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THE FORBIDDEN VALLEY LAY BEFORE THEM

. . . green and dark like jasper in the shadow of the overhanging cliffs. At the far end, a silver-white veil dropped down the mountainside, splashing crystal sparks into the shimmering air. Across the canyon, a cavern yawned, enclosing a city of stone, rose-red in the setting sun. The city was infinitely still, frozen in sleep, yet ever waiting.

From the sheer ledge, the three — the woman and the two men — looked down in wonder, in joy, in dread.

Only one white man had ever seen the Pueblo Encantado — the Enchanted City — and survived. He had come away with pockets full of raw gold and a mind drowned in madness almost 200 years ago . . .

FOXFIRE



ANYA SETON

PYRAMID BOOKS



NEW YORK

FOXFIRE

A PYRAMID BOOK

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FOX FIRE

CHAPTER ONE

THE STEEP mountain road narrowed again twisting upward on a hairpin curve. The battered little Model T sputtered as Dart shoved the throttle and spark lever and pushed the pedal into low, while the yellow head lamps dimmed then flickered over the dirt road ahead.

They were still climbing, towards El Capitan Pass on the eastern slope of the Pinal range. Outside of the car there was nothing but an immense brooding darkness. The dark of the cliff on the right, faintly tufted with the chaparral growth of the foothills. On the left, a deeper blackness of the canyon. Night seemed to fall so swiftly in Arizona and tonight there were no stars.

The somber enigma of the mountains held Amanda silent. Nor had Dart spoken since they turned south off the Globe highway a few miles back. His calm eyes scanned the road ahead as it unrolled in washboard corrugations after each switchback. He was watching for rockslides or the distant lights of a descending car. There were few good places to pass. Still, they had seen no other cars since sunset when they were driving through the San Carlos Apache reservation.

Dart drove expertly and without tension, allotting to the process the exact amount of awareness which it required. What under-surface thoughts he might be having, Amanda could not guess, deeply though she loved him. Nor was she ever quite sure of his inner life apart from her.

Dart swerved sharply to avoid a chuckhole, the Ford's left wheels bounced within inches of the hundred-foot drop to the creek bed below. Amanda held her breath and stared ahead until the middle of the road jiggling resumed. "How much further now, Dart?"

"Oh, about twenty miles to Dripping Springs, and then twelve more up the Lodestone road. *It's* pretty rough, but we ought to get into town before midnight."

"Don't you consider this road we're *on* rough?" asked Amanda.

"Why, no, ma'am," said Dart chuckling. "This is a highway to Tucson. Didn't you know that? They'll grade it pretty soon, though, when winter's over. Getting tired, Andy?"

Amanda uncrossed her slim silk-covered legs and buttoned her British tweed topcoat tight under her chin. It pushed up her dark gold curls into a little ruff. It had been stifling hot all day crossing the southern desert but now it was cold. A few snowflakes drifted down and melted as they landed.

"Not exactly tired . . ." she said, "I'm all keyed up to see Lodestone, I can't wait, and . . . but, oh, I don't know . . ." She checked this incoherence and made an effort to express the not quite unpleasant feeling which had been growing each hour since they had entered Arizona. "I'm not used to mountains, at least not stark queer ones like these. The country's overpowering. It's spooky. Canyons, cactus, empty, vast, lonely." She laughed. "All the things I've read you're supposed to feel about the Southwest. . . . Well, I feel 'em."

Dart didn't answer at once. Then he spoke with quiet amusement. "I think you always obligingly try to feel what books tell you to feel; you're a romantic little thing."

"Well, of course I'm romantic! That's one reason you love me, darling. Temperamental contrast. Dewy-eyed little romantic versus big, silent realist. We complement each other."

Dart made a noncommittal sound then peered through the dirty windshield as a huge red-tailed hawk sailed above the amber lights and disappeared.

I'm being silly, Amanda thought. Ingenue and brittle. He hates that. Fluffy badinage that did not mean anything, analyzing emotions. A habit developed in sub-deb days and always successful with men like Tim Merrill. Amanda shivered a little, lit a cigarette and thought about Tim with remote and affectionate tolerance. The image of Tim presented itself to her now in a sort of phony glitter, like a carrousel with the painted horses whirling by, the calliope screeching, and with Tim you caught the gold ring every time. She had very nearly persuaded herself that she was in love with him, because they laughed so much, and kept up a line of chatter by the hour, half teasing, half amorous.

