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THE MONTHLY

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Sina*

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*A Snake of Two Tongues Causes Domestic Troubles Between
Descendants of the First Families in the Southwest*

The Divorcing of Sina

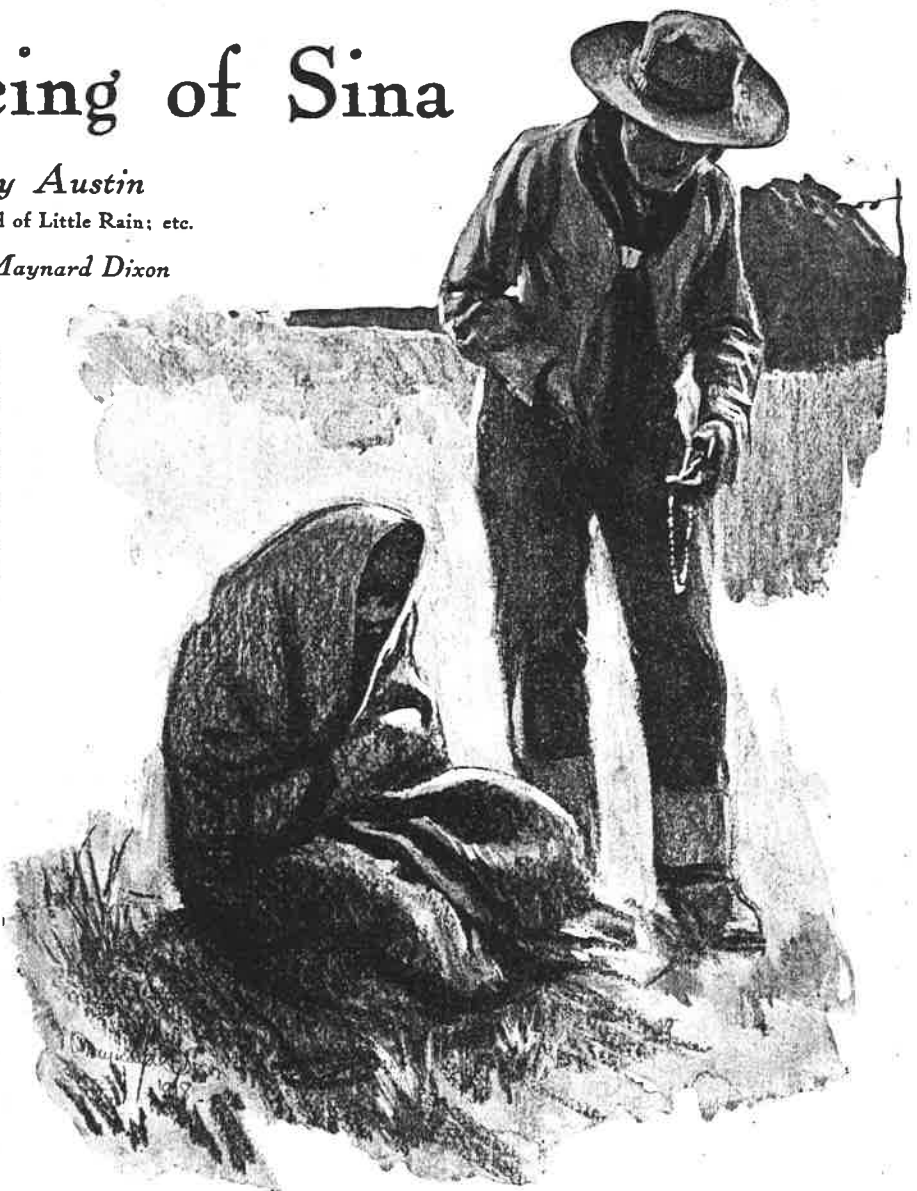
By Mary Austin

Author of: *The Land of Little Rain*; etc.

Illustrated by Maynard Dixon

ORDINARILY when a Piute gentleman comes home to supper to find his wife sitting beside the hut completely wrapped in her blanket, he goes away quietly and pretends to be thinking about something else. But there were several reasons why Bill Bodry felt obliged to depart from this excellent custom. For one thing he was hungry, in the next place he was very fond of his wife, and last of all there was his mother peering out from her own wickiup with eyes keen and bright as a gopher's, ready to cry fool to him who could not manage his own household. Bill's mother had been all for his marrying Black Rock Maggie, who though she had followed the glint of a white man's eye to an extent which prejudiced her in the opinion of the young and romantic, had acquired merit in the eyes of Bill's mother by her superior powers of wheeling tinned salmon and potato culls out of the white housewives. And because there was always Maggie in the back of his mother's mind as a standard of comparison, it was not possible for Bill to admit the complete overthrow of all his domestic authority as implied in the circumstance that he had come home three successive evenings to find the hearth cold and Sina sitting with her head wrapped in her blanket. Not that some allowance must not be made for young wives, even in a campody; but even in a campody, for a man to go three nights supperless to bed points to something more serious than bridal vapors.

