

**DEATH-VALLEY
SLIM, AND OTHER
STORIES**

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Death-Valley Slim, and other stories by Pauline Wilson Worth & C. A. Friedman

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PAULINE WILSON WORTH & C. A. FRIEDMAN

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Death Valley Slim

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By

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Los Angeles

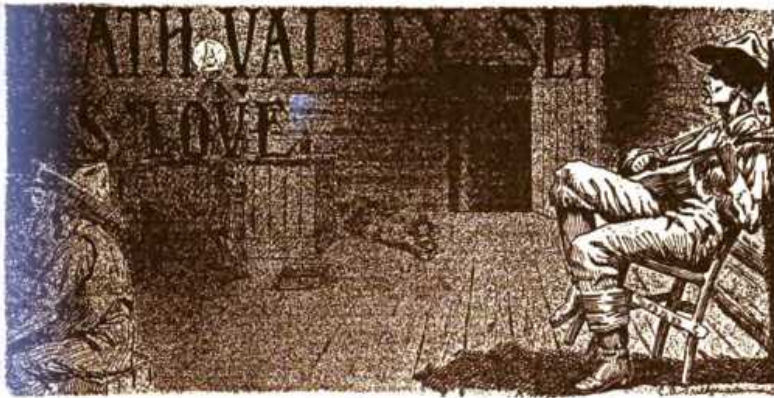
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AIN'T never heerd of Death Valley Slim? Well, it's plain thet ye air a stranger in these parts, 'cause ever'body as has been here twenty-four hour has heerd tell of him.

"Tell ye about him? Why, certainly, but ye might as well fill your pipe and draw your cheer up comfortable like, 'cause it's a long story, and a strange one—ye might be a little inclined to think thet it is stretched a bit, but it ain't—it's ever' word gospel truth."

Glad of a chance to kill time in the little Oregon mining camp, where I had been compelled to stay over Sunday, I filled my pipe and, with my feet on the table, I settled myself back in my chair in front of a cheerful log fire and awaited the story.

"Death Valley Slim was about as homely a cuss as you'll ever see; seemed like God had a lot of odd pieces left over and he jist put 'em together and called 'em Slim. He was six foot two in his stockin' feet, he had one game eye thet stared at ye while t'other one looked around, and he had a long, droopin' mustache. Awful awkward, Death Valley Slim was; seemed like his big hands and feet was allus in his way.



DEATH VALLEY SLIM

"Well sir, thet feller had walked plum acrost the continent; he would stay in one place until he got tired of it, and then git up and stretch his long laigs and strike out fer new diggin's; he was kinder like thet Injun thet one of the poets tell about.

"How did he earn his livin'? Why, man, Death Valley could earn a livin' where you couldn't. He had the finest voice thet ever I heerd and I hev heerd some of the best; seemed like all the purtiness and sweetness thet was left out of his body was put in his voice, and, stranger, he could make a guitar talk. He played and sung in the saloons and he could draw a crowd in less time than it would take to tell it.

"He used to work over in the mica mines in Death Valley and when he come here he wouldn't give no name eceptin' Slim, so we all got to callin' him Death Valley Slim, and I reckon they ain't a dozen people here as knows his right name.

"I took up with him right from the first, 'cause I liked his big, honest eyes, and I could tell thet underneath all his homeliness was a heart thet was true as steel. Death Valley was a great talker, but after he had left you and you went to think over what he had said to you, you'd find out ez he hadn't told you nothin'; he lived inside of hisself.

"Well, sir, one time we had been out to the Palace (thet's one of the saloons where Death Valley used to sing), and I noticed ez how Death was awful quiet like, and I sez to him, 'Death Valley, what's ailin' you tonight? You ain't a gettin' ready to tramp ag'in, be you?'

"'No Dutch,' sez he (he allus called me Dutch; don't know how it ever got started), 'No, Dutch; I wish to heavens I could git the movin' fever on agin, but there is somethin' thet holds me here



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and it seems like I jist can't bear to think of leavin'.

