady, Ines Heredia. As for the five thousand pieces of silver which were delivered to you from me, in settlement of the marriage, they are cancelled. I have received full payment from the Englishman, Ivor Kildare, and I give him, in turn, all my claims to that happiness.

"I sign myself with a thousand regrets, but with ten thousand hopes for your welfare and for the future of the noble lady."

Don Pedro looked up from the reading of the letter. He saw the eyes of Kildare upon him, as bright as a hawk’s and as blue as blue steel.

"I must sign this, Señor Kildare?" he said. "You have looked deep into her eyes—and therefore I must sign this?"

Kildare smiled on him, faintly.

"You are young, Alvarado," he said. "You are as handsome and fine a gentleman as I ever have seen. And you are young. May ten thousand gallons of good red wine flow down your throat before the day of your death. May a whole herd of noble beeves and flocks of sheep and goats march down your gullet. May you crush orchards of fruit with your teeth before your end. But none of these things will be if you fail to sign the letter and seal it with this wax, and with the ring that is on your finger."

Pedro Alvarado began to muse. He sat down.
Yellow hair and blue eyes were strange, thought Kildare, in such a Spaniard.

"After all," said Alvarado, "you have seen her, and therefore I know that you will be as good as your word. She is the one jewel. Men who have looked on her cannot desire any other. And I must die, señor, if I do not put my name at the bottom of this letter?"

"There was a curse on my sword," said Kildare, "or I should have spitted you fairly through the heart as we fought. I only ask for the least honorable excuse to kill you now. I am ready for anything except murder, Alvarado. It will not be murder if you fail to ransom your life in this way and be swearing on the altar of your honor that you will never come near her again."

Alvarado smiled. His eyes were still as calm as a calm sea. He seemed to Kildare the most beautiful and noble of men.

"I shall sign this," said Alvarado, "because I am forced to sign it. But as for the future, nothing can force me to sell my hope of seeing her again."

Kildare, with slow deliberation, raised from the table a pistol, cocked it, and levelled it at the head of the Spaniard.

"I give you time for your last prayers, señor," said he, "unless they are very long."

Alvarado raised his face.

"Our Father in Heaven," he said, "forgive me my sins, and grant my eyes living, or in life after
death, to see again the lovely face of Ines Heredia.”

He looked down at Kildare.

“That is all, señor,” he said. “I am ready.”

Kildare hurled the pistol from him.

“Alvarado,” he said, “you are the first Spaniard I have ever wished to call brother. Sit down. Sign the letter. Seal it with your ring. And I shall set you free with the other prisoners as soon as we touch an island. You may find better fortune, and Ines Heredia with it. I shall cut your throat hereafter wherever we meet. But I drink to you, now, as a friend.”

“Noble and generous Señor Kildare,” said the Spaniard, bowing, “I shall drink to you with thirst in my soul. And when I stab you to the heart on another day, I shall honor the blood I spill as though it came from the veins of a gentleman of Castile!”
Chapter FOURTEEN:

Two days later they made a small island and used the piragua, which had been kept in tow, to land Pedro Alvarado. Alvarado stood up in the sternsheets, with his face toward Kildare, and his hat under his arm. He kept alternately bowing and waving and smiling so that no one could have guessed that there was anything other than the most brotherly devotion between the two.

Then Kildare sailed on toward Port Royal. His mind was not clear. Porto Bello and Ines Heredia were the objects in his mind, but he could not see his way to them. He had checked and beaten back Pedro Alvarado; and stopping a little frigate loaded with salt fish and other provisions, he had let it go free, only charging it with Pedro Alvarado’s letter to Porto Bello. That letter might work much good. But in the meantime all the way before Kildare was obscure to the eye of his mind. He only knew that Port Royal and the sale of the ship was a forced conclusion.

Uncertain winds carried them slowly toward Jamaica. Sometimes, Kildare felt that they could never reach harbor, for the ship was totally without discipline and far less than half-manned. Three
men had fallen in the canoa at the beginning of the battle with the Hispaniola and in the fight to master the Spaniard exactly twelve more had gone down. That left of an original thirty-nine, a scant twenty-four, including Kildare and Luis. But this number still further diminished.

Every day and every night was an orgy. The brandy and the claret ran freely. Kildare, wrapped in the darkness of his great desire, many a night walked the poop and saw in the waist below the dancers leaping and whirling, while the moon kept their black shadows staggering beside them. It was not all dancing or dicing, either, but furious brawls. He saw two who were sworn mates and blood-brothers clasp their left hands together and stab each other in the true, delightful buccaneer fashion. Too much brandy killed another free companion as surely as a sword thrust. Another drunkard disappeared during one night, either thrown overboard or falling into the sea. That left twenty buccaneers to handle the big ship; with ninety prisoners under the hatches!

Most of the twenty were helpless with liquor day and night. They could only hold together in one agreement—that they would cut the throat of anyone who tried to come between them and their liquor. When Pierre Chaptal fiercely upbraided them and showed them their danger, some of them calmly proposed to turn the prisoners overboard, so that they could go on drinking unperturbed.

There were only two on whom Kildare could
count, Luis and old Chaptal; so he split the day into watches, providing that two sober men should always be on deck. To work the ship, to cook for the buccaneers and the poor Spaniards between decks, he had to take on deck a certain number of the prisoners every day; which meant that a ceaseless outlook had to be kept. On the roundhouse, the brass cannon was kept loaded, and pointed down into the waist. Every day the little gun was freshly charged and primed. But throughout the voyage, the Spaniards never tried to rise. Whether drunk or sober, the buccaneers appeared to the prisoners as unhuman devils who could not be mastered. But a happy man was Kildare when at last the Hispaniola slid into the beautiful harbor of Port Royal, where a score of ships were already anchored, some trim merchantmen, and some so negligently rigged that it was easy to guess that buccaneer carelessness had had the handling of them.

A fever of delight came over Kildare’s crew as they saw the low white buildings of the town, the green archings of the palm trees, the images of wharfs and ships lying deep in the still water. Small boats put out, pulled by the long arms of the Jamaican Negroes; a crowd of townsmen swarmed out onto the wharfs—land-sharks waiting for these fat fish from the deep sea.

The Hispaniola slid to moorings; the anchor splashed; the heavy rope cable went out with a rumble and roar. And before the anchor held, al-
ready the sharing of the ready loot had begun about the foot of the mainmast.

Kildare, who had found a suit of Quaker quietness except for the fine lace at the throat and the wrist, stood idly by, letting Pierre Chaptal and Dutch Peter distribute the shares of clothes, of weapons, of the thousand odd and ends of which the ship had been plundered. The division was rapidly made and accepted without comment, for the men were only hungry to get ashore and to the spending of their hard cash. There was plenty of this. Of gold and silver, the value of seven thousand pieces of eight were to be split among twenty hands, which made nearly a hundred pounds, in English money, to every man-jack of them. To Kildare, as the captain, the battle leader, the organizer of this expedition, there went four whole shares.

He stood on an empty cask in the midst of the litter and called out to them: "Friends, I told you at the taking of the _Hispaniola_ that my plunder would be one man. And I've had the man and loosed him. The money is yours. So is the value of the cargo and the ship, which I'll sell for you at as good a price as I can get. And if you like this treatment, tell the friends you find in the Port Royal taverns that we've had a jolly cruise from Tortuga, that Captain Tranquillo is an honest man, and better than honest, he has the luck of the sea. Who knows how soon we may sail again, and
some of you drinking good wine on the deck of my ship again?"

They looked at him with an utter bewilderment, for a moment, seeing a sane man throw away four hundred pounds in cash, together with as fat a share of the value of the ship and cargo. Then they gave him a cheer that set aflutter the throngs of colors with which, like so many gaudy birds, they had decked out the ship at every point. They ran to the charged and shotted guns and touched them off, still yelling and whooping.

They would still be whooping his name and fame when the liquor mastered them in the Jamaican taverns, that day; and a little celebrity was what Kildare needed more than hard cash, at this moment. Whatever the game that remained for him to play, he could guess that a hand filled with men and their devoted weapons would be far better for him to hold than a wallet heavy with silver.

Some of the shots from those guns skipped perilously near to the small boats which were hurrying their oars toward the _Hispaniola_. The buccaneers merely yelled with laughter at the sight of the little craft trying to dodge. Only by chance, no harm was done.

Old Pierre Chaptal came to Kildare, grinning more like a wolf than ever. He stood very close, his red eyes fixed on the face of the Englishman.

"Captain Tranquillo," he said, "this voyage is for me a good fat vineyard in Burgundy. One more voyage like it will buy me the house as well as the
ground. I shall find a good wench with some red in her cheeks, and in her nose, too. A red nose is a comfortable thing to see in the winter. I shall have a brood of small buccaneers, and when they grow up, I'll tell them how they may prosper in the world, if they can find a Tranquillo to fight for. Captain, I can't tell what your game is, but I know that I am your man."

"You'll be ship-keeper, Chaptal," said Kildare. "You won't want to sell your vineyard for some bad rum and a pretty girl. Stay on board till I find the right market for the powder and cannon of our cargo."

Then Kildare went over the side and ashore in a little canoa with Luis. He had with him only a few pieces of silver and a sword. He had given up all claim to the profits from the Hispaniola. He was farther than ever from Porto Bello. And yet he told himself that he could almost reach to the lady Ines Heredia!

When they reached the wharf, a score of hands reached for them, but most of the attention was directed toward the Mosquito, for the reason that he had dressed himself in wonderful and ridiculous fashion. With high boots, clothes of satin and lace, and a great yellow wig on his head, Luis appeared like a hero and grandee of the Spanish Main, to the shore crowd.

And as men and women swirled around the Indian, Kildare said at his ear: "You're free to go by yourself and spend your money, Luis. Buy what
you please and drink what you please—except rum. Go off with you, and be gay!"

Like gulls around sea-refuse, beating their wings in crowds and screaming out, so the land-sharks, male and female, clustered around the Indian. Kildare slipped away and in an instant was detached from all that noisy life of the water-front. He seemed more like a sober merchant of the town as he passed up a street, glancing into the taverns until he was stopped by a voice that bawled out a sea-song. Straightway he stepped inside.

It was like any other tavern—a long room with kegs ranged around it, active little black boys hovering about to take orders, benches and tables, two windows on the street and before each window a cage filled with gaudy parrots. There were several groups of drinkers, each group turning itself into a misty island by throwing up a screen of smoke that ascended to the beams of the low ceiling. A fiddler walked up and down on the top of a table, scratching off tunes and fragments. Sometimes the voices of the men rumbled, and sometimes they roared. The place had exactly the right atmosphere of a cave, the right sour smell of wine and sweetness of rum in the air, to please a sailor.

Kildare sat down in a corner and made himself obscure over a glass of Bordeaux; he wanted to see and not to be seen. But he hardly had taken his place and received his drink when two figures of men paused in the doorway, blocking away the light. Kildare felt eyes upon him, and he saw that
the real Captain Tranquillo was standing at the entrance in a magnificent suit of crimson with a great flowering of blue ribbons about his knees. There was a difference in his swarthy face. It was that the scar between his eyes no longer was white, but red. His arms were folded. He stared at Kildare and over his shoulder appeared the egg-shaped head of the Negro, looking in the same direction. They seemed to Kildare hardly like real beings, but rather as pictures of the mind, ghosts that rise by night.

"Hey! Tranquillo! Captain Tranquillo! Come in!" shouted voices.

The host of the tavern ran up to the famous man and entreated him in, to honor the inn by accepting a bowl of punch without charge. But Tranquillo turned, slowly, and strode away with the Negro like a great walking ape behind him.

The moment the man was gone, Kildare shuddered and looked suddenly behind him. He was glad that the wall was so close to his chair!
Chapter FIFTEEN:

"I'LL SEE YOU DAMNED, Captain Henry Morgan!" shouted a voice as a figure arose from the mist of tobacco smoke that billowed around the table across the room. It was a one-armed man with a dirty bandage tied around his head. Although his right arm was gone, he wore his machete on his left hip. He had on a great leather belt with a pair of pistols and a knife stuck into the front of it.

A great, roaring voice answered: "When they cut off your arm, they cut off half your wits. You can damn when you please and where you please, but if you stay at my table, I'll cut off the other arm myself and hold it by the hand while the dogs eat it. Get out of my sight."

The one-armed man merely laughed.

"You think I'll fight you, Morgan, but I won't," said he. "I've still got a half hour of life, and that shall be drinking. Farewell! May you rot of a plague and burn of a fever! I hope that my part of hell will be free of you."

He turned away. Captain Henry Morgan drew out a pistol and looked as though he were about to shoot the man through the back, but he changed his mind, slowly, regretfully, putting up the gun.
He was a man with the brow of a bull, and two sharply incised wrinkles that showed the resolution of a bull. The lower part of his face was graced by a tuft of beard between the lower lip and the chin, and a pair of moustaches which sprouted from meager roots but flowered into luxurious curling masses that were combed straight out. They looked as though they had been pasted on the skin and would fall off the instant the paste grew dry and old. Every brutality was in his mouth and jaw, but the face was lighted by a brain that shone out of the eyes. If he had been mere brute, he would have been a man to fear, and since he had a conceiving mind as well, his brutality was all the more to be dreaded.

Now he relaxed in his chair. On the back of it was perched a big monkey with a greenish face and a white beard. A quantity of nuts lay on the table, ready to season the wine of the buccaneer, and one of these from time to time he threw over his shoulder to the ape, which caught them out of the air and cracked and ate them, curling the tip of its tail with pleasure. When it was not eating, it continually stroked the captain’s head and let its foolish eyes wander around the room.

Captain Henry Morgan now struck the table with his fist and jumped again to his feet. The monkey leaped onto his shoulder. It seemed that Morgan would pursue his quarrel with the wounded man, but instead, he made straight out through the door. The host tried to stop him, babbling
something about the score. Morgan struck him aside and went on, with his companions laughing and shouting behind him.

The one-armed man was unsteady, as if from liquor. He stood wavering before the table of Kildare, watching Morgan leave. He was young. The lines of debauchery were worked deeply around his eyes. A white spot rode in either cheek. He was either sick with alcohol or some other poison.

“Sit down,” said Kildare.

He took a chair and sprawled back in it.

“Wine be damned,” he answered Kildare’s invitation. “There’s lemons and sugar and hot water and rum. I’ll make punch that’s fit for a man’s drinking. Bring me everything, boy! Hurry! The devil is glad of every minute that I lose.”

The boy scampered.

“That Henry Morgan,” said Kildare. “I should have heard of—by the look of him. But he’s new to me.”

“He’ll not be new for long,” said the other, “to you or to all the world, unless the smoke of his own fire chokes him. He’s done enough already, but now he’s only beginning. Why, he’s the one who took a piragua with a few friends to help him, and caught eight merchants in a week, and brought all the fat ships back with him. That was how he showed us his quality.

“And that was the start of him. He went with fifteen ships and five hundred men to Santa Catalina, with Mansvelt. They took the south island,
and then they took the north island. After Mansvelt died, he took Puerto el Principe, just a bit of a time ago. And that is why so many buccaneers are about Port Royal now, as lean as starved cats. For there was only twelve thousand pounds in money and goods to split among seven hundred men. And the French have fallen off from Morgan, too. Yet he’s not done. He’ll win through to a great name for himself, one day. But all the same, there’s no blood in his soul. It’s all in his body. And I’ve told him that. But there’s blood in me, my friend, body and soul, and soul and body, though most of it has run away.”

He began to laugh at this final, strange remark of his. And as he mixed punch with the materials which the boy had brought, Kildare said: “You have the fever, friend.”

“I have the fever,” agreed the buccaneer. “I have the last fever of all, at that. The last of my life, and the last of my money, and the last bowl of punch that ever I’ll drink. Here, boy!”

He threw some silver at the servant, and pouring for Kildare and himself, he raised his tankard.

“I left my right arm in a street of Puerto el Principe. The doctors promise me life if I’ll stay in bed on my back. But what’s a left-handed life to a man that is a man? So I’ll finish it all. Stand up with me, friend. Stand up and drink. To the bottom!”

He staggered, as he rose. Kildare, having tasted the punch, which was really excellent, put down his portion, and standing by, saw his companion
still staggering, still drinking, with dribblets of the liquor spilling from the corners of his mouth onto his breast.

Finishing, the buccaneer dashed the tankard to the ground, where it burst in pieces, with a loud crash.

"Now, lad," said the pirate to Kildare. "Since you've drunk with me, and sat with me, come to hell with me!"

He snatched a pistol from his belt and pointed it at Kildare, snapping the big hammer down. The swift hand of Kildare barely reached the gunbarrel in time to beat it down, so that the ball was fired into the floor.

The buccaneer hardly seemed to be aware that his shot had missed, but dropping the first pistol, he pulled out a second one, clapped it to his own forehead, and sent a bullet through his brain. He fell over the back of a chair and hung there limply.

The host came up, suddenly, to Kildare.

"These things spoil my business," he said, gloomily. "Sit down again, my noble friend. I'll brew you a better bowl of punch and you shall have a clean table. Here, Pedrillo—here, you black-faced, lazy dogs—pull this dead fool out of the way and wipe up the floor. If there's much more blood spilled on it, it will smell more like a slaughter house than a good tavern!

Here a crowd came up the street, roaring as loudly as a stormwind. The host rushed out to drum up trade, but he failed. Kildare saw half a
dozen of his own buccaneers go past the door, each man surrounded by a coterie of women or spongers.

There entered the doorway, now, a man with a sweeping, long black coat and a clerical collar. He shaded his eyes with his hand while he examined the dimness of the tavern, turning here and there a nose as long and as sharp as a pointer.

When he saw Kildare, he stepped to the table and took off his hat, and made Kildare such a bow as one would never expect to see in Port Royal.

"Are you that famous man of the sea, Captain Tranquillo?" asked the stranger. "Is it you who have just brought the *Hispaniola* into port, loaded with guns and the finest powder?"

"I am just off the *Hispaniola,*" said Kildare. "As for that cargo, perhaps you are a merchant, as well as a minister?"

"Burning or unburnt," said the other, "gunpowder is of very little interest to me. But I have been sent to you expressly by a man who knows all about the stuff. Captain Henry Morgan, about whom people talk so much in these days. And he begs you to come to his house. He has just learned that he was sitting with a great sailor, unknown to him, and he sends me to say that he is brewing a bowl of punch in your honor at this moment. He wishes to talk with you, Captain Tranquillo, about matters of great importance. Shall I show you the way to his residence?"

Kildare had stood up to greet the stranger. Now
the narrow black line of mustache bristled a little on the lip of Kildare, for the face of the clerical gentleman looked to him like a perfect mask for the covering of every sort of hypocrisy. But Henry Morgan was the very man for Kildare's rapidly forming purposes. Therefore he said: "I'll go with you at once," and throwing down money to pay his bill, he stepped out into the street.

A gust of wind came towards them, with a whirl of dust in it that staggered like a drunken ghost. They put down their heads to the blast. It was hot as the breath of a fire, but the man of the long nose strode forward, hooking a skeleton arm into that of Kildare.

As he went on, he was saying: "I've seen the jolly buccaneers from your ship, Captain Tranquillo. Gold and silver are good, tough metals, but those fellows know how to burn them up like dry tinder. You, however, are a gentleman of another stripe. Liquor is no friend, but a curse to the devising mind. It furls the sails of great conceptions and anchors the ship of progress. But you, noble captain, keep your wits at work. They are the only servants who labor without a fee. Those other poor rascals will be dead drunk before the end of the day and the filthy buzzards, the carrion-feeders of the town, will devour them to the bone. But to him that hath shall be given, Captain Tranquillo, and having had San Lorenzo, you will have many another town of the Spanish Main before you die, or
else I have never seen an eye to see a scheme and a hand to execute it.”

