

SUN DANCE SUITE

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And now it is night. The suffering is ended, and the watchers at the dance lodge wait, expectant, with bright eyes, moist lips, as the burning sun slowly sinks behind the barren hills. At last their hopes are rewarded: the chief priest rises, draws his robe about him, and raises his voice in a sing-song announcement which carries to the ears of every person in the great circle of tepees. "My children, my children! You know what this night means! Now the laws of the camp are forgotten- rubbed out. Now the tribe is all one family! Old man, now is the time to escape from your scrawny woman and hug the girls! Young husband, do not be angry when you see ~~your~~ ~~wife~~ ~~in~~ the arms of your brother! And you, young women and girls, do not refuse your lovers. Remember, the Powers Above look down on us this night. The Listeners-Under-the-Ground are hearing your footsteps. Let us do as our fathers did before us. My children, my children, this is Medicine Night!" At once, all is confusion in the camp as the people desert the dance lodge and hurry to their lodges- or to the lodges of others. For license will rule supreme throughout the camp tonight. Now each will do as he likes and pursue the woman he prefers; now each girl, each unhappy wife, may seek the embraces of the man of her choice unhidden. Shouts and screams and laughter, the rush of feet, blows perhaps, soft pleading and loud protest are all about. The ~~hours of darkness~~ ~~are~~ long- too long, for some; to others, the annual Saturnalia speeds by like the wind. But none sleeps, none rests. For this is Medicine Night!