

THE MAGIC CARPET MAGAZINE




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EVERY STORY COMPLETE—NO SERIALS!

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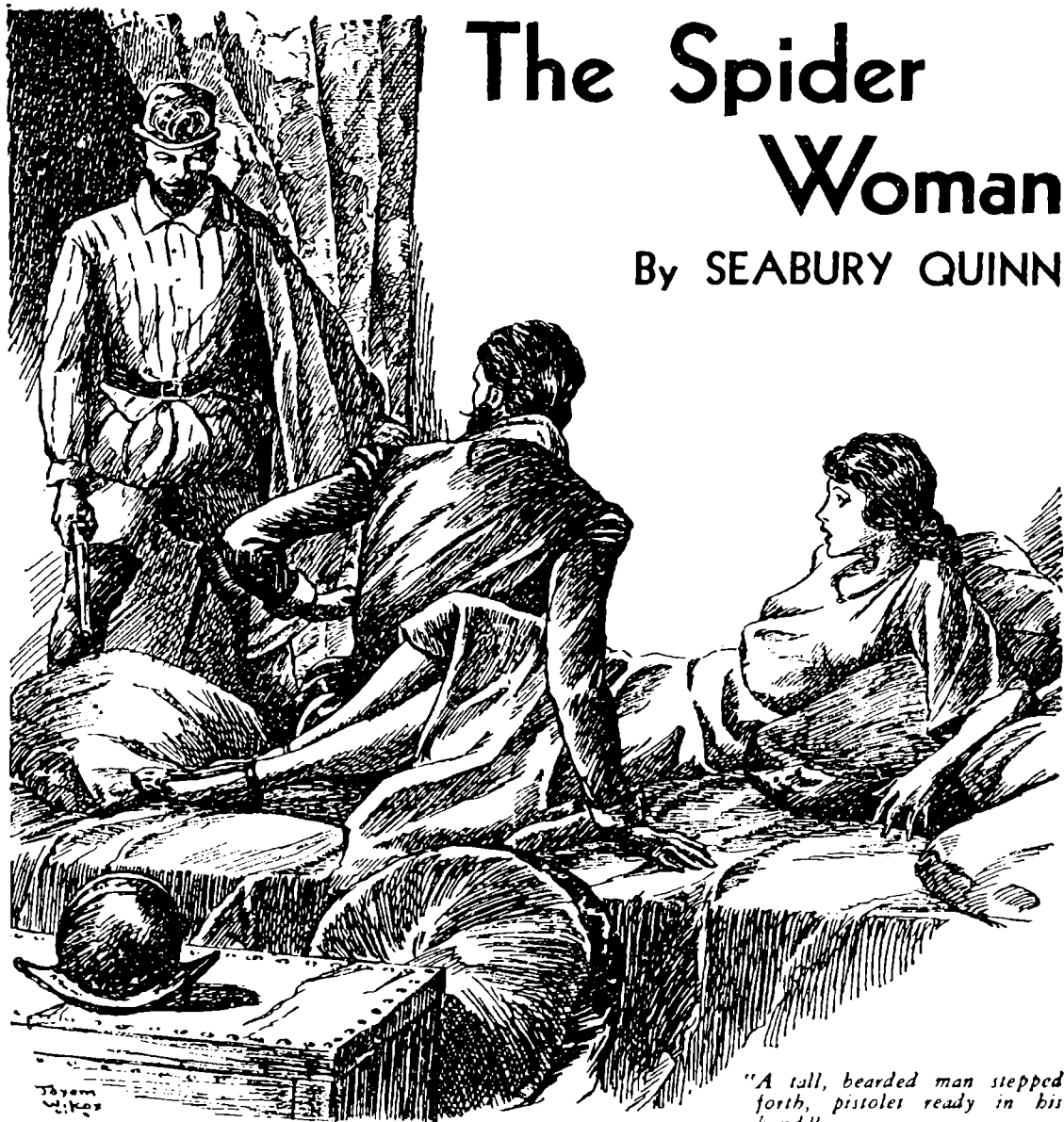
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The Spider Woman

By SEABURY QUINN



"A tall, bearded man stepped forth, pistols ready in his hand."

A terrific adventure of Carlos the Tiger in the Netherlands, and a lovely woman spy who told him how to conquer a Spanish stronghold

1. How We Met the Santa Isabella

RIGHT sharply sped the freshening breeze behind the straining sails of the Dutch ship *Jufvrouw van Haut* as I and my companions sailed from Portugal toward Holland. The barque was laden with supplies for those who

laughed derision at the King of Spain in the Low Countries; beeves and wine and good white wheaten flour for making bread, besides some store of powder, ordnance and weapons to aid the Dutchmen in their fight for freedom, and she lay low upon the water, heavy laden with her burthen, so that she wallowed

like a cow at milking-time the while she forced her way against the rising sea.

"St. Nicholas send the wind will hold," the sailing-master muttered as he scanned the far horizon. "With such a heavy cargo we should be no match for any skulking Spanish galley."

"Be of good cheer," spake Nuno Cabral, who, as my second in command, shared the quarter-deck with the Dutchman and with me; "the wind will hold, and we shall sight the shore of Holland ere another sun has sunk, I trow."

"*Wallah*, speak not foolishness," returned Black Hassan, who loitered at the rail beside me. "Know'st not that twenty times ten thousand *djinn* and devils fill the earth and air and sea to hear such idle boasts as thine and send a plague of fogs and tempests as a punishment for those who seek to tell the future? Aye, by the beard of Allah's goat, methinks I see there upon the larboard bow a sign of that same fog!"

He swung his great black hand athwart the sky, and sure, upon the far horizon, we could see the fleece-white ranks of sea-fog marching over the waters straight upon us.

The fog came on apace, and with it came a monstrous, choking calm which sucked the wind from out our sails as children drain the sweet juice from an orange, and though the Dutchmen prayed right lustily, and Hassan cursed and swore so that it was a joy to hear him, the white smoke of the sea came thickly and more thick until it wrapped us round like any blanket, and a man could toss a biscuit farther than his sight could pierce the slowly swirling whirls.

"Now, by the horns of Allah's ox, this likes me not, *effendi*," great Hassan muttered, spitting in the sea between his parted fingers. "*Wah*, it is as if the troubled ghosts of all the drowned who lie beneath the waves had risen from

their sandy graves to welcome us with beckoning arms into their midst!" He bent his thumb across his palm, encircled it with the third and second fingers of his hand and thrust the first and little fingers forward like a pair of horns. "In the glorious name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate, I take refuge from Shaitan, the stoned and the rejected," he intoned, and:

"Be silent, great uncouthness," I ordered sharply, for though I had small fear of ghosts or phantoms, having never yet beheld a dead man who could swing a sword or drive a dagger home, his idle prattle worried me. "Hast naught to do, great zany? Then get thee to the fore-castle and help the men prepare their weapons for the time when we shall meet the Roumi."

Right sullenly he touched his hand to brow and lips and heart, the while he muttered a rebellious "hearing and obeying," and turned upon his heel to do my bidding, but ere he took a second lagging step we both became stock-still and bent our futile gaze across the fog-enshrouded sea, for from the deep, impenetrable cloud of whiteness came the sound of voices and the creaking of the cordage of a ship.

