

“ ‘That,’ said I, ‘is a question which I was about to ask you, and one which struck me forcibly the moment I first saw you. To answer your question, however, I am Thomas Brinton, tourist and adventurer, in search of health in the forests of Wisconsin. And now perhaps you will tell me about yourself.’

“ ‘Of course. I cannot refuse after such frankness on your part. I am Cecil Waring, amateur artist and dreamer, living in the Wisconsin woods because my home is there.’

“ ‘You live here?’ I said.

“ ‘Yes, over here to the left of the ravine. Won’t you come along home with me? My father will be very glad to see you. It is so seldom that white travelers pass here.’

“ ‘And then, as we proceeded, she told me her story. Her father, an eccentric man, had, upon the death of her mother, been so overcome with grief, that he had left the city with all its sorrowful memories and had come to the wilderness, where he was now engaged in taxidermy and geological research for his own recreation. I found him to be a little, wizened old man, very talkative and anxious to impart his knowledge of his specimens. And in this, thanks to my college education, I could talk fairly well. After that scarcely a day passed that did not find me at the Waring cottage, ostensibly to help the old man, but really to see Cecil. Yes, Alger, you may laugh if you wish, but I was in love, and so would you have been had you been in my place.

“ ‘Thus amid such pleasant surroundings my outing lengthened to another month before I knew it. Then one afternoon Wewoka came in with supplies from the nearest settlement bringing a letter from my father, urging me to come home and take up his business. That evening I went over to the Waring cabin, resolved to bid them good-bye and leave. Cecil met me at the door, and, as usual, we sat down in the doorway. I told her of the letter, and I fancied I could detect a look of sadness come into her face. Then we talked of the past weeks and of when and where we had first met.

“ ‘Quite romantic, wasn’t it?’ she said, smiling.

“ ‘Yes. And do you know I have never been near the place since. I forgot all about the goose, but I am tempted to go and look for his bones now. Will you go along?’

“ ‘Certainly,’ she assented; and a few moments more we were on our way up the narrow gulch.

“ ‘Have you ever been up to ‘Death’s Gate’?’ she asked, suddenly.