

The Dark Wind

Jim Schulz

(chorus)

*From the lonesome ragged peaks, entombed in ice an' snow
Down the east slope of the Rockies to the foothills far below
Through knotted twisted river breaks it creeps in search of need
Lost souls upon its hunger as it slowly gathers speed*

*It settles in the Highwoods to conjure up some chills
And blows across the coulees to the distant Sweetgrass Hills
It swirls around the Bear Paws like some gloating tally jay
Checking off the cost of life for those who choose to stay*

*From Red Water up to Wolf Creek and down the Mussleshell
It screams its mounting fury from the gates of living hell
It pauses for a moment in silence cold as stone
As it sweeps across the prairie, the dark wind starts to moan*

I was workin' for an outfit along Box Elder Creek
I'd been ridin' mendin' fenceline on the spread about a week
I'd been sleeping on the high ground with just a sagebrush fire
Thinkin' about the open range and cursin' all barbed wire

The summer sun had passed its crown to autumn's chilly air
I was lookin' for a place to 'lite and spied it standin' there
An old sod shack still true and firm abandoned long ago
I'll have a roof tonight I mused and rode up to it slow

I stopped there for a minute as the wind-whipped shanty door
Bade me role my sugans out upon this musty homestead floor
I quickly bedded down that night dog-tired and slip-shod
And drifted off to slumber 'neath that roof of prairie sod

I dreamed I saw a woman she was bending low the ground
The sky was dark and ominous and dust was all around
It drifted from the rafters and through the sodden walls
Covered up the household like some dirty funeral shawl

I dreamed I saw a woman with a yellowed pillow case
She gently placed the moistened cloth upon her child's face
Her elder son was sleeping now, the babe would soon be too
She listened in the shadows as the wind around her blew

I dreamed I saw a woman with a garden hoe in hand
A rattle snake in pieces lay about her on the sand
Her eyes were gray and lifeless as she stared down at her feet
While the dark wind shrieked about her
in the constant August heat

I dreamed I saw a woman, she was standing all alone
You robbed me of my baby she quietly did groan
Her apron was a grisly scene of such I knew not of
A butcher knife, a bloody trail, a desperate act of love

The shanty door burst open and I leaped up from my bed
I scrambled in the darkness and I tried to clear my head
Upon the ridge above the shack a pale figure shown
Her wind-tossed dress in tatters and her face as white as bone

She held her withered arms aloft as if to sanctify
Then disappeared before the wind and vanished with a cry
A cry that set my blood to ice, a cry of such despair
I saddled up my pinto hoss and rode away from there

I rode with such abandon in that dreary night so black
I galloped for my very life and never once looked back
It's been some time a passing but I still know how it feels
With the fevered banshee wailing in the dark wind at my heels

(chorus)