

# HOSTILE VALLEY

by  
**BEN AMES WILLIAMS**

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## SYNOPSIS

At a gathering of cronies in the village of Liberty, Maine, Jim Saladine listens to the history of the neighboring Hostile Valley—its past tragedies, its superb fishing streams, and, above all, the mysterious, enticing "Huldy," wife of Will Ferrin. Interested, he drives to the Valley for a day's fishing, though admitting to himself his chief desire is to see the glamorous Huldy Ferrin. "Old Marm" Pierce and her nineteen-year-old granddaughter Jenny live in the Valley. Since childhood Jenny has deeply loved young Will Ferrin, older than she, and who regards her as still a child. Will leaves to take employment in nearby Augusta. His father's death brings Will back to the Valley, but he returns to Augusta, still unconscious of Jenny's womanhood, and love. Neighbors of the Pierses are Bart and Amy Carey, brother and sister. Bart, unmarried and something of a ne'er-do-well, is attracted by Jenny. The girl repulses him definitely. Learning that Will is coming home, Jenny, exulting, sets his long-empty house "to rights," and has dinner ready for him. He comes, bringing his wife, Huldy. The girls' world collapses. Huldy becomes the subject of unfavorable gossip in the Valley. Entering his home unlooked for, Will finds seemingly damning evidence of his wife's unfaithfulness as a man he knows is Seth Humphreys breaks from the house. Will overtakes him and chokes him to death, although Humphreys shatters his leg with a bullet. At Marm Pierce's house the leg is amputated. Jenny goes to break the news to Huldy and finds her with Bart Carey.

## CHAPTER IV—Continued

"Seth ought to be ashamed," said Huldy chidingly. "I'd give him a piece of my mind, shooting my Will that way, if Will hadn't already tended to him plenty." And she asked with wide innocent eyes: "Did you see them cut his leg off?"

"I helped the doctor," Jenny answered. Huldy was all surface sympathy. "That was hard on you—with you loving my Will so!" Her last word bit and stung.

And Jenny breathed deeply, and was strong. "I do love him," she asserted gravely. "But you're not likely to know what that means." She added insistently: "Can't you come to him now?"

Huldy smiled and shook her head. "I ain't coming," she said calmly. "You can have him. Tell him I said I never could be satisfied with half a man!"

The world shattered into fragments, as a mirror shatters under the impact of a thrown ball. Jenny rocked to and fro as though she had been struck; and her lips were dry. The lamp was smoking; a thin thread of smoke like a black line rose from the chimney top, to billow into a faint plume in the rising air current above the flame. The girl leaned forward to turn the lamp down a little.

"Wick needs trimming," she muttered.

"You'll take care of all such things for him," Huldy predicted. "You're such a housekeeper! But—tending a cripple would weary me. I'm going away!"

"You'd not go when he's hurt, and needs you?" Jenny whispered almost pleadingly.

"I'd rather be wanted than needed," Huldy retorted. "But that's a riddle to you."

"You're bound to go?" Jenny asked, still incredulous.

"I am going. In a little now."

"Where?"

"An old friend of mine," said Huldy lightly. "He's been fishing down at Bart's. Soon's he gets his clothes changed, he's coming to fetch me."

Jenny, suddenly, was almost happy. "It will hurt Will awful at the first," she decided, speaking her thoughts aloud. "But he'll come to thank you. With you gone, maybe he can be happy again!"

Huldy's brows knotted, and her lips moved as though to speak; but she smiled then suddenly, and she rose. "Well, anyway, I'm going. Now get out," she said, her tones rasping. "Go back on to that one-legged man. Long as I'm here, this is my kitchen, and I'll not have you in it. Go along with you."

Jenny turned without a word to the door. Her very passivity seemed to drive the other woman into fury. Huldy came to call some black word at the girl departing; but Jenny did not even turn her head. In the barn, she paused, hearing behind her, on the road down from the ridge, the beat of the feet of running horses. That would be Bart, riding back to the farm in haste. He must have left the wagon where it was. . . . And as she emerged into the orchard, she saw the headlights of a car laboring up the hill, and guessed this was the car which would bear Huldy away.

The stars were clear, the deep wood dark and comforting. Jenny came home in peace. She thought the Valley would be brighter, with Huldy gone; thought there was a rainbow promise in the starlit sky.

She had no least prevision that though Huldy might for a while depart, yet she would presently return.

## CHAPTER V

It was in October that Will was hurt, and Seth Humphreys came to his

end, and Huldy went away. Will stayed at Marm Pierce's farm till his leg was healed; and Jenny was happy in attending him. She gave him Huldy's message, and he received it uncomplainingly.

"Natural for her to feel so," he decided. "No one-legged man is good enough for her."