"By Allah's glorious name, they'll run us down!" Black Hassan cried, and then, before I had the wit to shut his gaping mouth, he bellowed:

"Ahoy, bear off to starboard; we be in your path!"

"*Que barque es? Quien es?*—What ship is that? Who are you?" came the answering hail, and at the Spanish words the Dutch ship's master wept and wrung his hands.

"O God!" he cried in trembling accents. "O merciful, sweet Lord, deliver us from out their hands!" To me he wailed:

"They'll break us on the rack and roast us at the stake; they'll tear the nails from off our hands and feet and gouge the eyes from out our heads; they'll——"

"By God, by God, by the One True God, they'll know they've had a deal of fighting ere they do it!" shouted Hassan; then, to the men who gathered in the forecabin and waist:

"Ho, children of the Devil, spawn of many camels and unmentionable diseases, make ready for the fray. They come, the Spanish dogs. Make ready, little, gentle lambs, to give them fitting welcome!"

Therewith he raised the silver pipe which hung about his neck and blew a shrill blast, and every man rushed straight to fight him for the battle.

While this was toward, my little orderly, Luiz Castro, had scurried down below and fetched my sable body-armor and my tiger-cloak, and helped me don them. Thereon I set to ordering my men.

OUR ship was built for cargo-bearing and naught else. Great beam she had, and eke a right imposing height, but she answered slowly to the helm, and as for speed, a man might walk as fast as she could run before the breeze. Also, she bore but four small carronades for armament, and these so poorly mounted that their muzzles could not be depressed or elevated more than ten degrees. Therefore I knew that we must fight it hand to hand, and so I placed my men.

Upon the forward deck I stationed musketeers and pikemen under Nuno Cabral's orders, while upon the poop I took a company in my command. Black Hassan held the rest amidships, and in the cross-trees of the masts I set my surest marksmen with orders to pick off the steersmen of the Spaniard when she came in view. This done, I oversaw the shoot-

ing of the guns, filling them with double powder charges and a helmetful of nails and iron-scrap, for well I knew that solid shot would be of no avail against the enemy when fired from out such puny ordnance.

Thus, all prepared, we waited for the tide to bear us toward our foeman, or cause the other ship to drift near us, and whilst we stood in readiness there came to us the silver singing of a trumpet's voice, the bang of booted heels upon the deck, and every indication that the Spaniard made him ready to attack.

Once more the hail rang out across the water: "*Que barque es?*" and I made answer boldly:

"We are the *Jufvrouw van Haut* out of Haarlem, commanded by Mynheer Dirk van Bost, and he who speaks is Carlos de la Muerte, called the Tiger. What wouldst thou?"

"We summon your submission in the name of his Most Catholic Majesty, Philip, King of——"

"*Wah*, king of filthy, mangy dogs and leader of a louse-bitten pack of curs!" broke in black Hassan tauntingly. "Come take submission from us, Spanish swine, if so be ye have the gust to fight!" And as he spoke he drove a glowing iron in the touch-hole of the nearer cannon, setting free a monstrous boom and scattering slugs and broken iron harmlessly into the water.

And now the wrathful Spaniard made him ready in good earnest. We could hear the stamp and shout of men as they hied to their quarters, hear the creak and groan of ropes and rollers as the guns were set in place, and while we waited for our foeman to emerge from out the fog there came another sound, the plaint of wood which rasped on wood, the rhythm of the overseer's hammer as he beat the stroke, and the whining cry and

smack of whips as they rose and fell and rose to fall upon the naked backs of rowers. Like a mongrel cur surrounded by her whelps the Spanish ship sailed with a convoy of swift galleys, and these were darting forth from out her shadow to attack us as we lay becalmed upon the fog-bound sea.

Now, when he heard the creaking of the row-locks Mynheer van Bost was like to die for very terror, for though he was a good enough mariner, he carried but a scanty crew, and all his fortune was encompassed in his ship and cargo. Likewise, he had seen somewhat of the Spaniard's gentle ways with captured Dutchmen, and so he trembled in his boots and wrung his hands in ecstasy of terror, and when Black Hassan saw it he was very wroth.

"O man," he called, "hast thou no faith in Allah's mercy? Hast thou no faith in Carlos de la Muerte, called the Tiger, or in the strength of us who fight beside him? Canst thou not see that we are even match for any tubful of pork-eating unbelievers who ever sailed the seas? Wherefore art thou frightened?"

But Mynheer van Bost was not to be persuaded.

"Ye know them not," he wailed; "their ships are floating fortresses and their men will surely overwhelm us!"

"All things are as Allah ordereth," the black replied, thrusting his irons anew into the brazier of glowing charcoal which stood beside the guns, "and in His glorious name we take our refuge from the Stoned One and his followers." Then, to the men of his command:

"Look sharply, thou sons of Shaitan, they come, the sons of noseless mothers!" Even as he spake, the galleys darted from the fog like dragons slithering from their lairs.

Black Hassan's teeth were chattering with excitement as he gazed along the

barrel of his gun what time he held his glowing iron ready over the touch-hole. The sea was calm, but a long ground swell raised the waters, and our pot-bottomed craft rocked lazily upon the ocean's bosom.

Then, as the nearer galley came alongside and our hither rail dipped low, he thrust his iron in the gun-breach and a roar like forty-thousand fiends with belly-ache resounded as the carronade thundered out its welcome to the foe.

The Spanish troops were massed upon their forward deck, all ready with their pikes and boarding-hooks, and the crafty Hassan had withheld his fire till his muzzle pointed fairly at them; wherefore the charge of nails and broken iron took them full in the face, sweeping the deck well-nigh clean of men and killing or maiming all the crew.

Wild screams and cries and lamentations rent the air as the gun-smoke cleared away, but though the Dons were shaken, they were brave, and the second galley followed hard upon the first.

Now the commander of the second boat had seen what treatment we had given his companion, and so he steered a different course, not attempting to collide with us bow on, but turning his craft so that he faced the same way we did, then shipping his oars on his near side and running cleverly alongside us.

Hassan's gun could not be lowered so that he could fire into the galley, and ere his men could make shift to fend the Spanish off with poles, their grappling-irons had made fast upon our side and their crew of forty stalwart knaves were swarming up the side.

But while we made us ready to repel them with our arms the Dutchmen had been far from idle, and ever as the Spaniards clambered toward our decks the ship's cook and two scullions came up from the galley with a mighty cauldron

of boiling water, while the carpenter was ready with a pot of seething pitch.

WITH pike and ax and flashing sword did Hassan's men assault the foe as they climbed up the side, while the mighty Black One spat upon his hands and whirled his spiked mace round his head, then smote and smote again, cracking iron casques and skulls as though they had been egg-shells. The ship's cook, too, poured pailful after pailful of boiling water on the boarders, and the carpenter bailed over seething pitch with his great ladle, and the tortured cries which rose where like the cries of souls but newly come to hell when first they feel the everlasting fire.

So merrily worked my doughty men that it was scarce five minutes ere the Dons retreated to their decks and were fain to cut their grappling-ropes and put away; but Black Hassan would not have it so.

"Forward, lambs; down upon them, little, sucking doves, fairest flowers out of Satan's garden!" he roared; and, led by him, the defenders tumbled overside and landed on the Spaniard's deck, thrusting merrily with pike and sword and hewing lustily with ax and hatchet.

