

CHAPTER 6

*Vengeance!*

[1695]

CHIEF Coxi peered through the open door of Padre Kino's little room. It was sparsely furnished. There was a table, a few books, a wooden chest, a bed—if you could call two saddle blankets on the floor a bed.

“Where is he?” asked Coxi.

The housekeeper frowned. “I do not know. Most of the time he is in the church, on his knees.”

“The fever still burns him?”

“Yes. I think it gives him bad dreams. I hear him moan and cry out names—names of the dead, Saeta, Francisco. And this morning very early, before the sun was up, he talked as if to all the Pimas assembled in the church, but he was in the room alone.”

“Is he there now, I wonder?” said Coxi, half to himself.

“He could be anywhere. A man with fever does strange things. I do not understand about our padre.

Part of the time he is himself again. This morning, after I heard all the talking, he came out with his face very white and his eyes red. He went to the church and said Mass. When he came back he would not eat. Then he went out again. I do not know where. Why do you want him?"

"Chief Felipe is here. He has something for the padre."

"Felipe is here? He wants to see me?" It was Kino's voice. Coxi whirled to see the padre standing in the archway leading to the patio. His face was pale and drawn. A chill shook him, so that he had to hang onto the rough adobe wall. Cold sweat stood out on his face.

"I will tell the chief to come back another time," said Coxi.

"No. Bring him here." Kino walked unsteadily to a chair and sat down.

The Pima chief came through the door from a plaza brilliant with summer sun and stood blinking in the cool dimness of the room. Under his arm was a bundle and when his eyes had adjusted to the light, he came forward, knelt before Padre Kino and held it out.

"Here," he said, and Kino saw it was wrapped in a neatly tanned skin, the skin of a mountain lion, judging from its size and shape.

"What is it?" said Kino.

"It is from Tubutama," said Felipe. "Or, perhaps Caborca. I do not know."

Hands trembling, Kino unwrapped the soft leather and saw two precious vestments, one red, one white. His heart swelled with joy. Even among the rebellious Indians, there had been one who respected the vestments of a priest, had kept them from being defiled.

"Tell the people of Tubutama I thank them," he said, his voice growing stronger with each word. "Tell them too that we promise peace and a general pardon, if they will deliver up to the army the murderers of the blessed Saeta."

Chief Felipe stared at the padre. This was better than he had expected. But could he be sure? Could the soldiers be trusted?

Padre Kino said firmly, "It is true. Before we left Cucurpe, General Jironza agreed with us that this was what we should do. If the murderers are brought in, no one else will suffer. And I have a letter from the governor of Sonora. He too promises that only the guilty ones will be punished."

"When are they to be brought to the army? And where?" Felipe still wondered if it was safe to believe such generous promises.

"I will send word to you," promised Kino.

Chief Felipe hurried back across the mountain, spreading the word as he went. No Indian believed him. No one trusted the soldiers. But he repeated over and over, "Padre Kino said it was so. Padre Kino promised that everything would be as it was before, if we bring in the murderers."

But behind him, at Dolores, Padre Kino was entertaining another visitor, a wealthy Spanish gentleman from San Juan, who was the bearer of bad news. There had been trouble when General Jironza announced the plan upon which he and the Sonoran governor and the padres had agreed. The Spanish civilians at San Juan insisted that all the Indians should be punished. They were sending troops with Antonio Solís in command.

"Solís!" exclaimed Padre Kino. "Not Lieutenant Solís?"

His Spanish guest smiled. "No, not Lieutenant, Padre Kino. Antonio has been rewarded for his successful campaigns against the savages. He is now Captain Solís."

Sick with dread, Padre Kino slept little that night. But in the morning he was calm. Even the blood-thirsty Solís would not dare to break the promises of his governor and his general! The sooner this matter

was settled the better. It had been a month since the murder of Padre Saeta. The murderers must be brought to justice.

Orders went from Dolores to Tubutama. "Come in peace, without weapons, to meet the army. Come to the marsh near El Tupo, between Tubutama and Magdalena."

Had the Indians, too, heard that Solís was in command? From everywhere word came back, "We are afraid to come."

Padre Kino managed to mount his horse and ride across the mountain to San Ignacio. From there he sent a message to the chief at El Tupo, telling him to summon the people. An order from Kino was not to be treated lightly. The chief took two other officials and went to Tubutama, returning with more than a hundred Indians, unarmed, carrying crosses. The innocent were bringing the guilty to justice.

Perhaps all would have been well if Padre Kino could have stayed, but the fever returned. So weak he could not stand, he clung to the saddle on the ride back to Dolores and once again, wracked with delirium, tossed from side to side on his hard bed. During lucid periods he begged for news. What was happening at the encampment beside the marsh?

