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One Little Indian

By

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An unidentified female about twenty years old was found in the La Brea district of Los Angeles, victim of an apparent homicide. An examination revealed that she had a broken skull caused by a violent blow on the head. Crime of passion, robbery, random killing ? Investigators have found no clues. But may be the answer lies in the scenic panorama of the surrounding hills which have been witnesses to human frailties for millenia and would unlock their secrets for the imaginative observer. If you have any information about this event, please call : 1-800- ANCIENT

The sun has completed about three quarters of its arc in the perfectly blue sky, not a single cloud can be seen anywhere. A gentle breeze from the ocean refreshes the atmosphere and caresses softly the leaves in the high branches of the trees. It appears as the touch of life in an otherwise still environment. Beauty and harmony fill the air. She is feeling deeply the pulse of nature penetrating her being through all her senses, as she walks aimlessly among the hills she knows so well. When she was a little girl her mother would bring her here to pick berries.

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"You are going to get sick if you don't stop eating those fruits. Aurora! That's enough!"

But she would pick some more and runaway giggling with her mother in hot pursuit.

"If I catch you, you're going to get it!" Her mother pretended to be angry as part of the game. She was a very agile woman, although she had brought into the world ten new family members, and she would invariably manage to grab the wiggling child in her arms and carry her away from the sweet temptation.

"This child is blessed by the gods!" She was told that's how her father with his keen sense of a propos greeted her at birth, addressing the clan.

"We had a drought for months and endured much hardship, but the rains came as my daughter was born. I will call her Aurora, like the morning light that chases away the demons of darkness." These proved to be prophetic words indeed as Aurora developed into the most beautiful maiden of the entire village. Her physical charms combined with her joyful disposition give her an exceptional radiance and also a certain ability to communicate happiness to others around her. Tribe members would look up to her as a role model.

A red fox! The sudden apparition of the shy little animal brings Aurora back to reality.

She is downwind of the animal and she manages to get closer. Right there under a large tree, the fox is feasting away. It looks like it caught a small rodent. As Aurora tries to position herself to take a peak at its lunch, she steps on a dead branch. Crack! It might have been a blast of thunder for the jumpy animal. It takes off in a flash and runs as fast as

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those little legs will let him.

"Don't be afraid! I won't hurt you." Aurora finds this exhilarating as she engages in a hot pursuit. She loves to run and never misses a chance to run with her brothers.

Her slender body seems to float over roots and rocks standing in her path. But the fox has disappeared. He probably sought refuge into one of the many holes in the ground. Her father would know what to do. He boasts about his prowess as a hunter when she joins him on hunting expeditions. He always seems to get the first hit on the prey. She suspects that the other hunters want to give him the honor, all except the Ugly family members. The Ugly family joined the tribe during the last drought, driven away from their homes by the lack of food. Aurora does not like any of them. They are aggressive, brutal, mean. There used to be harmony in the tribe before. Now her father has problems to keep the peace. He, as the chief, decided that new blood was good for the group. But it turned into bad blood. Wok, the leader of the Ugliers challenged her father in his position as chief. It was decided that matters would be settled during a hunting expedition.

Aurora's father and Wok took along a small group of hunters. The first one to bring back the head of a mastodon would earn the right to be chief. Her father had now to prove that he was better than his challenger to lead the tribe. After several days of wandering about, the chief and his men spotted a group of mastodons. The chief, experienced hunter as he was, followed them waiting for the right opportunity. He was hoping that one of these giants would wander away from the rest. It could then be attacked without running the risk of a charge from the rest of the herd. Then the Ugliers appeared on the scene. Wok,

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full of aggression as usual, would not wait. He and his men picked as a target one of the younger and smaller animals while it was still close to the herd

"Stupid fool!" The chief exclaimed with his usual flair. " The adults are going to defend their young." He no sooner said it than two of the males started charging the Ugliers.

Wok was knocked down on his back, rolled over, tossed into the air like a feather, flattened on the ground, trampled by a huge male. The chief turned his head and as a good sport pronounced solemnly:

"May his spirit, if there is any left, go in peace!"

"Long live, our chief!" The men shouted with enthusiasm. Meanwhile the Ugliers who could still get up ran away in panic. The challenge was over. The chief, generous in victory killed the biggest buffalo that could be found on his way back and asked the Ugliers to join the tribe in a festive celebration. But Yak, Wok's oldest son, was not happy. He had already asked to marry Aurora. The chief had refused even before the failed challenge. Aurora hated Yak. She was in love with Hunk, one of her father's most valorous hunters. Yak left the tribe after Wok's death. Once in a while he would sneak back into the village to get some food from his family. Aurora it was decided would marry Hunk before the return of the rains. Her father said : " Daughter, it's going to be the happiest event that the tribe has ever seen!"

Aurora jumps of joy. Let's forget about the elusive fox and all that reminiscing. It's time to prepare for the big wedding. Crack! Crack! What's that noise behind her. Is it a wolf, is it a bear, It sounds like heavy steps on fallen branches. It's certainly not the fox. Aurora is scared now. She wants to run back to the village. Suddenly Yak, who was hiding

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behind a tree, jumps in front of her. He has a frightful snarl on his face.

He is holding a large rock in one hand. The hand goes up high. The bright blue sky turns black in a flash in Aurora's mind. And then thousands of lights erupt in her head. It's like a sky in a very clear night lit up by countless stars...

Thousands of skeletons have been found in the La Brea tar pits. Tar has been seeping up to the surface of the earth in that small area of Los Angeles. Rain water formed puddles on the top attracting deers and other preys which in turn brought in carnivorous animals like saber toothed tigers and wolves. All of them, hunted and hunters, were trapped forever in the treacherous glue. Only one human skeleton has been found there, that of a young Indian woman. She had been killed by a blow on the head and thrown into the pit probably to hide the crime. A 10,000 year old murder mystery. Broken dreams. An unfulfilled destiny of long ago. Or was it? It might have been yesterday just as well. It could also be tomorrow. A dreadful scenario to be repeated time and time again with no end in sight, in the panoramic screen of these timeless hills. Man's trials and tribulations have brought fantastic accomplishments and shameful deeds to the area. But the serenity of the landscape endures unchanged.

The End