

PROLOGUE

to

THE BALLAD OF THE KID AND THE CANARY

by Joe Yolo

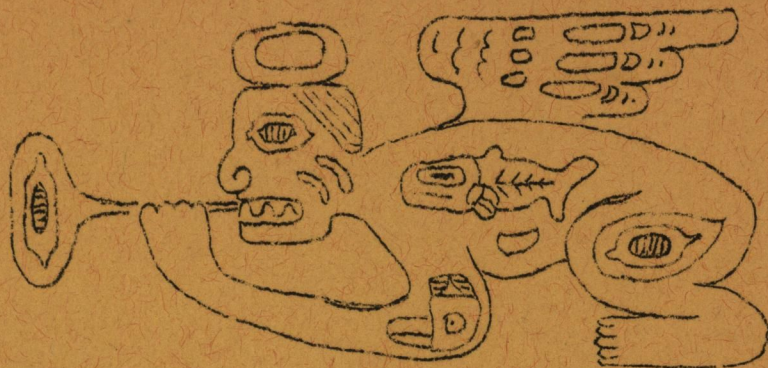
Many tales have been told in the North land, but one of the most unusual that I have heard was one of the Klootch (an Alaskan native woman) who locked her small child in the shack while she went into town on a "binge." Left with the child in the shack was the family canary.

The Klootch's celebration got beyond bounds and the local marshall threw her into jail where she ~~laid~~ <sup>SPENT</sup> several days sobering up. Unfortunately, no one knew that no provision had been made for the care of the child during his mother's absence. For lack of food, the child in desperation ate the canary, but in spite of having partially satisfied its hunger, it died of the cold.

This tale "inspired" this ballad, which is hereby presented in memory of the kid and the canary.







One day when Gabriel's horn will bid  
The world's long dead arise,  
Out of the frozen North will come  
A child with sunken eyes.

And there'll be with him a little bird  
With feathers of yellow tinge,  
And St. Peter's gate will open wide  
On a squeaky, creaky hinge;

For the little canary that gave its life  
That another's it might prolong,  
Will share the fate of the one it loved  
And died with a cheery song.

And the canary's soul will be entwined  
With the soul of a Yukon child -  
The babe it gave its life to save,  
In vain, on the frozen wild.

When the Yukon child with his little harp  
Sings out to the world below,  
The world he knew that was filled to the brim  
With hunger and sin and snow,

He will sing of the love of a bird for a babe,  
An innocent victim of sin -  
The child of a Klootch in a Yukon jail,  
Filled with hootch and the Devil's gin!

And I know that each note that will flutter and float  
Down from the starry skies,  
Filling the darkness down below  
With the sweetness of Paradise,



Will echo the song, sung long, long ago -  
Sung in a dismal shack,  
Sung by a bird with a heart full of love -  
Sung till the world went black!

It will echo the song of a little bird,  
Sung to a lonely child,  
Locked in the shack of a hootch-filled Klootch -  
A shack on the Yukon wild.



Into the night went this wayward Klootch,  
Filled with the Devil's gin,  
Into the night went this hootch-filled Klootch -  
A klootch in quest of sin!

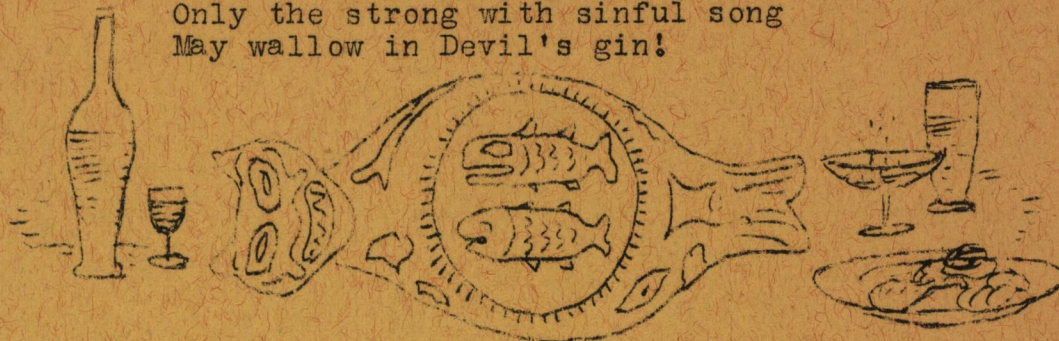
But the hand of the law is the hand of the right,  
And the hand of the law is strong,  
And the marshall wearing a gleaming star  
Heard the Klootch's sinful song,

So he locked her deep in a dark damp cell,  
And he threw the key away,  
And there she wallowed in sin by night,  
And she wallowed in gin by day;.

For none could know in a little shack  
Out on the Yukon wild,  
Where the winds were howling at ten below  
There waited a hungry child!



Oh! the weak must pay through the night and day -  
 Pay for the strong one's sin -  
 Only the strong with sinful song  
 May wallow in Devil's gin!



It is sweet to sit in mansions warm  
 By firelight's cheery glow -  
 It is sweet to eat of bread and meat  
 While sparkling wine does flow;

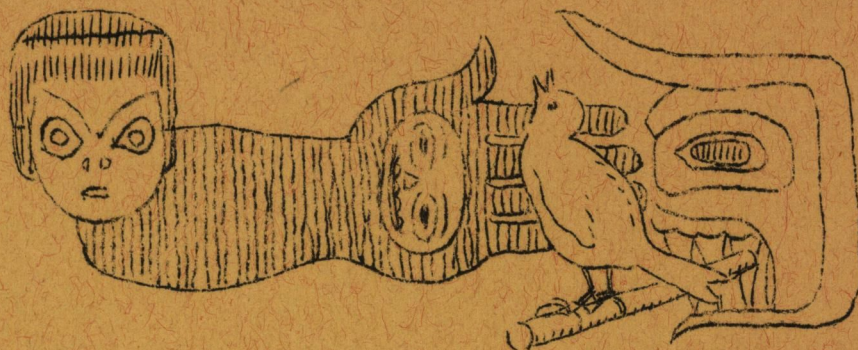
It is sweet to be with loving friends  
 When storms blow cold and wild,  
 But it is not sweet to sit alone -  
 A starving, helpless child;

To sit, a starving, helpless child,  
 Locked in a foul room,  
 While from the darkness comes a wail -  
 The she-wolf's wail of doom!

