

16 Trails to Two Moons

into open revolt. Christian — for that was his name — was earth-born in a land where the horse is king. The man who rode him was plebeian, loutish even in the careless sag of his overalls tucked into square-toed boots, the hump of his collar high round his ears. His wizened face was all fallen into hollows and crevasses beneath protuberant cheek bones and outstanding ears; skin above the scraggy gray beard baked a pipestone red; blue eyes which never cleansed themselves of dazedness. His features seemed to be set in a perpetual substrata of frost.

This was Old Man Ring, the sheepman of Teapot Creek come to Two Moons to tell the sheriff of Broken Horn something important.

Never before in his drab life of grubbing had Old Man Ring anything important to tell anybody. Never, even, had he been important in himself except in a limited way and that a bread-winning way — a hard-necessity way. The Big Country round about distinguished him above his fellow sheepmen only because he was the father of Hilma Ring. And Hilma Ring was counted a peach — a loo-loo.

“You, Christian!” Old Man Ring laid blame for the halt on his horse and querulously