

THE CUP OF TREMBLING
AND OTHER STORIES

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Short Story Index Reprint Series



BOOKS FOR LIBRARIES PRESS
FREEPORT, NEW YORK

First Published 1895
Reprinted 1970

STANDARD BOOK NUMBER:
8369-3340-0

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOG CARD NUMBER:
74-110189

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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MAVERICK

TRAVELING BUTTES is a lone stage-station on the road, largely speaking, from Blackfoot to Boise. I do not know whether the stages take that road now, but ten years ago they did, and the man who kept the stage-house was a person of primitive habits and corresponding appearance named Gilroy.

The stage-house is perhaps half a mile from the foot of the largest butte, one of three that loom on the horizon, and appear to "travel" from you, as you approach them from the plains. A day's ride with the Buttes as a landmark is like a stern chase, in that you seem never to gain upon them.

From the stage-house the plain slopes up to the foot of the Big Butte, which rises suddenly in the form of an enormous tepee, as if Gitchie Manitó, the mighty, had here descended and pitched his tent for a council of the nations.

The country is destitute of water. To say

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that it is "thirsty" is to mock with vain imagery that dead and nummied land on the borders of the Black Lava. The people at the stage-house had located a precious spring, four miles up, in a cleft near the top of the Big Butte; they piped the water down to the house and they sold it to travelers on that Jericho road at so much per horse. The man was thrown in, but the man usually drank whisky.

Our guide commented unfavorably on this species of husbandry, which is common enough in the arid West, and as legitimate as selling oats or hay; but he chose to resent it in the case of Gilroy, and to look upon it as an instance of individual and exceptional meanness.

"Any man that will jump God's water in a place like this, and sell it the same as drinks—he'd sell water to his own father in hell!"

This was our guide's opinion of Gilroy. He was equally frank, and much more explicit, in regard to Gilroy's sons. "But," he concluded, with a philosopher's acceptance of existing facts, "it ain't likely that any of that outfit will ever git into trouble, so long as Maverick is sheriff of Lemhi County."

We were about to ask why, when we drove up to the stage-house, and Maverick himself stepped out and took our horses.

"What the—infernal has happened to the man?" my companion, Ferris, exclaimed; and our guide answered indifferently, as if he were speaking of the weather,—

"Some Injuns caught him alone in an out-o'-the-way ranch, when he was a kid, and took a notion to play with him. This is what was left when they got through. I never see but one worse-looking man," he added, speaking low, as Maverick passed us with the team: "him a bear wiped over the head with its paw. 'I was quicker over with, I expect, but he lived, and he looked worse than Maverick."

"Then I hope to the Lord I may never see him!" Ferris ejaculated; and I noticed that he left his dinner untasted, though he had boasted of a hunter's appetite.

We were two college friends on a hunting trip, but we had not got into the country of game. In two days more we expected to make Jackson's Hole, and I may mention that "hole," in this region, signifies any small, deep valley, well hidden amidst high

mountains, where moisture is perennial, and grass abounds. In these pockets of plenty, herds of elk gather and feed as tame as park pets; and other hunted creatures, as wild but less innocent, often find sanctuary here, and cache their stolen stock and other spoil of the road and the range.

We did not forget to put our question concerning Maverick, that unhappy man, in his character of legalized protector of the Gilroy gang. What did our free-spoken guide mean by that insinuation?

We were told that Gilroy, in his rough-handed way, had been as a father to the lad, after the savages wreaked their pleasure on him: and his people being dead or scattered, Maverick had made himself useful in various humble capacities at the stage-house, and had finally become a sort of factotum there and a member of the family. And though perfectly square himself, and much respected on account of his personal courage and singular misfortunes, he could never see the old man's crookedness, nor the more than crookedness of his sons. He was like a son of the house, himself; but most persons agreed that it was not as a brother he felt toward Rose Gilroy.

And a tough lookout it was for the girl; for Maverick was one whom no man would lightly cross, and in her case he was acting as "general dog around the place," as our guide called it. The young fellows were shy of the house, notwithstanding the attraction it held. It was likely to be Maverick or nobody for Rose.

We did not see Rose Gilroy, but we heard her step in the stage-house kitchen, and her voice, as clear as a lark's, giving orders to the tall, stooping, fair young Swede, who waited on us at table, and did other work of a menial character in that singular establishment.