"By God, by God, by the One True God, let not a one of them escape from Satan's hands!" the black one shrieked, and right well his men performed his bidding, so that ere a man could count an even hundred they had maimed or slain the last man of the galley's crew. Then, heaving the disabled overboard and leaving the dead upon the deck, they went below and struck the shackles from the galley slaves, and with a mighty roar of triumph clomb back to our deck.

"Well done!" I cried to Hassan, and would have called him to the poop with me, but he had other business. With

pitch from out the carpenter's great kettle he smeared the galley's deck, then sent three varlets down into the hold to fetch a cask of oil, which same he broached and poured upon the captured boat.

"Now, by the tail of Allah's horse, we'll send them back their property!" he laughed, and as his men took poles and pushed the galley off, he flung a blazing brand into her hold.

She burned right mightily, and the lapping waves bare her blazing through the fog back to the ship from whence she came. Anon we heard great clamor and the rush of many feet, and as the Spaniards sought to quench the blazing galley and breast her from their side, we mocked them with harsh laughter and many foul insults for that they now must fight the very boat which they had launched to capture us.

But the same slow waves which took the galley from us were surely drifting us against the larger ship, and half an hour later we could make her out against the fog; a great, high-castled craft with crosses bossed upon her idly flapping sails, and her name, the *Santa Isabella*, picked out in golden letters on her prow.

There was not wind enough for steerage way for either of us, but the *Santa Isabella* lay broadside on, and as we drifted toward her she let go with eight guns. But so poorly were they served that but one shot went through our bulwarks, two through our sails, and the rest flew by as harmlessly as birds.

"Now, up into the crosstrees, musketeers!" I ordered, and in a moment our ratlines were all black with swarming men. Then, while the Spaniards ran about their deck and howled conflicting orders at each other, we shot them down like ducks.

But slowly we approached the *Santa Isabella*, and the enemy made him ready

for close-quarter fighting. Her bulwarks towered over ours, and I realized that they must surely board us in a little while. Therefore I set the men to work to bear the carronades up upon the forecastle and poop, lashing them in place as firmly as might be and bearing down their muzzles till they swept the waist of the ship. Thereon I loaded them with musket-balls till they were like to burst and massed the greater portion of my men upon the higher decks, leaving in the waist a few to keep the Dons in play a moment when they should have boarded us.

And now the grapnels were flung forth, and side to side the two ships ground together, their timbers growling with the pressure like ill-tempered dogs.

"*Viva el Rey, viva Cristo!*" cried the Spanish with a mighty cheer as they swarmed down upon us.

Black Hassan met them with his men drawn up in wedge formation, he and his great mace at the peak, the sides all bristling with pikes. "Carlos, Carlos, *Tigre, Tigre, Tigre!*" he roared defiance in the Spaniards' faces, and struck the foremost of them such a blow that he was swept from off his feet and hurled so swiftly into the next man that both of them fell backward into the ocean.

The fight was quick and bloody for a moment, but the Spaniards pressed on us so hotly that any one could see that Hassan and his company must swiftly die beneath the flailing swords unless they sought retreat; so I blew my whistle, and at its shrilling all the black one's men did break and scamper agilely to cover, and while the Spaniards stood in wonderment that they had won the deck so easily, we touched our heavy-loaded cannon off, sweeping the packed deck with a leaden hail of death.

And now the tide of battle turned, for full a hundred men had boarded us,

though now of all that number scarce a score remained, and of them not a one but had some grievous hurt. There were no more than fifty or a hundred left upon the *Santa Isabella*, and we could match them blade for blade, and so the hare became the hound, and up their side we clambered with fierce yells, beating all resistance down and slaying ruthlessly.

"Allah, Allah, Allah, Carlos—Carlos el Tigre!" sounded Hassan's battle-cry, and:

"Carlos, Carlos; *viva Carlos!*" cried the men, and from poop to forecastle we swept the Spaniards in a bloody tide. At last their leader gave the sign of yielding, whereat I blew upon my whistle to call a truce to slaughter.

"*Señor*, I am Don Sebastiano de la Montalva y Moreno, captain in the forces of his Most Catholic Majesty. I yield me to your arms, with these my brave companions, and put my trust in your knightly chivalry that you will entreat us honorably as prisoners of war," announced the captain of the Spanish ship. "Whom have I the distinguished honor of addressing?"

Now, at his words my heart was like to burst with pride, for all the Spanish race are proud as Lucifer, and to be thus spoken to by one of such importance was proof enow that I, the vagabond and fugitive, had risen in the world until I stood on equal terms with any man. So in my turn I made a courtly bow and answered:

"I am Carlos de la Muerte, called the Tiger, and these are soldiers of my army. The circumstances of my birth were such that I never owed allegiance to a king, and the flag 'neath which I fight is mine, and not another's; hence I treat with you as equal of the greatest, and make what terms I wish, for there is none to say me nay."

Thereafter we went into consultation, and though Hassan besought me tearfully that we should make the captives walk the plank, I would not have it. By the terms of the capitulation I took the *Santa Isabella* and all her mighty store of guns and ammunition, also the great bulk of treasure which was in her hold and which she brought from the New World. The Spaniards were allowed their arms and armor and all their personal belongings, and for their safe dispatch to shore we gave them the ship's boats, and built them several rafts of timber also. Likewise, I gave his jeweled sword back to Don Sebastiano and bade him bear his ensign with him, permitting that he lower it with his own hands.

"Don Carlos," he assured me as he went overside, "I am not one who forgets lightly. Should ever the fortunes of war be reversed, and I stand where you have stood, I bid you to remember how you have entreated me, and look for some requital of your generous terms."

Then, when all was finished and the Spaniards had departed, I ran my Tiger ensign to the masthead and transferred my men unto the captured ship, and, with the Dutch barque as leader, we took up our voyage to Holland.

2. *How We Made a Sorry Bargain*

Now, when we were all safely come to Zeadyn, and had tied up against the pier, I made me ready to treat with the Dutchmen concerning our employment. To impress them with our worthiness I ordered everything in readiness for a fine parade, and when the steeple-clocks were at the stroke of ten we did debark and march gallantly along the street till we were come to the Town Hall.

We made a goodly showing. First of all came I, dight in my suit of plain black stuff with plain black body-armor, my

black-plumed hat upon my head, my red-lined cloak of tigerskin thrown over my shoulders. Close at my heels came Black Hassan all in Moorish armor, his great two-handed mace across his shoulder like a musket, his long saber clanking at his heels. Then Nuno Cabral, second in command, led on the men, six men to a file, four files to a squadron, two squadrons to a wing, three wings composing the battalion; pikemen marching in the middle, musketeers with even-slanted pieces at the sides, in between the pipes and kettle-drums and trumpets—tramp, tramp, tramp, their booted feet struck on the cobbled roadway as I led them toward the Town Hall where the Dutch commander was. We deployed in even ranks upon the public square, and as we came to halt the halberdiers brought down their lance-tips, the musketeers stood fast with gun-stocks on the ground, muzzles held arm's-length out at the right, and the drums beat out a ruffle while the trumpets sounded forth a triple flourish.

But though the townsfolk crowded round and gaped at great Black Hassan in his Moorish armor and at me in my bright tiger-cloak, there was no cheering for us, but rather a subdued and sullen murmur.

