



# SPICY- ADVENTURE STORIES

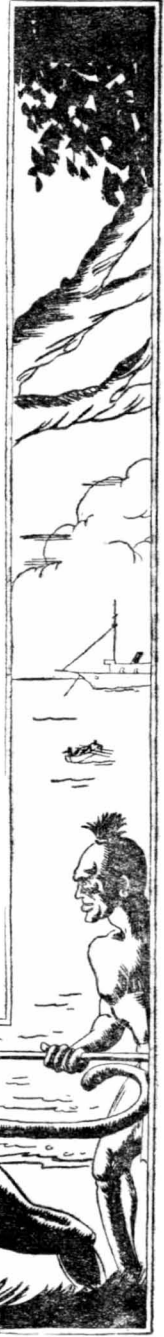
December, 1936

Vol. 5, No. 3

## CONTENTS

<b>FOR THE HONOR OF THE DUCHESS..</b>	<b>4</b>
Lew Merrill	
<b>RANGER'S REWARD .. . . . .</b>	<b>16</b>
James A. Lawson	
<b>MIDNIGHT LEGION .. . . . .</b>	<b>28</b>
Robert Leslie Bellem	
<b>VIPER PIT .. . . . .</b>	<b>40</b>
Alan Anderson	
<b>LA CABEZA HUMANA .. . . . .</b>	<b>52</b>
Jose Vaca	
<b>DIANA DAW .. . . . .</b>	<b>64</b>
Clayton Maxwell	
<b>TALE OF THE PERFECT WOMEN .. . . . .</b>	<b>66</b>
Guy Russell	
<b>CROWN OF THORNS .. . . . .</b>	<b>74</b>
Arthur Wallace	
<b>BANTU JUSTICE .. . . . .</b>	<b>86</b>
Jerome Severs Perry	
<b>TIGRIS TREASURE .. . . . .</b>	<b>94</b>
Ellery Watson Calder	

SPICY-ADVENTURE STORIES is published by the Culture Publications, Inc., 900 Market St., Wilmington, Del. The Publisher assumes no responsibility for the return of unsolicited manuscripts.



By  
**JOSE  
VACA**



# **La Cabeza Humana**

*She wants a man killed and offers money to the Sabinas Kid. When he spurns her gold, she tries other lures. . . .*



The girl in the car screamed when she saw the gleam of metal at the other's leg.

THE glittering roadster looked strangely out of place in its squalid surroundings. It crouched like a hound on leash in the narrow ribbon of dust that served as a road leading to the dilapidated *adobe* hut. An inquiring goat nosed about the front bumper, a bawling kid at its heels. A mangy dog lay in the deepening shadow, tongue lolling.

Behind the wheel of the roadster sat a *gringa*, an American woman, lips compressed with anger and impatience. From time to time she shifted uneasily, peered into the gloom and patted a foot on the floor. It was hot. The night wind had not as yet dropped down from the *sierras*.

Again the woman shifted, muttered

angrily beneath her breath, and glared at the hovel. Her dress had crawled up, her hose were rolled for coolness. Her knees and bare legs gleamed pearly grey in the twilight. She snapped the cigarette into the *mesquite*, pressed down on the horn button. Startled, the goat bleated, trotted away, followed by the still bawling kid.

Another woman appeared in the doorway of the hut. The lamp behind limned the soft turns and contours of a mature figure. Her skirt was vivid and voluminous, her blouse snowy white, sleeveless and lowcut. About her shoulders was a multicolored *rebosa*.

The woman in the car called, "Come here!" imperiously.

The Mexican girl hesitated haughtily.

Then, as she walked down the dusty path to the car every line of her figure showed scorn and distaste.

"You said he'd be here in a few minutes," challenged the *gringa*, "and I've waited half an hour already! If he isn't coming, tell me!"

"Every night," said Chiquita laughingly, "he come to see *me*. Perhaps he know tonight *you* will be here and does not come! The ways of men—*quién sabe?*" She shrugged, laughed.