He was aware that it was already beginning to be whispered about the camp that Sina, his wife, had put a spell on her husband. He was aware of it while he raked up the sticks between the cold stones and when he brought up the wicker water bottle from the creek to make the coffee—and how indeed does a Piute gentleman come to be boiling his own coffee unless somebody has put a spell on him? To make matters worse, here was Black Rock Maggie coming up the trail to visit his mother. Completely at an end of his devices for having it appear that the household arrangements were going on as usual, Bill came and stood over the slender huddled figure. He stood with his back to his mother so that she could not see his face working. It was time when any husband would have been justified in coercive methods, but Bill was still very much in love with his wife. What he could see of her, the little moccasined foot sticking out, and the slim shape of her under the blanket, moved him strongly.



"Look, Sina, what I got for you," he said in English, and took from his shirt a bead necklace of blue and amber

"Look, Sina, what I got for you." He spoke in English, for his mother did not understand English very well, and the use of the foreign tongue created the effect at least, of an excluding bond between him and Sina. He opened his shirt now to show his young wife the present he had brought for her, a bead necklace of blue and amber that had cost him the half of his week's wages as bronco buster. It clicked as it dropped from his hand to her lap, and in spite of herself the girl peeked curiously out of her blanket, her little hand moving instinctively, but stopped when she saw Black Rock Maggie.

Maggie was the sort distrusted by young wives immemorially. She was believed to have gone with a white man as far as Pharump valley, she wore corsets, and could read writing, and little moving yellow lights swam just under the surface of her beady eyes. Moreover, she had a way of making Bill's marriage appear a

mere ripple on the surface of her own superior intimacy with him. Oh, no, these things are not the product of sophistication! They are as old as men and women, or perhaps older, and it was with a sense of utter inescapability that Bill, as he heard Maggie's voice greeting his mother behind him, begged desperately. "Won't you tell me what it is you want, Sina?"

SINA was perfectly explicit. "I want to go home to my mother!"

Ordinarily there is no reason why, when a Piute lady finds marriage impossible, she cannot gather up her dowry in a perfectly amicable arrangement and go back to her father's house, supposing that he will have her. But the reasons why that could not be done in Sina's case are a considerable part of this story. Once before she had run away from her young bridegroom, and been brought back by Wind-in-the-face, her father,

promptly and honorably. That this was exactly what would happen to her again Sina knew as well as anybody, and the unreasonableness of her request would have moved Bill to do what any Piute husband would have done much earlier, but at that moment he heard Maggie's voice purring behind him.

"Don't you want me to get you some supper, Bill?" and in the moment when he looked up at her and back at his young wife again he noted that the blue and amber necklace had disappeared.

"I guess I don't want any supper," he denied, manfully. "I guess I'll take Sina to her mother, she's sick."

"A good dose of the stick will cure her complaint," jeered the mother of Bill Bodry; but Maggie's cue was sympathy.

"I guess Bill don't want to beat her if she's sick." This brought Sina out of her blanket like a slim little snake.

"I guess Bill's got a right to beat me if he wants to," she flashed a cold, withering scorn on her lord and master. "You got a right to beat me just like a horse, Bill Bodry, you bought me!" Bill shifted miserably from foot to foot in the dust of the mesa.

"Aw, Sina—I—" not for worlds would he have laid the stick on those round young shoulders, not so round by half as when he had married her.

"You goin' to beat me, Bill Bodry?"

"I—I'm goin' to take you to visit your mother, Sina."

She couldn't have known with what desperation he clutched at this last remnant of his husband's prerogative as he moved in the trail before her, thus to present to the scoffing eyes of his mother the spectacle of a wife following at her man's back in the ancient Piute custom. It might have answered, if, at the moment behind him, Black Rock Maggie had not suddenly and shortly laughed. He heard that and then he heard the hurrying steps of Sina breaking past him. He put out his arm, he knew in his heart it was merely to prevent her stumbling, for the girl was really sick with misery, but she must have mistaken the supporting clutch of his arm for violence, for with a cry she turned and struck him full in the face with something that rattled and stung as she tore free and fled from him; something that as he stooped to gather up and stuff into his bosom before he turned aside in the twilight to hide his discomfiture, the peering eyes of old Ebia recognized as a blue and amber necklace.