Like the night three years ago after the Princeton Prom when seven of them had all piled into Tim's Packard roadster and

careened sixty miles to the ocean at Sea-Girt to go swimming at dawn. They'd kidnaped a little Italian accordionist somewhere along the way, and he had played "O Sole Mio" for them on the beach while they dashed in and out of the freezing surf in their evening clothes. Crazy but fun. That was the night Tim had first asked her to marry him. But even then, long before she met Dart, or dreamed of the dark profound compulsions of real love, she had not wanted to commit herself yet. Tim had scarcely listened to her groping refusal. He had kissed her on the nose, rubbed sand into her hair, and they had drunk together from his flask of imported gin. Tim had plenty of money to pay the best bootleggers. He still had.

"Look, Dart—isn't that a man standing there ahead by the road?" Amanda asked suddenly pointing and clutching his arm.

"That's a cactus, my girl," Dart answered patiently. "A saguaro. We're getting down in desert country again."

Amanda said "Oh" and laughed. "You must bear with your tenderfoot bride."

"I do," he said and though he did not move his hands from the wheel she felt the pressure of his arm against hers. She sighed voluptuously, resting her head on his shoulder. Her heart beat faster and she thought of these past nights since their marriage. The surroundings had not mattered too much. She thought of the tourist court outside Harrisburg on her bridal night, a shabby little cabin, straw mattress and dust on the carpet. But there had been beauty in the dingy cabin with them. Fulfillment. No doubts then, and no regrets. She thought of the note she had written to her mother from St. Louis.

"I'm so happy. Don't ever worry about me. Marriage is a gorgeous, wonderful thing."

This note was for reassurance in answer to her mother's misgivings during the weeks before the wedding. Mrs. Lawrence was worldly and realistic; she was also a pleasant woman and a tactful one, inclined to talk in worthy clichés, since they saved trouble and were never misunderstood. On the whole, she had managed to keep most of her doubts to herself once she had been forced to accept the strength of Amanda's desire for Dart. This time, however, she had voiced her worry. "But baby, you hardly know the man—shipboard flirtations don't really count—nor is he an easy man to understand—such different background from yours, too. And the life of a mining engineer's wife is no bed of roses. It isn't as though I could help you out either, unfortunately. . . ." She sighed and cut across

Amanda's protests, "Oh, I know, dear, money doesn't mean much to you, you haven't really had to face that yet—and I'm not so calloused by middle age that I don't know the strength of your love, but——" Here Mrs. Lawrence had smiled to soften the anxiety of her blue eyes under their frowning, carefully tweezed brows. "Well, there is the fact of Dart's rather—rather peculiar parentage."

Amanda had laughed. "Oh, if that's all! It adds to his charm. I think it's exciting."

Mrs. Lawrence shook her head. "Marriage is a hard enough job at best, without adding extra handicaps."

The flivver jounced through the bottom of a dip up onto a comparatively level stretch, and Dart pulled a cigarette from his pocket. He scraped the match with his thumbnail and the flare lit his face. Amanda looked up at his profile. Not handsome by her mother's standards, too roughhewn, but so completely male. His frontal bones and black eyebrows were very heavy above a straight, thick nose. His flexible lips were sharply defined and held firm at the corners, even when his rare smile showed fine square teeth against his sun-browned skin. His eyes were gray and their steady, often ironic gaze was hard to interpret. He was six feet two, his body loosely knit and angular, like a Scottish Highlander. That's what I thought on the boat when I first saw him standing by the rail. That he was Scotch. . . . Did I actually fall in love with him at first sight, or was it that other night at the Captain's dance?

Dart jammed on the brake, and the Ford shivered to a stop.

"What is it?" she asked, peering ahead at a rippling band of black just beyond the headlights.

"This wash is running," said Dart, opening the door. "Been plenty rain or snow in the mountains. I'll see how deep." He jumped out and returned after five minutes. "We'll have to wait a bit," he said. "She'll be down enough to cross in a while."

"You mean we can't cross?" she asked incredulously, remembering all the dry creek beds.

