

Rescue at the Crossroads

11:59 am, September 2, 1911 - Indianapolis, Indiana.

Lynn Fox left the train depot and walked toward the police station. As a reporter of 'The World', a weekly newspaper for Colored people nationwide, Lynn prided herself in reporting the truth. But tonight she was off the record and seeking justice.

Hours earlier, 13-year-old David Johnson, accused of 'whistling' at a white woman, was dragged from his family's farm and thrown in jail. His grandmother contacted Lynn for help, worried that her grandson might not live to see the light of day. The town's torches were lit just after dusk, lighting the path for hundreds of angry men and women, each seeking their pound of flesh.

Lynn saw a single light twinkling on the horizon. "These negros are never on time," she joked to herself. Sizing up the growing mob, Lynn knew that she would have to start without help. Tired and sore from helping her neighbors harvest their crops, Lynn rolled her head from side to side. 'There's more than corn in Indiana,' she vexed, 'racism.'

There were no chants from the lynch mob, just hate and an insatiable lust for blood. It began to rain as a brick was thrown toward Lynn. She effortlessly caught it midair like a baseball, held it up, and chuckled, "Who threw this?" as she tossed the brick aside and walked forward. With the cover of night and dim street lights, Lynn barely needed a disguise. She already spotted the mayor and a famous racecar driver, so she thought it best to remain anonymous.

"Go home, the kid's already in the hoosegow!" Lynn pleaded half-heartedly. A low, booming voice replied, "Make us Niggra!" Parting the crowd was the largest man that Lynn had ever seen! Armed with a scythe, Cornfed was an imposing figure. "We gonna have us few hangings tonight!" laughed Cornfed.

"Da name's Esther!" Lynn yelled in a deep, rich, exaggerated Haitian accent, as her alter ego emerged. "Besides, it's morning already, ding-bat!" countered Lynn.

"I ain't scared of no little Voodoo Coon! Imma enjoy strangin' you up!" Cornfed snarled, as he lumbered toward Lynn.

Just then, Lynn felt a swift brush against her side and the familiar smell of coal. As Cornfed's scythe hurtled down toward her, an imposing shadow nearly the size of Cornfed's appeared. When John Henry Jr.'s (Junior for short) hammer blocked Cornfed's reaper, the streets resounded with rolling thunder.

"Well, well, the prodigal son has returned?" Cornfed mused. "Yo daddy cried when I gutted him like a fish, so what in the hell you gonna do... boy?" taunted Cornfed. "Daddy was 90!" Junior roared as he nailed Cornfed square in the chest with his hammer. The blow sent Cornfed airborne several yards back into the scrum. Cornfed slowly got back up and ran toward Junior enraged. The two giants sized each other up and traded punches. "Get the kid!" Junior cried to Lynn.

The mob and Lynn ran toward the station. Lynn arrived first, but the police barred the doors, trapping her outside to the bigots' benefit.

"Sick!" yelled a Beelzebub, unleashing a pack of dogs that ran toward Lynn like a rabid Cerberus leaping from the porch of hell! Lynn conjured up an old familiar childhood spell. As the time slowed from

minutes to seconds, the large pointy eared black and tan hounds appeared suspended not only in time, but in space. Lynn was reminded of the demise of her beloved matriarchs.

As all matter in her immediate vicinity drifted, easily manipulated as pawns on a chess board, so did Lynn thoughts. She drifted away to Haiti, to a time long ago when she hid away as a similar pack of hulking dogs mauled the lifeless bodies of her mother and grandmother on a pier. Both once very powerful in the ancient mystic arts, they sacrificed themselves (and bequeathed their powers) so that Lynn and her baby brother could stow-away on a ship bound for America.

As her time spell dissipated, Lynn, slowly turned around to a surprise attack – a blast of water from a fire hose! Before her was a team of firemen, pumping water from their fire engine. The water cannon pinned Lynn to the station door. Skillfully controlling the residual effects of time distortion, she propelled herself from the door toward the racist rabble. Lynn appeared to fly toward the hateful horde at an inexplicable speed! As the lagging water hose continued to follow Lynn, it extinguished most of the torches and knocked down scores of bigots like dominos. She continued into the mob in a zig-zag motion, smacking their faces for good measure!