"How is it the watch-dog allows such a pretty sprig as that around the place?" Ferris questioned, eying our knight of the trencher, who blushed to feel himself remarked.

"He won't stay," our guide pronounced; "they don't none of 'em stay when they're good-lookin'. The old man he's failin' considerable these days,—gettin' kind o' silly,—and the boys are away the heft of the time. Maverick pretty much runs the place. I don't justly blame the critter. He's

watched that little Rose grow up from a baby. How's he goin' to quit being fond of her now she's a woman? I dare say he'd a heap sooner she'd stayed a little girl. And these vere boys around here they're a triffin' set, not half so able to take care of her as Maverick. He's got the sense and he's got the sand; but there's that awful head on him! I don't blame him much, lookin' the way he does, and feelin' the same as any other man."

We left Traveling Buttes and its cruel little love-story, but we had not gone a mile when a horseman overtook us with a message for Ferris from his new foreman at the ranch, a summons which called him back for a day at the least. Ferris was exceedingly annoyed: a day at the ranch meant four days on the road; but the business was imperative. We held a brief council, and decided that, with Ferris returning, our guide should push on with the animals and camp outfit into a country of grass, and look up a good camping-spot (which might not be the first place he struck) this side of Jackson's Hole. It remained for me to choose between going with the stuff, or staying for a

longer look at the phenomenal Black Lava fields at Arco; Arco being another name for desolation on the very edge of that weird stone sea. This was my ostensible reason for choosing to remain at Arco; but I will not say the reflection did not cross me that Arco is only sixteen miles from Traveling Buttes — not an insurmountable distance between geology and a pretty girl, when one is five and twenty, and has not seen a pretty face for a month of Sundays.

Arco, at that time, consisted of the stage-house, a store, and one or two cabins—a poor little seed of civilization dropped by the wayside, between the Black Lava and the hills where Lost River comes down and “sinks” on the edge of the lava. The station is somewhat back from the road, with its face—a very grimy, unwashed countenance—to the lava. Quaking aspens and mountain birches follow the water, pausing a little way up the gulch behind the house, but the eager grass tracks it all the way till it vanishes; and the dry bed of the stream goes on and spreads in a mass of coarse sand and gravel, beaten flat, flailed by the feet of countless driven sheep that

have gathered here. For this road is on the great overland sheep-trail from Oregon eastward—the march of the million mouths, and what the mouths do not devour the feet tramp down.

The staple topic of conversation at Arco was one very common in the far west, when a tenderfoot is of the company. The poorest place can boast of some distinction, and Arco, though hardly on the highroad of fashion and commerce, had frequently been named in print in connection with crime of a highly sensational and picturesque character. Scarcely another fifty miles of stage-road could boast of so many and such successful road-jobs; and although these affairs were of almost monthly occurrence, and might be looked for to come off always within that noted danger-limit, yet it was a fact that the law had never yet laid finger on a man of the gang, nor gained the smallest clew to their hide-out. It was a difficult country around Arco, one that lent itself to secrecy. The road-agents came, and took, and vanished as if the hills were their co-partners as well as the receivers of their goods. As for the lava, which was its front

dooryard, so to speak, for a hundred miles, the man did not live who could say he had crossed it. What it held or was capable of hiding, in life or in death, no man knew.

The day after Ferris left me I rode out upon that arrested tide — those silent breakers which for ages have threatened, but never reached, the shore. I tried to fancy it as it must once have been, a sluggish, vitreous flood, filling the great valley, and stiffening as it slowly pushed toward the bases of the hills. It climbed and spread, as dough rises and crawls over the edge of the pan. The Black Lava is always called a sea — that image is inevitable; yet its movement had never in the least the character of water. "This is where hell pops," an old plainsman feelingly described it, and the suggestion is perfect. The colors of the rock are those produced by fire: its texture is that of slag from a furnace. One sees how the lava hardened into a crust, which cracked and sank in places, mingling its tumbled edges with the creeping flood not cooled beneath. After all movement had ceased and the mass was still, time began upon its tortured configurations, crumbled and wore and

broke, and sifted a little earth here and there, and sealed the burnt rock with fairy print of lichens, serpent-green and orange and rust-red. The spring rains left shallow pools which the summer dried. Across it, a few dim trails wander a little way and give out, like the water.