Elsa Moran, the *gringa*, retorted angrily but the words died on her lips.

FROM the shadows came the sound of a trotting horse, the sound of a man's voice raised in song.

*De la sierra morena y cielito  
Lindo voy viajando!*

Chiquita frowned, tossed her head impatiently at the *gringa's* smile of triumph and stood with arms akimbo waiting the approach of the rider. A huge black horse materialized out of the gloom stepping daintily as if keeping time to the rider's song.

The song ceased, a man's laughter welled and bubbled followed by his mellifluous voice. "*Corazones míos! Chiquita, my oh so sweetheart and Señorita Moran!*"

Now he was beside the car, a great *sombrero* sweeping the dust, the white of his teeth startling in the duskiness of his face. Chiquita loosed a torrent of Spanish, but his eyes and ears were for the American woman. In spite of herself she smiled at him.

"Well, Pancho, you have kept me waiting! What excuse have you to offer? Do you bring me any news?"

Pancho laughed again, his bold eyes devouring the pearly grey flesh so close

to him. Elsa flushed, pulled her skirt down a very little.

"This Sabinas Kid," she persisted. "You have located him for me? You have arranged for me to meet him?"

The Mexican looked about cautiously. "My *amigo* Jose Maria Gardinia Guedea, the Sabinas Kid, is very near! This very evening I have seen him! I have told him that the beautiful *gringa*, *Señorita* Moran is oh so anxious to see him!"

"Did you tell him I wanted to give him a chance to make some real money?"

"*Pouf!* What is money to that man? Something to spend! A little wine, a little love! I have told him how beautiful you are, *senorita*, how like the dove, like the rose itself!" He kissed his fingertips, rolled his eyes and tossed the kiss into the air.

Beside him Chiquita snorted in disdain, whirled and trudged up the path again. The *Señorita* Moran flushed and laughed, pleased.

"And what did he say?"

Pancho leaned closer. "Because the government would like very much to find this *amigo* of mine, this Sabinas Kid, he must be careful. But he is anxious to see you, so he will risk it all! Tonight at the *fiesta* in town he will find us!"

Elsa Moran frowned. "But I can't go to the *fiesta* with you, Pancho! I'm not dressed! I'm—"

Pancho shrugged. "That is what he say, *señorita*. That he will meet us tonight at the *fiesta*." He leaned closer, talked low for long moments. The woman sat wrapped in thought. Eventually she nodded slowly.

THIRTY minutes later Elsa Moran saw strange things. Still waiting, she was aroused from her lethargy by a

sudden squall of Spanish from inside the house. Pancho appeared at the door laughing, clad in typical *charro* costume, skintight trousers belling at the bottom, short jacket resplendent with silver ornaments. Across his back was a glittering guitar.

"*Adios, Chiquita mio!*" His voice was full of laughter. Suddenly Chiquita hove into view, crouched as tensely as any tigress, her hands extended like claws, talons.

"No!" she shrieked. "You have promised to take me and you go with thees *gringa peeg!*"

She was on him, tearing, clawing, hitting. Still laughing Pancho held her at arm's length until the spasm expired. Then gently he sat her down and murmured in Spanish. The lowcut blouse had fallen away revealing the upper slopes of palpitant mounds, mounds that rose and fell stridently in the woman's anger.

Suddenly she stooped, raised her skirt and snatched at a garter. Metal gleamed and flashed in an arc. In the car Elsa Moran screamed, turned her head. She heard the sudden thud of a blow, heard the laughter rise again. Presently someone was opening the car.

"We will go, eh, *señorita!* These woman, they are what you say, the hell!"

As they pulled out of the dusty yard Elsa saw a huddled heap in the doorway. She looked askance at the smiling man beside her, but already the guitar was in his lap and his soft voice was singing.

