

Lost in the Desert

by George Albert Leddy

*Well, I never was much of a man to pray, from churches and preachers, I kept away.
And I used to laugh when they talked 'bout Hell—what do they know of the things they tell?
When a man is dead, well, he's dead for good; same as the flowers, or pieces of wood.
But I changed my mind, and I'll tell you why, when I thought that my time—had come to die.*

Twenty mules with the strength of one, struggling along 'neath the devilish sun;
Off'in the trail for mor'in a mile, and gettin' farther all the while.
The water all gone, and the feed is low, and the mules are weak, and can scarcely go;
And I cut each strap, and I said good-bye, and let them wander away to die.

Now, here is the thing that is strange to tell, of a man who didn't believe in Hell;
How I knelt in the sand, and I tried to pray, but I had forgotten the words to say.
My tongue was swollen, my throat was dry, but I raised my arms to the distant sky;
And I prayed to God, to remember me—to let me die, and set me free.

Well, the desert sun, it was sinking low, and I saw in the distance, hills aglow;
Tinted with sun-rays clear and cool, and waters that sparkled in a pool;
Valleys of green with a rippling stream—God, is it real, or only a dream?
But something strange, and I know not what, kept urging me on, and I could not stop.

Never before were the skies so blue, never before such brilliant hue.
Then came the night, with its stars so bright; never before had there been such a sight.
The vision would fade, and on every hand, not but an ocean of burning sand.
Then I'd try to stand, but I'd only fall, lay on my belly and try to crawl;

Crawl like the Lizards and Rattlesnakes, crawl through the sands till my belly bakes.
Morning at last, and the Buzzards come, circling low in the desert sun;
Casting their shadows from the sky, watching and waiting for me to die.
Ever and ever, circling lower—devils of Hell, and nothing more!

Do you know what it's like to be all alone, when the sun's so hot that the deserts moan;
With the visions of forests on far distant hills, with it's valleys of green, and rippling rills?
Do you know how it feels when it's moving away; ever and ever, so far and so far?
Well if you don't, then you best stay away—for miseries reign where the desert sands are.

Then out of the hot sands, like a fool, stumbled a weary, trail-worn Mule;
One of my Leaders, he'd always been—trustiest Mule in my whole damn team.
Water he'd found where he had been, stumbling back to carry me in.
Laugh if you will, I don't give a damn, but I'd trust that mule—where I wouldn't a man!

*Now, that is the reason you find me today, here in this pulpit, to beg you to pray.
“Sky Pilot” they call me, but men I have been a skinner of mules, and a lover of sin.
I’ve drank and I’ve gambled, had women galore, but I’ve learned my lesson,
and those days are o’er.
For God heard my prayers, and He sent back that mule, to save a poor sinner
—who’d been a damn fool.*
