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# Sophia Starling Sees Figures in the Snow

by Robert Cooperman

We had pushed the horses  
through withers-high drifts all day,  
hands numb with blue-brittle cold.  
Mr. Sprockett cursed the snow  
that could slide away in an instant;  
the smashed carrion of our bodies  
feasts for coyotes and crows.

Imperative I reach Denver  
to meet the train for New York,  
or forfeit my fare paid in advance,  
and then the ship back to England.  
We thrashed like trout in a creel—  
dusk a deepening crimson: sure death  
unless we found a shack, a ranch outpost.

Eyebrows sewed tight with frost,  
I spied two trekkers plunge and rise;  
faces pale as sails of abandoned ships.  
They laboured under packs,  
passed us without a word;  
sky smudging into layers of ash,  
wind spat stray flakes at my face.  
Those two travelers had disappeared.

“Did you see?” I gasped.  
He nodded, my impatience a flame.  
“Do you know them?” I snapped.  
“Us,” his voice barked like a shot,  
“if we don’t find that cabin.”  
Fear danced down my spine;  
the sun was sinking like a ship.  
Then I saw those walkers on a snow-bank,  
the shack a dark square beside them.

“John!” I stabbed with a forefinger.  
We urged the horses toward the shelter,  
no one else in sight; no other footprints  
tamped down the snow drifted  
half-way up the one oil-skinned window.  
I took those journeyers for a sign  
I need not fret about consequences  
if our bodies merged one last time.

