

ZORRO



A Stormy Night

Reina de Los Angeles is a Spanish village in southern California.

In the village there is a military presidio with Spanish soldiers and their horses. There is also a Spanish church called a mission. The Spanish friars live here. All around the village there are big homes with patios.

Tonight there is a terrible storm and it is raining. Inside the village tavern there are soldiers and other men. They are eating and drinking. Sergeant Pedro Gonzales is at the tavern. He is a big, strong man.

"What a horrible night! It always rains in February. Where is Zorro on this stormy night?" asks one soldier.

"Zorro! Don't say that name! He is a bandit and a criminal," says Sergeant Gonzales.

"He is the terror of southern California," says another soldier.

"People say that he takes from the rich and gives to the poor. He is a friend of the natives and the friars. He punishes dishonest people," says an old man.

"Ha! Zorro is a big mystery. Who is he? Where is he from? He wears a black mask and no one can see his face. He travels on the El Camino Real on his fast horse. He is very good with his sword," says the Sergeant.

"Yes, and he leaves his mark - the Z - everywhere," says the old man.

"No one can stop him. The Governor of California offers a big reward for the capture of Zorro," says one soldier.

At that moment a man enters the tavern. He is young and handsome. He has black hair and dark eyes. He has fine clothes.

"Don Diego Vega, my friend!" says Sergeant Gonzales. "Your clothes are wet. Why are you out on this rainy night?"

Don Diego smiles and says, "I am going home, but I am cold and wet. I want something to drink."

"Come and stand near the fire," says the Sergeant. "Here is a glass of wine."

"Thank you, my friend," says Don Diego.

"We are talking about Zorro. Everyone is scared of him, but I am not! I am ready to fight Zorro and win! I am a champion with the sword. What do you think, Don Diego?" asks the Sergeant. "Everyone talks about this mysterious man with a mask. Many people say good things about him," says Don Diego.

"I want to fight him and capture him! I want the big reward," says Sergeant Gonzales.

"No, no! Don't talk about fighting. I hate fighting and I hate violence. I think Zorro is sincere. He

punishes only bad people. He protects the poor, the natives and the friars. Let Zorro do his work," says Don Diego.

"You are a kind man. You like music and poetry. You don't understand, my friend. You are rich and noble," says the Sergeant.

Don Diego smiles and says, "It's 6 p.m. I must return to my hacienda. Good night everyone." He opens the tavern door and goes out into the rain.

A Surprise Visit

At 7 p.m. the door of tavern opens. Sergeant Gonzales and the other soldiers are standing near the fire. They are talking about Don Diego Vega and his rich family. They turn around and see a man. He is dressed in black. He has a black mask and a black sombrero. It is Zorro!

"Good evening! My name is Zorro!" says the masked man.

The men in the tavern are very surprised and scared.

Sergeant Gonzales looks at him carefully and says, "What do you want, bandit?"

Zorro laughs loudly. He looks at Sergeant Gonzales and says, "I am here to punish you, Sergeant!"

"What do you mean?" says the Sergeant.

"You beat the poor natives. I am a friend of the natives. I am here to punish you."

"You idiot! The governor wants you dead or alive!" says Sergeant Gonzales. He pulls out his sword and wants to fight.

At that moment Zorro pulls out a pistol. He watches everyone carefully.

Sergeant Gonzales looks at the pistol and says, "Courageous men don't use pistols. They use swords. Perhaps you are not courageous, Zorro?"

"This pistol is necessary because you have many friends in this tavern. Everyone must go near the fire and stay there!" says Zorro. "Now I have a pistol in my left hand and a sword in my right hand. I am ready to punish you."

"Fight, senor!" says the Sergeant.

They start fighting. Their swords move quickly and make a lot of noise. The two men are good fighters. Zorro is fast and light. Sergeant Gonzales is slow and heavy. Zorro jumps onto a table. Then he jumps onto a chair. The fight continues and Sergeant Gonzales' sword falls onto the floor. His face is white. He is scared. Zorro slaps his face and says, "This is your punishment." Then he makes a Z on the Sergeant's shirt with his sword.