For a hundred miles to the Snake River this Plutonian gulf obliterates the land — holds it against occupation or travel. The shoes of a marching army would be cut from their feet before they had gone a dozen miles across it; horses would have no feet left; and water would have to be packed as on an ocean, or a desert, cruise.

I rode over places where the rock rang beneath my horse's hoofs like the iron cover of a manhole. I followed the hollow ridges that mounted often forty feet above my head, but always with that gruesome effect of thickening movement — that sluggish, atomic crawl; and I thought how one man pursuing another into this frozen hell might lose himself, but never find the object of his quest. If he took the wrong furrow, he could not cross from one blind gut into another, nor hope to meet the fugitive at any future turning.

I don't know why the fancy of a flight and pursuit should so have haunted me, in connection with the Black Lava; probably the desperate and lawless character of our conversation at the stage-house gave rise to it.

I had fallen completely under the spell of that skeleton flood. I watched the sun sink, as it sinks at sea, beyond its utmost ragged ridges; I sat on the borders of it, and stared across it in the gray moonlight; I rode out upon it when the Buttes, in their delusive nearness, were as blue as the gates of amethyst, and the morning was as fair as one great pearl; but no peace or radiance of heaven or earth could change its aspect more than that of a mound of skulls. When I began to dream about it, I thought I must be getting morbid. This is worse than Gilroy's, I said; and I promised myself I would ride up there next day and see if by chance one might get a peep at the Rose that all were praising, but none dared put forth a hand to pluck. Was it indeed so hard a case for the Rose? There are women who can love a man for the perils he has passed. Alas, Maverick! could any one get used to a face like that?

Here, surely, was the story of Beauty and her poor Beast humbly awaiting, in the mask of a brutish deformity, the recognition of Love pure enough to divine the soul beneath, and unselfish enough to deliver it. Was there such love as that at Gilroy's? However, I did not make that ride.

It was the fourth night of clear, desert moonlight since Ferris had left me: I was sleepless, and so I heard the first faint throb of a horse's feet approaching from the east, coming on at a great pace, and making the turn to the stage-house. I looked out, and on the trodden space in front I saw Maverick dismounting from a badly blown horse.

"Halloo! what's up?" I called from the open window of my bedroom on the ground-floor.

"Did two men pass here on horseback since dark?"

"Yes," I said; "about twelve o'clock: a tall man and a little short fellow."

"Did they stop to water?"

"No, they did not; and they seemed in such a tearing hurry that I watched them down the road" —

"I am after those men, and I want a fresh horse," he cut in. "Call up somebody quick!"

"Shall you take one of the boys along?" I inquired, with half an eye to myself, after I had obeyed his command.

He shook his head. "Only one horse here that's good for anything: I want that myself."

"There is my horse," I suggested; "but I'd rather be the one who rides her. She belongs to a friend."

"Take her, and come on, then, but understand—this ain't a Sunday-school picnic."

"I'm with you, if you'll have me."

"I'd sooner have your horse," he remarked, shifting the quid of tobacco in his cheek.

"You can't have her without me, unless you steal her," I said.

"Git your gun, then, and shove some grub into your pockets: I can't wait for nobody."

He swung himself into the saddle.

"What road do you take?"

"There ain't but one," he shouted, and pointed straight ahead.

I overtook him easily within the hour; he

was saving his horse, for this was his last chance to change until Champagne Station, fifty miles away.

He gave me rather a cynical smile of recognition as I ranged alongside, as if to say, "You'll probably get enough of this before we are through." The horses settled down to their work, and they "humped themselves," as Maverick put it, in the cool hours before sunrise.

At daybreak his awful face struck me all afresh, as inscrutable in its strange distortion as some stone god in the desert, from whose graven hideousness a thousand years of mornings have silently drawn the veil.

"What do you want those fellows for?" I asked, as we rode. I had taken for granted that we were hunting suspects of the road-agent persuasion.

"I want 'em on general principles," he answered shortly.

"Do you think you know them?"

"I think they'll know me. All depends on how they act when we get within range. If they don't pay no attention to us, we'll send a shot across their bows. But more likely they'll speak first."

