



The Mission Murders

An Incidental  
**Death**  
*in Monterey*

JOHN J. O'HAGAN

*Father Juan thought for a moment.*

“Major, if I may, there are two things I would like to add before you embark on that investigation.”

“Yes, please, what would those be?”

“I have a request, and I have a piece of information that may help you.”

“Yes, of course.”

“The request is that I be allowed to assist you. I think my skills may be helpful to you in resolving this case.”

The major started to answer, but the priest held up a hand.

“Before you speak to my request, let me give you the piece of information.”

“Yes?”

“Jacinta Li, until very recently, was employed as a very trusted servant in the household of Governor Pedro Fages.”

The major’s jaw dropped. He started to speak, stopped, started again and finally blurted out, “She was the girl...She was the one...She was...Dona Fages...She was...?”

“Yes,” the priest finished for him. “She was that one.”



An  
*Incidental  
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in  
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*John J. O'Hagan*  
**The Mission Mysteries**



ZUMAYA YESTERDAYS

2017

AUSTIN TX

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AN INCIDENTAL DEATH IN MONTEREY

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who checked and corrected my use of Spanish words and phrases. Any that are still wrong are mine and not hers.

## *AUTHOR'S NOTE*

In the following story, this much is true:

In 1785 Doña Eulalia Fages, the wife of the Governor of California, Pedro Fages, caught the governor *en flagrante delicto* with one of the servants in the kitchen of their home.

Doña Fages flew into a rage, chased the servant from the house and wasted no time in spreading the story of her husband's perfidy throughout the streets of Monterey. She immediately began a petition for divorce.

Because she would not relent of spreading the story, the governor, in desperation, had his wife imprisoned at Mission San Carlos for four months. The servant was never heard from again.

All else is fiction.

John J. O'Hagan  
April 2017

# CHAPTER 1



The grey-robed monk tied a leather apron over his habit and stepped up to the canvas-shrouded figure on the table. He heard the young soldier detailed to assist him give a quiet moan.

“We have nothing to fear from the dead, private. They can do us no harm, and they are beyond any earthly harm.”

He pulled back the canvas, and immediately gave his own moan. He almost dropped the lantern he was holding and had to lean against the table to keep from collapsing on top of the pitiful remains.

*She is young, he thought, so very young, and so very small. She is just a girl.*

He thought of almost the last words he had heard from her. *You will keep me safe.* He had never expected, when she had said that, to next see her lying cold and lifeless in the basement of a warehouse.

The young soldier stared at him, wide-eyed. The priest said once again, although with somewhat less conviction, “We have nothing to fear from the dead, Private. Please, would you hang this lantern for me? I am not tall enough.”

The young man inched forward, took the lantern and hung it on a nail protruding from the low ceiling. The priest returned his attention to the body.

Her black hair spread out beneath her head. There were bits of seaweed embedded in her hair and clothing. A long tendril of it crossed her cheek and disappeared under her shoulder.

On that cheek was that very noticeable scar. He studied it carefully. He remembered with a shudder her story of how she had gotten it.

He forced her mouth open and, leaning down, noted the wound did not go all the way through. As he manipulated her lips and tongue, it struck him that rigor mortis was in its very early stages.

He retrieved his bag from the floor, took out a piece of cotton waste, and wiped his hands on it. Then, returning to the bag, he retrieved a quill, ink, and some paper. He pushed the slight body back and cleared a space where he began writing.

Having completed his preliminary notes, he turned once more to the pitiful remains. He examined her face more carefully, parted her hair and examined her scalp. He peered intently into her nose, and even took a probe, tipped it with a piece of the cotton and swabbed out her nostrils.

He opened her mouth again and, using another piece of cotton, swabbed the insides of her lips and gums. He studied and sniffed the residue, and put it aside. He looked carefully at her neck and shoulders, pulling her dress down slightly and peering very closely. He made more notes on his tablet.

Then, to the shock of the wide-eyed soldier, the priest pulled her dress up to her waist. He noted the old scar on her lower leg.