Zorro runs to the window. He opens it and says, "Good evening, gentlemen!" He jumps out of the window and disappears.

The Pulido Hacienda

The next day is warm and sunny. Don Diego gets on his beautiful horse. He rides to Don Carlos Pulido's big hacienda.

Don Carlos is a good friend of Don Diego's family. Both families are rich and important. But the Governor does not like Don Carlos. He creates problems for him. He wants to take Don Carlos' land.

Don Carlos is happy to see his friend. "Good morning, Don Diego. What a nice surprise! Come and sit in the patio."

"Thank you. I am here to say something very important," says Don Diego. "I am almost 25 years old. My father wants me to get married and start a family. I am not interested in marriage. I think love and marriage are boring but I must obey my father. How old is your daughter Lolita?" asks Don Diego.

"Lolita is 18 years old and she is very beautiful," answers Don Carlos.

"You have a fine family. With your permission, I want to marry your daughter," says Don Diego.

Don Carlos smiles and is happy. "This is an honour for our family. You have my permission! Do you want to see Lolita?"

"I think I must!" answers Don Diego.

Don Carlos calls her and she comes to the patio. Lolita is a lovely girl with long black hair and dark eyes.

"Good morning, senorita. There is something I must tell you," says Don Diego smiling. "I want to marry you and your father approves."

"Oh, senor!" exclaims Lolita. "You want to marry me!" She is surprised and her face is red.

"Think about it today. One of my servants can bring me your answer tomorrow."

"But why can't you come tomorrow?" asks Lolita.

"Oh, your hacienda is far. I get tired when I ride my horse. I prefer to stay at home and rest."

"What! You want to marry me and you don't want to visit me! Is this your idea of love? I want to marry a strong, romantic man. You are young and rich, but you are not strong or romantic! Do you have a heart?" says Lolita. She is angry. She runs away and tells her mother.

Doha Catalina says, "You are lucky, Lolita. Don Diego is very rich. He comes from a noble family. The Governor likes his family. This is a big opportunity for our family."

In the afternoon Lolita is alone in the patio. She is thinking about Don Diego. Suddenly she hears a noise and turns around. She sees standing in front of her. "Zorro!" she whispers.

"Don't be afraid, senorita. I only punish corrupt people. I like your father because he is honest. I

am here to admire your beauty."

"What! You must go away. You are in great danger," says Lolita.

"You are beautiful and kind, Lolita," says Zorro. "Let me kiss your hand." Zorro takes her small hand and kisses it. Lolita looks into his eyes and smiles. Then she runs into the house. "What a courageous man! He is a bandit but I like him," Lolita thinks.

Captain Ramon

At 8 p.m. it is dinner time at Don Carlos' home. The family is sitting at the table. Someone knocks at the door. A servant opens it and Zorro appears!

Don Carlos, his wife and daughter stand up. They are scared.

"Good evening," says Zorro. "Don't be scared! You are an honest man, Don Carlos. I only want some food and drink."

Zorro goes to Lolita and whispers, "I cannot forget this afternoon in the patio."

"You must not come here. It is dangerous!" whispers Lolita.

Suddenly a young Spanish soldier enters the house. He is Captain Ramon. He wants to arrest Zorro. Zorro takes out his sword and they fight. The two men are good fighters.

"I want to arrest you, Zorro," says Captain Ramon. "You are a public enemy."

"You cannot arrest me!" says Zorro.

Zorro injures the Captain's shoulder with his sword. The Captain falls to the floor.

"Please help the Captain!" Zorro says to Don Carlos. Then he smiles at Lolita and rides away on his horse.

Don Carlos' wife and daughter look after Captain Ramon's injured shoulder. The Captain likes beautiful Lolita.

"Don Carlos," says the Captain, "I like Lolita very much. I come from a good family and I am the Governor's friend. I am 23 years old and I am the Captain of the Presidio. May I court Lolita?"

