

BLACK SOMBREIRO

by CLIFFORD KNIGHT ~ WNU SERVICE

Elsa Chatfield, Hollywood artist, is disinherited by her Aunt Kitty, who died from an overdose of morphine. Hunt Rogers, professional sleuth, and Barry Madison, an amateur detective, go to Mazatlan, Mexico, to solve what they believe to be Kitty Chatfield's murder. On arrival, they find that Elsa's party had preceded them by plane. During a festa at the ranch of Sam Chatfield (Elsa's father), James Chesebro is murdered. Lombardo, chief of the Mexican police, questions Pedro, the pulque man, after questioning all the guests. They reenact the prologue to the death of Chesebro. While this is going on, Pedro, the star witness, makes his escape into the mountains.

CHAPTER XI

"It's a nice little puzzle so far, Barry," observed Rogers. "We'll not solve it tonight—probably not tomorrow. It can very quickly be solved if Lombardo and his man Friday will catch up with Pedro. Suppose we sleep on it."

We did sleep on it, rocking gently in our stateroom on board the Orizaba anchored in the harbor. In the light of a new day, after a leisurely breakfast with Margaret and Dwight, at which time we spoke softly and with respect for the now murdered James Chesebro, we waited for the launch to take us ashore. Suddenly Dwight's body stiffened. "Look! Did you see that?" he cried. "Look!"

Before our eyes some hundreds of yards away a huge fish leaped clear of the water and then fell back with a great splash.

"There's your marlin, darling," said Margaret sweetly, "come to play with you."

"Let's go fishing now," Dwight's voice was excited. "Come on, fellows."

"Sorry," said Rogers. "I'd planned some other things—about Chesebro's slayer."

"Well, go on, then; the launch is waiting for you. As soon as it's back I'm going after that fellow. Hunting me up, is he? Wanting to play with me?" said Dwight as Rogers and I went down the ladder.

We landed at the wharf, found one of those ancient two-wheeled aransas like the one Elsa had ridden in that first day, climbed in and set off.

"It's probably like hunting for the needle in the haystack, Barry," he remarked, after an extended conversation with the driver which explored the fellow's acquaintances among the pulque sellers. At first the driver, a sleepy-eyed fellow with a bushy mustache, had not been able to comprehend why we should search for a pulque seller when liquor of many kinds was easily obtainable almost anywhere. When he realized, however, that we were looking for a particular dealer in pulque, he believed that he knew several Pedros. And so we started out.

At last our dispirited horse pulled up with a sigh before a thatched hut near the end of the street.

A small shy woman came to the door when Rogers knocked.

"Does Pedro, the pulque seller, live here, senora?" Rogers inquired in Spanish.

"Yes, sir," the woman replied hesitantly, a frightened look in her deep, dark eyes.

"May we speak with Pedro, senora?" inquired Rogers, smiling.

"He is away, sir," she replied.

"Did your husband return home last night from his trip to the rancho of Senor Chatfield?"

"Briefly, sir; and then made haste to depart."

"Did he go far, senora?"

"To the mountains, sir."

"And he will return soon?"

The woman shook her head. "He is away, sir. I do not know when he will return."

A man was lurking inside the house as we talked, just beyond our view. I had heard him and so had Rogers. At last overcome by curiosity he appeared suddenly behind the woman in the doorway. It was not, however, Pedro as I suspected, but a man whose face was familiar. Rogers glanced at him.

"Good morning," he said and smiled. The man returned the greeting hesitantly.

"My brother, Jose," the woman said.

"And did the old dog die, senor?" inquired Rogers. I recognized then the individual who the morning of Elsa's attack on Chesebro was putting to death with chloroform an old dog near the stables.

"Oh, yes, sir. Quickly, as you said he would."

"Senor," began Rogers, "the chloroform—tell me again who gave it to you."

"Senora Chatfield, sir."

"Senora Chatfield?"

"Yes. She of the golden hair—"

Rogers suddenly elevated Pepe to

the thatch of the roof where with a flutter of wings and wildly clutching feet he re-established himself, wheeled about to stare down at us with his wicked little eyes and utter a squawk of pleasure. We prepared to take our departure; Rogers bowed and smiled.

"I wish your husband a safe journey, senora, and a speedy return," he said, and we withdrew to our arana, tagged by the still silent children, while the pulque seller's wife stood in the doorway of the hut to observe our departure.

We had jogged along for some distance in the direction of the business district when I remarked, "Some grist for the mill there."

