

SUN DANCE SUITE

III

With sunrise the great camp is astir again. Smoke rises from the dark throats of the tepees about the big circle; ponies in large herds are driven furiously out to pasture, their rolling backs tossing like the waves of the sea in a cloud of golden sand. Then the warriors, in all their regalia of paint and feathers and emblazoned shields, with lances in hand and quivers at their backs, mount and ride around the great camp circle, inside and outside, led by the bravest, singing their songs of triumph, chanting their prowess, their courage, their victories. The people rush out of the ledges to watch them pass- cackling old men hobbling on sticks, too old and tremulous to mount a horse, but uttering a quavering war-cry; envious boys, clutching their miniature weapons- small children, frightened and wailing, like Astyanax, at the sight of their father's warbonnet- shy sweethearts, hiding their eager eyes and faces behind the shawl drawn close- wives and mothers, proud and happy, joining in the song, or shrilling war-whoops above the din. So the heroes pass on to the big dance lodge in the center of the encampment. They ride in, and the bravest are named chiefs, and return covered with glory to their happy families.