This half moral and half flattering sententiousness continued to pour from the lips of Kildare’s guide until they came to a better part of the town, where the houses were larger. At the huge, blank street-wall of one of these, they stopped, and the man of religion knocked three times, sharply, and again a fourth time. A bolt was drawn, the door clanked open. A Negro whose face looked like a bulldog’s head cast in black rubber drew back, and scowled as they entered a long, dark hallway. As they stepped in, the door closed with a heavy slam, so that it continued to vibrate for a moment against the bolt that had been thrown back in place.

Doors opened from the hall to either side, but the guide, still talking, went straight on to the end of the passage, where he pulled open another door as massive as that which led onto the street. The hallway had been dim enough, but now all that Kildare could see was a chamber more shadowy than twilight. His guide stood back to let him enter first, saying: “Pass on, Captain Tranquillo. I am sorry that there is not more light for you to see your way, but after all,” he went on, as Kildare moved across the threshold, “there is light enough for a fool to see his grave!”

Kildare whirled as though a hand had jerked him around, but the door crashed shut in his face.
and the iron bolts of it went clanging home into their sockets. The voice of the ministerial guide was raised on the farther side of the door into a croaking laughing. "And so adieu, fox. The teeth of the wolf are in you. You will soon be down his throat!"
Chapter SIXTEEN:

It had been a chapel. The height of the ceiling showed it, and the raised platform at one end on which the altar must have been placed. There were several niches in the wall; and at one end of the room, a rope hung down through a small hole in the ceiling. The bell-rope, no doubt, running up into a bell-tower above. At one side of the chapel, bracketed out from the wall on strong beams, was a balcony such as women of the household might have cared to use for privacy and comfort during the services. It seemed to Kildare that there were shadowy forms standing there even now. He strained his eyes until he made out very clearly that this, in fact, was the case. He was hardly sure of that when a voice marvelously harsh and profound came booming down to him, waking the echoes, bringing them in a clattering downfall about the ears of Kildare.

"Now, Kildare," said the voice of the real Tranquillo, "you are standing in my bank, in my place of business, and I have a debt to collect from you." His voice broke out suddenly at a higher pitch that was almost like screaming: "English dog, filth, beast, what shall I do? Shall I make death nibble
at you like a small fish for hours and days and weeks, till you rot away with pain and smell the stink of the grave before you’re in it? Or shall I make one mouthful and swallow you down—one draught of you—oh, what a fine wine you’ll be to me, Kildare. The thought of you will keep me from starving!"

Kildare stepped back to the wall, leaned his shoulders against it, and folded his arms. He surveyed the entire room, again, and saw that there was no help. If he could leap to the beams that supported the balcony, perhaps he could enforce a quick death by climbing to the place where Tranquillo and the others stood. That was the only element of hope, and there was not much hope in that. They would simply thrust him back to be finished off by some of those excellent devices of which all buccaneers were master.

“'I have prepared,” said the voice of Tranquillo, “several good alternatives. In a few minutes, I can have you tied and train some flesh eating ants to where you lie. That would be a very good thing. I should like to sit and watch your face while they pick your bones. Or I can hang you head down. Or I can roast you like a hog, and keep you basted with oil so that the joints won’t burn. Do you hear me, Kildare? Rotten scum, do you hear me?’”

“Poor Tonio!” said Kildare. “Are you there again, and drunk with spite? Well, I was sorry to have you stripped and beaten—beaten out of Tortuga like a dog! Have the wounds healed? Ah, but
the scars will remain like a silver net pasted against your back, Tonio, to tell all men that you have been a rude valet and that your master had to beat you. And yet I was almost sorry to do it."

A loud, braying laughter burst from one of the figures on the balcony. Another was panting and groaning as though he were stifled. That must be Tranquillo. But he who laughed, still laughing spoke in the voice of Captain Henry Morgan.

"Were you really his servant, Tranquillo? Did he beat you for your faults?"

"He lies! shouted Tranquillo. "He lies, and he is the fountain and source and well-head of all lying."

"Look at the welts on the rascal’s body, Captain Morgan," said Kildare. "But he was a useful servant in his day. He could steal well. He was my cormorant. He stole the fish that I ate, and cleaned the bones for his own portion."

Morgan laughed again, more loudly than ever, and said: "Why, Tranquillo, if he had you as a servant, what of it? I was sold by the sneaking merchants into service in the Barbados; I had a whip laid on my shoulders more than once, too. I served out my time, and the service made a man of me."

"Morgan," shouted Tranquillo, "if you’re such a fool that you believe him, I’ll let the foolish blood out of you with my sword!"

"You yellow-faced rat!" shouted Morgan. "Are you talking to me?"
“Never draw a sword with him, Captain Morgan,” said Kildare. “I’ve taught him some of the arts of fencing. His wits are too thick to master the finer graces, but he knows enough to cut a Welsh throat, at that.”

“Good!” said Morgan. “Now he has his teeth in me. This Kildare is so in love with death that he doesn’t care how she comes to him. Well, well, if I begin to finger him, I’ll get more music out of him than flutes and violins were ever able to sing. But he is your private dish for your private table, Tranquillo. Finish him any way you please and come to see me when you’ve finished picking your teeth. Unless he starts screeching under the torture. Then send for me. The tougher the man, the louder he yells, when his shame has left him.”

A door opened on the balcony. A shaft of light struck on a bright slant into the chapel, and fell full on the face of Kildare. Before that door closed, he saw Captain Henry Morgan standing in the oblong of the light, with the green-faced ape on his shoulder. There was more laughing beast in his face, Kildare thought, than in the face of the monkey.

The door closed, but a lantern was lighted.

“Have your pistols ready,” commanded Tranquillo, calmly. “When that cat begins to leap and to screech, it’s hard to tell how high he’ll bound or what he’ll sink his claws into. But the best way with him is Pedrillo’s way. So let Pedrillo have it. Take word to him.”
Someone left the balcony in haste, and Tranquillo called out: “Kildare, the time won’t be long. A brief death, but a merry one.” He began to laugh. “Have you been in the woods off Hispaniola, Kildare? Have you seen the mastiffs that run wild there?”

He broke off with a view halloo! And out of the distance, Kildare heard the baying of dogs, their powerful voices going with an electric vibrancy through the walls of the rooms. They came nearer, in sudden steps, as though doors were being opened before them. And the last door of all shunted them suddenly into the chapel, where Kildare saw three chosen monsters of the breed held on leashes by the great Negro, Pedrillo.

They seemed to rage at any man before they were baited. The mere sight of Kildare set them into a fury that filled the chapel with thunder. Kildare gave back, rapidly. Pedrillo shifted all three leashes into one hand, so that he could use the other to point out, to his master, the obvious terror of the Englishman. But Tranquillo could not have failed to see it long before. His cheerful voice announced that. He leaned over the balcony, striking his hands together, swaying back and forth in the ecstasy of his pleasure.

“Closer, Pedrillo! Closer! Closer!” shouted Tranquillo. “Let them fawn on him, the beauties!”

From the others who stood with Tranquillo, other advice came, eagerly offered, but here Pedrillo spoiled all because one leash slipped through
his fingers and the accident unnerved him to such a degree that the other dogs were instantly after their leader.

Their feet pounded like the feet of men; their nails rattled on the floor. And Kildare, fairly cornered, drew his sword to make a defence. Something tapped his shoulder, like a protesting hand; he found that the knotted end of the bell-rope was dangling beside him, a ladder of refuge. The sword whipped back into the sheath. He leaped high, caught the rope, and swung his legs up to escape the springing of the mastiffs.

Glancing down, he saw them slavering with hunger. They were so starved that the hand of a man could span their loins.

That one downward glance was enough for Kildare. He turned his face up and began to climb like a good sailor.

“Shake him down, Pedrillo!” shouted Tranquillo, half stifled with laughter. “Shake the fruit from the tree!”

Kildare had climbed well up the rope when it began to vibrate with convulsive jerks that thumped him heavily against the wall. That was Pedrillo, tugging with his mighty arms at the knotted end of the rope beneath, while the mastiffs still leaped high around him. One of them actually gained the shoulders of the Negro and leaped again from that perch.

Yet more horrible than the dogs and Pedrillo, or than the joy of those howling spectators on the
balcony, was the clangor of the great bell above. It had begun tolling when Kildare commenced his climb; now it gave out an insane clattering as Pedrillo wrenched at the rope.

Kildare, his hold almost torn from the rope, climbed higher still in order to lessen the vibration, until his head and shoulders struck against the belfry floor above him. There he would have to hang, with his legs twisted into the rope, until weariness made his hold relax, little by little, and let him slide down by inches into the maw of the dogs. How could the pleasure of Tranquillo have been drawn out more perfectly?

Twisting his body into the rope, he settled lower on it, yet the ceiling pressed on him still! He looked up, amazed, and saw what he should have noted before, a square space around which ran a very thinly etched line of sunlight. It was a trapdoor, of course, through the edge of which the bell-rope descended.

He worked upwards again. With a jerk of head and shoulders he thrust the trap well upward. Above him, the brilliant light of the day poured down through the open belfry; to Kildare, it was as though he were looking from the mouth of hell into the brilliance of heaven. Below him, he heard an outcry worthy of disappointed devils of torment; then he stood safely on the belfry floor, the trap clapping down over that uproar.

The swinging bell, smiting its noise into the very nakedness of his brain, began to pitch less and less
violently. It was almost better than the release from danger to have that insistent, brazen thundering abate.

He looked out. On two sides the belfry gave straight down upon the street, where a crowd had been gathered by that frantic tolling. On the other sides extended the roof of the house, an irregular mass of tiles that went twisting toward a tower at the other side of the building, balancing the belfry but large enough to have two windows to a side. That tower, Kildare could guess, would have to furnish him with a means of exit, so he was out on the roof at once.

He had hardly made a step when a loose tile shot from under his foot and sent him rolling. He spread his arms and legs to stop the rolling. Still he skidded until his left arm overhung the street. He looked down at small, dancing forms; the excited raising of voices came up to him like unhuman sounds on a sea-wind.

Then he inched himself away from the edge, regained his feet, and went on more cautiously, stooping over so that his hands were almost touching the roof. He gained a great square chimney and paused an instant with his hand on the top of it. Sky-blue fumes, almost invisible except for their shimmering, rose through the vent. He moved to get from the windward of them and glanced for a second over his surroundings.

The building was high, and over many of her roofs he looked down to the blue bay of Port
Royal, where the tall ships were lying and the oars of little boats flashed in and out of the water. He looked down. He was on the ridge of the house, and the slope of the roof let him see a portion of two streets, crowded with spectators. Yet others had come to high windows to enjoy this little diversion, and on top of a house opposite him, a big Negro sat like an ape, holding his bare feet with his hands, while he swayed with a pleasant excitement. In a glance he marked these things, while he recovered his breath, but what mattered above all was what he last saw. The windows of the tower were no longer vacant. At one of them crouched the green-faced ape of Henry Morgan, and at the other the captain himself was blocking Kildare’s retreat with a long musket balanced in his hands.

But the whole house was one great danger to Kildare, for now a trapdoor that he had not noticed opened in the roof like the long narrow jaw of a cachalot. In the narrow throat of that passage, he saw two men climbing, the leader with a cutlass between his teeth and a pistol in one hand. A more horrible apparition never rose before the eyes of Kildare than the leader. A sword stroke or the blow of an axe long ago had shorn off his nose and upper lip. The lip had been sewed in place again but it had been fitted very carelessly and now flared out stiffly from above the teeth.

As he saw Kildare, he put the ball from his pistol through the Englishman’s hat, snatched the cutlass from between his teeth, and let out an in-
articulate roar as he put foot on the roof. It was the very method of boarding a ship, gallantly executed; but wherever Kildare stood was the floor of a fencing master, so to speak. His sword ran past the ward of the cutlass and spitted that brave buccaneer through the heart. All that mass of uproar and bursting power became at the touch a sodden weight that dropped heavily back. It struck the second man from his grasp of the ladder. They thumped on the floor below and lay still. Other men were swarming up toward them.

Kildare dropped the skylight and turned toward the open windows of the tower, not that he undervalued Captain Henry Morgan, but simply because he was single and the others were a swarm. The Welshman actually stepped back from the window and sang out: “Come in, brother, come in. Jump through and be at home! Here we are together. Put your sword on the table.”

Kildare obeyed all of the injunctions, rapidly, until it came to the matter of the sword, but that he retained in his grasp, while half a dozen savage men, with Pedrillo among them and Tranquillo himself in the lead, burst up through the trap-door onto the roof, and came storming toward the tower windows. Morgan put the butt of the musket to his shoulder and sighted down it at the breast of Tranquillo.

“Morgan, Morgan, are your wits gone?” shouted Tranquillo. He held out both hands, a pistol in one of them, as he saw Kildare in the corner of the
room, calmly wiping the blade of his sword. “He’s mine, and I’ve bought him and paid for him!”

“I willingly enough gave you my name and my excellent preacher,” said Morgan, cheerfully. “But that was for a fellow I never had seen. You paid the price of a man, and you want me to deliver a hero to you? Tranquillo, you learned bargaining in Scotland. Besides, you’ve had him cornered, and you’ve coursèd him also, and if he’s still alive, it’s because you’ve tried to thread a needle with a hemp rope.”

“Captain Henry Morgan,” said Tranquillo, “he’s talked to you and offered you money, but the truth is that he hasn’t ten pounds. He gave away his share of the plunder of the Hispaniola, and that’s why the buccaneers are cheering for him as they drink in the taverns. He hasn’t enough gold to cover the palm of your hand. Let me at him!”

Morgan stood back a little and glanced toward Kildare as though this last argument had settled the case. But it happened that the burly Negro, Pedrillo, in an ecstasy of nervous rage when he saw his master’s enemy so close at hand, began to leap and wave his arms and gibber on the roof. At once the green-faced ape began to go through a similar dance, and Morgan broke into a heavy laughter.

“Even the beasts are making mock of you, Tranquillo,” he said. “Clear the deck, now, or by God, I’ll pepper some of you.”

He said this not loudly, but in such a marked
voice that one of the men with Tranquillo caught him by the arm and spoke something in his ear. It was a strange thing for Kildare to watch, but the entire group, with a few backward glances at the red, swollen face of the Welshman, promptly thronged down the door to the roof, and were gone.

"There," said Morgan, turning to Kildare. "And you owe it to Jimmy Green for his dance."
Chapter SEVENTEEN:

THE MONKEY, when it heard its name, made a skip across the room and landed on the table, where it sat squeaking, and making faces and gestures like an orator. Morgan put an affectionate hand on its shoulder, while he kept the muzzle of the musket turned constantly toward Kildare. The latter said: “What should I pay you and Jimmy Green, Captain Morgan?”

“I've done nothing but point a gun at a pack of fools,” said Henry Morgan, “but Jimmy Green is a fellow with a lot of interests. He has his mind set on something. I’ll find out what it is.”

He bowed his head toward the ape, which promptly put its face beside that of its master and began to stroke his head, seeming to whisper in his ear.

“Now, what d’you think Jimmy has in his head now?” said Morgan, shaking his own head as though in bewilderment. “He talks about a tall ship that’s loaded with powder and cannon, and the name of it is the Hispanicola. That’s what he wants from you, friend.”

Kildare smiled, but it was a very faint smile indeed. “The cargo belongs to the buccaneers who
sailed the ship,” he said. “My share was another thing.”

Morgan squinted at him, then said: “Meaning that you gave up all your shares for the sake of a little handful of jewels that were found in the cabin? Is that it, Kildare?”

“My name is Tranquillo,” said Kildare. “Of course it is,” answered Morgan. “But among friends it might be merely Ivor Kildare, eh? Oh, I’ve heard about the good day you had at Tortuga. But you and I must not be strangers to each other. Particularly when it comes to talking about what Jimmy Green wants.”

“I have an influence on the ship,” said Kildare. “I dare swear that you have,” answered Morgan. “They are a hearty lot of blood-drinkers, because I’ve seen a parcel of them, but I hear that they love you, which is another way of saying that they fear you! You could give the cargo where you please, and they’d never dare to yell. And that’s what Jimmy Green knows, I think. Because he’s set his heart on having that ship and its cargo!”

The monkey, every time its name was mentioned, looked earnestly into the face of its master, and now it began to chatter harshly, combing its white beard with both hands. Henry Morgan affected to listen carefully to the noise. When it ended, he interpreted: “Jimmy Green says that he has great schemes in his mind, and that he wants to put to sea. He says that he can smell all the treasures of the Spanish Main and that his fingers
itch to play with some of the big green emeralds, and that he could sit all the rest of his life smoothing the white bars of silver. But first of all, he wants that ship which is loaded with powder and cannon for Porto Bello. Otherwise, well—he has his doubts about you, my friend!"

Kildare was half a mind to laugh and half a mind to jump through the window and flee for his life. But he said: "What should I do about it, Captain Morgan?"

"Why should I put thoughts into your mind?" said Morgan. "Who am I to do the thinking for a captain of buccaneers? Would it be hard for you to walk the deck of your ship, tonight, and order the watch below? Would it be strange, after that, if you put another lighted lantern in the stern to show that all is clear, and if you failed, finally, to see a little boat slide up alongside you, or to hear the men clambering up the chains? In ten minutes the Hispaniola could belong to Jimmy Green!"

The monkey squeaked loudly.

"And suppose that I promised?" said Kildare, blandly.

"Why," said Morgan, "if you promised, and swore by your heart and your sword and your God, then you would be free to leave, says Jimmy Green, and he and I would take you down to the street and wish you good fortune on your way."

Kildare answered: "Morgan, I don't own the ship, and I won't promise to betray it."

"Is a man captain of a ship to please his crew or
to please himself?” demanded Morgan. “What sort of talk is this, Captain? Consider what Jimmy Green and I already have done for you. We have made a great enemy of a brave and famous man, Captain Tranquillo, whose name is good to raise five score hearty buccaneers whenever it is uttered; and with him there are others in this house, as worthy as ever cut a throat, and how you stand with them, I can only guess. One of them you fairly pined, for I saw it, and as for the rest, I’m afraid that their feelings are hurt. They had that look. Do you think, Captain, that I could let you go for nothing? What would Jimmy Green have to say to me, afterward? Would he stay with me? Would he ever again waste good advice and excellent wit on me? Why, Captain, the beard of Jimmy Green has been turned white by the fever in his brain; and if I should let you go for nothing, he would say that he had thrown away the flower of his youth and his intelligence for a nothing! It’s not fitting as a man of good business that I should let you go until you’ve made a present to the taste of Jimmy Green, and as I’ve told you before, nothing but the ship will do!”

His voice changed a little at the end; it had the same calm energy that had impressed the buccaneers on the roof, not long before. And now, into the window behind Morgan, stepped as strange a picture as the eye of Kildare had even seen, a fellow who had squeezed himself into a splendid coat two or three sizes too small for him, and which had
been burst across the shoulders and down the breast by the violence of recent exertions—a man with lace at the throat and wrists but with bare, brown legs. On the back of his head sat a splendid hat, flowing with feathers, which made such a strange frame for the face that Kildare could hardly recognize the features of Luis the Mosquito. But there he was, with his javelin poised. And a mighty sense of security passed over Kildare as it comes over a child that has been fearing the dark, when a door opens and the voice of the father sounds in the room.

“As for the ship, Morgan,” said Kildare, “the men who fought for it still have it. I can’t give you the promise that you want.”

“Look, Kildare!” exclaimed Morgan. “Behind that door is a flight of steps, and at the bottom of the steps there is a room where Tranquillo and the rest are already waiting, or I miss my guess. And now let me have a better answer, or I’ll march you down to them and into a worse death than the devil in hell could arrange for you. You hear me?”

