



Ben Ames Williams

SYNOPSIS

Jim Saladine listens to the history of neighboring Hostile Valley, which is the home of the mysterious, enticing "Huldy," wife of Will Ferrin. Interested, he drives to the Valley for a day's fishing. "Old Marm" Pierce and her nineteen-year-old granddaughter Jenny live in the Valley. Slips little more than a child Jenny has at first admired and then deeply loved young Will Ferrin, neighborly farmer, older than she, and who regards her still as merely a child. Will takes employment in nearby Augusta. Bart Carey, something of a ne'er-do-well, is attracted by Jenny, but the girl repulses him. Learning that Will is coming home, Jenny, excited, sets his long-empty house "to rights," and has dinner ready for him. He comes—bringing his wife, Huldy, who 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 who he knows is Seth Humphrey's breaks from the house. Will overtakes him, and chokes him to death, though Humphrey's shatters his leg, with a bullet. At Marm Pierce's house the leg is amputated. Jenny goes to break the news to Huldy. She finds Bart Carey with Marm Pierce's. Bart Carey arrives declares she has no use for "half a man," and is leaving at once. Will is legally exonerated, and with a home-made artificial leg "carries on" his life as a helper. Zeké Dace, Marm's later, Huldy comes back. Two years go by. Zeké and Bart Carey engage in a fight, the trouble arising over Huldy. Amy Carey commits suicide. Zeké Dace had been showing her attention, but Zeké had succumbed completely to Huldy's wiles. Saladine comes to the Valley. While fishing he is caught in a heavy rain and takes refuge at Marm Pierce's. Bart Carey arrives carrying Huldy whom he claims has fallen from a ledge, and seemingly is dead, but while alone, the woman, with her last breath, asserts Will killed her. Horrified, Jenny decides to tell no one of the accusation.

hat over her white hair. "I get strangled for air, when I stay in doors the whole day," she declared, and went out. As she closed the door, they heard something sither and fall, and saw her stoop down. "Knocked your rod over, Bart," she called. "Can't hurt that rod," he assured her cheerfully. She stepped down off the porch and disappeared toward the barn. "I met Will Ferrin, and Marm Ferrin, and Zeké Dace, this morning," Saladine said. "I was on my way to your place. I'll run into the washout; so I backed up and left my car in Will's yard." "I see it there a while ago," Bart assented. "Zeké looked like a sick man, to me," Saladine suggested. Bart grinned as though abashed. "He's failed a lot," he said. "But he was an able man, two years ago. He worked me over, proper, one day. The Valley will whittle a man down." And he added: "Some, like Marm Pierce and Jenny here, they're always the same, and Will's always the same, or would be if it wa'n't for Huldy. She's—twisted him, turned him wrong ways." His brow clouded. "I wouldn't blame him for anything he was to do. If I was Will, I'd have. . . . He changed this. "If she was mine, I'd have known how to handle her!" Rain, rain, rain; the lash of wails against this little house, the pelt of bullets. Bart looked thoughtfully at the door into the dining room; and said huskily, with a nod toward the other room: "You see her this morning, you said. What did you think of her?" "She was a queer one," Saladine confessed. Bart leaned forward with a deep intentness. "Saladine, he said. "How would she come to fall?" "Got dizzy, maybe? Or tripped over something?" "She wa'n't the sort to get dizzy," Bart protested. "And—the ledge is all smooth, and it's good footing there." "You mean to say she jumped?" Bart grinned almost in derision. "She look to you like one that would kill herself, did she?" he demanded. "No," Saladine admitted. "No, she didn't." "Then put a name on it," Bart whispered. "If she didn't fall, and didn't jump. . . ." But Saladine was always inclined to think twice before he spoke, and there was matter enough for thought here today. He shook his head, silently. Bart—though they were quite alone—whispered: "There ain't a soul around here would blame Will!" But Saladine stared silently at the stove, and Bart did not repeat

