



NOTHING is more common than our anxiety to reform other people, while we do not even make a beginning on ourselves.—Thomas A. Kempis

The Heart of the Desert

(Continued from last week.)

IN her weakness and misery Rhoda's cleft chin quivered. There was only merciless domination in the Indian's face. Slowly the girl walked to his side. He swung her to the saddle, adjusted the stirrups carefully, then fastened her securely to the saddle with a strap about her waist. Rhoda watched him in silence of utter fear. Having settled the girl to his satisfaction, he mounted his own horse, and Rhoda's pony followed him tractably up the trail.

The trail rose steeply. After the first few dizzy moments, Rhoda, clinging to the saddle with hands and knees, was thankful for the security of her new seat. The scenery was un-pleasant to her terrorized eyes. To the left were great overhanging walls with cactus growing from every crevice; to the right, depth of canon toward which she dared not look but only trusted herself prayerfully to her steady little horse.

As the trail led higher and darkness settled, the cold grew intense and Rhoda covered and shivered. Yet through her fear and discomfort was creeping surprise that her strength had endured even this long. In a spot where the trail widened, Kutie's pony-net back beside her and she felt warm folds of a Navajo blanket about her shoulders. Neither she nor the Indian spoke. The majesty of the night before, the fear and dismay of the afternoon gave way, slowly, to a lethargy of exhaustion. All thought of her faithful protestantism, of her friends' anxiety, of Kutie's treachery, was dulled by a weariness so great that she could only cling to the saddle and pray for the trail to end.

Kutie, riding just ahead, glanced back constantly at the girl's dim figure. But Rhoda was beyond pleading or protesting. The trail twisted and undulated on and on. Each moment Rhoda felt less certain of her seat. Each moment she felt that her horse grew more restful. At last a faint odor of pine-scented pines grew her sinking senses and she opened her heavy eyes. She had left the gloomy echo of the canon and Alchise was leading them into a beautiful growth of pines where the powerful hooves of ovel gave a pronounced sadness to the moon-flecked shadows.

Here, in a lone aisle of columnar pines, Kutie called the first halt. Rhoda reeled in her saddle. Before her horse stopped, Kutie was beside her, unfastening her waist strap and lifting her to the ground. He pulled the blanket from his own shoulders and Molly stretched it on the soft pine-needles Rhoda half-drooled, and un-into the young Indian's face with the pathetic unconsciousness of a sick child. He laid her carefully in the blanket. The two squaws hurriedly knelt at Rhoda's side and with clever hands rubbed and manipulated the slender, exhausted body until the girl opened her languid eyes.

Kutie, while this was being done, stood quietly by the blanket, his fine face stern and intent. When Rhoda opened her eyes, he put aside the two

squaws, knelt and raised the girl's head and held a cup of the rich broth to her lips. It was cold, yet it tasted good, and Rhoda finished the cup without protest, then struggled to a sitting position. After a moment Kutie raised her gently to her feet. Here, however, she pushed him away and walked unsteadily to her horse. Kutie's hands dropped to his side and he stood in the moonlight watching the frail boyish figure clamber with infinite travail into the saddle.

From the pine wood, the trail led downward. The rubbing and the

as he sat! If only his Indians would turn on him and kill him!

They were riding through the desert now, desert thick-grown with cactus and sage-brush. Suddenly a far away roar came to Rhoda's ears. There was a faint whistle repeated with increasing loudness. Off to the north appeared a light that grew till it threw a dazzling beam on the strange little waiting group. The train passed, a half-dozen dimly lighted Pullmans. The roaring decreased, the whistle sounded lower and lower and the night was silent. Rhoda sat following the last 'Yin light' with burning eyes. Kutie led the way from the difficult going of the desert to the road-bed. As Rhoda saw the long line of rails the panic of the previous night overwhelmed her. Like a mad thing, un-mindful of the strap about her waist she threw herself from the saddle and hung against the stolid pony. Kutie dismounted and undid the strap. The girl dropped to the ties and lay crouched with her face against the steel rail.

"O John! O John DeWitt!" she sobbed.

"Alchise, go ahead with the horses," said Kutie. "Wait for me at the painted rock."

Then as the Indians became indistinguishable along the track he lifted Rhoda to her feet.

"Walk for a while," he said. "It will rest you. Poor little girl! I wish I could have managed differently



Hauling Logs to the Sawmill—A Winter Occupation.