II

THE reasons why Sina could not be divorced from Bill Bodry in the infrequent but traditional way, had to do with her father's appetite for fresh-water clams in excess of his discretion. He had spent too much time kicking them out of the soft mud of the river bottom with his toes, but he thought he was being persecuted by the ghost of an enemy reincarnated in the form of a coyote. Either that, or else he had been going about on some inauspicious occasion with his mouth open, and a *Winuputs*—one of the million little devils who are responsible for the inside pains of Piutes—had jumped down his throat and worked from that to his knees. Catameneda, his wife, was inclined to the latter opinion, but by the time Jim had lost the fall rodeo and the piñon harvest on account of the swelling

in his legs, she was ready to believe anything.

It was just as this juncture, while she was tending Jim's pains with relays of hot stones as he lay in his rabbit-skin blanket on the sunny side of the wickiup that Bill Bodry came by on the trail with a swing in his walk like the smooth play of the flanks of a cougar. The light cotton shirt parted carelessly over the arch of his chest, his thighs were knit with power, about his head thick locks of blackness lay like sculpture work banded by the shining crease where the sombrero rested. Besides being good to look at, Bill Bodry spoke Government School English as befitted a man with a whole white name who owned a dollar watch and could tell time by it.

He had come over the barranca to talk with Yavi, grandson and sole prop of the Basket Maker, about the next rabbit drive, and had stopped neighborly to inquire as to the progress of Jim's pains. "Hurt-like-Hell," had been Jim's rejoinder, in compliment to the English in which as a member of the younger generation, Bill had addressed him. And that might have been all there was of it if at that moment Bill Bodry had not had sight of Sina.

Sina was slim and brown with budding breasts, and her eyes were as brown as the brown shadow of the creek under the birches. She was painting her face by a fragment of mirror propped in the rabbit brush, cheeks and chin a plain vermillion, as a sign that her affections were disengaged. When she saw Bill Bodry watching her she laughed, and Sina's laugh was like the sound of running water in a rainless land. Therefore Bill Bodry lingered to bargain with Sina's father for the making of a rabbit-skin blanket. Wind-in-the-face was the best blanket maker at Sagharawite. He cut the skins in thin strips around and around, and strung them on the wattles to dry. Evenings, when he sat with hot stones between his shins, he would take up the strips with his thumb and finger, twisting them between his palm and knee, ready for weaving. On one of these occasions he confided to the Basket Maker that Bill's blanket was to have a hundred skins.

"That's a large blanket for a man not married," said the Basket Maker.

"But he will not say what he means to do with it," Jim concluded his information.

"Ah," said the grandmother, "Bill Bodry was not fed on meadow larks' tongues," which is Piute for saying that Bill talked no more than necessary.

"And Black Rock Maggie talks enough for two," suggested a neighbor who had observed Maggie making eyes in Bill's direction, and she began to tell the story of Maggie and the white man, but Catameneda of the Round Arm nudged her. It was not the kind of story to be told before Sina, for there is no place in the world really where a nice young girl is kept more thoroughly nice than in a campody.

But as a matter of fact, Bill had not thought so far ahead of his blanket as that. He had said a hundred skins because it was a large number, and as he brought them as he found them, it afforded so many more occasions on which he could recommend himself to Sina by taking an interest in her father's rheumatism. But it was the whisper about

Black Rock Maggie which kept Sina's mother from suggesting what he was thinking. Sometimes Bill would see the girl behind the slight screen of rabbit brush, busy about her toilet with the considered, slow movements of Indian women, unobtrusive as the preenings of quail. Other times she would be walking in the twilight with young girls of the campody. They would walk with their arms about one another, their cheeks bright with vermillion and their breasts bore up the folds of their red and purple calico gowns like apples. It was on such occasions that Bill would lend a neighborly ear to the complaint of Wind-in-the-face that there needed nothing to his recovery but the professional attendance of the Medicine Man from Fish Lake valley. When it was learned later that that distinguished practitioner had been brought over to cure Jim's legs at Bill Bodry's expense, there was probably no one in the campody besides Catameneda and her daughter who did not know what was in Bill's mind.