"By Allah's bones, my master," muttered Hassan at my elbow, "these be a churlish set of knaves. Perhaps it were better if we left them to their fate and sailed away to battle with the Spaniards on the sea. There be rare pickings there, while here——" he paused and spat upon the paving-stones in token of disgust.

"Let be," I answered sharply. "Do you accompany me into the Town House, where we will see what welcome waits us from the Netherlander general. Certes, he can not withstand the offer of our help." And so we went into the house.

And there before the fire the general

sate, a great, thick-bellied man called van der Coopen, with a jaundiced eye, who looked upon us coldly and spoke with no great courtesy when we had told our errand.

"Mercenary soldiers, quotha," he answered in a heavy, oily voice; "we've had our fill of mercenary soldiers, and God wot it is a sorry lot of bargains they have been. Stanley and Yorke delivered Deventer and Zutphen to the Spanish, Von Eude's German cavalry deserted when the Spaniards breached the walls of Antwerp and helped them sack and slaughter the inhabitants. Mercenaries, ha! To eat our substance in the lulls between the fighting, and turn traitor or craven when the time to fight arrives!"

Now when I heard these words I was exceeding wroth, and the blood flushed up into my cheeks and my two hands itched to clutch the Dutchman by the throat, but still I held myself in check, and: "*Mynbeer*," quoth I, "I doubt not that many of your hirelings are a scurvy lot, but we are not the ones to ask that you should buy our goods unsampled. Be good enough, therefore, to tell us somewhat of the things which trouble you; name some task that you would have us do, and we shall do it gladly; then, when you've seen the temper of our metal, say whether we be worthy of your hire."

Thereat the general laughed right heartily, but methought there was a crafty twinkle in his eyes as he replied: "If thou'lt agree to take the fortress of San Salvador beside the River Viesel, I'll undertake to hire ye, every mother's son, and pay ye in advance, to boot. But performance before pay, my fine young fighting-cock. What say ye?"

"Why, by the Prophet's beard, that's very bravely spoken, good *Mynbeer*," said I. "What of this fortress?"

"'Tis an outpost of the enemy, a nut so hard to crack that we have lost an even thousand men assaulting it," he told me with a sneering laugh. "Dost think that thou canst take it, good Sir Tiger-Man?"

"Mayhap," I answered. "There be men and men, and one battalion such as mine, with me for leader, haply may work with more success than all the dunderheads you've sent against the place. We'll talk of this anon, *Mynbeer*."

Then we marched back unto our ship, and I and Nuno Cabral and Black Hassan entered into council. On horses hired in the town we rode out to reconnoiter the position, and found it strong, indeed. Star-shaped, full twenty feet the bastions rose, all built of solid masonry, and round their foot there ran a wide, deep moat, protected on its farther side by a criss-cross of sharp stakes of the kind called Friesland cavalry, whereon a man would surely pierce himself if he essayed to clamber over them. The wall-tops were notched for cannon fire and loopholed for musketry. Well could I understand how futile were assaults made on the place, and how the Spanish garrison, safe-walled within that fort, could thumb their noses at the laboring Dutchmen who sought to wrest the stronghold from them.

"Now, by the wool of Allah's sheep, methinks thou'st writ a sorry bargain for us, master," muttered great Black Hassan, and stout Nuno Cabral, who delighted in assault upon the strongest fortresses, shook his head and tweaked his beard in token of dismay.

"Were we ten times as strong in men, and aided by artillery, as well, we should be insufficient to the task of seizing that strong place," he told me. "Naught but a siege, protracted and delayed, could make it yield."

"Aye, and while we sat around the walls and howled like starving dogs

beneath a butcher's window, the Spanish forces from beyond would fall upon our rear and cut us into bits," added Hassan with a great gusty sigh. "I fear that we shall have to tell that monstrous ball of fat that he has won the wager, after all, and we can not take the fort for him, may Allah send an earthquake to devour him!"

But I was not content to have it so, and so, instead of going to the Dutchman and owning we were beaten, I went back to the ship and sat me down to study. But though I thought until my head felt heavy as a cannon-shot, I could not frame a likely plan.

3. *How I Met La Araña*

WHEN eventime was come, and I no nearer to a safe plan for the capture of the fort than I had been at noon, I shook me like a dog who rises from a long and troubled sleep, and went walking in the town, inspecting first the shore patrols which I had set to watch the waterfront and keep my men from harm if they mingled over-freely with the wenches and the wastrels in the taverns. And as I walked with head bent low in thought I chanced to pass a lightless alley-way, and came all suddenly to pause as I heard the scuffing of rough shoon on the kidney-stones and a woman's voice raised in a plaint for help. "How now?" I asked, loosening my simitar and dagger in their sheaths and stepping cautiously, for in the darksome byway a man could leap on me unobserved, and I had little wish to stand before the face of Allah ere my time were come.

"Help, *Mynbeer*, help!" the woman called again, and I stepped still farther in the gloom to see what filthy business might be toward. And that same step was like to have been my last, for even as I peered before me, one who huddled in an angle of the wall leapt forth and

drove a poniard straight into my breast, so that had I not been guarded by my shirt of secret mail, he had surely let my heart's blood and my life together from my body at the single stroke. But the good chain-mail held true, and his knife-blade broke off in his hand as though it had been but a rotten carrot, and before he had a chance to call upon the name of God I passed my dagger once across his throat. And thereupon he fell down on his back and made unseemly noises while he kicked his feet against the paving-stones and died.

"One infidel dog gone to feed the fires of hell!" I hailed right gleefully. "Who else would taste the steel of Carlos called the Tiger?" But not a word made answer, for the other knaves were wrestling silently with a woman at the far end of the alley, and even as I stepped across the body of the one I slew, taking care that his vile blood should not befoul my boots, I saw them push her into the canal and turn to run away.

"Now by the sacred slipper of Mohammed (on whom the salute!) this will not do!" I called. "Stand fast, ye knaves, and tell me what this means." But they paid me no heed, and would have run away completely had I not bethought me of a trick which I learned in childhood, and flung my dagger at the farthest lout so that he fell stumbling to the pavement with five inches of good steel between his shoulders and the red blood running from his mouth. And as he fell his grasping hands seized on the legs of his companion, so that he fell face forward, too, and ere he could arise I was upon him.

He rolled away as I struck at him with my sword, but I struck and struck again, so that though I missed him at each blow I kept him rolling to escape my steel until he reached the curb and toppled over into the canal. Then I retrieved the dag-

ger from his fellow's corpse and stood a while upon the water's edge, taking counsel with myself whether I should dive in after him and slay him with my steel, or let the water strangle him.

But as I paused in thought a blubbering hail came to me: "Help, help; I be sinking!" and from the dark canal a girl's white face looked up pleadingly.

"Have courage, mistress, I am coming," I called back, and leapt into the tide.

The woman's farthingale had buoyed her up somewhat, so that she was more wet than hurt by her immersion, and when I reached her with a few quick strokes I found it no great task to keep her chin above the water, while I towed her to the curb and drew her out upon the bank.

As daintily as any cat she stepped upon the shore and shook the water from her dripping garments, then, to my amazement, turned and laughed right merrily. "By my faith, *Mynbeer*, we be a sorry-looking pair, we two," she told me mid soft gusts of laughter. "Your beard is wet as any drowned rat's tail, while I must look like some old beldame ducked for scolding in the village pond. Will come with me and dry thyself? My house lies not so far away."

