



WHISPERING ROCK by JOHN LEBAR
AUTOCASTER SERVICE WY.

SYNOPSIS: Ruth Warren, living in the East, comes into possession of three-quarter interest in an Arizona ranch, left to her in the will of her only brother, reported to have died while on business to Mexico. With her ailing husband and small child she goes to Arizona to take possession, thinking the climate may prove beneficial to her husband's weakened lungs. Arriving at the nearest town, she learns that the ranch, "Dead Lantern" is 85 miles across the desert. Charley Thane an old rancher and rural mail carrier, agrees to take them to "Dead Lantern" gate, which was 5 miles from the ranch house. As they wearily walked past a huge overshadowing boulder in a gulch in coming to the ranch house, a voice whispered "Go back! Go back!" Their reception is cool and suspicious. Snavely and Indian Ann are the only occupants. They hear the legend of the gulch.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY.

"No. You understand I don't believe there's anything to it—It's just an echo or some noise, that's all. Course with Ann it's different."

"How do you mean?"

"Well, she's superstitious clean through. She's scared to death to go through the gulch—but just the same she doesn't go around it. She thinks the voice tol' her never to avoid it in case it wants to tell her anything."

The three sat silent. Soon the slightest of noises came from behind them and at the same instant Snavely raised his eyes. Turning, the man and girl saw the giant woman towering above them. Snavely, alone, was not startled by her silent appearance. She nodded to Warren. "Your trunk an' things is in your room."

Ruth stood up at once and gathered her sleeping son in her arms. "Thank you so much—I'll be going to bed now, I guess."

The old adobe seemed very huge and dismal. With no word between them the man and wife stood in the centre of the room. The yellow light from the oil lamp shone upon the walls of earth, mellow and dim.

"What do you think of him?" asked Warren, glancing suddenly into Ruth's eyes.

"I don't know," said Ruth slowly. "Did you notice that look on his face when he was talking about people? Not what you'd call a social animal."

"He hates us—he hates every human being!"

Warren said nothing for a time, then, "We'd better go to bed, I guess."

Ruth nodded.

One of the canvas cots Ann had placed near the glassless window; another, close by, was probably intended for David. The third cot was in the rear room. When the man and girl had finished their preparations the three cots were so close together that there seemed to be only a single broad bed made up in three sections. So hot was the night that covering was impossible. With David between them and the lamp extinguished the father and mother lay on their backs, their hands clasped above David's head.

The stillness was stifling. Finally the hand of her husband gradually relaxed. How could he possibly sleep? Poor Kenny—so terribly tired. She lowered her eyes from their upward stare and looked at the window. It was no longer a black hole but a patch of light—as though the moon were shining.

Carefully, she got to her knees and worked her way to the foot of the bed. Thus kneeling, she could rest her elbows on the sill and look out into the night.

A sound, a single squeak of a metal spring, instinctively brought her eyes to the back door of the ranch house. Some one was standing there; some one had just come softly out. Breathless, she watched. The figure moved slowly toward the ancient adobe and stopped. She knew that it was Snavely. After a moment he turned slightly and, walking with quiet steps, went toward a mound of earth heavily covered with bushes. This mound was nearly opposite the girl's window and about a hundred feet away. When he had reached the clump of bushes Snavely paused and seemed again to be looking at the adobe. She saw that he held a bundle under his arm. Suddenly he stooped low and disappeared from sight. The minutes passed—two, ten, or a hundred, the girl could not have told. Then she heard a hollow echoing clank among the clump of bushes. A moment later Snavely reappeared and walked softly back to the ranch house. His hands were empty. This time he

opened the door in such a way that it did not squeak.

By mid-afternoon of the next day Ruth could hardly stand. All morning and for three hours since lunch, she and Ann had been cleaning out the two rooms in the old adobe.

In spite of Ruth's exhaustion she had done very little actual work. Of the entire two floors she was only able to scrape an area which might have been covered by the ranch bath-tub before the palms of her very white hands developed puffy red mounds, extremely tender. The hoe in Ann's huge hands ripped up long scrolls of earth untiringly.

