



**The Desert of Wheat: "The night was dark, cool,  
and quiet. The heavens were starry bright."**

*Zane Grey*

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Pearl Zane Grey was born January 31st, 1872, in Zanesville, Ohio. From an early age, he was intrigued by history, fishing, baseball, and writing, all of which would stimulate his later success. Grey was an avid reader of adventure stories, consuming dime store novels by the dozen. By age fifteen he had written his first story; Jim of the Cave. His father, a difficult man, tore it to shreds and then beat him. He and his brother were keen fisherman and baseball players with aspirations of playing in the major leagues. Eventually, Grey was spotted by a baseball scout and received offers from colleges. Grey took up an offer from the University of Pennsylvania to studied dentistry. Naturally arriving on a scholarship really meant you had to be able to play. He rose to the occasion by playing against the Riverton club, pitching five scoreless innings and a double in the tenth which tied down the win. Sports scholarship kids can be average scholars. Grey certainly was. He preferred to spend his time outside class not trying to raise his grades but playing baseball, swimming, and writing. At university he was shy and teetotal, more of a loner than a party animal. Grey struggled with the idea of becoming a writer or baseball player for his career, but unhappily resolved that dentistry was the practical choice. Grey set up his dental practice in New York as Dr. Zane Grey after graduating in 1896. Though a dentist his real ambition now was to be a writer and New York had lots of publishers. Evenings were set aside for writing to offset the tedium of his dental practice. His first magazine article, "A Day on the Delaware," a human-interest story about a Grey brothers' fishing expedition, was published in the May 1902 issue of Recreation magazine. After some rejections he wrote his first Western, The Heritage of the Desert in 1910. It was the breakthrough. It quickly became a bestseller. Here was Grey's over arching themes; Manifest Destiny, the conquest of the Old West, and men wrestling with elemental conditions. Two years later Grey produced his best-known book, Riders of the Purple Sage (1912), his all-time best-seller. With its publication Zane Grey became a household name. Grey started his association with Hollywood when William Fox bought the rights to Riders of the Purple Sage for \$2,500 in 1916. His writing career would now rise in sync with that of the movie industry. During the crash and subsequent depression of the 1930s, the publishing industry was hard work. Sales fell off. Serializations were harder to sell. Grey was lucky. He had avoided investing in the Stock Market, he was still writing and very popular and continued to earn royalty income. This also coincided with the time that nearly half of the film adaptations of his novels were made. Zane Grey died of heart failure on October 23rd, 1939, at his home in Altadena, California. He was interred at the Lackawaxen and Union Cemetery, Lackawaxen, Pennsylvania.

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