

CHAPTER IV

WHITE SEEKERS OF TREASURE

WHEN Alvarado marched his band of adventurers into the pueblo Ua-lano to the sound of tom-toms and flutes of welcome, an Indian woman with a slender boy stood by the gate and watched the welcome of the strangers.

An exceedingly reckless, rakish lot they were — this flower of the Mexican forces who the Viceroy was only too willing should explore all lands, and seas, so they kept themselves away from the capitol.

The women and the children shrank back as the horses clattered in. Some laughed to cover their fear, others threw prayer meal, and their fright made the commander notice the blanketed figure of the woman whose eyes alone shone above the draperies held close, and who stared so keenly into each white face as they passed.

“Who is the dame in the mask of the blanket?” he asked of his host Chief Bigotes — the courteous barbarian who had crossed seventy leagues of the desert to ask that his village be honored by the god-like ones from the south.

Bigotes looked at her, did not know, but after inquiring came back and spoke.

“It is a strange thing but it is true,” said the interpreter, “she is called the One from the Twilight Land. She went as a girl from Te-hua to Ah-ko for study with the medicine people of one order there.

One night it was as if she go into the earth, or up in the sky. No one ever see her any more. It was the year of the fire of the star across the sky. Now she comes from the west and so great a medicine woman is she that leading men are sent to guard her on the trail to the Te-hua people — and to guard her son.”

“Faith! Your strangers are a handsome pair. The boy would make a fine page in a civilized land. He is the fairest Indian I’ve seen.”

The boy knew that his mother and himself were objects of query, and stood stolid, erect and disdainful,—the stranger should see that all their clanking iron, their dominating swagger, and their trained animals could not make him move an eyelash of wonder.

But to his mother he said:

“They have much that we will need if we ever fight them; their clanking clothes and shields can break many arrows.”

“Why do you talk of fighting?”

“I do not know why. It is all I thought of as I looked at them.”

One thing interested him more than all else, and that was a man in a grey robe who carried a book, and turned the pages in absorbed meditation; sometimes his reading was half aloud, and Tahn-té slipped near each time he could, for to him it looked as if the man talked to the strange white paper.—He thought it must be some sort of high magic, and of all he saw in the new comers, he coveted most of the contents of those pages,—it was more wonderful than the clanging metal of their equipment.

A tiny elf-like girl followed Tahn-te as a lost puppy would, until he asked her name, and was told it was Yahn — that she lived in Povi-whah by the big river and that her mother was visiting some society of

which she was a member,— that she was in the kiva and could not be seen for four days and nights, and in the coming of the beasts and the strangers, her caretaker had lost her, and the home where she had stayed last night she did not know.

She knew only she was lost, and some boys had told her that the new kind of beasts ate little girls. She did not weep or call, but she tried to keep her little nude body out of sight behind Tahn-té if a horse or a mule turned its head in the direction she was.

So glad she was to be protected that she told him all her woes in the strange town. The greatest was that a dog had taken from her hand the roasted ear of corn she had been eating, and she wished Ka-yemo was there, he would have maybe killed the dog.

Inquiry disclosed the fact that Ka-yemo was not her brother; he lived in Provi-whah. Her own name was Yahn. No:— it was not a Te-hua name. It was Apache, for her mother was Apache — and the Te-hua men had caught her when they were hunting, and always her mother had told Yahn to stay close to the houses, for hunting enemies might bear her away into slavery — and Yahn was not certain but these men on the beasts might be hunters.

She was very tiny, and she spoke imperfectly, but shyness was not a part of her small personality, and she insisted on making herself understood. To Tahn-té she seemed like a boy rather than a girl, and he called her Pa-ah-dé which is the Te-hua word for "brother"— and later he gave her to his mother to keep her out of the way of the horses and the strange men.

And thus it was that Tahn-té, and Apache Yahn saw together the strange visitors from the south, and Yahn, though but a baby, thought they might be

hunters whom it would be as well to hide from, and Tahn-té thought much of the coats of mail, and how lances could be made to pierce the joints.

He heard the name of the man with the black robe and the magic thing of white leaves from which he talked — or which talked to him! — it was “Padre” — there was also another name and it was “Luis.” It meant the same as “Father Ho-tiwa” or “Brother Tahn-te.”

