

Ian Tyson, Claude Dallas

In a land the Spanish once had called the Northern Mystery,
Where rivers run and disappear the mustang still is free.
By the Devil's wash and coyote hole in the wild Owyhee Range
Somewhere in the sage tonight the wind calls out his name.
Aye,aye,aye.

Come gather 'round me buckaroos and a story I will tell
Of the fugitive Claude Dallas who just broke out of 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,
And he learned the ways of cattle, and he learned to sit a horse,
And he always packed a pistol, and he practiced deadly force.

Then Claude he became a trapper, and he dreamed of the bygone days,
And he studied bobcat logic and their wild and silent ways
In the bloody runs near Paradise, in monitors down south
Trapping cats and coyotes, living hand to mouth.
Aye,aye,aye.

Then Claude took to livin' 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--rode into check Claude out,
They were seeking violations and to see what Claude's about.

Now Claude had hung some venison, he had a bobcat pelt or two;
Pogue claimed they were out of season, he said "Dallas, you're all thru."
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.

Its hard to say what happend next, perhaps we'll never know,
They were gonna take Claude in to jail, and he vowed he'd never go.
Jim Stevens heard the gunfire, and when he turned around
Bill Pogue was falling 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 was hard to say who drawn his first, but Claude had made his stand.
Claude said "I am justified Jim, they were gonna cut me down,
And 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.
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.
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