"First, I must explain something," says Don Carlos. "Don Diego Vega wants to court Lolita too. Lolita must choose her husband herself, but you have my permission to court her!"

The next morning there is a lot of noise at the Presidio Don.

Diego and other men are watching. There are many soldiers on their horses. They are listening to Sergeant Gonzales. "Today is an important day. We must find Zorro! We must look in every hacienda and in every home. Remember the Governor's big reward. Let's go!"

That morning Don Diego sends a letter to Don Carlos:

My dear friend,

Sergeant Gonzales and his soldiers want to arrest Zorro. It is dangerous for you and your family to stay at your hacienda. Please come to my home in Reina de Los Angeles. It is safe in my home. I must go away for a few days.

Your friend,

Diego Vega.

Don Carlos receives the letter and says, "What a generous invitation! Don Diego wants to

protect Lolita. We must accept the invitation. Let us go immediately!"

Lolita is in Love

Don Diego's home in Reina de Los Angeles is big and beautiful. There are many rooms and many servants. There is a big garden with trees and flowers. Don Carlos and his family like it.

"Lolita! Marry Don Diego and this beautiful home is yours!" says Doha Catalina.

"I don't love Don Diego! I don't want to marry him!" says Lolita.

"Lolita, tonight your mother and I must visit our old friends," says Don Carlos. "Can you stay at home alone?"

"Yes, of course. There are many books in Don Diego's library. I can stay here and read."

Lolita looks at the books. "How strange!" she thinks. "Don Diego has books about love, passion, adventure, horses and heroes! But he isn't strong and is so lifeless !"

Suddenly there is a knock at the door. A servant opens it and Captain Ramon enters. He goes to the library and sees Lolita.

"I'm glad you are alone! You are a very beautiful girl. I have your father's permission to court you! I know that Don Diego wants to marry you, but I am superior in every way. Don Diego has no courage. He is a weak man. I am the Captain of the Presidio."

"I am alone," says Lolita. "You cannot stay here. It is not right. Please go away!"

Captain Ramon takes her hand and says, "Don't run away, Lolita. You are mine! Kiss me!"

Lolita pushes him away and says, "I don't want to kiss you. Go away!"

"No, you are mine. You must marry me. Now kiss me!"

Lolita slaps the Captain's face.

At that moment Zorro appears in the library and says, "Captain Ramon, you are a villain. Don't touch Lolita! Leave this house immediately!"

"I cannot forget this terrible insult," says the Captain. His face is red with anger. Zorro opens the door and kicks him out.

"Thank you for your help, Zorro. You are courageous and kind. I love you!" Lolita says.

"Dear Lolita, I love you too!" says Zorro.

They embrace and kiss.

Friar Felipe

Captain Ramon returns to the Presidio. He is furious.

"I must punish Lolita, her family and Zorro for their insults!" he thinks. "I must write a letter to the Governor. I must tell him that Don Carlos Pulido and his family are traitors. They are Zorro's friends. They help him."

He writes the letter and sends it to the Governor. He smiles and says, "I want to see the Pulido family in prison!"

"I want to see you in prison!" says a man's voice. Captain Ramon turns around and sees Zorro. "You are a villain. Fight me but don't hurt the Pulido family!" says Zorro.

"Sergeant Gonzales, come quickly!" says the Captain. "Zorro is here."

Zorro disappears.

"I am here, Captain," says Sergeant Gonzales.

"Take all the soldiers and find Zorro! We must capture him."

The soldiers follow Zorro. The night is dark. It is difficult to follow him because his horse is very fast. The next morning the soldiers return to the Presidio. They are tired and angry. Zorro is still free.

There are many people in front of the Presidio that morning. Don Diego is there too. Something is happening.

An old friar is standing before the magistrate. The old friar is in chains. "I am not a thief," says the old friar. "I am a poor friar."

"What is happening?" asks Don Diego.

"This old friar is a thief. He must be punished," answers the magistrate.

