

# The luck of roaring camp

[Linguistics](#), [English](#)



s Fatherhood in the Luck of Roaring Camp Fatherhood is a complex relationship which evolves much differently than motherhood. The love of a mother is instinctive, whereas a father learns to love his child, much like any other skill in this world. Becoming a father is a spiritual journey that motivates even the most seasoned delinquents to mature and see the light, which forms one of the primary themes of the short story “ The Luck of Roaring camp” written by Bret Harte. The story revolves around a gold mining camp that consisted primarily of criminals and outlaws, who had been rightfully dubbed as “ the roughs”, which according to the narrator was “ more of a distinction rather than a definition”. (Harte, 1886, p. 1)

The story is set in the 1850’s where a band of men living in the foothills of the Sierra Hills were brought together by one common goal of mining gold in the region. However, when the town’s prostitute, Cherokee Sal, died giving birth to a baby boy, all the men in the camp were shaken for birth was an uncommon occurrence in the region. They were all fascinated by the baby and this marked the start of a beautiful metamorphosis, where the men at the camp not only assumed responsibility for the infant but began to make radical changes in their appearance and lifestyle to provide a comfortable home to the boy, who was later christened as Thomas Luck by the townsfolk.

This was one time, when the townspeople got their act together and took care of Luck in the best possible way. They wanted to give him “ the best that money could buy” and strangely enough, the infant was loved and nurtured by this uncultured band of men (Harte, 1886, p. 3). The most profound instance of budding paternal affection is depicted, when the new

born Luck holds on to Old Kentuck's finger that thoroughly embarrasses the man, but he is unable to hide the deep surge of emotion and joy that flushes over him and he relates that event to every man in the camp. The men then find ways to bond with each other and even decide to welcome visitors in this otherwise secluded, notorious town.

All the men in the camp began taking extra care of their hygiene and there was a marked fall in the number of profanities that spewed out of every mouth. They were truly trying to be the best father figures for young Luck and despite the fact that fate had a different plan for the Townspeople but it sheds great light on human nature on how they can turn from wild men to protective, responsible adults as soon as an infant made its entry into their lives. Kentuck dies saving the child when the flood struck the camp; a highly selfless act that went pretty much in vain, but old Kentuck embraced his fate like a brave man.

There are plenty of literatures on motherly love, but a father's love is only understood by a few, who actually undergo this transformation. This story is particularly heart-warming, because none of the men knew who the real father was, considering Cherokee Sal's questionable moral character; however, none of the other members in the camp were in a position to pass judgment on her. The baby could have been the son of any one of these men; they still worked as a team and began the process of raising the child together. Perhaps, it is embedded in a male human's nature to be reckless and callous, but it is remarkable how a responsibility of a feeble child can do to them.

Their love is not God-given or naturally injected in their hearts, but it is a

slow and steady process. They would gradually get accustomed to the child's existence and then make the necessary changes in their lives to accommodate him. The entire camp rejoiced the arrival of the new member that they had a temporary illusion of luck and associated every good thing that happened at the camp with the child's presence. It succinctly summarizes the journey of fatherhood and how men may not be able to articulate their love for their offspring, but express it through their actions.

#### Works Cited

Harte, Francis Bret. The luck of the roaring camp. Bartleby Press. 1917. P. 1, 3