He handled the musket as he spoke. With a marksman’s eye he examined the body of Kildare, waiting.

Said Kildare: “Stand fast, Morgan. If you lift the gun-butt to your shoulder, you’re a dead man, if a cold foot of steel through the back is enough to kill you. You may turn your head, and that should be enough!”

Morgan, in fact, slowly turned his head, and re-
mained for an instant with his eye fixed upon the image in the window. The ape saw the same danger, and with a hearty human apprehension, leaped to the shoulder of Morgan and embraced his head with both its furry arms.

"Put down the gun," said Kildare.
"Jimmy Green advised me to," said Morgan, "and Jimmy has wits that are better than mine. So there you are, Kildare."

He put down the musket on the table. Kildare stepped forward and drew it away.

"Come in, Luis," said Kildare. "But watch him carefully. He's more dangerous than one of your spotted forest cats, your jaguars."

Luis stepped through the window with his javelin. The ape, hugging the head of Morgan still more tightly, broke into a sound of weeping, like a frightened child.

"How did you find me, Luis?" asked Kildare.

"I heard the shouting," said Luis, "and from the street I saw you on the roof, just when the bell began to stop its noise. So I came up the side of the wall. There were a few windows to help me."

"A life for a life," said Kildare, calmly. "Because I was a dead man when you came. We'll talk later. Stand behind him. Watch him. Now, Captain Morgan, sit down and we'll talk as friends should."

"Nothing would please me better," said Morgan. "It seems that Jimmy Green made a mistake
about you. Or perhaps the rascal was joking all the time."

"Ay, perhaps," said Kildare.

"I have here some rum," said Morgan, "that is better drink for a gentleman of the sea than any wine that sits on a Bourbon table in France. We shall drink together; and then we shall talk together."

He crossed the room to a cabinet and opened the door of it, while Luis glided behind him with the every-ready javelin. But Captain Henry Morgan made no effort to find a weapon. He merely took out a small stone jug and a pair of glasses, which he brought to the table, and filled, handing one to Kildare.

"To the sea, and the men of the sea!" said Morgan, heartily.

The ape which clung in fear to his shoulder, leaned down to sniff at the glass and wrinkled its nose in disgust at the fumes that rose.

"To the sea, and the men of the sea!" said Kildare, with an equal heartiness, raising the glass to his lips. But he masked it with his hand, and though he went through the act of swallowing, not a drop passed down his throat. The glass was still covered by his fingers when he lowered his hand. Morgan, his head lowered a trifle, a smile beginning on his lips, had the attitude of one who waits, ready to start forward instantly. His own glass was covered by his hand.
"Excellent stuff!" said Kildare.

Captain Henry Morgan bit his lip.

"Good rum, and old rum," he said, but still he seemed to be waiting.

"Let's fill our glasses again," said Kildare.

"With all my heart," said Morgan, keeping his glass covered, and lifting the stone jug with his free hand.

But Kildare shook his head.

"I ask your pardon, Captain," said he. "But because of an old superstition, I never taste liquor that has been poured with the left hand!"

Captain Henry Morgan stared long and fixedly into Kildare's face. Then he said: "Here is God's pity, Captain, that you and I have traveled so many years without meeting one another."

He put down the jug, exposed his own untasted glass of the drink, and poured it carefully back between the stone lips.

"And yours?" said Morgan to Kildare.

But Kildare hesitated, fingerling his sword hilt, closely examining the brow and the eyes of the Welshman.

"Morgan," he said, "why should I not run this sword through your body?"

"Because of the waste, brother," said Henry Morgan. There was no tremor of his lips as he smiled at Kildare. There was no wavering in the straightness of his glance. "And let us save the rum, also. Let me have your glass. If you had taken enough to cover the roots of your tongue,
you would have died as surely as though a cannon-
ball had struck off your head.”

Kildare pushed back his glass, and saw its con-
tents returned to the jug, which was promptly
corked.

“But do you see, Morgan?” said Kildare. “Luis
would have remained!”

“True,” said Morgan, “but when a man has his
back against a wall, it is better for him to strike
what blows he can.”

“With sword, or gun, or poison, eh?” asked Kil-
dare.

“No man dies until his time comes,” said Henry
Morgan. “As for the half-baked fools and weak-
wits, their lives don’t matter, and there is always
God or Jimmy Green to look after men like you
and me.”

He patted the cork back into place, and re-
turned the jug to the cabinet.

“How many men have died out of that bottle?”
asked Kildare.

“Never ask for news that may hurt your feel-
ings,” said Henry Morgan. “I see you have a con-
science, Captain, and a conscience is a rare thing
and a beautiful thing, but it is like a silk coat, and
should only be used on state occasions. Sit down
again, my friend, and tell me why you have let me
live, during these last few minutes.”
Chapter EIGHTEEN:

So they sat down, facing each other, and a drop of the poisoned rum was black on the surface of the table, between them, and the fragrance of the strong liquor was still in the air. Now Luis leaned on his strong javelin, as he watched, and the monkey, recovering from part of its terror, hopped onto the back of Morgan's chair, though it still reached out a black, affectionate hand, now and then, and stroked his head.

Said Kildare: "You've taken a whole army to sea and had enough good luck in the fighting, but you made hardly enough to pay your debts in Port Royal. Is that right?"

"True," said Morgan. He got out his pipe, filled it, and presently was throwing up a cloud between his bull's face and the dark, sardonic features of Kildare.

"And the result is," said Kildare, "that all of the fellows who sailed with you think that you're a good battle-captain. They'd trust their lives to you, if you'll try to find them more money. You have the ships and the men. On some of those ships you need more guns, and of course the good gunpowder is a stuff that costs like the breath of life,
in this part of the world. Now, then, Morgan, suppose that you offer my crew a good, high price for the cargo on the *Hispaniola*, but promise it to them out of the loot from a new expedition?"

"Would you back me in that?" asked Morgan.

"I would," said Kildare, "on condition."

"Name it, name it!" urged Morgan, impatiently.

Jimmy Green took the head of his master between his paws and looked solemnly toward Kildare, like a philosopher over a globe.

"I name the place for the first raid," said Kildare, "and I fix on my share of the loot."

"Ay," said Morgan, frowning. "Continue."

"Porto Bello is the place, Morgan."

Morgan smiled.

"I could not get together more than five hundred men, and there are more soldiers than that in the forts at Porto Bello, besides all the townsmen who are capable of bearing arms, and what ships may be in the harbor! Why, captain, do you know how the forts stand, with enough metal to blow a fleet out of the water if it tries to run through the narrows?"

"The fewer men, the more the prize money," said Kildare. "The smaller the fleet, the more quickly we can sail. If you make a grand preparation, the Spaniards are sure to know all about us."

"What is it you want from Porto Bello?" asked Captain Henry Morgan.

Kildare raised his finger.
“One person is all I ask,” he said. “One captive out of the sacking of the town.”

At this, Morgan began to frown. “I hate a mystery,” said he. “But I suppose that you know of the one man in Porto Bello who will be able to pay a ransom worth the entire fleet.”

“Whoever it is,” said Kildare, “when I speak the name, the person is mine.”

“Mr. Kildare,” said Morgan, “you are a strange man, but so am I. You wish to take Porto Bello for the sake of one man in the town. And you hit on me as the engine for the taking. How does that come about?”

“Because,” said Kildare, “I take you to be a fellow with as ready a wit as I ever have found, with no more scruples than there are in Jimmy Green, and with the thing in you that other men trust and follow.”

“That is all very fine,” said Henry Morgan, “but I’ll tell you that no matter how much you may want Porto Bello, we won’t have the means to take it, whereas if we sailed into the Gulf of Mara-caibo—”

Kildare raised his hand.

“You sail for Porto Bello or for the other world,” said he. “Pull out your sword and swear on it, Morgan.”

“If I refuse to swear,” said Morgan, “and you kill me for it, how would you walk out of this place?”
"Why," said Kildare, "after you're gone, Captain, I would ask the advice of Jimmy Green."

Suddenly Morgan lolled back his head and roared with laughter. The ape, leaning from the back of the chair, peered with super-human gravity and interest down the gaping throat of the pirate.

"Very well," said Captain Morgan. "Here is my sword."

He drew the blade, while Kildare caught out his own fragile weapon. But Morgan made no attempt to attack. He raised the sword before his face, gravely, saying: "By my soul, my honor, and my God——"

"And your good luck," said Kildare.

Morgan scowled at him.

"By my soul, my honor, my God, and my good luck," said Captain Henry Morgan, "I shall gather the fleet and take Porto Bello if I can; and out of it, I shall give Ivor Kildare whatever captive he names."

"Kiss the blade," said Kildare.

The buccaneer scowled again, his eyes turning to fire, and the two wrinkles in his brows deepened to black slashes. But after that, he puckered his lips and kissed the clean steel. Then he rammed the weapon back into its sheath and started to his feet.

"Is that the end?" asked Morgan.

"It is," said Kildare.
“Give me you hand, then, as man to man,” said Henry Morgan.

Kildare put up his sword.

“I trust your oath, Captain,” said he, “but not your hand. Will you see me out of this house?”

The ape dropped its chin in the palms of both black paws, while it regarded Kildare with a blankness of thought. Then Morgan said: “Very well. Porto Bello is the place for us. No hawk ever tried a wilder flight than this! But by God, if we take the town the name of Henry Morgan will be remembered so long as men walk the earth. Come with me!”

He jerked open the door, and straightway into the room lurched the form of that tall, clerical gentleman who had led Kildare into the trap, this day.

Morgan took him by the throat. He made no attempt to resist but merely said, with a strangling voice: “If you sail for Porto Bello, you’ll be needing all of my professional services in prayer, noble Captain!”

Morgan flung him aside. He stood there reeling, fumbling at his torn throat, but he managed a gaping grin at Kildare, nodding, and saying: “Well met again, Captain Tranquillo. No cat ever ran up a rope as you did today, with a church bell to sing your praises on the way. I knew when I closed you into the room, that I had poured a spoonful of poison down the throat of this house!”

“Get out of the room, and walk down the steps
before us," said Morgan. "If there's any hasty shooting on the part of the real Tranquillo, may he put the bullets in your lanky carcass. You filthy, sneaking dog—you've been eavesdropping, have you?"

"Ah, noble Captain," said the fellow, "what does it matter if I hear today what you would confess to me tomorrow?"

Morgan broke into thundering laughter.

"That's Dr. Phineas May," he said to Kildare, "the worthy preacher and poisoner. He compounded the liquid in that stone jug, yonder. If a man's way won't turn the trick, I can always find out a snake's way from the doctor. Go on before us, Dr. May!"

Dr. Phineas May bowed deeply, as though he had just listened to a most flowery compliment, then he walked out through the door and led down the stairs with Kildare and Morgan walking behind him, shoulder to shoulder, the ape bouncing itself up and down as it rode behind the head of the pirate. The Indian made the rearguard, his naked feet whispering over the stones.

They heard voices beneath them, and issued into a long room where Tranquillo and a number of others caught up weapons and shouted with one voice at the sight of Kildare. But Morgan stopped their rush.

And after his first roar that halted them, he called: "Gentlemen, keep your pistols in your
belts. Here’s a man that’s a friend to us all. He’s showing us the way to pieces of eight. Tranquillo, why do you grind your teeth and curse? Every dog has his day.”

“Patience and faith, Captain Tranquillo!” said Dr. Phineas May, raising a long, bony finger at Tranquillo.

And so the four walked past the contorted face of Tranquillo, and straight out from the house into the strong sun of the street.

Henry Morgan stopped there. He took the arm of Kildare, and the ape, in turn, rested its black hand on the shoulder of the Englishman.

Said Morgan: “We’ve stepped into a fairytale, brother. And now if we take our eyes once off the page, we’re lost!”
Chapter NINETEEN:

Most of the hardy men of Port Royal, and all of the French who were there, paid no attention whatever to the expedition which Captain Henry Morgan was heading, but nearly five hundred wild adventurers agreed to follow him at the first call. Most of them were men who had sailed with Morgan before, and as one of them said to Kildare: "Bad luck cannot continue to follow such a good man!" They seemed to be enticed, also, by the silence which Morgan maintained as to the goal of the effort. For four days they worked in a frenzy to repair rigging and to ship provisions of every sort, above all, to parcel out through the fleet the cargo of the Hispaniola, for Kildare had found it an easy matter to persuade his crew to sell the powder and the guns not for a little cash quickly in hand, but for a great treasure that would some day be theirs. And on the fifth day after Kildare had talked with Henry Morgan, nine sail blew out of Port Royal and stood to sea, each with at least one little piragua or canoa dancing behind. Kildare, from the head of the foremost, watched the shining of the canvas, and saw the ships heel over as the wind laid its invisible shoulder against every

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mast at once. The flash of the sun on the sea roused him like the gleaming of a naked sword.

He looked down to the deck. All was in disorder. Ropes lay like heaps of entangled snakes. Buckets, clothing, all the litter of a ship was cast about with no care, and the buccaneers lolled at ease.

No admiral, however great, would dare to give them orders, except in the midst of a tempest or a battle, and even then they preferred their own wits to the commands of another. A good example was the best of all, but even then they followed only as they chose. They were chiefly English, though every nation was represented among the crews. Most of them were renegades from justice; most of them wanted gold today for the sake of rum tomorrow. But some were mere boys, fearless, loving adventure for its own sake. And more than a few had the minds of business men, like old Pierre Chaptal who ploughed the sea this season, and the next hoped to be tilling a vineyard in France. But whatever they were, all who could draw a sword or shoot a gun were tools which Kildare had set in motion for his own peculiar advantage, though in all the fleet only Luis the Indian knew what was in his mind. He felt that he had launched an avalanche on which he was now riding. He had started it, and he had given it direction, but the result might be sheer ruin beyond his control. There was Captain Tranquillo in a good ship, with a hand-picked crew devoted to him and his fame; and
Captain Tranquillo wanted more than gold or glory the blood of Kildare. There was the great Henry Morgan himself, who each day appeared more and more the perfect leader for such an expedition, and who was not apt to forget that he had been baffled and checked and taken in hand by Kildare. So Kildare had reason to grin without mirth as he watched that fleet blow westward day after day, hurried along by favoring winds. And all of this fleet was sailing because the blue eyes of Ines Heredia had looked coldly on Kildare as she sat at the lieutenant’s table with her father beside her.

The mainland of Costa Rica arose, at last, like an exhalation from the sea, and keeping it at that safe distance so that the ships might not be spied, Morgan led the way south. Through the dusk of the evening he edged in closer, however, and finally brought the fleet to anchor in the bay of Puerto de Naos, between the mouth of the river Chagres and Porto Bello, and ten leagues from that town.

To the cabin of his own ship, Morgan called the captains. Nine fierce men, with Kildare among them, drank the punch which Morgan had brewed with his own hands. They sat about in a loosely formed circle, all except Captain Tranquillo. And he stood in a corner with his eyes glimmering in the lantern light. Never once did he take his gaze from the face of Kildare.

The first bowl of punch was emptied, the second had been filled, before Henry Morgan stood
up. The green-faced ape leaped up at once from the back of the chair to the shoulder of its master. It had a bit of ship’s biscuit in its sooty hand and as it nibbled at the biscuit, little white crumbs fell on the head, on the coat, even on the wide-flowing moustaches of the Welshman. He paid no heed. He was telling his companions that they were bound for one of the chief jewels of Spain; and they would take it and wear it. Porto Bello!

Darkly those captains looked at one another, thunderstruck.

Captain Jeffrey May swallowed half a tankard of the punch and cleared his throat. He had lost three fingers from his right hand, but that hand was more famous and well known along the Spanish Main than the most celebrated faces. He was a small man, prematurely bald, but known for the berserk madness with which he fought in battle. Therefore when it was seen that he about to speak, his opinion was awaited.

He merely said: “There are as many men in the forts as there are on the ships, Henry Morgan. There are about three hundred white men in the town, and they’ll fight like three hundred devils, before they’ll let themselves be roasted and toasted at our pleasure. Besides, Panama is only sixty miles away, the governor can send soldiers overland in three or four days.”

He ended. Every man present, except Morgan and Kildare, agreed with Jeffrey May heartily.

Kildare said: “Friends, a man asleep may be a
giant, but his size will do him no good if he’s taken without warning. We’ve come here so secretly that not even the captains have known what harbor we made for. So the Spaniards are sleeping, and we take them before they stop snoring. I’ve been a captive in the town, not many weeks ago, and I know they’re sure of their strength. We’ll take them like oxen in stalls!”

Captain Tranquillo said, calmly: “The new men should be the last speakers. Porto Bello is too strong for us. We never can take it.”

Morgan banged his empty tankard on the table. He shouted: “If our number is small, our hearts are great. And the fewer persons we are, the more union we shall have and the better share in the spoils. I feel my luck in the pit of my throat, like good, hot rum. I can hear the clinking of pieces of eight, and the howling of the Spaniards, already. If you hold back, by God I’ll go forward with only this gentleman and the volunteers who want to follow us out of the fleet.”

“Well,” said Captain Jeffrey May, “I’ve spoken once on the side of caution. It’s the first time in my life, and the last. I’ll stand with you, Morgan.”

That vote was decisive. In two minutes they were agreed to make the venture, and instantly they put off to their separate ships. But such towering masts and sails they could not bring near to Porto Bello without advertising their coming, so a handful of men were left with the vessels while the rest tumbled hastily into canoas and piraguas to
make the last step of the voyage. In a favoring wind, they spread the small sails of the boats and slid down the coast, while Kildare watched the murky outlines of the forest along that low shore. It was a land breeze that carried them on, and in the breeze there was the rank, steaming breath of the jungle.

"Do you smell the salt marshes, Luis?" Kildare asked of the Indian. And the big man answered softly: "My heart is sad, master, because I am thinking of my wife and my son, and of many happy days."

The wind failed. Lanterns were lighted, the oars manned, and they went creaking on until they came to the river mouth called Estera longa Lemos, which was the nearest shelter they could find to Porto Bello. On the slimy beach they gathered, the mud sucking at their feet, and the captains took brief counsel. Above all things, they agreed, it was necessary to get quietly across country so as to take the forts by surprise, but it would be sheer madness to attack before knowing quite exactly the disposition of the various Spanish forces.

"One or two men can travel twice as fast as an army," said Kildare. "Bring the men on gradually, without tiring them too much. I'll go before you and enter the town if I can, and I'll return to meet you if the luck runs with me, and bring all the news of the Spaniards that we wish to know."

Morgan said: "If you've been a prisoner not
long ago, your face is known. And if you're found, an alarm is likely to be spread."

"No," answered Kildare. "I shall not be caught. I know the ways and the streets and the houses. No other man could have such a chance to going and coming safely. Luis, will you go with me?"

There was one lantern to light this conference; and now it showed Luis like a tower of bronze behind his master, laughing, and shaking his javelin until the head of it shone like a wind-blown flame.

"Come!" said Luis. "I would as soon spear a sleeping Spaniard as a sleeping fish!"

Kildare hesitated a moment, looking back at the men who were trailing up from the boats through the mud, carrying their heavy muskets and cursing the black of the night. That mud alone seemed enough to defeat the expedition, that and the close hot mist of the jungle which made a foul aura around the lantern. And the mosquitoes sang like ten thousand ghostly violins as they drifted toward the smell of living blood. Suddenly Kildare felt that it would be better to go alone, and to work by stealth with his unaided hands. It was the sight of the sinister, scarred face of Tranquillo and the bull brow of Morgan that reassured him. Such men were not apt to associate with failure! The monkey was still with Morgan, whimpering because of the wet, and leaning against the leg of its master like a tired child.

