

*Grit*  
&  
*Lust*©

pt. two

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## Chapter two

### THE TREASURES of MIGUEL CABRERA

**Picking up the envelope I had brought with me, I scattered the contents next to the almost empty breakfast plate, reading the note from my old friend, Professor Hernan Patrido.**

***Dear Rusty,***

***I need your help. I have something that you might be interested in that is just up your ally in Zacatecas. You need to please come, remember Port Ange?. You still owe me! I am being watched closely now and need to meet with you to explain further. I have arranged a plane for you tomorrow morning and a cab that will take you to me.***

***Pat***

**Yeah, I remembered Port Angel all right. The authorities from Guatemala were hot on my trail. It was some little dispute over Spanish doubloons and artifacts they claimed belonged to their country. Hell, I found them deep in the jungle and gave them the customary fifty percent. The corrupt officials wanted it all. When I couldn't negotiate my way out of it, I fled north to Port Angel where Pat was on a dig, and he hid me from them. But it wasn't without a stiff price. I owed him all right, yeah... and now he needs me. I guess a lot of people owed him. Well, as I didn't have much to go back to, I might as well go see what he has to offer. Besides, I had my eye on a nice ranch in Montana, and could use some more cash.**

**By the next morning, I was on my way. A small eight passenger Cessna was waiting for me. I was the only passenger. There was a pilot and stewardess / co-pilot. Before I knew it, she had placed a Bourbon and water in my hand.**

**"Let me know when you want more. I was told to make you very comfortable."**

**She smiled broadly and winked. As I sipped on the heady beverage I wondered what the pilot and stewardess owed Professor Pat. Three stiff drinks later we were landing at a remote runway at the back of the airport.**

### **Mexico City**

**As we landed the pretty stewardess said, "This way there will be no difficulties." We actually pulled the plane into a hanger and a car had just arrived. He pulled in after the plane had stopped and the engines had been cut. The car was black with dark tinted windows. The stewardess and the chauffeur loaded my bags into the trunk and opened the door for me to sit in the back.**

**The stewardess took my hand and deftly placed her card in it whispering seductively in my ear, "I'll see you later." Was it the whiskey or my lust? God she made me warm all over, and it felt good.**

**I was taken to a small hotel on the outskirts of town, told to check in under the name of Mr. Sam Wentworth, and that it had all been paid for. It was either that a lot more people owed Pat, or he was really padding his expense account. Checking into my motel I was given the key to my room and room safe. Patrido had thought of everything and knew somehow I would be carrying some sort of valuables. I only hoped I had the only room key. In assurance, I also padlocked the safe on the outside with my own padlock. The box, because of its size, had to be shoved in kitty corner to get it to fit at all, but I was satisfied that it would stay put until my return.**

**Back outside, the car was still waiting. I stepped inside and we headed back into Mexico City. Thirty minutes later I was standing in front of La Nueva Ópera, one of the oldest bars in the city. There was reportedly a hole that Poncho Villa had shot in the ceiling with his pistola. Now rarely visited by locals, it was a good place to meet, and I felt right at home.**

**Sideling up to the bar I ordered, "Bartender, give me a Jack and water." He winked in acceptance of my order.**

**"Better make that two," came a familiar voice from behind me.**

**I turned and saw my old friend, "Pat, you old scallywag, good to see you." We shook hands.**

**"So, you need some help, huh?"**

**"Not here, Mr. Wentworth, follow me please, to some place more comfortable." He signaled the bartender to put it on his tab. I followed my friend up the stairs to the next floor. Walking across the long room, we came to a small veranda with one table. We both pulled up wooden chairs to the small table, dragging them squealing forward nearer to the table.**

**I spoke first, "Well, what can I do for you?"**

**"Well, as you know, I am or... was, President of Mexico's Museum of Antiquities." He cleared his throat, taking a sip of his drink.**

**"But... I have fallen in disfavor with some officials of the Mexican government, because of some of my dealings with the black market. There is a tremendous amount of activity in stolen artifacts from here," He raised his eyebrows.**

**"So, what did you do, undercut the price you quoted someone?" Knowing too well Hernan had done that to many, many sellers. Caught, Patrido looked down for a moment at his drink, swishing it around in his hand.**

**"Si, only this one was the cousin of the Head of State." I laughed out loud causing Pat to laugh at himself as well.**

**"So, what can an old treasure hunter do for you?"**

**"They are watching me very close. I have information on where two artifacts of extreme importance to the museum are hidden. Both are very valuable. It was hidden by one of Pascual Orozco's men because he had deserted his beliefs about Madero. The ever ambitious Pascual wanted to take over the country himself with his followers the *Orozquistas* and was very close to joining Huerta in his persecution of the Mexican peoples like the last dictator." Hernan cleared this throat, "There is known only to me a map hidden in a ruin in Zapotecas containing these great treasures."**

**I leaned forward, "What treasures?"**

**"There are two, I am willing to give you one for your services and the other one**

stays here. Both are extremely valuable. This act will ensure that I return to good favor and am reinstated as museum curator."

