



# CARMEN OF THE RANCHO

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### SYNOPSIS

Don Alfredo, wealthy, Spanish owner of a Southern California rancho, refuses to heed several warnings of a raid by a band of outlaws, Sierra Indians. One day after he has finally decided to seek the protection of the nearby mission for his wife and family, the Indians strike. Don Alfredo is killed and his two young daughters are torn from the arms of the family's faithful maid, Monica, and are carried away to the hills. Padre Pascual, missionary friend of the family, arrives at the ruins of the rancho and learns the story of the raid from Monica. After a trying and difficult trip across the plains and mountains from Texas to California, youthful Henry Bowie, a Texas adventurer, with his friends, Ben Pardaloe and Simmie, an Indian scout, sight the party of Indians who have carried off the two little girls. The three Texans attack the war party of fifty-odd Indians and through a clever ruse, scatter the savages to the hills. The girls are saved. The group makes its way out of the hills and meets the distraught Monica, the children's maid. The girls are left with Monica and the friendly Padre at a mission, and the Texans proceed to Monterey. Here Bowie completes his business for Gen. Sam Houston of Texas, who has commissioned him to deliver an important message. Bowie decides to have a look at the wild untamed country that California was in the middle Nineteenth century. Bowie disappears from California but returns eight years later and makes the acquaintance of a friendly Spanish family at the Rancho Guadalupe. He is attracted by the lovely Carmen, daughter of Don Ramon, the rancho's owner. Bowie saves Don Ramon's life in a fierce fight with a huge grizzly bear.

### CHAPTER VI—Continued

But Pedro dared take no chances. His horse was frantic, and he knew the deadly danger of a wounded bear. Casting a hasty glance at Bowie, who lay on his face, he urged his frightened horse closer to the fallen monster of the Sierras. The vaquero eyed the bear narrowly while he rode his horse, kicking and flinging, around him until he caught sight of the handle of a Bowie knife sunk to the hilt between the ribs under the left forepaw. The grizzly lay quite dead.

Hastening to Bowie, Pedro slipped from his horse to examine him. Dust-covered and mangled, the Texan lay in a rapidly widening pool of his own blood. His heart was beating faintly, and Pedro, giving hurried orders to his comrades, raised the unconscious man in his arms, pushed up from one ear a flap of scalp torn from Bowie's temple, and, shouting for puffballs, plastered the dry spores as best he could over the unconscious man's head, shoulders and arms.

### CHAPTER VII

Bowie woke in bed to see a tall bald man in the brown woolen habit of a Franciscan padre sitting in a chair beside him and eying him with a suspicion of a smile. As Bowie opened his eyes the padre raised the forefinger of his right hand and laid it across his own lips as if to enjoin silence.

"Dos palabros, amigo, no mas!" he said in a low sympathetic voice. "Few words from you for some time yet. I want to see some nourishment for you before you expend any strength—you left most of that, amigo, in the canyon."

"Yes," he continued, still in English, "I know what you want to ask. You were brought back to the ranch house, given up for dead. When they sent for me at the mission I asked, 'Who is this man?' 'A Texan, mangled by a grizzly,' they told me. 'A Texan?' I repeated. And when they assured me you were, I said, 'The Texan is not dead; I have seen many men torn by grizzlies; but the Texan outlasts the bear.' However, I say to you seriously, few words and on your back till we can get more blood coursing through your veins."

Bowie lay so utterly weak he could hardly find voice, but speak he would. "Padre," he said, breathing with difficulty, "if the bear is dead I want my knife. My knife," he repeated with an effort, "and my revolver."

For answer the Franciscan rose, turned to the bureau in the bedroom, took from it the long knife and the Colt revolver. "They have been cared for, amigo, as you see. But I advise you to rest up for at least three months before you resume with a grizzly. . . . That is, indeed, a knife," remarked the padre, holding up the Bowie knife for interested inspection. "Where did you get it, amigo?"

"The blade was made from a blacksmith's file," returned Bowie with a trace of pride in his weakness.

"And calls for a long strong arm to wield it," mused the padre.

Don Francisco entered the room on tiptoe. He greeted Bowie warmly. "Amigo!" he exclaimed. "Thanks to God that you are alive! Tell me: what happened in that canyon?"

The padre put up his hand. "He is too weak to talk."

"But in a few words," begged Don Francisco.

"In a few words," responded Bowie dryly, "we had more or less of a fight."