To the further shock of the young man, the priest pulled down her simple pair of pantaloons and studied carefully and intently her genital region, even going so far as to part the dark hair and the lips of her vagina. He rolled the body slightly towards him and looked intently at her lower back. Finally, restoring the corpse to some modicum of decency, he replaced her underclothes and lowered her dress.

In pulling the dress down, his hand touched something metallic in the waist area. He looked carefully at it. A ring, a plain gold ring, was caught firmly in the loose fabric of the weave. He carefully untangled it, and looking more closely at it, realized it was not a ring, but a simple gold earring. Peering at her ears, he noticed that, while both were pierced, neither had an earring in it. He put the jewelry in one of the pockets of his robe.

He looked carefully at the woman's hands, pressing and releasing the fingernails. Several of the nails were broken and torn.

He used two fingers to rap sharply across her abdomen, and then he laid the side of his head on it, reached across her body with both hands, and shook vigorously. Not once but three times. Straightening up after this exercise, he frowned slightly, looked more carefully at her abdomen, and began pressing with his fingers, moving from side to side and down lower again. He paused, made the sign of the cross over her mid-section and shook his head slowly. He once more covered her completely with the canvas shroud and stood back.

"We are done, Private, we can go."

As the young soldier began fleeing up the stairs, the priest called him back.

"The lantern, Private – the one you hung on the beam. I am not tall enough to reach it."

The soldier gave a sheepish grin, slouched back, retrieved the lantern and headed back up the stairs.

As they stepped into the now fully-darkened compound, the priest asked the soldier.

"May I ask one more piece of assistance from you, Private?"

Speechless at the prospect of what bizarre task this strange priest might ask of him, the soldier could only nod silently.

"Could you direct me to the commander's office?"

“Oh, yes. Yes, Father,” the much-relieved young man said. “Yes, please, I will take you there. Yes, thank you, Father, come, come this way.”

He happily led the way to the major’s office and just as happily departed for other duties.

## CHAPTER 2



Don Pedro Fages, Governor of Alta California, fussed about in his office at the Customs House. He consulted his watch and called out to his clerk.

“Carlos, what time is that American ship sending a boat to pick me up?”

“One o’clock, *Excelencia*. They said they would have a boat at the landing at one o’clock.”

The governor looked again, impatiently, at his watch. It was just slightly past noon. He had told her to meet him at the landing at twelve-thirty. It would only take five or ten minutes to walk down there. Nonetheless, he was nervous and impatient. He took his hat and walking stick and started out the door.

“Thank you, Carlos, I am going to take a little walk before I visit the Americans. I will probably be there most of the afternoon, and will go home when I come back. *Hasta mañana*.”

“Good afternoon, Governor, I will see you tomorrow.”

Don Fages stepped into the crisp blueness of an early October afternoon on Monterey Bay. He walked down to the waterfront. As he approached the pier, he saw she was there already; and he had to admit, she looked particularly fetching.

She was wearing an emerald-green dress — not extravagant, but not everyday wear, either. Her hair was piled on her head in mysterious fashion, held in place with a mother-of-pearl comb. A parasol in the same material as the dress was over one shoulder.

He noted the American boat, with two oarsmen and a coxswain, was already waiting. Glancing around, he walked up to her and took her arm.

“*Buenas tardes*, Jacinta. You look pretty — you have done well with your shopping.”

She gave a slight nod of assent.

The sailors, who had been talking and joking about something, on sighting the governor recognized him as their passenger and jumped up and saluted him. They assisted first Jacinta, then the governor, into the boat, cast off, and began pulling towards the American ship. The trip was a very short one; the ship was anchored only about a league from the beach.

As they approached the side of the ship, the coxswain gave a shout, and an American sailor appeared at the rail to receive a rope that was thrown up. Quickly, the boat was secured, and a rope ladder was dropped over the side. Fages was not a young, nor a particularly agile, man, so he never relished this part of his duties. Scrambling awkwardly up a rope ladder from a bobbing boat to a rolling ship was not only difficult but undignified.

Before he started his ascent, Fages was told by the coxswain in passable Spanish that “a chair will be lowered to take the lady aboard.” He was standing, waiting on the deck for Jacinta, when the American captain came striding briskly towards him.