"What are they?"

"First I must know if you are interested."

"I'm listening, and interested... but..."

"But what?"

"I want a guarantee of safe passage across the border. And with it, a signed document from you about the legality of me having possession of it... and it's authenticity from you, as head of the museum." Hernan thought for a few moments, stuck out his hand and shook Rusty's.

"All is possible, you drive a hard bargain, Rusty."

"Just an insurance policy my old friend, just an insurance policy." The curtain moved behind Patrido and a waiter stepped out. I stood up quickly. My height must have been intimidating to him because the waiter cringed and took a step back.

"Ung... drinks, Señor?"

"How long have you been listening?"

"Easy, Rusty my friend, this is a cousin of mine. He's OK." Pat whirled off a few dozen words in Spanish and the waiter disappeared across the room and down the stairs to get more drinks and some food.

"Sit down, sit down, I think you are worse than am I." I sat down after looking around the room for anything else that was suspicious.

"Have you ever heard of a painter named Miguel Cabrera?" asked Hernan.

"Yeah, I think so... early Mexican painter around the mid seventeen hundreds, said to be world class. He painted that poet, Juana, and some kind of icon. That's as far as I can remember."

"Yes, he did indeed paint Sor Juana, and also copied the icon Our Lady of Guadalupe for three people- himself included. Let me show you some photographs." Out of his pocket he pulled three taking them out of a white envelope he layed them on the table.

### **Miguel Cabrera**

**"This is a photo of Miguel Cabrera the other one is Sor Juana.**

**"What about this one," I turned the biggest one around to face me. On it were two Military Officers and a civilian. "I recognize General Pershing on the right and this one in the middle as Pancho Villa. I don't know who the third one is."**

**Left to right Pascual Orozco, Pancho Villa, the man who hid the treasure, and General Pershing.**

**"That's Pascual Orozco, the one that betrayed Madero."**

**"What about the one that's got an arrow pointed to him?"**

**"That's the only picture that there is of the man that hid the treasure."**

**"So... the treasure is a painting by Miguel, and an Icon?"**

**"Sir, your drinks," the waiter said some thirty feet away, waiting to approach them. Pat collected the photos up and put them back in his coat pocket before waiving his hand for him to come over. The waiter approached and set down two drinks, a bowl of chips and Salsa, and a plate of tacos.**

**"Gracias," said Hernan, and his cousin disappeared again. "Yes it is; there are two items. For sure you can have the painting, and I'll take the Icon."**

**"So, where exactly is this treasure?"**

**"Don't know, but in the ruins of La Quemada, in the hall of columns, he left a map or directions on how to find it."**

**"La Quemada, huh?"**

**By the next morning I was being shuttled to a smaller airport outside of town by a hired car sent by Hernan Patrido. A white and red trimmed airplane was waiting for me on the landing strip with its engine idling. I was more than a little surprised to find the same beautiful girl that was co-pilot on my flight into Mexico City.**

**"Hello, Rusty," she smiled coyly. I couldn't help but smile back at the beautiful girl, more than glad to have someone I knew, at least a little bit, along on the flight. She took off with the ease of a very experienced pilot, heading northwest.**

**"So, it's obvious by now that you're no stewardess." Her perfume filled the cockpit with the smell of a field of fresh poppies.**

**"Nope, a bush pilot. Name's Connie, Connie Heath; been flying throughout South America for the last few years, hope to make it to Alaska sometime." She reached over and shook my hand. "Put on your headset," she yelled. "You can hear better!" she pointed to the head and mike set hanging from the door hook.**

**In a quieter tone she continued into my head set, "So, it's obvious to me that you're no businessman, not if you're dealing with our mutual friend, Hernan." I laughed, eyeing her lithe form that looked good even in a flight suit.**

