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how inept. After the meal Uncle Alf took hammer, saw and nails and went down to the shed stable to rip off precious boards and make a coffin. Hilma donned her oldest dress, carried pick and shovel to a flower-blown knoll above the creek and there chose a site for the grave. She was bare-headed; her sleeves rolled up to the shoulders gave the dazzling whiteness of her arms to the sun. Soon the sleazy dress clung to her back with a sweat of toil, and its stretched web undulated to the smooth play of muscles from shoulder to midback.

Zang Whistler found her thus at labor when he rode up. He had been skirting the crest of the opposite divide, two miles and more away, when the dazzle of sunlight on her live gold hair arrested his eye, so he crossed the Teapot to make talk. Hilma looked up at the sound of hoofs; she drew one arm across her forehead to wipe damp strands of hair out of her eyes. Zang Whistler's sweeping bow — and a fetching figure of a horseman he was — was answered by a grave nod. The visitor's careless masculine grace and bold features, a little raffish and devil-may-care, carried no sex challenge to Hilma. She counted men, especially youngish men, merely as a variant of her own