“Good afternoon, Governor. Thank you for honoring us with a visit. I am Captain Charles McHugh of the brig *John Beggs* out of Boston. Please, this way to my cabin. I have some refreshments for you.”

“If you would, Captain. I am waiting for my aide to join us.” The governor gestured towards the railing, where a group of sailors was even now decorously lifting a somewhat apprehensive Jacinta aboard. The governor made the required introduction.

“I am Governor Pedro Fages of Alta California, and this is my aide, Señorita Jacinta.”

The girl nodded demurely and barely glanced up. The governor continued.

“I compliment you, Captain, on your Spanish, it is very good.”

The captain shrugged and smiled graciously.

“We are out of Boston, but we have been two years away from home, and most of those we have been operating out of Lima, Peru. Not only I but most of my crew have found it necessary to become proficient in your language. We are finally on our way home with some furs we have acquired from the Russians farther north. Come, please, to my cabin where I can make you and your...uhm...aide comfortable.”

In the cabin, the captain offered the governor and Jacinta comfortable chairs and poured them each a glass of port. The next hour was spent in an exchange of pleasantries, and comparisons of the hardships of serving so far from home. Finally, the governor brought the conversation around to official business.

“What is it you need in calling at Monterey, Captain? How long do you plan on staying here? Will you or any part of your crew be spending any time ashore?”

“I understand, Governor, the problems the Spanish Crown has with foreign ships in these parts. We have no goods to offload here. As a matter of fact, though, we *would* like to take on some cattle hides so our holds will be completely full as we return to Boston.”

The governor nodded and could not resist adding, with a slight bitterness, “Yes, it seems as if the Franciscans, who

are so reluctant to provide cattle or meat to the army, never hesitate to slaughter a few thousand cattle when Yanqui dollars are available.”

The captain shrugged noncommittally.

Cattle hides were very much coin of the realm with American traders on the west coast. In fact, they were referred to as “California Dollars.”

“I am sure you will have no trouble. In fact, if you would like, I can send messengers to some of the surrounding missions, and they will begin assembling some hides for shipment to Monterey.”

“If you do, Governor, that would be good. *Gracias.*”

“Of course,” the governor continued with only the slightest hesitation, “there will be some slight expense attached to that. You know — a few nights lodging, pay for the messengers, drivers to bring the hides in, that sort of thing.”

“Oh, of course, Governor. I will be very happy to pay the usual and customary expenses.” The captain continued, “There is, though, one slight problem...or maybe not a problem. I hope it will not be a problem — perhaps just a bit of a complication.” He poured the governor another glass of wine.

“Yes, what would that be?” the now-alert official asked.

“As I mentioned,” the captain began, “we have been at sea for over two years. We are ready to return home. Depending on wind and weather, that is a voyage of another eight to ten months. Before we embark on that final leg, my ship is in need of repairs and maintenance.”

“Captain, we have no facilities here for ship repair. I am pretty sure they do at San Francisco and at San Diego.”

“I would not need any special facilities,” the captain answered. “Let’s go back up topside.”

They left Jacinta sitting in the cabin and went back up to the main deck. The captain walked to the bow of the ship, which was now pointing at the shore. Stopping at the rail, he pointed at the pine-covered hills to the south and east of the harbor.

“There are all the facilities I would need,” he said, “And there...” He turned to his left and pointed to an area of sand dunes where the waves rolled gently ashore. “I have skilled carpenters and mechanics in my crew. If I could sail my ship up onto that beach, we could lay her on her side and effect the necessary repairs. There is all the lumber I need on that hillside.

“If you could grant us permission to do that and six months’ time to accomplish it, I could be on my way in May or June, which is when the current and winds would be most favorable for a southern passage.”

Fages thought carefully over the proposal. Six months of American presence in Monterey would be unheard-of. He was not sure he had the authority to grant such a request.

As he considered the possibilities, Captain McHugh reinforced his request.

“Of course we would pay for the timber we harvested. Also, although my crew would supervise, we would need to hire local people to do some of the work. We would also pay for the use of the beach where we would build temporary shelters for our crew. They will not be able to live on the ship while it is lying on its side.”

This prompted a slightly different perspective in the governor’s mind. All of the land and all of the resources in California belonged to the Crown. Any payment for the use of that land or resources would be to the representative of the Crown. *He* was the representative of the Crown.

