

# Hank Snow, Cremation Of Sam McGee

There are strange things done in the midnight sun by the men who moil for gold  
The Arctic trails have their secret tales that would make your blood run cold  
The Northern Lights have seen queer sights but the queerest they ever did see  
Was that night on the marge of Lake Lebarge I cremated Sam McGee

Now Sam McGee was from Tennessee where the cotton blooms and blows  
Why he left his home in the South to roam round the Pole God only knows  
He was always cold but the land of gold seemed to hold him like a spell  
Though he'd often say in his homely way that he'd sooner live in hell

On a Christmas Day we were mushing our way over the Dawson trail  
Talk of your cold through the parka's fold it stabbed like a driven nail  
If our eyes we'd close then the lashes froze till sometimes we couldn't see  
It wasn't much fun but the only one to whimper was Sam McGee

And that very night as we lay packed tight in our robes beneath the snow  
And the dogs were fed and the stars o'er head were dancing heel and toe  
He turned to me and Cap says he'll cash in this trip I guess  
And if I do I'm asking that you won't refuse my last request

Well he seemed so low that I couldn't say no then he says with a sort of moan  
It's the cursed cold and it's got right hold till I'm chilled clean through to the bone  
Yet taint being dead it's my awful dread of the icy grave that pains  
So I want you to swear that foul or fair you'll cremate my last remains

A pal's last need is a thing to heed so I swore I would not fail  
And we started on at the streak of dawn but God! he looked ghastly pale  
He crouched on the sleigh and he raved all day of his home in Tennessee  
And before nightfall a corpse was all that was left of Sam McGee

There wasn't a breath in that land of death and I hurried horror-driven  
With a corpse half hid that I couldn't get rid because of a promise given  
It was lashed to the sleigh and it seemed to say you may tax your brawn and brains  
But you promised true and it's up to you to cremate those last remains

Now a promise made is a debt unpaid and the trail has its own stern code  
In the days to come though my lips were dumb in my heart how I cursed that load  
In the long long night by the lone firelight while the huskies round in a ring  
Howled out their woes to the homeless snows oh God! how I loathed the thing

And every day that quiet clay seemed to heavy and heavier grow  
And on I went though the dogs were spent and the grub was getting low  
The trail was bad and I felt half mad but I swore I would not give in  
And I'd often sing to the hateful thing and it hearkened with a grin

Till I came to the marge of Lake Lebarge and a derelict there lay  
It was jammed in the ice but I saw in a trice it was called the Alice May  
And I looked at it and I thought a bit and I looked at my frozen chum  
Then Here said I with a sudden cry is my crematorium

Some planks I tore from the cabin floor and I lit the boiler fire  
Some coal I found that was lying around and I heaped the fuel higher  
The flames just soared and the furnace roared such a blaze you seldom see  
And I burrowed a hole in the glowing coal and I stuffed in Sam McGee

Then I made a hike for I didn't like to hear him sizzle so  
And the heavens scowled and the huskies howled and the wind began to blow  
It was icy cold but the hot sweat rolled down my cheeks and I don't know why  
And the greasy smoke in an inky cloak went streaking down the sky

I do not know how long in the snow I wrestled with grisly fear  
But the stars came out and they danced about ere again I ventured near  
I was sick with dread but I bravely said: I'll just take a peep inside  
I guess he's cooked and it's time I looked then the door I opened wide

And there sat Sam looking cool and calm in the heart of the furnace roar  
And he wore a smile you could see a mile and he said please close that door  
It's fine in here but I greatly fear you'll let in the cold and storm  
Since I left Plumtree down in Tennessee it's the first time I've been warm

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