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Lavinia Burden Replies to Sheriff Dennehy's Proposal of Marriage

by Robert Cooperman

Dear Sheriff,
you flatter me greatly,
but my husband's passing
is still too recent and raw
for me to entertain
a second marriage.

I can't say
what my plans are,
that Reverend Burden
leaving me not
quite so secure
as I'd been led
to believe:
which you were kind
enough to point out.
And my family
does reap the rewards
of their righteous lives,
as we all hope to.

Life's so precarious—
witness my late husband's
fall—that I believe
I shall lose my mind
to be deprived again;
and worry for my safety
might distract you
in a situation calling
for your panther reflexes.

Dear Sheriff Dennehy,
were I to enter
the blessed state again,
I'll consider your suit
with all seriousness.
but for now,
I can only offer thanks
for this great honor:
you, Gold Creek's
one indispensable citizen.

