

## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE PROPHECY OF TAHN-TE

**V**AGUE tremblings were still felt underfoot; the river was red with the clay of fallen banks. Smoke came from an ancient crater to the south, and also the east, and above the Mesa of the Hearts hung a cloud of volcanic dust, or a puff of smoke escaped from the red ash-covered fissures of the Under-world.

The women were gathered in terror in the court, but fled at the sight of Tahn-té. The anger of the earth was a thing of fear; but he was made see that there were worse things, and they covered the faces of their children that his eyes might not rest on them.

At the door of the council house he paused and Don Ruy beside him. There was much talk. All the leading men were there, also Padre Vicente and Don Diego. They entered, and there was silence.

No one offered to Tahn-té the pipe, and no one spoke to him.

The priest of the New God had told them things — he knew men's hearts — he had confessed so many! — He told them it was love for the witch maid by which the hand of the sorcerer kept every other man from touching her.— Even to take the heart from her breast, was an easier thing than to give her to the men of Te-gat-ha or of Povi-whah, who had looked on her face and asked for her, also he had wrapped about her his priestly robe of office before he laid her in the

earth where Satan had broken the rock to reach for her!

Their sorcerer had traded his robe of office for the evil love of an enchantress:— never again must a god be offended by sound of his prayers!

And no one offered him the pipe, and no one spoke to him. He sat alone and looked with unseeing eyes at the weeping god on the altar.

Padre Vicente was seated in a place of honor. He looked at Tahn-té across the circle, and it was plain that the ways had changed since that other day of council when they had looked into each others eyes, and the pagan had been the Ruler!

The right hand man of the governor arose. He was the oldest man, and he spoke.

“While the earth has trembled we have talked — and the trembling has grown little while we talked,” he said. “It is plain that the gods have sent these signs that we may know our white brothers are indeed of the sun, and the symbol of the sun should be given to their keeping.”

Another man arose.

“Also these new brothers will guard our fields from the Navahu and the Apache,” he said. “We will have the tamed animals to ride, and our enemies will run before the fire sticks our brothers will give us.”

The governor arose.

“Their god we are asked to take, and the god will do much for us if the sun symbol is given to their keeping. To us that seems good. The keepers of the sun symbol are two, and must be only two. Let it be for the ancients of the Po-Ahtun to say which man of their order gives up the secret, and makes medicine to forget it was ever in his keeping.”

A man of the Po-Ahtun stood up and looked at Tahn-té.

“A man and a woman hold that secret of the symbol of the god,” he said. “In our own kiva must that be spoken of, and not in another place. But the hearts of our people are gentle towards our new brothers who smell out witches, and do not mate with them! Our order will surely make medicine that the priest of the great king be given that secret to keep for us, and the Sun God will smile again on our land.”

“It is well — it is very well,” said all the council. And then there was a long silence, and they looked at Tahn-té until he arose.

“Not except I die for you, will you believe; — and even then you will not believe,” he said in sadness. “You, my people, will accept the god of the gold hunters, and you will not see that it is only riches they want at your hands! In other years you will see. When the men of Te-hua work in chains for the men of Spain — and for the masters of the men of Spain! — Then in that day will the men of Te-hua tell to their sons these words — the words of the prophecy of Tahn-té!”

“We are much troubled, and our hearts are sad,” said Po-tzah. “The magic of the white god is strong — and their priest has let our people see that it is strong. We do not want that magic against our children.”

“Against your children will the magic come in the unborn years!” said Tahn-té with decision. “You will take the god of the white man because one more god, or one more baptism hurts no man. You will be trapped by fair words until I see the time when you can circle in the half of a day all the fields you dare

plant for your own! The Flute of the Gods will be silenced in the land. Your Te-hua daughters will be slaves for the men of the iron! The sacred places will be feeding lands for their animals. The Te-hua priests will wait the word of the white man ere they dare go to the groves of the sacred trees for the prayer wreaths to the gods!"

"The sacred pine must be sacred to all — always!" said Po-tzah.

"Not anything is sacred to the white men — I have looked in their books; — I, of all Te-hua men!"