“I will think about it, Captain. Let me invite you and your officers to dine with me one evening at my residence. Perhaps I will have an answer for you then. I will send a messenger with an invitation when I and Doña Fages have decided on a good date.

“In the meantime, your crew may consider Monterey as open to them. You understand, of course, that while you are in Monterey, you and your crew are subject to the laws of Spain.”

“Of course, Governor, thank you for your hospitality. I will be sure my crew respects that hospitality, and it would be an honor for me and some of my officers to join you for dinner. I’ll await your invitation.”

The two men returned to the cabin. The waiting girl was somewhat curtly told “We are leaving,” and the captain’s men rowed them back to the landing.

As they were making the short trip, the governor considered the possibilities. There was nothing in his orders that mandated a specific time foreign vessels might remain in port; it was understood they not be encouraged to tarry. Surely, no one could object if it came about that he allowed a ship to stay long enough to make repairs?

Ships before had replaced spars and masts from the forests surrounding the harbor. It had never occurred to anyone to either offer or require payment. Now this Yanqui captain had come forward on his own to offer payment for not just the wood but for the use of the beach for perhaps six months. How much might that be? Whatever it was it would be money he had never anticipated, and money the king was not anticipating. He was also pretty sure it could be money only he and the captain would know about.

It was late afternoon when they returned to the landing. As the Americans pulled away, the governor, after a glance to be sure no one was watching, pulled Jacinta close and awkwardly embraced her.

“Later,” he said. “You know what to do.”

## CHAPTER 3



Don Pedro walked into his house just as the servants were lighting the lamps for the evening.

“*Querida*,” he greeted his wife. She leaned forward to accept a quick kiss.

“How was the meeting with the Americans?” she asked.

“Good, good. The captain is a very cordial man. He wants to know if his ship can stay a little longer than usual.” At her questioning look, he continued. “They have been at sea for several years now. They would like to load some cattle hides and head back for home, which I think I remember was Boston. Before that, though, he would like to make some repairs on his ship. It is for that he wants to stay.”

“But you have no ship repair facilities in Monterey,” she noted.

“I told him that, and he didn’t seem to think that was a problem. He says if he could sail his ship onto the beach here, and harvest some timber from our forests, his men can make the needed repairs.”

“How long would that take?” Eulalia asked.

“Maybe six or seven months.”

Eulalia knew nothing of shipbuilding or repair. What she did know was that six months was an inordinately long time

to allow an American vessel to stay in the capitol of Alta California. As the wife of the governor and an educated woman, she knew of the anxiety American ships caused in official circles.

The Americans were appearing more and more often in Monterey. They had replaced the Russians and the British as the most frequent foreigners to appear in California's waters. The official policy of the Spanish government was that there was to be no trade with these interlopers.

The laws of all maritime nations, though, prohibited any government from refusing a harbor to a vessel that might need provisions or repair. Within those constraints, nothing was to be done to encourage them to spend any time they might utilize to assess the defenses and settlements the Spanish had established. She had been with Pedro when he received his official briefings before leaving Mexico City. She remembered the warnings the viceroy had given.

"The Yanquis will not be content with the eastern side of the continent they already occupy. They have eyes for the entire continent, and in particular the west coast. They want ports and harbors which will give them access to the Far East, and those ports and harbors are ours at San Diego, San Francisco, and Monterey. We must keep them away. They are to be received courteously and accommodated with what they need, and they are then to be sent on their way."

"Can you do that?" she asked with a wide-eyed stare. "Can you let the Americans stay here that long?"

Pedro shrugged unconcernedly.

"We will see. I have not given them an answer yet. I want to think about it. In that regard, I would like to invite the American captain and some of his officers to dinner. When would be a good time to do that?"

Eulalia thought for a moment.

"Perhaps this Sunday? That will give Imelda time to prepare and to hire some temporary servants if necessary."

Nodding, the governor suggested, "We could invite that new commander from the Presidio — we have only met him at

the change-of-command ceremony. This will give him a chance to start getting more involved in the workings of official Monterey.”

