

Captain Jimmy Bones And His Devil-Dog Marines

'Twas winter time in Quantico in nineteen-twenty-two,
The slum was pretty rough that night, and all the men felt blue;
The hail and sleet, with ghostly feet beat on the bunkhouse dome,
Some men doped out their time to do, while others thought of home.

Then from the starless night, there slipped in through the bunkhouse door,
An old top sergeant that no man had ever seen before;
The hoar frost glistened in his hair, his eyes like star shells shone,
A gnarled mustache hid half his face, and he was skin and bone.

He sat down near the glowing stove and warmed his fleshless hands,
The chill of death was in his breath, like thunder his commands;
His voice was hollow, like the tone of one who'd long been dead,
And when he spoke, the silence broke, and this is what he said:

“Pipe down, all you devil-whelps, and snap out of your dreams,
And a tale I'll tell of heaven and hell, and the Devil-Dog Marines;
Just Captain Jimmy Bones, M.C., their skipper wrote his name,
He was a fiend for fighting, he had no care for fame.”

“Have never seen so fierce a man on land, nor sky, nor sea,
He had a scar for every war, and fought in ninety-three;
When he was riled, he had an eye that drilled a hole through men,
He spoke but once, and no man asked him how, nor why, nor when.”

“Now Jimmy was the headpiece of a hundred brave Gyrenes,
He used to have a whole lot more who died from eating beans;
But them what ate the chow and lived, they sure were hard-boiled guys,
They flicked the bullets off their coats just like so many flies.”

The old top sergeant's voice grew low, and at its ghostly gloom,
Men shivered, and the vermin crawled upon the bunkhouse broom;
He stuffed a live coal in his pipe, and deeply did inhale,
He blew the smoke clean through the roof, and then resumed his tale.

“They say the devil made him mean when he was in the skies,
And filled them all so full of hell it shone out through their eyes;
Then old St. Peter found the bunch, and gave them souls of white,
But hell still boiled up in them, and they couldn't else but fight.”

“So Peter had to can old Nick, and when to earth he fell,
He got himself a steady job recruiting souls for hell;
Well, Peter stamped Marines 'OK,' and marked them all first class,
'Cause all that ever scared 'em was to see a looking-glass.”

“Now some they come from Texas sand, so they was full of grit,
And some was from Montana plains where they’d been roughing it;
Some more they come from old New York, and wore a Bowery frown,
Then some which was the toughest came from good old Frisco town.”

"Old Jimmy Bones shoved off for France in nineteen-seventeen,
And shipped across the toughest crew the world had ever seen;
Each man had ‘First to Fight,’ tattooed across his chest, in black,
And right betwixt his shoulder blades, ‘Watch out, we’re coming back!’”

“Them hundred Devil Dogs sure was a bold and daring crew,
They bit the soles right off their shoes whenever they’d want a chew;
There wasn’t one among that bunch of those U.S. Marines
Who couldn’t spit three fathoms deep, and sink three submarines.”

“And when it came to shooting guns, why, say, them men were there,
They’d shave a man a mile away, and never miss a hair;
They’d trim the eyebrows off a lark, a- soarin’ in the sky,
Or shoot the points off shooting stars, as long as they had an eye.”

“They cruised on all the seven seas and rationed on hard tack,
They fought their way around the world and half to hell and back;
They fought in every war there was, clean up to Vera Cruz,
The only things they hadn’t fought was huns, and too much booze.”

“Now Jimmie Bones reached France OK with that all-furious crew,
And everyone turned round to say, ‘No savvy parley-vous;’
The French girls grabbed them by their hands, and washed their necks with tears,
The French men slapped them on their backs, and yelled them deaf with cheers.”

"Then Jimmy made a speech, and said, ‘I hear you got a war,
Around here somewheres hereabout, and that’s what we’re here for;
But all I got to say is this. Enjoy it while you can,
I’m going to clean up Germany If I lose every man.”

“The Germans learned that Jimmie Bones had crossed the sea to fight,
And when they got that awful news, their feet turned cold with fright;
And when they lamped that roughneck crew from off an aeroplane,
It nearly knocked ‘em for a goal, and some went plumb insane.”

“Said they, ‘What is this thing, Marines? If they had said before,
They had such Devil Dogs as these, there wouldn’t be no war;’
So that is how they got their name of ‘Devil Dog’ Marines,
And ever since, they’ve chased the Dutch dachshund clean off the scenes.”

The old top sergeant rolled his eyes, as if to recollect,
And where he let his fierce glance fall, it scorched six feet of deck;
Said he, “No man has ever lived that crossed old Jimmy Bones,
He had the power that lifted men, Or dragged kings down from thrones.”