A few Hoosiers regained their footing as the hose ceased and the effects of the spell wore off. Suddenly, someone grabbed Lynn's boot and slammed her to the ground! Now several hundred yards into the fray, Lynn realized that she was severely outnumbered. Another Hoosier caught Lynn off guard and stabbed her in the left leg with a pitchfork! Then a barrage of shovels, rakes, and sticks hit Lynn so hard, all she could do was curl up into a ball.

The ruffraff continued to attack Lynn with a flurry of fists and feet from behind. Sensing the beginnings of regeneration and unwilling to concede defeat, Lynn caught a bat just inches from her face, pulling herself up as its wielder followed through with his swing. Regaining her footing, she snatched a pitchfork from a stunned attacker, snapped the handle across her leg, leaving a dense wooden handle in her hands. Lynn began twirling it about, using *Arnis*, an ancient martial arts style, as more 'lemmings' stepped up for a customized beating.

Lynn and her brother, Jack, mastered combat from their mentor, Dr. Wilson, (a Buffalo Soldier). Dr. Wilson spent years learning *Arnis de mano* and *kuntaw* in a POW camp during the Philippine-American War. Blocking bats and enduring pain in the rain reminded her of the countless hours she spent practicing in the garden of her adopted home.

The ability to heal quickly was a gift from her grandmother. She sensed Jack's presence before he arrived. This was one of many preternatural gifts that she received from her mother. Lynn was reassured by Jack's pending arrival to help further subdue the throng.

As the ground violently rumbled, everyone stopped fighting to seek out its source. A bright light emerged from a cloud of steam at the depot. CJ's train arrived just as the Indiana State Militia marched up South Street. CJ's hustle and ingenuity made her into a true titan of industry, but her business empire was not nearly as impressive as her vigilante enterprises. CJ exited a train car ramp riding on a motorcycle, accompanied by Lynn's brother Jack, an Indian aptly named 'Kills' (for short), and a sea of young men (Nupes) and women (Walker Agents) dressed to the nines and armed with canes and hatpins (respectfully).

CJ ordered the Nupes to the police station to free David, while hundreds of Walker Agents threw scores of needle-sharp hatpins from their Edwardian Straw Boaters to counter the militia's attack. Jack joined Lynn as 'Kills' charged toward the militia's flanking cavalry, living up to his namesake.

Jack and Lynn pushed the mob back with a series of blows and kicks that caused scores of Hoosiers to retreat. The Nupes fought the police and managed to find David without any bloodshed, per CJ's orders. The firemen blindly gave chase as CJ sped away from the train tracks as planned.

Lynn asked, "Think we can do a Sandman, Ace?" "With this many... maybe," Jack reasoned. The duo whispered in a mystical tongue as Junior pushed Cornfed toward the rioters. Like a log being tossed onto a bonfire, the sky was filled with glowing ashes that mesmerized the entire horde. One by one, they all fell to the muddy streets.

"You might want to get the militia too, before 'Kills'... well, you know..." quipped Junior.

CJ's train whistle blew, commanding her crew return to the depot. 'Kills', just getting into a rhythm, reluctantly retreated too. The militia and cavalry, also dazed by Lynn and Jack's spell, toppled over in the street.

David boarded the train with the Nupes, enthusiastically shaking the hands of everyone he encountered, thankful for his newfound freedom. Finally, Lynn, Jack, and Junior met up with 'Kills' on the train. "What in the hell is a Nupe?" whispered Junior. "I dunno. I think CJ picked them up in Bloomington," replied Jack.

"Why didn't you guys just knock everyone out?" complained 'Kills.' Jack replied, 'It never lasts for more than a few minutes!' 'Besides,' Lynn warned, "the Klan will be here soon. We've done what we came to do."

Finally, after losing the fire engines, CJ drove her motorcycle up a ramp onto her train and ordered her conductor to depart.

Lynn asked CJ, "Where will David go now?" "Tulsa, Oklahoma," CJ replied. "There's an amazing community there, with a bright future," she said.