

THE LAST OF THE DUANES

by Zane Grey
Illustrated by Verne C. Christy

WHAT HAPPENED BEFORE

Buck Duane, quick on the draw, kills Cal Bain in self-defense and finds himself an outlaw. Flying from pursuit, he meets Luke Stevens, another outlaw, and the two become pals. Luke narrowly escapes capture and Duane is shocked to find his brother outlaw severely wounded.

Duane buries Stevens. Then he goes on to Bland's camp, where he gets into a fight with a man called Bosomer and wounds the latter. He makes a friend of an outlaw at Bland's called Euchre, who tells him of Mrs. Bland and the girl Jennie.

Duane meets Jennie and promises to try his utmost to get her away from Bland's camp. To avert suspicion, it is planned that he pretend to care for Mrs. Bland. Euchre introduces him to the latter and he engages in conversation with her.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY:

Evidently the outlaw's wife liked Euchre, for her keen glance rested with amusement upon him.

"As for Jen, I'll tell you her story some day," went on the woman. "It's a common enough story along this river. Euchre here is a tender-hearted old fool, and Jen has taken him in."

When Euchre had shuffled into the house Mrs. Bland turned to Duane with curiosity and interest in her gaze.

"I'll tell you, Duane," she said earnestly. "I'm sure glad if you mean to bide a while. I'm a miserable woman, Duane. I'm an outlaw's wife, and I hate him and the life I have to lead. I come of a good family in Brownsville."

"I never knew Bland was an outlaw till long after he married me. We were separated at times, and I imagined he was away on business. But the truth came out. Bland shot my own cousin, who told me. My family cast me off, and I had to flee with Bland."

"I was only eighteen, then. I've lived here since. I never see a de-

worry, to gather the import of every word which had a double meaning.

Euchre said that the girl had begun to wither under the strain, to burn up with intense hope, which had flamed within her. But all the difference Duane could see was a paler face and darker, more wonderful eyes. The eyes seemed to be entreating him to hurry, that time was flying, that soon it might be too late.

Then there was another meaning in them—a light—a strange fire wholly inexplicable to Duane. It was only a flash, gone in an instant. But he remembered it because he had never seen it in any other woman's eyes.

Inside Duane's body there was a strife; his heart pounded, his blood roared, his breast bore a heavy pang. Something hot had dug into his vitals and the pain remained. In the depths of his mind, his soul, there was chaos.

He felt something dying in him. He suffered. Hope seemed far away. Despair had seized upon him and was driving him into reckless mood when he thought of Jennie.

He had forgotten her. He had forgotten that he had promised to save her. He had forgotten that he meant to snuff out as many lives as might stand between her and freedom.

The very remembrance sheered off his morbid introspection. She made a difference. How strange for him to realize it! He felt grateful to her. He had been forced into outlawry; she had been stolen from her people and carried into captivity.

They had met in the river fastness, he to instill hope into her despairing life, she to be the means, perhaps, of keeping him from sink-

ing to the level of her captors. He became conscious of a strong beating desire to see her, talk with her.

These thoughts had run through his mind while on his way to Mrs. Bland's house. He had let Euchre go on ahead because he wanted more time to compose himself.

Darkness had almost set in when he reached his destination. There was no light in the house. Mrs. Bland was waiting for him on the porch.

She embraced him, and the sudden violent, unfamiliar contact sent such a shock through him that he all but forgot the deep game he was playing. She, however, in her agitation did not notice his shrinking.

"Duane, you love me?" she whispered.

"Yes—yes," he burst out, eager to get it over, and even as he spoke he caught the pale gleam of Jennie's face through the window.

"Dog-tired we are and starved," said Bland heavily. "Who's here with you?"

"That's Euchre on the porch, Duane is inside at the window with Jen," replied Mrs. Bland.

"Duane!" he exclaimed. Then he whispered low—something Duane could not catch.

"Why, I asked him to come," said the chief's wife. She spoke easily and naturally, and made no change in tone. "Jen has been ailing. She gets thinner and whiter every day. Duane came here one day with Euchre, saw Jen, and went loony over her pretty face, same as all you men. So I let him come."

"Kate, you let Duane make love to Jennie?" queried Bland incredulously.

"Yes, I did," replied the wife stubbornly. "Why not? Jen's in love with him. If he takes her away and marries her, she can be a

decent woman."

"Jennie," whispered Duane, "that was clever of Mrs. Bland. We'll keep up the deception. Any day now be ready."

She pressed close to him, and a barely audible 'Hurry' came breathing into his ear.

Then he stepped out into the moonlight and spoke. Bland returned the greeting and, though he was not amiable, he did not show resentment.

"Met Jasper as I rode in," said Bland presently. "Duane, I want you to stop quarreling with my men. If you were one of us—that'd be different. I can't keep my men from fighting. But I'm not called on to let an outsider hang round my camp and plug my rustlers."