"A little wetting is no great affair," I answered shortly, for her laughter liked me not, "but it were better that I saw you to your dwelling, else you are like to meet with other scurvy knaves and not find rescue nigh."

She made a little growling noise deep in her throat, as one who mocks a harmless puppy's show of fierceness; then, as I offered no response, she tucked her small hand 'neath my arm and walked along demurely as a village maid upon her way to Sabbath worship. And so we paced along the darkened streets, and three times as we walked methought I heard

the patter of pursuing steps, but each time I turned round I saw no follower, and so, deciding it was but some homeless dog which sought for bones by night, I thought no more upon the matter.

ANON we reached the gate of a walled garden, and with her key she let us in and led me toward the house. Thrice did she rap upon the door with the heavy signet of her ring, and at the third alarm an ancient, withered crone came hobbling to the portal and admitted us. "*Gracias*—" she began, but my conductress cut her short and told her hurriedly:

"Light the fire up, Margot, and brew some chocolate for *Mynbeer*, for he is wet unto the skin from leaping in the Brandt canal to save me from untimely drowning."

The ancient woman looked at her from out her lashless, rheumy eyes, but spake nothing further as she turned and led us up the stairs, kneeled down upon her knees and set the logs which lay all ready on the hearth to blazing merrily.

"Await me here, *Mynbeer*, and dry you by the fire," the younger woman bade. "I go to make myself more fitting for your entertainment."

The smoke steamed from my garments as I stood me by the blaze, and turned me round and round before it like a joint of meat upon the spit, till I was dry and snugly warm again. This done, I sate me in a richly cushioned chair and gazed about the room, for it was wondrous handsome, being carpeted with rugs the like of which I had not seen since I was last in Barbary, and hung with cunningly wrought tapestries depicting scenes of valor and of gallantry, with here and there a painting of some soberer religious nature. Silk cushions of bright hues were strewn upon the divans which stood by the walls, and a brazen lamp suspended

by a gilded chain from the low ceiling cast an amber light into that portion of the room not lighted by the blazing logs. In a copper brazier smoldered aromatic herbs which sent their scented smoke in lazy spirals toward the roof.

"How now, *Mynbeer*, dost like my nest?" a soft voice asked me from the curtained door, and I roused me from my reverie at the sound.

She was a pretty minx. Abundant chestnut-colored hair, rippling with rich shadow-laden waves, was wound in heavy coils low on her neck. Her face was small and pointed at the chin, with a small nose whose delicately cut nostrils seemed to palpitate above the thin, crimson mouth. Devoid of color as a mask of carven ivory, her pale countenance was enhanced in pallor by the redness of her lips and the shadow of the curling, silken lashes which framed her pansy-purple eyes. She had changed her stiff brocade for a clinging gown of purple tissue that hung light as any veil upon her slender, girlish form, and as she grasped the doorway curtain with one pale and ringless hand the loose sleeve of the garment fell away, and showed an arm as white as sculptured marble. On her feet were silver sandal shoon, and I saw her toes were long and straight and slender as the fingers of a well-kept hand.

I drew my breath in quickly, for the vision was enticing, and I was young and filled with all the fire of youth; yet some caution held the rapid beating of my heart in check, for here I knew there stood no ordinary woman, but some creature of enchantment whom men loved to their undoing, as men had loved the Trojan Helen in the days of long ago.

"And dost thou like my nest, *Mynbeer*?" she asked again, but:

"Call me not *Mynbeer*," I answered

roughly. "I am no beer-besodden Dutchman to be called *Mynbeer*."

A strange light came into her purple eyes. "No Dutchman, thou, I might have known it," she admitted with an intake of her breath. "A Spaniard, then; a *renegado*, possibly?"

"A Spaniard—I?" I answered; then, lest I soil her dainty carpets if I spat upon the floor, I spat into the fire. "By Allah's self——"

"A Moorman!" she exclaimed, and her eyes were big with wonder. "A Moorman—here?"

"And why not?" I responded. "Is not clean Moorish steel as good as any—aye, and as sharp, as thou didst see some little time aback when those low rascals flung thee in the water?"

She crossed the room and sate upon the divan facing me, and the perfume of her gown and hair rose to my brain like the working of some subtle drug. "Then thou art he who came to General van der Coopen, the Governor, and offered him thy services this morning?" she asked, while she studied me as though I were some rare beast at a show.

"I am that same," I told her, "and like to go away as empty as I came, for he would have me prove myself by a task which any man might quail before."

She laughed a short and mirthless laugh. "In sooth, thou'rt like to leave the shorter by a head," she answered, while her big eyes shone with secret merriment. "Dost know who I am, and who it was thou slew'st for to succor me tonight?"

"Why, as to that, I think it no great matter," answered I. "Thou wert a woman, lovely and in trouble; they a set of scurvy knaves who played the truant overlong from hell. Need more be said?"

"Indeed and indeed," she told me, while that same slow smile of sadness once again spread o'er her face. "I am

Lysbeth van Goorl, called sometimes La Araña, and those were van der Coopen's secret spies ye slew. For months they had hung on my trail, like sleuth-hounds following a roe; tonight they seized me in their net and were bearing me before the Governor when ye interfered. I do not think his Excellency will be greatly pleased when he learns the part ye've played, unless, perchance——" She stopped her speech and looked at me with dreamy, speculative eyes.

"Yes, mistress, unless what?" I prompted as she forbore speech, but continued looking at me, half in pleading, half in irony.

"Unless ye do redeem yourself and take your ransom to him," she replied. "Seest thou this head of mine? It's pretty, is it not? A soft and lovely thing to rest upon your shoulder, or within the hollow of your arm? A something ye might gaze on fondly as it lay upon the pillow by thine own, when morning's sunbeams drove the shadows of the night away? Nay! 'Tis something far more valuable. 'Tis worth its weight in minted gold, for that's the price upon it.

"See"—she slipped from off her seat and kneeled upon her knees before me, while she bowed her sweet head docilely and tapped my sword-hilt with her pearl-tipped fingers—"there is your sword and here my bowed and naked neck. Hew off this head of mine and bear it to the Governor. Long has he sought it, and in vain. Last Candlemas he swore an oath that he who brought him La Araña's head should have full amnesty and pardon for any crime or crimes, howe'er so great, which he might have committed, and the even weight of that same head in broad gold pieces, as well. Strike quickly, good Sir Moorman, that I may not suffer overmuch, and buy thyself free pardon and preferment with the prize I offer thee."

"Now by great Solomon, the son of David (on whom be peace!), what foolishness is this?" I asked, amazed and angered. "Dost take me for some Spanish swine that ye should dare this thing of me? Rise, lady, and let there be no talk of hewing heads away between us, unless, perchance, they be the heads of those who do thee injury."

Anon she sate beside me on the divan, and as timidly as any little bird that chirps and creeps within its nest, her lily fingers crept within mine own. "And why art thou hight La Araña?" I asked her afterwards, for my lips meantime had been full busy with other things than speech.