"Never did teach the flivver to swim," he said, laughing.

"How long, Dart?"

"Oh, about an hour, I guess. You'd better take a nap." He pulled a dusty old steamer rug from the back seat which was piled high with their luggage, and spread it over their knees. He stretched out his long legs, leaned his head back,

and fell asleep at once. Amanda looked at him with envious amusement. Already she knew his gift for complete relaxation, turned on and off like a light switch. His body always obeyed his will. Hers, however, did not. She sat beside him in the dark little car, listening to the gurgle of the wash, and the sporadic distant screech of some night bird. An uneasiness seeped through her and a loneliness which she tried to rationalize. They had been so close to each other while they crossed the East's rolling green hills, and later on the midwestern plains. Friends as well as lovers, sharing the tiny incidents of the road, exploring with mutual excitement the unknown countries in each other's personalities.

Why, then, should this uneasiness have crept in? The scenery, she thought. A sinister quality in the landscape, the weird rock formations, the stark granite mountains bare of all softening green. A sinister quality in the giant cactus, sharply grooved and towering against a burning copper sky. Grotesque shapes in the rocks and in the plants. The prickly pears, thick fleshy paddles armed with hostile spines; the snakelike ocatilla, the vicious cat's-claw and mesquite, but especially those giant saguaros, rearing themselves brutally phallic into the dusty sunshine. A male country eternally disdaining the soft, pliant female.

Freudian nonsense! she thought. Let's get it straight. It isn't so much the scenery. It was that damn historical marker . . . and maybe those Apache wickiups we passed today.

Dart stirred a little and raised his head. "How are you doing, Andy?" he said, seeing the light of her cigarette and the tense lines of her body. "You're not scared, are you? Nothing to be afraid of."

"I know," she said, after a moment. "I'm not afraid with you. I never could be."

He grunted and went to sleep again. She thought of her last remark and knew that it was true. That quality of quiet strength she had felt in him from the first hours on the boat. She had wanted it for herself to lean on, to sink into luxuriously. For she had never known any man like him and the difference between them had but added glamour. Until for a moment today there had been the shock provided by the historical marker.

It stood by the highway as they passed the Peloncillo Mountains just after entering Arizona and Dart at her request had stopped the car so that she might read it. It said, "Site of Apache Raid in October 1881. An entire wagon train of white settlers was massacred here. 30 men, women and children."

"Heavens!" she had cried, shuddering and staring at the bland mesquite-studded desert. "How ghastly. It's so hard to believe."

Dart nodded. "Tanosay was one of the war chiefs in that raid. He never told me much about it, though."

She had been silent while it seemed that a chill wind blew off the desert between them. Dart had started the car and they continued on their way.

"Was that THE RAID?" she asked, very low. "The one when your grandmother——" She could not finish through the tightening of her throat, though at home she had often questioned him.

"No," said Dart. He was not on the defensive, he seemed indifferent to anything she might think. He had stated a fact, bluntly, as he always stated them, and she might do what she liked with it.

Yet that night on the *Bremen* she had thought him defensive and she had glowed with impulsive sympathy.

Amanda snapped on the flashlight and looked at her tiny gold wrist watch. Fifteen minutes had passed. Ahead the wash still gurgled darkly, beside her there was even, steady breathing. She pulled the blanket up across her chest, nestled close to Dart and tried to sleep. But her thoughts would not still, and over and over as if for reassurance her mind unreeled again those days on the boat, and after.

They had been a gay crowd of young people in Tourist Third on the *Bremen* last September, mostly students returning to college after happy vacations in Europe, though some like Amanda would not be able to continue their studies, but must go job-hunting, an uncertain prospect in that fall of 1932. Amanda had rationally accepted the new poverty which engulfed her family in '29, but except for passionate rebellion against her father's resultant death from a heart attack, the shadow of insecurity had not touched her emotionally. There had been enough money salvaged from life insurance for her to complete her sophomore year at Vassar, and to provide Mrs. Lawrence with a tiny income and a three-room flat in New York. There had been a few hundred dollars left to Amanda outright, and these she decided to spend on the student trip to Europe before facing the "grim realities" of life. This was Mrs. Lawrence's own phrase, often expressed. Let Amanda have what fun she might, while she could, poor child, and thank heaven that Jean, at least, was provided for.

