

## JANUARY BRANCH

By Jason Morningstar

"In captive chains whole races have been led, but never yet upon one heart did fall  
Misfortune's hand so heavy. Thy young head has born a nation's griefs, its woes, and all  
The sorrows which earth's histories call the hand of God. Then, Olive, bend thy knee,  
Morning and night, until the funeral pall hides thy fair face to Him who watches thee,  
Whose power once made thee bond, whose power once set thee free."

Ten years ago the Adams family came west, Faithful from back east. The family patriarch was driven by a vision of settling far to the south, in a secret valley shielded by the desert. They didn't find it, but they did find Mountain People on the war path, driven to violence by the treaty incursions of the Territorial Authority. The entire family was massacred except Lorenzo, who was left for dead, and Olive, who was taken captive at age thirteen. She lived as a slave among the southern Mountain People for five years. During her captivity her face was tattooed with deep blue cactus ink. When finally recovered, Olive was re-united with Lorenzo, who had taken a bride and become Steward of the oddly-named town of January in the interim.

### SOMETHING'S WRONG

Sister Olive, a former captive of the Mountain People, is quietly teaching converts to hate themselves and their kin. Suspicion and bigotry are on the rise.

### PRIDE

Brother John L. refuses to marry Sister Olive, despite pressure from the Steward. John L. is repulsed by her appearance and by her past - he has a fairly good idea what her captors must have done to her, and he doesn't want "damaged goods", even the sister of a Steward. Besides, he's in love with Unity.

Lorenzo views his position as Steward as one of power - to force John L. to marry his sister - rather than responsibility.

Olive and Lorenzo insist that John L. love Olive or, failing that, that he marry her anyway to better her lot in life.

### INJUSTICE

Olive can't really fend for herself in January - she has to rely on her brother to put food on the table. She wants to be a wife and mother but can't, because no eligible man will have her.

John L. and Unity can't be together, even though they are in love.

### SINS

Violence, soon - John L. is going to go up the mountain and kill the Mountain People's "medicine witch".

Apostasy - Olive's cult has veered a little wide of the Faith's mark concerning love and compassion. Because her religion classes are not taught in English, no one in January knows what she's up to.

Disunity - Olive is glad that Unity is going to die. Unity wants Olive destroyed.

### DEMONIC ATTACKS

Sister Unity is suffering from a mysterious illness and will soon die. John L. thinks it is Mountain People witchery to punish Unity for converting, and nobody really disagrees.

Over time, the Mountain People - including converts - are going to suffer, and those who cause the suffering are going to prosper.

### FALSE DOCTRINE

MOUNTAIN PEOPLE ARE THE ENEMY OF THE KING OF LIFE.

### CORRUPT WORSHIP

Olive preaches the converts hatred and self-loathing in their own tongue during "special services", and no one knows but the cultists themselves.

### FALSE PRIESTHOOD

Olive leads the tiny cult and is perfectly happy to see the stubborn Unity wither and die, all in accordance with the King of Life's plan for the Mountain People.

### SORCERY

There's power in hate. It spreads like a weed. It's infecting others, like John L., who is hot to go "teach the savages a lesson" for bewitching Unity.

### HATE AND MURDER

Hatred as thick as clay, built up over torturous years, murder soon to follow. John L. is ready to go up in the hills the day the Dogs arrive. Lorenzo won't be far behind.

### WHAT DO THE TOWNSPEOPLE WANT FROM THE DOGS?

Olive wants her "shameful marks" removed.

Lorenzo wants the Dogs to marry Olive to John L. She deserves happiness after all she's been through.

Faith wants the Dogs to divorce her from Lorenzo. It is a bad match - she's far from worthy of his affection and they can't even communicate. He married her to prove a point about forgiveness.

John L. wants the Mountain People punished for what they've done to Unity. Once she's well enough, he wants the Dogs to bind Unity to him in marriage.

Unity wants the Dogs to destroy Olive, who she knows is a sorceress - and when she tells people in her moments of lucidity, no one will believe her.

Pete Stars wants the Dogs to make him a white man so he'll be a good catch for Unity.

### WHAT DO THE DEMONS WANT?

The demons want more Mountain People converts to pollute, ideally dragged from their dying parents.

### WHAT DO THE DEMONS WANT THE DOGS TO DO?

Support the misguided Steward. Leave Olive to her missionary work. Punish the Mountain People.

### WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF THE DOGS DIDN'T COME?

January would be whipped into a genocidal rage, and the hatred would spread north and south along the range.

## WHO'S WHO

Olive Adams, Sorceress, Religious mentor and former Mountain person captive. In love with John L.

Lorenzo Adams, Steward and carpenter. Olive's older brother. Wants a good match for his little sister.

Faith Adams / Shell Woman, Mountain person convert, Lorenzo's wife. Cultist. Like a shadow to Olive. Cannot speak English.

John L. Frazier, wealthy saw and grist mill owner. Eager to take action. In love with Unity.

Unity / Mouse Road, beautiful and deathly ill Mountain Person convert. Cultist. Speaks good English when she is lucid and knows the score. In love with John L.

Pete Stars, millhand and Mountain Person convert. In love with Unity. Cultist devoted to Olive. Speaks halting English.

## NOTES

This town was inspired by Royal B. Stratton's *The Captivity of the Oatman Girls: Being an Interesting Narrative of Life Among the Apache and Mohave Indians*, written in 1858.

<http://books.google.com/books?id=CFoYoDvI3x8C&dq=%22captivity+of+the+oatman+girls%22>

Brief biography and photograph of Olive Oatman:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Olive\\_Oatman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Olive_Oatman)