"I looked at him wonderin' like, and he went on, 'I know 'taint no use; thet she can't never love such a good fer nothin' as I am, and so I shan't never trouble her nor let her know anything about my feelin's fer her, but, Dutch, I love her with my whole soul; I love her jist like the little flowers love the sun—if it leaves them they die, and I feel thet if I was where I couldn't see her, I would foller suit. So, Dutch, while she's here, I am here, and wherever she goes, I go—she won't never think nothin' of it 'cause I wander so much anyway, but I'm a watchin' her, Dutch, and if anybody ever tries to harm her they've got Slim to deal with to the finish.'

"'But Death,' says I, 'you ain't told me who she is and you hev kept your feelin's so close to yourself thet I ain't even got a guessin' acquaintance with who you mean.'

"Well, it 'peared thet the gal was Nita Hayden and her pa was our preacher. Of course she couldn't have nothin' to do with a feller as sung in saloons; thet was a cinch, and so I told Death, 'You air a lookin' a little too high—you want to let your affections light on some woman more like yourself. Now there's Lillie Mason; she's more to your style.'

"'Now look ahere, Dutch,' sez he, 'I don't want to hear no more—I hev got enough sense to know thet the little gal wouldn't no more look at me than she would at a common beggar and, as I said afore, I ain't a-goin' to bother her none, but all the powers thet be can't keep me from lovin' her.'

"His whole face lit up when he said thet and I'll be switched if Death Valley Slim didn't look almost handsome."



DEATH VALLEY SLIM

A smile lingered on his lips as he sat there, his thoughts in the past and my presence forgotten until I gave a little cough to remind him that he had an interested and impatient listener.

"Now it wasn't long after that, that a feller come into camp to keep books and do the assayin' fer the Silver King and he tuck right up with Nita, of course, she bein' a mighty purty little trick, and jist as smart and good as she was good lookin'.

"That feller hadn't been in camp six months afore it was plain that he had lost his heart complete to Nita, an' she was jist all wrapped up in him, but it 'peared that her pa had other plans for her. It seemed that there was a feller as had made a stake over in Montany and he was mighty tuck up with Nita. Her pa wanted her to marry him, 'cause he had the long green. Couldn't blame the poor cuss; you know preachers don't usual hev their pockets lined with green backs and Hayden had a big family and, while he liked the young bookkeeper mighty well, he couldn't see why Nita couldn't love the feller that had the money. But the pore little gal couldn't help where her affections lit. Affections is jist like a cup of water thrown into a crowded street; jist as likely to light on a beggar as it is on a millionaire.

"Well, time went on and it turned out that the pore little Nita had felt it her duty to do as her pa wished and it was reported around camp that on the next Wednesday night after prayer meetin' that Nita and the money feller was a goin' to git married, and all you needed to do was to take one look at the pore bookkeeper and Nita's pale face, to know that it was so.

"Where was Death Valley Slim all this time? Well' I'm a gittin' to that. You see I told you once afore as how he allus kept everything to



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hissself, but I'll be blowed if he didn't hand me one that I wasn't lookin' fer.

"He come up on a Thursday night afore the weddin' and he set right down where you air a settin' now, and he sez to me, 'Dutch, I ain't never told ye very much about myself and I hev liked ye fine 'cause ye ain't never asked me no questions, and so I'm a goin' to tell ye somethin' as will surprise ye a little, I reckon. Dutch, I am a rich man—ye don't need to look so all-fired thunderstruck. I know I don't look like one, but I ain't been a diggin' around minin' camps thirty year fer nothin'. If you'll remember a story in the "Herald" about a man that struck it rich over in the new gold fields of Colorado about fifteen year ago, and how he stayed a tramp—well, that's me.

"Now look ahere, Dutch, you air the only person on earth that knows that I love that little gal and you don't know 'cause you can't see my inner feelin's; but I hev been adoin' some purty tall thinkin' lately and I want you to help me. That little gal mustn't marry that lubber with the money; she might far better marry me and I ain't no more fit for her to marry than a hog is to stay in a parlor, and, Dutch, I hev got all of this money and it don't do me no good, and if I could only work it so's to make the little gal happy I'd be almost happy myself. Can't ye help me on this deal, Dutch?"

"I felt considerable up the stump and so I told Death as how the young man was too proud to accept money straight out and so was Nita and her pa. Well, jist then I had an idee. 'Look ahere, Death Valley, I've got an idee. Ye know people is allus makin' donations to preachers and churches, and the Lord knows this preacher and this church needs it as bad as the next ones. So why not send a donation to the preacher, the