"That is impossible. Friar Felipe is an honest man. I know him," says Don Diego.

"No, you are wrong," says the cruel magistrate.

He calls two soldiers and says, "Whip this friar 15 times."

The soldiers whip the old friar and he falls to the ground. Don Diego is very angry because Friar Felipe is his friend. He returns to his father's hacienda.

"Good afternoon, my son," says his father, Don Alejandro Vega. "I am happy to see you. Come and tell me about Lolita. Does she want to marry you?"

"I like Lolita, but she doesn't like me. She likes romantic men. What can I do?" asks Don Diego.

"Girls like courageous, romantic men. You must talk about love. You must play the guitar and sing love songs. Give her some flowers. This is what young men do. Wake up, Diego!" says Don Alejandro.

"How ridiculous! I cannot do these stupid things," says Don Diego.

"You must try. Lolita is a lovely girl," says Don Alejandro.

"There are many problems in my life. I want to rest and meditate," says Don Diego.

The Avengers

In the evening the magistrate and his friends are in the tavern. They are laughing about the old friar.

Why are you laughing?" asks a mysterious voice. They look at the door of the tavern and see Zorro. He has a pistol in one hand and a sword in the other.

"Magistrate! I am here to punish you," says Zorro. "Old Friar Felipe is not a thief and you know it."

"I am an important magistrate. I don't like friars because they are your friends, Zorro."

Zorro gives a whip to the magistrate's friend and says, "Now whip this corrupt magistrate 15 times."

"But I cannot do this," says the friend.

"Whip him or I whip you!" says Zorro.

The friend whips the magistrate. After the punishment the magistrate falls to the ground.

"This is how I punish dishonest people," says Zorro.

The next day everyone talks about the magistrate's punishment. A group of young men want to help Captain Ramon arrest Zorro. They look for him in the hills and in the valleys. In the evening they go to the Vega hacienda. When Don Alejandro sees them he says, "Why are you all here?"

"We are looking for Zorro. We want to capture the bandit and get the reward. But now we are tired and hungry. Can you give us some food?"

"Yes, of course. Please come in. You can put your swords and pistols near the door," says Don Alejandro. "Sit down! Eat these cakes and this wine."

Don Alejandro and Don Diego talk to the young men.

At 9 p.m. Don Diego says, "Please excuse me. I am tired and I am going to bed."

"Look, Diego, these young men are not tired. It's only 9 p.m. You are young but you are always tired," says Don Alejandro.

"Yes, father, you are right. Good night everyone!"

The others eat, drink and sing.

At midnight a masked man appears at the door.

"Look, it is Zorro!" says one of the young men.

"Zorro, the bandit," they all say.

"Yes, I am Zorro, but I am not a bandit. I have principles and I fight for them. In California we have corrupt political men, cruel magistrates and dishonest people. I want to change this. I fight to help the poor, the natives and the friars. What are your principles?"

"We want to help the poor, the natives and the friars too," says one young man.

"Our principles are the same," says another.

"Come with me and we can fight together! We can make California a better place to live," says Zorro.

"But who are you? Where do you live?" asks a young man.

"I can't tell you. It's a secret," says Zorro.

The young men talk together.

"Yes, we want to fight with you. We want justice in California. Our new name is The Avengers!" says a young man. "Yes, we are The Avengers," they all say.

"Good! We now fight together!" says Zorro and leaves.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Escape

The Governor of California is here today, says Sergeant Gonzales.

"Good!" says Captain Ramon. "I must speak to him"

"Good morning, Captain Ramon," says the Governor."

I have your letter. Thank you for the information about the Pulido family. They are Zorro's friends. They are traitors. We must put them in prison and kill them! They are dangerous."

"What a good idea! My soldiers can arrest them today," says the Captain.

A group of soldiers goes to the Pulido hacienda. They arrest Don Carlos, Dona Catalina and Lolita. They take them to prison. Don Carlos is furious. His wife and daughter cry.