"La Araña—the Spider—as thou'lt learn, if thou shouldst live so long, is the chiefest of the Spaniards' spies, the shrewdest gatherer of information that they have," she answered me. "For years she has been here and there, sucking secrets from the military leaders of the Dutchmen and their allies as a spider drains the blood from hapless flies. Aye, and enmeshing the strongest of them in the meshes of her tresses as the spider traps the helpless, foolish moth within her web. Through La Araña's subtlety have many been made traitors and endured the death of shame upon the scaffold or before a file of musketeers. Hundreds—aye, and thousands—of brave men have been butchered in the field, because, forsooth, the Spaniards knew the secrets of their battle strategy beforehand. She is a woman with a fair and seemly body framed for love, but a body with no soul within it; she is a woman with the shrewd brain of a man within her head, but without a heart beneath her white and pliant breast; she is a ruthless, soulless, heartless spider-woman, an enemy more dangerous than a regiment of horse, a cruel, inhuman monster, shaped in woman's form, and only fit to die. Say,

wilt thou slay me now? For I am La Araña!" Therewith she kissed me full upon the mouth with gently parted lips.

All gently did I disengage the soft and scented arms from round my neck; then, whilst I held her two white hands within mine own, I asked her:

"Thou art a woman of the Dutch; thy name proclaims as much; how comes it that ye fight with charm and brain against your countrymen and for the bloody dogs of Spain?"

4. *How La Araña Came to Be*

A LOOK of wonder overspread her face. "Ye do not shrink from me—from La Araña? Ye would not slay me now, when I have told ye all?" she asked me in amaze.

"I would not slay thee now or ever," I replied. "I am the Tiger only to mine enemies, and thou'rt no foe of mine. Besides, Carlos de la Muerte does not kill where he has kissed. Wilt tell me now why is it that thou warrest on thy countrymen?"

She loosed her little hands from mine and rose and sate herself across the fire from me, then raised her fingers to her eyes as though to pinch away the tears. "I scarce can yet believe it," she declared. "Ye know me for the thing I am, yet ye do not flinch from me nor curse me, nor offer me a hurt. Art truly gentle as ye seem? Dost soothly wish to know why I make war upon my blood-kin as upon a bitter foe?"

"Soothly," answered I, and took her hands in mine again. "Mayhap I can still further serve thee, Lysbeth, as I have already done. If so it be, thou needest but ask my help, for maugre thou hast said about thyself, I still am not persuaded."

Now, when I spake her thus, it seemed the very visage of the woman changed.

M. C.—8

She was no longer Tryian Helen or fair Circe of the Isles, a woman-bait to catch men in a trap, but just a woman, soft and simple and in much great trouble. The very hand that rested in my hand seemed resting there for comfort rather than seduction.

"How old am I?" she asked me, and I shook my head in puzzlement.

"Why, one or two and twenty; perhaps a year or so the less," I answered.

"Nay, I'll not see twenty-six again," she told me with a weary smile, "but oh, my friend, I feel as though I had been old and wrinkled on that dim, far night when the moon gave birth unto the stars, for I have lived and suffered much in this short life of mine.

"It was six years ago when I was betrothed to Adrian van Tassel. Our bans were published Michaelmas; we were to wed the morning of All Saints. Then came the Spanish.

"All the Low Countries lay beneath an interdict; children, men and women held their lives forfeit if the Spaniards took them captive, and so the minions of King Philip raged throughout the town, burning, sacking, slaying all who fell into their path. I was in the house of my affianced, who was a lawyer and a man of peace and not a soldier; yet the Spanish captain fain would force him to the square where the Dutchmen captured under arms in the surprize attack awaited execution. But I kneeled upon my knees before him and cried mercy, and for me he granted it.

"If thou wilt come to be with me I'll spare the lives of all within this house and put a mark upon the door that none may enter for to rob it," he agreed, whereat the man to whom I was betrothed and eke his aged father and his mother did plead with me most piteously that I would grant myself pliant to the Span-

iard's offer. Round me they crowded, kissing my hand and the hem of my garment as though I had been a queen or saint, and saying that the thing I did was holy, noble sacrifice.

"And so I went away with Don—with the leader of the Spaniards, and in the camp I dwelt with him till Christmastide was come; then orders took him to the siege of Haarlem, and I was left to go my ways in peace.

"Back to my native town I went, the heart within me burning for the sight of home and friends and kindred, and with me I did bear some trinkets of remembrance for those I held most dear, for the Spaniard had entreated me right fairly, and I was left no beggar when he went away.

"The candles burned all brightly in the houses as I passed along the village street, and at every doorstep stood the wooden shoon for good St. Nicholas to fill, and by the door of Vrouw van Tassel stood another pair, a small and dainty pair all bright with fresh new gilding. But when I struck the knocker on the door there came no instant answer to my summons, though I used the secret knock which Adrian and I had used to make us known to one another. And finally came Adrian, my betrothed, and with him came a young and pretty doll-faced woman who laced her arm in his and looked at me in wonder as I stood there in the snow.

"'Adrian, 'tis Lysbeth—I!' I cried, and held my hands, all full of gifts, out to him, and:

"'Who is this woman, husband?' asked the girl who stood within the circle of his arm.

"'Bah, 'tis some strumpet of the town come to beg for alms or play a wicked, wanton's trick on us!' he answered as he slammed the door against me.

"Father and mother had I none, but to the home of her who reared me, my old aunt, I went, and she came forth from out the chimney-place where she nodded by the fire, and cursed me for a wanton and a harlot and a leman of the Spaniard, and drove me from her door into the snow.

"Then was mine anger kindled hot against my blood and kin and all my countrymen, and in the snow of Christmastide I stood and raised my hands to heaven and called down judgment on them for that they had accepted sacrifice of all I had to give when their extremity was great; yet now, when the danger I had saved them from by my self-sale was passed, they turned me from their doors with foul insult.

"And so, from that day forward I have gone my secret ways, now in this place, now in that, beguiling with a Judas-kiss, betraying all who fell beneath the witchery of my beauty, taking bloody toll for all the insults I had suffered at my countrypeople's hands, and receiving Spanish gold in return for services more valuable than any mercenary soldier's. Dost see why I am La Araña, and why I fight against my countrymen, Don Carlos?"

"I see that thou wert greatly wronged and that thou hast excuse for all thy deeds," I answered. "Further, I, who owe no duty to the Stadts General, but am a mercenary soldier like thyself, can pass no judgment on thee, Lysbeth. We mercenaries fight for friend or foe, according to our pay, our only loyalty to him who hires our swords, and that enduring only while our hire is paid. As yet I hold no patent from the Governor or the Stadts, and so we are not enemies in fact or deed. But this I tell thee, Lysbeth van Goorl, if on tomorrow's morning General van der Coopen should hire me, my first act would be to put thee in restraint, that thy lovely

face and agile wit should work me and my men no harm. What sayest thou, will it be truce until we fight for different flags, or——"

"No truce for thee, my fine young cockerel!" spake a man's deep voice behind my shoulder, and from beyond a heavy tapestry hanging on the wall a tall and bearded man stepped forth, a pistol with glowing match held ready in his hand. "Draw forth thy sword and dagger and sling them on the floor," he ordered with a smile more threatening than any frown.

5. How Old Foes Met Again

"EXCELENCIA! Do not so, I pray!" the girl besought, wringing her white hands together. "This night he saved me from the Governor's spies when they had made me prisoner. He is no Dutchman, nor a ladrone in their pay, but a kind and very knightly gentleman, who, even when he learned that I am La Araña, forbore to do me hurt and spake me well with kindness and full courtesy."

"The more fool he," the Spaniard answered with a sneering laugh.