All night while hunger filled his soul  
 The child and wolf did wail,  
 But no cry reached the hootch-filled Klootch  
 Locked deep in the Yukon jail!







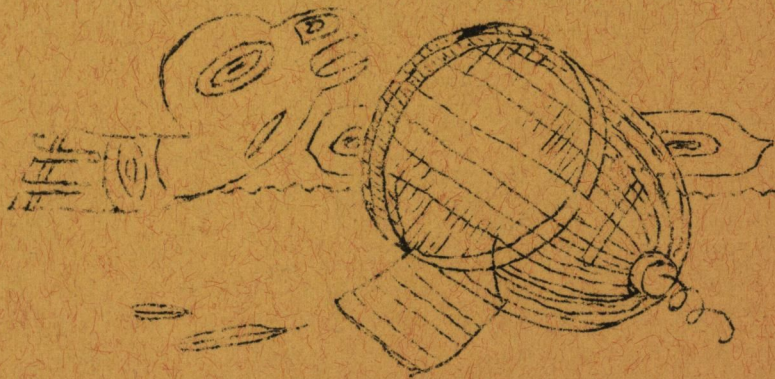
Through the howling night the canary sang -  
It sang when the dawn grew red;  
It sang at dusk and at break of day,  
But its song was not of bread.

And on through another day it sang  
Its song so eternally sweet,  
That the soul of the lonely, starving child  
Felt the source of the song was meat!

Then...into the gilded cage stole death -  
Death in the hands of a child;  
Death in the hands of a starving babe  
In a shack on the Yukon wild.

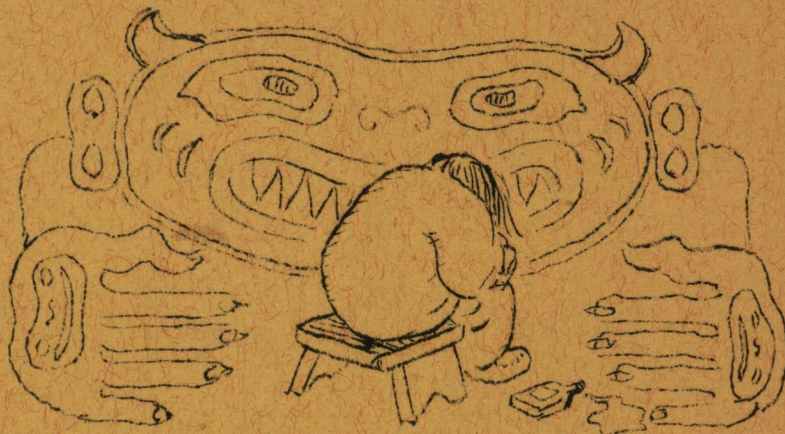
The canary died that the babe might live;  
It died, but it died in vain,  
For while grim hunger had lost its clutch,  
Icy winter had won again!

They found the babe by the empty cage -  
Lifeless and stiff and cold;  
This poor little child in the Yukon wild  
Had returned to the Shepherd's fold.

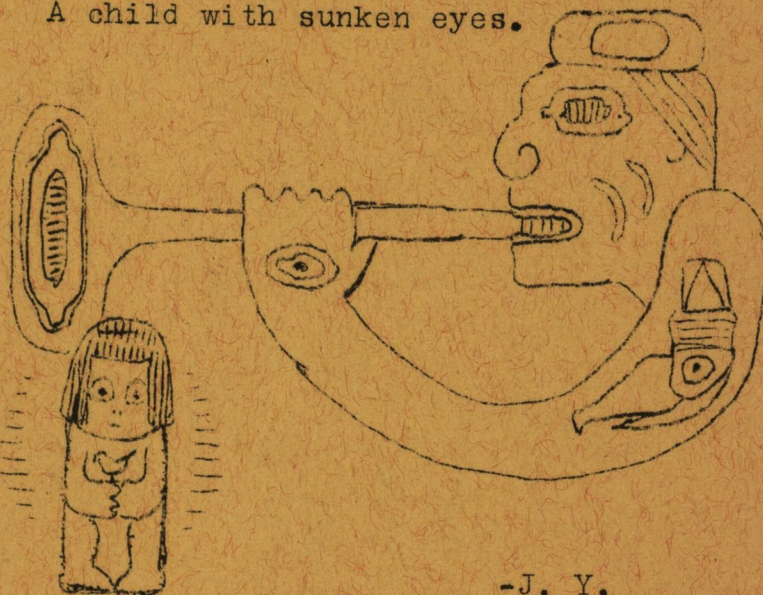




Shed no tear for this babe so dear -  
 No more he'll in anguish wail.  
 No tear was shed by the hootch-filled Klootch  
 Locked deep in the Yukon jail.



One day when Gabriel's horn will bid  
 The world's long dead arise,  
 Out of the frozen North will come  
 A child with sunken eyes.



-J. Y.  
 September 29, 1941

*Interpretive Art Coy  
 David Walker*