A scene such as the above is becoming somewhat of a rarity in the older sections of Ontario, but hauling logs is the clearing his land in New Ontario. The above illustration was taken at Monteith, in New Ontario.

but this was best for you. Come, don't be afraid of me!"

Some savage instinct stirred in Rhoda. For the first time in her life she felt an insane joy in anger.

"I'm not afraid of you, you Apache Indian!" she said clearly. "I loathe you! Your touch poisons me! But I'm not afraid of you! I shall choke myself with my bare hands before you shall harm me! And if you keep me long enough I shall try to kill you!"

"Kutie gave a short laugh.

"Listen, Rhoda, your protests show that you are afraid of me. But you need not be. Your protection lies in the fact that I love you—love you with all the passion of a savage, all the restraint of a Caucasian. I'd rather die than harm you. Why, girl, I'm as strong as you, not destroying you! Rhoda! Dear one!" He paused and Rhoda could hear his quickened breath. Then he added lightly, "Let's get on with our little stroll!"

Rhoda wrung her hands and groaned. Only to escape—to escape! Suddenly turning, she ran down the track. Kutie watched her, motionless, until she had run perhaps a hundred yards, then with a few mighty leaps he overtook her and gathered her to his great chest. Moaning, Rhoda lay still.

"Dear," said Kutie, "don't exert yourself foolishly. If you must escape, lay your plans carefully. Use

your brain. Don't act like a child. I love you, Rhoda!"

"I loathe you! I loathe you!" whispered the girl.

"You don't—ah—" He stopped abruptly and set the girl on the ground. They were standing beside a side-track near a desert water-tank. "I've caught my foot in a sagebrush-twig," muttered Kutie, keeping his hold on Rhoda with one hand while with the other he tugged at his moccasined foot.

Rhoda stood rigid.

"I hear a train!" she cried. "O dear God, I hear a train!" Then, "The other Indians are too far away to reach you before the train does," she added calmly.

"But I'll never loose my grip on you," returned the Indian grimly.

He tore at the imprisoned foot, ripping the moccasins and tearing at the road bed. The rails began to sing. Far down the track they saw a star of light. Rhoda's heart stood still. This, then, was to be the end! After all the months of suffering and death was to be upon her in a moment! This, then, was to be the solution! And with all the horror of what life might mean to her, she cried out with a sob.

"Oh, not this way! Not this way!"

Kutie gave her a quick push.

"Hurry," he said, "and try to remember good things of me!"

Rhoda jumped from the track, then stopped. There flashed across her inner vision the face of young Cartwell, debonair and dark, with unfathomable eyes; young Cartwell who had saved her life when the scorpion had stung her, who had spent hours trying to lead her back to health. Instantly she turned and staggered back to the Indian.

"I can't let a human being die like a trapped animal!" she panted, and she threw herself wildly against him.

Kutie fell at the unexpected impact of her weight. He lifted Rhoda, leaped from the track, and the second section of the tourist train thundered into the west.

"You are as fine as I thought you were," he began. But Rhoda was a limp heap at his feet.

The girl came to her senses partially when Kutie set her in the saddle and fastened her with strap and blanket. But happily she was practically unconscious for the hour or two that remained till dawn. Just as day was breaking the Indians made their way across an arroyo, and up a long slope to a group of cottonwoods. Here Rhoda was put to bed on a heap of blankets.

Sometime in the afternoon she woke with a clear head. It was the first time that she had not had wakened without a headache. She stared from the shade of the cottonwoods to the distant lavender haze of the desert. There was not a sound in all the world. Mysterious, remote, the desert stared back at her, mocking her little grief. More terrible to her than her danger, Kutie's hands, more appalling than the death threat that had hung over her so long, was this sense of a vastness of barren nothingness with which the desert oppressed her. Instinctively she turned to look for human companionship. Kutie and Alchise were not to be seen. But Molly nodded beside Rhoda's blankets and the thin bag Cocca was curled in the grass near by. Alchise.

"You awake? Hung hungry?" asked Molly suddenly.

Rhoda sat up, groaning at the torturing stiffness of her muscles.

"Where is Kutie?" she asked.

"Gone get 'em supper. Alchise gone too."

"Molly," Rhoda took the rough brown hand between both her soft cold palms, "Molly, will you help me to run away?"

Molly looked from the claspings fingers up to Rhoda's sweet face. Molly?

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