"Ah, but if I ask this of thee—I who never yet have asked a favor since——"

"Be silent, drab!" he bade her harshly. "I am upon my liege lord's business, and not all your harlot's tears can stay me from my duty. Besides, I have a bone to pick with this black crow of infamy, this *renegado*, this scar-faced pirate and sea-robber.

"Dost recognize me, sirrah?" he turned his face full on me, so that the lamplight fell upon his features.

"Don Sebastiano——" I began, amazed, and:

"——de la Montalva y Moreno, captain in the forces of his Most Catholic Majesty," he finished with a pasquin bow. "Thou hadst thought to see the last of

me when thou turned me loose upon the ocean in a little boat, no? But we were rescued by a galley ere we'd rowed a league, and——come, shed thou thy sword and dagger, pirate dog, I have no words to waste on thee. Anon, within the fortress of San Salvador we'll see if thy neck be tougher than a hempen rope, unless the torturers have finished thee before the halter gets a chance."

"Nay, *Señor*," I protested, "this is graceless, surely. When we overcame thee in fair fight upon the *Santa Isabella's* deck, thou didst surrender and received due courtesies of war. Had I been pirate as ye name me, I could have slaughtered thee and all thy crew; yet I did release thee with thy personal belongings, forbearing even to hold thee prisoner for ransom. Thy ship was prize of war, 'tis true, but thy person——"

"Silence, dog, thy very words convict thee!" he spat an angry answer. "My ship was prize of war, thou sayest? Ha, what war was there 'twixt thee and Spain? Thyself admitted that ye'd never known allegiance to a king; hence thou wert masterless, and fighting for no country and no flag, ye did assault a treasure ship with force and arms; therefore be ye pirate, and as pirate shall ye die, for now I hold the upper hand and——*Santa Maria!*"

The look of one who sits unwarned upon a nail came on his face.

"Let drop thy pistol, Spaniard, and hold up thy hands above thy head, or by our Lady thou'lt not live to draw another breath," a husky whisper sounded from behind him.

He did as he was ordered; then: "Now step two paces forward in the room," the same low tones commanded, and as the haughty Don obeyed I saw behind him the small form of my little orderly, Luiz Castro, who, scarce reaching to the Spaniard's shoulder, held a long and naked

dagger-point against his back above the heart.

Swiftly I drew my sword and put its point against Don Sebastiano's throat, and whilst I held him pinned against the wall, small Luiz bound his wrists together with a cord from off the window-curtain.

"There be three more beneath the window in the garden, Master," the lad informed me as he knotted fast the knots about the Spaniard's wrists, "but I fooled them bravely. As they stood watch I hurled a great stone into the bushes, and while they searched to see what made the noise, I slipped beneath their very noses and followed in this one's steps. And none too soon did I arrive, meseemeth."

"Was it then thy feet I heard behind me in the street?" I asked.

"Aye, Master. When ye left the ship I followed in thy wake. I saw thee fight the three knaves in the alley and pull madonna from the water, then come with her unto this house. I waited in the street for thee, and presently I saw these ravens come and hold a parley with an ancient crone, who would have sent them off, but they refused to go. Eftsoons the three took station in the garden while their leader here did mount a trellised vine unto the window of this room—and I came after him. Say, now, Master, shall I slit his gullet?" He whetted the edge of his knife across the palm of his small hand.

"Nay," answered I the while I plucked my beard in thought; then, of the girl I asked:

"Lady, it was in thy house that these things came to pass; what is thy judgment in the matter?"

The Spanish captain laughed a scornful taunt: "Don Sebastiano de la Montalva y Moreno, captain in the army of His Majesty of Spain, is subject to the judgment of a pirate and a slut! Señor

Don Carlos de la Muerte, *el Tigre*, of the Kingdom of Cockaigne, and the white and pure Queen of Babylon, the fairest strumpet of them all, would sit in judgment on a gentleman of Spain!"

The girl's soft eyes flashed sudden fire and her slender bosoms heaved as though she fought for breath. "Strumpet thou hast named me—woman of the town and of the camp—and thou hast named me rightly!" she replied. "And who was it made me so? Who forced me to his will by threats against the ones I loved? Who reft me of my home and kin and honorable marriage, and soiled me with the sin of lechery? *Thou*. Sebastiano de la Montalva, thou art he!"

The Spaniard eyed her coolly. "What I have done I did for Spain and for the true religion," he replied. "I do not need to justify myself before the eyes of any man."

"Thou sayest truth," I answered, "but thou must justify thyself before the eyes of Allah, the Compassionate and Merciful.

"Loose his hands," I bade small Luiz; then, when this was done:

"Draw, Spaniard, and defend thyself," I ordered, "for within the semi-hour thou shalt stand before the face of God and receive the judgment of thy sins. On guard, thou offspring of a noseless mother, thou brother of a naughty sister!"

And then we fought.

Right valiantly the Spaniard swung his sword, for he was no novice at the game, and more than once his keen point drew the blood from me as right cut, left cut, down-stroke, up-thrust, we made sword-play through the dimly lighted room.

THE little Dutch girl knelt upon her knees and raised her hands in prayer. "Oh, Lord God of Battles, let the weapons of my champion prevail!" she be-

sought heaven. "Look down on outraged virtue and deflowered innocence, and let Thy righteous judgment deal with my seducer according to his sins against the fatherless and helpless. Amen!"

"*Mujercilla!*" spat the Spaniard as he gave back from my sword. "Dost think that heaven hears the prayers of such as thou? Take thy petition down to hell in person!" Dodging from my threatening point he lowered his blade and with a sudden snake-stroke ran it through her body.

"By God, by God, by God's own self, thou diest for that caitiff blow, if for naught else!" I shouted, and like the tiger-beast whose name I bore, I leapt upon him.

His sword-point struck my brisket, and I laughed aloud at his discomfiture as the steel bent back against the meshes of my shirt of mail and I drove my dagger deep into his breast and turned the blade about for greater torment.

"Go down to hell and tell the Devil Carlos sent thee—aye, and grope thy way in blindness over the fiery coals!" I told him; then, as he gasped his life away upon the floor, I leant over him and one by one dug out his eyes with my sharp dagger-point.

"The pistol, lad," I bade my little orderly, and snatching up the weapon blew the match to life again as I leaped into the window-place and gazed into the garden down below.

The Spaniards loitered at their posts, and one I shot ere they could know I looked at them, and as his comrades bent above him I clambered down the trellis, drove my good sword clean through the nearer one, then set upon the other with the fury of the damned. The fight was short, for at my second stroke I hacked his head well-nigh from his shoulders; then, with my saber swinging by the

sword-knot from my wrist, I climbed again the trellis and kneeled down beside the dying girl.

"Carlos, *caro mio*, I thank thee for thy championship," she whispered, and the little goutts of blood were already forming at the corners of her mouth. "It was a knightly act, *amigo mio*, but I would ask one more of thee. Raise me up and take me in thy arms, then kiss me like a brother, not a lover. Many are the men who have clipped me to their bosoms, many more have kissed me on the mouth, but never since the days of my lost innocence has any treated me as thou hast."

I nursed her head within the hollow of my elbow and kissed her on the lips and brow, and then:

"I suffer, Carlos," she complained, "and all is growing dark. Is it death?"

