

of a cliff from which she would fall if she were not holding to something.

At last she said in a clear, rich voice, "The rest doesn't matter."

§ § § §

## Earthquake

Kathleen Wilson

I had just remarked how strange the weather seemed. The day was heavy with heat, without a breeze to stir the stagnant air. The sun was out of sight behind a cloudy slate-grey sky which seemed to impart the same dull color to everything below. As I look back on that day now, I am inclined to describe the atmosphere as one of ominous quietude, but I had no forebodings then; I barely took notice except to grumble about my discomfort.

When I first heard the deep, distant rumble, I thought how strange to have a thunder shower in California, but this "thunder" had no lightning to accompany it—it didn't stop. The people about me stood wide-eyed, wondering and listening to the animal-like growl that seemed to come up through the ground on which we stood.

Then we pitched and shook as though the earth were rebelling against its dormancy. I was frightened and I thought of God—how strange it is that fear of tragedy brings one closer to God. So many thoughts tumbled through my mind: Men are such vulnerable beings—so soft and defenseless against the hard, mighty strength of nature. Neither science nor government can build a barricade against this sort of an attack. Surely this must be the most terrible of all natural phenomena. And, as irony would have it, just as I was creating grandiose visions of destruction and terror, the quaking stopped as abruptly as it had begun.

The ensuing quiet was deafening, and I had to resist the impulse to laugh hysterically and shout that this was my first earthquake, how admirably I had survived! And that was it. Night fell, just as though this day were like all others, with no deviation from the normal path of nature's routine.