Jean, six years older than Amanda, had in 1928 married a solid young man called George Walker. His solidity, though worthy and unencumbered by imagination, might not have ensured Jean's security during the panic years that followed, but his position, as vice-president in his father's Gelatine Products Company, did. George's income had shrunk, of course, but Jean still had her house in Greenwich, her Buick coupé, and a nurse for little Sally Lou.

"Maybe"—Mrs. Lawrence had said, laughing at the flavor of hopeful Victorian mama which underlay her thought—"on this trip to Europe, Andy darling, something will turn up. You never can tell. Thank heaven, you've still got some good clothes. Or"—she added wistfully—"maybe you'll make up your mind about Tim. I think he'd make you happy and you *would* be so well taken care of."

But, not at all in accord with Mrs. Lawrence's hope for Amanda's future, it was Dart who had turned up.

Amanda had first noticed him just after they left Cherbourg on the voyage home. He was standing by the rail, his hands in his pockets, gazing out over the ocean toward the setting sun. She noted first that he was very tall, and that he was a little older than most of the students. His clothes were nondescript, a cheap and rumpled tweed suit, but the position of his body, leaning slightly forward against the wind, suggested an easy strength. So did his hands, she thought, as she watched him lighting a cigarette, and his blunt, thin profile interested her.

In the steamer chair next to Amanda's, Peggy Gordon, her cabin mate, had giggled. "I wouldn't bother to make a play for him, Andy. He looks pretty grim—inhibited, I'd say. Cerebretonic type." Peggy was a psychology major at Vassar.

"I don't think he's grim exactly. There's something about him . . ." Amanda had paused trying to analyze the quality she felt in this tall, rangy and quite unexceptional young man—was it a lack of self-consciousness? An inner poise? "I think he's attractive, anyway," she finished a trifle defiantly.

Dart had then turned, throwing his cigarette into the water, swept the two girls with an indifferent stare and walked off toward the stern.

Neither Amanda nor Peggy was accustomed to indifference in a masculine eye, especially on shipboard. Amanda, especially, had always breathed the incense of male attention. She was not beautiful, but she had known since she was fourteen how to appear so. She was five feet five, small-boned and small-

breasted, so that clothes became her. Bathing suits did too, for her legs were exquisite and years of tennis, swimming, and dancing had long ago vanquished an adolescent pudginess.

Her fine, curly hair had been abandoned by nature to a light brown exactly the shade of a wild mink furpiece, then rescued by beauty parlors to tints of rich and tawny gold. Her face was squared at the jaw and temples, belying a childish soft and appealing mouth, which Amanda enlarged to a vivid scarlet.

These allurements and an aura of shining cleanliness she shared with many other American girls of her age and background, but it was her eyes which arrested attention. They were large and green-blue, set beneath dark brows. They held an expression of direct and friendly interest tinged with laughter, and a hint of coquetry.

Amanda was predisposed to like people and showed it. Nor had she as yet, in her twenty years, been met by anything but warm response. Her self-confidence was, therefore, ingrained and unassuming. She was also a romantic. The combination had led her into several love affairs besides the one with Tim, and led her out of them again. For the romance always unjelled, rapidly melting it seemed to her into a sticky mess of sexual byplay, and though bred on Freud and accustomed like all her generation to the frankest possible analyses of sex, her passions were still unawakened. This was before she met Dart, and despite Peggy's jeers she continued to watch for him while she played shuffleboard or lay in deck chairs with the other young people.

"Probably a shoe clerk, married, with three children in Brooklyn," said Peggy.

"Maybe," answered Amanda, "but I'd like to meet him. I think he looks lonely."

Peggy snorted, and it turned out that she was right. Dart was never lonely, at least not in the usual way.

Amanda did meet him that night, as they all sat in the lounge and drank rich Bavarian beer. Some of the German exchange students clustered together and began clicking mugs and singing. Dart was sitting by himself in a corner, and emboldened by the fruity sentiment of "Alt Wien" Amanda walked over to him smiling. "Don't you want to join us?" she said, indicating her own group. "We thought we might set up a rival chorus when they've finished over there—the 'Missouri Waltz,' or something."

Dart laughed. "Thank you, no. My bullfrog bellow would