The therapeutic of the Medicine Man from Fish Lake valley belong to that strip of country between the desert and the tolerable outposts of the Sierras, known as Lost Borders. It depends for its efficacy on being able to cross the border between sense and spirit by a method which ought to prove immensely popular in more sophisticated circles, since it consists largely of singing and dancing. The point in the case of Sina's father was that it succeeded; it drove the *Winuputs* out of his legs and set him back a matter of seventeen dollars or so with Bill Bodry.

IT was about this time that Bill began to build him a house with a door like a white man's and Catameneda of the Round Arm began to be uneasily aware of the frequency of his visits to her wickiup. She egged on her husband to discharge his obligation.

"I gonna pay you, Bill, soon as I get workin' for Watterson," Jim assured him, speaking English as a way of putting himself quite on an equality with his creditor. "How in hell I gonna pay you when I got no money, thass what?"

"You don't never need to pay me," Bill earnestly reassured him. "What I needin' with money when I got me a new house, I got plenty blankets, I got a sack of pine nuts, I got a house, I got blankets—" avoiding the dangers of repetition, he dug the toe of his boot into the earth floor of the wickiup. "I guess I gonna get me a wife," he concluded.

"Who you gonna get?" Windy inquired sociably. Bill smoothed out the mark of his boot carefully. Said he at last:

"I gonna get Sina."

"Huh!" remarked Sina's father. He had moments of thinking, however, when he came to break it to Sina and her mother, that it would have been better to put up with the rheumatism. For Sina of the budding breasts did not in the least wish to get married. The burden of primitive housewifery lies heavy on maiden dreams in Sagharawite, and Sina had been thinking of Bill Bodry as a friend of her father's. Sina was a spoiled and only child, and even a maiden of the Stone Age may be forgiven for insisting on being courted for herself alone rather than being handed over from one man to another

in discharge of an obligation. That was the mistake Bill made, and Ebia, his mother, who should have instructed him in the proper way to win a wife, was touting for Black Rock Maggie. If a man must marry, why not have a wife who can bring something in, rather than a half-grown girl who would waste his substance in the measures of inexperience? But Bill stuck to it that Sina he would have and no other, and once the subject of the debt had been broached what was Wind-in-the-face to do, as an honorable Piute gentleman, but hand his daughter over? If a girl is to be allowed to exercise her own choice in the face of her parents' necessities, what is to become of the institution of the family? It is one of the ways, indeed, in which the family becomes an institution, by the exercise of vicarious obligation. To do them justice, Sina and her mother never thought of resisting; the most they could do they did, which was to render their men folk thoroughly uncomfortable. No doubt Catamenada could have reconciled herself in time to a match so eminently desirable. For the House with the Door had worked the accustomed effect of prohibition and mystery. Probably there was nothing more behind it than the usual Piute furnishing, but an inch of pine planking, in place of the ordinary rag of blanket or buckskin, by preventing prying eyes, magnified the bridal setting forth of Bill Bodry to magnificence. What, demanded the interested and gossipy campody, did the girl want anyway? Sina wept and surrendered, but between the girl and her mother there was the secret, unendurable pang of violation. People who have forgotten that a favorite goddess of the ancients was a fleeing virgin, must needs be reminded that the age of chipped flint was before the complaisance of women had been forced by social exigencies. Sina's time for loving had not come, and even in a house with a door her uncaptive heart pined like a wild thing in captivity. She hated Black Rock Maggie always hanging about with her proffers of superior competency, and if she could have spared any energy from hating Bill, she would have hated that whining old fox, Bill's mother. All of which would have led in due time to a proper divorce except for the distinction at which I have hinted.

PIUTE society is, unlike our own, when you understand it, perfectly simple. Anything that is an Indian's can always be taken back, no matter how many times he gives it, since it remains always in some respect peculiarly his own. But what he receives is never his at all except upon sufferance. If Sina had given her heart away, she could have taken it back on any justifiable occasion. But Sina had given nothing; she had been taken on demand in payment of money given by Bill Bodry, and not even Bill could release her.

That was why, when Sina, after three weeks of married life had run away to her mother, Wind-in-the-face had girded up his affections as a father, and notwithstanding his wife, who called him offal, ditchwater and many other names fit to cause him the greatest possible embarrassment, had carried Sina back to her husband. It was after this that Sina took to sitting with her head in her blanket and Black Rock Maggie's visits to Ebia had

been of almost daily occurrence. And now that Sina had run away again after publicly shaming all his tenderness, the young husband, simple savage that he was, whose hurts are sore and immediate, lay alone in his blanket of a hundred skins beside the House with a Door and nearly died of it.

