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# William Eagle Feather Contemplates the Widow Burden

by Robert Cooperman

Weeks before her husband's husk  
flew down that shaft,  
Miz Burden traipsed up  
to my mountain camp  
with an empty berry pail,  
saying the day was so lovely  
she forgot to pick  
any of the blue nuggets,  
wind a tune she had to follow.

I couldn't read in her face—  
harder to figure than tracks  
in flinty ground— what she wanted.  
If it was just a walk,  
she'd put herself in danger:  
a woman alone as easy pickings  
for a grizzly as swiping honey,  
or taking a runt fawn for a cougar.

If to shed her Christian skin,  
even more parlous for me,  
a half-breed: if I was caught  
with a minister's wife,  
I'd jerk like a locomotive  
had took off both my legs.

Still, at her man's funeral  
she did flicker a smile at me,  
or I thought she did.  
Ever since, she's all  
I've been able to think of.

The wind's the only company  
I ever needed. Now,  
its lonesome moaning  
drives me to town,  
to offer her my condolences.

