





Roaring Camp was a rough gold-mining town. It lay in a valley between two hills and a river. The only way out was a steep trail over one of the hills.

It was home to about 100 men. Some were crooks hiding from the law. Some were gamblers. None were what you might call "civilized."

Only one woman lived in Roaring Camp. Her name was Cherokee Sal, and she was no lady. Now Sal was in trouble. She was having a baby. And there was no other woman there to help her.

The men of Roaring Camp gathered around

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the cabin where Sal lay. Most of them didn't think much of Sal. Still, they felt for her in her hour of need.

But none of the men really knew what to do about the situation. Deaths were common in Roaring Camp. But a birth was something new.

"You go in there, Stumpy," said Kentuck. "See what you can do to help. After all, you've had experience in them things."

Kentuck's suggestion wasn't a bad one. Stumpy had been married twice, and he had children. In fact, that was one reason he was in Roaring Camp. He was hiding out from his family.

Everyone else thought Kentuck had the right idea. So Stumpy agreed. He went into the cabin. The rest of the camp sat down outside to wait.

As they waited, the men made bets. They bet on whether the baby would be a boy or a girl. They bet on whether or not Sal would make it through safely.

Then there was a sound. It was cry unlike anything heard before in the camp. The pines stopped moaning. The river stopped rushing. The fire stopped crackling. It seemed as if

### *The Luck of Roaring Camp*

Nature had stopped to listen.

The men rose to their feet as one! Someone suggested exploding a keg of gunpowder. But word came to them that Sal was sinking fast. So only a few shots were fired.

#### ***“The Little Cuss”***

In less than an hour, Sal was dead. Sadly, this didn't bother the men much. However, they did wonder about the baby.

“Can he live now?” someone asked Stumpy.

No one was sure of the answer. The only other female in camp was a donkey named Jinny. So the men tried an experiment. They milked Jinny and gave the milk to Stumpy. He went inside to try to feed the baby. Luckily, the experiment was successful.

Then Stumpy opened the door to the others. The crowd formed itself into a single line. They entered the cabin one by one.

Sal lay on the low bunk, covered with a sheet. Nearby stood a pine table. On this a box sat. Inside, wrapped in red flannel, lay the latest arrival to Roaring Camp.

A hat was placed next to the box. Its use was soon clear.

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"Gentlemen," said Stumpy. "Please pass in at the front door. Go past the table and out the back door. Them as wishes to give something to the orphan will find a hat handy."

The first man entered with his hat on. He took it off once he got inside. As so often happens, a good example is copied by those who follow. As the men filed in, each removed his hat out of respect for the baby.

The men made comments to Stumpy as they passed by the baby.

"Is that him? He's mighty small," said one.

"Ain't no bigger than my pistol," said another.

The men dropped things into the hat.

A silver box, a gold coin, and a fancy handkerchief. A diamond pin, a ring, and a Bible. A golden spur, a silver teaspoon, and an English bank note. And about \$200 in loose gold and silver coins.

While all this went on, Stumpy watched—a serious look on his face.

Only one strange thing happened. As Kentuck bent over the box, the baby turned. He grabbed at Kentuck's finger and held it tightly.

Kentuck looked foolish. A blush tried to