Then Kildare turned toward Porto Bello and went off at a rapid pace through the darkness. Luis
stepped out before him, with a surer step and a keener eye and jungle sense, until they came clear of trees and saw before them the looming bastions of the fortress which protected the coast road. It was a sufficient hindrance to stop an army, but Kildare and the Indian skirted it to the left and presently were descending into the town. Luis had brought with him a long cloak which he now threw over his shoulders. They walked side by side.

"We are to take one Spaniard who will talk, and who will know all the gossip of the town and the soldiers, Luis," said Kildare. "If you could pick and choose, what one would you select from among them all?"

"Only one, master," said Luis. "There is that Juan Capote. When I think of him, my stomach turns in me as though I had eaten bad fish."

"Juan Capote it shall be, then," said Kildare. "We know where to find him. There's one place that I need to see first."

A misting rain had begun, as Kildare reached the house of Larreta. It covered the lights of Porto Bello with a sickly haze; it housed the lanterns that were carried in the streets with small halos. Above all, in the eyes of Kildare, it shrouded the house of Larreta with a veil so close that Kildare could walk straight up to the patio entrance with little fear of being discovered. He went in among the trees and shrubs of the patio garden. The house flared with many lights that made the rain-mist
seem like the smoke of a fire; and there was a rumor of voices laughing and murmuring within the walls. Kildare came to a big window that opened on the patio. There were heavy iron bars across it to keep out intruders, and inside the room, clearly, because the glass of the pane was not water-marked or clouded, he could see the dinner in progress, every face, but chiefly, framed in the center, with all the splendors of the men and the women leading up to her, he saw Ines Heredia.

He saw her with a sense of possession, as though the labors he had undertaken had assured her to him; and he had done a great deal already, even if it were not with her will. He felt a sense of pride, as though she were his child. He felt a sense of glory, as though he had dressed her in that green velvet dress, and with his money had made the emerald necklace to shine on her throat.

And on her right appeared the face of a handsome youth as blond as the girl herself. It was Pedro Alvarado. He was talking to her in a certain way; and the manner of her listening made Kildare handle his sword. He tried to look at the others. He tried to see the bowed shoulders and the lean profile of Larreta, who sat opposite the girl, which put his back close to the window; but Kildare could pay attention to nothing, not even to the important face of the governor, so long as Ines Heredia was there to see.

"It is she," said Luis, speaking softly, his voice
at the very ear of Kildare. "You stand in the rain and she is like a bird in the sun. She does not know you are here, master."

"No," said Kildare.

"When I first saw my wife," said Luis, "before I had seen her father, it was in the forest. And I had come silently to a sound of voices, and I saw two girls. One of them was pretty enough, but the other was as sleek as a fish; she glowed like fish close to the surface of the water. Through the pouring sunlight and the shadows, she ran like many small fish through little waves.

"Then she laughed.

"When she had finished laughing I stood for a long time like a man who had been struck by an arrow and feels the pain, but dare not look down for fear he will see that he has been fatally hurt. Then I went quickly to the father of that girl. I said very few words, but I was rich. I had been with the buccaneers not long before and I had money. I had a gun, I had an extra spear head. I had many things, and the man could not tell which to pick up and hold in his hands. He was still putting down and taking up again when he consented to give me the girl.

"I went out and told her who I was. She was frightened and ran away. I ran after her, one half step behind. She ran like a deer and it was hard for me to keep up, because I was laughing. There was happiness in me like a strong wind, and I kept laughing. She began to pant hard. At last she sank
to the ground and screamed. I stood by her and folded my arms, and waited. After a time I saw that she was no longer afraid. She was looking at me like a child at the moon.

“But that lady does not even know that you are standing here in the wet of the night, master!”

“She shall know before the morning comes,” said Kildare. “Luis, I should have killed that Spaniard with the yellow hair.”

“He looks like her brother,” said Luis. “She cannot love him in the way you fear.”

“Hush!” said Kildare. “He is going to speak to them all!”

All the table was attending on the words of Pedro Alvarado, and the sound of his voice came with an increasing distinctness through the window to the listeners in the patio.

“I know what it is that you wish to hear, your excellency, and all my good friends,” said Alvarado. “And I am talking partly to correct things that are being said. For there are some who think that I cut my way through the buccaneers and so came off free. But the truth is not that. It is even more wonderful. When I have finished, you will find it hard to believe what I say, unless you can also believe that there are merciful tigers, and forbearing snakes, and harmless spiders.

“I tell you briefly, because most of you have heard already something of how I was caught between the jaws of a lion and nevertheless came away alive. I shall hardly begin at the point where
we left The Havana loaded with cannon and powder, or how the wind failed us, or how we saw the two long boats of the pirates coming over the sea like two caterpillars with many legs. I saw a cannonball knock the blood out of the crew of one boat like dust out of a rug that is being beaten. But they came in rapidly. They boarded us. And that was a miracle too, because we had such a press of men at the rail. But the leader of the buccaneers was a man of fire. He burned a way through all that met him. They gained more room on deck. In the waist we checked them again, until a cannon was fired by them from the roundhouse, and left the deck covered with our men. They all screamed out with one voice, when the slugs and the bullets and the bits of broken metal came whirring among them.

"After that, the pirates charged us again and drove us back——"

Here the governor groaned loudly that there had been a day when gentlemen of Spain did not give way even to the devil.

"That may be true," said Pedro Alvarado, with a fine calm, "but in the front of those pirates came an old grey man whose flesh could not be wounded with bullets or steel, and a bald-headed fellow who broke heads with the back of an axe, and a big Indian made of bronze who kept the flash of his javelin in our faces, but above all there was that other man, whom you have seen in Porto Bello
and about whom you still talk, every day, and in this house more than in other places!"

At this, he made a slight pause. One or two voices laughed a little, and all eyes were fixed on Ines Heredia.

"Yes," she said, "we all want to hear about that English madman who called himself Captain Tranquillo."

Kildare knew that Luis the Indian was turning his head and staring down at him. Kildare himself did not move. He could not.

Alvarado went on: "He came through the press of the fight like a dancer, but every time he bowed, someone cursed or someone fell. His sword, as you know, is hardly more than a great needle, but it was constantly in Spanish flesh, as we were driven up onto the forecastle. And there, all in a moment, my last companions were beaten to the deck. It was almost certain that I was about to die under many blows. But the voice of this man stopped all the others. He claimed the killing of me for himself. The rest stood by sweating, and bleeding, and panting, and leaning on their weapons. And this Tranquillo paid me an insult that stunned my brain, and then came in at me. I tried to find him with the point of my sword and then with the edge, but all I touched was the air, while he put his own blade through my shoulder. My sword fell. He stood back, eating me with his eyes, hungering after my life. But a gentleman does not
kill a disarmed man, and this Tranquillo, or Kil-
dare or whatever his name may be, is a gentle-
man!"

“Gentleman?” cried several voices, all at once, 
and Larreta half rose from his chair, like an om-
inous bird of prey.

“Yes, a gentleman,” said Alvarado, “and the 
proof is that——”

A sudden uproar of wind and rain drowned the 
voice and so covered the window pane that all at 
one Kildare could see nothing except a dimness 
of lights and colors inside the room. When the 
window cleared again, a little, the people were 
leaving the room.

“I must speak with her, Luis,” said Kildare. “I 
am going up to her room again, in the hope that 
she’ll come there once more.”

The downpour had been a clearing shower. 
Now all the rain ceased as Luis caught the arm of 
Kildare and pointed. Several women stood in the 
arch of the doorway that led from the patio into 
the house, and one of them spoke with the voice 
of Ines Heredia.
Chapter TWENTY:

It was too damp for the others. They were afraid to wet their slippers on the sanded paths of the little garden.

"She will come out by herself," whispered Kildare, the profound conviction behind that thought making it audible. And the moment he had spoken, he heard her urging them to go inside; she would be with them instantly. She wanted only one breath of the open air.

They retired; and the girl came straight on to the edge of the central pool of the patio. In it appeared the image of the stormy confusion in the sky, and the moon that plunged through the sky. Kildare slid behind the shrubbery until he stood between her and the door which she had just left.

"A gentleman!" said the girl, under her breath.

"Well," said Kildare, "no one can believe more than the strength of the heart permits."

She whirled about. He saw the scream frozen in her face. Not a sound came from her straining lips.

"You have come again! Pedro swore that you would, but how could I believe it?" she gasped. "Stand out of the light and into the shadow. There—that's better!"
“I thought you would call for help, and instead of that, you’re helping me,” said Kildare.

“You saved Pedro,” said the girl. “Hush! We can’t talk. If even the stones of those walls recognize your voice, Ivor Kildare, they would fall on us and crush us. Go quickly. Even if you were no more than a shadow on the ground, you would be in danger here!”

“Then ask me first why I have come,” suggested Kildare.

“I can’t ask that. You’ll say that you’ve come because of me.”

“You’re afraid of me,” said Kildare. He went a little closer, so as to see her face more clearly. “I even think that you hate me.”

“Whenver I see you,” said the girl, “my body shudders to think of all the wounds that you’ve given to Spaniards. I know you are brave, and that you have some wild, romantic feeling about me; but every time I see you, I feel the shame of the Spaniards you have beaten; my whole soul feels it, and all the Spanish blood in my veins.”

“And what does your English blood feel?” asked Kildare.

“Nothing!” she answered. “The blood of an honest person is all that of the country that has given the name.”

“Nevertheless,” said Kildare, “you are going to leave Porto Bello with me, whether you wish it or not.”

“Do you mean that you would try to force me
away?” she asked, seeming to be more amazed than frightened.

“Not now,” answered Kildare. “I only offer you this chance of going quietly and peacefully away with me, because if you refuse, such hell will pour on this house that one minute will rot it away like a million years. Come with me now, Ines; for if you won’t, I’ll have to go away and return. And when I return—I can’t explain the rest.”

“If you return, you’ll be destroyed,” said the girl. “Pedro Alvarado is now under our roof!”

“If there were a Pedro Alvarado in every door and in every hall of your house, still they could not keep me from reaching you,” said Kildare.

“That is a cheap boast,” said Ines Heredia. “I know you are brave enough, but you are no god of thunder and lightning, señor.”

“This Alvarado, this pretty, yellow-haired boy—do you love him?”

“In the name of heaven, Señor Kildare,” said the girl, “why do you ask me such a question? Why do you expect me to answer it?”

“Because I have a claim on you,” said Kildare.

“What earthly claim?” she asked.

“The blood of all the men I have killed or led to death on account of you,” said Kildare. “Is that a claim?”

“Do you put your murders on me, Captain Kildare?” said the girl.

“And by the cold look on your shallow, pretty, silly face,” said Kildare, “I know that more men
will have to die, and there's the pity of it, and there's where I know that I'm a fool. Except for your face, you're not a whit better than a million other women. No, not so honest or kind or gentle; but I'm led like a bull with a ring in its nose by the pain in my heart. I've asked you a question, and I want an answer to it. Do you love this boy, this blue-eyed, yellow-headed boy, this Pedro Alvarado?"

"Yes," she said, "I love him! Or I'm beginning to love him. And every word you speak makes me love him more. Poor, noble, generous-hearted Pedro—he calls you a gentleman in spite of all your murdered men!"

"If every sin of mine were a small stone, and they were heaped together," said Kildare, "the pile would reach higher than the mainmast of a great ship, but I swear that none of my sins is as great as my folly in loving a half-Spanish wench who hasn't eye enough to tell a man from a boy. But this guardian of yours, this honorable man of business, this other good Spaniard, Larreta—how does he feel now that the first marriage payment has been cancelled? Will he let you marry Pedro Alvarado, or must Alvarado find more money, first?"

"I have given you enough answers," said the girl, "and whatever Señor Larreta may be, he is far too high and great a man to be handled by the tongue of an English buccaneer!"

Kildare stared at her for a moment.
“It’s the Spanish in you that makes you talk in this manner,” he said. “But think back now to the honest English that put the blue stain in your eyes and the color in your hair. Let that blood speak out in you and it will tell you that I deserve an answer. If you’re a woman and a good woman, my sins are nothing to you compared with the fact that I love you. Answer me—will Larreta let the marriage go forward without more money?”

He had to wait a moment before the answer forced its way through her lips.

“No,” she said.

“Very well,” said Kildare. “Then I have a little time. I’m going away, but when I come again I’ll ask no questions. Either I’ll take you away with me like a horse on a rope, or else I’ll die before Larreta’s house.”

She ran suddenly past him toward the house. Her head was thrown back. He half expected to hear her voice ring out, to give the alarm, but then she paused, and went on more slowly until the shadows of the doorway drowned first the colors of her dress, and then the flash of her jewels, and she was gone.

Kildare went from the patio with Luis again at his shoulder. The rain had begun again. Their feet sloshed through the mud.

“Speak to me, Luis,” said Kildare. “Tell me the first thing that is in your mind?”

“I think of how many words a white man uses,” said the Indian. “And that is a wonder to me. An
Indian girl, master, if she saw that her lover had come to see her in the enemy’s camp—she would not need to hear him speak. She would understand quickly.”

“True,” said Kildare. “And I am going to learn more of the Indian style of wooing, before long. There is such iron in my heart, Luis, that it would turn the point of a sword!”

The rain, which made the world miserable, gave them both safety. A column of soldiers came crunching through the slush, fifty of them in a double file. They marched with grunts and curses, and the rain blinded them to any thought of danger that might lurk in the form of two such passersby as Kildare and Luis. They went on with their heads down, and Kildare smiled a little; he felt that Porto Bello, suddenly, had been delivered over into the hands of ruin, and he felt that ruin was all it deserved.

Even if they had never been in the jail, they could have known the place by the sounds that came pouring out of it. Madhouse or prison, nothing but a house of torment could have produced the chorus of outcries that accompanied one over-mastering solo of terror and pain, a woman’s voice, screaming.

“Listen, Luis,” said Kildare. He touched Luis and made him stand still. “But I hear,” answered Luis, “and ever since I was held in that place, I have dreamed and thought of nothing else, and the shrieking of a woman has always been echoing

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somewhere in my ear, very far off. That is Capote at work. He likes to flog the women, and that is Capote doing it.”

“Listen to her beg,” said Kildare, as they drew nearer. “To hear a thing like that is to ripen the brain of a man, Luis. All in an instant I know that God put me on earth for one important service—to kill Juan Capote!”

They stood close beside the wall of the long shed and heard the woman yelling out in one unceasing wind-song of agony. They heard the cracking of the whip on the bare flesh, and the cursing of the other prisoners. They could not make out the voice of Capote until the flogging ceased and the voice of the woman had run down the scale to a helpless, hopeless sobbing. Then they could hear Capote gasping out: “And the next time, I beat the child, too. It wants water, does it? You have to wake me up from a good sleep because your dirty brat wants water? You want to know why I beat you, and I’ll tell you why. I beat you because it pleases me to beat you, damn you. I like to see you jump and I love to hear you screech. And here’s one more to prove it!”

The whip cracked again. The woman’s answering scream was a white thrust of lightning through the brain of Kildare. The whole shed broke into a furious uproar. Kildare could hear Juan Capote progressing toward the door of the shed, slashing those helplessly protesting wretches with his whiplash.
On either side of the rear door, Kildare waited, with Luis. The door opened. Juan Capote came out staggering with labor, but great and full of himself. He struck a last stroke in his battle, delivering a good whack on the muddy face of the earth. He was drunk with power and the pain that he had given.

Before he could move, he was paralyzed by the terrible hands of Luis, as swiftly as the sting of the wasp paralyzes the strength of a fat spider.

Kildare said: “Do you know me, Capote?”

“Oh, God, serene Father,” said Juan Capote. “What have I done that the devil himself should be sent for me? Señor Kildare—Captain Tranquillo—have mercy—poor Juan Capote does no harm—”

“Beast!” said Kildare. “We heard the woman scream! Come quietly, or you know what we will do.”

So Juan Capote came quietly, through the length of the town, and past the rain-dimmed walls and the rain-splintered lights of the fort, and into the dark of the coast road, beyond. Before he had gone far, shadows stirred, rising out the earth.

“We have the prisoner from the town,” said Kildare. “Where is Captain Morgan?”

They were guided at once to where the Captain sat under a tree in the dark of the woods, with no light and no comfort except a weltering handful of fire that burned on the ground. The green-faced ape hovered over this fire and cherished it with his
hands. And in the darkness and the wet of the night, all around, stood the rest of the captains. Kildare merely said: “I have been gone a long time, because I wanted to get the best man. This is Juan Capote, the gaoler, who knows the name of every soldier in Porto Bellò, and exactly where they are stationed, and how many guns are in the forts, and how many rounds of powder for 'em. Question him closely. Only make sure that he is not lying, because he’s the greatest liar in the world. Turn his face from the fort, too, because his screaming will carry farther than the beacon of a lighthouse.”
The rain stopped before the grey of the morning, coming coldly over the forest and the hills, showed Juan Capote hanging like a scarecrow, a stuffed, dismembered thing, against the trunk of a tree. They had taken from him all that they wished. They had made sure that it was the truth by closely winnowing his words and his body with pain. Kildare cut him loose. "Even I am sorry, Juan; not so much for you but because, as you see, there are in the world men who are even greater devils than yourself!"

Juan Capote said nothing. His glazed eyes looked before him with sight. Fear, more than pain, had overcome him and was killing him.

"Shall we kill him, Luis?" asked Kildare.

But the speechless Juan Capote made a sudden gesture with both hands. Nothing could save his life, but nothing could diminish his love of life even if every breath of it were assured torment. So he made that dumb appeal for mercy, and Kildare turned away from him, sick at heart.

"Men who could do this, Luis—" he gasped. "They are not men, and they are not even beasts!"

"Why?" said Luis. "To Juan Capote I could have done all those things with pleasure. I could have done some other things, too, because I had
a few ideas of my own; but on the whole, I thought that the torturers were doing very well. At least, they made sure that he did not lie!”

They drew near the fort, taking shelter everywhere, training their muskets on the embrasures and on the few sentinels that walked the walls. The light increased. Kildare, turning suddenly, was aware that Captain Tranquillo stood behind him, smiling with infinite confidence and good-humor. There was some malicious hope that the captain could chew on without ever draining all the sweetness out of it.

“What are you thinking of, Tranquillo, poor fellow?” said Kildare.

“I was thinking of that Juan Capote,” said Tranquillo. “Of nothing but Capote, on my word.”

He kept on smiling, and Kildare very well knew what was in the mind of the buccaneer.

“The fort ahoy! The fort ahoy!” shouted the great and familiar voice of Captain Henry Morgan. “We have you ringed around. Surrender, Spaniards, and your lives are saved. But if you fight me and make me lose time, I’ll slaughter you all. I’ll fill the walls of the fort with red soup! Cheer, lads!”

A shout ran down the line of men which lay sprawled among the trees all around the place, to show that the danger completely surrounded the commander. But that commandant was a brave fellow, and Kildare could make out the frantic voice within the walls that ordered the trumpets
blown, and a drum beaten. Straightway, two small cannon roared from the top of the wall, sending their shot foolishly far and high. And there was a scattering of musket fire, not much, but enough at least to alarm the town which Henry Morgan had hoped to catch sleeping. He and all the buccaneers, in a rage, were instantly over the walls. The fighting ended before it was well begun, and Captain Henry Morgan, hearkening to the distant sounds of distress that came plainly to his ears from the awakening town, swore that he would live up to his promise and slaughter the Spaniards out of hand.

Kildare took him by the arm. The ape, Jimmy Green, straightway ran up the back of his master, and sitting on Morgan’s shoulder, cupped a hand behind his ear to listen to the conversation very gravely and judiciously.

Said Kildare: “Pieces of eight are what we want, not dead men, Captain Morgan.”