**"That obvious huh?"**

**"From what I've concluded," she said into the mike of the headset and over the roar of the engine, "you are an advanced form of antique collector."**

**"You could say that." Changing the subject I asked, "How many times have you flown someone to La Quemada?"**

**"Counting this time, it would be the first."**

**The flight took over three hours. "There really isn't a landing strip here," she said. As she circled around the site, her wing dipped down to observe the best place to land. "To come back here by car would take at least three hours from the nearest town. There's a spot," she said, circling around for an approach. "This might get a little bumpy. Hang on." I could see the stone pillars that formed the hall of columns of the site from out of his window. The huge tires on the plane barely touched the ground before the plane leapt up in the air on a bounce, hitting the ground with smaller bounces until the plane leveled out. Then it slowed until the tail touched down and the plane rolled to a stop.**

**"That's the one thing I love and hate about being a bush pilot; no one to have to ask permission from to land, and then again, if you get in trouble no one to ask for help."**

**Clambering out of the plane I asked, "What did Hernan tell you about what I was doing?"**

**"Nothing, he just said to help you all I could, and keep you out of trouble." With**

that she pulled a Beretta and a holster out of her flight bag. She checked the magazine and chambered a round, stuffing the clip back in.

"What do you call that?" I asked.

She smiled, "Pilots discretion."

I watched her with amusement. Taking my own forty-five out, shoving it into its sling holster I had added to the belt under my jacket.

"What do you call that?" she asked.

"A metal detector." With that, we started out across the field toward the ruins- Connie beside me. Within a few feet of the Hall of Columns the ground was loaded with hoof prints. I bent down examining them.

"We may not be alone."

"I see," she said, scanning the area. "Who to you suppose?"

"They're certainly not frito banditos, that's for certain."

## La Quemada

I took out two small pieces of paper. The first one was a crest carved into a wall on the outside of the columns.

"That matches," I said aloud. Reading the second one, I went to the furthestmost west wall and paced twenty-three paces east then, turning toward the tower, pacing out forty more paces, stopping just in front of one of the columns. I dug my heel in the dirt making a line. Then, stuffing the paper back in coat pocket, walked completely around the column several times, examining the stones one by one. Taking out the paper one more time, I put his finger to some figures on it, and again shoved it back into my pocket. On the south side of the column I placed a hand at the base and measured up seven from the bottom. Then with both hands, began to wiggle and pull out a stone. A loud shot ricocheted off of the stone column above. Before I knew it, we were surrounded by six men and one woman on horseback, all wearing large sombreros, and a few wear-

ing bandoleers of bullets. A few were wearing a holstered sidearm and several had their rifles pointed at us.

Surprisingly the girl spoke thickly, "So, Señor, Señorita, ju are a long way from home. Are ju lost?"

"No," I said, "we're just out taking in the ruins. Do you know much about them?" She shook her head.

"Many jears ago we had men here such as ju. They could have told ju all about it, if they were still alive." A horse whinnied and danced to the left, taking the attention off of the two for a split second. Rusty used the opportunity to use the back of his shoulder to push the stone back into place on the column.

"So, what do ju look for here, treasure?" Three of her dark companions smiled broadly, giving a glimpse of golden capped teeth.

"No, just sightseeing."

"Well, ju should be careful, dere are still bandoleros around the country." All of the men laughed. "Jose, Pepe," she signaled with her gun. Two of the men dismounted and pushed us away from the stone column, holding us at bay with their rifles. Then the girl got down from her horse and, examining the column where the two had stood, pulled on the stone that I had pushed back in.

"Ju think we are no too smart, but I see pretty good." One of the men, upon a nod of her head, dismounted and helped her pull the stone back out of the column. She pushed him out of the way and told him to stand back. The small hole was about eight inches by five inches. Looking inside the dark opening, she could see nothing. Reaching inside, her arm went back in up to the elbow and, by her reach, I could tell the hole was really quite deep. Then with a funny look she withdrew her arm. Turning her hand over, she saw three tiny bloody marks. Seconds later she put her hand to her head and, swooning in a circle, fell over in a heap. I had my gun out, firing before she even hit the ground, disposing of the two hombres that were closest. By now, Connie had capped off one round, dumping the one left in the saddle that had his gun pointed at us. The rest were too startled to move.

"Hands up, panaderos!" I shouted. They all raised their hands and dropped any

weapons they held, and looked around at one another with puzzled expressions.