CHAPTER VIII—Continued

But Marm Pierce pointed to the floor. Here were wet, muddy traces where booted feet had stood, where soaked garments had dripped upon the boards. "It's that Will," Marm Pierce decided scornfully. "He's forever prying around!" She shut the door with a slam. "I should think you'd be nervous, you and Jenny, living here alone," he suggested. "The Valley gets some folks," she agreed. "Folks that don't know how to be alone without being lonely. You've got to know how to be company for yourself, to get along around here!" And she added with a wry chuckle: "Just the same, I'm full as well pleased to have you around." "You mean—on account of your brother?" "Land, no!" she said scornfully. "No, I don't pay no heed to him. He comes and goes. But I'd as soon have a man in the house right now, for all that!" He watched her curiously, but before she could answer his unspoken question, there was a step on the porch outside the door; and they turned to see Bart appear. He leaned a steel rod beside the door before he came in. He had changed into dry clothes, coat and overalls. "Where's Will?" Marm Pierce demanded. "He wa'n't around," Bart explained. "Nor Zeké either. I figured they'd heard about Huldy and come over here." He looked around. "Where's Jenny?" he asked. "Gone to fetch Huldy's clothes," Marm Pierce told him. "It's a wonder you didn't meet her." Bart shook his head. Saladine saw a broad leather belt about his waist, with a belt attached, and to which a holster hung. "Hello," he said. "You pack a gun?" "Sure," Bart assented, and produced it. Saladine took the weapon in his hands. It was an old model, the front sight gone, of heavy caliber; and when Jim, holding back the hammer, gingerly tried the trigger, he found that the pull was feather light. "I always carry it when I go fishing," Bart explained. "You never know when you run into a mouse down here in the woods, or a wildcat."



"Huldy's Dead!"

Marm Pierce was in the dining room, and Bart lowered his tones. "That's the gun Seth shot Will Ferrin with," he said. Marm Pierce returned, and Jim handed the weapon back to Bart. The old woman was putting on an alkalin coat. "Bart, you see anybody fishing down brook this morning?" she inquired. "I heard there was tracks along the bank." "Will likely went that way," Bart reminded her. "I noticed tracks my own self, when I came down along. Figured it was him." Marm Pierce pulled an alkalin

his sinister suggestion; and a little after, Marm Pierce came briskly in. "Well, you've let the fire go out, between you!" she said sharply. This was almost true. She whisked off a lid of the stove and thrust a billet in, scolding them impartially. She hung up her coat and hat. "Wet to the knees, I am. Got to go change." She left them, departing through the dining room; and Bart's glance flickered after her through the open door, as though his eyes were drawn irresistibly that way. Then the two men sat alone a while, till Saladine heard a familiar sound, remotely, coming near. He rose and moved to the door, Bart at his shoulder.

"It's Will Ferrin," Saladine remarked. "And Jenny, in my car." And Bart said in a low, surprised tone: "So 'tis! I didn't know, but Will would've got out of the country by now!" Saladine, to avoid reply, opened the door and stepped out on the porch. Then Will and Jenny, Will with an old suitcase in his hand, alighted from the car and came toward them here.

When Huldy, with that black accusation on her lips, died, Jenny was at first left desperate; till quick loyalty brought her strength again, and resolution too. Marm Pierce, seeing without understanding the girl's deep distress, as soon as they were alone asked gently: "Jenny, you all right? I'm troubled about you."

"Seeing her die upset me," Jenny whispered. "That was all, Granny." Marm Pierce, only half convinced, yet forebore to question further. "Well, she's dead," she said. She touched Jenny's arm reassuringly. "Child, she's dead; and Will, he'll be coming soon. Nought now to keep him away from you. . . . Jenny's pulse failed and the blood drained from her lips. "Don't, Granny," she protested softly. "With her lying there. Not now." And she urged: "We'd ought to dress her in dry clothes. Will, he hadn't ought to see her so."

Marm Pierce nodded. Jenny's thoughts were plunging now. There was in her a blind desperate hunger to see Will, to comfort him, to assure him of her loyalty and of her deep understanding and forgiveness too. She wished on any count to see him, to be with him now. Yet it was some time before she devised that errand, involving Huldy's clothes. Even when she proposed this errand, Marm Pierce at first demurred; but longed to be with Will, Jenny would not be restrained. In a sort of breathless rush, she overbore her grandmother's remonstrances, and so was away.

