

What Old Tamber Had to Say

by William Owen

"They say she lives alone out there."

"What, like out in the woods?"

"Not like way back in a cabin or anything, but in a little house out there off the road. I'm not even sure she has a car."

"What, does she walk in here every day? Seems a long way. And not really safe is it, or doesn't seem safe. Anyone come along on someone looks like her, well if they ain't a good sort that'd turn around pretty bad."

"They say she speaks in a funny tongue, some weird, old accent. Old Tamber said she spoke with all manner of things too. That when you'd go up by the place she'd be outside, out in back of the place or over on the side nearer to the stream and the marsh near that fork in the road."

"The one that leads over to Dalton."

"Or over towards Hume yeah."

"Hm, didn't realize the place was up that far. I'm not out that way too much."

"Tamber says she'll be out there talking with the plants, sometimes treating them to a congregation."

"The hell does that mean?"

"A sermon."

"Like a preacher?"

"Yeah. Holding forth on all those plants and anything else there she might be seeing. What kind of virtue to you suppose you'd extol to a plant."

"Hahaha, hmm. Constancy."

"How about a venus fly trap?"

"Sort of have to condone murder on that one don't you."

"Either that, or you and Tamber just having on, right?"

"I'm not, I'm telling you what Tamber said."

"That old broad knows just about everyone, and doesn't strike me as to like to make up a story like that."

"No, s'why I kind of went on with it. It's out there sure, but don't fall off the edge."

"Still, even if she is sort of odd, she's still a beauty and there are still all kinds out there up on the hills. That one guy, the one they say takes off anytime he gets wind of the FBI after him, he lives out there. He's not someone I'd put anything past. Even if I didn't know him twice as well as I'd like to I'd've heard in a year more than half what I need to know he isn't any sort."

"Yeah. I don't know. Makes a mystery though doesn't it. She's only lived here for what, five years. Opens this little store, always standing there in the doorway. But it's gotta be good for the town, having a curio shop that sells flowers."

"Sure. You think you're ever gonna talk to her."

"Me? No."

"Why not?"

"I get tongue tied and stammerin' just thinking about talking to her."

"You'd maybe do alright."

"No, carpenters don't talk to pretty florists."