*Hay Hay ayay  
Canta y no llores.*

Back at the *adobe* hut Chiquita picked herself up, cursed softly. Her black eyes were vehement with jealousy. Swiftly she ran through the gloom to

the neighboring house where lived good Mamacita Gonzales. Mamacita had a telephone!

At the edge of the plaza Elsa Moran stopped the roadster. From the stone stand in the middle of the square came the soft music of a Mexican band. The crowd had gathered in that direction.

Pancho spoke. "My *amigo*, the Sabinas Kid, will be sure to be here, *señorita*. Wait for me, and I will go across to the *cantina* and ask." She nodded, lit a cigarette, and settled back in the seat. The Mexican, guitar held by the throat, walked across the street and entered the *cantina*.

Hardly had he disappeared when two dark figures skulked out of a noisome alley and crept close to the door.

**I**NSTINCT, intuition, made Elsa tense. The two newcomers did not enter. Instead they peered furtively into the saloon, held a whispered consultation, and stepped back into the shadows. Somehow Elsa knew these men were enemies of Pancho! Should she warn him?

Still undecided she saw the lithe figure appear in the doorway, laughing over his shoulder at someone in the barroom. The guitar was slung carelessly beneath his arm. There on the sidewalk he paused, struck a match, held it to his cigarette.

Elsa glimpsed movement in the shadows and screamed. Pancho crouched in a split instant, flung up the guitar at the same moment that a gun blazed from the darkness. He seemed to stagger for a moment then as if by magic he had a gun in his own swarthy hand, a gun that spoke once—twice—in answer to his opponents.

A figure sprawled out of the shadows and lay at Pancho's feet. Another figure

cursed and ran up the darkened street. The sound of Pancho's laughter mingled with the roar of his gun. The fleeing man sprawled in the dust fifty yards away.

Then Pancho was beside her. There was no laugh on his face now, no indolence in his eyes. They were coals of fire peering up and down the street. His mouth was thin-lipped, twisted in a snarl. He waved the gun at the girl behind the wheel.

"Quick," he snarled, "back the way we came!"

She wheeled the car, headed into the darkness of a side street. As they roared away beyond pursuit, her heart throbbed but she kept the car going at high speed. Finally the man laughed again.

"Did they—did they hit you?" she faltered.

"Hit me? Not me, *corazon!* This guitar is very special box. It has a steel lining!" He threw back his head and laughed.

"Why—?" she began.

He reached over and turned the key in the switch. His eyes were mocking. "*Señorita*, for three days you have been looking for the Sabinas Kid. You come to me because you hear I can find him for you! I have promised you would see the most notorious *bandido* in Mexico tonight. Pancho, *corazon*, is a man of his word. Those fools back at the *cantina* were merely trying to collect the five thousand *pesos* offered for the Sabinas Kid. Look!"

He extended the revolver, butt foremost. That butt was gold plated, ornamented with flowers and painstaking scrollwork. A shield, left in the center, was inscribed,

To my friend, Jose Maria Gardinia Guedea,  
The Sabinas Kid.

She gasped. "Then why have you led me on for these three days, pretending to get in touch with the Kid?"

Again laughter. "*Señorita*, I am a cautious man. For three days I have been investigating you, to see what you would want with the Sabinas Kid. Last night at your *hacienda* when you talked to Jim Carson, your uncle, I listened outside the window. You are very clever, you *gringos!* You want a man killed, so you come looking for me, who has killed many men! Your uncle has heard that the Sabinas Kid will do anything for a beautiful face! So he sends you to pull his chestnuts from the fire! I am sorry, *señorita*, but I do not like *Senor Carson* and the way he treats his Indians. I am afraid he will have to do his own murder!"

There was a long silence. The girl was too surprised to speak at once. This man knew all the facts already! It was true, Jim Carson, her uncle, the owner of thousands of acres of productive land, *did* want a man killed, and he had sent Elsa to contact the Sabinas Kid because she was young and beautiful.