"Yea, it is death," I answered in a whisper. "Wouldst thou that I should pray with thee? I know a Christian prayer." So then:

"Our Father which art in heaven,
Hallowed be Thy name . . ."

we prayed together, she falteringly and slow for that her strength was ebbing fast, I haltingly because I had not prayed that prayer since I had stood, a little child, beside my mother's knee in the harem in Algiers.

At length she whispered chokingly: "A legacy from La Araña, Carlos *mio*—remember, if thou still art minded to assault the fortress of San Salvador, that guile counts more than guns, and that a woman enters freely where a man is barred."

"What meanest thou, *cara mia*, by that parable?" I asked, but:

"Oh, hold me tightly, Carlos!" she besought. "They stand all robed in ghostly white to speak my accusation—those many men whom I betrayed to death!"

"Nay, 'tis the blessed Jesu and His

company of angels thou dost see," I comforted. "What says thy Christian Bible: 'Though thy sins be as scarlet, yet will I wash them whiter than snow.' It is the blessed Lord who waits to welcome a repentant sinner, I tell thee, Lysbeth."

"The blessed Lord!" she gasped. "Ah—Carlos!" And the blood flushed forth from out her mouth.

So died the Spider-Woman, La Araña, courtesan and spy, betrayer of men's trust and barteress of love, in the arms of Carlos de la Muerte, with his name upon her lips.

6. *How I Bargained for a Burial*

NEXT day there was a great commotion in the town. A Spanish plot to take the place by stealth had been discovered, it was said, for four dead Spaniards had been found in the dwelling-place of a notorious woman spy, who had doubtless entertained them while they hatched their foul plots, and perished with them when *Mynbeer* the Governor's spies came on them. In proof of this it was told how the Governor's most expert spies had lost their lives in saving of the city, for their bodies had been found beside the Brandt canal. But how they came so far from La Araña's house, and whether they had suffered mortal wounds and staggered from the place after dispatching the woman and her co-conspirators, none could surely say. Only, all knew, the Governor's spies were dead, and so were all the Spaniards and their woman colleague.

This was the simple story as it was started. But as the rumor sped from lip to lip, the tale grew monstrous great; so by the time it reached its hundredth teller it was two hundred Spaniards who had perished as they drew a cordon round the Governor's residence to take him in his sleep and despoil the city's treasure chests.

One thing was natheless certain. The Spaniards' heads had been struck off, and with them that of her who gave them aid and comfort, and while their bodies had been burned to ashes in a bonfire, their heads were stuck on sharpened stakes and set up in the public square for oafs to gape and wonder at.

Now when I heard this I was passing wroth, and taking with me a stout whip of plaited bullhide and Black Hassan and good Nuno Cabral, I marched to the City Hall and called upon the Governor.

"How now, Sir Mercenary," he demanded, "hast come to tell me that my bargain is too hard for thee, and ye dare not seek to prove your mettle against the fortress of San Salvador?"

"Nay, by the Prophet his beard, I've come to tell thee no such thing," I answered him right angrily. "I come to strike another bargain with thee, good *Mynbeer*, and thou'lt be wise to enter into it. First, in return for the capture of San Salvador, I do demand that I be made a Sergeant-Major-in-the-Field, with due commission from the Stadts and a salary of five hundred gilders every month. Next, I would that all my men be hired to serve under me, and that every man receive a good hard dollar every day for wages. Last of all, but first to be attended to, I do demand that straightway ye do give to me the head of her who perished yesternight, to be right honorably buried in the churchyard with a parson to read prayers over it and a file of musketeers to fire a last salute above the grave. What sayest thou, thou monstrous ball of fat? Dost accede to my terms, or wilt thou feel the sting of this my whip?" And thereupon I uncurled my lash and sent it whistling through the air above his head.

Then he would fain have called his guard and had us clapt in irons, but great Black Hassan reached out gently and put

fingers round his throat and grinned into his face so horribly that he forbore outcry and readily acceded to our terms.

"Now lower me that head from yonder pikestaff," I told a sturdy varlet of the Governor's guard who lounded before the door, "and see thou to it that it toucheth not the earth."

"And who art thou that ye give orders thus?" the knave demanded, whereat I struck him twice across the face with my stout whip, so that the blood gushed from his cheek.

"Wilt argue with the Tiger, carrion?" I asked. "*Wah*, then taste the Tiger's claws, and know from them how terrible can be his teeth."

And so he took the head from off the pike, and I wrapped it in a square of fair white linen which I'd taken from a table in the Governor's house, and bare it with me to a skilful Jewish chirurgeon who knew such things, and bade him spice it with sweet herbs and aromatics that it might not know corruption, and to close the half-shut eyes and compose the wilted features in a look of peaceful sleep; then shut it in a carven leather casket well shelled in lead and have it ready for the burial that night.

7. *How We Assailed San Salvador*

Now morning was far spent when these things had been done, and so I turned me to the task which I had set myself. All night my thoughts had dwelt upon the words which La Araña spake whilst she lay dying in my arms, and by day I had their meaning in my mind.

"Guile counts for more than guns, and a woman enters freely where a man is barred," she had said, and from that hint I planned my strategy.

A score and ten of my stout men I singled out for that their stature was

below the average, and them I dight in woman's weeds, with baskets full of eggs and vegetables on their arms, and their swords well hid beneath their flowing skirts.

Then in groups of twos and threes they walked along the road till they were come unto the fortress of San Salvador, where they sat down as though they had been countrywomen waiting for the ferry-boat to bear them over the River Viesel to the Spanish lines beyond, where they might sell their wares.

When all were sat hard by the fortress gate, I and all of the remainder of my troop, some horsed, the rest unmounted, came at furious pace adown the road, yelling as it were a pack of fiends but lately loosed from hell.

And when the huckster-women saw us come they cried and beat their breasts and rent their hair for very terror, and ran shrieking to the fortress for succor. And the Spaniards let the drawbridge down for them to enter, whereat some smote the guard and others cut the hawsers of the bridge, so it could not be lifted, while still others rushed into the castle armory and held the door against all comers, so the garrison could not come unto their muskets or their pikes, and only those who mounted guard upon the bastions were ready to receive us armed when we thundered over the bridge.

"Carlos! Carlos!—Tigre! Tigre! Tigre!" sounded high the battle-cry as my musketeers emptied ball on ball into the startled Spanish ranks, and my pikemen and my axmen swept upon them, striking limb from body, hewing head from neck; thrusting, cutting, stabbing, smiting, bearing down all opposition in the fierceness of their charge.

Great feats of valor did Black Hassan do with his two-handed mace, and Nuno Cabral, too, and even little Luiz Castro

did himself proud with sword and dagger; while as for me, had twice times forty thousand Spaniards barred my path, I should have cut a lane through them, for I battled for the right to give a fair head honorable burial in the churchyard's sacred close.

And so we took the fortress of San Salvador, and lowered the hated ensign of the King of Spain, floating from the masthead in its stead my own good banner brodered with the likeness of a snarling Tiger's head.

And when the sunset came, the Gov-

ernor arrived with all his company, and I bade him welcome to the fortress I had taken, and to him I did give the keys; then, whilst his troops were stood in order at the gate, I lowered down my flag from off the ramparts, and he raised the standard of the Stadts General in its place.

And on a fair white parchment was my patent then engrossed, commissioning me a Sergeant-Major-in-the-Field, and setting forth at length the terms of hiring for myself and men. And thus did I commence my term of service with the Dutch.
