

# 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.

**NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY**  
"Wal, I got it this way. Bebbe it's straight an' mebbe it ain't. Some years ago Benson made a trip over the river to buy mescal an' other drinks. He'll sneak over there once in a while. An' as I get it he run across a gang of greasers with some gringo prisoners.

"I don't know, but I reckon there was some barterin', perhaps murderin'. Anyway Benson fetched the girl back. She was more dead than alive. But it turned out she was only starved an' scared half to death. She hadn't been harmed.

"I reckon she was then about fourteen years old. Benson's idee, he said, was to use her in his den, sellin' drinks an' the like. But I never went much on Jackrabbit's word. Bland seen the kid right off an' took her—bought her from Benson.

"You can gamble Bland didn't do that from notions of chivalry. I ain't gainsayin', however, but that Jennie was better off with Kae Bland. She's been hard on Jennie, but she's kept Bland an' the other men from treatin' the kid shameful. Late Jennie has grown into an all-fired pretty girl, an' Kate is powerful jealous of her. I can see trouble brewin' over there in Bland's cabin.

"That's why I wash you'd come over with me. Bland's hardly ever home. His wife's invited you. Shore if she gets sweet on you, as she has on—wal, the'd complicate matters. But you'd get to see Jennie, an' mebbe you could help her.

"Mind, I ain't hintin' nothin'. I'm just wantin' to put her in your way. You're a man an' can think for yourself. I had a baby girl once, an' if shed' lived she'd be as big as Jennie now, an' by gosh I wouldn't want her in Bland's camp."

"I'll go, Euchre. Take me over," replied Duane.

Euchre knocked upon the side of the door.

"Is that you, Euchre?" asked a girl's voice, low, hesitatingly.

"Yes, it's me, Jennie. Where's Mrs. Bland?" answered Euchre.

"She went over to Deger's. There's somebody sick," replied the girl.

Euchre turned and whispered something about luck. The snap of the outlaw's eyes was added significance to Duane.

"Jennie, come out or let us come in. Here's the young man I was tellin' you about," Euchre said.

"Oh—I can't! I look so—so—"

"Never mind how you look," interrupted the outlaw in a whisper.

"It ain't no time to care for that. There's young Duane. Jennie, he's no rustler, no thief. He's different. Come out, Jennie, an' mebbe he'll—"

Euchre did not complete his sentence. He had spoken low, with his glance shifting from side to side.

Euchre went away through the cottonwoods.

"I'm glad to meet you, Miss—Miss Jennie," said Duane. "Euchre didn't mention your last name. He asked me to come over to—"

Duane's attempt at pleasantry halted short when Jennie lifted her lashes to look at him. Some kind of shock went through him.

Her gray eyes were beautiful, but it had not been beauty that cut short his speech. He seemed to see a tragic struggle between hope and doubt that shone in her piercing gaze. She kept looking, and Duane could not break the silence. It was no ordinary moment.

"What did you come here for? she asked at last.

"To see you," replied Duane, glad to speak.

"Why?"

"Well—Euchre thought—he wanted me to talk to you, cheer you up a bit," replied Duane somewhat lamely.

The earnest eyes embarrassed him.

"Euchre's good. He's the only person in this awful place who's been good to me. But he's afraid of Bland. He said you were different. Who are you?"

Duane told her.

"You're not a robber or rustler or murderer or some bad man come here to hide?"

"No, I'm not," replied Duane, trying to smile.

"Then why are you here?"

"I'm on the dodge. You know what that means. I got in a shooting scrape at home and had to run off. When

it blows over I hope to go back."

"But you can't be honest here."

"Yes, I can."

"You fought Bosomer the other day?"

"In self-defense I crippled him."

"Oh, I know what these outlaws are. Yes, you're different." She kept the strained gaze upon him, but hope was kindling, and the hard lines of her youthful face were softening.

Something sweet and warm stirred deep in Duane as he realized the unfortunate girl was experiencing a birth of trust in him.

"Maybe you're the man to save me—to take me away before it's too late!"

