

Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

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Claude Dallas

Claude Dallas

(Ian Tyson, Tom Russell, 1986.)

In a land the Spanish once had
Called the Northern Mystery,
Where rivers run and disappear
And the Mustang still lives free,
By the Devil's wash and the coyote hole
In the wild Owyee Range,
Somewhere in the sage tonight
The wind calls out his name.
Aye, aye, aye.

Come gather round me, buckaroos,
And the story I will tell:
The fugitive Claude Dallas
Who just broke out jail.
You might think this tale is history
From before the West was won,
But the events that I'll describe took place
In nineteen-eighty-one.

He was born out in Virginia,
Left home when school was through.
In the deserts of Nevada,
He became a buckaroo.
He learned the ways of cattle.
He learned to sit a horse.
He always packed a pistol
And he practiced deadly force.

Then Claude he became a trapper.
He dreamed of the bygone days.
He studied bobcat logic
In the wild and silent ways,
In the bloody runs near paradise,
In the monitors down south,
Trapping cats and coyotes,
Living hand and mouth.
Aye, aye, aye.

Then Claude took to living all alone
Out many miles from town.
A friend, Jim Stevens, brought supplies

And he stayed to hang around.
That day two wardens, Pogue and Elms,
Drove in to check Claude out.
They were seeking violations
And to see what Claude's about.

Now Claude had hung some venison,
Had a bobcat pelt or two.
Pogue claimed they were out of season.
He says, "Dallas, you're all through."
But Dallas would not leave his camp.
He refused to go to town.
As the wind howled through the bull camp,
They stared each other down.

It's hard to say what happened next.
Perhaps we'll never know.
They were going to take Claude in to jail,
And he'd vowed he'd never go.
Jim Stevens heard the gunfire,
And when he turned around,
Bill Pogue was fallin' backwards.
Conley Elms, he fell face-down.
Aye, aye, aye.

Jim Stevens walked on over.
There was a gun near Bill Pogue's hand.
It's hard to say who'd drawn his first,
But Claude had made his stand.
Claude said, "I'm justified, Jim.
They were going to cut me down.
A man's got a right to hang some meat
When he's livin' this far from town."

It took eighteen men and fifteen months
To finally run Claude down.
In the sage outside of paradise,
They drove him to the ground.
Convicted up in Idaho,
Manslaughter by decree,
Thirty years at maximum,
But soon Claude would break free.

There's two sides to this story.
There may be no right or wrong.
The lawman and the renegade
Have graced a thousand songs.
So the story is an old one.
Conclusion's hard to draw.

But Claude's out in the sage tonight.

He may be the last outlaw.

Aye, aye, aye.

(Repeat first verse.)

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