"Madre de Dios!" exclaimed Don Francisco. "I would call it more than 'less of a fight.' Pedro has never seen so big a bear—no, not in all his life, he truly says. But Bowie, you must know Padre Martinez. He has been our surgeon, amigo. We had none else to call on. Dr. Doane was in Santa Barbara. Doctors are scarce in California, very scarce. We feared you would die from all the blood you lost. But Padre Mar-

tinex, who graduated a surgeon in Spain before he became a missionary, came quickly to our aid—and you see!" Bowie weakly acknowledged his obligation by pressing the hand of Padre Martinez, who sat beside his bed, and the padre silenced Don Francisco by waving him out of the room and then following him.

At the door he encountered Don Ramon just coming to speak to Bowie and, in matter of fact, to apologize for exposing his guest's life to such danger. Don Ramon brought back his nephew Francisco for translator. "Only a few words, Padre," exclaimed Don Ramon. "But he saved my life. I must, at least, thank him."

Bowie, who in the everyday course of the life of a frontiersman would not have looked on his narrow escape as an extraordinary event, found himself the hero of the rancho. Pardaloe and Simmie, shining in the penumbra of his prestige and though secretly elated at the feat, put on airs of indifference among the vaqueros to intimate that where they came from such incidents were everyday occurrences.

The days went slowly, almost painfully, for an active man like Bowie. Dona Maria, realizing that her husband's life had been spared through the diversion of the bear's fury, was unremitting in her solicitude for the Texan's comfort. And when he was ready to sit up, Carmen sent flowers and a Chinese confection to him.

During the impatient days that followed, Bowie had one faithful attendant. Don Francisco spent hours at his bedside and entertained him with stories of California and of his people, the rancheros. Bowie was a good listener. One day while Don Francisco sat with Bowie a jar of Canton ginger was sent in with the compliments of Carmen. Bowie, assuming such indifference as he could muster, asked why Carmen wore black.

"She had a sweetheart, Don Ramon de Haro. He had a twin brother. . . . Now if you are an admirer of General Fremont," Don Francisco interrupted himself to say, "you would not like to hear this."

"Fremont," said Bowie, "means nothing to me."

"The brothers, one day this spring, took a boat at Yerba Buena to row over to San Rafael. They wanted to see Fremont about getting pay for a bunch of steers his men had taken from the De Haro rancho. They took with them an old friend, Don Jose de Berreyesa, to interpret. The three men landed at San Rafael, and when they were seen by Fremont he detailed three to meet them and kill them."

"Kill them?" echoed Bowie, surprised.

"Listen," continued Don Francisco. "One of these three men sent by Fremont was his scout, Kit Carson. Carson, before he set out, asked Fremont whether he should take these three Californians prisoners. Fremont growled, 'I've got no room for prisoners.'"

"Carson and his two men dismounted about fifty yards from the De Haro boys and Berreyesa, who were walking up the hill unarmed, and, covering them with rifles, deliberately shot the three."

Bowie tightened up a little. "Is that the kind of a man Fremont is?" he asked.

"Judge for yourself," returned Don Francisco succinctly.

For a moment Bowie made no comment. "I've heard some tough stories about him," he said slowly, "but nothing to equal that."

"They buried the boys—fine young fellows—and poor Berreyesa. You can imagine how Californians felt."

"I can."

"Senorita Carmen was wild. Don Ramon and she were not, what you say, engaged, but they were deeply in love. I really believe if she could have got hold of Fremont she would have strangled him. No wonder she hates Americans."

Bowie's padre surgeon, Martinez, came often. When the danger had passed he confessed he had greatly feared infection. "But I should have known better," he said one day. "Texans are strong blooded. You may be discharged from my care, let us see—it is four weeks. You are a lucky man, Senor Bowie. What will you do now?"

This was the question that was being asked in the Estrada family. After prolonged discussions in which Padre Martinez was consulted Don Ramon spoke to Bowie.

"You have come to California to live. You mean to go upriver to join Captain Sutter. I have something better. If you will become major-domo of Rancho Guadalupe I will make you a rich man."

Bowie thanked Don Ramon but shook his head. "I would rather be free, Don Ramon. I have always been free. A Texan just naturally hates to be tied down. Besides, I want to see more of this country. It is very wonderful. And—who knows? I might be called back to Texas."

Don Ramon did not press his offer. "As you will, senor. Remember, you are always welcome, with your friends, at Guadalupe. And if you honor us again with your company I shall be careful not to lead you into any more bear traps. You have saved my life."