Duane's spirit leaped.

"Maybe I am," he replied instantly.

She seemed to check a blind impulse to run into his arms. Her cheek flamed, her lips quivered, her bosom swelled under her ragged dress. Then the glow began to fade; doubt once more assailed her.

"It can't be—You're only—after me, too, like Bland—like all of them."

Duane's long arms went out and his hands clasped her shoulders. He shook her.

"Look at me—straight in the eye. There are decent men. Haven't you a father—a brother?"

"They are dead—killed by raiders. We lived in Dimmit County. I was carried away," Jennie replied hurriedly.

She put up an appealing hand to him.

"Forgive me. I believe—I know you're good. It was only—I live so much in fear—I'm half crazy—I've almost forgotten what good men are like. Mr. Duane, you'll help me?"

"Yes, Jennie, I will. Tell me how. What must I do? Have you any plan?"

"Oh, no. But take me away."

"I'll try," said Duane simply. "That won't be easy, though. I must have time to think. You must help me. There are many things to consider. Horses—food, trails, and then the best time to make the attempt. Are you watched—kept prisoner?"

"No. I could have run off lots of times. But I was afraid. I'd only have fallen into worse hands. Euchre has told me that. Mrs. Bland beats me, half starves me, but she has kept me from her husband. She's been as good as that and I'm grateful.

"She hasn't done it for love of me, though. She always hated me. And lately she's growing jealous. There was a man came here by the name of Spence—so he called himself. He tried to be kind to me. But she wouldn't let him. She was in love with him. She's a bad woman."

"Bland finally shot Spence and that ended that. She's been jealous ever since. I hear her fighting with Bland about me. She swears she'll kill me before he gets me. And Bland laughs in her face. Then I've heard Ches- Alloway try to persuade Bland to give me to him. But Bland doesn't laugh then."

"Just lately before Bland went away things almost came to a head. I couldn't sleep. I wished Mrs. Bland would kill me. I'll certainly kill myself if—Duane, you must be quick if you'd save me."

"I realize that," he replied thoughtfully. "I think my difficulty will be to fool Mrs. Bland. If she suspected me she'd have the whole gang of outlaws on me at once."

"She would that. You've got to be careful—and quick."

"What kind of a woman is she?" inquired Duane.

"She's brazen. I've heard her with her lovers. They get drunk sometimes, when Bland's away. She's got a terrible temper. She's vain. She likes flattery. Oh, you could fool her easy enough if you'd lower yourself to—"

"To make love to her?" interrupted Duane.

"My girl, I'd do worse than that to get you away from here," he said bluntly.

"But—Duane," she faltered, and again she put out the appealing hand, "Bland will kill you."

Duane made no reply to this. He was trying to still a rising strange tumult in his breast. The old emotion—the rush of an instinct to kill! He turned cold all over.

"Ches Alloway will kill you, if Bland doesn't," went on Jennie, with her tragic eyes on Duane's.

"Maybe he will," replied Duane. It was difficult for him to force a smile. But he achieved one.

"O, better take me at once," she said. "Save me without risking so much—without making love to Mrs. Bland!"

"Surely, if I can. There! I see Euchre coming with a woman."

"That's her. Oh, she mustn't see me with you."

"Wait—a moment," whispered Duane, as Jennie slipped indoors.

"We've settled it. Don't forget. I'll find some way to get word to you, perhaps through Euchre. Meanwhile keep

up your courage. Remember I'll save you somehow. We'll try strategy first. Whatever you see or hear me do don't think less of me—"

Jennie checked him with a gesture and a wonderful gray flash of eyes.

"I'll bless you with every drop of blood in my heart," she whispered passionately.

It was only as she turned away into the room that Duane saw she was lame, and that she wore Mexican sandals over bare feet.

He sat down upon a bench on the porch and directed his attention to the approaching couple. The trees of the grove were thick enough for him to make reasonably sure that Mrs. Bland had not seen him talking to Jennie.