"My uncle," she faltered, "will pay you much money in good American dollars. A thousand—perhaps more."

He shrugged. "Tell your uncle, *señorita*, that I do not kill for money. Money means nothing to me. Tell him to give back the land he has stolen from the Indians and I will do his bidding. Otherwise—drive me back to Chiquita, *señorita.*"

THE car shot forward, but the huge motor ran no swifter than the American woman's mind. As she pressed in on clutch and brake from time to time, the dress continued to climb higher into her lap. She was conscious of the hot eyes of her companion sweeping across



He held her at arm's length  
until her spasm subsided.



Esaki

bare white flesh, up to her firm, feminine breasts so plainly accented by the silken sweater she wore. Once before the *adobe* cottage, her mind was made up. She stopped the car, turned toward him, and drew one silken leg beneath her. The Mexican gasped as she lay a hand on his arm. Her eyes were taunting, her lips curled but challenging.

"These stories one hears about Mexican badmen," she sneered, "are all alike! Lies! Tell the truth, *amigo*, you are afraid!"

The Sabinas Kid laughed harshly. "Afraid! I'm afraid of no man that walks the earth!"

"But a woman," she jeered. "You're afraid of a woman! You're afraid of me!"

For a moment he looked at her with hot eyes, then before she could move, swept her into his arms. She tensed against his caresses for a moment, then surrendered as his lips found hers, as his hands cradled the soft flame that was her body. Presently he drew away. This time he did not laugh.

"Do this thing—for me," she whispered and her eyes were a promise.

"Tell your uncle, Jim Carson, that I will be at his *hacienda* within two days."

He opened the car door, stalked toward the darkened house. The woman smiled to herself and roared away into the blackness. Within the house the Sabinas Kid flung his guitar to a cot, lit an oil lamp, and gazed about. He called, "Chiquita, Chiquita," but no one answered.

Out in the clump of *mesquite*, Chiquita crouched, glaring down the road the car had taken. She was cursing venomously beneath her breath, her fingers fondling the hilt of a small dagger in her garter. As the red tail light disappeared, she gazed toward the *adobe* hut

and her curses were just as vehement. She crouched there in the bushes until the man extinguished the lamp. She heard the jingle of his spurs as he walked toward the shed in the rear, heard the creak of saddle leather and the soft footfall of the huge black horse as man and rider disappeared into the blackness.

AT THE Carson *hacienda* later that night, the girl, Elsa, reported to her uncle. Jim Carson, lean and saturnine, sat behind a huge library table, his little pig eyes half closed as he heard the girl's story. Smoke poured in twin streamers from her nostrils, her lips curled as she told how easy the Mexican badman had been.

Leaning against the mantel in the shadow, Tony Peters listened in silence, his eyes continually undressing the woman who sat so carelessly in the chair. As she glanced at Tony, her own eyes widened, closed quickly, as if the two had some secret in common which they were keeping from Carson.

Carson grinned evilly and slapped the table with his open palm. The glass in front of him jumped. "So," he exclaimed, "now we shall see! The Sabinas Kid will do anything for money or a beautiful woman. Elsa, it is up to you! We will see what this fake socialist, this so called leader of the peons, has to say when the Sabinas Kid sticks six inches of knife in him. With Morenas, the *Agrarian*, out of my way, I can buy the rest of that land for a song!"

Elsa wrapped her foot, crossed her legs in a flurry of chiffon that caused Tony Peters to lick his thin lips, to grin widely in a manner that exposed three gleaming gold teeth in the front of his mouth.

"And what happens after the Kid kills



Morenes? What is to prevent him from blackmailing you the rest of your life?"

Carson laughed crazily. "Am I a fool? The Sabinas Kid will kill Morenes, then he will be paid. Look—" He pointed at the leering Tony Peters. Peters tapped his left armpit suggestively. Carson cackled. "Tony Peters, the brave American, will collect the government reward for killing the Sabinas Kid! Blackmail? Bah!"