Padre Vicente saw that the old magic of the talking leaves was potent; — and he arose without waiting for formal interpretation.

"He has looked in the books with the eyes of a sorcerer!" he declared, thus openly accusing Tahn-té before the council.—"He has read crooked things — and his words are the words of the man who mated with the witch in the hills!"

The council stared at this new sign that strong magic was with the priest of the robe — he was suddenly given knowledge of the tongue of Te-hua! Don Diego stared in wonder and crossed himself many times.

"It is a language infernal even to the people born to it," he gasped — "but that it should be given to one of us on the day when we are openly claimed as brothers is a special sign of grace. Thanks to the saints who sent it your way instead of mine!"

"This man has brought evil on you until the earth groans and turns," continued the Padre. "His mother of the caves is called 'holy' and he is called strong in the light of the sky: — But the sky is angry, and the Great God and his saints are angry that this

sorcerer has cheated you so long with enchantments of the devil! Be strong for the saving of your own souls, and leave him to his witch mates and to his hell!"

Even Don Ruy was astounded that the padre addressed the council in their own words — truly of all priests ever frocked he had found the one most subtle for the work in hand, for having gained the council — as it was easy to see he had gained them — Padre Vicente spoke in Castilian to Tahn-té.

"Yet does my office exact absolution for you, if you but crave it with a contrite heart," he said for the benefit of Don Ruy and Don Diego who listened. "You have worked for your devils, and they have deserted you, and stripped you of power. Acknowledge the true God and the saints will intercede for your favor."

Tahn-té looked at him, and his smile was strange.

"There was a man named Judas in your holy book," he said, "only silver did he crave for his work. You are greater than Judas; you work for the metal more precious. Is it thirty pieces you want ere you crucify me utterly?"

The figure of a woman darkened the entrance — a slender fragile figure who moved to him swiftly, and noted no others in the dusk of the council house. In Shufinne the word had reached her of the horror of Puyé — and she had come quickly as might be, and the sound of his living voice drew her breathless, but thankful to his side, and his arm circled her in support and in tenderness as he looked over her head to the Te-hua men of the council.

"I see your thoughts, and I read them," he said. "The men who seek the gold have put a wall between you and me. That which you have you can give

them; — but remember in your hearts that there are things which belong to the unborn, and such things you have no power to give them. Only so long as you keep your own religion, and your own gods, so long will your tribe stand as a tribe; — no longer! Step by step your children will have to fight the strangers for that which is now your own. Only your god-thoughts will bind you as brothers; — the god of the gold hunters will poison your blood, and will divide your clans, and will divide your children, until your names are forgotten in the land!”

“The sorcerer who tells you this is the brother to the serpents in the Desert!” said Padre Vicente springing to his feet in angry impatience; — “enough of words have been said of this —.”

A sound between a scream and a moan silenced the words on his lips, and Don Ruy felt his blood run chill, as the drooping figure of the Woman of the Twilight stood suddenly upright with lifted hand.

“Teo!” — she murmured in utter gladness, — and moved through the half light of the room towards the Castilians. “Teo!”

“Holy God!” whispered Don Ruy, while the padre turned white. Don Diego stared in horror — only one named Teo came in his mind — the Greek who should belong to the Holy Office in Seville; — the man whose word even now was wanted as to the older days of Christian slave trade in Europe!

“Don Teo!” she was quite close to him now, and she spoke as a trembling child who craves welcome, — “I — Mo-wa-thé — speak! O Spirit; — you have come back from the Star — you have come —.”

The Te-h men, and Tahn-té also, waited in wonder. Never before had the Twilight Woman



gone like that to a man — and she was so close that the man shrank from her against the wall of the room.

“Back!” — he muttered, and he spoke Te-hua now, and his voice was rough with rage and fear, — “This woman is evil, and brings evil power!”

“She is the Woman of the Twilight — the holy woman of the caves,” said a man of the Po-Ahtun, for Tahn-té could find no words for the wonder she wakened.