Much might be said for Ruth's bravery in attempting to do any work whatever, but as a matter of plain fact she was afraid to do anything else. That morning at breakfast she had asked if Ann could help her, and Snavely had replied, "I reckon she can, if you NEED help."

All day this reply had rankled. She told herself that Ann was merely a servant employed on the ranch and that Snavely's interest in the ranch was only one-quarter. Yet while this was in some ways a comforting reflection, it could not put from her mind those pale, jerking eyes.



Suddenly he stooped low and disappeared from sight.

Warren and David were spending the day under a great live oak which stood on the western bank of the gulch and was visible from the doorway of the old adobe. It was a beautiful tree, its wealth of shade made even more inviting by the cool green of its leaves. Warren lay back in a canvas chair, lazily improvising on his guitar. Little David was tremendously busy making things with the small acorns which covered the shaded ground.

Often Ruth glanced toward the oak tree, and once she had gone part way over and shouted to Warren to watch out for snakes. She returned to the adobe reluctantly. She rather felt that she also should be under that tree.

Anyway the adobe looked quite clean and pleasant compared with its appearance the evening before. Only last evening? Ruth could hardly believe that she had not yet been twenty-four hours on the ranch; it seemed a month. Well, the cleaning was over. She supposed that a storm would come in a few days and the whole place would fall down. In such an event she could imagine Snavely suggesting that she move her family into the barn—after cleaning it out.

Since rising that morning, she had wondered constantly what Snavely had been doing the night before. But she had not gone to the bushes to investigate, she had not mentioned the incident to her husband, and she had not the remotest intention of asking Snavely. And, just as she told herself that the voice in the gulch was an echo, she told herself that Snavely was probably attending to some neglected ranch chore—well, such as putting something away in a box which made a clank when the lid was dropped.

Ruth did not know what she thought about Ann. The giantess both fascinated and frightened her. She was fascinated by the skill with which Ann drove nails and she was frightened when the woman bent her back and tossed aside a huge chunk of fallen adobe which partially obstructed the doorway, as though the heavy earth were corks. It was hard to think of the giantess as a woman; her enormous strength and size were so foreign to the girl's idea of femininity. And always Ann was aware of the little dog—Ruth felt that but for her presence Ann and Sugarfoot would have carried

on a continuous conversation. Several times Ruth had tried to start friendly talk with Ann but with no success. The giantess had not once smiled; she did her work like a relentless machine, but a machine with thoughts of its own.

From the corner of her eye she saw Ann loading trash from a pile near the door into a wheelbarrow. She stepped to the threshold and asked casually: "What in the world shall we do with all that stuff, Ann? It won't burn, that's certain."

Ann grunted and lifted the wheelbarrow. Ruth fell into step beside her as the giantess wheeled her load toward a clump of bushes beyond the wood-pile. "You know, Ann, we ought to have a regular place for putting trash—something out of sight where we could put things we didn't want to see any more."

Ann said nothing. "I've often wished I had a place where I could put things I've done that I shouldn't have done." The haughty cast of Ann's features softened; she looked into the girl's eyes and nodded slightly.

Inside the encircling fringe of underbrush a half dozen sun-bleached planks lay upon the ground. Ann turned back the nearest of these disclosing a black hole. She tipped the wheelbarrow and the trash slid from sight. Ruth caught her breath without knowing why—there was something weird in the silent way that load disappeared—perhaps there was water in the hole, very close to the top. Ruth took a step forward, just as a sudden roar of sound belched from the blackness. She screamed—the trash had just struck bottom.

Ann looked at her. "It ain't nothin'—jes' an ol' well we throw stuff into."

"How—how deep is it?"

"Way deep—a hundred feet, I reckon. The folks what built the 'dobe dugged it years ago. But they never found no water jes' hereabouts."

The girl shivered. Something in Ann's face caused her to turn quickly—Snavely was coming through the bushes. His pale eyes glinted dangerously.

"Now, Ann"—he spoke in a high voice—"I think you'd better be tendin' to the milkin'. You best finish with the cleanin' tomorrow. We got to butcher this evenin' too."