When Don Diego hears about this, he goes to the Governor. He asks him, "Why is the Pulido family in prison?"

The Governor answers, "They are Zorro's friends. They help and protect him. They are traitors!"

"I cannot believe this. I know them. They are honest people. They don't help bandits," says Don Diego.

"You are wrong, Don Diego. They must be punished. The punishment for traitors is death," says the Governor.

Early in the evening Zorro sends a message to The Avengers. The message says:

"Meet me at midnight at the lake Bring your swords and pistols. Pass the word to everyone."

At midnight Zorro and The Avengers meet at the lake. Every Avenger has a mask on his face. Zorro says, "We are here to rescue Don Pulido and his family. They must escape from prison. They are innocent. We must be silent, enter the prison and help them. Francisco, you take Don Carlos to the village of Pala. Jose, you take Doha Catalina to the Vega hacienda. I want to take Lolita to Friar Felipe. They must hide for a few days."

Zorro and The Avengers rescue the Pulido family. Don Carlos and Doha Catalina reach their destination. The soldiers follow Zorro and Lolita. Zorro's horse is very fast.

Zorro and Lolita arrive at Friar Felipe's hacienda. Zorro says, "Can Lolita stay here with you for a few days? She is in danger."

"Yes, I can protect her," says Friar Felipe. Zorro kisses Lolita and says, "Always remember that I love you." Then he rides away on his horse.

The Man behind the Mask

The soldiers follow Zorro all night. They cannot capture him.

The next night Zorro silently enters the Governor's home. He wants to talk to the Governor and Captain Ramon. They are sitting near the fire.

Zorro enters and says, "Don't move and don't make a noise. I want to speak to you."

He has a pistol in one hand and a sword in the other.

"Zorro! Why are you here?" asks the Governor.

"You are here to die!" says Captain Ramon.

"No," answers Zorro, "I am here to bring justice. I am here to learn the truth. Governor, you want to punish the Pulido family. Why?"

"They are traitors. They are your friends, Zorro! They help you. Your friends are my enemies," says the Governor.

"They are not traitors. They do not help me. They are not my friends," he says.

"Look at this letter. It accuses them," says the Governor.

Zorro reads the letter and says, "It is Captain Ramon's letter. He accuses the Pulido family." Zorro looks at the Captain and says, "Captain, you are a liar but I am here to punish you. Tell the Governor the truth about the Pulido family."

Zorro puts his pistol to Captain Ramon's head and says, "Tell the Governor the truth or I shoot!"

Captain Ramon is silent. His face is white.

"Tell the truth, you liar," says Zorro.

"Yes, I am a liar. The letter is not true."

"This is terrible!" says the Governor. "You are a liar. You cannot be the Captain of the Presidio!"

At that moment the Captain pulls out his sword.

He begins to fight Zorro. It is a long sword fight. In the end, Zorro kills Captain Ramon.

"The Captain is dead," says Zorro to the Governor.

Outside the Governor's home there are many soldiers. They want to capture Zorro. He sees Lolita on her horse. He shouts, "Lolita, come with me. We must hide in the old tavern. This time it is very difficult to escape. There are soldiers all around us."

"I'm happy to be with you Zorro," says Lolita. "I'm not scared."

Zorro and Lolita hide inside the old tavern. The soldiers try to enter. Zorro is ready to fight.

Suddenly The Avengers come to rescue Zorro and Lolita. They explain many things to the Governor. The Governor pardons Zorro.

Zorro and Lolita walk out of the old tavern. They are free. Everyone is happy and cheers. The Governor says, "Now that you are free, show us your face!" "Yes! Yes!" the people say. Zorro takes off his black mask. "It's Don Diego Vega!" exclaims Sergeant Gonzales. Everyone is very surprised. "My son, Don Diego! I can't believe it!" exclaims Don Alejandro. Lolita looks at him and says, "Is this true or is it a dream? Are you really Don Diego?" "Yes, my love. I am your Don Diego and your Zorro!" he says embracing Lolita.

- THE END -

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