When the outlaw's wife drew near Duane saw that she was a tall, strong, full-bodied woman, rather good-looking with a full-blown, bold attractiveness. Duane was more concerned with her expression than with her good looks; and as she appeared unsuspecting he felt relieved. The situation then took on a singular zest.

Euchre came up on the porch and awkwardly introduced Duane to Mrs. Bland. She was young, probably not over twenty-five, and not quite so prepossessing at close range. Her eyes were large, rather prominent, and brown in color. Her mouth, too, was large, with the lips full, and she had white teeth.

Duane took her proffered hand and remarked frankly that he was glad to meet her.

Mrs. Bland appeared pleased; and her laugh, which followed, was loud and rather musical.

"Mr. Duane—Buck Duane, Euchre said, didn't he?" she asked.

"Buckley," corrected Duane. "The nickname's not of my choosing."

"I'm certainly glad to meet you, Buckley Duane," she said, as she took the seat Duane offered her. "Sorry to have been out. Kid Fuller's lying over at Deger's. You know he was shot last night. He's got fever today."

"When Bland's away I have to nurse all these shot-up boys, and it sure takes my time. Have you been waiting alone? Didn't see that slattern girl of mine?"

She gave him a sharp glance. The woman had an extraordinary play of feature, Duane thought, and unless she was smiling was not pretty at all.

"I've been alone," replied Duane. "Haven't seen anybody but a sick-looking girl with a bucket. And ran when she saw me."

"That was Jen," said Mrs. Bland. "She's the kid we keep here, and she hardly pays her keep. Did Euchre tell you about her?"

"Now that I think of it he did say something or other."

"What did he tell you about me?" bluntly asked Mrs. Bland.

"Wal, Kate," replied Euchre, speaking for himself, "you needn't worry none, for I told Buck nothin' but compliments."

(Continued Next Week)

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Pushing Drive for New Members in This Region; Value of Organizations

In the recent drive for members conducted by the Deerfield Building and Loan association, F. J. Labahn was first followed by Dan Hunt in a close race for first place, Charles Kapschull, president, announces. The association gained about 500 new shares in the two weeks' period of the drive. Interest in the year-old association was greatly increased by this means and the new president's term of office bids fair to be a banner year in the history of the Deerfield Building and Loan association.

The building and loan is an old, safe and successful method for persons of small means to save and eventually own their own homes, says Mr. Getty, secretary, and the movement is widespread throughout the United States. Following are excerpts from the Chicago Daily News and the Journal of Commerce of interest to building and loan enthusiasts:

Building and loan associations in the United States now have assets totaling approximately \$7,179,000,000, according to the latest information received by the comptroller of the currency. This is an increase of \$844,459,000 over the amount reported for the previous year. The data for both years were prepared by the United States League of Local Building and Loan Associations.

The building associations with their large accumulations of capital are held to constitute an important agency for promoting home ownership, particularly among individuals and families of moderate means. A large percentage of the funds loaned,

it is stated, go to finance construction of this type.

A railroad co-operative building and loan association in New York City, with 70,000 members, has received returns from a questionnaire that are interesting and highly favorable to the habit of thrift. Originally the association was exclusive for New York Central railroad employees. Now more than 75 per cent of its members are not railroad workers.

Contrary to the popular notion that people form habits of systematic saving only toward middle life, it is shown to be a fact that a majority when between 20 and 30 years of age, of this organization began saving. Only 15 per cent postponed saving until they were 40.

The average saving was between 10 and 35 per cent, with some saving as much as 75 per cent of their earnings. Saving is, so to speak, a cumulative habit, that is, one which impels people to save more and more as the years pass. Once a person learns what an increase interest brings to them, and how pleasant it is to have his own money earning money for him, the desire to save increases. It is safe to say that those now saving 75 per cent of their incomes did not increase their living expenses with each increase in their wages or salaries.

Information concerning the plans and method of procedure and any other information will be gladly given at the office of Vant & Selig, or Charles Kapschull in Deerfield. The large benefits which it affords both investors and home builders should recommend it to consideration.

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