There was no bitterness in his tone; but he saw Jenny's loyal anger, and he said appeasingly:

"Huldy's one that takes a lot of stock in the way folks look, Jenny. She was like a cat, always cleaning herself. Took as much pleasure in herself as an old skinkint does in his money. And she lived to have everyone around her the same. Farm folk like us, we're apt to kind of forget. If I come into the house with barn on my boots, it always bothered her."

And he added: "I can see how she'd take this. Anybody with two legs is kind of bound to feel that a man with only one leg is no good. It's just like you'll shoot a horse that breaks its leg, or get rid of a crippled cat, or dog."

Jenny, faced by his stubborn loyalty to this woman who, despite the fact that she had wronged and flouted him, was still his wife, felt a reluctant pride in him. If he had cursed Huldy, he would not have been Will Ferrin; not the man she had long loved. So she said no word of blame for Huldy, and the matter thereafter did not rise between them.

But Bart Carey was not so tactful, still Will silenced him. Jenny, in the kitchen, heard them talking together, heard Will's slow tones at last.

"Bart," he said strictly, "I don't want that kind of talk about Huldy."

Yet the girl was content, and when winter broke and the feeble pulse of spring began to flutter, Jenny had come to a certain happiness. She was happy in serving Will, going almost daily to clean up the kitchen and cook a batch of doughnuts, or make biscuits, or concoct a pie. To see him, to be alone with him was for the time bliss enough for her.

But when the frost was out of the ground and plowing to be done, the handicap under which Will must labor began more fully to appear. He was able to do the barn chores; but field work presented problems hard to solve. Bart and others helped him when they could; but Will's restless zeal sought an outlet in great works about the farm, and the neighbor folk had their own tasks to do.

For this problem which Will faced, chance brought what seemed a fortunate solution. Toward the foot of the Valley there was a farm long owned by old Fred Dace, whose father and grandfather had dwelt there before him, and who lived there with his son, Nate. But Nate had died a year or two before; and this spring the old man likewise sickened and came to his quick end. He had no kin about; but there was a son who four or five years before had gone west, and this son now came home.

Zeke Dace was a lean, wiry man in his middle twenties, who wore a wide-brimmed hat of a western pattern, and rode plow horses with a stock saddle, and rolled cigarettes with one hand, and had a laughing, ready tongue. He had come home, he said, to stay. The cow business was busted, jobs on the range were hard to find.

But the Dace farm promised no great return from even a vigorous cultivation; and Will Ferrin sent for Zeke and hired him as a hand.

Jenny approved the arrangement. She liked the newcomer; and he and Will were from the first a congenial pair. Zeke had acquired an alien color, yet underneath bore still the traces of his New England ancestry. That battered old hat of his amused the folk hereabout; but it amused him as much as it did them. He wore it with an air; he played a game of cribbage as seen as Will's; and the two young men—they were nearly of an age—were comfortable enough in the house there above the brook together.

There were others who liked Zeke, too. Amy, Bart's sister, was one of them. She was older than Jenny, but not yet old enough to begin to fade in that quick, relentless fashion which hard farm work may impose upon a woman. Since Huldy's departure, whether by accident or not, Bart had fewer boarders; and Seth Humphreys' steam mill was shut down, abandoned and deserted now. So Bart and Amy were much alone, and Bart went often for a word with Will, and Zeke as often came down the hill to stand in the door of Amy's kitchen and talk with her a while. He had a teasing, laughing tongue that could whip color to her cheeks; but she liked it, and she sometimes nursed happy dreams.

So this early summer in the Valley passed serenely; and Jenny was a part of this serenity. She had no least warning of what was to come. It was mid-July when Huldy returned. There had fallen one of those periods of still, hot weather when hay ripens quickly; and Zeke and Will were busy with the harvest. Will could drive the mowing machine, or the rake; and when it came to load the hay cart, or to put the hay in the mow, he called a board across the foot of his peg leg to make a sort of snowshoe which enabled him to stand securely. Jenny had gone this day early to the farm; had helped for a while in the fields, pitching hay up on the cart with Zeke while Will stowed it there.

He told Jenny this one day. They approached the subject guardedly, by long indirection, naming Huldy not at all; until at last Will said soberly:

"Jen, no use our dodging around the thing. Here's my look at it. A man might want to say a woman wa'n't his wife, if she'd acted wrong. But I don't see it so. The way I see it, I'm bound—any man's bound—long as he's give his word."

And he said: "It looks to me, the worse a woman is, the more like she is to come to the time when she needs a husband to stand by her, and look out for her. A man, if his wife ever come to him, no matter what she'd done, and said he'd got to help her, why it looks to me he'd have to."

Jenny assented without reservation; but when she told Marm Pierce, days later, this word of Will's, the old woman said frantically:

"That's just like a man! Once you get an idee into the critter's heads, there's no knocking it out again. A man's worse than a broody hen! Only sure way to break her is cut her head off."