She took by habit the path toward the woods; and her lips shaped unspoken words of tenderness and comforting. But when she came to the dark border of the wood, the girl paused, shivering, reluctant to plunge into the shadows. This path would take her by the foot of the ledge, by the very spot where Huldy a while ago had fallen to her death; and Jenny could not endure the prospect. So she retraced her way and turned aside toward Carey's. And halfway up the hill she saw ahead of her a figure, tremendous in the dim rain, familiar, beloved. Will, coming toward her. She stood weak and shaken by the sight of him; yet when he came near, lest he might think she shrank from him, she took one step forward to meet him steadily.

Will looked down at her for a long moment in silence. He said at last, heavily: "Jenny, where you going in this rain?" "To find you, Will," she told him. "I'm on my way to Bart's," he explained. "To see if maybe Huldy's there!" Jenny felt her spine chill. "She's not there, Will," she said. "She's at our house." He frowned in a deep bewilderment. "Your house?" "Will," she told him gravely, "Huldy's dead!"

The man stood huge above her; wind whipped his hat brim, rain lashed his cheek and struck his face and filled his eyes. He wiped his eyes with his hand, shook the water off his hand, wiped it on the side of his coat. A storm, visibly, swept across his countenance and left a shadow there. Yet she thought he was not surprised; and she spoke quickly, to spare him need of speech. "She fell off the ledge down back of your house," she said. "Bart found her, and fetched her over to our place, case Granny could do her any good. But she died."

He asked, after a long moment, dumbly: "Bart know how she come to fall?" Jenny steeled her tones, made them all reassurance. "No one will ever know that, Will," she said; and she added: "We did all could be done!" "I guess you would," he agreed. His shoulders bowed as though under a crushing load; and after a moment he said heavily: "Well, I'll go on over." But Jenny checked him. "I have to get some clothes to dress her," she said gently. "You'd best come back to the house with me, show me her things." He accepted this without speech; and he and Jenny climbed the steep grade side by side. In Will's barnyard Jenny saw a car standing, and so remembered Saladine. "That man, he's over 't' the house," she told Will. "I guess he wouldn't mind if we drove his car over. He'll want it, and that way we can keep Huldy's things dry." "Over there, is he?" Will echoed, with haunted eyes. "Last time I see Huldy," he said, "she was talking him off down to the ledge. Said she'd show him the brook trail." And his brow furrowed. "I want to talk to him," he said, ominously. "He left her on the ledge," Jenny urged. "He never see her, after. They went indoors. Now you get some dry clothes onto you, and he beds him. 'Til I pack the things

we'll need for her. Where are they, Will?" He looked at her in a sort of shame. "In there," he said, and pointed through the dining-room door to the bedroom beyond. "That's hers. I mostly sleep 'up attic." He opened a door beside the stove, and she heard him climb the narrow stairs.

She selected what she required; and then on impulse, she made Huldy's bed. Huldy's nightgown she put away; and when she was done, the room was in immaculate order. It pleased her to leave all things as Huldy would have wished to leave them. When she had packed the suitcase, she came back to the kitchen, and called up the attic stairs: "I'm ready, Will."

He answered her, after a moment. "I'm coming, Jenny."

When they were in Saladine's car, Will said: "The road looked to me



And He Stood Looking Down at His Wife's Body.

like we could get through down to Carey's, Jenny. We'd save a lot of time that way."

She made no comment, trusting such matters to his judgment; and he turned the car down the hill and drove on across the bridge, past Bart's, out to the Valley road, and thus in toward Marm Pierce's farm. In the yard they stopped, and Will took the suitcase from the back of the car. Saladine and Bart were on the porch to meet them; but if Will had known a passing doubt of Saladine, it was forgotten now. He said to the other man: "Jenny told me you was over here. I didn't know as you'd mind if we drive your car over."

"Glad you did," Jim agreed; and Bart gripped Will's hand. "Guess you know, Will, how I feel about this," he said. "Guess I do," Will agreed. They all came indoors. "Set down here by the stove, Will," said Jenny softly. "Your hands are bound to be cold. Take off your coat, and dry."

"I went out to find you, Will," Bart explained. "But you wa'n't there." "I was out hunting them," Will assented, and he looked at Saladine. "She didn't come back after she went with you," he said. "When it come on to rain, I went to find her. Huldy was foolish about rain, kind of. She'd stay out in it, claimed to like it."