Things had been strained between the couple for the past several weeks, and the prospect of an evening of entertaining was appealing to Eulalia.

“Good, good,” she agreed. “I’ll invite Sylvia de Anda.”

Pedro smiled slightly.

“Matchmaking, my dear?”

Eulalia smiled in return and shrugged.

“She is an attractive widow, he is an attractive single man. They are about the same age. They will nicely round out the dinner party. Let’s have some wine to toast the success of our dinner. . .and whatever else may come of it. Imelda!” she called.

An old lady appeared in the parlor.

“*Sí, señora?*”

“Could you please have one of the girls bring the governor and I some wine?”

“*Sí, señora.*” She turned and walked back to the kitchen.

Very shortly, an Indian servant in a plain linen shift appeared, carrying a tray with a bottle and two glasses. Her hair hung down her back and was held in place with a simple leather thong. She poured glasses for the two and backed away.

“*Gracias, Jacinta,*” Eulalia said.

The girl gave a deferential nod as an answer and, with bowed head, returned to her kitchen duties.

## CHAPTER 4



Doña Fages and Imelda went over the last-minute plans for the dinner. All was in readiness. The guests would be arriving shortly.

Imelda explained, “I will use the two girls I’ve hired from the village to do the serving and clearing. They are Clare and Mercedes. We have used them before, and they are very good. I have two young men to help in the kitchen, and Jacinta will be in there as well with me. Everything should go smoothly.”

“*Gracias, gracias*, Imelda.” Doña Fages leaned over and placed an impulsive kiss on the old lady’s cheek. “I can always count on you.”

The old servant gave the slightest of smiles before turning back to the kitchen.

The governor and Doña Fages took seats in the parlor to await their guests. First to arrive was Major Carillo in full-dress uniform. He greeted the governor and his wife, thanked them for the invitation, and sat to engage them in small talk.

“I expect the Monterey Presidio to be my last assignment,” he told them. “In January of the year after next, I will have been thirty years in the army, and I will retire.”

“Thirty years, Major?” Eulalia asked. “You must have been very young when you joined the army.”

“I was just sixteen when I first joined as a common soldier. The army life has been good for me, and I will be happy to retire as a major, and...” He paused to smile. “...in one piece.”

Eulalia did some quick calculations and was happy to confirm that he was, indeed, only a few years older than her friend Sylvia.

“And you have never married?” she asked.

“No.” The major smiled congenially. “The army has been a very demanding wife. Most of my postings have been on the frontier, and the opportunities to find a suitable spouse have not been much present. Believe me...” He smiled more broadly. “I am not opposed to marriage. Maybe when I retire and return to Mexico, I will find a wife who wants to share my golden years.”

The governor decided to bring the conversation around to more manly topics.

“How do you find your new command, Major? What is the state of the troops at the Presidio?”

The major thought for a minute before answering.

“Better than most, not as good as some. You know how it is, *Excelencia*, you are an army man yourself, no?”

“That is true.” The governor chuckled. “I was career army until I was offered this post. I never made it to major. I was a captain when I gave up my commission to accept this job.” He gave his own slight smile.

Although the governor’s background was not new information to the major, he once again thought of what had occurred to him when he first heard of it. From army captain to Governor of Alta California was a very big jump indeed. This man must know people in very high places.

He turned to Doña Fages.

“Who else are we expecting this evening, señora?”

“The captain of the American ship in the harbor and some of his officers are the guests of honor, Major. I have also in-

vited the Mayor of Monterey and his wife, Señor and Señora Gomez, as well as Fathers Fermin de Lasuen and Mattias Noriega from Mission Carmel. Finally, to round out the group, I have invited a very dear friend of mine – Señora de Anda.”

It did not escape the major there had been no *señor* coupled with Señora de Anda’s name, and that the only “rounding out” she could have accomplished would be to be paired with the single Spanish male there – himself. He resigned himself to an evening of the overweening ministrations of an aging widow. It wouldn’t be the first time that plight had been inflicted on him.

He returned the conversation to the governor.

“The American ship, *Excelencia*? It has been here a few days; perhaps I should plan to visit it to determine their intentions.”