Connie leaned toward him and whispered while keeping her gun trained on the man closest to her in the saddle.

"You just called them bakers."

"No I didn't, I called them jerks. Hold still you!" I aimed the forty five at the man standing closest to the girl on the ground.

"It's the wrong word."

"DAMN!" I said. "It is? OK... then all of you assholes get out of the saddles, and boots on the ground." I went to each, taking all of their guns, and threw them one by one on top of the twelve-foot column. They landed with a clatter and clank.

"Now, vamoose Muchachos!" All of them looked at one another briefly, then, shrugging their shoulders they turned their horses and slowly led them quietly out of the ruins. The girl moaned, the one wounded man got up and started to tend to her. I tucked my colt back in my holster and dragged the girl to one of the walls, under a little shade. The wounded man followed.

Connie kicked the two other men, they didn't move. "I don't think there's much we can do for them."

"Uh-huh," I said, not really paying attention to her.

"Did you hear what I said?"

"What... yeah. Leave 'em. Buzzards have to eat too." The small flashlight I pulled from my pocket shown on five or six scorpions in the back of the hole. "I knew you little bastards would be in there."

I turned, smiling at the pretty pilot, "God bless Mother Nature, she can be a bitch but sometimes she's on my side." Taking a matchbook out of my pocket, I lit the paper part of the book on fire, and deftly shoved it back in the hole. Within a matter minutes the match heads caught on fire, sending sulfurous smoke fumes billowing out of the hole. Out scurried no less than ten rather large jet black scorpions.

"Ewue..." Connie exclaimed.

"They're stingaroos, a bad scorpion, nasty as can be and with quite a sting. They won't kill you, but they will knock you out if too many get you," I said, looking over at

the girl behind me, propped up against the stone wall. "She'll be a hurting little lady for a while; serves her right."

"Not as hurting as those two vaqueros." Connie remarked.

"Ah... they knew the price of what they were doing," I said with out remorse. I examined the hole again with my light. There was no movement. Sticking my hand cautiously back in the hole feeling around in the dust with my fingers, I eventually pulled out a small dirty leather pouch. Inside the pouch was a folded piece of paper. I opened it up.

"Yup, this is it! Let's go." With that we returned to the plane, carefully watching about them for anymore banditos. The plane fired up within moments-and with a lot of bouncing was airborne. Connie circled the ruins for a moment before heading back toward Mexico City.

"Where are we going?"

"We're actually headed towards Pancho Villas' home town."

"Where is that?"

"Durango Province, San Juan de Rio," she said. I got out the maps for her, finding at last the one for Durango Province. She examined the maps while I hung on to the wheel, trying not to steer into any mountains.

"We have enough gas and they have a small airport just outside of town. We can make it in an hour and a half if I push it." I nodded.

"You're pretty handy with a gun!"

"Well, you know a single girl can't be too careful." We both laughed.

Opening the dirty leather pouch, I dumped the contents on top of the maps in my lap. Besides the note, two coins and a small key fell out. The two coins glittered in the afternoon sun that lit the plane. I picked both them up, holding them in awe.

"What are they?" Connie asked over the headphones.

"COB, gold doubloons."

"COB? What's a cob."

"It's a very old way they used to make coins. They would chisel off the end of a molten bar and then stamp it. It was actually called cabo-de-baro in Spanish. These are

very old. 1607 and 16... I can't read the rest here. They don't look like Potosi mint stuff, too early, so these actually came from Spain."

"So what are they doing here?"

"I've got no clue. There were a lot of raids during the revolution, so they may be loot from someplace."

"Are they worth anything?"

"Not sure how much, but in the thousands each."

"Hey, it's a bonus..." I said, looking over to Connie, "one for you and one for me in payment, because I'm sure Pat isn't paying you enough."

"Yes he is, 'sides, I've already been paid," she smiled.

"Ok, how much did you get for hauling me around?"

"Enough."

"Like how enough?"

She glanced at me, "You're riding in it, a Bellanca Super Viking." I was amazed.

"You mean tight old Hernan gave you this plane in return for dragging me around the countryside?"

"Yep, 'cause I can drive a hard bargain, and other things." I was definitely impressed with this talented beauty, and believe me I wasn't impressed by too many women. She could fly, shoot, and drive a hardcore bargain, yet there was something about her that I couldn't quite put my finger on. Perhaps that it was the fact that she was a little too good.

to be continued.....