

Scene IV

(Rio Santo's "Round Room," the secret sanctum of the Gentlemen of the Night. It is a windowless room with six doors. Rio Santo enters through door No. 1, wearing a very elegant riding costume. He carries pistols under his coat, which he removes, to remain dressed in a jacket and soft boots. He throws his pistols on a table and looks at them for a moment. Then, he makes a gesture of boredom and calls.)

RIO SANTO: Phegor!

(A black servant appears.)

RIO SANTO: Strike the gong.

PHEGOR: How many times, Master?

RIO SANTO: Five times.

(Rio Santo hurls himself in an armchair. Phegor strikes the gong five times. At the fifth blow, the five doors open at once. Owen Falkstone comes out of door No. 2, Walter Brown from door No. 3, Nick Smith from door No. 4, Fanny Bertram from door No. 5 and Peter Wood (a.k.a. The Practice), carrying a huge ledger and wearing green eyeshades, from door No. 6. These comprise the Council of the Night. Phegor advances chairs and leaves. The new arrivals bow respectfully to Rio Santo; he gives them a sign to sit down.)

RIO SANTO: I need money.

WOOD (*aside*): Always!

SMITH: We're at your disposition, Milord. (*the others bow*) How much does Your Lordship need?

RIO SANTO: 10,000 pounds.

ALL: 10,000 pounds!

RIO SANTO: For tonight.

FALKSTONE: For tonight!

FANNY: I'm ready, Milord. All I have is yours.

RIO SANTO (*softly*): I know it, Fanny. But you, Peter—

WOOD: I'm ready.

BROWN (*after an hesitation*): So I am.

FALKSTONE: I'm ready—ready to say that all this isn't worth the Devil! I know the respect I owe you, Milord, but I've never seen money spent like this! Money which is hard to come by! Here we are, five respected businessmen: Mr. Wood owns a currency exchange office which does some good business; Mistress Bertram's stores offer cashmeres of a quality not seen even in India, and lace and other fineries—what do I know!—worth millions! Mr. Brown furnishes drapes to all the rich houses of England and France. Mr. Smith rivals the India Company. And I am the richest goldsmith in the City! Well, to our misfortune, our five shops are built around this cursed room, which leaks money like the barrel of the Danaids! All that we earn goes into it.

RIO SANTO: By Jove, gentlemen, I admire you! What do you complain about? Do you lack merchandise? Do the police trouble you? How much do your jewels cost, Mr. Falkstone? Your drapes, Mr. Brown? Your bank notes, Mr. Wood?

ALL: True, true...

RIO SANTO: Fanny, you will give me nothing today. These gentlemen will pay for you—that pleases me. (*all bow*) Mr. Smith will furnish 1,000 pounds.

SMITH: Yes, Milord.

RIO SANTO: Mr. Wood, 2,000 pounds.

WOOD: Yes, Milord.

RIO SANTO: Mr. Brown, 3,000 pounds. (*Peter bows*) And Mr. Falkstone, 4,000 pounds.

FALKSTONE: I don't have them.

RIO SANTO: They must be had.

FALKSTONE: Impossible!

RIO SANTO: I wish it!

FALKSTONE (*bowing in his turn*): So be it!

RIO SANTO: Are there any reports this morning?

SMITH: As for me, Milord, nothing new.

RIO SANTO: That's fine. And you, Walter?

BROWN (*giving his*): Here's my report.

RIO SANTO (*reading it*): Ah! why didn't you tell me this, Walter?

BROWN: I was awaiting orders, Milord.

RIO SANTO: This is very serious, gentlemen, very serious! Once suspicion starts being focused on our brotherhood, we are all imperiled. And you say that it's in the parish of Saint Giles they are holding these meetings attended by the police?

BROWN: Yes, Milord.

RIO SANTO: This is serious! Who is the head of the police in Saint Giles?

BROWN: A clever Commissioner.

RIO SANTO (*jesting*): Clever—that suits us fine.

BROWN (*seriously*): Clever and honest. Totally honest, Milord.

RIO SANTO: That's another matter. He must be replaced tomorrow.

BROWN: Replaced! I don't see any way, Milord.

RIO SANTO: It's necessary. Write to the Chief of the Metropolitan Police, tell him that I wish to speak to him. Have him come immediately.

BROWN: His Lordship won't willingly trouble himself.

RIO SANTO: His Lordship *will* trouble himself. What about you, Mr. Falkstone?

FALKSTONE: This is my report on the subject of yesterday's diamonds. I'm proposing to the Council of the Night to send them immediately to Holland where they will be safer than here.