Later that night Elsa Moran lay flat on her back in her own room, blowing smoke rings in the still air, her brain active and scheming. She wore a diaphanous negligee that clung about her rounded limbs like wet tissue paper. There was a scratching at her door. Again. Slowly she arose, tiptoed across the room to the door. The bolt clicked. Tony Peters slid through the opening, his three gold teeth gleaming in the dim light.

Without his speaking, his arms encircled her slim body, drew her closer and closer.

**P**RESENTLY, breathing hard, she drew away. "Oh, Tony, it won't be long now! We'll be so happy together, just you and I. Are you afraid?"

The man grinned down at her. "Afraid of what? How can we miss? We'll go through with it, let the old goat buy the new land after Morenes is dead, then—"

The woman shivered deliciously. "Then it's Jim Carson, too! We'll have it all, Tony, just you and I! Thousands of acres for us and us alone! We'll be rich, Tony,—if you're not afraid to do it!"

"Afraid!" His voice was a sneer. "I'll do it, never fear. Wait until the greaser bumps Morenes, and I'll do the rest!" He kissed her again, savagely, triumphantly, picked her up and bore her

clinging, half clad body across the room, crushed and yielding in his possessive arms.

**J**UAN GARCIA also was aroused that night by a scratching on his door. With much grunting and groaning he opened the wooden door, drew back in astonishment as he recognized his caller.

"*Madre de Dios,*" he ejaculated and pulled the newcomer into the room. "Maria, Maria, get up! The Sabinas Kid has come to visit his old friend!"

Far into the night the two men talked. The Sabinas Kid had many questions to ask, much to speak of. Later Juan Garcia trotted into the night to find *El Diablo*, the huge black horse, to hide him safely in the hills.

Hardly had he gone, when the Sabinas Kid slid from the house like a black ghost. The *hacienda* was silent, sleeping. No one heard the footsteps of the bare-footed man who climbed to the roof of the rambling porch, pried off a screen, and slipped into the silent house.

Jim Carson in his bed, his mouth open, his toothless gums exposed, never knew that a pair of shrewd eyes watched him as he slept for long moments. Nor did Tony Peters ever know that a black shadow skulked into his room to find it empty, the bed disarranged but cold.

Presently, like a cat, that black shadow slid soundlessly into another room. The moon beat through an open window to illuminate the rumped bed with silver. Sleeping there all radiant and flushed, sweetly rounded breasts rising and falling rhythmically—Elsa Moran. Leaving the room on tip-toes, was a man. The man's half open mouth disclosed three gleaming gold teeth.

**T**HE next morning Don Jaime Carson snorted at Juan Garcia. "A blind beg-

gar! What does he want with me? Give him alms and tell him to *vamos!*"

Juan bowed, fumbled at his belt and produced a square of cardboard. "The blind man, *señor*, say to give you this. Me, I cannot read but he say—"

Carson looked at the printed card. It bore the legend, "Jose Maria Gardinia Guedea." He laughed shrilly.

The peons who labored so hard for Don Jaime, the *gringo*, thought he had a sudden softening of the heart. It became *hacienda* gossip—Jim Carson bringing the dirty, pockmarked blind beggar into his own house and feeding him!

The Sabinas Kid, who was the blind beggar, listened in polite silence as Jim Carson explained. Presently the American was silent. The Mexican spoke. "This Antonio Morenes is a very big man politically, *señor*. There is much danger in his killing. True, as you say he deserves to die. He is a schemer, a bad man who deludes the poor Indians into following him, then appropriates their land!"

"That is just the reason I want him dead," roared Carson righteously. "I can't stand to see the poor *peons* abused! I'm like a father to my workers. I'm—" The Sabinas Kid grinned like a wolf, gestured impatiently.

"Two thousand American dollars is a lot of pesos. I am a poor man. Give me time to think." Carson grinned, left the room on some pretext. He was shrewd. Spread out on the table was a great array of gold coin. Hardly had the door closed behind him when another opened and Elsa Moran entered.