As the last day of his stay approached, Bowie began to wonder whether he should catch a final glimpse of the young girl who had occupied his thoughts so much since coming to the rancho. She had been visiting in Monterey and came home the night before Bowie and his scouts took their departure.

The scene in the morning as the trio made ready to mount their horses was a lovely one. The sun had broken into flame above the eastern Sierras and flung its billows of gold over the land. They lived the spreading green of the pepper trees and brightened the pink tips of the burgeoning oaks.

The family were grouped together. After good-bys to Don Ramon and the Dona, Carmen came forward, with her cousin Francisco for interpreter, to thank Bowie for the claws. Bowie yielded to an impulse and stepped up to Carmen to thank her for the Canton jar. "Since I can't take it with me, I have left it in the car of Don Francisco," he explained. "It was most kind of you, senorita," he said, while Don Francisco translated, "to think of the stranger within the gates. I shall not forget it."

He watched her narrowly as Don Francisco repeated his words, but her manner was reserved, her smile cool. Yet at the end as he turned away he thought, perhaps imagined, that a faint flush crept unwelcomed into her cheeks.

"If ever I am happy enough to revisit Guadalupe . . ." remarked Bowie, soliloquizing, as he rode away, "I shall certainly have learned to speak Spanish. In fact, I won't come back till I can."

He kept his word. They heard from him at Guadalupe. For months after the Texan had ridden away there came from upriver, almost regularly, choice bits of game from Bowie—saddles of venison and elk; Canadian geese, mallard ducks and, not infrequently, pelts, from the north, of the silver-tipped fox. Of these there were always two, soft tanned and deep piled, for the Dona and her daughter.

"The Indians has the instincts of a gentleman," observed Don Ramon at dinner, one evening, "since he exaggerates in his mind the slight hospitality we have been able to extend to him and his men. Nor does he forget Padre Martinez, for Pedro tells me that Santa Clara receives much courtesy from him—alone in gifts of compliment, but—so Pedro says—he and his men have helped the padres recover horses and sometimes cattle, driven off by thieving Indians."

"The Indians are growing constantly bolder, Don Ramon," said his nephew indignantly. "I hear it on every hand. They raid our neighbors already. Soon they will be after our horses. Yosco and Stanislaus long ago taught them rebellion. They need to be driven out of these mountains."

"Don't undertake it yourself, Don Francisco," remarked his uncle, who knew his fiery disposition.

"Nevertheless, my uncle, you will see them give us trouble if they are not taught a lesson."

Don Francisco proved too good a prophet. The horse-stealing Indians did grow bolder. Their depredations increased, and they raided the big ranches with less fear of consequences. Every young Californian along the foothills was angry. They demanded something be done by the soldiers at the mission or the presidio.

But the authorities were indolent. Following minor depredations at Rancho Pinole, the Indians, emboldened, ran off, one dark night, every saddle horse on the place. Don Jose Martinez and his son had to borrow horses from Don Ramon at Guadalupe.

The neighbors were infuriated. They organized a party and set out to recover the horses and chastise the thieves. Don Francisco of Guadalupe was chosen captain.

The posse was in the saddle early next morning, and two vaqueros tracked the marauders through the hills to a canyon in the mountains where, toward evening, they charged the Indians in a surprise attack.

It was made too hastily, and the red men, scattering at the onslaught of the rancheros, sent back a cloud of arrows at their pursuers. Pedro and his vaqueros took advantage of the sudden confusion of the warriors to run the stolen horses out of the canyon and head them downhill for home. For a time the brush was fast; but there were too many Indians. Don Francisco called a retreat, and the Californians slowly retired from the field.

As the leader of his little band, Don Francisco was the last to wheel from the scene of battle. The youngster was fearless beyond his years. Unhappily, as he spurred after his comrades, an arrow struck him between the shoulders. For a moment he swayed in his saddle, but before he had galloped a hundred yards, striving to cling to his horse, he pitched forward headlong to the ground.

A score of Indian horsemen in hot pursuit yelled in triumph as he fell. His companions turned to attempt a rescue. But the fighting line of pursuers had already passed the fallen Don, and the pitifully few Californians were driven back

without being able to save their youthful leader.

The duty of informing Don Ramon of the capture of his nephew was put upon Don Guillermo Castro, eldest of the young men. Hat in hand, he headed his companions into the living room. The family were, unfortunately, there—Don Ramon, Dona Maria and Carmen. No sooner had Don Guillermo spoken than all seemed to grasp the dread tidings at once.

