

Zorro Rides Again

Johnston McCulley

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Spellbinding and rich, this return to McCulley's original text reveals Zorro at his most captivating.

Dashing swordsman Don Diego Vega, better known as Zorro, comes to life in Naxos' audiobook *Zorro Rides Again*, read from the original 1931 Johnston McCulley pulp novel. Though Don Diego had hoped to settle down and marry beloved fiancée Lolita, his reputation and good name are being tarnished by an impostor. Rather than fighting for justice, the false Zorro is instead attacking the innocent, the elderly, and defenseless females.

By returning to the unabridged McCulley text, *Zorro Rides Again* minimizes more stereotypical or comic perceptions of the mysterious swashbuckling hero. Actor Bill Homewood's deep British tones alternate with ornately Spanish-accented characters such as Zorro himself, Zorro's father Don Alejandro, Fray Felipe, and Sargent Pedro Gonzales. Though women are not a major part of this adventure, Homewood voices them with a breathy and occasionally indignant contrast as they try to maintain their highly valued feminine virtues.

Zorro Rides Again vividly recreates its setting of early nineteenth century Los Angeles, between Spanish and Mexican rule. Wealthy hacienda owners, Franciscan friars, reformed pirates, and pompous military officers populate McCulley's fictional landscape, with its strong influence of Old World colonialism amid Native American settlements. The novel's descriptive passages and Homewood's rich narration emphasize this courtly and class-defined era of caballeros, Californios, and a general obsession with honor and revenge.

Additionally, some of the fight scenes of *Zorro Rides Again*—whether swordplay or a truth challenge among the Cocopah Indians—have an almost spellbinding quality. Deadly blades clash, clang and cut, or bare-chested men gleam with sweat in a knife battle by a flickering campfire. These intense details are balanced by quieter moments, such as Don Diego's serene *al fresco* breakfast of melon, wine, and “fish fresh caught in a distant sea.” The audio chapters flow together in serial-like fashion, each ending at an intriguingly suspenseful point in Don Diego's fierce quest to discover who else dares to wear the famed black Zorro mask.

MEG NOLA (Audio 2017)

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