

EPILOGUE

question—is quivering on her lips. And once under the covers she cries herself to sleep.

The next day the whole party ride up to Pine Ridge. But Lelia fails to share their enjoyment. She cannot forget that chance remark—that allusion to herself. In the late afternoon they leave the Emmetts at the Ridge and that night, when they are alone once more, she crawls up on the lap of the father of many years, and puts the strange question.

At first Bruce Jimmy is a little startled. All along he has known that this would come some day. All along he has known that there would come a time when he would have to disillusionize this wonderful young girl, who comes and sits on his lap, kisses his cheek, and throws her arms around his neck. He loves his other children, as a true father should, but he has a peculiar affection for Lelia—his first.

Quietly, tenderly, he tells her the story. But not all the story—there are parts that he will never tell. Softening it as best he can, he narrates the tale of the runaway—that wild day when the stage raced down the mountain. And also of that wilder and sadder night when—ah, this part is hard to tell.

And although he softens the tale and leaves out parts here and there, Lelia is moved greatly.