

*Kate Stephens  
Desert Narrative,  
Circa 1930*

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## A desert scene episode

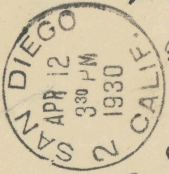
Our long expedition was nearing completion our faces were turned homeward. The horses tired with the long hard work, hard fare lagged slowly over the arid way no effort was made to hasten them. Frank was too familiar with the desert to urge where it was unnecessary the short twilight was near at hand.

I knew from Frank's behaviour and the horses also that camp was not so very far off so all four of us quiet, tired, worn but slowly and quietly watched for the camping place it was ~~my~~ <sup>the</sup> first time I had ever been at this place and my interest was suddenly awakened when I saw before us a steep hill probably half or a mile of almost straight steep rough road but what made us all pick up interest was, at the base of the hill a tiny spark of fire flickered. The horses raised their heads and slowly pricked up their ears I set up straight forgetting my slumping attitude. someone must be down there I remarked yes said Frank and it must be someone that knows the desert I was not surprised at this remark to often had he made some such remark where I could see nothing his eyes and knowledge explained



a whole episode. I tried to imagine how  
the person down there should know  
the desert so after a little said how  
do you know that it is the last place they  
can get wood. he said no more was said  
we watched that tiny flare showing snow  
<sup>then</sup> disappearing again behind some larger  
rock or bend of the road we tramped on  
slowly and the twilight slowly envelo-  
ped us at last the bottom of the hill and  
almost darkness the camp fire quite  
near but a little off the road. a form  
came out of the darkness and caught hold  
of the rail of the seat next to me. "Have  
you got a little water a tired voice said.  
Trenk stopped the horses and leaned over  
to me and said why it is Mr carpenter  
with it the face peered over to him  
and then leaving hold of the wagon rail  
threw his arms over his head and almost  
shouted why its Mr Stephen its  
Mr Stephen's I am all right now  
I am all right now <sup>its Mr Stephen's</sup> Trenk ~~jumped~~ <sup>tried the</sup>  
rails to the ~~dash~~ <sup>board</sup> slowly slipped slowly  
down and the two men walked off  
leaving me on the wagon. I knew  
it was all right now <sup>hobbling</sup> so slowly  
climbing out and <sup>along</sup> walking to the back of  
the wagon my stiff limbs could hardly  
hold me up I tried to loosen the





trail board to get. some of the things for getting  
 supper at least. there was a fire already started  
 it was but a minute or two when the two men  
 came back and Frank took the canteen of water  
 and they both went off again I could do no more  
 the quile bot and bot with pots and pans were  
 too heavy for me to lift to get ~~them~~ up a few  
 things I made up the fire and back they came the  
 man telling excitedly Frank saying nothing the  
 quile bot down and some Quail skinned and  
 coffee on supper was soon ready my courtesy  
 would have been keen had I not been so tired but  
 it appeared that this man had walked many miles  
 to take home a sick horse the horse could go no  
 further and had fallen down this man a work less <sup>day</sup> man  
 had given his last drop of water to the horse he was  
 about nine miles from home no water dead tired and  
 expected to have to walk home next day thru the  
 hot desert he would try to start now and would not  
 leave the horse can you wonder at his excitement  
 at seeing my trunk the very sight of him removed  
 all worry he was saved he knew that whatever could  
 be done for the sick horse would be done and that a  
 supper was right there and that tomorrow a ride  
 on the wagon home was his. ~~Some~~ Quail  
 coffee, tea, beans, vanilla, beds made a last  
 look at the dying horse and sleep sweet sleep  
 such as can only come from an all days ride  
 The gravelly ground might be heard for my creaking  
 bones but the stars shined brightly simply faded  
 out of my ken as I lost myself asleep in the open desert.

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