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Sheriff Dennehy Speculates on the Death of Reverend Burden

by Robert Cooperman

If he was filled with lead,
especially a perforated spine,
I'd say the culprit
was that escapee from Hell,
John Sprockett, scars slashing
his face like someone smashed him
with a bottle of rotgut.

It looks like an accident;
but why would a man of God loiter
at that abandoned mine shaft?

We didn't smell no whiskey on him—
Preacher famous for temperance in a town
oiled by liquor and its gold river.
But rumors flew raucous as crows
about him and Mary LaFrance.
Wouldn't surprise me:
she can bewitch Jesus himself.

So her and me'll have a nice chat
if she wants to keep the company
of gold fever boys in my town.

Sprockett could've killed Preacher,
though why I can't cipher at all.
Still, when John spouts the Bard
like a flash flood, he can murder
anyone discourteous enough
not to listen. Maybe Preacher
didn't pay proper attention.

