

Moment of Vengeance

The Waiting Man

by Elmore Leonard, 1925-2013

Published: 1956
in »Saturday Evening Post«



AT MIDMORNING six riders came down out of the cavernous pine shadows, down the slope swept yellow with arrowroot blossoms, down through the scattered aspen at the north end of the meadow, then across the meadow and into the yard of the one-story adobe house.

Four of the riders dismounted, three of these separating as they moved toward the house; the fourth took his rope and walked off toward the mesquite-pole corral. The horses in the enclosure stood and watched as he opened the gate.

Ivan Kergosen, still mounted, motioned to the open stable shed that was built out from the adobe. The sixth man rode up to it, looked inside, then continued around the corner and was out of sight.

Now Kergosen, tight-jawed and solemn, saw the door of the adobe open. He watched Ellis, his daughter, come out to the edge of the ramada shade, ignoring the three men, who stepped aside to let her pass.

"We've been expecting you," she said. Her voice was calm and her smile, for a moment, seemed genuine, but it faded too quickly. She touched her dark hair, smoothing it as a breeze rose and swept across the yard.

"Where is he?" Kergosen said.

Her gaze lifted, going out across the open sunlight of the meadow to the far west corner, to the windmill that stood out faintly against a dark background of pines.

"He's at the stock tank," Ellis said. "But he'll come in now."

Mr. Kergosen's hands were gripped one over the other on the saddle horn. He stared at his daughter in silence, his mustache hiding his mouth, but not the iron-willed anger in his eyes and in the tight line of his jaw. "Whether he does or not," Kergosen said, "you're going back with me."

"I'm married now, Pa."

"Don't talk foolish."

"Married in Willson. By a priest."

"We'll talk about that at home."

"I am home!"

"Girl, this isn't going to be a public debate."

"Then why did you bring an audience?" She was sorry as soon as she said it. "Pa, I don't mean disrespect. Phil and I were married in Willson five days ago. He bought stock, drove it here, and we intend to raise it."

Her father stared at her, saying nothing, and to fill the silence she added, "This is my home now, where I've come to live with my husband."

Leo Pyke, one of the three men standing near her, the curled brim of his hat straight and low over his eyes, said, "Looks more like a wickiup. Someplace a 'Pache would bring his squaw." He grinned, leaning against a support post, staring at Ellis.

Mr. Kergosen did not look up, but said, "Shut up, Leo."

"It's no fit place," Pyke said, straightening. "That's all I'm saying."

"Phil has work to do on it," Ellis said defensively. "He's already put on a new roof." She looked quickly at her father. "That's what I mean. We didn't just run off and get married. We've planned for it. Phil paid down on the house and property more than a month ago at the Dos Mesas bank. Since then we've be making it livable."

"Behind my back," Kergosen said.

Ellis hesitated. "Phil wanted to ask your permission. I told him it wouldn't do any good."

"How did you suppose that?" her father asked.

"I've lived with you for eighteen years, Pa. I know you."

"Can you say you know Phil Treat as well?"

"I know him," Ellis said simply.

"As far as I'm concerned," Kergosen said, "he qualifies as a man. But certainly not as the man who marries my daughter."

Ellis asked, "And I have nothing to say about it?"

"We're not discussing it here," Kergosen said.

He had hired Treat almost a year ago, during the time he was having trouble with the San Carlos Reservation people. He lost two men that spring and roughly two dozen head of beef to raiding parties. The Apache police did

nothing about it, though they knew his stock was being taken to San Carlos. So Ivan Kergosen went to Fort Thomas and hired a professional tracker whose government contract had expired, and went after them himself. They turned out to be Chiricahuas and the scout ran down every last one of them.

The scout's name was Phil Treat. He had been a soldier, buffalo hunter, and cavalry guide, and had earned a reputation as a gunfighter by killing three men: two of them at Tascosa when they tried to steal his hides; the third one at Anton Chico, New Mexico—an Army deserter who drew his gun, refusing to go back to Apache land. Only three, but the shootings were done well, with witnesses, and it took no more than that to establish a reputation.

And after the trouble was past, Phil Treat stayed on with Mr. Kergosen. He was passing fair with cattle, a good horsebreaker, and an A-1 hunter; so Kergosen paid him top wages and was pleased to have such a man around. But as a hired hand; not as a son-in-law.

