

30 Trails to Two Moons

into her apron and carried them far away from the house to spill them down the steep gorge of the coulee. She returned to her lonesomeness, and her still-gnawing anger.

Lonesomeness had been this girl's portion almost since she could remember. There had been a time — away back there in Minnesota — when there was a mother; but that time was all in the dim forgotten land. Almost the only fact Hilma remembered about her mother was that she was American, and for that the girl was devoutly thankful. That this shadow figure of child memory should have been American instead of Danish had always been to Hilma a sort of investiture of sainthood. Hilma hated the Danish blood in her; she remembered how children had called her "Scowegian." When the mother went — Hilma was six then — the lonesomeness had come. First the lonesomeness of the scrubby farm in the flat lands but with neighbors so near one could see their windmills. Then the greater and more terrible lonesomeness of this vast country, where one looked a hundred miles from the Broken Horns across and across to the Black Hills, where it was a day's ride to a neighbor's house.