"A general of the allies looked out through his periscope,
And seen ten million German huns a-coming on the lope;
He bit his short mustache and said, 'We're in an awful stew,
We've only got a million men. It looks like they'll break through.'"

"Then, Jimmy Bones piped up and said, 'You didn't count Marines,
I've got some hell-dogs that'll chew the spikes right off their beans;
'Cause numbers don't mean nothing to my well-behaving crew,
Why, they ain't been to school enough to count the men they slew.'"

"The general said, 'You win, my man. Go take your wild Marines,
And form a scouting party just to double up the scenes;'
Then Jimmy Bones saluted stiff, and to the general said,
'We'll break through to Berlin, sir, If we don't, we'll come back dead.'"

"With that, he yelled, 'Outside, Marines, and snap out of your hop,
We're going out to gather up that German lemon crop;
And if I see one of you men so much as leave a rind,
You'll rate the brig 'till kingdom come, and sixty dollars fine.'"

"The hundred Devil Dogs fell out, and then they all fell in,
And each one closed a gap in ranks by shaving up his chin;
The chief cook turned up missing when the time for counting come,
But he was cooking shrapnel up to make the crew some slum."

"Then Jimmy Bones, he gave a talk, to all his men, he said,
'We're shipping out on heavy seas with reefs and shoals ahead;
But all I got to say is this, remember you're Marines,
Cause water settles everything, and that's what our name means.'"

"He marched 'em up on company front, in quick and double-time,
He marched 'em in a riot squad and in a skirmish line;
He ran 'em in a platoon rush, and then by single squad;
And each advance ten thousand huns stretched out and hit the sod."

"He mowed 'em down with Browning guns, and with their Springfield gats,
And them they couldn't get that way they stuck with bayonets;
And when it came to trenches they just shoved the banks all in,
And tons of huns were swallowed up, and never lived again."

"The Germans shot a bunch of bombs of dead limburger cheese,
But all it did to Jimmy's men was make them cough and sneeze;
Then Jimmy lit a strong cigar from off a passing shell,
Three million huns got one good whiff, and died of that vile smell."

"The hundred Devil Dogs shoved on, their eyes flashed liquid fire,
Which melted guns and cannons up just like they were lead wire;
They kicked about a million huns into the River Marne,
And if they drowned, or sunk, or swam, they didn't give a darn."

“The Germans thought that judgment day had come to take its tolls,
They got the jula in their knees, and trembled in their souls;
And when they saw those Devil Dogs, and heard their awful yell,
They knew their judgment day had come, and they were picked for hell.”

“So, what was left threw up their mitts, and hollered ‘kamerad,’
But Jimmy’s men thought that was Dutch for talk profaning God;
So they stuck their bayonets right through them anyhow,
And buzzards came down from the sky and ate ‘em up for chow.”

“Now Kaiser bill and Hindenburg was in a game of craps,
He staked his royal crown against a box of ginger snaps;
Old Hindy won the crown and said, ‘This ain’t no good to me,
I’d sooner have a bite to eat than all of Germany”

“Said Kaiser Bill, ‘I’ll tell you what. You lend ten marks to me,
I’ll pay you back in a month or two with French indemnity.’
Said Hindy, ‘Where’d you get that stuff. Do you see any green on me?
I bought myself some Liberty Bonds from Mrs. Liberty.”

“Just then the crown prince busted in and said, ‘Oh papa dear;
I see some wild men coming who will wreck this joint, I fear;
I’ll shoot a long-range shot at them, and if they still persist,
Then I’ll take about a million men and slap them on the wrist.”

“The Kaiser took a peek out from a half-raised window blind,
And seen a hundred Devil Dogs a-swimming across the Rhine;
The river was a-running blood, From all the men they slew,
And every time they’d duck their heads, they’d drink a quart or two.”

“The Kaiser’s hair stood up on end and turned from black to white,
And when he spied old Jimmy Bones, his blood ran cold with fright;
He grabbed the prince’s hand and said, ‘Don’t fool with that wild Yank,
He’ll fill you full of bullet holes where Papa used to spank.”

“ ‘What ho the guard!’ Cried Kaiser Bill. ‘There ain’t no guard no more,’
Said Hindenburg, ‘The guard was shot out there by the palace door;’
‘Where is my ally Gott?’ yelled Bill. ‘Von Gott, he ain’t at home,’
Said Hindenburg, ‘The Gott you had was in your crazy dome.”

“The Kaiser’s eyes stuck out a mile. ‘What shall I do?’ said he,
‘I’ll save myself and my six brave sons. To hell with Germany;’
Said Hindenburg, ‘It went to hell long time before this thing,
Ten million huns that you sent there are waiting for their king.”

