



(Continued from last week)

"What's this?" he said.

"Pineapple and marshmallow salad. With Ruby gone and all, I didn't get anything for your supper—I was so upset—all those women . . ."

He sat looking down at the slippery mass on his plate. His great arms were spread out on the table before him. The beautiful hands were opening and closing convulsively. So a mastodon might have looked at a worm. "Pineapple and marshmallow salad," he repeated, thoughtfully, almost wonderingly. Suddenly he threw back the magnificent head and began to laugh. Peal after peal of Herculean laughter. "Pineapple and marsh—?" choking, the tears running down his cheeks. Sabra was angry, then frightened. For as suddenly as he had begun to laugh he became serious. He stood up, one hand on the table. Then he seemed to pull his whole body together like a tiger who is about to spring. He stood thus a moment, swaying a little. "Actum est de republica."

"What?" said Sabra, sharply.

"Latin, Latin, my love. Pineapple and marshmallow salad! It is all over with the Republic!" She shrugged her shoulders impatiently. Yancey turned, stiffly, like a soldier, walked out of the room, flicked his white sombrero off the hall rack and put it on at the usual jaunty angle, went down the porch stair with his light, graceful step, to the sidewalk and up the street, the great head lowered, the arms swinging despondently at his sides.

Sabra went on with her work of tidying up the house. Her eyes burned her throat was constricted. Men! Men! Cim off with that squaw. Yancey angry because she had given him this very feminine dish of left-overs. What was the use of pride, what was the use of ambition for your children, your home, your town if this was all it amounted to? Her work done, she allowed herself the luxury of a deliberate and cleansing storm of tears.

Eight o'clock. She heated some of the afternoon coffee and drank it sitting at the kitchen table. She went out on the front porch. Darkness had come on. A hot September evening. The crickets squeaked and ground away in the weeds. She was conscious of an aching weariness in all her body, but she could not sleep. Her eyes felt as though they were being pulled apart by invisible fingers. She put her palms over them, to shut them, to cool them. Nine. Ten. Eleven. Twelve. She undressed, unpinning the braids of her thick hair, brushed it, plaited it for the night. All the time she was listening. Listening. One.

Suddenly she began to dress again with icy fumbling fingers. She did up her hair, put on her hat and a jacket. She closed the door behind her, locked it, slipped the key into the mail box. The wigwam office. Yancey was not there. The office was dark. She shook the door, rattled the knob, peered in, unlocked it with the key in her handbag. Her heart was pounding but she was not afraid of the darkness. A cat's eyes gleamed at her from the printing shop. She struck a light. No one. No one. The linotype machine grinned at her with its white teeth. Its iron arm and hand shook tauntingly at her in the wavering light. With a sudden premonition she ran to Yancey's

desk, opened the drawer in which he kept his holster and six-shooters, now that Osage had become so effete as to make them an unessential article of dress. They were not there. She knew then that Yancey had gone.

Doc Valliant. She closed and locked the door after her, stepped out into the quiet blackness of Pawhuska avenue. Doc Aalliant. He would go with her. He would drive her out there. But his office and the room at the rear, which was his dwelling, gave forth no response. Gone out somewhere—a case. Down the rickety wooden steps of the two-story brick building. She stood a moment in the street, looking this way and that. She stuck her palms together in a kind of agony of futility. She would go alone if she had a horse and buggy. She could rent one at the livery stable. But what would they think—those men at the stable. They were the gossips of the town. It would be all over Osage, all over the county. Sabra Cravat driving out into the prairie alone in the middle of the night. Something up. Well, she couldn't help that. She had to go. She had to get him.

Toward the livery stable, past the Bixby house. A quiet little figure rose from the blackness of the porch where all through the day the traveling men and loafers sat with their chairs tilted back against the wall. The red coal of his cigar was an eye in the darkness.

"Sabra? What is this! What are you doing running around at this hour of the night?"

Sol Levy, sitting there in the Oklahoma night, a lonely little figure, sleepless brooding. He had never before called her Sabra.