Jenny urged proudly: "Will couldn't do different, Granny!"

"You and your Will!" Marm Pierce ejaculated. "You're as bad as him, some ways. A woman like Huldy, all she deserves is a knock on the head. 'Stead of that, you and him will go on eating your hearts out, and she'll gad around with this one and that one. . . . I'd like to lay a hand on her once. I'd trim her comb!"

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But later she went to the house to get dinner ready for them; and at a convenient time they came stamping into the kitchen, and Will made a jest of that clumsy foot of his, and Zeke tossed his wide hat aside, and they washed themselves at the sink and so sat down. Jenny served them, set the heaping dishes on the table, then seated herself to eat with them; and the three were laughing together at some word Zeke had said, when a car drove into the yard.

A car with a man at the wheel and Huldy by his side.

They saw her through the open door; she descended and came toward them. The man stayed in the car.

Jenny thought that Huldy was as beautiful as ever. She found herself on her feet, facing the door. Will half-turned in his chair as though to rise; but that board nailed across the end of his peg cramped under a rung of the chair and prevented. Zeke looked questioningly at Will, and then at Huldy; and Huldy stood smiling, in the doorway.

Then she laughed. "I see you ain't lonely, Will?" she said. He tried again to get up. "Where's your crutch?" she inquired derisively. "Want me to fetch it for you?"

Jenny asked: "What have you come for?" Her tone was steady, her heart still.

"Don't worry," Huldy told her. "I don't aim to stay. I left some clothes here; come to fetch them. Unless you've been wearing them!"

"They're in a box in the attic," Jenny said, ignoring the taunt. "I put them away."

"Moved in, have you?" Huldy commented. "Seems like you was in quite a hurry. I waited till he married me, anyway!"

Jenny's cheek was white; yet she curbed her tongue, and Huldy turned to Zeke. "I don't know as I know you," she said amiably. "But you look like you had sense enough to realize three's a crowd!"

Zeke grinned, deriding her. "From what I hear, three wouldn't crowd you none," he retorted.

Her brows lifted. "So you been hearing about me, have you?" Then she smiled, flatteringly. "But you'd find that one's enough for me, if he's a whole man," she said.

Will wrenched the board off the end of his leg, with a squeak of drawn nails, freeing his foot. He stood up to face her. "Huldy," he said huskily, "you mind your tongue. Come in if you want. You're always welcome here. But mind your tongue."

Huldy was for the moment silenced; but Zeke spoke to Jenny. "Where's this box?" he asked scornfully. "I'll fetch it down for her."

"In the attic, the far end," Jenny said. "By the window."

Zeke turned toward the attic stairs, behind the stove; but Huldy spoke to him. "You're in an awful hurry to get rid of me," she protested.

Zeke hesitated, looked at Will. "I'll pack her back in the car out there if you say, Will," he offered, his cheek hot.

Huldy whispered mockingly: "I guess you don't like me at all!"

"Not a bit, lady," Zeke assured her. "Nor any of your kind."

"How do you know my kind?" she challenged.

"I've seen enough of 'em, in gutters and around," he said mercilessly.

But Will turned upon him. "Zeke, you hush up," he said. Then to his wife: "Huldy, he'll fetch your things!"

## (TO BE CONTINUED)

## Longfellow's Evangeline

### Result of Story to Poet

Evangeline of the poem was written as the result of a story communicated to Longfellow long after the actual events occurred and one cannot be very definite on the facts behind it, according to a writer in the Detroit News. In Philadelphia there is a tradition that Evangeline wandered about New England all her lifetime and in her old age joined a sisterhood which cared for the sick. In the Philadelphia almshouse she found her lover on his deathbed and the shock of his death killed her; both are believed to be buried in the cemetery of Holy Trinity Catholic church there. The other tradition is that Evangeline (whose real name was Emmeline Labiche) was exiled with other Acadians to Maryland, where they remained for three years and then made their way into Louisiana. Soon after she landed she met her former lover, who had plighted his troth to another. A few months later she died of a broken heart and was buried near the "Evangeline" oak at St. Martinville, La. A statue of her at that place was dedicated in April, 1931.

Longfellow, in a letter to a Philadelphia journalist, mentions how he came to select the Philadelphia poorhouse and old Catholic graveyard for the final scenes of his poem. This is published in the preface to Evangeline in Longfellow's complete poems.

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# STAR DUST

Movie • Radio  
By VIRGINIA VALE

RANDOLPH SCOTT'S marriage came as a surprise to Hollywood; rumor has had the handsome Randy about to propose to one motion picture star after another. So imagine the shock when he announced that he was married last March, when he went back home.

His bride is a member of the wealthy and social DuPont family—couple that with the fact that before he went into pictures he was an usher at a DuPont wedding, and you may get some idea of how far the romance dates back.