To the man from whom the rakish Spanish soldiers bent the knee and removed the covering from the head, Tahn-te felt no antagonism as he did for the men who carried the arquebus and swords. The man who is called “Father” or the woman who is called “Mother” with the Indian people, is a person to whom respect is due, and through Bigote he had heard — by keeping quiet as a desert snake against a wall — that the man of the grey robe who was called “Father” was the great medicine-man of the white tribe. Through him the god of the white man spoke. In the leaves of the white book were recorded this god’s laws, and even these white men who were half gods, and had conquered worlds beyond the big water of the South, and of the East, bent their knees when the man of the robe spoke of the sacred things.

Of these things he spoke to his mother, and was amazed to learn that she knew of the white man’s gods, and the white men’s goddess. Never had she talked to him of this, and she did not talk to him much now. She only told him that all she knew would belong to him when the time came, and that the time seemed coming fast — but it was not yet. When he was older he could know.

When he talked to her of the many white pages in

which the white god had written, she told him that much wisdom — and strong magic must be there. The white men had no doubt stolen for their earth-born god the birth story of Po-se-yemo, the god of her own people. But his magic had been great in that land across the seas and that people had written words of the earth-born god as had certain tribes of Mexico, and all that the god said and did had been written plainly as had been written the records of Quetzalcoatl of the South, and it was not good that their own tribe had not the written records of their gods.

“It may be that the time has come to make such records,” said Tahn-té, “our people should not be behind the other people.”

“We have no written words,” — said his mother; — “our head men who govern have only the deerskin writings of Ki-pah the wise, who lived long ago and did much for the people of Kah-po and Oj-ke, and the people of the river.”

“Of him I have not heard,” said Tahn-té — “was he a god?”

“No — no god, but he lived and worked as a god. He came to this land before the day of my grandfathers. When the time is come, the men of my father’s people will tell you the work he did in our valley, and what he said. So will tell you the old men of Provi-whah and the old men of Kah-po. He came to a land, not to one people, and on the deerskin he painted things never seen but by the wise men who know how to read it.”

The boy stared moodily into the sun swept court of Ua-lano. There were so many things in the world of which no one had ever told him!

“If I am very good, and say very many prayers, and wait on the gods very carefully, will the wise men

of the medicine orders tell me of the deerskin records some day?" he demanded.

"Some day — it may be so," she conceded.

"Good! I will think of that each day as the sun comes up!" he stated. "And the magic of the white man's writings I will learn for myself. It is a thing which is not kept for sacred places, and no prayers are needed for that!"

The woman of mystery regarded him strangely, yet spoke no word. The magic of the white conquerors was wonderful magic to her, yet she could not ask her son why he only spoke of them as ever beyond some wall which they must not cross,— and of their knowledge as strong knowledge, yet not sacred knowledge.

Between the woman and her son there was often a wall of silence. Even her love could not cross it. There were always spoken or unspoken questions which she left without answers. He was only learning this in the wonderful journey of the desert lands, and he asked fewer questions,— but looked at her more. And: — she knew that also!

The man of the talking white leaves, and the grey gown set in the center of the court a white cross, and all the soldiers knelt, and in front of the dwellings the brown people knelt also — which the Christians deemed a special dispensation that so many heathen had been brought so quickly to their knees at the mere sight of the holy symbol. And in the morning Father Luis decided he would baptize all of them, and have a high mass for the salvation of their souls, The boy who watched the book so closely, was, he felt sure, a convert at mere sight of the white leaves, and the heathen mother would no doubt clamor also for sanctification.

But in the early dusk of the morning the boy and his mother were on the trail for the home valley of the river Pō-sōn-gé of which he had dreamed. With them were people of Kah-po, and people of Provi-whah and the Apache woman and her child Yahn. Yahn made some one carry her most of the hard trails, and talked much, and asked many things of the little growing trees in the old urn of ancient Tusayan.

And when they came in sight of the sacred mesa, Tuyo, a runner was sent ahead to tell the governor and the head men of the strange new people of the clanking iron at Ua-lano, and the wonderful and belated home-coming of the lost woman of many years' mystery.

