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The Widow Burden, After Rejecting Sheriff Dennehy's Suit

by Robert Cooperman

My refusal tiptoed through
a nest of rattlesnakes.
he's Sheriff, after all,
and he can make my sojourn here
a hell of trumped-up charges.

I fought my gorge when he trod
my plank floor like a buccaneer,
and spat an albatross of tobacco,
before launching his soliloquy.

And when he mentioned
John Sprockett, I feared
he'd discovered that good man
of violence had killed my husband
and given me the pouch
I buried under one floorboard
that creaked my guilt
whenever Sheriff's boot
struck it like a flint.

Oh, to be with William
in the wilderness
and damn the consequences
of forsaking my civilized life,
but at least clear
of this great filthy teat of gold
that prospectors suck at
with the greed of piglets.

