

## *Way Up North Saskatchewan*

Solitude can take its toll. A wicked wind can blow.  
Devoid of frequent company, a mental slip can show.  
Now thinking back upon it, that might have been the case  
Of why the trapper disappeared and left without a trace.

To tell the truth a man not missed. He was disliked a lot.  
But out there isolated, you deal with what you've got.  
Seldom did I see him. To speak to him was rare.  
Frankly as I came to see, of that I shouldn't care.

Both of us were mushers, our only common ground.  
He hated Dev my lead dog, who liked to nose around.  
How the man maintained his team, so differently than me.  
Trapp had no respect for them. That you could plainly see.

My dogs took comfort by my fire, to him a great disgrace.  
He said, "Just made for pulling. A fact you ought to face."  
Trap found it economical, to chain them in a line.  
If he left for several days, he thought that it was fine.

"I only feed them when they work", he bragged to me one day.  
"They only listen when they're lean", was what he had to say.  
I didn't count Trap as a friend. I knew the man was mean.  
Treatment of his sled team, the worst I'd ever seen.

His dogs grew lank and restless. I thought I best stop by.  
But my bold imposition, proved not his slice of pie.  
Trap threatened me to stay away, brandishing his gun.  
He was dead on serious. Enough to make me run.

For ways my dogs were treated, he'd nothing but disdain.  
But that day when he lost it, he truly seemed insane.  
Several days and stormy nights, I heard their mournful sound.  
Snow now deep, I kept my dogs, not free to range around.

Dev, he was my lead dog, and insightful was his eye.  
Desperate turned their voices. He knew things were awry.  
He paced there in the cabin, and kept his ears on keen.  
Listening to the dun of it, determining the scene.

Come feeding time I cut the meat. I always fed Dev first.  
He seized his share then out the door, with a sudden burst.  
Straight to Trap's I saw him run. I quick pulled on my coat.  
Thoughts that Trap would use his gun, sure were not remote.

Dev tossed his meat out to that pack, all havoc did break loose.  
On heavy chain they struggled, to try to break their noose.  
I ordered Dev to head to home, but he stayed by my side.  
Then stood with paws upon my chest, and we met eye to eye.

Frozen for some moments, our thoughts were in exchange.  
What his look conveyed to me, had so much depth and range.  
His eyes they spoke compassion. The things he'd learned from me  
Were courage and respect for life. I had to set them free.

Ashamed of hesitation, I shoved the trapper's door.  
The place completely empty, just furnishings and floor.  
Hard to think he'd chained those dogs, and left them to their fate.  
A fact I would have realized, but only far too late.

I faced the dogs. Their lips a snarl with hackles on the rise.  
Even when I tossed them meat, nervous were their eyes.  
Hunched wild with apprehension, after they'd been fed.  
They'd yanked upon their chain so hard, some of them had bled.

Dev paced that line with forceful sounds, I'd never heard before.  
Each dog then dropped down quiet. No struggle anymore.  
I ventured forth, unchained them, with Dev there at my side.  
What happened next, I tell you, made my eyes grow wide.

The first edged crawling up to me, and he nosed my boot.  
Every single one of them, then simply followed suit.  
Like a pledge of loyalty, for what I'd come to do.  
A hope that my humanity, was going to follow through.

Obedient they formed a line. Dev led them to my door.  
Against my better judgment, they lay down on my floor.  
Ears erect and eyes on Dev, who surely took command  
They kept their best behavior. Nothing got out of hand.

Dev looked at me so proudly. He'd doubled up my team.  
With dogs that he deemed worthy, all females it would seem.  
Trap? He never did return, and so those dogs were mine.  
Dev and I? We prospered, and multiplied the line.

Way up North Saskatchewan, the wind can howl and blow.  
With looks the dogs would give me, I knew they'd come to know  
Kindness does not ruin a dog, when harnessed up for start.  
What they need through ice and snow, comes from inside their heart.

For every kind deed that you do, one surely comes around.  
In many situations, I know it's what I've found.  
Here many trails are dangerous, with weather adding strife.  
They more than paid me back the day, on which they saved my life.

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