Because of this they were met at the edge of the mesa by many, and the Woman of the Twilight knelt and touched the feet of the governor and asked that the gate of the valley be open to her and to her son. And Tahn-té knelt also and offered the growing things.

"These are sacred things of which the Ruler must speak," said the governor. "I am but for one short summer and winter, but the Ruler is for always. Of the new things to bear fruit we still speak in council, — also of the new people trading a new white god for blue stones, and painted robes."

But Tahn-té knew that a welcome was theirs, for the governor would not have come outside the walls except it had been so, and the old man watched keenly the delight of the boy as the river of that land came clear before him spread at the foot of the wide table land, and the great plain below. Trees grew there, and between them the running water shone in the sun. The Black Mesa Tuyo, Mesa of the Hearts, arose

from the water edge,— a great dark monument of mystic rites, and wondrous records of the time when it had been a breathing place for the Powers in the heart of the earth. The rocks were burned so red it always seemed that the fire was still under them. And south was the God-Maid mesa:— its outline as the face of a maid upturned to the sky.

Beyond the river stretched the yellow corn fields — the higher land like a rugged red skeleton from which the soil had been washed,— and beyond that was the great uplift of the pine-clad mountains where the springs never failed, and the deer were many.

Wild fowl fluttered and dove in the waters of the river, grey pigeons flew in little groups from the trail; as they walked, two men in canoes caught fish where a little stream joined the big water of Pō-sōn-gé — in every direction the boy was conscious of a richer, fuller life than any he had yet seen. His mother was right — her people were a strong people! and their villages were many in the valleys of the river.

In Povi-whah the clan of the Arrow Stone people welcomed the Twilight Woman as their own, and the men and women who had journeyed with her from Ua-lano looked glad to have journeyed with her,— they had to answer many questions.

Tahn-té also had much practise in the Te-hua words when he tried to tell them what the peach was like, and what the pear was like, and the youth were skeptical as to peaches big as six plums.

A boy larger than he flipped with a willow wand at the urn with the little trees, and told him that in Provi-whah a boy was whipped if he lied too often!

“How many times may a boy lie and not be whipped?” asked Tahn-té, and the other boys

laughed, and one stripling gave him a fillet of otter skin in approval, and said his name was Po-tzah, and that their clan was the same.

But the tiny Yahn who looked from face to face, and saw the anger in the face of the boy of the willow wand, caught the switch and brought it down with all the force of her two chubby arms on the nurslings brought from Hopi land.

Tahn-te caught her and lifted her beyond reach of the urn.

"I should have let the strange beasts of the iron men eat you," he said. "You shall go hungry for peaches if you kill the trees!"

The others laughed as she wriggled clear — and lisped threats even while keeping out of range of his strong hands.

"Always she is a little cat of the hills to fight for Ka-yemo," said Po-tzah. "Little Ka-yemo will some day grow enough to fight alone!"

Ka-yemo scowled at them, and muttered things, and sauntered away. He was the largest of all of them, but one boy does not fight six!

Yahn was in such a silent rage that she twitched and bent the willow until it was no longer any thing but a limp wreck: — she would break something!

"That is the Apache!" said Po-tzah. "I think that baby does not forget to fight even when she sleeps."

The little animal flung an epithet at him and ran after the sulky Ka-yemo: — evidently her hero and idol.

The mother of Tahn-té was called in council for things of which Tahn-té was not to know. But he learned that she was of the society of the Rulers: — that from which the spiritual head was selected when

the Po-Ahtun-ho or Ruler no longer walked on the earth.

After the council sacred meal was sprinkled on the trees in the urn, and the priests of the order of Po-Ahtun divided them between the Winter people, and the Summer people, that it be proven which the care of the new fruit would belong to for prayers, and each planted them by their several signs in the sky. His mother spoke to him when alone and told him he was now to do a boy's work in the village, and his training must begin for the ceremonies of high orders into which the council wished him to enter.

"To serve our people?"

"Yes: — it will be so — to serve our people."

"Since it is to be like that, may I also speak?" — he asked. "May I not speak to the men who decide? I have thought of this each day since Ua-lano. At some time I must speak: — is not this the time?"

"It may be the time," she assented. "We will go to the old men of the orders. It may be they will listen."