RIO SANTO (*to Brown, who is writing*): Tell his Lordship of the Metropolitan Police that I wish to speak to him on the matter of the diamonds stolen yesterday at Saint James'.

FALKSTONE: Milord, what are you thinking of?

RIO SANTO (*to Brown*): Keep writing. Where are those diamonds, Mr. Falkstone?

FALKSTONE: Milord—

RIO SANTO: You have them?

FALKSTONE: Yes, Milord, but—

RIO SANTO: That's fine—go find them and bring them to me.

FALKSTONE: I don't know...

RIO SANTO: Go, Falkstone. Don't force me to ask you a second time.

FALKSTONE (*reluctantly*): I obey, Milord. I obey.

*(Falkstone leaves. Walter Brown hands the letter he's just written to Rio Santo.)*

RIO SANTO (*reading*): That's fine! Let the letter be delivered immediately.

WOOD: Milord has no further orders to give?

RIO SANTO: No; you can withdraw. Go, gentlemen. Ah! Have someone go to the Russian Embassy and ask His Grace, Prince Dimitri Tolstoy if he can receive me this morning! (*to Fanny*) Stay, Fanny.

*(The other three leave.)*

RIO SANTO: As for you, you're my friend!

FANNY: Your sister, Milord. My mother nourished the two of us. Both poor, we left dear Ireland; my mother died of starvation there, and I would have died here too, if not for your generous protection.

RIO SANTO: The debt that I contracted with your mother, I paid to her daughter.

FANNY: You did more than that, Milord. We'd lost sight of each other when we arrived in London, amidst waves of men, in this maelstrom of misery and crime. I was alone, without work, at the end of my resources. Distress was pushing me towards the abyss at the bottom of which vice awaits its prey. You met me, you recognized me, and as you had become rich and powerful, you called me your sister again. That day, you gave me a guinea, which saved my life. You could have given me a hundred, which would have ruined me. You could have said: take this and dazzle; instead, you said: take this and work. That guinea, and your wise advice, Milord, made me rich—and kept me pure. You've given me a fortune; you've preserved my honor. Your advice is graven upon my soul. Your guinea, I marked with a cross, and much

later, I repurchased it for a hundred guineas from Ishmael Spencer. I still have it—on my heart. It's a talisman, a memento. That's why I remain your friend, Milord.

RIO SANTO: The most patient, the most active, the most intrepid of women.

FANNY: For you, for your plans, for your service, yes, Milord.

RIO SANTO: Thanks, Fanny. You're the only heart in whom I trust!

FANNY: But let's speak of you now. You were expecting letters from Ireland today?

RIO SANTO: Yes?

FANNY: But our regular messenger hasn't come.

RIO SANTO: Ah.

FANNY: Another man has presented himself in his place.

RIO SANTO: Another man?

FANNY: Of piercing eyes, austere visage and imperious gesture. I think I know him.

RIO SANTO: How's that?

FANNY: This is the man whom you saw last year, in that small house in Dublin, during the trip we took there.

RIO SANTO: The man from Dublin? Oh! That's impossible! What did he tell you?

FANNY: He looked at me silently at first, then with a voice that no Irishman will ever forget, Milord—

RIO SANTO: Speak lower.

FANNY: —He said: "Tell the Marquis de Rio Santo that I've left Dublin to see him, and that, this very day, I will see him—at his home."

RIO SANTO: Today. He's in London, he's going to come here. He—

*(Phegor enters.)*

RIO SANTO: It must be him!

FANNY: I'm withdrawing.

RIO SANTO: Yes, Fanny—Fanny, if only you knew! Later, much later. Goodbye, my friend, goodbye.

*(She leaves.)*

RIO SANTO *(to Phegor)*: Let him in.

*(Phegor departs.)*

RIO SANTO *(alone)*: He's in London, and I was unaware of it.

*(Daniel O'Connell enters; Rio Santo treats him with great respect and bows to him.)*

RIO SANTO: Allow me to thank you for the honor you're doing me in coming to visit me here—you, the greatest citizen of Ireland and the father of all the Irish.

O'CONNELL: Milord, I'm coming to you despite my illness, because of your orders calling to London 10,000 young men from our poorest counties. These are like my own children. I must know—what use do you intend to make of their arms?

RIO SANTO: What use?

O'CONNELL: Yes. Ten thousand men for whom you intend to pay passage. You are indeed rich, Milord.

RIO SANTO: I have money for them and for all those who will come to me in the name of Ireland.