III

TRIBAL laws are to the highest degree exigent. That they present themselves as inexorable to our unaccustomed eye, is only because the human circumstances with which they deal have the quality of inexorable sameness. Sina couldn't divorce herself and Bill couldn't give her back, but on the other hand the tribe of Sagarawite couldn't afford to let a healthy young woman fret herself into a wasting fever. That's where they have the advantage of us, for with all our precaution against hookworm and typhus we suffer the social waste of heartache and humiliation with indifference, and permit our young to wound one another to the death with impunity.

In the case of Bill and Sina nothing was neglected which could have helped. Everybody took sides with the greatest heartiness. Bill's mother and Sina's outdid each other in the—sage hen, and flea-bitten whelp of a coyote—epithets heaped respectively on the other's offspring. Wind-in-the-face remonstrated with his child as he was duly bound, but she turned her back on him; then he beat her and she lay on the ground at his feet and whimpered like a hurt animal. Being thus at the end of his resources he painted his face, draped himself in his best blanket and asked for an Order in Council.

Infrequently as it occurs, there is no particular condemnation implied in a Piute taking his domestic affairs to the Council instead of settling them in the privacy of his wickiup, which is about as private as a bird cage. But it was unfortunate from Bill Bodry's point of view that Wind-in-the-face should have summoned the Council to sit on the case of his daughter Sina at the time of the spring shearing. That was when the shallow tide of prosperity ran at its highest in the campody. Sweet sap dripped from the canes, the earth was full of foodful roots, the clink of the shearing wage in every pocket. It was the moon of

tender leaves and not far from the time of the dance of Marriageable Maidens. Those who remembered Sina as she had appeared in it for the first time the last season, saw in her drooping frame and bitten lip the figure of young pitiableness. The girl was plainly ill, ate nothing, slept little and moaned as she slept. There was not a woman in the camp who had not had the whole story from Catamenada, who was wild with fear lest her daughter should eat wild parsnip. In the open life



"It is known as far as Fish Lake valley that you have put a spell wife for money and a Sina wouldn't."

of the campody, where there are no distractions and few concealments, death as a surcease from disaster is more often than we imagine resorted to. And though no woman may speak in Council, there was not an elder among them who did not know that he would have to answer at home for whatever was done to Sina; and it was against all considerations of tribal profit that the hearts of

women should be fretted. For one thing, who was to do the work if the women were discontented? "A grudging heart makes cold the hearth," says the proverb. The Council met at the moth hour in a hollow under Togobah. New shorn sheep were white across the slope, shepherd fires winked out along the foot-hills, musk-scented gillias bloomed, burrowing owls

deed to the point of dumbness, made the mistake of saying nothing of his love and staking all on the ancient ruling. The girl had come to him on a debt, who could take her from him? Of course if the debt were paid—but seventeen dollars and a half! Yavi, grandson and sole support of the Basket Maker had an inspiration. They would take a leaf out of the white-man's book and take up a collection. Yavi was thought to have an eye for Sina herself before Bill Bodry came by, and there were none too many marriageable girls that year in the campody. The suggestion had the smack of romance to which in the spring even a Piute is susceptible. Dimes and dollars came out of the shearing wage and clinked in the ceremonial basket. Thus the divorcing of Sina was accomplished without any violation of the tribal custom. Sina went home to Wind-in-the-face, Bill Bodry boarded with his mother, the House with the Door was shut up, and Black Rock Maggie veiled the yellow lights in her eyes and waited.

IV

NOTHING much can happen in the campody in the summertime when the snakes are about to run and tattle of it to the gods. Later, when the long grass is eaten short, when the heat haze has gone up from the bare bones of the mountain, and the qualities of the earth and sky are interchangeable, about the end of the piñon harvest when the old sit with their toes in the ashes, many summer-hidden things come to the surface.

So it was about the first of November that it began to be whispered around Sagharawite that Bill Bodry had put a spell on Sina who had been his wife. How else could it be when divorce didn't help her? To lose appetite and sleep and waste with no fever; that was the way when Bad Medicine had been made against you. That was what happened to the children of Bed Morning when Poco Bill had a quarrel with him; four of them one after another thinned like fat on the fire, and died in spite of all that could be done for them. And then there was a man in Fish Lake valley—instance multiplied instance to show that Sina had been coyoted.