He was very gloomy, and would keep silence for an hour at a time. Once he turned on me as with a sudden misgiving.

"See here, don't you git excited; and whatever happens, don't you meddle with the little one. If the big fellow cuts up rough, he'll take his chances, but you leave the little one to me. I want him—I want him for State's evidence," he finished hoarsely.

"The little one must be the Benjamin of the family," I thought—"one of the bad young Gilroys, whose time has come at last; and sheriff Maverick finds his duty hard."

I could not say whether I really wished the men to be overtaken, but the spirit of the chase had undoubtedly entered into my blood. I felt as most men do, who are not saints or cowards, when such work as this is to be done. But I knew I had no business to be along. It was one thing for Maverick, but the part of an amateur in a man-hunt is not one to boast of.

The sun was now high, and the fresh tracks ahead of us were plain in the dust. Once they left the road and strayed off into the lava, incomprehensibly to me; but

Maverick understood, and pressed forward. "We'll strike them again further on. D——fool!" he muttered, and I observed that he alluded but to one, "huntin' water-holes in the lava in the tail end of August!"

They could not have found water, for at Belgian Flat they had stopped and dug for it in the gravel, where a little stream in freshet time comes down the gulch from the snow-fields higher up, and sinks, as at Arco, on the lip of the lava. They had dug, and found it, and saved us the trouble, as Maverick remarked.

Considerable water had gathered since the flight had paused here and lost precious time. We drank our fill, refreshed our horses, and shifted the saddle-girths; and I managed to stow away my lunch during the next mile or so, after offering to share it with Maverick, who refused it as if the notion of food made him sick. He had considerable whisky aboard, but he was, I judged, one of those men on whom drink has little effect; else some counter-flame of excitement was fighting it in his blood.

I looked for the development of the personal complication whenever we should come

up with the chase, for the man's eye burned, and had his branded countenance been capable of any expression that was not cruelly travestied, he would have looked the impersonation of wild justice.

It was now high noon, and our horses were beginning to feel the steady work; yet we had not ridden as they brought the good news from Ghent: that is the pace of a great lyric; but it's not the pace at which justice, or even vengeance, travels in the far West. Even the furies take it coolly when they pursue a man over these roads, and on these poor brutes of horses, in fifty-mile stages, with drought thrown in.

Maverick had had no mercy on the pony that brought him sixteen miles; but this piece of horse-flesh he now bestrode must last him through at least to Champagne Station, should we not overhaul our men before. He knew well when to press and when to spare the pace, a species of purely practical consideration which seemed habitual with him; he rode like an automaton, his baleful face borne straight before him—the Gorgon's head.

Beyond Belgian Flat—how far beyond

I do not remember, for I was beginning to feel the work, too, and the country looked all alike to me as we made it, mile by mile—the road follows close along by the lava, but the hills recede, and a little trail cuts across, meeting the road again at Deadman's Flat. Here we could not trust to the track, which from the nature of the ground was indistinct. So we divided our forces, Maverick taking the trail,—which I was quite willing he should do, for it had a look of most sinister invitation,—while I continued by the longer road. Our little discussion, or some atmospheric change,—some breath of coolness from the hills,—had brought me up out of my stupor of weariness. I began to feel both alert and nervous; my heart was beating fast. The still sunshine lay all around us, but where Maverick's white horse was climbing, the shadows were turning eastward, and the deep gulches, with their patches of aspen, were purple instead of brown. The aspens were left shaking where he broke through them and passed out of sight.

I kept on at a good pace, and about three o'clock I, being then as much as half a mile

away, saw the spot which I knew must be Deadman's Flat; and there were our men, the tall one and his boyish mate, standing quietly by their horses in broad sunlight, as if there were no one within a hundred miles. Their horses had drunk, and were cropping the thin grass, which had set its tooth in the gravel where, as at the other places, a living stream had perished. I spurred forward, with my heart thumping, but before they saw me I saw Maverick coming down the little gulch; and from the way he came I knew that he had seen them.

The scene was awful in its treacherous peacefulness. Their shadows slept on the broad bed of sunlight, and the gulch was as cool and still as a lady's chamber. The great dead desert received the silence like a secret.