The bull-brow of Morgan was swollen and flushed. His whole face was slightly enlarged and distorted by the rush of blood into the arteries.

“I’ve marked your pretty ways and your fine thinking, Master Kildare, or Tranquillo, or whatever your name may be,” shouted Morgan, “but I tell you that I’ve promised the death of these dirty rats to God Almighty and therefore they shall die.”

The poor Spaniards already had been herded into a single big room, the mess quarters of the common soldiers, and now Captain Tranquillo appeared with a pannier in his hand, from which he
was still allowing a steady stream of blue gun-
powder to drool. The cellar, he cried, was filled
with barrels of the powder.

“It would be better than eating and drinking!”
cried Tranquillo, “to put the burning match of a
musket to this train, and let the fort and all these
men in it go jump at the sky.”

“Do you hear a true buccaneer, a jolly heart and
a right companion talking?” exclaimed Henry
Morgan to Kildare. “This fellow, Tranquillo,
would let them off.”

“A wise man looks to his own skin first,” said
Tranquillo.

Kildare walked out of the fort with Luis, saying
nothing, but thinking all the more. There was no
outward reason for this change on the part of
Morgan. In fact, this very night Kildare had per-
formed an important act of service, but neverthe-
less he saw very clearly that Tranquillo stood too
close to the throne of power to allow Kildare any
space whatever. That instant, if he had been think-
ing of his own safety alone, Kildare would have
fled from the town.

The whole troop of the buccaneers now cleared
out from the fort. The last man of all was Tran-
quillo, running wildly through the gate, and be-
hind him the earth opened, and with a great roar,
and in a torrent of red fire, the first fort of Porto
Bello was flung at the clouds.

That uproar was a fitting beginning for the
attack on Porto Bello. The echoes of the explosion
died away among the hills; another human echo of the crash came in the upraised voice from the streets of the frightened town. Then the downfalling masonry which had been hurled into the air began to strike the earth, beating down trees, killing more than one of the buccaneers.

Other damage began to beat upon them at once. The sun was not yet up, but the daylight was rapidly increasing and now Castle Gloria, which shielded Porto Bello on one side, opened fire with heavy guns and small. Morgan, ordering the men forward to this necessary attack, was in a towering passion. Kildare saw him kick aside the green-faced ape and rush forward, shouting orders; and coming up with Ivor Kildare, the pirate thundered: “What devilishness is in the hearts of those Spaniards, now? They should be running for their lives, and instead of that, they’re murdering us with the big guns.”

“It’s the governor,” said Kildare. “He has the look of a man who’ll keep them fighting till the finish.”

“I’ll feed that governor to the crowds, a spoonful at a time, from my thumb and forefinger!” shouted Morgan, and ran forward.

The monkey, unwilling to scramble on foot, caught up with its master and leaped to his back. Morgan shook it off. Again it leaped up from the side, and Kildare saw Henry Morgan lift his fist to crush the ape to the ground, and then suspend the blow. Instead, he ran patiently on, carrying that living burden! It seemed to Kildare the strang-

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est sight that he ever had seen in the world; considering what he knew of Henry Morgan.

There was no concerted work. The pirates simply found shelter where they could, in hollows of the ground, or behind brush. In groups of twos and threes or singly, they kept up a musket fire on the fort. When the Spaniards sponged and rammed home the charges in their guns, they had to expose themselves at the embrasures, and the buccaneers were the finest marksmen in the world. So they killed many a one of the gunners, but they themselves were ruinously swept by the steady fire of the big guns. Almost worse than the death that continually came among them, was the heat of the sun. To escape that, now and again, a party would rush to the fort, yelling wildly, which would bring on a certain quantity of the other buccaneers to help them in the assault. They prepared fire-pots of resin and powder to burn the gates, but always when they came near, their narrow scaling ladders were thrust from the walls, and on those beneath came a shower of stones, of earthen pots filled with powder, or shells crammed with small shot that exploded and killed all who were near.

Kildare, crouched at the side of Luis behind some small shrubs and making play with a pair of muskets, was called from behind, and saw Henry Morgan on one knee behind him. Jimmy Green was still on his shoulder, ducking his wise head every time a cannon boomed.
“What is it, Kildare?” said Morgan. “What does your brain say to it?”

“Better ask Tranquillo, first,” suggested Kildare.

“Tranquillo is only a damned Italian,” said Morgan. “Besides, he’s not as near me as you think. Because I drink with a man is no sign that I love his judgment. But you have a cold, clear brain in your head, Kildare. What would you say? Tranquillo swears that we’re beaten. But once we start to retreat, those Spaniards will be out of their stalls in no time, and cut us to pieces.”

“Send a flag of truce,” said Kildare, “and tell the governor that he’s a fool to keep on resisting, when we already have him in our hands. Offer him terms to surrender.”

“He’s a brave man. Besides, he won’t believe us,” said Morgan.

“While he’s answering,” said Kildare, “our fellows will have a breathing spell. And your summoning them to surrender will make them feel weaker and make our men feel stronger. Besides, it will give us a chance to think. And thought pulls down stone walls faster than cannon balls.”

“Time,” said Morgan, “might help us a little, now. We can make some broader scaling ladders, for one thing—ladders that the men can mount three or four abreast. Such ladders won’t be knocked away from the walls so easily. Kildare, get together some men and start the making of those ladders. I’ll send in the letter immediately. The devil’s in that governor. The fort should have
been ours long ago. And still we'll try, Tranquillo or no Tranquillo!"

He was off, at once, and as Kildare gathered groups of men, here and there, for the building of the heavy, broad ladders out of canes and brushwood, the firing of the guns stopped. The buccaneers set up a cheer, and then it was seen that the flag of truce was going forward. A time of silence followed. The pirates came out to bandage their wounds, seek shade, and stare at the fort that had resisted them so long.

There were many dead, and Dutch Peter was among them. Kildare saw the fat, round face smiling more placidly than ever, with a little round hole drilled cleanly between the eyes. Pierre Chapital sat cross-legged behind him.

"Well, Chapital," said Kildare, surprised at this show of emotion in the old buccaneer, "all of that will do him no good now, poor Dutch Peter!"

"You see how it is," said Pierre Chapital, with his usual gravity, "I've sometimes thought that when I am on the way to hell, Captain, I should like to have someone keep hold of my hand until the warmth drips out of it, and the cold comes in. A stirrup cup is a heartening thing, and so is a friend's farewell, Captain. Dutch Peter was not a thrifty man, but he was a friend."

An outcry of cheering came from the fort. They had refused the offer of Morgan, Kildare knew, and now he was sure that his fortunes would be put to the final test.
Chapter TWENTY-TWO:

There were many ladders prepared, now, and others nearing completion when Morgan appeared once more, the ape running on all fours beside him, and now and then half straightening to use a stick of wood as a cane.

"The governor tells us to go to the devil," said Morgan, "and says that he'll never surrender himself alive. The Spaniards are making everything ready for a final effort. And the one bit of good in the whole thing is that our boys are picking up their heads again. They've had an hour out of the sun, and their brains are not boiling, just now."

"They haven't opened fire from the fort," said Kildare.

"They're saving up for a volley, that they'll use when we try to rush the fort," said Morgan. "And God help the lads then. Hurry the ladders on. I'll fire three shots in the air as the signal for the rush. Get your section of men ready. And if we win through to Porto Bello, Captain, you'll have a larger share than any other man!"

While Morgan was speaking in this friendly way, the monkey took hold of Kildare's sleeve, and twitched it, all the while nodding and muttering
with the greatest good will in the world. Then off went the strange pair; and Kildare, looking after them, felt that there was more honest sincerity in the beast than in the man. Then came, with surprising suddenness, the signal for the final rush. The ladders had been distributed to various quarters around the fort; they were picked up by the buccaneers and brought out of cover with a rush toward the walls.

And not a gun spoke from Gloria Castle!

Kildare could see the shadowy forms moving about inside the embrasures, but there was not a round of shot fired until the rush of the pirates had brought them very close. Then one piece exploded. It was a signal. A storm of heavy shot and bullets whipped through the crowd of buccaneers. The Spanish cheered madly; the buccaneers yelled like wounded beasts. Several of the ladders were dropped, and the carriers, insane for battle, ran ahead to find themselves helpless beneath the walls, where stones and hand-grenades blew them to pieces. But many more ladders were set against the walls and instantly weighted down with a mass of climbing pirates.

Luis and old Pierre Chaptal were both on Kildare’s ladder. At his side they went up the rungs rapidly. On the walls, men were striving to push the ladders off with long poles, so that they would topple backward and crush the human load against the ground. Others fired with muskets and pistols, and another hurled down a great, smoking can.
It flew over the head of Kildare and exploded as it struck the ground, with a force that almost lifted Kildare from his grasp on the ladder. He looked down and saw that every man below him had been knocked from place. A smoke cloud stifled him. Through it he could see the still bodies of the dead, and those others who were not yet emptied of life were writhing. A legless man caught hold of the bottom rungs of the ladder and with a knife between his teeth began to haul his lightened body upwards.

Another grenade was poised by a cheering Spaniard above. The hurled javelin of Luis drove right through his body, the dripping steel standing out well behind the back. That soldier, in falling dropped the living grenade on the top of the wall. Another, seeing the danger, caught up the smoking pot to hurl it among the buccaneers, but it exploded in his hands. That was how the top of the wall was cleared for Kildare and his two companions. And as they stood on the crest of the rampart, Kildare wondered how many others, unless they had been similarly aided by chance, could have come to touch with the enemy. And yet already he saw groups of the pirates here and there, mastering points of the wall, hurling the defenders into the inner yard, and clambering down to push home the assault.

Kildare was instantly among them. He saw Luis put his foot on the breast of the dead Spaniard at the base of the wall and tug out the javelin. He
saw Pierre Chaptal pick up and kindle the fuse of a grenade which he tossed through a lower casement of Castle Gloria. With the explosion, there was a great outburst of smoke and screaming through the window.

Everywhere the defenders were running to gain the main building of the “castle”; everywhere they were being cut down as they ran. Only at the main entrance and the main hall of Castle Gloria was there a resolute kernel of defense that laid the entering buccaneers in heaps. Kildare made for it.

A pistol exploded close to his head, the bullet barely skimming his cheek. It had been fired from behind him, and turning, he had a glimpse of the contorted, dark face of Tranquillo through the smoke. But there was no chance to get at him. The press of the attack was too great to repay that treason on the spot.

Like swirling water, that wave of fighters burst in through the entrance and Kildare saw through the uproar, as through smoke, the noble form and the noble face of the governor, rallying the last of his men. There were hardly half a dozen of them at his side. A woman—his wife perhaps—and a small girl were plucking at him, begging him to surrender, no doubt. But they might as well have tried to influence an iron statue. With the point of his sword resting on the pavement, and his hands folded on the hilt of it, he waited silently for the next attack. Blood already flowed from his head, but his face was white and calm. With one
glance at him, Kildare knew how Spanish metal had conquered the New World, north and south.

“Hold back from him, men!” shouted Kildare. “He’s worth ten thousand pieces, living, and not a penny, dead!”

But yonder strode Tranquillo, waving a sword in his hand, and calling the pack behind him. The irresistible desire to kill brought the whole mob on in a wave. It closed around the last defenders. They went down. Only the head and the laboring sword of the governor appeared for a minute. Then the wave closed over him, also, and Kildare turned hastily away.

His clothes had been half burned, half blown from him in the assault; powder stains and burns blackened him. He looked now even more the ragged scarecrow than when he had stood in the cattle market of Porto Bello before the crowd. But he went on fiercely, eagerly, with Luis striding constantly at his side.

In the yard, they passed a group of a dozen Englishmen who had been taken out of a cellar of the “castle.” They had been prisoners since the Spaniards, by treachery, captured Providence, two years before. The scars of old floggings and the bloodstains of recent ones were written on their backs. And now they were flinging up their arms in a madness of joy. With their starved, shaggy faces, they had the look of bestial gods of the forest and of happiness.

Many others were before Kildare and Luis, in
making toward the town. Singly or in clusters, the men of the sea rushed down on the unhappy city. They were searching houses, gathering booty, dragging prisoners into the street. Brandy kegs were here and there to be tasted by any who passed; more of wine and rum being rolled out to the gutters by shouting companions. The uproar of triumph was all out of the throats of men; the wail of defeat seemed to be altogether out of the throats of women, and Kildare broke into a run, aiming straight for the house of Larreta.
Chapter TWENTY-THREE:

It was the rich quarter of the town. The size of the houses advertised its wealth. And at the doors or through the windows, everywhere, the buccaneers were forcing an entrance against a feeble resistance. Only inside the door of the Larreta house there seemed to be fighting men. Of the half dozen ruffians who were in front of the house, one was already kicking in the dust, embracing his wounded body with both arms, and the other five alternately beat at the door with clubs and axes, and dodged as bullets were fired through the wood. That door went heeling inward with a crash, as Kildare and the Indian came up.

Out of the dimness a volley met the inrushing buccaneers. It made one leap back in fear; it toppled another against the side of the door. Only three charged home through the shadows of that hall. And Kildare, following fast, saw one of these drive the whole length of a cutlass into the body of old Larreta. The man fell without making a sound. But another buccaneer was promptly pistolled by tall young Pedro Alvarado.

That left a mere pair, of whom one was that formidable, bald-headed fellow who had fought at
the side of Kildare before this. And perhaps Alvarado would have stood his ground against two, but when he saw another pair coming, he turned and fled up the great stairway and disappeared into the upper part of the house.

Kildare followed, keen as a hound. He could guess where Alvarado would make the last stand, but even before him that bald-headed pirate with the two dancing pigtails came to the door of the room of Ines Heredia. One blow of the axe in his hands split the door from top to bottom. Alvarado, shouting and desperate, sprang at the fellow with a thrust of his sword. It was beaten from his hands by a sway of the axe; and the weight of that weapon, glancing against the head of Alvarado, flung him stunned against the wall, and then let him slump against the door.

Ines Heredia had been trying to unbar the shutters of the window to escape in that manner onto the roof, but there was no time now for flight. She drew back, throwing out one hand toward the fallen body of Alvarado and calling out his name; the thin gleam of a stiletto was in her other hand. She was dressed like a serving girl in grey woolen, but she looked to Kildare like a queen of the world.

“Drop the knife, lass!” cried the bald-headed buccaneer. “Would you be spoiling goods that by rights belong to me?” And he tapped her across the wrist with the handle of his axe, so that the stiletto flew out of her grasp and tinkled against the farther wall.
All of this had happened in two gestures, as the door was burst open. Now Kildare ventured a glance over his shoulder and saw the wide shoulders of Luis, and the grinning face of the other buccaneer, pressing eagerly forward.

"Throw this one down the stairway, Luis," said Kildare. "I'll handle the other."

He saw the great hands of Luis reach for the second pirate, and turning again, beheld the bald-headed ruffian resting a hand against the wall on either side of the girl. She stood as straight as though she were bound to the stake, but her eyes held straight on the brutal face before her. She had not uttered a sound, except to cry out the name of Pedro Alvarado, as he fell.

Kildare pricked the buccaneer no deeper than a wasp sting, between the shoulder-blades. The monster swung his head and roared: "Captain or no captain, this loot is my loot. Go fill your hands in another place, for that's the law and the order!" Then his voice burst out in a frenzy: "Hell take you out of my way!"

He swung about, the huge bit of the axe flashing in an arc, but as those feet of Kildare flicked in and out, like a dancer, the great axe went slithering and clanking across the floor. The buccaneer dropped to one knee, gasping: "Mother of God, and to die for a wench——"

He spilled heavily over on his side. His great body was loosened and melted against the stones by death.
The girl had not moved; only her eyes watched Kildare, now, instead of that fallen man.

“I’ve come for you,” said Kildare. “But go to your Pedro Alvarado, first, and see if your man is dead, or only stunned.”

She was by Pedro Alvarado in an instant, pressing his head to her breast, mourning over him for an instant, and then looking up suddenly with a joy that was as pale as the horror of death.

Kildare, like a portrait painter, drew that face in the eye of his mind. He saw Alvarado stir and sit up, groaning. Big Luis stood in the shattered doorway, panting, his eyes flickering with the uneasy light of battle.

“Bring a rope,” said Kildare, “and tie the pair of ’em by the neck, together.”

Luis vanished. He was back again by the time that Alvarado got staggering to his feet, his yellow hair an entangled cloud about his head, and a thin trickle of blood running down his face.

“By the neck,” said Kildare, to Luis. “And leave a free length of the rope so that you can lead them along.”

Luis began to laugh. Something in this seemed to touch the very core of comedy in him, and still he laughed and laughed as he fitted the rope in two nooses around the necks of the pair.

Alvarado, as his wits cleared, realized who was standing before him. He cried out: “Señor Kildare—noble Captain—God reward you for saving her. My own life is nothing. Ines, no matter what hell is
eating out the heart of Porto Bello, he is strong enough to save you.”

“You Spaniards,” said Kildare, “have taught us how to turn murder loose, and some of it is running through the street, now. But as for rewards, I reward myself in this life, Señor Alvarado. Tell me—do you love this wench in the grey dress?”

“She is more than heart and soul to me,” said Alvarado.

“Do you,” said Kildare to the girl, “love this handsome lad with the yellow hair?”

She was silent. Kildare stepped quickly to her, caught her chin in his hand, and forced back her head a little.

“Answer me!” he said. “You little fool, do you think that you’ll bring him into danger if you tell me the truth? I saw you mauldering over him, when you thought he was dead. But answer me with your own voice, and perhaps I can get the two of you clear of the town. Do you love him?”

She closed her eyes. Through the grip of his fingers, he could feel her trembling.

“I do,” said the girl.

Kildare dropped his hand and stood back from her.

“There’s the end of a great design,” he said. “The English blood in you was worthy of it, but the Spanish stifles me. You and I could have made a story for men to remember. Instead of that, I have to lead you out like a pair of slaves and turn
you loose in the forest. Mind you, if the men of Henry Morgan thought that I was setting you free, they'd have you away from me instantly. You must look like miserable captives. Alvarado, smear the blood over your face and wipe your hands on her dress. Ines, tousle your hair and let it hang wild. Tear your dress. You have to look the part of a slave, or by God, you may be one before the darkness begins! Take the rope, Luis, and lead them down."

He himself went before. He heard their voices speaking behind him, but the beating of his own pulses drowned out the sound of the words and made all obscure. In the hallway, he heard her exclaim at the sight of Larreta stretched on the floor. She would have paused, but Luis wrenched cruelly on the rope, and dragged them away; and Kildare left that harshness unreprimanded.

They came out into the street to see that the sun was setting behind the Iron Castle at the harbor's mouth, and past that castle, which lay black and silent against the glow of the west, the sails of many ships were blowing. It was the fleet which Morgan had left behind, and which was now brought up by those who had been left to man it. It could have been blown out of the water by the guns of the Iron Castle, but perhaps that garrison had fled when the Gloria was taken. At any rate, all of Porto Bello lay helplessly in the hands of the buccaneers and the guns of the incoming fleet.
boomed out a salute to the victory, and all the bells of the town were set jangling in answer.

The sacking of the town was in full progress. Movables of all sorts were being dragged out of doors or flung from windows into the streets. Already the bloodstained buccaneers, drunk with wine and brandy, had made themselves still more fantastic to the eye with stolen finery of all sorts. And while some of them plundered the houses, others were torturing women and men to make them confess into what corners and holes treasure had been tucked, into what wells and cisterns it had been dropped.

Kildare and his troop passed an old man who was hung up by the thumbs from the lintel of his own doorway while one drunken brute applied fire to his feet and another shook him by the beard and shouted questions.