All his life Ivan Kergosen had worked hard and prayed hard, asking God for guidance. He built his holdings according to a single-minded interpretation of God's will, respecting Him more as a God of Justice than a God of Mercy. And his good fortune, he believed, was God in His justice rewarding him, granting him success in life for adhering to Divine Will. It had taken Ivan Kergosen thirty years of working and fighting—fighting the land, the Apache, and anyone who tried to take from his land—to build the finest spread in the Pinaleno Valley. He built this success for his own self-respect, for his wife who was now deceased, and for his daughter, Ellis—not for a sign-reading gunfighter who'd spent half of his life killing buffalo, the other tracking Apache, and who now, somehow, contrary to all his plans, had married his daughter.

He heard Leo Pyke's voice and he was brought back to the here and now. "Fixing the house while he was working for you, Mr. Kergosen," Pyke was saying. "No telling the amount of sneaky acts he's committed."

The man who had gone to the corral came out, leading a saddled and bridled dun horse. He looked back over his shoulder, then at Mr. Kergosen, and called, "He's coming now!"

Ellis was aware then of the steady cantering sound. She saw Leo Pyke and the two men with him—Sandal, who was a Mexican, and Grady, a bearded, solemn-faced man—look out past the corral, and she said, "In a moment you can say it to his face, Leo. About being sneaky."

She looked up in time to see her husband swing past the corral, coming toward her. She watched him dismount stiffly. He let the reins drop, passed his hand over his mouth, then up to his hat brim, and loosened it from his forehead. He turned his back to the three men in the ramada shade as if intentionally ignoring them; then looked from Ellis to her father and said, "Well?"

And now Ivan Kergosen was faced with the calm, deliberate gaze of this man. He saw that Phil Treat was not wearing a gun; he saw that he was trail dirty and had moved slowly, to stand now, tall but stooped, with his hands hanging empty.

He could handle this man. Kergosen was sure of that now, but he respected him and he had planned this meeting carefully. Leo Pyke, who openly disliked Treat, and Sandal and Grady, who had been with him longer than any of his other riders, would deal with Treat if he objected. No, there would be no trouble. But he formed his words carefully before he spoke.

Then he said, "You made a mistake. So did my daughter. But both mistakes are corrected as of this moment. Ellis is going home and you have ten minutes to pack your gear and get out. Clear?"

"And my stock?" Treat said.

"You're selling your stock to me," Kergosen said, "so there'd be nothing to delay you." His hand went into his coat and came out with a folded square of green paper. "My draft on the Willson Bank to cover the sale of your yearling stock. Thirty head. When you draw the money, the canceled draft is my receipt." He extended his hand. "Take it."

Treat did not move and Kergosen's wrist flicked out and the folded paper floated—fell to the ground. "Pick it up," Kergosen said. "Your time's running out." He looked at Ellis then. "Mount up."

ELLIS ALMOST SPOKE, frightened, angry, and unsure of herself now, but she looked at her husband and waited.

Treat stood motionless, still gazing up at Kergosen. "You have five men and I have myself," he said. "That makes a difference, doesn't it?"

"If this is unjust," Kergosen said, "then it's unjust. I'll say it only once more. Your time's running out."

Treat's eyes moved to Ellis. "Do what he says." He saw the bewildered look come over her face, and he said, "Go home with him, Ellis, and do what he tells you." Treat paused. "But don't speak one solitary word to him as long as you're under his roof. Not till I come for you."

He said this quietly in the brittle silence that hung over the yard, and now he saw Ellis nod her head slowly.

He looked up at Kergosen, who was staring at him intently. "Mr. Kergosen, we can't argue with you and we can't fight you, but take Ellis home and you'll know she isn't just your daughter anymore."

"You don't threaten me," Kergosen said.

"No," Treat said, "you've got iron fists, a hundred and thirty square miles of land, and you sit there like it's the high seat of judgment. But you live with Ellis now, if you can."

Kergosen said, "Pick up that draft."

Treat shook his head.

"As God is my judge, I mean you no harm," Kergosen said. "But you don't leave me a choice."

He nodded to Leo Pyke as he reined his bay in a tight circle and rode out. Ellis had mounted and now she followed him, looking back past the two riders who fell in behind her as she passed the corral and started across the meadow.

They were not yet out of sight, but nearing the aspen stands when Pyke said to Sandal and Grady, "So he won't pick it up."

