

Tang of Life

do, yet it kept him awake. Did he imagine it, or had the rope moved?

Dex had lifted his head. He was sniffing the cool morning air. Slowly the tawny-golden shape of the big buckskin turned, head up and nostrils rounded in tense rings. Waring glanced across the cañon. The farther wall was still dim in the half-light. In a few minutes the trail would become distinct. Dropping from the ledge, he stepped to his saddle. Dex evidently heard him, for he twitched back one ear, but maintained his attitude of keen interest in an invisible something — a something that had drawn him from drowsy inattention to a quietly tense statue of alertness. The ash gray of the farther wall, now visible, slowly changed to a faint rose tint that deepened and spread.

Waring stooped and straightened up, with his glasses held on the far trail. A tiny rider appeared in the clear blue circle of the binoculars, and another, who led two horses without saddles or packs. The men were headed south. Presently they disappeared behind a wall of brush. Waring saddled Dex, and, keeping close to the eastern wall, rode toward the arroyo.

The morning sun traced clean, black shadows of the chaparral on the sand. The bloom of cacti burned in red and yellow blotches of flame against its own dull background of grayish-green. At the mouth of the arroyo, Waring dismounted and dropped