For a moment the Sabinas Kid smiled at her, his eyes sweeping from her breasts to her trim silken ankles.

"You are going to do this thing—," she breathed, "—for me?"

"For you, *corason!*" Suddenly she was in his arms. As she closed her eyes awaiting his caress, he grinned again wolfishly—and thrust her aside. Surprised, she tensed.

"Not here," he chided gently. "Tonight when all is asleep!"

"And you'll do as my uncle asks?"

He nodded. "Tomorrow there is the bullfight. Antonio Morenes will be very drunk. Tomorrow he dies, I swear it."

That night Tony Peters of the gold teeth did not go to Elsa Moran. Instead she lay awake far into the night and waited, clad in her most alluring negligee, a negligee of spiderweb that showed lush breasts through its gossamer, full flaring hips and tapering thighs. Once during the night she thought she heard singing. Blood throbbed in her veins and she waited expectantly. But nothing happened. Stretched out at full length on the moonlit bed, she lay wide eyed and expectant. Again, later, she thought she heard mocking laughter from the window, but she was never certain.

ANTONIO ESCOBAR VALDEZ Guzman Morenes was in the height of his glory. To be in the height of his glory it was necessary that Morenes be very drunk. He was. He sat in the *autoridad's* box, the judges' place, in the crowded bullring and surveyed his children with drunken satisfaction. Antonio Morenes, the friend of the Indian! As they saluted him with many *bravos* and *vivas*, he waved a fat hand airily. On a pudgy finger gleamed an immense diamond.

Already three bulls had charged into the ring and met death. Now the *pica-dors*, safe on the padded horses, worried another *toro*, a huge black fellow who

"Let me see if my clothes fit you," he said and laughed. Hopelessly, she donned them.



snorted, charged, whirled and pawed the earth in rage.

Not far away in a *sombra*, Señor Jaime Carson, the *gringo*, and his niece watched the spectacle. Long ago they had spotted the sly, well dressed Mexican who sat in the first row directly behind Señor Morenes. Don Jaime had licked his lips and spoken softly to his niece. "This Sabinas Kid is smart! He will put a knife in Morenes and make his getaway in the excitement! In this crowd they will never get him!"

Beside Elsa Moran, Tony Peters grinned and flashed his three gold teeth. After the death of the third bull, Jim Carson asked him, "All is ready?"

Peters nodded, squeezed Elsa's knee and got to his feet. With a flirt of his hand he pushed his way through the crowd and left the arena. Carson grinned at his niece. "You are sure he will go there?"

The woman nodded. "That is his hideout. He'll return there to change his clothes."

"And Tony will take care of him," laughed Jim Carson. The girl shuddered.

**N**OW the *toreadors* worried the black bull. A pause, a snorting charge at the pink cape that flaunted him. A swift movement on the part of the *toreador* and the bull thundered by to bring up short and wheel again toward the cape. *Toreador* after *toreador* ran gracefully into the arena to taunt the bull, to escape those needlepoint horns by miraculous distances. The crowd cheered. Hats were tossed into the ring. Don Antonio Morenes huzza-ed vociferously, waved his pudgy hand. The diamond gleamed and flickered.

*Banderillas*, in the knowing hands of experts, planted in the lump of muscle at the base of the bull's neck. Eight

darts, beribboned, decorated with flowers quivered in that lump of muscle. A great roar went up from the crowd as the *matador* himself stepped into the ring, the long curved sword in one hand, the small red *muleta* in the other.

Quiet, while the bull pawed the earth and watched his new tormentor. The *matador* poised the sword, flipped the *muleta*. With a roar of rage the bull charged. Just then a puff of wind, the *muleta* swayed higher. The bull's horn followed just as the *matador* lunged with the sword. The sword hit bone, bent nearly double then flashed through the air like a released steel spring. The crowd screamed as the great horn caught the *matador* near the thigh, tossed him high in the air.

