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From the Dime Novel, *The Badman and the Lady*: Chapter 15 - "The Lady Takes Her Leave"

Robert Cooperman

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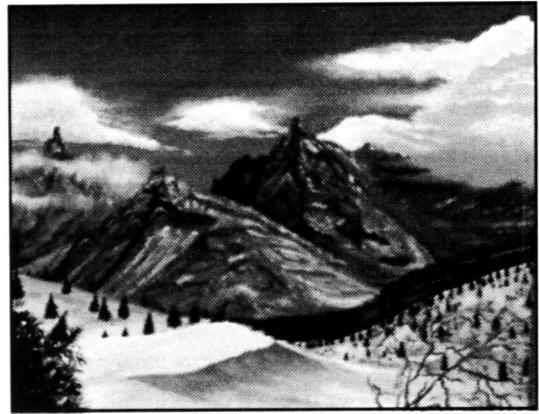
From the Dime Novel, The Badman and the Lady: Chapter 15— “The Lady Takes Her Leave”

by Robert Cooperman

“March can be tricky in Denver,
sifting blizzards on the Pearl of the Plains
like tons of deadly confectioner’s sugar.
But on this day, ladies had need of fans,
men waved stetsons in front of sweat-lathered faces,
fingers greased carriage reins, parasols,
tempers flared like shoot-outs in saloons.

“John Sprockett stood beside Sophia Starling
waiting for the east-bound to New York.
Hat in hand, he ignored children staring
at the claw marks ripped down his face
by the king of grizzlies he had dispatched
with nothing more than his Bowie blade
and the raw courage of an American legend.
Miss Starling fidgeted with her gloves,
hoping he’d speak some tender farewells,
knowing they would never meet again:
she returning to England,
he a creature of mountains and plains,
more likely to crush a china teacup
than hold one with a daintily raised pinkie.

“The whistle blew, the platform shuddered,
mothers pulled children from the rails
as if from a herd of stampeding mustangs,
men kissed wives, shook hands with brothers,
yelled at porters, bought cups of water,
resorted to flasks to fortify themselves
against the long, dry journey east,
sun thudding like a Ute tom-tom.



Painting by Gary Wolgamott

“John Sprockett stooped for Miss Starling’s bags.
She blushed, then quick as a hummingbird,
gave her lips to his as no man has ever been kissed.
Mothers cupped palms over children’s faces,
men elbowed each other and snorted,
a reporter cursed that he had no camera handy.
Sobbing into her handkerchief, she flew on-board.
‘Good-bye!’ she cried. ‘I shall treasure you always!’
And in a rush of whistles and steam she was gone,
the platform silent as the prairie after a twister.

“Sprockett—feeling old as Lee at Appomatox,
yet a glory like Lincoln to preserve the Union—
pivoted like a war-decorated hero.
He rode west, sun glittering pyrite.
On board that snorting steel horse,
a boy read a novel about Wild Bill Hickock.
‘He’d not stand a chance,’ Miss Starling vowed,
‘against my darling John Sprockett.’”

