

(LA TULES is now fully armed with multiple pistols and daggers. PILAR arranges LA TULES' clothing and rebozo to better disguise it all.)

PILAR

The monte game at the United States Hotel – last night – was the richest ever. Delia said. *(PILAR takes a coin from the jar.)*

LA TULES

Don Armijo and his cronies. Their haste forced them to abandon what they could not carry for a chance at money they could not win.

PILAR

And the Norteamericanos?

LA TULES

The Norteamericanos want only one thing – to make more money. And we, the people of Santa Fe, will help them. With parties and fandangos and drinking – and gambling.

PILAR

Gambling with La Tules makes no one rich but La Tules.

LA TULES

To be rich in hope, Pilar. That is something.

PILAR

Hope will not satisfy them, Doña. They did not come for fandangos and gambling. Just as the Spanish did not come for chile and sunsets.

LA TULES

We have nothing. What part of nothing do they want?

PILAR

More. They will always want more.

LA TULES

Then more of nothing is what they will find.

PILAR

And most of that at the Pueblo. Where they will find less than nothing.

(PILAR begins to gather the loot.)

LA TULES

There is one thing more.

(LA TULES crosses to the birdcage and pulls out the heavy flat bottom tray. PILAR rushes to help her. LA TULES attempts to dust off the contents with a handkerchief.)

I did not wish to burden you, Pilar, until I had to. It can no longer be avoided.

PILAR

Doña Tules! Where did you come by this?

LA TULES

I won it in a game of monte.

PILAR

A redo vaya! There must be –

LA TULES

Nineteen thousand, nine hundred and seventy-three dollars.

PILAR

In gold *coins*.

LA TULES

In *Norteamericano* gold coins.

PILAR

It is all covered –

LA TULES

In bird caca, I know.

PILAR

This is not safe here. What if someone cleans the cage?

LA TULES

No one ever cleans the cage.

PILAR

But how – ?

LA TULES

This morning, on my way home from the sala, a man approached me. A young man. Hardly older than Carmelita. He challenged me to a game of monte. He was not drunk. He was confident. He was drunk with confidence. He said, “I know who you are. The Madam of the Hall of Final Ruin.”

PILAR

The *what*?

LA TULES

The Hall of Final Ruin. At least I think that is what he said. His Spanish was very bad.

PILAR

He was a soldier? With the Norteamericanos?

LA TULES

He was a punk. And he smiled. *A lot*. And he was a fidget. As if his skin would split open and a clown would pop out. And he had very bad teeth.

PILAR

Norteamericanos! They have very bad teeth. And they are diseased. And their Spanish is very poor. Celia said. (*PILAR takes a coin from the jar.*)

LA TULES

He was also absent in the head. He bet it all. And I won it all.

PILAR

Sí! She said they are stupid, too. (*PILAR takes a coin from the jar.*) And then?

LA TULES

And then he wept. He tried to embrace me. But I believed he was trying to kill me, so I pulled my pistol and put it to his chest. And then he pissed his pantalones.

PILAR

Cowards, too.

LA TULES

He did not care much if I shot him then, so he ran away into the darkness. To the south. I do not believe it was his money to lose.

PILAR

Did you not consider the danger greed would bring to your mortal soul, Doña Tules? The pride? Vanity?

LA TULES

Pride and vanity are only dangers *after* death. It was not *his* money to lose. The danger lies in someone coming for it.

PILAR

It is Norteamericano money. The Norteamericanos will come for it.

(The two scan the room for appropriate hiding places.)

The clock!

LA TULES

No. *There* they will look.

PILAR

(Pointing to the ceiling.) That rotten viga. The one needing repair.

LA TULES

They will look there as well.

PILAR

Who saw you with this young man?

LA TULES

No one. That I know of. He himself was secretive. He himself whispered.

PILAR

(Finding a chamber pot.) We could put the money in here, si? And cover it. You know...with...with...

LA TULES

No. No, that is the *first* place they will look.

PILAR

There is only one place it will be safe. Con las Pistolas.

(LA TULES pats herself down, accounting for all the pistols hidden on her body.)

LA TULES

Bar the door.

(PILAR bars the door. LA TULES hastily removes the large number of pistols and knives hidden on her body. PILAR begins cleaning the coins with a rag.)

PILAR

Doña, these coins. They are useless. We cannot spend them.

LA TULES

No. But someone will do business with us. You will see.

PILAR

Perhaps we should melt it into different shapes. Then no one will know it once belonged to the Norteamericanos.

LA TULES

Perhaps. Until then, I will keep it safe with the pistols at all times.

(With PILAR'S help, she fashions a belt to hold the coins out of Lalo's rope and the rebozo.)

PILAR

It weighs as much as one of Diego's half grown burros. You could buy every burro in Santa Fe with this much gold.

LA TULES

I do not need more burros. I need roofing materials. And a carpenter for my eternal home, La Parroquia. The roof leaks, the door is off its hinges, the plaster is crumbling.

PILAR

With this much gold, you could build your own church. And have yourself buried in it.

LA TULES

What? Alone? What good would that do me if no one ever visited? No, I want to always be under the feet of the living. So near them I can hear their voices when they pray.

PILAR

And seize them by the ankles when it rains.

LA TULES

With this gold, I will make repairs to La Parroquia.

PILAR

With this gold, the bishop will bury you inside its walls.

LA TULES

With this gold, La familia – you and the girls, Pilar – will have a future in spite of the Norteamericanos.

PILAR

If we could spend it, Doña.

LA TULES

Sí, if we could spend it.

(The belt holding the gold coins is noticeably apparent under her skirt. PILAR attempts to disguise the lump by adjusting LA TULES clothing.)

It is heavy. Like when I carried Estevan.

PILAR

(Comforting.) With this gold, you will be certain to see Estevan again.

(Voices and laughter are heard coming from outside. LA TULES and PILAR peek through the curtains.)

Who is *that*?

LA TULES

Rallitos! There she goes bringing one of her strays home again!

PILAR

That is no stray.

LA TULES

First the bird. Then that damn cat. Now –

PILAR

A Norteamericano! A woman! They are here! From the trail! Like Teresa said! *(PILAR takes a coin from the jar.)*

LA TULES

That woman. Look at what she wears.

PILAR

She is covered all over. She looks like a priest.

LA TULES

Hijola! I think she is a Pro-TEST-ant.

PILAR

A *what*?

LA TULES

A Pro-TEST-ant.

PILAR

What is a Pro-TEST-ant?

LA TULES

It is a new religion. I have heard stories. *(Hiding multiple pistols and daggers on her person.)*
They are violent.

PILAR

A redo vaya!