"I guess I'll have to be hitting the trail for somehwere," said Duane.

"Why not join my band? You've got a bad start already, Duane, and if I know this border you'll never be a respectable citizen again. You're a born killer. I know every bad

man on this frontier. "More than one of them have told me that something exploded in their brain, and when sense came back there lay another dead man. It's not so with me. I've done a little shooting, too; but I never wanted to kill another man just to rid myself of the last one."

"My dead men don't sit on my chest at night. That's the gun-fighters' trouble. He's crazy. He has to kill a new man—the's driven to it to forget the last one."

"But I'm no gun-fighter," protested Duane. "Circumstances made me—"

"No doubt," interrupted Bland with a laugh. "Circumstances made me a rustler. You don't know yourself. You're young; you've got a temper; your father was one of the most dangerous men Texas ever had. I don't see any other career for you. Instead of going it alone—a lone wolf, as the Texans say—why not make friends with other outlaws? You'll live a while longer."

Euchre squirmed in his seat.

"Boss, I've been given' the boy exactly the same line of talk. That's why I took him in to bunk with me. If he makes pards among us there won't be any more trouble. An' he'd be a grand feller for the gang. Slickest of all the gun-throwers I ever seen! An' I've rustled around over the southwest."

(Continued Next Week)

FARM POINTERS.

Good hitching devices for large teams are illustrated and discussed by the horse association of America in a bulletin entitled Horse-

Champion Strong Man Stronger Than Horses



Gus Bauman, Champion German Strong Man, giving a demonstration of his great strength in New York. He is shown holding together two teams of horses which are pulling in opposite directions. This and other feats of Bauman are attracting considerable attention.

Mules. Power-Profit, obtainable from that association. The farm management department at Oregon State college recommends this bulletin to farmers interested in utilizing horse power to the best advantage. The trend to big teams is inevitable, because large units reduce labor costs.

Neat, well built and well kept fences are "show windows" advertising of progressive farmers.

Everything points to a substantial increase in the alfalfa acreage in western Oregon for 1929. Larger requirements for more late summer pasture and for high class hay are

interesting farmers in alfalfa. Usually the first crop is saved for hay and the later crops are pastured. Grimm alfalfa has proved best in most of the western Oregon trials, says the experiment station.

Bulbous bluegrass, the new grass recently discovered in Jackson county, is being tried in many sections of the state. It is purely in the experimental stage in most areas and does not appear to make superior growth to the rye grasses. Its more permanent nature may eventually prove it to be superior to other grasses, reports the experiment station.



... Haunted by Jennie's sad face—her wistful smile—her eyes ...

cent woman or man. I never hear anything about my old home, or folks or friends. I'm buried here—buried alive with a lot of thieves and murderers. Can you blame me for being glad to see a young fellow—a gentleman—like the boys I used to go with?

"I tell you it makes me feel full—I want to cry. I'm sick for somebody to talk to. I have no children, thank God. If I had I'd not stay here. I'm sick of this hole. I'm lonely."

There appeared to be no doubt about the truth of all this. Genuine emotion checked—then halted the hurried speech. She broke down and cried. It seemed strange to Duane that an outlaw's wife—and a woman who fitted her consort and the wild nature of their surroundings—should have weakness enough to weep.

"Would Bland object if I called on you occasionally?" inquired Duane.

"No, he wouldn't. He likes me to have friends. Ask him yourself when he comes back. The trouble has been that two or three of his men fell in love with me, and when half drunk got to fighting. You're not going to do that."

"I'm not going to get half drunk that's certain," replied Duane.

Without any solicitation or encouragement from Duane, the Bland woman fell passionately in love with him. His conscience was never troubled about the beginning of that affair. She launched it herself. It took no great perspicuity on his part to see that.

He was playing a game of love. Playing with life and death! Sometimes he trembled, not that he feared Bland or Alloway, or any man, but at the depths of life he had come to see into. He was carried out of his old mood.

Not once since this daring motive had stirred him had he been haunted by fancies of Bain beside his bed. Rather had he been haunted by Jennie's sad face—her wistful smile—her eyes.

He never was able to speak a word to her. What little communication he had with her was through Euchre, who carried short messages. But he caught glimpses of her every time he went to the Bland house. She contrived somehow to pass door or window, to give him a look when chance afforded.

And Duane discovered with surprise that these moments were more thrilling to him than any with Mrs. Bland. Often Duane knew Jennie was sitting just inside the window, and then he felt inspired in his talk, and it was all made for her. So at least she came to know him while as yet she was almost a stranger.

Jennie had been instructed by Euchre to listen, to understand that this was Duane's only chance to help keep her mind from constant

ing to the level of her captors. He became conscious of a strong beating desire to see her, talk with her.

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