MCLOSKY. They don’t expect to recover any of this old debt in time, do they? It may be years yet before it will be paid off, if ever! DORA. Well, if there’s a chance of it, there’s not a planter round here who wouldn’t loan the Peytons the money to keep their name and blood amongst us. Now, if you’ll excuse me, I must attend to Mr. Peyton, the new master of this estate. (Dora exits into the house, haughtily.)

MCLOSKY. Curse these old families — a snobby lot of dried-up aristocracy. Just because my grandfather wasn’t some broken-down Virginian émigré or a stingy old Creole, I ain’t fit to sit down to the same meat with them. It makes my blood so hot I hear my heart hiss! And the presence of these Peytons keeps alive the accusation against me that I ruined them. If I’m ever to clear my name, I must sweep them from this section of the country. Yet, if this money should come! Bah! There’s no chance of it. And if they go, they’ll take Zoe — she’ll follow them. Damn that girl; she makes me quiver when I think of her. (Zoe enters from the house with the secretary.) ZOE. (Putting the secretary down.) Here are the papers and accounts — Where did Dora — ?

MCLOSKY. Stop, Zoe; come here! How would you like to rule the house of the richest planter in Achapalaga, eh? Or say the word and I’ll buy this old place, and you shall be mistress of Terrebonne.

ZOE. Oh, sir, do not speak so to me!

MCLOSKY. Why not? Look here, these Peytons are broke; leave ‘em and jine me; I’m rich and I’ll set you up grand, and we’ll see these families and their white skins shrivel up with hate; what d’ye say?

ZOE. Let me pass! Oh, pray, let me go!

MCLOSKY. What, you won’t, won’t ye? Come, Zoe, don’t be a fool; I’d marry you if I could, but you know I can’t, so just say what you want. I’ll put back these Peytons in Terrebonne, and they shall know you done it; yes, they’ll have you to thank for saving them from ruin.

ZOF. Let me pass! (Dora reenters, calling for Zoe.) DORA. Zoe! (Beat, as she senses something wrong.) Zoe, you are needed inside. Mrs. Peyton calls for you. (Zoe exits. Dora gives M’Closky a suspicious once-over before exiting.)

MCLOSKY. Fair or foul, I’ll have her! (Opens secretary.) What’s here — judgments? Yes, plenty of ’em; bills, accounts with the bank — what’s this? “Judgment, 40,000 dollars,” surely, that is the mortgage under which this estate is now advertised for sale —