Treat looked at him, then stooped, without loss of dignity, unhurriedly, and picked up the draft. "If it bothers you," he said.

Pyke grinned. "He's not so big now, is he?"

The Mexican rider, Sandal, said, "Like a field hand. I thought he was something with a gun." "A story he made up," the third man, Grady, said.

Pyke said to Sandal, "Move his horse out of the way."

Sandal winked at Grady. "And the Henry, uh?" He led Treat's claybank to the corral and lifted the Henry rifle from the saddle boot as he shooed him in. He walked back to them, studying the rifle, holding it at belt level. Without looking

at them, as if not aiming, he flipped the lever down and up and fired past them, and the right front window of the adobe shattered.

Sandal looked up, smiling. "This is no bad gun."

Across the meadow two of Kergosen's riders were moving the herd away from the stock tank. Treat watched them, turning his back to Sandal. There was time. These men would do as they pleased, whether he objected or not. Wait and say nothing, he thought. Wait and watch and keep track of the score.

He remembered a patrol out of Fort Thomas coming to a spring, and a Coyotero Apache guide whose name was Pesh-klitso. The guide had said to him in Spanish, "We followed the barbarian for ten days; two men died, three horses died; we have no food and we killed no barbarian. Yet we could have waited for them here. Our stomachs would be full, the two men and the horses would still be alive, and we would take them when they came." He'd asked the Coyotero how he knew they would come, and the guide answered, "The land is not that broad. They would come sooner or later." Which meant, if not today, then tomorrow; if not this year, then the next.

He had known many Pesh-klitsos at San Carlos, and at Tascosa, when they carried Sharps rifles and hunted buffalo—hunted them by waiting, then killed them. And the more patience you had the more you killed.

Treat waited and watched. He watched Grady go into the adobe and saw the left front window erupt with a spray of broken glass as a chair came through. He saw Sandal break off two of the chair legs with the heel of his boot, then walk into the adobe, and a moment later the Henry was firing again. With the reports, the ear-ringing din and the clicking cocking sound of the lever, he heard glass and china shattering, falling from the shelves. Then the sound of a Colt and a dull, clanging noise; sooty smoke billowed from the open doorway and he knew they had shot down the stove chimney.

Grady came out, fanning the smoke in front of him. He mounted his horse, sidestepped it to the ramada, fastened the loop of his rope to a support post, and spurred away. The post ripped out, bouncing, scraping a dust rise, and the mesquite-pole awning sagged partway to the ground. Sandal came out of the adobe, running, ducking his head.

He watched Grady circle to come back, went to his own horse, fastened his rope to the other support post, and dragged it away. The ramada collapsed, swinging, smashing, against the adobe front, and the mesquite poles broke apart.

Watching Treat, Leo Pyke said, "You letting them get away with that? All this big talk about you, and you don't even open your mouth."

Grady and Sandal walked their horses in. Treat glanced at them, then back to Pyke. "I don't have anything to say."

"Listen," Pyke said. "I've put up with that closemouth cold-water way of yours a long time. I've watched men stand clear of you, afraid they'd step too close and you'd come to life. I watched Mr. Kergosen, then Ellis, won over to your sly ways. But all that time I was seeing through you—looking clean through, and there was nothing there to see. No backbone, no guts, no nothing."

Sandal was grinning, leaning over his saddle horse. "Eat him up, Layo!"

Pyke's eyes did not leave Treat. "If you were worth it, I'd take my gun off and beat hell out of you."

Treat's eyebrows raised slightly. "Would you, Leo?"

"You damn bet I would."

Sandal said, "Go ahead, man. Do it."

"Shut your mouth!" Pyke threw the words over his shoulder.

"The vision of being segundo returns with the return of the daughter," Sandal said, grinning again. To Grady, next to him, he said, "How would you like to work for this one every day?"

Grady shook his head. "She can't marry him now. And that's the only way he'd get to be Number Two."

"I think she married him," Sandal said, nodding at Treat, "to escape this one."

"I said shut up!" Pyke screamed, turning half around, but at once he looked back at Treat. "You ride out, right now. And if I ever see you this close again, I'll talk to you with a gun. You hear me!"

NINE DAYS AFTER that, R. C. Hassett, the county deputy assigned to Dos Mesas, was told of the disappearance of two of Ivan Kergosen's riders.