*Toreadors* rushed from the protecting screen to take the bull off the fallen *matador*. The beast whirled, puzzled, stood over the fallen man who was trying to crawl to safety. The crowd screamed. No one was more excited than Antonio Morenes, the friend of the Indian. He dropped the flask from which he had been about to take a drink, waved his pudgy hands, hysterically screaming at the top of his voice. He clambered atop the protecting balustrade shaking with excitement and *tequilla*.

For a moment he wavered, lost his balance, shot through the air to hit the top of the inner barrier. His pudgy body flipped grotesquely, did a perfect somersault, and dropped six feet into the sand of the bullring proper.

At the sound of the new screams the bull whirled, disregarded the capes of the *toreadors*, forgot the fallen *matador* crawling painfully across the bloody sand. He trumpeted once, lowered his head and charged with lightning speed at the pudgy figure of Don Antonio Morenes!

Don Antonio ran, not for the screens but directly toward the wall. Blind with fear he crashed into it, bounced back like a rubber ball, and collapsed. On came the maddened bull.

**S**UDDENLY a slender figure dropped into the ring before the fallen Morenes. Metal gleamed in the newcomer's hand. A great *sombrero* was waved before the charging animal. The bull wheeled toward this new tormentor, who dodged nimbly.

As the bull went by with lowered head, the Sabinas Kid literally dove for its thick neck. One arm was wrapped firmly about it, the other, which held the short knife, stabbed again and again at the spinal cord.

Against the wall the bull slowed. His tongue protruded, his eyes were dumbly appealing. Great spurts of blood came from his mouth. Slowly he tottered and sank to his knees while the air was suddenly filled with shouts, with hats, with *serapes*, while the populace went wild with joy at the hero who had saved the life of Antonio Morenes.

Somehow in the excitement the Sabinas Kid managed to disappear completely. In his box in the *sombra* Jim Carson cursed. Beside him the girl still tensed and thrilled at the sight she had seen.

"The double crosser," raged Jim Carson. "I pay him to kill a man and instead he saves his life! The liar! The cheat! Well, to hell with him! Tony Peters is waiting for him now. Maybe he'll learn he can't doublecross Jim Carson!"

**J**UST as dusk painted the squalid *adobe* hut with black shadows, two people heard the footsteps of *El Diablo*, black horse of the Sabinas Kid. Chi-

quita and Tony Peters crouched in the squalid structure that served as a stable.

"That is him," whispered Chiquita. "I must meet him. Soon he will come to bed down *El Diablo*. Shoot him, *señor*, and be sure the first shot is perfect. Do not give him time to get close, but shoot when he approaches on the path! *And shoot straight!*"

*El Diablo* was restless. He nickered and pawed the earth impatiently as his rider swung off before the *adobe* hut. He sniffed the air, pawed again, and whinnied. The eyes of the Sabinas Kid were wary as he observed these signs. He entered the house just as Chiquita came in from the rear. She greeted him cheerfully, even put arms about his neck and pressed him close.

For long moments he held her off, gazed down at her suspiciously. Then he gestured toward the huge pot that bubbled and boiled atop the crude stove.

"Hungry, my own?" she laughed. "Tonight we have *cabeza de cabrita*, kid's head!"

She went about her work nervously, all too conscious of his questioning eyes. In the front of the house *El Diablo* still snorted and stamped and whinnied.

The Sabinas Kid said, "Come here, *corazon!*"

Fearfully she came, guilt heavy in her eyes. He smiled—wolfishly—and caressed her brown skin.

"You grow fat, *corazon!* Soon you will be able to wear the clothes of the Sabinas Kid!"

She giggled then half screamed as his fingers tore the clothes from her body in ragged strips. Her hands covered her breasts protectively as she cowered before him.