O'CONNELL: Are these soldiers you're enlisting? You keep silent, Milord. Still, I must know. Hear me. This would be an unequal war—a mad struggle whose means the world would condemn and that God would not bless.

RIO SANTO: You have the right to speak thus. But open your eyes in the name of our suffering fatherland! See the movements on the marshes. Many have come to help us. You haven't dared to say that this war is unjust. Is it then fear that should delay us? England has filled the cup of oppression and infamy to the brim. How many times in these hallowed halls has your voice resounded, how many times have you shouted: Shame, shame on England!

O'CONNELL: But I have also proclaimed: Peace to Ireland!

RIO SANTO: What is peace to a slave? Is it you who speak now, you whose burning heart got you named the Liberator? Are you now going to regret the drop of blood which will purchase our independence? I've avidly pursued this work. for ten years. I've visited Russia, Spain, Austria, France, always faithful to this austere passion that I hid under the effeminate folds of a Don Juan. To see me thus—asleep at the feet of women—no one could suspect in me the existence of that profound, patient and implacable purpose. And yet, for the last ten years, I've preached our crusade. For ten years, I've consumed the best part of my life in an ungrateful, exhausting labor. I've done more. I've made the greatest of all sacrifices: I've choked the voice of my conscience.

O'CONNELL: I feared so, Milord.

RIO SANTO: Yes, I've descended to the depths of villainy. Yes, I've sought in the misery of London those dark alliances with men whose criminal empire spans the Continent. Yes, I've committed crimes which the sanctity of my cause is barely enough to purify. Yes, I'm the Marquis de Rio Santo, Grandee of Spain, but I'm Irish first and foremost! I know very well that these shadowy mires into which I've plunged my hands to further my task will not soil my heart.

O'CONNELL: Milord, you love Ireland, and that makes me love you. (*extending his hand*) But trust me: don't let your hate dominate your patriotism. Imitate my example—wait!

RIO SANTO: Wait? When a nation is in agony! Wait, when the mine is collapsing! When I already see this odious, invasive, oppressive colossus, shake! I've waited ten years, I tell you—the hour has come. Now, I no longer intend to wait.

O'CONNELL (*rising*): I have waited longer than you—I, who the rest of Europe has long accused of impetuosity and violence. Do you think that I haven't had to make prodigious efforts to still the passion of my heart? Milord, in this century, the law is a sharper weapon than the sword. We must conquer, but in accordance with the law, through the law. My violence, my passion, my impetuosity—these were evil counselors that I crushed under the weight of my will. I waited because I ought to have waited.

RIO SANTO: The future will decide between us two then.

O'CONNELL: Milord, my strength has been exhausted in the cause to which I have devoted myself completely. Look at me—the struggle has broken me. My life is ready to pass away—one foot in the tomb. I want to descend into my grave as calmly as I ascended into this world. I know that another must continue my work by the same means, the same peaceful means. That's why I've come, Milord. I came to know you, for you might be my successor; but before giving you that title, before placing the supreme hope in you, I must be convinced that you won't compromise the sacrifices of my entire life. What am I saying? The heroic sufferings of an entire nation. In the end, you must tell me what you intend to do with my 10,000 Irish children.

RIO SANTO: To explain my plans to you, to unveil my whole soul, I ask two more days.

O'CONNELL: I trust you, Milord—two days, then—so be it! I shall return to Dublin, where my presence is expected—our men will be ready—but think about it: the sword of God must be without stain, and the ways of Providence, while strange and often twisted, never become an evil path. In two days, then, milord, I will know if God is calling you to continue my work. In two days, I will know if my poor Irish children should leave—if they should give you their arms and their hearts, follow your path blindly and die as Christians. Goodbye, Milord.

RIO SANTO: Goodbye, sir.

(*O'Connell leaves.*)

RIO SANTO: That man spoke the truth—the sword of God must be untarnished. But the good I've done, placed in the balance, will perhaps outweigh my sins. And yet, shall I be a redeemed?

(*Falkstone returns.*)

RIO SANTO (*aside*): Come on, come on, no more weakness! (*to Falkstone*) Approach, Mr. Falkstone.

FALKSTONE: Milord, here are the diamonds.

RIO SANTO (*pointing to a table*): Put them there—that's fine—I won't detain you.

FALKSTONE: In the name of Heaven, Milord, consider that I am accountable to the rest of our brotherhood.

RIO SANTO: As I am accountable of the very security of our brotherhood itself, Mr. Falkstone. There's danger over our heads. Do you prefer to keep these diamonds—or your life?

FALKSTONE (*terrified*): Milord!