For two days before the guilty Pimas were brought in, the soldiers stayed in camp, pitched near some springs in an open plain. Chief Felipe was there and on the morning of the ninth of June, Captain Solís acted as godfather at the baptism of Felipe's young son. Not long after this happy event, fifty Indians approached, put down their bows and arrows and came into the camp.

According to a prearranged plan, soldiers on horseback formed a circle around the group. Chief Felipe, along with the loyal governor from El Tupo and two other Indian officials who had been helping the Spanish, pointed out men who had taken part in the rebellion and murder. The ringleaders were not here. These Indians considered their crime so black they could not mingle with the others. They would be brought later.

Three Indians were bound. Felipe began to point out others. The Indians became fearful and began to mill around in the circle. Suddenly several of them shot between the mounted soldiers and ran for the trees. Fearful that the guilty ones would escape, Felipe seized the worst of them by the hair and said to Solís, "This is a murderer!"

With one blow of his sword, Solís cut off the man's

head. The horrible sight touched off a panic and everyone in the circle made a break for freedom. The soldiers' guns were primed and ready. They aimed and fired. And when the smoke had cleared and the bloody heap of the dead was counted, forty-eight had perished, thirty of them loyal Spanish supporters.

Manje took the dreadful news to Kino. The governor of El Tupo was dead. Chief Felipe was dead. "That shocked even Solís," said Manje. But afterward he admitted that Solís had given orders to kill every Indian, that if even one escaped he would cut off the head of the soldier who let him go.

Kino was prostrated with grief. This could be the end of the missions in Pima land. Could the Indians ever forget such treachery?

Manje tried to sooth him. "It may be for the best. My uncle, the general, is sure that the rebellion among the Pimas has been put down forever. Now he orders the army to Cocóspara. The soldiers go from there to the east, for a campaign against the Apaches.

Padre Kino turned his face to the wall. He knew his Pimas better than the general did.

On the morning of June 19 the troops were still at Cocóspara, awaiting word from the general. This was

to be a great campaign. Perhaps they could teach the Apaches the same kind of lesson that had been taught these Pimas!

But the Pimas were far from cowed. With the soldiers out of the way, they saw their chance for revenge. Relatives of the murdered Indians and many who had, up to now, been friendly with the Spanish, joined in two large bands, went to Tubutama and Caborca and burned every building that had been spared earlier. Then three hundred of them assembled to march on Padre Campos' missions at Imuris and San Ignacio.

The padres still had friends. A heathen chief of a little village north of Imuris went down the valley and told Padre Campos what was about to happen. The general had left four soldiers at San Ignacio, so Campos felt safe in waiting there to see if the Indians actually would attack. But he sent a messenger to Cocóspera to bring back the army. The messenger was unexplainably slow and did not reach the army camp until daybreak of the 20th of June.

At eight o'clock that same morning, while Padre Campos and the four soldiers were eating breakfast at San Ignacio, they heard ear-splitting yells and the enemy was upon them. Three of the soldiers went out to fight them off while Campos put on his spurs and

mounted his horse. Then the five rode off into the mountains while the yelling hordes set fire to the whole village.

While all this was happening, a second messenger had hurried on to Dolores where he warned Manje, then rode back up the mountainside to a vantage point in the pass between Dolores and San Ignacio. He did not see Campos and the soldiers make their escape and, as smoke billowed from the burning mission, mounted his horse and spurred the animal at breakneck speed for more than twenty miles back to Dolores. There he ran into the dining room, burst into tears and told between sobs that Padre Campos had been burned alive with the soldiers, the house, the church, everything!

"I must warn the general!" cried Manje and ran for his horse. It was forty miles downstream to the little town where his uncle was staying. Manje pounded into it before three in the afternoon and found General Jironza having a leisurely cup of hot chocolate. He did not finish his cup. He called for his horse; Manje got a fresh mount, and away they went up the trail, arriving as far as Cucurpe before dark. It was not safe to travel at night, so they rode up to the rectory to ask for a bed. To their relief, Padre Campos had reached

there with his soldiers. It did not matter about the mission if the padre was safe!

Early next morning Manje was off for Dolores, taking two soldiers with him. Kino was alone when they arrived. That afternoon a messenger came from the west. The marauders were coming to destroy Dolores.

"We must save the sacred vessels from the altar," said Kino and that night he and Manje stole away from the village carrying boxes of ornaments, vessels, books, missals and other treasures. After stumbling through the darkness for almost two miles, the padre led the way into a cave. Far at the back of it they hid the precious things.

"This is a good place to stay," said Manje. "We should not go back to the village."

Padre Kino shook his head. "We must go back."

"Then hear my last confession." Sure that they were returning to martyrdom, Manje sank to his knees.

Padre Kino gave him absolution, and then led the way along the trail to Dolores. The sky was pink with morning when they arrived, and danger or not, Manje collapsed on his bed and went sound asleep. Padre Kino went to the church. When Manje came out after a few hours, the padre was still on his knees in front of the altar.

