

Paramore, Edward. The Ballad of Yukon Jake

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THE BALLAD OF YUKON JAKE

By EDWARD E. PARAMORE JR.

Begging Robert W. Service's Pardon

OH THE NORTH COUNTREE is a hard countree
That mothers a bloody brood;
And its icy arms hold hidden charms
For the greedy, the sinful and lewd.

And strong men rust, from the gold and the lust
That sears the Northland soul,
But the wickedest born, from the Pole to the Horn,
Is the Hermit of Shark Tooth Shoal.

Now Jacob Kaime was the Hermit's name
In the days of his pious youth,
Ere he cast a smirch on the village Church
By betraying a girl named Ruth.

But now men quake at "Yukon Jake,"
The Hermit of Shark-Tooth Shoal,
For that is the name that Jacob Kaime
Is known by from Nome to the Pole.

He was just a boy and the parson's joy
(Ere he fell for the gold and the muck),
And had learned to pray, with the hogs and the hay
On a farm near Keokuk.

But a Service tale of illicit kale --
And whisky and women wild --
Drained the morals clean as a souptureen
From this poor but honest child.

He longed for the bite of a Yukon night
And the Northern Light's weird flicker,
Or a game of stud in the frozen mud,
And the taste of raw red licker.

He wanted to mush along in the slush,
With a team of husky hounds;
And to fire his gat at a beaver hat
And knock it out of bounds.

So he left his home for the hell-town Nome,
On Alaska's ice-ribbed shores,
And he learned to curse and to drink, and worse --
Till the rum dripped from his pores.

When the boys on a spree were drinking it free
In a Malamute saloon,
And Dan Megrew and his dangerous crew
Shot craps with the piebald coon;

When the Kid on his stool banged away like a fool
At a jag-time melody,
And the barkeep vowed, to the hard-boiled crowd,
That he'd cree-mate Sam McGee --

Then Jacob Kaime, who had taken the name
Of Yukon Jake, the Killer,
Would rake the dive with his forty-five
Till the atmosphere grew chiller.

With a sharp command he'd make 'em stand
And deliver their hard-earned dust;
Then drink the bar dry, of rum and rye,
As a Klondike bully must.

Without coming to blows he would tweak the nose
Of Dangerous Dan Megrew,
And becoming bolder, throw over his shoulder
The lady that's known as Lou.

Oh, tough as a steak was Yukon Jake --
Hard-boiled as a picnic egg.
He washed his shirt in the Klondike dirt,
And drank his rum by the keg.

In fear of their lives (or because of their wives)

He was shunned by the best of his pals;
An outcast he, from the comradeship
Of all but wild animals.

So he bought him the whole of Shark-Tooth Shoal,
A reef in the Bering Sea,
And he lived by himself on a sea lion's shelf
In lonely iniquity.

But, miles away, in Keokuk, Ia.,
Did a ruined maiden fight
To remove the smirch from the village Church
By bringing the heathen Light.

And the Elders declared that all would be squared
If she carried the holy words
From her Keokuk home to the hell-town Nome
To save those sinful birds.

So, two weeks later, she took a freighter,
For the gold-cursed land near the Pole,
But Heaven ain't made for a lass that's betrayed --
She was wrecked on Shark-Tooth Shoal!

All hands were tossed in the Sea, and lost --
All but the maiden Ruth,
Who swam to the edge of the sea lion's ledge
Where abode the love of her youth.

He was hunting a seal for his evening meal
(He handled a mean harpoon)
When he saw at his feet, not something to eat,
But a girl in a frozen swoon,

Whom he dragged to his lair by her dripping hair,
And he rubbed her knees with gin, --
To his great surprise, she opened her eyes
And revealed -- his Original Sin!

His eight-months beard grew stiff and weird,
And it felt like a chestnut bur,
And he swore by his gizzard -- and the Arctic
blizzard,

That he'd do right by her.

Then the cold sweat froze on the end of her nose
Till it gleamed like a Tecla pearl,
While her bright hair fell, like a flame from hell,
Down the back of the grateful girl.

But a hopeless rake was Yukon Jake,
The hermit of Shark Tooth Shoal!
And the dizzy maid he rebetrayed
And wrecked her immortal soul!...

Then he rowed her ashore, with a broken oar,
And he sold her to Dan McGrew
For a husky dog and some hot eggnog --
As rascals are wont to do.

Now ruthless Ruth is a maid uncouth
With scarlet cheeks and lips,
And she sings rough songs to the drunken throngs
That come from the sealing ships.

For a rouge-stained kiss from this infamous miss
They will give a seal's sleek fur,
Or perhaps a sable, if they are able;
It's much the same to her.

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That mothers a bloody brood;
And its icy arms hold hidden charms
For the greedy, the sinful and lewd.

And strong men rust, from the gold and the lust
That sears the Northland soul,
But the wickedest born from the Pole to the Horn
Was the Hermit of Shark-Tooth Shoal!