

Hank Snow

"My Friends"

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The man above was a murderer
The man below was a thief
And I lay there in the bunk
Between ailing beyond belief
A weary armful of skin and bone
Wasted with pain and grief.

My feet were froze and the lifeless toes
Were purple and green and gray
The little flesh that clung to my bones
You could punch it in holes like clay
The skin on my gums was a sullen black
And slowly peeling away.

I was sure enough in a direful fix
And often I wondered why
They did not take the chance that was left
And leave me alone to die
Or finish me off with a dose of dope
So utterly lost was I.

But no they brewed me the green-spruce tea
And nursed me there like a child
And the homicide he was good to me
And bathed my sores and smiled
And the thief he starved that I might be fed
And his eyes were kind and mild.

Yet they were woefully wicked men
And often at night in pain
I heard the murderer speak of his deed
And dream it over again
I heard the poor thief sorrowing for
The dead self he had slain.

I'll never forget that bitter dawn
So evil askew and gray
When they wrapped me round in the skins of beasts
And bore me to a sleigh
And we started out with the nearest post
A hundred miles away.

I'll never forget the trail they broke
With it's tense unuttered woe
And the crunch, crunch, crunch as their snowshoes
sank
Through the crust of the hollow snow
And my breath would fail and every beat
Of my heart was like a blow.

And often times I would die the death
Yet wake up to life anew
The sun would be all ablaze on the waste
And the sky a blighting blue
And the tears would rise in my snow-blind eyes
And furrow my cheeks like dew.

And the camps we made when their strength outplayed
And the day was pinched and wan
And oh the joy of the blessed halt
And I did dread the dawn
And how I hated the weary men
Who rose and dragged me on.

And oh how I begged to rest to rest
The snow was so sweet a shroud
And oh how I cried when they urged me on
Cried and cursed them aloud
Yet on they strained all racked and pained
And sorely their backs were bowed.

And then it was all like a lurid dream
And I prayed for a swift release
From the ruthless ones who would not
Leave me to die alone in peace
Till I waked up and I found myself at the post
Of the Mounted Police.

And there was my friend the murderer
And there was my friend the thief
With bracelets of steel around their wrists
And wicked beyond belief
But when they come to God's judgment seat
May I be allowed the brief...

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