"Yes, Barry. There is confirmation of the conclusion we reached last night. Pedro ran out on us at Sam Chatfield's, hurried home, remained briefly and then fled to the



"What is he called, senora?"

mountains for an indefinite stay. He carried with him the belief that he not only saw the murderer of Chesebro, but can identify him. He fears the consequences if he is made to identify him.

"You're right, of course," I sighed. "But where does that leave us, Hunt?"

"It leaves us with a simple explanation of the crime—when Pedro is captured and returned to Mazatlan. To the jefe del policia, Senor Otilio Lombardo, will fall the honor of solving the murder of Kitty Chatfield, as well as that of Chesebro, when his men bring in Pedro."

"But there's no evidence that the two were done by the same hand."

"No," admitted Rogers, as we drove along the shady streets, "there is no evidence of it; there's only a hunch on my part, and a very, very faint hunch at that. Perhaps no more than a wish that it be so. Simplify things enormously, wouldn't it, Barry?" he said, looking at me with a twinkle in his mild blue eyes.

"Let's go and talk with Lombardo and urge upon him our belief, and perhaps spur him on to greater effort in bringing back Pedro." He turned to the driver and said in Spanish: "Senor, take us, please, to the police station."

Rogers asked for Lombardo at a small desk, and the courteous occupant assured us that we should see the jefe at once. But it was some ten minutes before we were shown into a small room where Lombardo sat alone.

"We came," Rogers said slowly, "only to offer what help you think we can give toward the solution of the murder of our friend, James Chesebro."

"That is very kind of you, gentlemen."

"Our opinion, reached after considerable reflection, senor, is that it is vital to capture Pedro, the pulque seller, who fled last night when we were about to require him to identify the slayer."

"Yes, of course."

"Undoubtedly Pedro knows who the slayer is."

"I believe so, gentlemen."

"We understand that he fled last night to the mountains."

"Ah, so?" Lombardo's eyebrows shot upward. "You know that too?"

"Yes, from the man's wife. You of course, have questioned her?"

"Of a certainty, senor. Already the order has been given to bring the man back from the mountains."

"It would be helpful, gentlemen," he said carefully, "if you could provide us with additional motives to be put with those we already have when it comes to the trial."

"You—" he began hesitantly. "Is it possible you have reached a decision, senor?"

"We have made the arrest, this morning. The murderer is now in custody, gentlemen. I would appreciate it if you could supply, perhaps, additional motives, although what we have are ample, I am sure."

We both were silent, stunned a little at this announcement of an arrest in the case so early, before even Pedro had been returned to Mazatlan.

"May we ask, senor—" began Rogers.

"Of course," Lombardo replied, his white even teeth showing in a magnificent smile. "I have arrested Senor Reed Barton."

"Barton!" I exclaimed.

"Yes, Senor Madison. It was not difficult to discover the fact that he is guilty. There was the testimony of Pedro last night; not testimony in so many words, gentlemen, but by his actions. He was terrified of having to identify the murderer who was at the moment re-enacting the role before our eyes."

"But—" Rogers attempted to protest. Lombardo ignored the effort courteously.

"Moreover, senores, yesterday Senor Barton and Senor Chesebro quarreled violently in the office of the mining company. Senor Barton was discharged; there were threats exchanged. The quarrel was over Senorita Chatfield. All this has been told us by Senor Costillo, the clerk in the office, who was a witness."

Reed Barton was sitting in his cell smoking a cigarette with the air of one upon whom has descended a vast and philosophic calm. His dark blue eyes indicated that there had been no strain, no loss of sleep. His handclasp through the bars of his cell was vigorous and warm, and he looked at us with a faint expression of amusement at our concern for his predicament.

"I didn't dream, Reed," I said, "when we parted at Sam Chatfield's last night, that we would find you here this morning."

"Neither did I, Barry. Mexico not only is a land of romance, but, in the threadbare observation, anything can happen in it."

"And does, apparently," remarked Huntton Rogers, a wry twist to his lips. "I'm sorry that this has happened, Reed. It is much too soon to make an arrest."

We spoke in English, to which the guard lounging near by paid no attention.

"When were you arrested, Reed?" I inquired.

"At the very moment when I was sleeping my best, just before sunrise. They came knocking on my door, made me dress and brought me here."

"But they haven't anything in the way of evidence that a good attorney couldn't shoot holes through—at least, back home it would be so," I said.