On Saturday, two days before, they'd spent the evening in town. They started back home at eleven o'clock and had not been seen since.

Hassett thought it over the length of time it took him to strap on his holster and take a Winchester down from the wall rack. Then he rode out to Phil Treat's place. Entering the yard, he heard a hammering sound coming from the adobe. He saw that a new ramada had been constructed. As he reined toward the adobe, Phil Treat stepped out of the doorway, a Henry rifle under his arm.

"So you're rebuilding," Hassett said. "I heard about what happened."

His eyes held on Treat as he stepped out of the saddle, letting his reins trail. He brushed open his coat and took a tobacco plug from his vest pocket, bit off a corner of it, and returned the plug to the pocket.

His coat remained open, the skirt held back by the butt of his revolver.

He had been a law officer for more than two dozen years and he was in no particular hurry.

"I wasn't sure you'd be here," said Hassett. "But something told me to find out."

"You're not looking for me," Treat said.

"No; two of Mr. Kergosen's boys."

Treat called toward the adobe, "Come out a minute!"

Hassett watched as Grady and Sandal appeared in the doorway, then came outside. Grady's bearded face was bruised, one eye swollen and half closed, and he limped as he took the few steps out to the end of the ramada shade. There was no mark on Sandal.

"These the men?" asked Treat. Hassett nodded.

"Ivan reported them lost."

"Not lost," Treat said. "They quit him to work for me."

"Without drawing their pay?"

"That's none of my business," Treat answered.

Hassett's gaze moved to the adobe. "Grady, I didn't know you were a carpenter."

The bearded man hesitated before saying, "I'm swearing out a complaint on one Phil Treat."

Hassett nodded, moving the tobacco from one cheek to the other.

"It's your privilege, Grady; though I'd say you got off easy."

"This man forced us—" Grady began.

Hassett held up his hand. "In my office." He looked at Treat then.

"You come in, too, and state your complaint. I make out a writ and serve it on Ivan. The writ orders him to court on such and such a date. You're there to claim your wife with proof of legal marriage."

"And if Mr. Kergosen doesn't appear?" asked Treat.

"He's no bigger than I am," Hassett said. "I see that he does next time."

"But that doesn't calm his mind, does it?"

"That's your problem," Hassett said.

Treat almost smiled. "You said it as simply as it can be said."

"All right," Hassett said. "You've been told." He moved around his horse, stepped up into the saddle, then looked down at Treat again.

"Let me ask you something. How come Grady looks the way he does and there isn't a mark on Sandal?"

"I talked to Grady first," Treat said.

"I see," Hassett said. "I'll ask you something else. How come Ivan didn't come here looking for these two?"

"I guess he doesn't know I'm still here."

Hassett looked down at Treat. "But he'll know it now, won't he?" He turned and rode out of the yard.

That afternoon, after they had finished the inside repairs, Sandal and Grady were released. They rode out, riding double, and watching them, Treat pictured them approaching the great U-shaped adobe that was Mr. Kergosen's home, then dismounting and standing in the sunlight as Ivan came down the steps from the veranda.

Sandal would tell it: how they were ambushed riding back from Dos Mesas, how Treat had appeared in front of them, coming out of the trees with the Henry; how Grady's horse had been hit when they tried to run, and had fallen on Grady and injured his ankle; how they had been taken back to his adobe and forced to rebuild the ramada and patch the furniture and the stove. And Sandal would describe him as some kind of demon, a nagual who never slept and seldom spoke as he held them with a Henry rifle for two days and two nights. Ivan Kergosen would turn from them, his eyes going to Ellis sitting on the shaded veranda, reading or sewing or staring out over the yard.

She would not look at him, but he would detect the beginning of a smile. Only this, on the tenth day of her silence.

You have a woman, Treat thought, picturing her. *You have one and you don't have one*. He thought of the time he had first spoken to her, the times they rode together and the time he first kissed her.

And now they'll come again. But not Grady, because his ankle will put him to bed. Outwait an old man, he thought. Wait while an old man realizes he is not God, or God's avenging angel, God's right hand. Which could take no longer than your lifetime, he thought.

He took dried meat, a canteen, a blanket, the Henry, and a holstered Colt revolver and went out into the corral to wait for them.

