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## John Sprockett Finds Shelter for Himself and Sophia Starling from a Sudden Snowstorm

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## *John Sprockett Finds Shelter for Himself and Sophia Starling from a Sudden Snowstorm*

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I could shoot myself for losing our mounts  
when that cougar screamed and attacked  
while Miss Starling was showing me wild flowers.  
This storm'll kill the horses, if that hell-cat don't.  
Instead of steadying then, I shot, and missed:  
always my unthinking way.  
Their meat could've seen us through this blizzard.

Miss Startling thinks me a genius-Galahad.  
The night we stopped in that Salida hotel  
I didn't need a peep-hole  
to imagine her bath, one strand of hair loose,  
bubble-slick along her white neck.  
If I'd drank that night, I'd have smashed  
in her door, taken her like a grizzly.  
So I bunked in the livery stable  
and curried our mounts over and over,  
hating their nickering companionship.

I should've just found a whore.  
Instead, I met the dawn mean as a badger.  
We dawdled all morning, mounts grazing  
on stiff autumn grass  
while Miss Starling pointed to peaks,  
wild for mountains that can kill you  
quicker than Quantrill's bully-boys.

I wasn't paying mind to sky or wind,  
or to our mounts—spooked by cougar and snow.  
That storm swooped like a hawk ripping a gopher.  
Dumb, dude's luck I found this shack,  
wood and stores laid in by a good genie.  
But we're stuck, and not a notion in her head  
of how I feel; and if Miss Starling knew,  
she'd run shrieking into the blizzard;  
not enough soapy water in the wide world  
to clean herself of the filth  
I'd smear her with, just by staring.

*by Robert Cooperman*