Reed cocked his head and looked at me. "This is different, Barry," he remarked. "I don't know what they've got. Except for one thing—the police picked up a paper knife in my room while I was dressing. It seemed to have its effect."

"Yes, it was a small, thin-bladed weapon that killed Chesebro. But there's more than that, of course," Rogers explained. "Lombardo seems to have been swayed a great deal by what a clerk in your office told about you and Chesebro quarreling."

"Costillo?" said Reed. "He would, of course. We did have quite a go—the Chief and I. I guess I told you about it, Barry. We unloaded everything we had been storing up for each other for several months. Chiefly concerning Elsa, you know; but, even if I do say it, he rather started talking about Elsa. Down here, of course, things like that amount to fighting words."

Steps along the corridor interrupted our conversation; the guard sat more erect in his chair and shot a glance at us as if he meditated bringing our conference to a halt. Walking rapidly around the corner came the short, rather thick figure of Sam Chatfield. He saw us standing outside Reed Barton's cell and came directly toward us, a smile lighting his rather serious face.

(TO BE CONTINUED)



Choosing Right Breed Of Rabbits Important

Market Demand Should Govern Selection

Every farmer who wishes to raise rabbits should become familiar with market demands in order to select a breed that will find a ready sale, says a U. of California publication, "Rabbit Raising," by H. M. Butterfield and W. E. Lloyd. Some rabbits will satisfy the market demands better than others. For example, a market that prefers a small fryer rabbit weighing from 1½ to 2 pounds dressed or 3 to 4½ pounds live weight will justify the producer in considering a breed that develops early and soon reaches a marketable condition with a low feed cost. Breeds that are slow to develop or that do not fill out well when young are better suited for markets using large meat rabbits weighing five pounds or more.

Only a few breeders cater to a fur market and sell the meat from rabbits producing the fur for whatever it will bring. The meat from a six-month-old fur rabbit will usually weigh four or five pounds or more; it is important to find a market that is willing to take dressed rabbits of this size. Such meat is usually low in price, five to nine cents a pound live weight being a fair range in list price.

The production of breeding stock calls for a wise choice from the many breeds now available. The newer breeds usually sell for more than the old established breeds, and the beginner should anticipate a drop in prices for some of the present high-priced new breeds. Nearly always the final choice will rest on the value of the animals for meat and fur. A new breed may possess excellent fur qualities and yet have no value on the fur market because the pelts are not available in sufficient numbers for matching.

Breeds for the Beginner.

Most rabbit raisers find it best to start with but one breed. The characteristics and requirements of one breed are far easier to learn than those of several. As skill is acquired and markets are developed, the producer may then find it profitable to cater to several kinds of demand.

Certain breeds have become popular because they have returned a profit and have had the approval of buyers. For example, the New Zealand Red or New Zealand White and the Flemish Giants are very popular for supplying the market demand for high-quality meat. Among the fur rabbits the Chinchilla, the American White, the New Zealand White, the White Flemish Giant, the Havana, the Lilac, the Castor Rex and its crosses, and certain blue and silver breeds have been very popular for fur and have considerable meat value. All these breeds are produced in quantity so that stock is easily purchased and the market demand is kept up by a regular supply. Some of the newer breeds might be more popular if they could be secured in larger quantities and at smaller expense. The introduction of a little-known breed is not always a paying undertaking.

Selection of Individuals.

Some general characteristics which should affect the choice of breeding rabbits, regardless of the breed or variety are:

1. Ability to maintain health and vigor under commercial conditions; not unduly susceptible to disease.
2. Meat white, fine-grained, firm, and delicately flavored, in the case of meat rabbits.
3. Dressing percentage high, with a large percentage of the best meat cuts (saddle); body compact, meaty, with fine bone for the meat trade.
4. Ability to thrive on inexpensive feed.
5. Market weights and desirable plumpness reached at an early age.
6. Value sufficient to leave a profit for the producer under existing conditions.
7. Ability to reproduce true to color and type.
8. A good breeder the year around.
9. Females good mothers, able to bear and rear large litters.

Utility vs. Fancy Stock.

The first concern of the breeder should be with utility rather than with fancy stock. Rabbit breeders have too frequently wasted much time on unimportant characteristics. Leg bars, black toenails, and nose or ear markings have little effect on the utility value of any rabbit, though such markings may sometimes be correlated with certain desirable colors in the pelt. Ultimately the popularity of a breed will largely depend on its utility value.

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