“That will not be necessary, Major,” the governor replied rather quickly. “I have visited the Americans. I am aware of their plans. I do not think they need to be bothered with any further official inquiries.”

“Ah, then,” the major said, sitting back in his chair, “they won’t be here much longer?”

Eulalia, good hostess as she was, had been following this conversation, and she sat perfectly still, waiting for the governor’s reply.

“They will be here only as long as necessary,” the governor said somewhat evasively.

The sound of footsteps on the front porch provided a welcome escape.

“The other guests are arriving. Perhaps, Major, you and I should visit on this subject at a different time.”

The servant who had been appointed to serve as doorman came into the room with several American officers trailing him. The governor rose to greet his new guests. As he did, he instructed, “Do not bother our guests with any official questions this evening, Major.”

It was not a request.

The somewhat puzzled major nodded, and stood to greet the new arrivals.

## CHAPTER 5



The dinner was a pleasant and well-run affair. The Americans were, indeed, fairly fluent in Spanish. Their grammar and context sometimes left much to be desired, but the hosting Spaniards were far too polite to ever correct them. The wine and the conversation flowed. Each time the kitchen door opened Pedro flinched involuntarily, but Jacinta never came through it, nor was she even visible in the brief glimpses the guests might have gotten of the laboring staff.

Major Carrillo was very pleasantly surprised to find his dinner companion was not some withering wraith in widow's weeds but a vibrant and beautiful lady wearing a bright-blue dress with a proper, but certainly generous, neckline. She had disarmed him right at their introduction by pleading, "Please, call me Sylvia. And I will call you...?"

"Uhm...Eduardo?" he suggested.

"Eddie, I like Eddie. May I call you Eddie?"

Major Carrillo, who had never in his life allowed anyone to call him Eddie, told this smiling lady, "Of course, that would be fine."

Eulalia, watching from across the room, smiled as she saw that her vivacious friend had effectively negotiated the abject surrender of the career military man within thirty seconds.

After dinner, the men took cigars and brandy out onto the veranda and the women adjourned to the parlor, where Eulalia and Sylvia took turns playing the piano. It was a very pleasant, slightly warm evening.

The major noticed that, as they filed out to the porch, the governor took Captain McHugh's elbow and held him back for a bit. The governor and the captain, conversing head-to-head, were the last two to join the group.

The major declined one of the chairs and took a perch on the railing that surrounded the porch. It wasn't obvious to anyone but himself that, from this seat, he could see through the open parlor to where Sylvia sat at the piano.

The two priests from Mission San Carlos had surprised the American sailors not just with their willingness to have wine with dinner but by joining in the brandy and cigars after dinner. The Americans, struggling with images of their own dour and abstemious clergymen, found the priests not only capable of handling large quantities of alcohol but very accomplished conversationalists and raconteurs. Once, the captain started to ask about the purchase of cattle hides, but a discrete warning shake of the head from the governor had made him stop in mid-sentence.

It was shortly after the gentlemen had rejoined the ladies in the parlor that the mayor and his wife began saying their goodbyes. Since Sylvia had arrived with them, she began preparing to leave as well.

"Excuse me, señora," the major interrupted. "I would be happy to escort you home later if you wish to stay longer."

Sylvia turned to him with a radiant smile and put her hand on his arm.

"Why, thank you, Major. That would be nice. I *would* like to stay a little longer and visit with Eulalia."

It was almost midnight when the American sailors noisily headed towards the landing and their ship. As they started down the dark street, the governor pulled Captain McHugh back.

“That matter we discussed, Captain? On your ship? I think it can be done. Why don’t you give me a couple of days to arrange some matters, and I will send a messenger to let you know when you can beach your ship.

“The money? Twelve escudos a day, was it? I will send a messenger for the first payment. I will send Jacinta, my aide. You remember Jacinta, right? We don’t need to involve anyone else. Jacinta I can trust. Is that agreeable?”

Captain McHugh took a deep breath. He had had his share of the liberally poured wine and brandy, but he knew his limit, and he knew he was clearheaded. He was clearheaded enough to know that neither twelve escudos nor any other amount had ever been suggested. He was clearheaded enough to know that twelve escudos was not an outrageous sum for what he wanted to do. He was clearheaded enough to realize that what the governor was asking for was a bribe, and he was clearheaded enough to realize he didn’t give a damn how the Spanish conducted their business.