Kildare looked back and saw that the girl carried her head high, walked steadily on, and had about her something so detached and superior to any earthly wretchedness that the common grey robe, torn as it was, and the dishevelled hair, could hardly meet his eye, such was his sense of her. Or perhaps, as she saw the ruin of the town, the English blood in her may have whispered the story of all the towns which Spaniards had smitten, and the dead Indian millions that had been swept from the New World.

A sudden outcry before them, and the beating
of hoofs, announced the coming of something of importance. If there had been any by-lane, Kildare would have turned his prisoners down it, but the way was walled solidly on both sides, and he had to march on, merely swinging to one side, when a triumphal procession turned the corner and came on toward them. In the lead ran a score of Negroes, the poor slaves rejoicing in the downfall of their masters and hardly caring what misery came to them tomorrow, so long as there might be suffering for the Spaniards today. Behind them stormed along a dozen or so of the buccaneers who had given over, half-finished, the pleasures of the sack, in order to accompany two of their leaders. And these two were Henry Morgan himself, and Captain Tranquillo, who were mounted on a pair of mules. Captain Henry Morgan rode with the ape on his shoulder, making his silhouette a monstrous thing; and at his knee there was a great jug of rum, which he raised to his lips, now and then. Captain Tranquillo was content with a flask of brandy, and both drank freely as they passed along, while the buccaneers turned from the plundering of Porto Bello to cheer their most valiant and lucky of captains.

"The Englishman!" shouted Tranquillo. "Look, Morgan! The Englishman, and he has two prisoners instead of one. Take one of 'em away from him, if you're a man!"

Captain Morgan stopped his mule. The whole
procession stopped with him and the Negroes spilled around Kildare and his three companions. He heard Morgan saying slowly, loudly: "I would stop God in heaven and take the lightning out of His hand, so why should I not stop a damned, starved Englishman?"
Chapter TWENTY-FOUR:

KILDARE STOOD with the two captives close beside him, and he muttered to the girl: "I have the oath of Morgan to take one prisoner out of Porto Bello. But not two."

"Then take Pedro Alvarado!" whispered the girl.

"No!" said Alvarado.

"Silence, swine!" said Kildare, into the noble face of the young Spaniard, and walked straight forward to Henry Morgan. "Do you want my reason for taking two instead of one?" he demanded.

"You've come to reason with me, have you?" said Henry Morgan. "I'll teach you to reason, you scarecrow, you dancing master!"

"Good!" shouted Tranquillo. "A damned proud, scrawny, mincing dancing master."

"If I were not in a hurry," said Kildare, calmly, "I'd take you out of your saddle, Tranquillo, and tie your hands, and whip you like a dog of a black slave."

"If I were not in a hurry," said Tranquillo, in a thundering fury, "I would stop to chop you up with a sword, but instead, I'll use a pistol!"

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He cast the flask of brandy away, and hauled out a pair of pistols as he spoke. But Henry Morgan exclaimed: “Put down the guns, Tranquillo. This fellow stole your name from you once, and he may steal it again. Have numbers on your side before you fight with him. But who talks of fighting when Captain Henry Morgan is near? Tell me, Kildare, you fool? Are you talking of fighting?”

Jimmy Green caught the anger of its master at once, and began to jump up and down on the shoulder of the buccaneer, gibbering and squeaking and shaking a fist at Kildare.

“Why should I talk of fighting?” said Kildare. “Walking is the easier way, and I’ll walk on with my pair. I brought you Juan Capote, Morgan, and when you roasted him, you owed me another prisoner.”

“I owe you another for the noise that Juan Capote made,” said Morgan, suddenly laughing. “By God, there was plenty of music to be squeezed out of him, and I think I got most of the tunes. I owe you another, so take the pair of them. Hai, Kildare! I saw you on the ladder with the hair blown off the back of your head and your friends knocked out from under your feet, but still climbing. Take your two—take your twenty!”

He waved his jug, and a quantity of the rum leaped from the lips of the vessel into the air, making a flash of rosy gold in the air of the sunset.

“Take half the town!” shouted Henry Morgan. “When Henry Morgan denies a few score of Span-
ish rats to a hero, call me pig and throw swill in my face!"

Kildare waved his hand and turned back to the waiting trio, and he heard Tranquillo saying: "All right, Morgan. Let him take the life of the town and the light of it, and leave you the empty house and the darkness. He's taken the angel out of this heaven, or I'm a blind man."

"Is she beautiful?" demanded Morgan. "Let me see her! She is beautiful, by God! Look at me—wait a moment, Kildare! Look at me, sweetheart, and tell me if you could love Henry Morgan?"

He swung down from the mule and stalked to the girl. Pedro Alvarado dropped his head with a groan as Morgan stood over the girl, roaring out: "Tell me, my golden lamb—has this brute of a Kildare dared to put hands on you, and blood on your dress and fear in your heart? Tell me, sweetheart—could you love a man who is going to sweep the Spanish Main from coast to coast and heap up silver, and bury you in gold?"

"If she would bow her head—or scream out in fear!" thought Kildare.

But her head remained higher than ever, and her eye was totally undaunted.

"Speak to me, you fool! Has he cut out your tongue?" roared Morgan, suddenly. "Ah, if you won't speak, you'll talk mute language, perhaps. Kiss me, my beautiful!"

He caught her in his bloodstained arms, putting a hand behind her head, as he leaned to kiss her
white face. Kildare moaned like a dying man and struck Morgan away with his fist.

He knew that he had done wrong the instant his knuckles struck the flesh. He was sure of it, as Morgan reeled back a step and stood with a hand laid against his bruised face.

"I foul your girl when I touch her with my chimney sweep hands, do I?" said Henry Morgan.

He made a gesture to the excited Negroes: "Take him!"

They were like a score of black dogs, eagerly leaping. Kildare was instantly helpless. Luis, also, they almost pulled down, but he managed to fling them away from him for a moment, and then run like a great tawny mountain lion across the road, and leap a wall. Tranquillo took a flying shot at the Indian; but when the Negroes clambered over the wall, there was no sign of him.

"He’s too big to be lost," said Henry Morgan. "We’ll find him again, and fry him in the same pan. He may furnish the grease for the cooking of his master, eh?"

"This is your day, Captain," said Tranquillo. "You can’t be wrong on this day of days!"

"That’s a true thing, also," said Morgan. "Now, Kildare, watch me. Look at me carefully. Do you see? I take her in my arms, gently and slowly, so that my hands can taste the softness of her flesh. And I bend back her lovely face, thus—do you see, Kildare?"
“God! God, strike me blind!” cried out Kildare.

“Ah, ah,” murmured Morgan, rolling his head from side to side. “Tell me what you think, Tranquillo? Does he love her? Do I give a damn who thumbs my mistress? No, for I know that she’s a twice-read page. But for my wife—for my wife—that’s a different matter. Kildare, did you want to marry the wench? Tell me, sweet blue eyes, my beautiful heart—would he have married you like an honorable gentleman? If you’ll not speak to me, kiss me then, my heart! Kiss Captain Henry Morgan!”

He leaned until his face touched hers. Then he pushed her gradually away to arm’s length. “I might wait for you, too,” said Henry Morgan, “and I might even wait a day or two, until a few bowls of punch have ripened you, and I’ll harvest you, sweetheart, when you blush for me like a flower in the field. Do you hear me, Tranquillo? I talk like a damned poet, a damned, stale, stinking poet. Come on with them! I wish we had the Indian too, though. He had legs long enough to jump like a grasshopper, and I have ways to make ’em spring high, Tranquillo. Oh, I have plenty of ways!”

He climbed back onto his mule; Jimmy Green turned on his master’s shoulders, and began to make threatening gestures toward Kildare. But Kildare hardly marked them. The spirit seemed to have gone out of him, at last. And in an instant, with the flight of his hope, all his strength left him.
The Negroes poked his lean body with their fingers and laughed, and called him a thin bird that would take only a short roasting.

Then he heard the voice of Pedro Alvarado saying: "It was for my sake, señor. And I know that to you, I am more of an enemy than even my race makes me. Now we are lost together, and whatever cruelty these devils may find to use on us, we shall help each other to die like men and——"

His voice died in his throat. For suddenly he saw that Kildare's head had fallen back on his shoulders, as though he were dying already, of fear or of despair, and his head rolled from side to side, and with every step that he made, a groan came up out of his throat.
Chapter TWENTY-FIVE:

The tallest of all those ships in harbor was the *Hispaniola*; and Morgan had his three new captives rowed straight out to it, for now, he said, it would be his flagship, his prison, and his treasure-house.

And as Kildare was dragged up the side of the familiar ship, he heard the clamor from Porto Bello arising, with all voices blended by distance. There was whooping and shouting and laughter and song in the voice of the town, but sorrow is always stronger than joy, and now the outcry from Porto Bello was a long moan of pain, infinitely deep, and with pulses of high, thrilling fear running through it. They flung Kildare and Alvarado into the hold, weighted them down with irons, and left them. Footfalls hurried through the ship, bringing it all to life. Shouting, singing began from aft in the boat.

Through the darkness, the groaning of Kildare continued. Sometimes there was a sob that swelled in his throat, and broke out in a sound almost like weeping.

Then Alvarado said: "Brother, are you wounded?"
“Through the brain!” said Kildare. “And through the heart, and the soul. I had brought her to the verge of the doorstep—she was almost free—and then to have failed!”

“There is more nobleness in you than I can raise my eyes to,” said Alvarado.

“Nobleness?” groaned Kildare. “Would it not have been poison, every breath I drew, to think that I had given her up to you? But afterwards, there would have been a reward! There would have been a heaven on earth for me. Do you understand, Alvarado? I have done such things in my life that my stomach turns when I think of them, and the soul goes out of me. But wherever she lived, wherever she moved, wherever her eyes were turning, she would have a thought of me that would be like a salvation. Oh, Alvarado, men have cursed me like a bad conscience, but to her I would have remained as a savior.”

He fell to groaning again, and beat his head on the stanchion to which he was held by the irons.

“Ay,” said Alvarado. “I understand you, Captain Kildare.”

“How can you understand?” said Kildare. “No two men in the world could understand her. But I knew her first by the devil of pride in her. She could watch men die, and never turn her eyes. She could make her heart into a stone. But then I learned that she could be as merciful as she was proud, and to a stranger and an enemy race, Al-
varado! And today I saw her as calm as a holy angel, Alvarado, when that fiend, with the blood still on his hands, put his grasp on her. And it came leaping up in my mind like a fountain of light, that even to have touched her hand was to have touched heaven on earth. Did you understand that, as you watched?"

"No," said Alvarado. "I was only nauseated, and I wanted to kill him. That was all. I feel like a child when I hear you talk. I feel as though I never have known what love can be."

"How could you know?" said Kildare. "You have gone by the right road and kept your hands clean, where I've wallowed in the gutter. But the mountains look brighter, Alvarado, to the poor, scurvy, wretched, evil scum that live in the dark of the valleys. And I've lived there, and I've seen her brightness. Oh, by God, I can believe in miracles, for even to think of her opens this darkness and makes an angel of light and goodness walk in on me. Alvarado, Alvarado, what have I done? If I had found a clever word. If I had laughed while he mauled her. If I had shouted with laughter and urged him on, it would have been well, he would not have harmed her!"

"Well," said Alvarado, "perhaps it may be true; but the thing you did was brave, and I don't think I should have had the courage to do it."

"You speak like a child," said Kildare. "But I tell you this," he cried out, in a terrible, great,
choking voice, “if there is a God, He will see her, and save her, and give her a way to kill herself to escape from the beast, Morgan!”

“Kill herself!” exclaimed Alvarado. “Do you wish that for her? Ay, and again you’re right. But think of that beauty killed out of the world!”

“Think of it! Ay, think of it!” groaned Kildare. “What else do I think of as I lie here? What is freezing and burning me except trying to pray that she’ll die quickly?”

“I tell you my own thought,” said Alvarado. “He could not do it, not even drunk. When his hands fall on her, something will come out of her soul and stop him.”

“Do you think that?” said Kildare.

“I think that,” protested Alvarado.

“I tell you,” shouted Kildare, “there is more cleanliness in the monkey he wears of his shoulder than there is in the brute Morgan. I tell you I lie here, and lie here—and try to pray, and think every moment that I hear a scream beginning.”

All his chains clanked as he fell back on the deck, and then his groaning began, once more, with every breath he drew. Alvarado said nothing. He, too, felt the ache of groaning come up in his throat, and he too began to listen for the sound of a scream.

There was in fact a sharp screeching sound as a door opened on sea-rusted hinges, and a lantern brought long, broken waves of light to them. Two men leaned over them and unlocked the leg-irons,
and told them to stand up because the noble captain, Henry Morgan, had consented to see them.

They were brought up into the waist. From it, they could hear again, more clearly, the voice of the wounded city. A dull streak of sunset was still in the west and made the waves of the bay run in purple and blood against the ships.

They were driven aft to the captain’s cabin, and through the open door the first thing that Kildare saw was the hideously small head and the vast mouth of Pedrillo, the Negro of Tranquillo. The noble Tranquillo himself sat at the table with Captain Henry Morgan, drinking a fresh punch that filled the cabin with fragrance, and on the farther side of the table, facing the door, was the lady Ines Heredia. She had pulled back her golden hair and knotted it roughly at the nape of her neck; and as Kildare looked at the torn, blood-stained dress of wool and the bone-whiteness of her face, all his mind rushed back to that other day when he had stood before her in the lieutenant’s house. That seemed to him, now, a beautiful and happy time. The irons clanked about his hands, as he stepped through the doorway.

Tranquillo was drunk. He pulled out an Italian dagger of an old make, with a cross-guard, and beat the pommel of it on the table, while he looked at Kildare, and began to laugh, reeling in his chair with contentment and rich joy.

But Kildare looked past him with desperate eyes, and a desperate question in them, at the girl;
and she, looking back at him, smiled suddenly, and gently.

Kildare closed his eyes. "Mighty God, I thank You," he muttered.

"He's come!" shouted Tranquillo. "The high gentleman, the lady's knight is here. Step forward, gentle Captain! Bow to me, because I am about to drink to you!"

The green-faced ape leaped up on the table and hopped thence to the back of the girl's chair.

"Be quiet," said Morgan to Tranquillo. "Stop your bawling noise. I'm drunk myself, but not so drunk as that. And what I have to say may wipe the laughter out of your face like a filthy mop."
Chapter TWENTY-SIX:

The pride of Captain Tranquillo was as great as that of any man, but he seemed to have learned to swallow his emotions, when he was beside Henry Morgan.

The silence now continued for a moment, so fixedly that Kildare could hear the noise of the nails, as the ape scratched in his foolish white beard. Morgan, in the meantime, had dropped his bulky head to stare at the floor, as though he were revising a thought, or summoning his brutal will.

At last he stood up and banged his tankard on the table.

"Madame, you are the presiding judge," said Henry Morgan. "Are you ready to deliver your judgment?"

She turned her glance from Kildare and Alvarado toward Morgan, and touched him with her look for an instant, then let it drift away as though he were a far-off thing, something that passed beyond the window of a house.

Morgan glowered at her.

"For such a look as that," he said, "necks have been wrung. Soft, white throats like yours have been twisted, my heart!" he snarled at her. "Well,
we’ll get on to the judging. Look at these two fellows. Here’s a reverse, by God, in the ways of nature. Here’s a scrawny Englishman as dark as a crow, who has put up the lives of a hundred men, I’ll swear, in the sheath of that little sword of his. I’ve seen it working, and there’s nothing his hand is so familiar with as murder, I suppose. And here’s another, a blue-eyed Spaniard, a Spaniard with golden hair, a beautiful young man, brave enough, too, even if he’s not a tiger like Kildare. He has an ancient family behind him, too, and a noble way with him, and he speaks many languages very fairly, and he’s a man to be proud of, eh?”

He waited.

“Answer me!” he thundered.

He raised his fist as he shouted at the girl. Jimmy Green, suddenly, put both his tawny hands around the head of Ines Heredia, and shook his queer, wise, beastly face at his master.

“Get down from the chair, Jimmy!” exclaimed Morgan, and knocked the ape headlong.

The monkey lay curled up in a corner, whining, and making a half sobbing sound.

“Damn you, and all your ways,” said Morgan to the girl. “See what you’ve made me do!”

He strode to the corner, picked up the monkey, and placed Jimmy Green on the table, patting the back of the ape a few times. But the moment that it was released, Jimmy Green leaped again onto the back of the girl’s chair.
“Now” said Morgan more quietly but with an increased savagery: “Will you answer me? I say: Isn’t that tall young Spaniard a man to be proud of?”

“Yes,” said the girl.

Kildare leaned a little, and looked more closely at her, for he was filled with wonder that her voice should be so calm and full. It was changed from the voice he had known before; it was as though she had spoken to his memory rather than to his ear.

“He is” continued Morgan, scooping his tankard through the punch bowl, and holding it dripping over the floor, “he is a beautiful young fellow, and of course he’s a man to be proud of. But by the God that made apes and women, I’ll wager a thousand pieces of eight that in preference to him, you would choose that same sneering, ugly-face, stabbing, lying scoundrel, Ivor Kildare!”

“Bah,” said Tranquillo.

“Did you speak, Tranquillo?” said Morgan.

“You have lived some days in the world,” said Tranquillo, “but it’s a strange thing that you know women no better than this. A thousand pieces? I would lay that little wager with you, Captain.”

“I take you, then,” said Morgan. “We’ll have the proof, in a moment. You, there!”

He pointed his hand, suddenly, and roared at the girl.

The monkey, once more, stretched out his
hands as though to shield her, but this time he extended them palms down in the exact attitude of one who gives a blessing.

"You," exclaimed Morgan, "tell me if you care a whit for either of these gentlemen?"

She looked at the two, quietly. One might have said that she hardly knew them, that she was having to search her mind to remember their faces and their names.

"Yes," she said.

"I knew it!" said Morgan. "You love one of 'em, eh? As much as a silly, half-formed, foolish girl can love any man, you love one of 'em?"

"Yes," said she.

"I knew it again," said Morgan, triumphantly. He downed half his tankard of punch, and shook his head against the mounting of the fumes into his brain. "And now tell us which one you love, madame!"

Vaguely she looked toward Henry Morgan.

"D'you need a bribe, like a baby, before you speak?" said Morgan.

He stared grimly at her, for a moment. Jimmy Green began to draw the dark, polished palms of his hands over the sheen of her hair.

"How would it be to his advantage, if I told you?" she asked.

"It will be to his advantage, perhaps," said Morgan. "We'll see about that. It won't hurt him, if you tell me. Which one is your choice, my girl?"

She looked at them both, with a distant and
misty consideration. It seemed to Kildare that a faint flush came over her face, and the warm beauty of a child asleep.

"Which one, damn it? Which one?" said Morgan, thundering again.

"Ivor Kildare," said the girl.

She spoke with so little emphasis that Kildare thought she was using his name to begin a sentence, or to ask a question; he heard Alvarado cry out her name with a wail of sorrow in his voice; and then Kildare understood that the quiet with which she spoke was the calm of deeply assured finality.

And yet he had heard her say that she cared for Alvarado. His brain turned.

Morgan appeared delighted. He struck the table with his tankard until the rum punch threw up a tawny spray toward the ceiling. He laughed, and shook his fist at Tranquillo.

"A thousand pieces, you fool!" shouted Captain Morgan.

Tranquillo thrust out his jaw, a characteristic distortion of his face.

"It's a lie and a trick," said Tranquillo. "All the English are liars. And I say, she lies!"

"She's named the man," said Morgan, grimly, "and you'll pay the money. And now, Ines, beautiful and good, worthy of princes and kings, now, Ines—I make a bargain with you for the sake of this Kildare. I swear to God that I wish it had been the other one, the tall fellow, because for my own
part I would like to keep Captain Kildare in my hands. There is a certain score that we should settle before he leaves me. But I ask you again—out of your heart, you love this man?"