All night they listened, and all night they talked, and the old men looked at the mother strangely that the son should speak the words of a man in council.

"Thanks that you let me speak," he said. "Thanks! It is true what you hear of the white gold-hunter's magic. It is strong. It is good that we find out how it is strong. My mother tells you how the Snake priests of Tusayan make me of their order, so that I can know that magic for the rain ceremony. In my hands also was given the Flute of Prayer to the desert gods, and to know Hopi prayers does not hurt me for a Te-hua: — it is Te-hua prayers my mother teaches me always! So it will not hurt me to learn the magic of the men of iron. They are

strong and they will be hard to fight. The grey robe man is the man who teaches of their gods. He teaches it from magic white leaves in his hand, on the leaves there are words — other iron men can talk from them, but only the grey robe is the priest and teaches. He would teach me if I would serve him — then I could have their magic with our own.”

“It may be evil magic,” said one.

“It tames the strange beasts as the Hopi prayers tame the snakes,” replied the boy — “and every day the beasts do work for these people.”

The old men nodded assent — it certainly must be strong magic to do that!

But a man of the Tain-tsain clan arose.

“This woman has been gone many moons on a strange trail,” he said. “The son she brings back to her clan speaks not as a youth speaks. It is as if he has been very old and grows young again. It may be magic — and again it may be that he is half lost in his mind and dreams the dreams of a man. It is a new thing that men listen to a child in council.”

Then Kā-ye-fah the aged Po-Ahtun-ho made a sign for silence, and sat with closed eyes, and it was very quiet in the council until he spoke.

“You have brought a big thought out of the world of the Spirit People, Phen-tza,” he said. “It has been given to you to say, and that is well! It has been given to me to see — and I see with prayer. When the God-thought is sent to earth people is it not true that the child of dreams, or the man of dreams, is the first to hear or to feel that thought? Was not the earth-born god, Po-se-yemo, called a youth that was foolish? Was he not laughed at by the clans until he wept? Was he not made ashamed until out of his pain there grew a wisdom greater than earth-

wisdom? Let us think of these things, and let us hear the words of the child who dreams."

"It is well," said another, "even when half the mind is gone, it may be gone only a little while on the twilight trail to the Great Mystery."

"The life music comes in many ways," said Kā-ye-fah, the Ruler. "Many reeds grow under the summer sun, but not in all of them do we hear the call of the spirit people when the wild reed is fashioned for the flute. The gods themselves grow the flutes of High Mystery. This youth is only a reed by the river to-day — yet through such reed the gods may send speech for our ears."

"We will listen," said the others. "Let us hear more of the men whose blankets are made of the hard substance." And at this Tahn-té again took courage and spoke.

"These iron men say they are only on a hunting trail — they say they will not trouble the people — that is what their men say who speak for them! But if one boy, or one man, could talk as they talk, you men of Povi-whah would know better if they speak straight. My mother has found the trail to her people on the right day, and has brought me here. I want to be the boy who learns that talk of the hunters of the blue stones and sacred sun metal of the earth, and then I can come back and tell it to the wise men of my mother's people."

"But you may not come back."

"I will ask all the Powers that I will come back. My mother will pray also, and her prayers are strong."

"I will pray also," said Sāā-hanh-que-ah.

The men smoked, and the boy watched them and waited until Kā-ye-fah spoke.

“That which the son of this wise woman says is to be well thought of; — it may be precious to us in days not yet born of the sun. You who listen know that we are living now in a day that was told of by Ki-pah in the years of our Lost Others, and Ki-pah spoke as the god Po-se-yemo spoke: — he was given great magic to see the years ahead of the years he lived.”

“It is true,” assented the governor — “It was when the people yet lived in the caves, and the water went into the sands in that highland — that is when he came to our Lost Others — Ki-pah — the great wisdom. He came from the south, and taught them to come down from the caves and build houses by the great river, and to turn the water to the fields here. All things worked with him — and Kah-po — and Oj-ke and Pō-ho-gé were built and stand to this day where he said they must be built. He knew all speech, and could tell magic things from a bowl of clear water. It was in the water he saw men who were white, and who would cover the land if we were not strong. These men are the men he saw in the water. I think it is so, and that this is the time to be strong.”