RIO SANTO (*pointing at a door*): Go in there. When the Chief of the Metropolitan Police comes, lend an ear. I permit it. I desire it.

FALKSTONE: I will listen, Milord, since it is your good pleasure.

(*Falkstone goes to hide.*)

RIO SANTO (*ringing*): Phegor!

(*The black servant appears. Behind him is Doctor Moore*)

RIO SANTO (to Moore): Ah, Doctor Moore. You bring news of the Right Honorable Mr. Percival?

MOORE: Yes, Your Lordship.

RIO SANTO: Have you seen him?

MOORE: I put the first dressing on his wound.

RIO SANTO: And?

MOORE: The bullet passed a mere inches from the heart.

RIO SANTO: Ah!

MOORE: I know you to be an extraordinary shot, Milord. I think that you've been generous.

RIO SANTO: Perhaps. What did you think of the wound?

MOORE: It can be cured.

RIO SANTO: So much the better.

MOORE: So much the better? What about Miss Trevor?

RIO SANTO: No questions—but—

MOORE: This Percival is an obstacle.

RIO SANTO: I know it, which is why I wanted to destroy him.

MOORE: But you no longer intend to?

RIO SANTO: No.

MOORE: Yet, your marriage with Miss Trevor—

RIO SANTO: All this wearies and displeases me.

MOORE: Milord, each of us does certain things unwillingly. And all is not pleasure in the brotherhood of which you are the supreme leader on those islands. The association needs this marriage, which will make you heir to a peerage and give you the most effective protection. The Great Family is counting on you, Milord.

RIO SANTO: Am I slave or free?

MOORE: You are not free.

RIO SANTO: Then I'm a slave!

MOORE: Milord, this marriage is all our hope. The Trevors are almost of royal blood. By this union, we arrive—you arrive, Milord—at the very steps of the throne. Remember that you swore an oath before the assembled Council in Sartene...

RIO SANTO (*interrupting him*): I remember, sir—and I will consider— (*changing tone*) Meanwhile, I am still the Master here, right?

MOORE: Indeed, Milord.

RIO SANTO: How is it then that my orders are not executed?

MOORE: If I know the guilty party—

RIO SANTO: The guilty party—that's you, Doctor!

MOORE: Me!

RIO SANTO: I forbade you earlier to involve that young girl Suzannah in our shadowy maneuvers.

MOORE (*feigning surprise*): The young girl—ah, pardon—I understand now, Milord. I truly didn't expect so much memory on Your Lordship's part—

RIO SANTO (*severely*): You've disobeyed me! (*sits down*)

MOORE (*with feigned humility*): Milord, ordinarily, when it's a question of a woman, I'm astonished that you remember anything. (*in a low voice*) She's very beautiful, this Suzannah! And might that be the motive for your change of heart? Before seeing her, you were quite prepared to marry Mary Trevor.

RIO SANTO (*rising*): If you disobey me again, I will have your head, Doctor Moore!

MOORE (*standing up abruptly*): I am a member of the Council of the Night.

RIO SANTO: And you would like to rise in rank. My place seems good to you—you're thinking of taking it—don't deny it, I know you—you've already tried to ruin me. You're one of the first practitioners in London. You have much science, much reputation—much future. Yet, between you and the scaffold, there's only my will.

MOORE (*incredulous*): The scaffold! You're going too far, Rio Santo!

RIO SANTO: I say this to you now, because you know how to kill from a distance, and chance might put my life in your hands. I tell you this now because you're my doctor—and that I intend to sleep peacefully, even with you watching my sick bed. Don't be too surprised. I hold more or less all your colleagues the same way. Our colleagues from the Continent call it the *invisible weapon*. Without it, I would need to have a thousand lives.

MOORE: If you please, what then is the crime you hold over my head?

RIO SANTO (*lightly*): Choose between any of your misdeeds. I have proof of one of them. A good proof. Irrefutable evidence. Enough to hang you.

MOORE (*aside*): What does he know? (*aloud*) Milord, I've let you speak, but whatever your prejudices and suspicions against me, there's no need of threats for me to serve you. It's my very fidelity, and it's my profound devotion to the brotherhood, that henceforth will plead my cause to Your Lordship. What are you pleased to order me to do?

RIO SANTO: Cure Percival's wound.

MOORE (*hesitating*): That's your will?

RIO SANTO: That's my will.

MOORE: It will be faithfully done.

RIO SANTO: As for that young girl—

MOORE: The beautiful Suzannah? It suffices, Milord. Henceforth Suzannah is sacred to us. Is that all?

RIO SANTO: That's all— Go!