

Hank Snow, Dangerous Dan McGrew

A bunch of the boys were whooping it up in the Malamute saloon
The kid that handles the music-box was hitting a jag-time tune
Back at the bar in a solo game sat Dangerous Dan McGrew
And watching his luck was his light of love the lady that's known as Lou

When out of the night which was fifty below and into the din and the glare
There stumbled a miner fresh from the creeks dog dirty and loaded for bear
He looked like a man with a foot in the grave and scarcely the strength of a louse
Yet he tilted a poke of dust on the bar and he called for drinks on the house

There was none could place the stranger's face though we searched ourselves for a clue
But we drank his health and the last to drink was Dangerous Dan McGrew
There's men that somehow just grip your eyes and hold them hard like a spell
And such was he and he looked to me like a man who had lived in hell

With a face most hair and the dreary stare of a dog whose day is done
As he watered the green stuff in his glass and the drops fell one by one
Then I got to figgering who he was and wondering what he'd do
And I turned my head and there watching him was the lady that's known as Lou

His eyes went rubbering round the room and he seemed in a kind of daze
Till at last that old piano fell in the way of his wondering gaze
The rag-time kid was having a drink there was no one else on the stool
So the stranger stumbles across the room and flops down there like a fool

In a buckskin shirt that was glazed with dirt he sat and I saw him sway
Then he clutched the keys with his talon hands my God but that man could play
Were you ever out in the great alone when the moon was awful clear
And the icy mountains hemmed you in with a silence you most could hear

With only the howl of a timber wolf and you camped there in the cold
A half-dead thing in the stark dead world clean mad for the muck called gold
While high overhead green yellow and red the North Lights swept in bars
Then you've got a hunch what the music meant hunger and night and the stars

And hunger not of the belly kind that's banished with bacon and beans
But the gnawing hunger of lonely men for a home and all that it means
For a fireside far from the cares that are four walls and a roof above
But oh! so cramful of cosy joy and crowned with a woman's love

A woman dearer than all the world and true as Heaven is true
God how ghastly she looks through her rouge the lady that's known as Lou
Then all of a sudden the music changed so soft that you scarce could hear
But you felt that your life had been looted clean of all that it once held dear

That someone had stolen the woman you loved that her love was a devil's lie
That your guts were gone and the best of you was to crawl away and die
Twas the crowning cry of a heart's despair and it thrilled you through and through
I guess I'll make it a spread misere said Dangerous Dan McGrew

The music almost died away then it burst like a pent-up flood
And it seemed to say repay repay and my eyes were blind with blood
The thought came back of an ancient wrong and it stung like a frozen lash
And the lust awoke to kill to kill then the music stopped with a crash

And the stranger turned and his eyes they burned in a most peculiar way
In a buckskin shirt that was glazed with dirt he sat and I saw him sway
Then his lips went in in a kind of a grin and he spoke and his voice was calm
And boys says he you don't know me and none of you care a damn

But I want to state and my words are straight and I'll bet my poke they're true
That one of you is a hound of hell and that one is Dan McGrew
Then I ducked my head and the lights went out and two guns blazed in the dark
And a woman screamed and the lights went up and two men lay stiff and stark

Pitched on his head and pumped full of lead was Dangerous Dan McGrew
While the man from the creeks lay clutched to the breast of the Lady that's known as Lou

These are the simple facts of the case and I guess I ought to know
They say that the stranger was crazed with hooch and I'm not denying it's so
I'm not so wise as the lawyer guys but strictly between us two
The woman that kissed him and pinched his poke was the lady that's known as Lou