

introduced herself, *amigo?*"

"I know the lady," I said. "But she doesn't want to know me."

He looked at both of us a minute and then laughed.

"Oh, a lover's quarrel. Is it not so?"

Monita flushed. "It is not so."

Carras put a hand to his head. "This is splitting like the hammers of hell," he smiled. "And you should not argue." He smiled again. "I have need of Mr. Carmody, *senorita*. Tonight, he has done me a big favor." He shook his head. "Sometimes, for my own good, I drink too much. But three days in this devil's heat. . . ."

"For your own good," I cut in, "you should stop showing money around guys like Peeper John."

He grimaced. The girl spoke up. "My father has received word from you that the *Bolívar* will be in tomorrow. I have come to arrange the payments."

Carras spoke as he mixed drinks for us both. "The understanding, *senorita*, is that your father will purchase from my agents a shipment of gravel."

A frown crossed Monita's face. "Yes," she said, slowly. "And here is the money." She reached into her wallet, brought out a package. "I have not counted it," she said. "My father wrapped it up."

Carras took the package, tossed it on the desk. "And you, Mr. Carmody, where shall I reach you?"

I gave him my address. "I still don't know what I have to do."

He laughed. "You will oversee the natives. Sort of a bodyguard."

I said that ought to be easy.

Handling natives was a cinch. Or so I thought at the time when I figured a bodyguard's job such as Carras was offering me, meant being a West Indies Simon Legree. Yeah, I was wrong.

Monita and I went out together. I could see she was worried about something and so I asked her if anything was the matter.

She stared at me for a moment as we walked to her car. Then, she said, curtly: "Get in, Mike. I'll drive you home."

MY HOUSE was a little ways out of town, in the opposite direction from the way Monita lived. I knew then, when she was so willing to drive me, that something was up.

But until we got there, she didn't say anything. I did the talking, explaining what had happened when I broke that date. She smiled a little then and I figured it was all right to ask her in.

This time she took a drink, sipped it slowly. "I am worried about father, Mike," she said. "All that gravel. He is going to make driveways to facilitate his shipping."

"That's not a bad idea," I said. "It would help him. It's a good idea."

"It's not his idea. It's Rodolfo's." A frown came over her face. "That man. . . ."

I agreed with her. Rodolfo Quesada was her father's foreman. And to me, a heel. I'll always suspect he was mixed up in the revolution del Orto had had me fighting against.

"We can't afford it, Mike," she