He added: "But I couldn't find them nowhere." "Where's Zeké?" Bart asked. "I dunno," Will confessed. "I ain't seen him since." Jenny took the suitcase into the dining room where Huldy was, and closed the door between. Marm Pierce was there; she said crisply: "Back, be you? Fetch Will!" "He's in the kitchen," Jenny assented. "I want to get her dressed first, make her look as nice as we can before he sees her."

Marm Pierce nodded, watching the girl; and she saw that Jenny's countenance was illuminated, and by much more than mere happiness; much more than the selfish happiness which, if she loved Will, she might find in the fact that now he was free to love her, too. It was as though she were committed to a task in which she found peace and pride.

While they were busy here, the rain was pitiless outside. The afternoon, though it was not yet late, was already shrouded in a sort of quak when Jenny went at last to bid Will come in. Will followed her into the dining room where Huldy lay; and he stood looking down at his wife's body, his shoulders bowed. Jenny was close beside him, almost touching him; her head nodded faintly once or twice. It was as though she spoke words of comfort and of heartening; yet her lips did not move.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Use for Sugar Cane Hawaiians make boards out of the "begañe" that is left over when the juice is squeezed out of the sugar cane. But boards in the tropics are of questionable value as a building material because the white ants eat them up. So, in Hawaii, a bit of potash is mixed with the begañe which makes it immune from insect attack. The product is called cane and is sent in great quantities to the Philippines for use

New Autumn Woolens Striking

By CHERIE NICHOLAS



ment, sawtooth checks, mari tweeds, broken plaids, chevron stripes, ombre plaids, ribbed diagonals and others too numerous to cite.

The colorings of the versatile woolens brought out this season are a triumph both in art and of science. A complete wardrobe may be planned to include several colors, none of which conflict because the most vivid plaids and gay hues are given dusky overtones which blend into one grand symphony via misty interweavings of grayish or brownish yarns. The attractive Seton Cotterill collection of London which was recently shown in America by the Chicago wholesale market court, stressed particularly this feature of color blend in smart woolens. The trio of high-style woolen fashions here pictured were displayed in this exhibit.

See illustrated to the left in the group a perfect travel costume. The Scotch plaid in black and white, of which it is made, has a heavy nub yarn interwoven to give highlights of canary yellow.

A new chevron-stripe wool in tones of amber, rustique and brown makes the suit with tuxedo topcoat (centered in the illustration). Note the smart cross-scarf of the jacket. Semi-fitted lines and woolen buttons give a new smart air.

The new skirts are marvelously built. They are most deceptive. They look as innocently pleated and paneled as you please, while in reality they are concealing slits which allow for perfect freedom of action. Such a skirt is the one to the right in the picture. "Swagger collegiate" describes this ombre plaid suit in rich tones of dubonnet red and ivory. It has a snug collar and stock scarf and is worn with matching sweater.

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COAT OF PIGSKIN

By CHERIE NICHOLAS



Have you heard about the too-chic-for-words new polo coats which are made of fine pigskin? Just study this picture and see how smart they are down to the slightest detail. You can get them either in natural or rich dark dyes. The model illustrated has all of the latest "touches" such as big, roomy bellows pockets, the new sash belt which ties so casually, strap-band sleeves which are adjustable about the wrist, deep-set yoke and an intricate seaming which gives the garment exquisite finesse. The hat is of plaid to match the coat. The pale pink scarf is up to the moment in style.

LUXURIOUS METALS

TOUCH UP FABRICS

Inspired by Oriental and period influences fabric manufacturers have outdone themselves in producing beautiful and luxurious metals on every type of silk ground.

In addition to being important for afternoon and evening gowns, the new metals are widely used for millinery—notably turbans—scarfs to be worn with wool as well as silk suits, blouses, waistcoats, bags, vanity and cigarette cases, in superb evening sandals and evening jackets that have a decidedly new look.

Metals with solid burnished faces in silver, gold—and newest of all—copper are shown in the market and considered especially good for jackets and accessories.

Silk crepes with double borders in metalized broche show distinct traces of Persian, Hindu and Japanese influence in their rich colorings and delicate patterns.

Sheer silk gauzes, completely metalized, form one of the newest and loveliest of the metals.

