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WOLF MOON

A ROMANCE OF THE GREAT SOUTHWEST

BY JOSEPH J. QUINN

CHAPTER XII.—CONTINUED

Singing-in-the-Rain was a wanderer from the Dakota reservation. He did not return there for the simple reason that law is eternally vigilant and unforgetful. Thus he relinquished all rights to partake of tribal money. After much adventure he went to live in the Panhandle of Oklahoma. In Terilton he built his abode when his arms were strong and his eyes far-seeing. From here he watched the white men herd the cattle and till the soil, and later saw wire fences stretched across ranges where once the buffalo trod upon their mysterious migrations. Age did not stoop his shoulders but it grayed his hair and impounded him in a smaller horizon. On bitter days when northers swept down the mesa and through the hardy sage the cowboys gathered around Tupper's stove would say, "Wal, I reckon this heah spell all git ole' Singin'-in-the-Rain." But when the Gulf wind tempered the biting air he would come to the village, a living refutation of the assertion that he was frozen stiff in his shack near the blackjacks. A hermit, if you will, but ever willing to lend his shaking hands in aid.

"Singing-in-the-Rain, I've come for your help. I'm Jack Corcoran, one of the Christian riders. At Tupper's about a month ago you told Buster Christian and me that you had been in the Belle Starr cave. Is that so?" "Sure. I been there before the Arapahoes come west. There be five, six big places there, big as cabin here."

"Didn't you say there was another way out of the cave, a secret passage?" "Yes, on other side, near spring."

"Well, I want you to come and show it to me." "Now?" "Yes, right away." "Where is White Robe?" "Who?" "White Robe, my pinto." "Don't see him. Get on behind here." Jack helped the Indian mount. "Now what's the shortest way to Roundtop?" "Go to town and out sandy road to big cottonwood."

The pair crossed the railway tracks, plunged across the arroyo and mounted the opposite slope. One mile beyond the tableland and to the South lay Roundtop, like the discolored tusk of a giant. "Rain come soon. Rain in air, big storm mebbe."

"Well, it won't come too soon," answered Jack. "Everything's as dry as a pine cone. Does rain follow this dust and sand?"

"Me hear of Pemella lots," commented Singin'-in-the-Rain. "He big man of Guadalajara's band. Had big bear father named Pemella. Two sons as big as you—bigger."

"Let's go slowly here," whispered Jack as they came to the brush at the foot of the trail. "Let me see these tracks a moment. The sand seems to have covered up all but—"

Jack stopped. There in the sand were the fresh imprints of two sets of tracks—one of a man and the other the unmistakable small boot of a woman. It could not have been a gypsy woman's step. Gypsy women in summer wear soft, comfortable slippers or moccasins.

Jack was conscious at a glance that the footprints were Louise's. He followed them until they swerved sharply off into the underbrush. The trail ahead was filled with soft unmarked sand.

"This sure is queer," exclaimed Jack. "It looks as if she was followed into the brush by these large tracks. But perhaps we will see them further on." They advanced up the slope.

Jack was alone, and it comes in the plain. A cry of wonder escaped him. Just one track and I bet that belongs to Pemella."

with the storm and crouching at the head of the trail, was Pemella. His bulging form was outlined against the black of the sky, a panther against the night. A livid streak of electricity from the forked tongues of the sky serpents coiled in the clouds lighted his face, lived in his black eyes and displayed the raging beast within. With a short sweep of his hand he brushed back his heavy hair to the rocks below. His dark hair blended with the sky, his eyes matched the thundering clouds. A dash of rain came down over them touseling Pemella's hair until it appeared shaggy.

Jack's muscles grew as taut as cowhide, his throat blistered, his fingers grew tense. Liked two animals in combat they faced each other high in the air as cliff-dwellers of old had fought. This was to be a battle to the end for the hunter held a death glint in his eye. Jack summoned all his strength to his arm and waited for the outbreak of this fanatic. Pent-up passion was lunging for an outlet to destruction, tearing at its fetters like the rolling waters of a damned river.

Forced out of the sky by the tenacity of the elements came a long thin finger of fire that split into a nest of white twitching veins. Just as it broke, Pemella, seemingly on top of the screaming, screeching fire, sprang.

Jack rose half way to meet him. TO BE CONTINUED

BIRDIE LANE'S EASTER The sun shone brightly that Holy Saturday afternoon, and upon the air there was a touch of the balm of spring. The season was late because winter had held on with numerous snow flurries, and then with cold and driving rains. Only yesterday there had been the usual Good Friday storm. But this day was warm and the sky clear, which argued well for fair weather for Easter.

Brigid McLain, with an armful of pussy-willows, stepped from the crowded car, and hastily made her way towards Mercy Hospital. There was upon her cheeks youth's fair bloom, heightened by her recent exercise and walk in the fresh country air. She best knew how to use the hours in which she was "off duty" at the hospital.

think you can get it to her, without her mother finding out?" "Sure thing. She doesn't care what I do, Birdie and I are always together."

"All right then, Bobbie. Now hurry and bring her this warm broth. I think it will help her."

"I know it will. But gee—I wish she had such a nice bed, as the people have in here."

"Here, Bobbie," called the nurse, "give me those papers. You cannot hurry home if you have to stop and sell papers on the way. Give me the Easter decorations too. I'll pay you tomorrow. Now run along. And be sure to come back tomorrow for your money, and tell us how Birdie is."

"Thanks, Miss M'Klain. You're a brick so, Thanks, Sister!" There were tears in the little fellow's eyes.

Sister and nurse paused another moment as they watched him quickly hurry up the street, until he was lost in the crowd of Saturday afternoon shoppers and belated office girls returning from work.

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