Tenderfoot as I was, I knew quite well what must happen now; yet I was not prepared—could not realize it—even when the tall one put his hand quickly behind him and stepped ahead of his horse. There was the flash of his pistol, and the loud crack echoing in the hill; a second shot, and

then Maverick replied deliberately, and the tall one was down, with his face in the grass.

I heard a scream that sounded strangely like a woman's; but there were only the three, the little one, acting wildly, and Maverick bending over him who lay with his face in the grass. I saw him turn the body over, and the little fellow seemed to protest, and to try to push him away. I thought it strange he made no more of a fight, but I was not near enough to hear what those two said to each other.

Still, the tragedy did not come home to me. It was all like a scene, and I was without feeling in it except for that nervous trembling which I could not control.

Maverick stood up at length, and came slowly toward me, wiping his face. He kept his hat in his hand, and, looking down at it, said huskily:—

"I gave that man his life when I found him last spring runnin' loose like a wild thing in the mountains, and now I've took it; and God above knows I had no grudge ag'in' him, if he had stayed in his place. But he would have it so."

"Maverick, I saw it all, and I can swear it was self-defense."

His face drew into the tortured grimace which was his smile. "This here will never come before a jury," he said. "It's a family affair. Did ye see how he acted? Steppin' up to me like he was a first-class shot, or else a fool. He ain't nary one; he's a poor silly tool, the whip-hand of a girl that's boltin' from her friends like they was her mortal enemies. Go and take a look at him; then maybe you 'll understand."

He paused, and uttered the name of Jesus Christ, but not as such men often use it, with an inconsequence dreadful to hear: he was not idly swearing, but calling that name to witness solemnly in a case that would never come before a jury.

I began to understand.

"Is it—is the girl?"—

"Yes; it's our poor little Rose—that's the little one, in the gray hat. She 'll give herself away if I don't. She don't care for nothin' nor nobody. She was runnin' away with that fellow—that dish-washin' Swede what I found in the mountings eatin' roots like a ground-hog; with the ends of his feet

froze off. Now you know all I know—and more than she knows, for she thinks she was fond of him. She wa'n't, never—for I watched 'em, and I know. She was crazy to git away, and she took him for the chance."

His excitement passed, and we sat apart and watched the pair at a distance. She—the little one—sat as passively by her dead as Maverick pondering his cruel deed; but with both it was a hopeless quiet.

"Come," he said at length, "I've got to bury him. You look after her, and keep her with you till I git through. I'm givin' you the hardest part," he added wistfully, as if he fully realized how he had cut himself off from all such duties, henceforth, to the girl he was consigning to a stranger's care.

I told him I thought that the funeral had more need of me than the mourner, and I shrank from intruding myself.

"I dassent leave her by herself—see? I don't know what notion she may take next, and she won't let me come within a rope's length of her."

I will not go over again that miserable hour in the willows, where I made her stay with me, out of sight of what Maverick was

doing. Ours were the tender mercies of the wicked, I fear ; but she must have felt that sympathy at least was near her, if not help. I will not say that her youth and distressed loveliness did not sharpen my perception of a sweet life wasted, ^{gone} ^{tr}Y, which might have brought God's blessing into some man's home — perhaps Maverick's, had he not been so hardly dealt with. She was not of that great disposition of heart which can love best that which has sorest need of love ; but she was all woman, and helpless and distraught with her tangle of grief and despair, the nature of which I could only half comprehend.

We sat there by the sunken stream, on the hot gravel where the sun had lain, the willows sifting their inconstant shadows over us ; and I thought how other things as precious as "God's water" go astray on the Jericho road, or are captured and sold for a price, while dry hearts ache with the thirst that asks a "draught divine."

The man's felt hat she wore, pulled down over her face, was pinned to her coil of braids which had slipped from the crown of her head. The hat was no longer even a

protection ; she cast it off, and the blond braids, that had not been smoothed for a day and night, fell like ropes down her back. The sun had burned her cheeks and neck to a clear crimson ; her blue eyes were as wild with weeping as a child's. She was a rose, but a rose that had been trampled in the dust ; and her prayer was to be left there, rather than that we should take her home.

I suppose I must have had some influence over her, for she allowed me to help her to arrange her forlorn disguise, and put her on her horse, which was more than could have been expected from the way she had received me. And so, about four o'clock, we started back.