Don Ramon sank, crushed, into a chair. Dona Maria burst into tears, and Carmen, ghastly white, fainted. Like wildfire the bad news spread to the servant quarters. Guadalupe, that night, was a house of mourning.

It was nearing midnight when a clattering of hoofs was heard outside. Carmen, in the living room, was still trying to comfort her mother; Don Ramon sat gazing into the dying fire. He had smoked a final cigar and given himself over to painful thoughts. At the sound of horsemen he stirred and, answering a rapping on the door, rose to his feet, answering, "Adelante!" Don Ramon thought some of the neighbors had returned.

The visitor strode somewhat forward and spoke easily in Spanish. "You do not remember me, Don Ramon. It is more than a year since I have seen you. I am Henry Bowie, the Texan."

The Don's gloomy features lightened. "Senor!" he cried. "Who could be more welcome? I am only sorry that you find us grief stricken."

Bowie raised his hand. "That is why I am here. The bad news reached me in Monterey tonight. I came down the river this morning with Pardaloe and Simmie, bringing a batch of furs. They are with me. And I came at once to offer any help that I can to my friends, Don Francisco and yourself."

Don Ramon recounted briefly the tragedy and said the rancheros were waiting for daybreak to assemble for pursuit.

"You tell me that Pedro was with him? May I go to the vaquero quarters to speak with him?"

"Stay. He will come here. Carmen, tell Pepita to call Pedro."

When the sleepy-eyed vaquero appeared Bowie plied him with rapid questions. Don Ramon listened, impressed by the ease with which Bowie reconstructed, step by step, the fatal fight. It was almost as if he had been there.

### CHAPTER VIII

"You say you can find the canyon in the dark?"

"Without doubt, senor."

"And you think you know the band?"

"Yosco led them, senor. I know him."

Bowie turned to Don Ramon. "Pedro seems sure he can find the ground of the fight. We will start at once."

"Pedro might easily go wrong on a night like this, senor. It is raining hard."

Bowie shook his head. "Every hour is precious if Don Francisco is alive. The Indians will not kill their prisoner before daybreak. Since they drove off the Californians they may have remained in the canyon. Vamos!"

"How about carbines, senor?"

"My men are well armed. You, Pedro, see that your vaqueros have carbines with plenty of dry ammunition—and hatchets and knives, Pedro."

Bowie spoke rapidly. His eagerness to get started was most apparent. In the vaquero quarter Pardaloe and Simmie, who had gone to bed, were roused with the vaqueros picked for the rescue party.

Under the conditions it was not possible to go fast after the beaten trail was left behind. Yet Bowie was keenly anxious to make time.

The party halted for a moment while Pedro took his bearings.

"I want to get to the canyon by daylight, Pedro," said Bowie. "Push on whenever you are sure you're right. But be careful not to get lost. Except for that, I like the rainy night. Sabe?"

"Si, senor."

The others of the party were cautioned to stick close together, to make no noise and not to attempt to light pipes. The faintest light of dawn, penetrating the leaden sky and the driving rain, found the rescuers riding fast. They reached the canyon entrance an hour later, but the high walls shut out the added daylight, and utmost caution was used in threading the winding recesses. Pedro suddenly halted and waited for Bowie to come up. "Here is the place, senor," he whispered, pointing to a sharp rock that jutted well up from the canyon floor. "The fight was here."

"Then we'd better scout ahead a way to look for Indians. We'll go on foot."

He spoke to Pardaloe and Simmie. "Pedro and I will work ahead, Ben," he explained. "You boys follow. Keep your priming pans dry."

The horses were left with the vaqueros, and the four stole forward on foot.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

## AROUND the HOUSE

Items of Interest to the Housewife

A little milk added to the blue water used for lace curtains will launder them beautifully.

When freshly washed windows are dry wipe them with tissue paper to make them sparkle.

To prevent cauliflower from turning dark while cooking, put a slice of lemon in the water in which it is cooked.

Shades of pink can be set by soaking in salt water.

Never use water that has been boiled before or has been standing in the kettle to make tea. Draw fresh cold water and let it boil for the first time. Water that has boiled before tastes flat, because the air has gone out of it.

A layer or two of blotting paper put over grease spots on the wall, and a warm iron laid on top of them, will often take away the marks.



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