“The outside palace door crashed in. There was a mighty roar,
‘Thank gott,’ said Hindenburg, ‘I’ll see that mush of yours no more;’
With that he grabbed his gat and blew the brains out of his head,
And Kaiser Bill knowed then and there he meant just what he said.”

“The Kaiser beat it for the door and flung it open wide,
And there he met Jimmy Bones a’coming just outside;
Behind him were his Devil Dogs with gleaming bayonets,
And Kaiser Bill knowed they had come to get a whole world’s bets.”

“Then Jimmy gave him just one look that turned his gizzard pale,
And made him wish that he had spent his life in some nice jail;
Said Jimmie Bones, ‘So you’re the cur that kicked up all this row,
You’ve got about an hour to live, so don’t give us no gow!’”

“The Kaiser’s nerve went over the hill. His brow dripped bloody sweat,
He got down on his knees and cried and got the carpet wet;
His teeth, they rattled, just like dice do in a game of craps,
And every word that Jimmy spoke was like a note of taps.”

“Then Jimmy Bones drewed out his gat, and then he tossed it by,
Said, ‘you ain’t fit enough to live, and not that fit to die;
You’ve served the devil all your life, but now you’ll work for me,’
And then he thought of things to do. Jim Bones can think of three.”

“You’ll stand a guard of twenty hours around the Arctic zones,
With fifteen minutes out to thaw the marrow in your bones;
And every hour throughout the night you’ll answer reveille,
And every twenty years or so, you’ll rate a liberty.”

“And all you’ll have to drink is German blood you’ve shed,
And when you’re hungry, you will gnaw the bones of German dead;
You’ll do a jolt in eighty-four for ten or twenty years,
And under a hard-boiled non-com you’ll shed your dying tears.”

“Then Jimmy stopped, and silence filled the gloomy castle hall,
The Kaiser rose and tried to speak, then fell against the wall;
Said he, ‘I thought the devil was a mean and ugly guy,
But you’ve got Satan cheated with one look out of your eye.’”

“Said Jimmy Bones, ‘Now that ain’t all I’m gonna leave you do,
Them things is just light duty, but there’s heavy duty too!’
The Kaiser throwed up both his mitts. ‘You win!’ That’s all he said,
He gave a yell that was heard in hell, and then fell over dead.”

The old top sergeant paused awhile to see if some would doubt,
He sneezed a sneeze, the stoves grew cold, the window panes fell out;
He rolled himself a cigarette from sweepings off the floor,
And lit it with his flaming eye, and then resumed once more.

“Now German spies sent word to France that Jimmy Bones was dead,
And all his hundred Devil Dogs was slaughtered too, they said;
The women weeped a lot of weeps. The men felt pretty bad,
And all of them were mourning cause the shock it hit ‘em bad.”

“The cook was boiling coffee up from a piece of dried-out meat,
Said he, ‘If they is dead or not they’ll be back here to eat;
The world has never seen the time Marines have met defeat,
They would have gone to hell to cut off Kaiser Bill’s retreat.”

“A sentry sighted Jimmy’s men a’coming over the hill,
And dragging on behind them what was left of Kaiser Bill;
And when they reached old Paris, they were met with yells and cheers,
And showers of gold enough to last ‘em all a thousand years.”

“They hung a million medals on old Jimmy and his crew,
And when they took ‘em off they had a barrel full or two;
And ever after that each lived just like a millionaire,
They never answered reveille, or heard a bugle blare.”

“And all they did was bunk fatigue from then, forever more,
And when they died, they went above and knocked on heaven’s door;
Old Peter came down to the porch and hollered, ‘Halt! Who’s there?’
“United States Marines,” said Jim. First here, and everywhere”

“So Peter let the whole bunch in along with Captain Jim,
And each one grabbed himself a harp, and sung the Marine hymn;
And ever after that each stood his guard on heaven’s green,
And nary a German has got past the brave U.S. Marine.”

The old top sergeant heaved a sigh that raised the bunkhouse roof,
And those who sat too close to him were blown ten feet aloof;
He cut the sling from off a gun and took a three-foot chew,
And where he spat, the floor gave way, and hell came boiling through.

Then from the fiery pit there rose a corporal of the guard,
His face was sunk, his flesh was iron, his look was twice as hard;
Said he, “The detail’s still intact around the brimstone floods,
The devil’s peeling onions and the Kaiser’s peeling spuds.”

The old top kicker knit his brow, said he, “All right, that’s well!
But when you’ve finished with that job they’ll start to coal up hell;
And if them billion tons ain’t in before they shut an eye,
I’ll run ‘em up ‘fore Jimmy Bones, and let them tell him why.”

The corporal turned and leaped head on down through that fiery mass,
The floor closed up, the bunkhouse swayed with clouds of molten mass.
The top arose, the lights went out, Taps sounded, came the rain,
A chill swept through the room and he was never seen again.