There was a scene when we headed the horses to the west ; she protesting with wild sobs that she would not, could not, go home, that she would rather die, that we should never get her back alive, and so on. Maverick stood aside bitterly, and left her to me, and I was aware of a grotesque touch of jealousy — which, after all, was perhaps natural — in his dour face whenever he looked back at us. He kept some distance ahead, and waited for us when we fell too far in the rear.

This would happen when from time to time her situation seemed to overpower her, and she would stop in the road, and wring her hands, and try to throw herself out of the saddle, and pray me to let her go.

"Go where?" I would ask. "Where do you wish to go? Have you any plan, or suggestion, that I could help you to carry out?" But I said it only to show her how hopeless her resistance was. This she would own piteously, and say: "Nobody can help me. There ain't nowhere for me to go. But I can't go back. You won't let him make me, will you?"

"Why cannot you go back to your father and your brothers?"

This would usually silence her, and, setting her teeth upon her trouble, she would ride on, while I reproached myself, I knew not why.

After one of these struggles — when she had given in to the force of circumstances, but still unconsenting and rebellious — Maverick fell back, and ranged his horse by her other side.

"I know partly what's troubling you, and I'd rid you of that part quick enough,"

he said, with a kind of dogged patience in his hard voice; "but you can't get on there without me. You know that, don't you? You don't blame me for staying?"

"I don't blame you for anything but what you've done to-day. You've broke my heart, and ruined me, and took away my last chance, and I don't care what becomes of me, so I don't have to go back."

"You don't have to any more than you have to live. Dyin' is a good deal easier, but we can't always die when we want to. Suppose I found a little lost child on the road, and it cried to go home, and I did n't know where 'home' was, would I leave it there just because it cried and hung back? I'd take you to a better home if I knew of one; but I don't. And there's the old man. I suppose we could get some doctor to certify that he's out of his mind, and get him sent up to Blackfoot; but I guess we'd have to buy the doctor first."

"Oh, hush, do, and leave me alone," she said.

Maverick dug his spurs into his horse, and plunged ahead.

"There," she cried, "now you know part

of it; but it's the least part—the least, the least! Poor father, he's awful queer. He don't more than half the time know who I am," she whispered. "But it ain't him I'm running away from. It's myself—my own life."

"What is it—can't you tell me?"

She shook her head, but she kept on telling, as if she were talking to herself.

"Father he's like I told you, and the boys—oh, that's worse! I can't get a decent woman to come there and live, and the women at Arco won't speak to me because I'm livin' there alone. They say—they think I ought to get married—to Maverick or somebody. I'll die first. I *will* die, if there's any way to, before I'll marry him!"

This may not sound like tragedy as I tell it, but I think it was tragedy to her. I tried to persuade her that it must be her imagination about the women at Arco; or, if some of them did talk,—as indeed I myself had heard, to my shame and disgust,—I told her I had never known that place where there was not one woman, at least, who could understand and help another in her trouble.

"I don't know of any," she said simply. There was no more to do but ride on, feeling like her executioner; but

"Ride hooly, ride hooly, now, gentlemen,
Ride hooly now wi' me,"

came into my mind; and no man ever kept beside a "wearier burd," on a sadder journey.

At dusk we came to Belgian Flat, and here Maverick, dismounting, mixed a little whisky in his flask with water which he dipped from the pool. She must have recalled who dug the well, and with whom she had drunk in the morning. He held it to her lips. She rejected it with a strong shudder of disgust.

"Drink it!" he commanded. "You'll kill yourself, carryin' on like this." He pressed it on her, but she turned away her face like a sick and rebellious child.

"Maybe she'll drink it for you," said Maverick, with bitter patience, handing me the cup.

"Will you?" I asked her gently. She shook her head, but at the same time she let me take her hand, and put it down from her face, and I held the cup to her lips.

She drank it, every drop. It made her deathly sick, and I took her off her horse, and made a pillow of my coat, so that she could lie down. In ten minutes she was asleep. Maverick covered her with his coat after she was no longer conscious.

We built a fire on the edge of the lava, for we were both chilled and both miserable, each for his own part in that day's work.