She looked straight at Kildare with what seemed to him a sort of quiet amusement; and then she said: "Yes, out of my heart."

No other words ever had been spoken, like these. They rang through the brain of Kildare. They spread before him a prospect of all the happy days of his life; they made the past a moment and the future would be eternal for him.

"Out of your heart, eh?" said Henry Morgan, turning and leering at Kildare. "Look at the skinny fool, now; the fire-eater, the sword-swallower, the man-killing Kildare—and see how he trembles. His lips have lost their blood. By God, I'd like to make his whole body lose its blood, and turn his eyes into the eyes of a fish. But—well, you have spoken, Ines. You have made up your mind in spite of poor young Pedro Alvarado who stands there like a thing cut out of pale stone, with a bad imitation of a smile worked on his face. You'll let him suffer, and give yourself to this sneering, dark-skinned, ugly devil? By the leaping thunder, I think that he has Moorish blood in him. Tell me, Kildare: Was your mother a Moor, perhaps?"

Kildare said nothing. He did not even glance at Morgan, but kept his look fixed on the girl as though she and the miracle might vanish together.

"Well, then," said Tranquillo, harshly, "get the
dirty work over, Captain. I want to see Kildare screech out like a monkey that gets a bullet through its guts.”

Tranquillo, as he said this, leaned forward in his chair, feeding his eyes with the thought. He looked, at that moment, more like an older and larger brother of Kildare than ever before.

“Why,” said Morgan, leaning back and making a gesture that seemed almost one of resignation and relief, “why, of course in a business like this, one pays. Because you love this man and choose him, he goes free, my dear Ines. You shall see him planted in a canoa. With your own lovely eyes, Ines, you shall watch him sail out of the harbor, and once outside the trap, it will be easier to catch a bird out of the sky than that fish out of the sea. You shall see him take his freedom out of your own beautiful hand; and after that, you will be in the mood for giving, eh?”

Captain Tranquillo grinned broadly, with parted lips, as he tasted this moment. But Kildare did not cry out as Tranquillo had hoped; he barely gasped the words: “Ines, in the name of God, no! I’d rather be burned alive, and watch you torn to pieces while I burn.”

The face of Henry Morgan swelled with red and purple, as he glared. But he merely said. “Flesh is flesh and blood is blood, and blood will have its way. And afterward, a fair life and many long days to you, my lady. Does Kildare go free?”
Her eyes opened like the eyes of a child, and no man could say what she was seeing.

“No,” she said softly.

Morgan got to his feet. He put his face close to hers. The monkey, leaning well forward, laid a hand on the head of Morgan and another on the head of the girl, peering from one face to the other like one who intercedes.

“Is that the love that you talk about?” said Henry Morgan.

“Women are selfish beasts,” said Tranquillo, and he began to laugh, while he filled his flagon from the punch bowl.

“I’ll show you him eaten a morsel at a time,” said Morgan. “I’ll have you listen to his yammerings for hours while he dies!”

She turned her head from the brutal face of Morgan.

“Ivor!” she cried.

At that appeal, Kildare lifted his chained hands. Morgan turned and knocked him headlong to the floor of the cabin, so that his head skidded into the wall, and in red fire and blackness he lost his sense of this world.
KILDARE WAKENED with that ache in his throat of his own groaning. First he saw a rag of a moon blown among the clouds, like the wind-worn remnant of a pennant in the rigging of a tall ship. Then he saw Pedro Alvarado seated beside him, with his fine head bowed between his hands. Finally, he looked up and recognized Pierre Chaptal.

"Ah, Chaptal," said Kildare, "how I thank God to see you here!"

"I’ve heard men thank God for a drink of wine, many times, and even for an omelette, but I’ve never heard them thank God for Pierre Chaptal," said the buccaneer.

Kildare sat up. There was a wine cask, half empty, behind him. As he pushed himself up, the wine sloshed softly inside the cask.

"Look!" said Kildare, holding up his hands, with the chains on them. Chaptal levelled a half-pike at his breast at the same moment. "These are all that hold me, Pierre. Break them, or file them through, and we’ll master the ship!"

"Ivor," said Alvarado, "you don’t understand. He’s set here to guard us."

"To guard us?" said Kildare. "To guard us?
Then Morgan is drunk and a fool! My old shipmate, Chaptal, set to guard us? I could laugh at that, except that my head is still ringing."

"Try him, then," said Alvarado. "I've tried him before with every promise that a man could make, and I have wealth enough in Spain to turn the head of a prince by offering half of it!"

"But, my friend," argued Chaptal, "a mountain of gold in Spain is less to Pierre Chaptal than one piece of silver in this old hand of mine."

He held out that hand, spreading the fingers, and then closing them on nothing.

"And promises," said Chaptal, "are no heavier than the breath that is used in speaking them."

"But, Pierre," said Kildare, "remember the vineyard in France, and how you earned half of it by one voyage with me!"

"And the rest," said Chaptal, "I shall make on this voyage with Captain Henry Morgan."

He nodded his head at them. The moonlight covered it with silver. And his thoughts made him smile open-mouthed, like a wolf.

Kildare looked away from that savage picture and regarded the town, out of which the clamor was still rising with an unabated voice. Two houses were burning close to the edge of the bay, and they cast two red moon-paths over the water. In front of one flame-wrapped dwelling, little figures danced and gesticulated like tiny marionettes. Kildare, for a moment, was as one who sits in a theatre, divorced from what he saw.
From aft, he could hear the voice of Henry Morgan thundering out a song that ended with a crash of flagons beating on the table, and bellowing laughter that contained, pre-eminently, the high, snarling voice of Tranquillo.

"They're holding the carouse," said Padro Alvarado, "and in the meantime, the small boat has been sent ashore to get certain materials that Morgan wants; and also to pick up a few spectators of the spectacle he'll soon be making on the ship, here."

"What sort of spectacle?" asked Kildare.

"You—and me!" said Alvarado. "We'll be triced in the rigging, before long, Ivor. And then—she will be brought to watch!"

He stopped short, and then moaned, softly: "Oh God! Oh God! I saw, just then, the court of my father's house, and Enrico holding my bay horse, and my mother looking down at me from the window, shaking her head because she was afraid of that bay colt. I saw that! My God, my God, Ivor! Does that mean that I've come to the end of my life? Am I to die? Am I to die?"

He managed to keep his voice low enough, as he said this, but only by strangling the sound. And he could not control the way the pitch went up toward the end.

Pierre Chaptal spoke before Kildare could answer, saying: "Death is a queer beast. I like to see the way that it lays hold on a man, Captain! Now, here's the fellow who fought as bravely as anyone,
when he was on the deck of his ship, with a sword in one hand and a pistol in the other! He was the brave lad and the hero, then. All his fathers would have been proud of him. But now death is not raging or showing him her teeth and claws. She simply is lying down by him and holding him in her cold, stinking mouth, and the nerve and the soul rots away in him very fast!"

"You're not to die, Pedro. Neither am I," said Kildare. "You are going to live. Here is our old sea-wolf, our Pierre Chaptal. He'll see reason, presently, and set us free. What, Pierre! You know there's a treasure in this ship. There's a great treasure, and it belongs to the first man to put hands on it. They've sent the men away from the ship. There's only Tranquillo, and Morgan, back yonder in the cabin, and Tranquillo's Negro, and the ape. Three men. And here are three of us. Do you see? It's too simple, and too easy. We are all rich men, Pierre. Quick, then, and we'll be about it!"

Chaptal looked aft, toward the source of the song that was this moment rising again, Tranquillo and Morgan making together a brazen chorus. And Chaptal licked his lips. He pulled a bunch of keys out of his pocket, selected one, and shook it in his fingers, thoughtfully. But, in a moment, he dropped the bunch back into his pocket.

"No," said Chaptal. "I would like to. I yearn to. There are treasures in this ship that I have seen with my own eyes that will never get out of those eyes again. There is a cross set with rubies that are
colored red with my heart’s blood. Yes, my heart’s blood dripped, and I saw in that cross a manor house and a whole manor, with orchards, and green pastures, and birds singing in the hedges for the pleasure of Pierre Chaptal. But, noble Captain, brave Captain, I must put the picture away from me.”

“Tell me why?” asked Kildare.

“Because,” said Pierre Chaptal, “when the rats leave the ship, it is time for the sailors to leave, also. And your luck has run away from you, my Captain. Therefore, I run away, also. I go to a safer deck, and I stand there, and I shake my head sadly when I see the ship sink, carrying down two such brave fellows.”

“Will you listen to me, Chaptal?” said the young Spaniard. “I will swear on the blood and the honor of a Christian gentleman, that I will give you——”

“Hush, Pedro,” said Kildare. “Why should you swear to him? Why should you promise? What are blood, or honor, or Christianity to Pierre Chaptal. There are no flaws in the steel that makes him. He’s a cutting edge that never has been turned, eh?”

He actually smiled at Pierre Chaptal. There was a certain reason for the light that had appeared in the eye of Kildare, however, and this was a figure that flowed over the edge of the ship’s rail, far forward, a figure of a man who seemed naked, and whose wet, polished body gleamed like bronze in the light of the forward lantern.

That form, having appeared, as suddenly was
lost again among the shadows of the forward structure. But the heart of Kildare had leaped suddenly, and high.

"True," Chaptal was saying. "What I am, I am. There is no changing me. Other men laugh to-day at what made them cry yesterday, but not Pierre Chaptal. Not I, by the mercy of St. Christopher—may he lead my steps to a fountain of liquid gold! No, Pierre Chaptal has from the first struck out for only one cause, and that cause has been a vineyard of my own, and a house that will call me master. What will they say when they see poor Pierre, the beggar, return among them riding on a horse? What will they say when the cart takes me to the market, a man with money in his pocket, a man to be regarded? How will the girls in the village stand all in a row, with their faces blushing, and watch me, and duck their heads at me, till the baskets swing on their arms, and they shuffle their heavy shoes a little, and in every heart of them, there will be a big hope, warmer than a glass of Burgundy, that she will be able to take the eye and the fancy of the rich man. Do you see, noble Captain, why Pierre Chaptal has hewed to a line, and to one line, only?"

"I see," said Kildare. "And Morgan is singing well, to-night. Listen!"

The buccaneer, in fact, had opened his throat and sent a quiver through the entire ship, as it were.
“He sings,” said Chaptal, “because his luck is sitting with him.”

“Ay,” said Kildare. “His luck is poor little Jimmy Green.”

“It is,” said Chaptal. “His luck is in the devil that is living in Jimmy Green, for a little while. Then it may slide into the body of a cat, or a bird. But that devil will always be with Henry Morgan till he dies.”

“He may die to-night,” said Kildare.

“He will die when his term is up,” said Chaptal, with a grim assurance. “Ah, there the boat puts off from the shore again to come to us.”

Kildare glanced over the side, and saw a long boat coming, a lantern burning fore and another aft, and the oars making play like wings of gold, as they glistened in that light.

“We are dead men,” said Pedro Alvarado.

“Not so lucky as that,” answered Kildare. “But we’ll have that fortune before very long. It’s half an hour before they get to the ship. And how long can they keep up alive under the torture, Pierre?”

“Why, there’s a matter,” said Chaptal, considering, and nodding his head gravely. “Well, I’ve seen a man left for dead, hanging in his ropes, partly whittled away with knives and partly melted away with fire, and yet at the end of thirty-six hours, I’ve heard a screech brought out of him by using the flame or a torch in the right way. I, now, am a master at the use of flame!”

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Kildare saw the naked form of the man of bronze glide down from the forecastle to the waist, and crouch in the shadow under the rail. As a snake may be seen working through grass, dimly, so the form of the Indian worked forward through the shadow. There was one shining point of light that often showed before him, pale as the ghost of a lamp, and Kildare knew that that was the broad leaf-shaped head of the javelin, made of the finest steel, sharpened to a razor’s edge, and capable of driving through eight inches of oak when the ample grasp of Luis wielded it.

So Kildare said to Chaptal: “Now, I’ll wager to you, Chaptal, that I live more than two days, or that I am dead in half an hour.”

“So?” said Chaptal. “So?”

He sucked at his front teeth, thoughtfully.

“Well,” he said, “I would make a wager, though I am not one who gambles. But you have nothing to bet.”

“Ivor,” muttered Alvarado, “to what saint shall I pray for strength to die like a man, without uttering a cry?”

“No, no,” said Chaptal. “If you yell, it makes the dying easier and quicker, perhaps. It teaches the breath a way out of the body. It sets an example to the spirit. Besides the pleasure that you give to those who are watching and listening, the screaming makes you faint sooner, and then, of course, you feel nothing at all.”

He struck the point of the half-pike into the
deck and rubbed his hands together, on this thought. But there was the faint noise of metal touching against metal. The spear head of Luis must have struck some bolt. And the noise made Chaptal snatch the pike out of the deck and whirl about. Luis, rising out of the shadow beneath the rail, drove his javelin through the body of Chaptal up to his hand hold on the haft. And as Chaptal fell, the Indian put his foot on the loose form and tugged twice, before he could draw the streaming spear out again.
Chapter TWENTY-EIGHT:

PEDRO ALVARADO got to his knees and his feet, gasping: “My prayer! My prayer!”

Kildare, on his feet in turn, said rapidly: “Take the keys from that pocket. So! Try them in this lock that holds the irons. Brave Luis! Softly and quickly! I waited for you like a father for his son. I knew that you would come! So!”

Water still was dripping from the loin-cloth of Luis; excitement still kept a tremor in his great body and in his eyes, as he worked with the key, and sprang the locks till the hands of Kildare were free.

“Do you see, Alvarado?” Kildare was saying as the Indian tried other keys to loose the Spaniard. “There was the hand of God in it, because Morgan left my sword with me, still!”

Then he saw Pierre Chaptal stir, and lift himself to a sitting posture. His entrails flowed out from his body. But he said, in a clear voice: “Cider for the kitchen, Jacqueline, you fool, but wine for the gentry at my table!” He fell back and died on the last word, as Alvarado became again a man with free hands.

“The boat is coming fast, Ivor!” muttered Alva-
rado. "What shall we do? Drop overboard and swim? Can we draw up the canoa that's under the stern and try to make off in it? Is there time?"

"You forget," said Kildare. "She is still there in Morgan's cabin, listening to them sing!"

He started aft toward the noise of the singing. The gigantic Indian caught his arm and held him, muttering: "There are a thousand more; and you can have them all for squaws. There are a thousand thousand women to cook your food and make your clothes. Let this one stay. There is too little time!"

"He's right!" urged Alvarado. "Think, Ivor! The good chance has come to us. We cannot take her. Another day we return to rescue her, but now every moment—"

"I go alone, then," said Kildare, and slipping from the hand of Luis, he ran aft.

The whispering feet of Luis followed. And glancing behind, as he climbed up from the waist, Kildare saw Alvarado run as if to join in the attack, and then halt, faltering, unable to govern his will.

The singing ended, and as he came close to the door of the cabin, Kildare looked to the side and saw the many-oared boat drawing nearer across the bay. The men were calling out to give a steady rhythm to the beat; faintly and musically their voices sounded.

Morgan's voice was saying: "That was a good song, Tranquillo. You're a good sailor. There's no
good sailor, or man of the sea, that can’t bawl out
a tune and warm up the heart. If you would sing,
now, Ines, you’d soon warm your own heart.”

“Give her some of the punch,” said Tranquillo.
“That will warm her blood for her. That will thaw
her.”

“You see her sit there like a fool and touch
nothing,” said Morgan.

“Ay,” said Tranquillo. “But if the jaws of a
horse can be pried apart, so can the jaws of a
woman. Dose her with rum once or twice, Henry
Morgan, and she’ll melt into your arms like a bird
into a nest, by God!”

Kildare, crouched at the door of the cabin, saw
the girl with her hands folded on the edge of the
table, her look fixed before her. She seemed fea-
tureless. There was no color in her eyes. Her lips
were stained no more than a faint grey-purple. It
was like a face seen through water.

“True,” said Morgan. “And I’ve known you for
a man of brains, Tranquillo. Now we’ll see what
happens to her when there’s a cargo of rum
aboard. Rum has stopped mutinies before this day,
God knows! Here, sweetheart! Drink for Henry
Morgan like a good child; drink with Henry Mor-
gan! Here’s the glass at your lips!”

He pressed the rim of the flagon to her mouth,
as he spoke. When she refused it, the force of his
hand moved her head back a little. The sword
trembled in the hand of Kildare, but the monkey
which still sat on the back of the girl’s chair
reached down and pushed the cup of punch from the lips of Ines Heredia. Then it sat up and began to shake its head, glibbering with a scolding voice.

"Look!" said Morgan. "Even the ape won't have me do it. Ines, part your lips to taste the punch. Open your heart to me afterward. I'll marry you, and be damned to us both if I don't. And I'll make you a lady, one day. Sir Henry Morgan's lady. Or Lord Henry Morgan. There's a sound to that, eh? Lord Henry Morgan! I can hear the crowds name me as I go by in a coach and six, with postillions and all. I can hear 'em mutter my name. And you shall sit beside me, my beauty."

The great Negro, Pedrillo, had been sitting in a corner of the cabin with his eyes closed, squatted on his heels. Now he rose, and stepping past the table he exclaimed: "I smell the musk; and he is close!"

"Who is close, Pedrillo?" asked Tranquillo.

"The Englishman!" said Pedrillo. "The man with the sword!"

His eyes rolled. His great nostrils flared and contracted like the nostrils of a scenting beast.

From her chair, the girl started to her feet, and slipped around it.

"He's near," said Morgan. "That's true. He's as near as the waist of the ship and there he'll stay, with his sword, because I have been watching him as a wolf, Pedrillo, that will cut his throat the moment he tries to move."

"He's nearer, master," said Pedrillo, pulling out
a huge pistol, “because I smell the musk, and I’m afraid!”

Kildare, at the same time, moved out opposite the doorway as the Negro giant stepped toward the threshold. What Pedrillo saw was probably no more than the dim ray of light that glinted down the meager blade of Kildare’s sword. The pistol exploded with a heavy roar, sending a bullet into the deck; Pedrillo dropped on his face.

“Ines!” called Kildare.

But as though her eyes could dissolve the darkness, she was already passing him. Morgan had reached for her; but his hand caught on the flutter of her cloak and stripped it from her without stopping that sudden flight.

The monkey screamed, jumping up and down on the back of the chair. Tranquillo, catching up his sword, with the face of a madman rushed forward; and Morgan snatched a pistol from the table as Kildare drew the key from the door and, leaping back, slammed it. The bullet from the pistol bored through the door. But it was massive oak, meant to withstand the shock of any combing wave, and as Kildare fitted the key from the outside and turned the bolt with a single gesture, the strength of that door endured the whole weight of Tranquillo, that was flung against it.

“He’s gone!” shouted Tranquillo. “Death of my life, he’s gone, Morgan!”

“Tear down the door!” cried Morgan. “Let me at it. If he gets off free, the devil rot my bones!”
“Ship ahoy!” called a voice beside the *Hispaniola*. “What’s loose aboard you?”

It was the returning boat with its throng of men, already making fast.

Kildare opened his throat until thunder poured out of it.

“Mutiny! Murder and mutiny!” he roared. “Tranquillo is trying to murder Captain Morgan! Help in the captain’s cabin!”

Luis was already well aft, and Alvarado was now with him, pulling in the rope that tethered the big canoa astern. Down that rope they slid, Luis first to steady the craft and receive the girl as she was lowered by Kildare; and then Kildare himself and Alvarado. They heard the boat’s crew from the shore clambering aboard the *Hispaniola*; they heard the pounding of their feet running aft toward the cabin from which came the yelling of Tranquillo, the thunder of Captain Henry Morgan, and the unearthly screeches of Jimmy Green.