Ebia, who knew perfectly what would happen to her son if the story gained credence, laid Sina's wasting to her general incompetence, as witnessed by her failure to rise to the honor which had been thrust upon her in becoming the wife of the one man in Sagharawite who had a house with a door like a white man's. In this she was seconded to her face by Black Rock Maggie, who had of late left off corsets and taken to wearing her blanket folded over her breast as becomes a Piute maiden who has not married nor walked in the trail of a white man. But away from the mother of Bill Bodry, Maggie was observed to listen to the tale of the man from Fish Lake valley with marked conviction. If she had doubts she used them to draw the talk in that direction. It would have suited her very well to

have Bill driven from the camp as a Coyote Doctor.

She managed her game so well that by the time the winter constellations had wheeled to their station midway over the narrow, knife-cut valley, there was open talk of bringing Bill Bodry to book for evil practices. Weevil had got into the pine nuts that year and there were many cases of pneumonia, evidence enough that Bad Medicine was working somewhere. And always there was Sina. For a month or so after the divorce she had brightened, but now she sat leaning her young head against the wickiup, her hands falling listlessly still over her basket plaiting, and nothing would induce her to paint her cheeks vermilion and put on the purple calico. It was plain enough what was the matter with her, but whenever anybody ventured to suggest it to Catameneda, she moved her closed fingers before her face, extending them suddenly outward in a gesture which is one of the oldest resources of nature against the evil suggestion, so old that it is no longer polite to explain its origin. In the privacy of their blanket, which is the only privacy possible in a wickiup, she confided to Wind-in-the-face that she had looked the girl all over for signs of ordinary sickness and found none. What she had been really looking for was the blue and amber necklace. Ebia had told of it as evidence of her son's unappreciated munificence, but not even Ebia knew what had become of it. All of Sina's dowry had come home with her, but the necklace as a present had surely been hers in some degree, and if the smallest thing of hers, say a string of beads or a ribbon, remained in the custody of Bill Bodry, might it not serve to make a spell upon Sina's undoing? So Catameneda of the Round Arm brooded over the business of the necklace, but dared not question her daughter lest by mentioning the evil thing she bring it to pass. Thus matters stood until within a week of the annual Council when, if there were any such thing as coyote doctoring going on in the camp, it would surely be looked into.

That all this could go on without Sina's knowing anything about it, was due as much to the girl's sick indifference to life as to the inviolable rule of the campody that one does not speak to another of that other's private business without invitation. It was a woman from Black Rock, visiting the Basket Maker the week before the Council, who inadvertently brought it to her attention.

SINA had moved to the further side of the wickiup to be free from her mother's solicitations, which brought her in range of Seyavi's hut and the voices of the two old crones as they sat gossiping on the kitchen-midden. As she lay there inert in her blanket, if they saw her at all, and sight goes early in the smoky huts, they must have thought her sleeping, and voices carry far in the clear afternoons of November. The woman from Black Rock was numbering the affairs of importance which should come before the Council, and along toward the end came this business of the coyote doctoring and Bill Bodry. Did Seyavi think there was anything in that story? Since Bill had got his money back, why should he put a spell on Sina, especially as he had so

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"Sina," she cried venomously. "You that bought a spell on Sina, you couldn't keep her!"

who-whoed at their mating. The whole earth was full of comfortable twitterings; Sagharawite looked at Bill Bodry, handsome as he was but with the alien touch of a year of white-schooling, looked at Sina, wan and violated by a hateful marriage and decided against him. Bill, quite as sensitive as anybody to the intimidation of the mating season, whose every fibre ached with desire of her, ached in-

The Divorcing of Sina

(Continued from page 29)

You are to understand that there is nothing in Piute etiquette which prohibits love-making of this explicit character. Maggie came close and laid her hands on Bill's breast,

pointedly recovered from his brief infatuation for her. Or, certainly, hadn't Seyavi heard? The Black Rock woman had it from a friend of hers, who had it from the wife of Bed

Morning, who had seen for herself, going up the creek to leach acorns of an early morning, Maggie and Bill folding up Bill's blankets—pity Bill was such a fool about women. First Sina and then this hot-eyed draggle-tail—he had only to come to Black Rock—they could tell him what Maggie was—

SLOWLY and unobtrusively as a snake changes its place in the sun, Sina crept out of sight behind the wickiup. She moved at first with the hurt creature's instinct for concealment, and as she moved two entirely distinct and contradictory impulses woke within her. She wanted to stand for Bill before the Council, to defend him from stones and obliquy, and she wanted quite as much to get him off to herself where she could kill him quietly. She remembered the affront Bill had put upon her in his House with the Door, when the moon was up and the door was shut, she remembered Black Rock Maggie and something alive and terrible stirred and turned in her. There ran a screen of black sage from the hut to the creek, and up along that were the thick, fringing willows. Past these Sina stole with a strange sick thing inside her; so at last to a close copse of willows and brown birches, within which she had often hid herself from the detested sight of Bill and the sharp tongue of Bill's mother. From here she could see the House with the Door, and a thin trail of smoke going up beside it. There was no one about, and she could not tell from this distance whether it were Bill's smoke or Ebia's. But she could not have seen very well in any case, for the sight of the smoke brought sudden tears and the strange, sick something that tore in her and strove to rend itself forth by bitter sobbing. Oh, there was no doubt about it at last, that somebody had put a spell on Sina!