Ann left at once. After a moment in which he stood as though half stupefied, Snavely smiled on the girl. "Ann'd rather do most anything than milk—seems to me. She don't know how lucky she is to have somethin' to milk—it ain't every cattle ranch that's got a milk cow." As he was speaking he walked away from the well and Ruth followed. "I got that Jersey for milk—solely for milk—traded a long yearlin' beef for her to a Mexican who was goin' to slaughter her. Besides," he smiled again and stopped beyond the bushes, "we've got good milk for our victuals."

"Oh, I see. It seems like good business to have a milk cow, then. Mr. Snavely, about that well, I—"

"You're dead right it's good business. I told Grey that when we first started up. While he was puttin' in a

new windmill, and the tank, and the cement water troughs I looks around and got hold of that Jersey—she's already paid for herself in the poor little weak calves she's nursed."

They were passing the woodpile and Snavely stooped to pick up the axe. "I come up here for this—me and Ann're goin' to butcher. We need meat. Can't keep it more'n a couple of days in this weather, but Ann'll jerk a lot of it. But we'll have fresh meat for supper." He smiled. "Don't reckon you ever had a chance to eat beet a half hour after it was killed. You want to come down to the corral and watch us?"

"No—no, thank you. Mr. Snavely, please fence that horrible well! I won't let David out of my sight until you do. And when you begin I'll get him out of the way—I don't want him to know about it or be curious. He must never go into those bushes. You will fence it right away, won't you? Please!"

Snavely nodded. "That's a good idea, Mrs. Warren. I'll attend to it."



The girl shivered. Something in Ann's face caused her to turn quickly.

myself tomorrow—we never expected to have kids on the place and just throwed loose boards over it to keep the stock out. But I'll fence it sure."

"Make a very strong fence—one David can't get through or over. Couldn't you use boards? These barbed wire fences look so insecure."

Something terrible flashed into Snavely's eyes. "Barbed wire"—he spat the words—"ain't goin' to be used for nothin' on this place! What wire is here can stay, but, by God I ain't never touched it an' I ain't never goin' to."

"Well—I'm glad you will use the boards, Mr. Snavely," said Ruth uncertainly, as she left him.

That evening when the girl and her family went into the ranch house for supper, they were sorry to see that Ann had a long cut on her cheek. Snavely explained that she had done it on the catch of the kitchen cupboard.

(CONTINUED NEXT WEEK)

TREASURER'S SALE OF LANDS FOR ARREARS OF TAXES

TOWNSHIP OF BUCKE

To Wit:

By virtue of a warrant issued under the hand of the Reeve of the Township of Bucke, and the seal of the Corporation of the said Township, bearing date the 15th day of May, 1933, and to me directed, commanding me to levy upon such lands for the arrears of taxes respectively due thereon, together with all costs thereof. The said list has been published in the Ontario Gazette on September 9th, 16th, 23rd and 30th, 1933, respectively. Copies can be obtained from my office. I hereby give notice that pursuant to the provision of the Assessment Act, R.S.O. 1927, Chapter 238, and any amendments thereto, I shall on **Friday, the 15th day of December, 1933**, at the hour of 2 o'clock in the afternoon, at the Municipal Offices, North Cobalt, in the said lands, or so much thereof as may be necessary to discharge such arrears of Taxes and all costs thereof, unless such arrears and costs have been sooner paid.

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7 p.m.—Gospel Service.

COBALT UNITED CHURCH
Rev. E. Gilmour Smith, B. A.,

11 a.m.—Morning Worship.
2.30 p.m.—Church School.
7 p.m.—Evening Worship.

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Captain Fred Poulton
Lieut. Robert White

SUNDAY
11 a.m.—Holiness Service.
2.15 p.m.—Sunday School.
7 p.m.—Salvation Service.
Thur., 8 p.m.—Prayer Meeting.
Fri., 8 p.m.—Y. P. Guild.

ST. JAMES CHURCH
Rev. C. Glover, B.A., L.S.T.,

8.00 a.m.—Holy Communion.
11.00 a.m.—Holy Communion.
(1st, 3rd, 5th.)
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7.00 p.m.—Evensong.

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