“She is an enchantress who fights against the true god and his angels; — a witch of evil magic!” — and the padre was white, and breathing hard lest she touch him.

“A witch!” — she echoed in horror. — “I? — Teo—.”

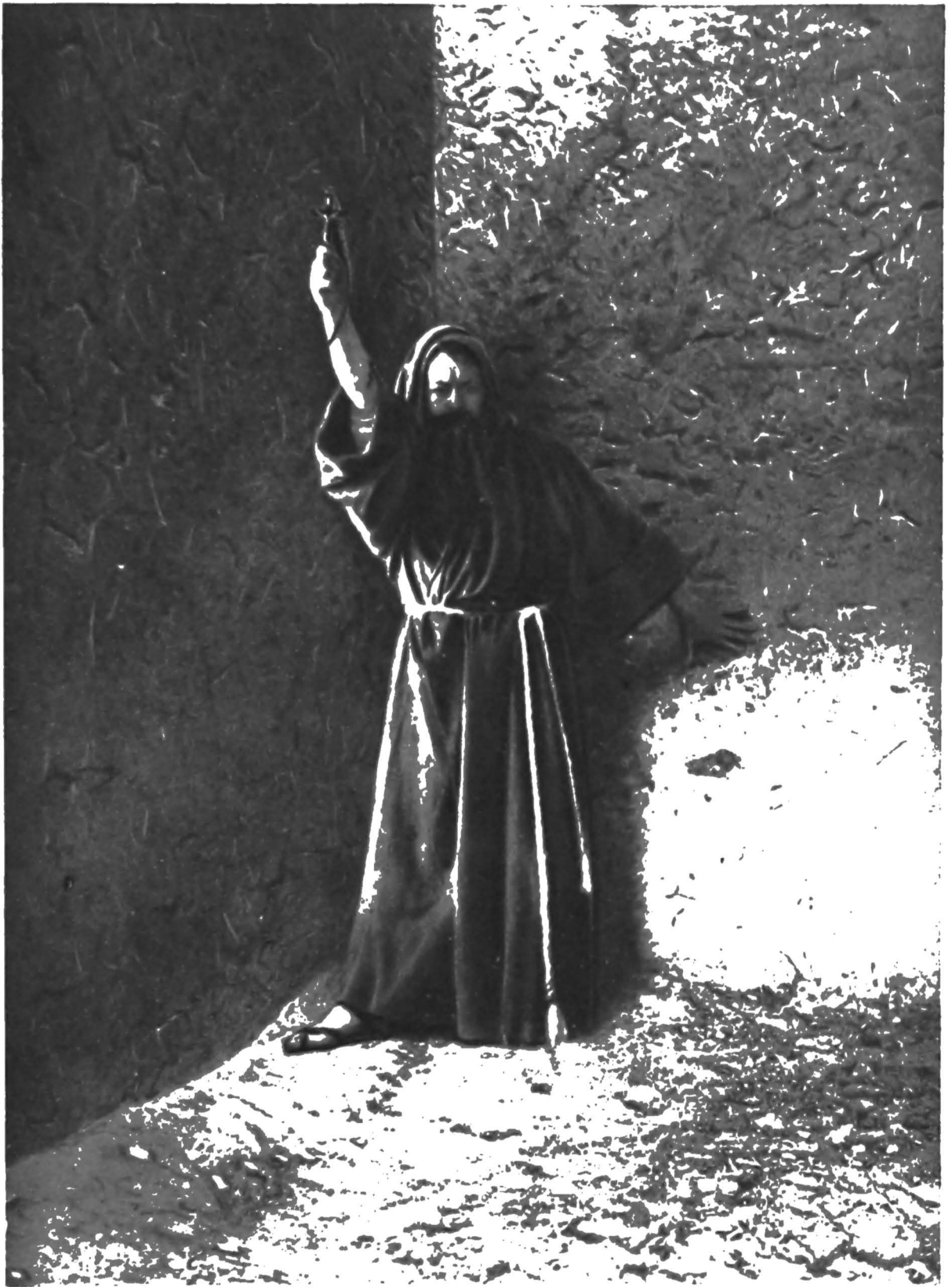
She crept to him in abject supplication and reached out her hand, touching the sleeve of his robe.