"Do not be afraid," he smiled. "Let us see if my clothes fit you." From a  
(Continued on page 108)



## LA CABEZA HUMANA

[Continued from page 63]

leatherbound chest he tossed a pair of trousers, a dark colored shirt. Without a word she donned them, hopelessly. She knew what was coming.

Once dressed he surveyed her sardonically. He drew off his sombrero, clapped it on her head. "Tonight," he smiled, "I will be the housewife and you will be the Sabinas Kid! You will bed down good *El Diablo, corazon!*"

Her face was white, her lips trembling. But she did not cry out. She knew the dice had gone against her. Somehow this devil, this Sabinas Kid knew the truth. She walked slowly to the front of the house, took *El Diablo's* halter and walked toward the stable.

Seizing a murderous *machete* from the wall, the Sabinas Kid leaped through the solitary window and skulked toward the stable in the shadows.

**I**N the stable Tony Peters tensed as he heard the *clap-clap* of the horse's hooves. Carefully he aimed the heavy revolver. Suddenly a woman screamed. He thought it was Chiquita telling him to fire. He pressed the trigger. *El Diablo* reared and snorted as the slender figure leading him collapsed in the path.

Suddenly something hit Tony Peters on the head and he too, collapsed. The *machete* rose and fell.

Moments later the Sabinas Kid stepped from the stable, something grotesque and gruesome dangling in his left hand. He walked to the house, spurning the body of his faithless woman with his foot. At the stove he leaned over the boiling pot, then grinned as he dropped the gruesome object within.

For two long hours he fed the flame of the stove, replenished the water from time to time in the pot.

Later that evening Jim Carson started back in amazement as the figure of a blind beggar stepped unannounced through the doors that led to the *patio*.

"You!" he gasped, unable to believe his eyes.

The Sabinas Kid bowed sardonically, grinned at Elsa Moran who stood against the wall.

"Of course, *señor*. I come for the rest of my money. That was our bargain, half before, half after."

Carson recovered his aplomb. "You double-crosser! I pay you to kill Morenes and you save his life! Then you come for more money!"

The Sabinas Kid laughed, raised his brow. "Why, *señor*! I want much to earn my fee. You do not pay me to let the bull kill this bad politician! No, you pay *me* to kill him. I have to save his

As if by magic a gun was in his swarthy hand.



life if I am to earn my money, eh? Listen, the bells."

Silence. From the west, the direction of the town, came the faint tolling of bells. The Sabinas Kid shrugged.

"They are tolling for the death of

*Señor* Morenes, Meester Carson. *Señor* Morenes who was killed in his bedroom by an unknown assailant. The exploiter of the *peons* will do no more harm, you may rest assured."

"How do I know you speak the truth!"

The Sabinas Kid laid something on the table. It glittered and gleamed, sparkled and flashed like a great eye. Carson looked and grinned. It was the enormous diamond that had once adorned the pudgy finger of Morenes. Without a word the American went to his safe, opened it and took out a bag of gold coin.

From across the room Elsa Moran faltered, "And Tony, Tony Peters? You did not see him? Where—"

The Sabinas Kid took the money bag, picked up the ring and thrust it back into his pocket.

"Tony? Tony?" he said reflectively. "Ah yes, to be sure! *Señorita*, Tony Peters say to give you this to remember him by."

From the shadows near the window he extracted a large package, fully a foot square. He placed it on the table and went again to the window.

"*Adios, señor*, and you, *señorita*. The Sabinas Kid rides far tonight. I have done well in ridding my country of a crooked politician. And you, *Señor* Carson, I will be back in a few weeks. See that you do not fall into the ways of this Morenes, who was a greedy pig! *Adios.*"

He was gone.

WHITEFACED, Elsa Moran opened the package on the library table. Suddenly she screamed and Jim Carson, still nervous at the Mexican's warning, caught her slumping body. His horrified eyes were held by the gruesome object on the table.

*It was a man's skull, white and gleaming, seeming to grin up at him, to taunt him. In the front of the lipless mouth gleamed three gold teeth.*