THERE WERE FIVE that came. They reached Treat's adobe at dusk, spreading out as they approached it, coming at it from both sides of the corral, two of the riders circling the stable shed and the adobe before entering the yard. Sandal dismounted and went into the adobe. He came out with a kerosene lantern and held it as Pyke struck a match and lit it.

"Who's going to do it?" asked Sandal.

"You're holding the fire," Pyke said.

"Not me." Sandal shook his head.

"Just throw it in. Hit the wall over the bed."

"Not me. I've done enough to that man."

"What about what he did to you?"

"He had reason."

Pyke stepped out of the saddle. He jerked the lantern away from Sandal and walked to the door. His hand went to the latch, then stopped.

"Layo!" Sandal's voice.

Pyke looked over his shoulder, saw Sandal not looking at him, but staring out toward the corral, and he turned full around, holding the lantern by the ring handle.

He saw Treat crossing the yard toward him. In the dusk he could not see the man's features, but he knew it was Treat. He saw Treat's hands hanging empty and he saw the revolver on his right leg. Now Sandal was moving the horses, holding the reins and whack-slapping at the rump of one to force both of them to the side. The horses of the three riders still mounted moved nervously, and the riders watched Treat, seeing him looking at Leo Pyke. Then, thirty feet from the ramada, Treat stopped.

"Leo, you tore my house down once. Once is enough."

Pyke was at ease. "You're going to stop us?"

"The last time you stated that you'd talk with a gun if I ever came close again." Treat glanced at Sandal when Pyke said nothing. "Is that right?"

"Big as life," the Mexican said.

Treat's gaze returned to Pyke. "Well?"

"You got me at an unfair advantage," Pyke said carefully. "A lantern in my hand. All the light full on me."

"You came here to burn down my house," Treat said, standing motionless. "You're holding the fire, as you told Sandal. You've four men backing you and you call it a disadvantage."

"Three men backing him," Sandal said.

Beyond him one of the mounted riders said, "This part of it isn't our fight."

And Sandal added, "Just Layo's."

"Wait a minute." Pyke was taken by surprise. "You all work for Mr. Kergosen. He says run him out, we do it!"

"But not carry him out," the one who had spoken before said. "You threatened him, Leo; then it's your fight, not ours. And if you think he's got an unfair advantage, put the lantern down."

"So it's like that," Pyke said.

"You got two feet," Sandal said. "Stand on them. Show us how the segundo would do it."

"Listen, you chili picker! You're through!"

"Sure, Layo. Now talk to that boy out there."

"Mr. Kergosen's going to run every damn one of you!" Pyke half turned to face them, shifting the lantern to his left hand, the light swaying across Sandal and the chestnut color of his horse. "We'll talk to him," Sandal said.

Pyke stared at him. "You know what you done, you and the rest? You jawed yourself out of jobs. You see how easy a new one is to find. Mr. Kergosen's going to be burned, but sure as hell I'm going to"—his feet started to shift—"tell him!"

As he said it, Pyke was spinning on his toes, swinging the lantern hard at Treat, seeing it in the air, then going to his right, but seeing Treat moving, with the revolver suddenly in his hand, and at that moment Treat fired.

Pyke was half around when the bullet struck him. He stumbled back against the front of the adobe, came forward drawing, bringing up his Colt, then half turned, falling against the adobe as Treat fired again and the second bullet hit him.

The revolver fell from Pyke's hand and he stood against the wall staring at Treat, holding his arms bent slightly, but stiffly against his sides, as if afraid to move them. He had been shot through both arms, both just above the elbow.

Treat walked toward him. "Leo," he said, "you've got two things to remember. One, you're not coming back here again. And two, I could've aimed dead center." He turned from Pyke to Sandal. "If you want to do him a good turn, tie up his arms and take him to a doctor. The rest of you," he said to the mounted men, "can tell Mr. Kergosen I'm still here."

HE WAS TOLD, and he came the next morning, riding into the yard with a shotgun across his lap. He rode up to Treat, who was standing in front of the adobe, and the shotgun was pointing down at him when Kergosen drew in the reins. They looked at each other in the clear morning sunlight, in the yellow, bright stillness of the yard.

"I could pull the trigger," Kergosen said, "and it would be over."

"Over for me," Treat said. "Not for you or Ellis."

Kergosen sat heavily in the saddle. He had not shaved this morning and his eyes told that he'd had little sleep. "You won't draw a gun against me?"