The flat is a little cup-shaped valley formed by high hills, like dark walls, shutting it in. The lava creeps up to it in front.

We hovered over the fire, and Maverick fed it, savagely, in silence. He did not recognize my presence by a word—not so much as if I had been a strange dog. I relieved him of it after a while, and went out a little way on the lava. At first all was blackness after the strong glare of the fire; but gradually the desolation took shape, and I stumbled about in it, with my shadow mocking me in derisive beckonings, or crouching close at my heels, as the red flames towered or fell. I stayed out there till I was chilled to the bone, and then went back defiantly. Maverick sat as if he had not

moved, his elbows on his knees, his face in his hands. I wondered if he were thinking of that other sleeper under the birches of Deadman's Gulch, victim of an unhappy girl's revolt. Had she loved him? Had she deceived him as well as herself? It seemed to me they were all like children who had lost their way home.

By midnight the moon had risen high enough to look at us coldly over the tops of the great hills. Their shadows crept forth upon the lava. The fire had died down. Maverick rose, and scattered the winking brands with his boot-heel.

"We must pull out," he said. "I'll saddle up, if you will"—The hoarseness in his voice choked him, and he nodded toward the sleeper.

I dreaded to waken the poor Rose. She was very meek and quiet after the brief respite sleep had given her. She sat quite still, and watched me while I shook the sand from my coat, put it on, and buttoned it to the chin, and drew my hat down more firmly. There was a kind of magnetism in her gaze; I felt it creep over me like the touch of a soft hand.

When her horse was ready, Maverick brought it, and left it standing near, and went back to his own, without looking toward us.

"Come, you poor, tired little girl," I said, holding out my hand. She could not find her way at first in the uncertain light, and she seemed half asleep still, so I kept her hand in mine, and guided her to her horse. "Now, once more up," I encouraged her; and suddenly she was clinging to me, and whispering passionately:

"Can't you take me somewhere? Where are those women that you know?" she cried, shaking from head to foot.

"Dear little soul, all the women I know are two thousand miles away," I answered.

"But can't you take me *somewhere*? There must be some place. I know you would be good to me; and you could go away afterward, and I would n't trouble you any more."

"My child, there is not a place under the heavens where I could take you. You must go on like a brave girl, and trust to your friends. Keep up your heart, and the way will open. God will not forget you," I

said, and may He forgive me for talking cant to that poor soul in her bitter extremity.

She stood perfectly still one moment while I held her by the hands. I think she could have heard my heart beat; but there was nothing I could do. Even now I wake in the night, and wonder if there was any other way—but one; the way that for one wild moment I was half tempted to take.

"Yes; the way will open," she said very low. She cast off my hands, and in a second she was in the saddle, and off up the road, riding for her life. And we two men knew no better than to follow her.

I knew better, or I think, now, that I did. I told Maverick we had pushed her far enough. I begged him to hold up and at least not to let her see us on her track. He never answered a word, but kept straight on, as if possessed. I don't think he knew what he was doing. At least there was only one thing *he* was capable of doing—following that girl till he dropped.

Two miles beyond the Flat there is another turn, where the shoulder of a hill comes down and crowds the road, which

passes out of sight. She saw us hard upon her, as she reached this bend. Maverick was ahead. Her horse was doing all he could, but it was plain he could not do much more. She looked back, and flung out her hand in the man's sleeve that half covered it. She gave a little whimpering cry, the most dreadful sound I ever heard from any hunted thing.

We made the turn after her; and there lay the road white in the moonlight, and as bare as my hand. She had escaped us.

We pulled up the horses, and listened. Not a sound came from the hills or the dark gulches, where the wind was stirring the quaking aspens; the lonesome hush-sh made the silence deeper. But we heard a horse's step go clink, clinking—a loose, uncertain step wandering away in the lava.

"Look! look there! My God!" groaned Maverick.

There was her horse limping along one of the hollow ridges, but the saddle was empty.

"She has taken to the lava!"

I had no need to be told what that meant; but if I had needed, I learned what it meant before the night was through. I

think that if I were a poet, I could add another "dolorous circle" to the wailing-place for lost souls.

But she had found a way. Somewhere in that stony-hearted wilderness she is at rest. We shall see her again when the sea—the stupid, cruel sea that crawls upon the land—gives up its dead.