She must have lain there a long time before her vision cleared, and quite empty of crying she looked back toward the House with the Door and saw Bill moving about with the awkward fumbling of a man whose hearth is deserted, and the divine instinct to mother her man awoke in Sina—but go to him? She who was bought with money? Let him get Black Rock Maggie. She saw Bill coming with the water bottle to the creek, and sure enough there over the barranca as though to an appointment came Maggie. All this was part of Maggie's game, which she played cleverly—to appear always just when a man feels himself most in need of a wife, and to answer the need in her person. That was how she had been seen by the wife of Bed Morning, folding up Bill's blankets for him on the morning after Bill, to ease his desperate ache, had set the door of his house ajar and lay in it all night calling his young wife from her father's hut and calling vainly. On this particular evening Ebia was gone with two other of the campody to dig tule roots where the water of Salt Creek comes down to the river. Maggie meant to pretend she had forgotten all this—and a man likes to have a warm meal of an

evening no matter who cooks it for him. Besides she had heard that at Black Rock which warned her to move quickly. If it came to Council that Bill was a Coyote Doctor, bringing evil on the camp by reason of the evil thoughts that brewed in him, he would be stoned and driven out for it. She could follow him, of course—what man could refuse comfort in banishment? They could go out Paniment way and winter in Coso, and when summer had restored the equanimity of the camp they could come again—but Maggie was a sociable soul; what she wanted more than anything else was to pose proudly before the other women as mistress of the House with the Door. If she could persuade Bill to take her before the Council convened, who could accuse him, the happy bridegroom, of putting spells on other women? So as she came over the barranca to meet him at the creek, Maggie unloosed the yellow flame in her eyes, and her hot heart shook her. It might have been that, or the unwhispered protest of Sina watching from the willows that caused her to begin badly. She slipped the bottle from him as it sagged in the water.

"Are there no women left in Sagharawite that you wait on yourself like a white man?" she laughed.

To the man sore with the want of the only woman who mattered, it sounded like a taunt to be answered. "Loss of women like white men more better than Piutey."

Bill made a practice of sticking to English with Maggie, possibly because it was so much less explicit than the speech of his fathers. Maggie met it with a flash of her fine eyes.

"And if I have followed the white man's trail and heard what he thinks in his heart, I have come back, Bill Bodry—does any one ask why I came back—" The language of the Piute is ample and lends itself to passion as easily as mountain stream to the spring freshet. "I came back," she said, "because my heart was as dry under his hand as the earth in summer. Because the blood of the white man is pale like his face, Bill Bodry—" She swung herself across the stream to him, challenging, magnificent. "But I didn't expect to find that the men of my race had turned white also—you, Bill Bodry—wasting yourself on a girl whose breasts are scarcely grown—who weeps in the night—who shudders—"

She saw by the lift of his shoulders how the thrust had gone home to him. She swung the water bottle dripping from the creek to her shapely shoulder. "White man"—her eyes danced with veiled provocation—"come up to your house and I will cook a meal for you—" She should have gone then; past question he would have followed her, but the eternal feminine desire to be taken at more than her worth overcame her. She leaned the wicker bottle on a rock and came slowly back to him, all fire and softness. "I shall cook you a meal," she said, "and you shall teach me—all that you could not teach Sina."

which had tightened under her challenge, and as her hands came to rest there, they touched something hard and sound under the cotton shirt, like a woman's necklace. At the touch Bill stepped back and quivered as he would have done if the little horned snake of the desert had struck him.

"I guess you pretty fine cook, Maggie," he stuck obstinately to English, "but I ain't carin' much about anybody's cooking but Sina's."