In fact, there used to be rumors to the effect that he was very much in love with a girl in the Sunny South but felt that he hadn't enough money to marry her—though his father was a rich man. So—fame and fortune came by way of the movies, and now Hollywood, where bachelors are far too rare, has lost one of the most eligible ones.

"The Road to Glory" is going to be one of Fredric March's favorite pictures; he liked the role the best of any he'd had in a long time, and gave a magnificent performance when the cameras turned.

Judging from his early reception, the picture is going to be a favorite with film fans, too. The versatile March knows a "fat" part when he sees it. He demonstrated that

in his portrayal of Bothwell in "Mary Queen of Scotland" in which Katharine Hepburn starred as the ill-fated monarch.

Olivia de Havilland's very beautiful younger sister, Jean Fontaine, has been signed up for pictures by Jesse Lasky, the old star-maker (at the moment of this writing it's still a secret). So remember the name and look for the face, for it's dollars to doughnuts that she will be one of the big names in pictures before very long.

Of course you've heard Peter Van Steeden's band on the radio—now he declares that some day you may hear his daughter play. She is only a year and a half old, but she likes her toy piano better than anything else, and he swears that she can play several notes of "The Merry Widow Waltz" on it.

Edgar Guest is known far and wide as a poet; in fact, the name of "Eddie Guest" is a household word. But—he wishes that you knew him as a musician. In the broadcasting studios he gazes wistfully at the flying fingers of the pianist and banjo players who are on his program; he said recently to a friend "If I could only get out of my typewriter what those fellows get out of their instruments"—not realizing that the poems he writes are music to the ears of multitudes.

Robert Taylor is getting more fan mail than anyone else on the Metro lot—including Clark Gable. And that's what makes for long-term contracts, big salaries, and especially selected roles. Also, he is still devoted to Barbara Stanwyck.

Charles Boyer and his wife, Pat Patterson, paused a day in New York on their way to Europe; it was one of the hottest days of a very hot summer, but he wore a topcoat when they arrived, and she wore one too. They must have believed what Californians say about New York weather. He very diplomatically said nothing about the making of "The Garden of Allah," his latest picture.

Fred Astaire made all arrangements for his new broadcasting series before he hopped off for Europe for a vacation, most of which will be spent with his sister and former dancing partner, Lady Cavendish. He'll begin broadcasting September 8, and Jack Benny will give him a send-off, just for luck. Movie fans are wondering what the next film vehicle of the dancing king and his partner Ginger Rogers will be.

ODDS AND ENDS . . . They do say that one reason why Adolphe Menjou was so glad to sail off to Europe was that his caricature of John Barrymore in "Sing, Baby, Sing" is pretty harsh. . . . Patricia Ellis has been entertaining three charming young people, Joe, Eugene and Marjorie O'Brien—her sister and brothers. . . . Jean Harlow loves the sun, but she stayed out in it much too long the other day, and got a serious case of sunburn that kept her in bed for a couple of days. . . . William Powell and Myrna Loy are going to do "The Return of the Thin Man"—for which loud cheers!

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## SEEING IS FOUND

### MOST IMPORTANT OF FIVE SENSES

Scientific research discloses that the eyes receive 87 per cent of all impressions we receive. Our ears receive but 7 per cent; our sense of smell, 3.5 per cent; touch, 1.5 per cent; taste, 1 per cent.

These five senses form our sole contact with the world and the people in it. All that we know comes to us through our senses.

Though the eyes represent our most priceless physical asset, most of us subject our eyes to needless abuse. That this is so, is seen in the fact that 22 per cent of all children in the country have defective sight. At college age, 42 per cent have impaired vision. At age forty, the figure jumps to 60 per cent. And after the sixtieth birthday, only 5 per cent have unimpaired eyesight.

These statistics are the more appalling when we consider that our own carelessness is largely responsible for these deficiencies. Yet it may not be so much of carelessness as a lack of understanding as to what causes eyestrain.

Of all the abuses to which we subject our eyes, poor lighting is said to be one of the greatest. Oddly enough, this is also the easiest cause to prevent.

It is significant perhaps that defective eyesight is common among farm families. This is thought to be due to the fact that there are still several million farm homes to whom the advantages of electric lighting are not available. Yet if this is so, it again reflects a lack of understanding of the need for good light, for there are available today, types of portable lamps that provide daylight brilliance for every night-time task.

Perhaps the most popular of these are the gasoline and kerosene pressure mantle lamps.

For reading, sewing, and all the after-dark pursuits which require prolonged and close use of the eyes, abundant light is imperative to those who would protect that greatest of God-given gifts, the eyes. And this is more especially important where there are children in the family. Children's eyes are much more easily strained than those of adults.

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