

Open Range



Monica was out West for the first time in her life. Born and bred in Boston, she was used to an urban environment full of sidewalks, skyscrapers, traffic, noise – and people! Everywhere, there were always people. Then, one day, when she was at the paleontologist’s office having her mastodon dewormed, she noticed a picture on the wall of a small, neat house completely encircled by wide-open spaces. It was entitled “Open Range, Wyoming” and looked like the proverbial middle of nowhere. To someone who’d been in the car for an hour and a half with a large animal that took its acute motion sickness out on the upholstery, it also looked like heaven on earth! Immediately, she made plans to go there at the next opportunity. Now, six months later – she’d had a devil of a time finding a housesitter for Barney – she was at last in Wyoming. The emptiness of the space between her and the horizon was disquieting at first, but she gradually settled in to her new environs. Imagine, no fences as far as you could see! Why, back in the city, you had to merely stand on a corner holding a bag of jewelry and a fence would be in your face in no time. Off in the distance, she saw a sign that sent a shiver down her wilderness-starved spine. It said “Open Range.” Right next to it was what she deduced was a cattle feeding on grass that was growing right out of the ground! Eagerly, she walked towards it. But the closer she got, the more the cattle looked like her Amana back home. Were her eyes just playing tricks on her? She hoped they were, because otherwise, the lava that had begun to pour out of the volcano just behind her could spell dire consequences, indeed!