

described her, with her elbows on her knees, rocking and nursing her head, from which her long hair was looped and fell, like grey rags, about her withered fingers. i dont like her looks, snorted mrs. hedgehog. and how disgustingly they have trampled the grass. it is quite true, said i; it will not recover itself this summer. i wish they had left us our wood to ourselves. at this moment mrs. hedgehog laid her five toes on mine, to attract my attention, and whispered is it a gipsy and lifting my nose in the direction of the rustling brushwood, i saw sybil. there was no mistaking her, though her cheeks looked hollower and her eyes larger than when i saw her last. good evening, mother, she said. the old woman raised her gaunt face with a start, and cried fiercely, begone with you begone and then bent it again upon her hands, muttering, there are plenty of hedges and ditches too good for your lot, without their coming to worrit us in our wood. the gipsy girl knelt quietly by the fire, and stirred up the embers. what is the matter, mother she said. were only just come, and when i heard that linker george and his mother were in the wood, i started to find you. you makes too free with the linkers, says my brothers wife. i goes to see my mother, says i, who nursed me through a sickness, my real mother being dead, and my own people wanting to bury me through my not being able to speak or move, and their wanting to get to the bartelmy fair. i never forget, mother; have you forgotten me, that you drives me away for bidding you good day good days are over for me, moaned the old woman. begone, i say dont let me see or hear any that belongs to black basil, or it may be the worse for them. the bright air, casting the riders shadows on the rustling grass and making their way easy. the stars were beginning to glitter too, and pool after pool was passed which looked as if it were dotted with points of light. it was a glorious ride, and not without incident. wherever there was water the fowl which frequented the marshy pools could be heard feeding, and the wild cries of the animals which haunted the far spreading plain came frequently to the ear, while the sharp yelping barks, or the long, low drawn wails like those of jackals and the dismally weird snapping shout of the prairie wolf came plainly from far away where the salt bush was known to be plentiful. every now and then too some owl came hawking by on silent wing, fixing its great eyes upon one or other of the party as it swooped past. twice over griggs paused in doubt as to their course, for the crushed down grass trampled by the ponies was at times hard to trace in the moonlight; but he was not long in picking up the trail again, and at last the camp was reached, with everything looking just as it had been left that morning, while the mules were still grazing, apparently as hungry as ever, though a little closer observation proved they were picking and choosing amongst the youngest and juiciest twigs. hah sighed ned, dropping wearily from his pony. now for a good fire and some of that turkey, griggs. eh didnt you hear what the doctor said just now when he came up alongside no, said ned anxiously; what that i was not to light the fire no, nor any one else, lad. he said that no fire was to be lit to night, and that we must all make shift with a bite of what we left in camp this morning. oh groaned ned, so dismally that chris was not too weary to forget his own disappointment and laugh and chuckle with delight at his the medical man to reply. yes, said dr ennefer, with a reserve in his voice that implied that he was not there to answer every irrelevant question that it might please foolish people to put to him yes, such a wound as might have been caused by a hammer, or by any other blunt instrument used with violence. even by a heavy stick westray suggested. the doctor maintained a dignified silence, and the coroner struck in: i must say i think you are wasting our time, mr westray. i am the last person to stifle legitimate inquiry, but no inquiry is really needed here; it is quite certain that this poor man came to his end by falling heavily, and dashing his head against this wooden note in the pedals. is it quite certain westray asked. is dr ennefer quite sure that the wound could have been caused by a mere fall; i only want to know that dr ennefer is quite sure. the coroner looked at the doctor with a deprecating glance, which implied apologies that so much unnecessary trouble should be given, and a hope that he would be graciously pleased to put an end to it by an authoritative statement. oh, i am quite sure, the doctor responded. yes and he hesitated for the fraction of a second oh yes, there is no doubt such a