Pink Rates Coolest Shade and Looks Most Expensive

Pink, fashion's favorite color this summer, is the coolest-looking and, incidentally, the most expensive appearing shade you possibly can wear. There are pink linen and shantung suits for town and country, handsome pink sweaters to wear with white skirts when you week-end out of town and glamorous evening gowns in various tones of this lovely shade. One particularly nice evening gown is fashioned from double layers of pink chiffon and is worn under a billowing wrap of matching material.

Paris Loves Blue

Blue is a favorite color of Paris this year. Smart women seen at the races are many of them gowned in navy with white relief; also navy and white prints. Pale, misty blue crepe frocks are worn with darker blue hats, bags and shoes.

GOLDEN PHANTOMS Fascinating Tales of Lost Mines by Ethel L. Watson

CHERRY COW GHOST

DID you ever hear of a haunted mine?

If all abandoned mines are not haunted, they ought to be. The old Cherry Cow mine, in eastern Arizona, had a ghost. It once had been a pretty fair gold mine—and Mike Church, its discoverer, made enough out of it to buy a nice little house and an orchard, where he tried to settle down and spend his days in comfort. But Mike, like the rest of the breed known as prospectors, could not be happy in such a setting. He would wander away without a word and disappear for weeks and months, only to return again, weary but happy. He had been off prospecting—hunting for another Cherry Cow.

During his absences, a young man named Bill Richards, who lived nearby, would take care of Mike's place. He did this just as a gesture of friendliness, because he liked the old fellow, and when Mike was at home he would regale Bill with tales of wonderful mines and their equally wonderful treasure.

He had many good words to say for the old Cherry Cow, as well, and he enjoyed telling about the days when he had several men working there, taking out "some mighty good-lookin' ore—yes, sir!" But the ore had run out, and so had Mike's interest in the mine.

One fall morning, seeing no smoke rising from the little house in the orchard, Bill went over to investigate. As he had suspected, Mike was not there, but a letter lay on the kitchen table, and it was unusual. Picking it up, Bill saw that it was addressed to him. He opened it and read the misspelled scrawl within:

"Dere Bill—I'm off on a trip a long one this time. If I don't come back in a yr you take the place and everything I got its all yures this is my will. Mike."

Bill was touched. He knew the old man meant it, but he hoped that cold weather would find him in his little house again.

Winter came, and spring. Then the rumors of a ghost began to spread about. Someone had gone up to the abandoned Cherry Cow shaft, and had seen a shadow that flitted out of sight and could not be found again. A miner who passed that way after dark reported a strange light that seemed to shoot straight out of the shaft. A cowboy who rode by said that his horse had snorted and shied as he passed, though nothing was to be seen or heard.

Aroused to suspicion by these stories, Bill Richards went up to the Cherry Cow to investigate. He found nothing but the shaft from which Mike's modest stake had come, with the rotting boards that had once been a shaft-house leaning above it. He called, wondering if his eccentric old friend could possibly be about, but a scolding blue-jay gave him the only answer he heard.

"The years went by, and no one knew what had become of Mike Church. At last, urged by his friends, Bill produced the letter, and while it was not a legal will, since no other claimants to the estate were found it became Bill's property.

But now the Cherry Cow was avoided by everyone who had business up that way. No one wanted to be frightened by a ghost, and even the strong-minded who claimed there were no such things as ghosts saw no reason for going near the mine. At last an easterner came to town, hunting for a mine, and wandered up to the Cherry Cow.

He liked the place. Although Mike had always contended that his ore had been a stray pocket, the newcomer said he believed that he could find a vein. He became so enthusiastic that the stories of the ghost merely amused him. "I'll lay that ghost," he promised, "I'll take the spell right off the Cherry Cow."

And so he bought the mine from Bill Richards. He hired a small crew of men to clean out the shaft and unwater the sump.

But before long one of his men came to him. "The water's down a foot," he told the easterner. "There's something down there—the Mexicans won't go on mucking out—they're afraid to touch it."

"I'll go down myself and see. It's that fool ghost, I suppose, that's got them worried. Well, I don't want any ghosts around here." And he hurried to the shaft.

They knew that it was what remained of Mike because they found his old-fashioned watch. The burial was informal and hasty, for there were only bones and shoes and a few shreds of clothing left. The Mexicans quit, of course, and it was some days before an American crew could be hired. Bill Richards went up alone and said a little prayer for Mike at the grave. And the ghost never haunted the Cherry Cow again. But Mike was right—the easterner never found his vein, either.