"No, sir."

"Why?"

"If I did, I'd have to live with Ellis the rest of my life the way you're doing now."

"So you're in a hole."

"But no deeper than the one you're in."

Kergosen studied him. "I underestimated you. I thought you'd run."

"Because you told me to?"

"That was reason enough."

"You're too used to giving orders," Treat said. "You've been Number One a long time and you've forgotten what it's like to have somebody contrary to you."

"I didn't get where I am having people contrary to me," Kergosen stated. "I worked and fought and earned the right to give orders, but I prayed to God to lead me right, and don't you forget that!"

"Mr. Kergosen," Treat said quietly, "are you afraid I can't provide for your daughter?"

"Provide!" Kergosen's face tightened. "An Apache buck provides. He builds a hut for his woman and brings her meat. Any man with one hand and a gun can provide. We're talking about my daughter, not a flat-nosed Indian woman—and you have to put up a damn sight more than meat and a hut!"

Treat said, "You think I won't make something of myself?"

"Mister, all you've proved to me is that you can read sign and shoot."

Kergosen paused before asking, "Why didn't you sign a complaint to get Ellis back? Don't you know your rights? That what I'm talking about. You can track a renegade Apache, you can stand off five men with a Colt, but you don't know how to live with a white man!"

"Mr. Kergosen," Treat said patiently, "I could've got a writ. I could've prosecuted you for tearing down my house. I could've killed Leo Pyke with almost a clear conscience. I could've done a lot of things."

"But you didn't," Kergosen said.

"No, I waited."

"If you're waiting for me to die of old age—"

"Mr. Kergosen, I'm interested in your daughter, not your property. We can get along just fine with what we're building on."

"Which is nothing," Kergosen said. "When you started," Treat asked, "what did you have?"

"When I married I had over one hundred square miles of land. Miles, mister, not acres. I was going on forty years old, sure of myself and not a kid anymore."

"I'm almost thirty, Mr. Kergosen."

"I'll say it again: And you've got nothing."

"Nothing but time."

"Listen," Kergosen said earnestly. "You don't count on the future like it's nothing but years to fill up. You fill them up, good or bad, according to your ability and willingness to sweat, but you're sure of that future before you ask a woman to face it with you."

Treat said, "You had somebody picked for Ellis?"

"Not by name, but a man who can offer her something."

"So you planned her future, and it turned out different."

"Damn it, I try to do what's right!"

"According to your rules."

"With God's help!"

"Mr. Kergosen," Treat said, "I don't mean disrespect, but I think you've rigged it so God has to take the blame for your mistakes. Ellis and I made a mistake. We admit it. We should've come to you first. We would've got married whether you said yes or no, but we still should've come to you first. The way it is now, it's still up to you, but now you're in an embarrassing position with the Almighty. Ellis and I are married in the eyes of the same God that you say's been guiding you all this time, thirty years or more. All right, you and Him have been getting along fine up to now. But now what?"

Kergosen said nothing.

"We could probably argue all day," Treat said, "but it comes down to this: You either go home and send out some more men, or you use that scattergun, or you come inside and have some coffee, and we'll talk it over like two grown-up men."

Kergosen stared at him. "I admire your control, Mr. Treat."

"I've learned how to wait, Mr. Kergosen. If it comes down to that, I'll outwait you. I think you know that."

Kergosen was silent for a long moment. He looked down at his hands on the shotgun and exhaled, letting his breath out slowly, wearily, and he seemed to sit lower on the saddle.

"I think I'm getting old," he said quietly. "I'm tired of arguing and tired of fighting."

"Maybe tired of fighting yourself," Treat said.

Kergosen nodded faintly. "Maybe so."

Treat waited, then said, "Mr. Kergosen, I'm anxious to see my wife."

Kergosen's face came up, out of shadow, deep-lined and solemn, but the hard tightness was gone from his jaw. He shifted his weight and came down off the saddle, and on the ground he handed the shotgun to Treat.

"Phil," he said, "this damn thing's getting too heavy to hold."

From his pocket Treat brought out the bank draft Kergosen had given him. He handed it over, saying, "So is this, Mr. Kergosen."

They stood for a moment. Kergosen's hand went into his pocket with the bank draft and when they moved toward the adobe, the bitterness between them was past. It had worn itself to nothing.

