

On the way to the hotel—the stranger lived, he said, at the Nacional—he told me his name was Carras. Julien Carras.

We went upstairs, me opening his door and flicking on the light. Then, he swayed drunkenly and just looked. I was surprised, too, but I managed to say hello.

**M**ONITA DEL ORTO had risen from a wicker chair. She had been sitting in darkness. The daughter of a wealthy planter, I had met her when, shortly after doing my hitch in the Marines, del Orto hired me to drill troops for a counter-political movement.

The only word to describe the smile on Monita's face is "mocking". Oh, I knew what she was thinking. She was thinking that that no-good Carmody, who ducked out on a date with her (which was why she was mad at me) had gotten her friend stinko.

I couldn't say anything then, though, because I was too busy refreshing my memory about her. Tall and dark, with raven-black hair and the same kind of eyes. Her face was tanned and her lips red as a rose. Now, in a white linen suit, and satin blouse of the same color—an outfit that had a Tiffany body for a background—well, that was all I needed to set my blood pounding again. Even if I hadn't noticed—which I did!—the way every line of her body flowed easily. And the barely perceptible way her small, firm breasts rose and fell as she panted under the heat.

"Take him into the bathroom, Carmody," she said. "Throw him into the tub and then get out."

"And leave the door open a

little," she added. "I want to make sure he doesn't drown."

She sat down then, crossing her legs and displaying a flash of tantalizing flesh above the sheer silk stocking she wore. She always wore stockings, I remembered, on a date or when she came to town.

And you know, when I tossed Carras into the tub, clothes and all, I was just a little bit jealous. After all, I hadn't meant to miss that date with her. There had been a little gun running job to be done and I collected plenty. But when I tried to reach her later, she still had been doing her slow burn.

I hung around for a few minutes, tossing a sponge onto Carras' head. And then, as he started to come out of it, I got ready to leave.

He looked up, blinked a second, and said: "Where are you going, *amigo*?"

"Home."

"But I don't want you to, *amigo*. You have done me a great favor. I must repay you."

"Skip it. You'll have enough trouble taking care of your hang-over."

He struggled to his feet, flashed a smile. "You will wait, *amigo*, with *Senorita* del Orto. I wish to talk with you."

Well, an order is an order. I went out. Monita had heard, all right, and her face showed it. She said nothing, just sat there stiff and straight.

There was some liquor on the table and I mixed a drink. She said no. A word that came pretty natural to her.

Carras came out, wearing a dressing gown that had been hanging in the bathroom. "You have