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In the Wake of the Suspicious Death of Reverend Burden, Sheriff Dennehy Calls in an Expert

by Robert Cooperman

I had a deputy fetch
that William Eagle Feather,
a better tracker than hounds
spooking a runaway slave from cover.
If anyone could find sign,
it was that half-blood,
his face giving nothing away,
like the time I complimented him,
“For a breed, you’re a decent man.”

After he scouted the mine entrance
Preacher fell, or was pushed, into—
sniffing, flicking through shrubs,
running eyes and hands over rocks
like they were bolts of fabric—
he slapped palms and muttered,
“Nothing.”

Then he strode off to wherever
he camps when he don’t fancy work.
I was hoping he’d point the finger
at John Sprockett, a murderer
who never rides into my town without
another cross going up in Boot Hill.

Maybe Undertaker Stone
appreciates Sprockett’s handiwork,
but I shudder to think if him
and Eagle Feather ever partnered,
the one blasting half the Territory,
the other covering their tracks
like an evil magician.

To be continued in future issues

These poems are part of a collection entitled *The Widow's Burden*.

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