“Back!” — he shouted in horror — and held the crucifix between them — “Thing of the Evil One! May your tongue be palsied — may your magic fail — may —.”

Tahn-té hurled him aside, and caught his mother as she fell; and the padre leaned half fainting against the wall, with great beads of sweat standing on his face, and the crucifix still lifted as a barrier or as a threat.

But the threat was useless to the slender creature of the caves.

“Teo — Teo!” she whispered, and then “Tahn-té,” and then the breath went, and her son laid her gently on the floor, while the padre regarded *him* with a new horror! Don Ruy watching them both, choked back an oath at the revelation in the white face.



*B*ACK! THING OF THE EVIL ONE!"

*Page 324*





The Te-hua men also drew away; — even Po-tzah averted his face when Tahn-té looked from one to the other!

Again had their eyes seen the strength of the white medicine god. The holy Woman of the Twilight had been destroyed before their eyes. It was the greatest magic they had yet seen!

Tahn-té saw it, and knew it; and felt as he had felt when a boy, and he had stood alone and apart — the only child of the sky. He had come again into his own! He was akin to none of earth's children.

Then the man of the Po-Ahtun spoke.

“Two there were who held the secret of the sun symbol; — Now there is only one,— she has taken it through the Twilight Land to the Light beyond the light.”

“Two?” — said Don Ruy — “and this woman was one? And the other?”

No one spoke, but Tahn-té looked at him; and again there was no need for words.

“Medicine can be made to make a man forget,” said Tahn-té to the men of Te-hua — “but no medicine can be made to make a man remember! One keeper of the secret is dead by the magic of the white priest. Your children's children will give thanks in the days to come that it was not given to the men of iron.”

“It is a secret of the tribe!” protested the man of the Po-Ahtun.

“It is now the secret of the god who hid it in the earth,” said Tahn-té. “By all earth people who knew it — it has been forgotten!”

“But — without it we will lose our brothers of the new god!”

“Without it you will surely lose your brothers of

the new god!" he assented. "Each time you look on the God-Maid of the mesa who has turned away her face, you will remember the prophecies of Tahn-té! Each time the God of Young Winter paints leaves yellow for the sleep to come, your children will see a sign on the mountain to tell them that Tahn-té was indeed Brother to the Serpent as that man said in his mocking! — also that the prayers of Tahn-té do not end. Free I came from the Desert to you, and I carried the Flute of the Gods, and fruit for your children: — free I go out from your dwellings and carry my 'witch mother' to rest!"

He gathered her in his arms, and looked once into the pallid face of her accuser and destroyer. At that look from the pagan priest the white priest shrank and covered his face with the cowl.

"You — go?" said Po-tzah.

"In the place of Povi-whah another will hear your prayers to the gods, and I — Tahn-té the outcast — I go!"

No more words were spoken among the men of the council. In silence they watched him as he walked with his burden up the trail of the mesa where he had run so gladly to make his boy vow at the shrine.

No happy sign shone for him this time in the sky. It was as he said to Don Ruy; — those who make vows to the gods, — and forget them for earth people, pay — and pay prices that are heavy! But above him a bird swept into the golden sky. He put up his hand to the wings in his hair — and heard plainly the words of the mate who would wait his call at the trail's end.

And Don Ruy Sandoval watched the man called "sorcerer" out of sight, and then went to the dwelling of José and gathered to his breast



*T*AHN-TÉ; THE OUTCAST



the secretary who had adopted blanket draperies.

“Sweetheart comrade,” he said without proper prelude or preparation —“There is not anything in this weary world worth living for but Love, and Love alone. Shall we take the homeward journey and go where we can guard it?”

“There are tears in your eyes,” said his “Doña Bradamante,”—“and you look as if you make love to me, yet think of some other thing!”

“I have seen a man live through hell this day,” he answered. “Never ask me, Sweetheart — what the hell was. It is beyond belief that a man could live it, and continue to live after it.”