

Trails to Two Moons 33

cow outfits were located between Teapot and town. It must be her father, returning.

The girl cooked supper and laid out two plates on the oilcloth-covered table. Supper grew cold; a smell of stale grease and cooling tea filled the long room. The clock with the picture of the Minnesota state capitol on its pendulum case banged out ten. Hilma ate alone.

When she had dried her hands of steaming dishwater she went out to the dooryard and stood a long while listening for the sound of hoofs. A coyote somewhere out in the dark complained dolefully of life's bitterness, but that was the only sound. She moved round the log walls, closing and bolting with stout turn buttons the wooden shutters covering each of the three windows. This was a nightly precaution of hers; just why she did it Hilma never knew. Maybe it was to shut out the great dark. Then she reëntered the house and slipped the heavy oaken bar into place behind the door. The house was hers to possess in lonesomeness.

Mercifully constricted and intimate was this oasis of lamplight in the desert of the night. Just one long room, twenty feet from end wall