



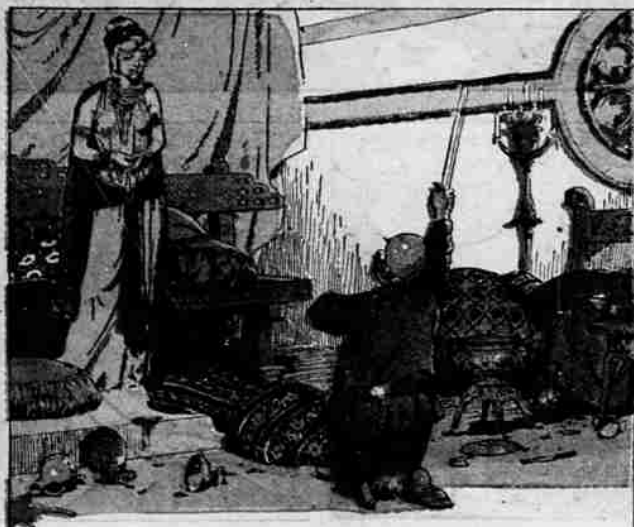
Our Story: PRINCE VALIANT AND HIS NORTHMEN HEW THEIR WAY INTO THE CITY OF THE KHAN, BRINGING FLAME AND PANIC. PIERRE, SIR GAWAIN'S SQUIRE, HAS NO TASTE FOR SUCH THINGS AND ENTERS THE FIRST DOORWAY THAT OFFERS REFUGE.



ALETA STANDS IN THE EMPTY PALACE, WAITING. THE NEXT ONE TO ENTER THAT DOORWAY WILL BRING EITHER RESCUE OR DEATH!



IN ALL THE BEST TOLD TALES OF ROMANCE IT IS THE HERO WHO COMES AT LAST TO RESCUE THE MAIDEN FAIR. BUT THERE IS NOTHING AT ALL HEROIC IN THE FRIGHTENED FIGURE THAT ENTERS.



PIERRE RISES TO THE OCCASION. STRIDING RESOLUTELY FORWARD, HE CRIES: "FEAR NO MORE, LADY QUEEN, FOR I HAVE COME TO YOUR RESCUE!"



IT IS PIERRE'S GREAT MOMENT! THEN VAL AND GAWAIN HAVE TO COME AND SPOIL IT!



FOR TWO LONG DAYS ALETA HAS KNOWN NO REST OR SLEEP; DEATH HAS BEEN VERY CLOSE. SHE LAUGHS, LOUDER AND LOUDER, UNTIL THE ROOM IS FILLED WITH HER WILD LAUGHTER.



VAL IS HURT. WHAT IS SO FUNNY ABOUT HIS HARD-FOUGHT RESCUE? HE HAS NEVER HEARD OF HYSTERICIS.



THEN SHE FLINGS HERSELF INTO HIS ARMS, WEEPING. "I WISH I KNEW MORE ABOUT THE WAYS OF QUEENS!" MUTTERS VAL AS ALETA GOES WEARILY TO SLEEP.

NEXT WEEK—The Retreat.