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Hilma had unconsciously lifted one hand away from the door frame to bring its fingers playing about her lips while Original delivered this smooth flow of magic. Now she burst forth in hot anger:

"I always heard you cow inspectors were crawling Indians, dodging and twisting in the grass to spy on folks. If you saw all this why didn't you come right out and talk about it then? Afraid of Zang Whistler's gun?" This last shot with a wintry smile.

"Got me wrong, Miss Corntossel," he teased, no spite, but a secret attempt at provocation registering in his voice. "I saw all this, as you say, on the ground. Tracks tell no lies. Zang Whistler rides a horse with one notched hoof; he's fair in love with that little horse and won't give him up, howbe it leaves a wide trail everywhere. A calf with a healing brand limps on the leg he's favoring; that's easy to see in any middlin' soft ground. Anyway, I mostly find cattle with sore brands clustering round the tracks Zang Whistler's horse makes. It's a funny habit they have."

She stood irresolute for the space of two breaths looking up to the smiling eyes under the shadowing hat brim. Then without hurry