

And, of course, we all gathered around the waning fire, looking on with awed fascination at the glowing shapeless mass which writhed and twisted, rose as if with despairing effort, and slowly subsided into flaky fragments that shone golden, violet, a dazzling white, then dulled to an ashy grey. I confess that my feelings were strained to a nervous tension, slowly relaxing, and as I glanced swiftly around the circle, I saw that Jenny's eyes were snapping and her red lips compressed into a tight thin line; Joseph stared woodenly with his mouth bulged outward; Mrs. Biggles had her hands clasped, with the fingers interlaced in a basket pattern, and one corner of her mouth was deflected downward; Aunt Anne's eyes were distended in wondering perplexity; and Olivia, beside me!—I cannot picture the divine smiling sympathetic tenderness which irradiated her countenance as she looked up and met my gaze. "You poor, poor man!" she breathed.

It was just then that a vagrant, eddying whirlwind descended in our midst, snatched up the dying embers, and away it spun, the soul of my booby bag, a mocking demon that derisively scudded through the darkness in a fiery attenuated