With a long knife from his girdle, Luis slashed the mooring line; a thrust of his hand parted them from the black contagion of that hull.

Then the sweeps! Luis, handling the massive beam like a toy, had one of the oars out in a trice, and setting it against the hull of the *Hispaniola*, gave the canoa one more powerful impetus. Kildare and Alvarado, between them, handled the second sweep, and as they set it against the thole, the girl ran aft to the steering oar, to straighten the head of the little craft for the mouth of the harbor.
It seemed that the tide had set against them, or that they were stuck on a mud bank, so little progress were they making, to overcome the inertia of the canoa, so great was the danger that loomed above them in the Hispaniola.

They heard the cabin door go down with a crash, then. Almost immediately many men topped the after rail of the big ship. Their terrible nearness made every word audible as Tranquillo shouted for muskets, and himself levelled a piece.

“No, damn you!” shouted Henry Morgan, clearly identified by his voice and by the silhouette of Jimmy Green, perched on his shoulder. “The fox has gone to earth after a good run, and you shan’t dig him out. This pack has already been blooded, and the hunt is better than the kill. Let them be from the deck of my ship, Tranquillo!”

“What fool’s brain has jumped into your head?” raved Tranquillo.

“It’s Jimmy Green, who’s been saying ‘no’ to me ever since he laid eyes on that girl. Go chase ’em in another craft and see what luck you find for yourself, after Jimmy Green says the devil is in it!”

“A hundred pieces!” shouted Tranquillo. “A hundred pieces to every man who pulls an oar to take them. Into the boat, brave lads, hearty buccaneers. We’ll run them down before they’re well under way. There’s little wind to help ’em!”

All save the figure of Henry Morgan, with the ape on his shoulder, disappeared from the after
rail, their footfalls thundering forward along the deck. Soon they would be shooting the small boat around the stern of the Hispaniola and making it leap toward their prey, and in the meantime, the wind blew small and faint indeed! What little there was of it came off the land from a favorable point, but as the three men in the canoa made the ropes screech, hauling up the yard to the peak of the canoa’s mast, the canvas was hardly swelled by the gentle pressure of the breeze, and the boat heeled not at all. Even so the wind gave them such headway that the oars were of no use. They shipped the sweeps and stood in a silent agony, listening to the faint dash of the harbor waves against the prow. Still the Hispaniola seemed to embrace them and hold them back with a spell of darkness.

“Ahoy, Kildare!” shouted the hearty voice of Henry Morgan.

“Ahoy, Morgan!” hailed Kildare.

“Run well, old fox!” called Henry Morgan.

“With all the wind the sky can give us,” answered Kildare. “A foul death never came to a fair sportsman. Good luck to you, Morgan!”

“I’ll have all the luck that Jimmy Green will give me,” said Henry Morgan. “Ines!”

She was still on the raised platform aft, holding the steering sweep, though Luis was ready to take it from her. She lifted her head in answer to the hail.

“Make your man happy,” shouted Morgan, “for
he's crossed Henry Morgan and yet he's still living and laughing. Make him happy, and thank God and Jimmy Green!"

Jimmy Green became a shrill gibberish, hearing his named called out so many times; but the sound came more faintly to the ears of Kildare; and now around the stern of the big ship glided the boat of Tranquillo for the pursuit.
Chapter TWENTY-NINE:

They stood well aft, all four of them, Kildare handling the bowline, feeling constantly for the wind’s altering. Luis the Indian sat on his heels to make a smaller mark if the muskets of Tranquillo should open fire. Ines Heredia put her hand in that of Kildare, but she looked toward Luis and Alvarado, as she said: “No other three men in the world could have done such a thing. No other three would have tried.”

Alvarado turned so that the moon would mask his face with blackness.

“There were only two men who tried and two men who won, Ines,” said he. “I was the frightened dog that sulked in the waist of the ship. Yet I knew you were there in the cabin, sitting in the middle of hell. But I would have run off to save my own skin, because the boat from the shore was walking up on us all the time. It was only Ivor who went aft for you.”

A silence came, after this. The girl seemed to mark nothing but the progress of the boat behind them, as the double row of oars flashed faintly in the moonlight and was buried again. Or else she was listening to the increasing rush of the wind,
and feeling the sway of the canoa as it felt the weight of the breeze cuffing it forward. For a moment, Kildare was afraid that Alvarado would receive no answer. That silence lasted long enough to fill Kildare to the throat with greater cold than that of fear.

“We’re not all of us leaders, Pedro,” said the girl. “Most of us simply follow. Besides, you thought that I’d cast you off. Why should men lift a hand for a girl whose mind goes about and about like a weather vane in April?”

“I want no comfort,” said Alvarado, “but only one more fair chance to prove if there’s any man in me before I die. But will you speak to me, Ines, if you can, and tell me why you had one mind in the house of Larreta, and another in the cabin of the Hispaniola? Or was it simply that when we faced Morgan you could see more clearly the truth about the two of us?”

Kildare moved suddenly forward; but though their voices were lowered, he could not help hearing.

She said: “He was the enemy of my father’s blood in me, Pedro. When I saw him first in the house of the lieutenant, I’ve told you how he seemed to take us all up with a glance, and weigh us, and then throw us away. I hated him shamefully, then. I wanted to despise him for a murdering pirate, but I could only hate him for being the man he was. And then I saw him before the governor, despising all the men who faced him. I can’t
tell how he knew that I was there, but he knew, and spoke to me. He had killed two men that day in the cattleyard, and he said that he killed them in my name. He made me speak out to save the life of Luis. And it seemed to me that he was dragging me out from among my people and my race, and forcing me to stand beside him. I could see him every hour of the day and night, after that, and his ugly, sneering face seemed to be despising me, always, and drawing me away from myself. When he escaped, he came to my house. He seemed to put his will like two strong hands on me. I felt the hatred dying out of me, and that made me more afraid than ever. He went away, and something in me kept crying out after him. I said that it was my mother’s blood, only. Then you came, Pedro. I told you that I loved you because I wanted to love you, and let your love come around me and shut out every thought of him; but when you told how he came up out of the sea and captured the Hispaniola and how he made you cancel your claim on me, then all surety left me. I was afraid. It was like sitting alone in a house and seeing a terrible face look in through a window. That same night I saw him again and tried to drive him away with words so that he would never come near me again. But still I knew that he would come. I knew that he would find a way through armies. He came, and he stood in the room with you and me. He asked me which one of you I chose, and I chose you, Pedro; but it was a wretched lie that came out of a
cold heart. And then again, we were in the cabin of Henry Morgan, and he put the same question to me, and it seemed to me that the brutal voice of Henry Morgan was something that came up out of my own soul and told me now to meet my fate squarely and honestly. But the moment I spoke his name, all the doubt went out of me; all the fear and the hate and the anger and the shame went rushing out with that breath. It was like seeing a face by daylight that you’ve never seen before except by dusk, or by night. I’ve tried to tell you everything that has been in my mind. Can you understand me?”

“Ay,” said Pedro Alvarado. “I understand you. The rest of us are dull creatures, the sword in the scabbard. But he’s the naked blade. I understand. There’s no bitterness in me, Ines, but I’m still sick with the loss. As though I’d had a diamond that filled my hand—and let it drop. And if—if fate had decided otherwise, if—”

“Master,” called Luis, “shall I lay her over toward the center of the harbor? They’re running up on us like dogs on a sick deer!”

Kildare came aft. He could have looked straight into the eyes of Tranquillo, but he dared not.

Behind them, he could hear the cry of Tranquillo as he heartened the rowers. It was a glorying voice that rang loudly over the sea, and in fact the boat was gaining very rapidly.

The harbor waters where the canoa sailed so leisurely seemed to be smoothed out and polished
by the moon; but farther out from shore the wind was darkening the bay. And well Kildare remembered how he had sailed for his life from this place once before.

But that had been with an empty boat, as it were, that held nothing but a pair of half-breeds and the lightness of his own life. Now there was aboard the wretched canoa the glory and the beauty of the world. He had been, it seemed, a mere shell, a mere husk in other days; now his heart was freighted with incalculable treasure.

"Lay her a little over to the larboard, Luis," he told the Indian. "Get down behind the side of the ship, or they'll pick you off, in a moment. There; that's better. Make a slant for the deeper water, where you see the wind on it. If we can only have a hatful of it in the head of the sail, we'll walk away from them. Remember how we were hunted before!"

"Ay, master," said Luis. "And does good fortune ever show the same side of her face twice to any man?"

"It was good fortune before," said Kildare, calmly, "but now it's luck from Jimmy Green that we're leaning on. Whistle for the wind, Pedro!"

He himself sent out a shrill blast; it was answered from the boat that hurried behind them, with a loud yelling, as they saw the canoa alter its course, thereby instantly shortening the line between pursuer and pursued.

"Hold your fire! Hold your fire!" shouted Tran-
quillo. "Save it till we’re close in; for they’re running into our hands."

Pedro Alvarado sat at the foot of the mast, with his head bowed on his hands. The girl came to Kildare and stood so close that she had to bend her head well back to look into his face.

"Are we lost, Ivor?" she asked him.

"Unless Jimmy Green saves us," said Kildare. "They have ten men in their boat. We have three. They have muskets and pistols and swords. We have the javelin of Luis, and my rapier. Stand farther back, Ines."

She would not move.

"If it is the end, Ivor—you know that I’ll never let them carry be back to the Hispaniola—and you never have kissed me. It’s better to die a widow than a maid."

He looked at her with the sad, peering eyes of one who creates, rather than one who beholds.

"Alvarado is near us," said Kildare, "and if I touch you, Ines, I burn him with hell-fire."

She drew back from Kildare; and he stepped past her to the place where Luis crouched, with an eye that never turned from the leech of the sail. And Kildare heard the girl weeping, but he would not turn.

"They are coming up hand over hand, Luis," said Kildare.

"Ay, master," said the Indian. "I hear the oars bending and the sound of them in the water."
“Ivor Kildare! Ivor Kildare!” shouted Captain Tranquillo.

“Ahoy!” answered Kildare.

“Do you think of Tortuga?” called Tranquillo. “Think of it now, Kildare, and eat your heart!”

“I think of it now,” said Kildare, loudly. “I think how I took the sword from you, Tranquillo, and how you were stripped and beaten like a dog from the place. I think of it now, and I laugh.”

Like an echo of his words, a real shout of laughter came bellowing out of the throats of the buccaneers who rowed the boat. Breathlessness from their labors cut the laughter short, and the curses of Tranquillo, who turned to damn them.

“Now I wipe out the day!” cried Tranquillo. “A slow death, Kildare. Nine lives for you, my fine cat, and I’ll waste them all, little by little. I’ll rub ’em small, and rub ’em faint, till they’re gone.”

“You lie!” shouted Kildare, suddenly. “You lie, for there’s still power in Jimmy Green!”

For he felt the canoa heel, as though it had been suddenly struck by a great broadside wave on the starboard, but it was the brawny hand of the wind that had knocked them aslant. The mast and the cordage groaned in protest as the breeze took hold and hauled with its untiring arms. And the canoa sprang forward, smashing a wave to flinders with its bows. It lifted high, and spanked the bay with the flat of its bottom.

“Guns! Guns!” yelled Tranquillo. “Oh God, if
I've lost him again! Give me a musket. Fire for the hull, low down toward the water. God send the bullets through his heart! The cursed wind is snatching them away!"

"Down, everyone!" commanded Kildare. "Down flat on the bottom of the boat."

They dropped. They lay sprawling as the muskets sent the clanging echoes over the bay. They heard the noise of the bullets that cut through the sides of the canoa; a splinter broke with shrewd force across the head of Kildare.

"Ines!" he cried.

"Safe!" she answered. "And you, Ivor?"

"Not a scratch!" said Kildare, exultantly. "Luis—Pedro—are you hurt?"

"They came close enough to see my face and know me a second time," said Luis. "That was all."

"Untouched," said Alvarado, gloomily.

"It's the work of Jimmy Green!" said Kildare.

But the words died out in his throat, for as he cried them, and as the echoes of that misspent volley were taken up by the impatient barking of pistols from the pursuing boat, the wind that had drawn the canoa away failed it utterly, and left it rocking on the waves, a helpless thing from which all movement was dying away.
Chapter THIRTY:

There is no hope so sweet as that which comes after despair. It was no wonder that the buccaneers shouted when they saw the canoa falter and pause; and as a boy halts when he sees the butterfly blown away on the wind, and then again pursues with a shout as it lights not far off, so they all gave tongue, and let fall their oars till the spray flew up in the moonlight.

They were not far behind, at the start of that chase, and now they closed so fast that it was apparent folly to thrust out the sweeps in order to heave the canoa ahead.

Kildare said: "Alvarado, you have no weapon. Stay with Ines. If they beat us down—take her in your arms and jump into the sea!"

"I have a weapon," said Alvarado, calmly.

He stood up from the bottom of the boat and showed a short billet of wood that he had found, like the end of a broken spar. "It's not a sword," said Alvarado, "but a coward deserves no more than a club to beat with, or to be beaten. And the honor of Ines is as safe in her own hands as your sword is in yours, Ivor. Kiss her, Ivor, and God receive our souls."
He stood by the mast, and looked calmly on them, while the arms of Kildare received her. And Kildare, stepping back, saw that she smiled at him. He made sure of her with his eyes for a single moment, and then sprang aft again to face the buccaneers. They were already reaching for the gunwale. Luis with the edge of his spear-head slashed one good right hand across the wrist. That hand lost its hold. It would never take grip again. But others pulled the two boats together.

Like savage dogs that will not wait for a good hold, but bite where and how they may, so the men of Tranquillo did not try to lay their craft fairly alongside the canoa, but once their bows well overlapped the quarters of the canoa, they came forward with a rush. On the narrow steersman’s platform, the three defenders met them—the reaching javelin of Luis, the sword of Kildare, and the shattering club that was in the hands of Alvarado. The girl, grasping the bowline, pulled in the corner of the sail to nurse the last faint breath of wind; for in a moment it might come again, and set them leaping.

Well and valiantly, Tranquillo led his men like a good captain. He turned the darting javelin of Luis with a rapid parry as he leaped aboard. His thrust he missed, but with a half-arm cut he slashed the forehead of Luis and left the Indian helplessly blinded by a flow of blood.

Three more buccaneers were struggling against the club of Alvarado and the height of the canoa’s
side. Kildare left the Spaniard to handle them, for Tranquillo was the soul of the attack and at him went Kildare. In the first parry, the meager sliver of his sword blade snapped and left him a mere splintered shard of steel to fight with.

"Now God, I thank you!" breathed Tranquillo, as he poised his long sword.

Kildare caught the edges of it in his naked left hand, and stepping in, he stabbed Tranquillo through the hollow of the throat. Again, and again, he buried the daggerlike fragment of his sword in the breast of the buccaneer.

Captain Tranquillo's body fell half across the gunwale, then slithered loosely out of sight in the water, leaving his great sword in the ruined left hand of the Englishman.

That death brought a howl from the buccaneers but it was not enough to halt them. The wind, rising suddenly, seemed striving to wrench the canoa free again, and the men of dead Tranquillo, with one hand grasped the gunwale of their prey, with the other fought to board it.

Luis, clearing his eyes of running blood, paid one account with the plunging head of his javelin, but Alvarado had borne the brunt. Kildare saw him now flowing with blood from a dozen wounds, and his long golden hair flung sidewise on the rising wind. He had drawn back a step. Now he hurled himself high into the air and straight upon the points of the crowding weapons that were ready to receive him. One head received the last
stroke of his club. Two or three more of the pirates were tumbled into the water by that sudden charge. All the boat was thrown into hopeless confusion, and every handhold that bound them to the canoa was broken, so that the wind which had been drawing both ships forward, now swept the canoa away.

Kildare, with the long blade of Tranquillo balanced above his head, poised himself on the gunwale to leap in after the Spaniard. But Luis snatched him back to safety.

"He is dead, master, because he wished to die," said Luis. "See, now, how much too late it is. They threw him away from the boat. But they cannot throw away the name of a brave man, my master! He has given himself for us, and three lives are a good gift. Mine I take with a very glad heart."

Those in the boat had flung out the body of Alvarado. It lay face up, for a moment, as though hands supported it, and the long hair spread out on the water. It was only an instant's vision that hung in the water and was gone.

Even now those savage fellows in the boat, though three were dead and others wounded, strained at their oars again. But the wind held true as the little canoa gained the center of the bay, then fled for the harbor's mouth.

This time no dangerous craft slid out from beneath the walls of the fort that guarded the entrance to Porto Bello. That fort was covered with blackness, and past it they glided into the open sea. The land breeze held steadily. It hardly mat-
tered where they sailed, so long as their course was away from Porto Bello.

As best she could, Ines Heredia had bound up the wounded head of Luis, and by moonlight she had mourned over the mangled left hand of Kildare. Whether it were ruined or not, they would not be able to tell until time or physicians had worked upon it. The pain of it worked to his shoulder and throbbed under his arm, but as they headed out into the open sea that pain was forgotten, too.

Kildare made as if to take the heavy steering oar from Luis, but the big Mosquito Indian refused to surrender it.

"When I took my woman home, master," said he, "wherever her shadow fell my step was in it. Stay with her, now. I am happy. My son waits for me, and the woman is roasting the fish that he catches out of the river. Now they sit under the moon and speak of the sound of the water, and of the day the shadows fall, and of the fish they have eaten today, and they wonder what they will find tomorrow. They speak of these things, but they think of me. Therefore I wish to hold the steering oar and dream that we are heading swiftly toward them."

"It will not be long, Luis, before you see them," said Kildare. "And when you go home, you will return very rich."

"Well," said Luis, "if a man has two fish spears, one is to use and one is to lose. And the clothes of
a white man only make the body too hot. When I leave you, master, I shall be happy even if my hands are empty, because my mind will be full. I shall be like one of the old men of my tribe who can sit still all day long telling their thoughts to themselves, with happy faces like children who are listening to wonderful tales."

So Kildare sat forward with the girl, where the motion of the ship was like that of a jumping horse that flies across country, clearing the hedges handsomely.

He had in him a wealth of emotions, but they would not turn themselves into speech. He idly kept thrusting his broken sword into the gunwale until at last he forgot that, also, and left it standing on the bows of the canoa like a cross. And the girl said nothing at all, either. In the hollow of his shoulder lay her head. Looking down he could see her brow and her smile, but her eyes were only a shadow. He could not tell whether the pulse that he felt was the beating of his heart or of her own.
PIRACY WAS A GAME MEN PLAYED

For loot of gold dubloons and all the wealth of treasure ships... For lust... For love of the power to be despotic kings, howling defiance to the nations of the world.

But Ivor Kildare was another kind. For him the lure was the game of piracy itself. To spring from manacled wretchedness and with nothing but his wits and a needle of a rapier, to best even the towering pirate chief Henry Morgan... ah! That was a game indeed!

And there was a woman, the cool and beautiful Ines Heredia. Was he no more to her than an ape on a chain? Well, he would change her mind about that!

This first paperback edition of THE NAKED BLADE is the first book of fiction to carry the name of Frederick Faust as author—a fantastic paradox, for the work of Faust, if not his name, is known to every fiction fan, to every television viewer, to every moviegoer. Under the pen name of Max Brand (and a score of other names) he wrote some hundreds of novels and movie scripts. He created the "Dr. Kildare" stories. He wrote, among his many westerns, "Destry Rides Again" which became a motion picture three times and a musical comedy. In its original hard cover edition, THE NAKED BLADE was signed with his pen name "George Challis."