"Sol! Sol! Cim's out at the reservation. Something's happened. I know. I feel it!"

He did not scoff at this, as most men would. He seemed to understand her fear, her premonition, and to accept it with oriental fatalism.

"What do you want to do?"

"Take me out there. Hitch up and drive me out there. Cim's got the buggy. He went out with her."

He did not ask where Yancey was. He asked nothing. "Go home," he said. "Wait on your porch. I'll get my rig and come for you. They shouldn't see you. Do you want me to go home with you first?"

"No, no. I'm not afraid. I'm not afraid of anything."

Sol Levy had two very fine horses; really good animals. They won the races regularly at the local fairs. The little light rig with its short rubber tires whirled behind it over the red dusty Oklahoma prairie roads. His slim hands were not expert with horses. He was a nervous, jerky driver.

er. They left the town behind them, were swallowed up by the prairie. The reservation was a full two hours distant. Sabra took off her hat. The night air rushed against her face, cooling it. A half hour.

"Let me drive, will you Sol?"

Without a word he entrusted the reins to her strong, accustomed hands, the hands of one who had come of generations of horse lovers. The animals sensed the change. They leaped ahead in the darkness. The light buggy rocked and leaped over the rutted roads. Sol added her nothing. They drove in silence. Presently she began to talk, disjointedly. Yet, surprisingly enough, he seemed intuitively to understand—to fill in the gaps with his own instinct and imagination. What she said sounded absurd; he knew it, for tragedy.

"The pineapple and marshmallow salad . . . hates that kind of thing . . . Ruby Big Elk . . . Cim . . . his face . . . peyote . . . Theresa Jump . . ."

"I see," said Sol Levy, soothingly. "Sure. Well, sure. The boy will be all right. The boy will be all right. Well, Yancey—you know how he is—Yancey. Do you think he has gone away again? I mean—gone?"

"I don't know." Then, "Yes."

Three o'clock and after. They came in sight of the Osage reservation, a scattered settlement of sterile farms and wooden shanties sprawled on the bare unlovely prairie.

Darkness. The utter darkness that precedes the dawn. Stillness, except for the thud of their horses' flying hoofs and the whir and bump of the buggy wheels. Then, as Sabra slowed them down, uncertainly, undecided as to what they might best do, they heard it—the weird wavering cadences of the Mescal song the bird-like chatter of the gourd rattle shaken vigorously and monotonously; and beneath and above and around it all, reverberating, haunting, ominous, the beat of the buckskin drum. Through the still, cool night air of the prairie it came to them—the overwrought woman, and to the little peaceful Jew. Barbaric sounds, wild, sinister. She pulled up the horses. They sat a moment, listening. Listening. The drum. The savage sound of the drum.

Fear was gnawing at her vitals, wringing her very heart with clammy fingers, yet Sabra spoke water-of-factly, her voice holding a hard little note because she was trying to keep it from quavering.

"He'll be in the Mescal tepee next to Big Elk's house. They built it there when he was chief, and they still use it regularly for the ceremony. Yancey showed it to me once, when he drove me out here." She stopped and cleared her throat, for her voice was suddenly husky. She wondered, confusedly, if that sound was the drum or her own heart beating. She gave a little cracked laugh that bordered on hysteria. "A drum in the night. It sounds so terrible. So savage."

Sol Levy now took the reins from her shaking fingers. "There is nothing to be frightened about. A lot of poor ignorant Indians trying to forget their misery. Come." Perhaps no man ever made a more courageous gesture, for the little sensitive Jew was terribly frightened.

Uncertainly, in the blackness, they made their way toward the drum beat. Nearer and nearer, louder and louder. And yet all

the, Sol and Sabra entered the crowded Mescal tepee.

The ceremony was almost at an end. With drybreak it would be finished. Blinded by the light, Sabra at first could discern nothing except the central fire and the figures crouched before it. Yet her eyes went this way and that, searching for him. Gradually her vision cleared. The figures within the tepee paid no attention to those two white intruders. They stood there in the doorway, bewildered, terrified, brave.

(Continued next week)

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