Maggie for her part turned venomous. "Care!" she cried, "you care when it is known as far as Black Rock and Fish Lake valley that you have put a spell on Sina. You that bought a wife for money and couldn't keep her!" She pushed him from her. "You that turned Coyote Doctor so that she should eat parsnip root and you will be done with her. You that will be stoned in the Council—" Right here there was a sound of breaking branches and a sudden slim form flashed upon them from the opposite bank of willows. The dusk was falling and the girl with her wasted face and her once white doe skins looked unearthly.

"You snake of two tongues—" she addressed herself to Black Rock Maggie. "What right have you to say that I have a spell put on me, making trouble for Bill Bodry? For what should I eat wild parsnip when I am married to a good man and have a house with a door and plenty of blankets." She panted white with weakness, but with all the dignity of the proper matron. "You go to the Council with a story like that," said Sina, "and you'll see what you get, you—white man's leavings!" It was not for nothing that Sina had been daughter-in-law for three months to the sharpest tongued woman in the campody.

Maggie's game was up, but Maggie herself was undaunted. She struck her foot sidewise along the ground causing a little spurt of dust to fly up, an immemorial gesture of belittlement. "Pruett," she laughed, "seventeen dollars and a half's worth!" She gathered the ends of her blanket over her breast and as she ran up the trail they heard her laughing. The two young things stood still on opposite sides of the stream and looked at one another. Sudden inspiration unsealed the lips of Bill Bodry.

"Sina," he said, "I ain't never cared at all about that money. All the time I comin' to your father's house, it ain't the money I thinkin' about, Sina, it's you—Sina." He came across to her, all his young heart was in his eyes, but Sina had no word for him. She was staring at something that showed on Bill's breast where the shirt had parted under Maggie's vehement fingers, something that hung against his heart and rose and fell with its quick panting, a blue and amber necklace.

V

BITTER anxiety came and camped that night by the wickiup of Wind-in-the-face and Catamenada. Dusk fell with the owl's calling, but no Sina. A hurried round of the neighboring huts yielded no trace of her. One by one the little fires

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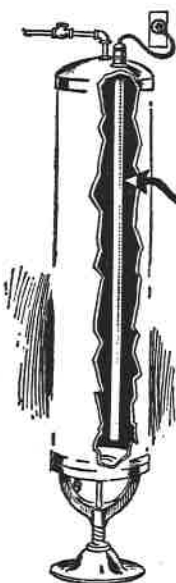
winked out. Catameneda sat in the hut and moaned on the Basket Maker's shoulder while Wind-in-the-face and Yavi went down along the river marsh where the wild parsnip grows, groping and fearing. The campody slept and searched by turns and whispered apart things best not spoken openly among the covert dangers of the night. Opinion grew as the dark thinned to blueness; by dawn it was concentrated in one word: Bill Bodry. Who else had any interest in the girl's disappearance? Just about break of day Catameneda, wild of heart, had run out across the mesa crying and calling. Close by the wild olive tree she had come upon a night-hawk squatting under the bushes; it had not stirred nor flown, but looked up at her, its eyes bright and beady—she could have taken it in her hand—it looked as if it would have come to her hand. How if that had been her daughter? Well, look at all the things that had happened of late in the campody—three deaths since the new moon! weevil! And Red Morning's mare gone lame in the night without visible occasion! And now Sina—but for all that they waited until the light was well advanced before they called him up to answer for such evil practices.

The sun was not up from behind the desert ranges, but the vast arc of heaven was filled with the light of it and the earth with pulsating blueness as the little knot of neighbors went up the trail toward Bill Bodry's. Sticks and stones they gathered by the way, but they put Wind-in-the-face foremost; after all it was *his* daughter.

BILL was out building the fire as they crossed the creek, and had turned facing the sound of voices when the first stone struck him. "Coyote whelp! Sorcerer! Spell binder!" the cries assailed him. He stood rooted with astonishment; another stone sailed by and struck plump on the door of the wickiup, the door like a whiteman's; prompt as a hornet out came Sina. She was looking very well and very much the mistress of her house. Catameneda of the Round Arm wept distractedly.

"Sina, Sina, my girl, come away from him—come away home with me—" When one has expected to find one's only child turned into a night hawk or a wood rat, one may be forgiven for a touch of hysteria. "Sina, Sina, daughter of my heart, come away from the Worker of Evil!" Sina looked at her husband's cut lip which was beginning to bleed, and then at her parents, and the look took on a touch of severity.

"I don't know what you mean," she said, though she did perfectly, for she remembered what the Woman of Black Rock had said about bringing Bill to Council. "But I know one thing," said Sina in the lisping English which was the hall-mark of the younger generation, "I don't thank you for comin' here makin' trouble for me and my man so early in the morning."



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