His prayers were answered. Not only Dolores, but the two other missions under his personal care were spared. The soldiers pursued the fleeing Indians into the mountains and killed a few of them and for a little while there was an uneasy truce. But even Padre Kino knew it could not last.

General Jironza did not have enough troops at his command to punish the rebels and sent an urgent plea for help to two Spanish generals in the east. Their campaign against the Apaches had been a success and they felt they could safely leave the border for a while. On July 13 they rode into Cocóspora to find Captain Solís there. Then General Jironza arrived, and Padres Kino and Campos. It was the obligation of the padres to provide food for the soldiers. Many cattle and sheep that Kino had dreamed of sending to the natives of California had to go instead to feed the army.

Padre Kino was praying that there would be no more slaughter of innocent people. The Spanish generals seemed to be intelligent men, with none of Solís' bloodthirstiness. They welcomed Kino's help and advice. But they told him firmly that the rebellious Indians must be punished.

Messages went out to the villages, urging them to turn over the leaders of the revolt against the padres. They were promised pardon if they would do so, complete

destruction of their homes and food supplies if they did not.

On the morning of July 20, Padre Kino said an early Mass and the army started south. Campos went along as chaplain. Five miles down the valley they halted to round up more of Kino's cattle. That afternoon Kino and Jironza left for Dolores to gather more supplies.

Deeply concerned over Kino's health, General Jironza insisted that the padre stay at Dolores. He was too weak and ill to argue, but he refused to stay in bed and spent most of the time on his knees in the church, praying for peace.

Messages came from the army. They had destroyed crops along the Altar River, seized provisions, were carrying out the grim promises they had made. They killed a few Indians at Tubutama. The rest fled into the hills. Then, as the army encamped at a ranch near Tubutama, hungry refugees began to come in. The soldiers treated them kindly and within a few days there were more than fifty Indians in the camp. The general appointed new officials for the rebellious towns from this group. He must have had a great deal of confidence in them, for he wrote to Padre Kino:

"Peace is as good as made. I will give my head for any misdeed the Pimas commit after this!"

In two areas, however, the Indians were still suspicious and fearful. At Caborca, where another general had taken his troops, the people remained in hiding. So did the ones who lived near the place where Solís had killed so many. Nothing the army could do would induce them to show themselves. The generals appealed to Kino to come and help them.

Still thin and weak, Padre Kino arrived on August 21. He had sent the Indian governor of Dolores ahead with messages to several ranches. Some of the newly appointed Indian governors came to meet him and gradually other Pimas drifted in, until he had assembled a sizeable delegation. There was a formal conference. The Indians agreed to meet at Tubutama, to bring with them those who were in hiding. But there was still no message from the Pimas of Caborca and Kino decided he would go there himself.

"I will send soldiers with you," said the general, but Kino shook his head.

"I have offered to go in peace," he said. "Soldiers will only make the Indians distrust me."

With only one sergeant and a number of friendly Indians, Padre Kino went toward Caborca. The general encamped there with eighty soldiers was quite willing to let Kino take charge.

"Have you any captives?" asked the padre.

"Two women and three little girls," said the general.

"Release one of the women," ordered Kino. "Send her to summon her people. Tell them the Boat Man is here."

The name was magic. Day by day more Indians came to see the padre. He talked with each of them, renewed old friendships, questioned them about Padre Saeta's death. They confirmed what he had been told by Chief Felipe. The people of Caborca had not killed Saeta. It was wicked Indians from Tubutama who did it.

So Kino and the soldiers returned to Tubutama. On August 30, a great peace conference was held. Padre Kino said Mass at the nearest mission and Padre Campos at the military camp. The Indians made speeches. They were sorry for the death of Padre Saeta and the good Indians killed with him. They were sorry for the burning of the missions. They grieved for the eighty Pimas who had been slaughtered by the soldiers. They pledged themselves to seek out and deliver, alive or dead, the murderers of Padre Saeta.

Through it all Padre Kino and the generals listened gravely. At the end the Indians begged that the missions be restored, the padres come back to them.

"We will receive the padres with love," they promised. "And we will rebuild everything that has been destroyed."

Kino rose from his place and threw his arms around the speaker. The generals followed his example and Pima governors and captains gathered round to share in the embraces.

Would it be a lasting peace? Padre Kino believed it would. He was even more hopeful after his return to Dolores when he received the news contained in a letter from Lieutenant Manje.

"Captain Solís has been discharged by the army," wrote the lieutenant. "He has gone to the capital of Mexico, publicly disgraced."

Padre Kino breathed his thanks to heaven. Now, if he had to summon the Flying Column, it would not be Solís who commanded it! And now, he hoped, after so many bitter lessons, the Spanish leaders would treat his Indians with fairness.