“Of course, Governor, agreed! A deal!” He stuck out his hand, which the somewhat confused-looking governor accepted. “*Buenas noches, Gobernador.*”

## CHAPTER 6



Within a week of the dinner the American ship had moved from where it had been anchored and deliberately but gently grounded on the beach to the east of the Presidio and the Customs House. The morning he saw the Americans beach their ship, Major Carillo presented himself at the governor's office and perhaps injudiciously demanded to know what was going on. Somewhat imperiously, the governor dismissed his concerns.

"I have given them permission to repair their ship, Major. I have the authority to do that. We are required to offer aid to mariners of any nation we are not at war with, and I am quite sure we are not at war with the Americans."

"How long will they be here? It looks as if they are building cabins on the beach."

"Well, Major, these men, who normally live on their ship, can hardly be expected to do that while it is lying on its side on the sand. They have agreed to be subject to our laws and, of course, your authority while they are here. They are here with my permission. That is all, Major."

The fuming major returned to his office.

"Sergeant! Ensign!" he shouted.

His aide, Ensign Garza, and the company sergeant, Gabriel Manzanares, were immediately in front of his desk.

“Ensign,” he ordered the young officer, “I want you to visit that American captain. He is to be treated respectfully and courteously, but you are to tell him you are there on the orders of Major Carillo. You are to tell him that Major Carillo wants a complete written roster of his entire crew, officers and common sailors. We want names, physical descriptions, birth dates, identifying marks or scars, and rating of each man.

“Further, you are to tell him that each day you will visit him with this roster, and he will confirm that it is accurate, and that each man on it is accounted for. If any of his men are sick or injured or dead, we are to be informed of that, and God forbid, should any of those men actually turn up dead, they are not to be buried or otherwise disposed of until we have had a chance to examine their remains.

“Finally, you are to inform him that none of his men may be about on the streets of Monterey after midnight, on any night, or they will be arrested.”

As he paused to turn to the sergeant, the young ensign asked, “Excuse me, sir. From what I have seen of the Americans, they are not likely to take kindly to this *reglamento*.”

The major smiled at the nervous young man.

“The American sailors are, indeed, an unsavory lot. Their captain, though, is a gentleman and a man of honor — I have met him. You will not be delivering these rules to the sailors, but to their captain. You will deliver them to the captain with the compliments of Major Carrillo. You will leave a copy and report back to me. You are not, at least not at this point, being asked to enforce them. *Comprende?*”

“Yes, sir,” the relieved young man answered, and turned to leave.

“Sergeant.” The major turned to the enlisted man standing by. “Effective immediately, I want a mounted patrol to — at least twice daily, but at random times — visit the American compound. Should that patrol uncover any evidence of a violation of any of our laws, I want the offender or offenders arrested.

“Further, I want the activities of the Americans as they go about the streets of Monterey strictly monitored. Not the slightest breach of any of our laws is to be tolerated. Any complaint by any Spanish subject about the behavior of the Americans will be vigorously investigated and if necessary, prosecuted.”

“Excuse me, sir,” the sergeant interrupted. “The American sailors spend almost all of their free time not in Monterey but in Seaside. The only ones who come to Monterey are the captain or their purser when they need to buy comestibles or other material. Do you want to patrol Seaside as well?”

The major was aware of what was being asked. Although he had only been at the Presidio a few months, he had very quickly learned Seaside was that community that seemed to spring up in close proximity to every military post – an unappealing strip of bars and brothels whose only purpose was to relieve young soldiers of their meager pay as quickly as possible. He knew from experience that such communities had their own unwritten laws of behavior and enforcement. Reluctantly, he had to acknowledge that, as brutal as those rules might be, they were generally effective.

“Other than murder or mayhem, leave Seaside to its own devices. If you establish a controlling presence there, it will be your own soldiers who are most hurt.”

“I agree, sir. I’ll see to it.” The sergeant saluted and left. The major thanked God for a company sergeant with wisdom as well as discipline. The sergeant thanked God for a commander with common sense.