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Sheriff Dennehy Discovers the Widow Burden Gone

by Robert Cooperman

I'd come courting all proper,
with picked mountain flowers,
hair pomaded, the shirt and jacket
I wear for burying town officials.
But when I saw no chimney smoke,
I drew my gun, nudged open her door—
hearth cold as a buzzard-picked carcass,
armoire gaping like a shotgun wound.

But no sign of a struggle,
even I could tell that:
always that half-breed Eagle Feather
to whistle up like my hound,
when we had to hunt a man down.
Him and Lavinia took off together,
the rumors and gossip all true.

She made a fool of me,
her and that half-breed cur
that hated me for snapping
my fingers to make him track
long riders or reservation jumpers.
But he never flung away
the coin or two I'd toss him.

So now my duty's clear:
form a posse and jerk him
to Jesus, for stealing the gal
I'd cut out from the herd.
Her, I'll sell to Miss Jezebel,
forced to do the nasty with me
and every three-fingered prospector
with brimstone breath,
so she won't get tossed out
with the slops, to die in the snow.

