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# Mary LaFrance Learns Why Reverend Burden Missed Their Appointment

by Robert Cooperman

Men've abandoned me  
in every gold-cholera town  
sweating its fever in these mountains,  
but he's the first to fall  
down an abandoned mine shaft.  
Maybe he was escaping the baby  
he'd stuffed inside me,  
once it hit him his wife had him  
in a grizzly death hug.

Or maybe he had help into the world  
he was always preaching on  
as if he'd seen Satan's caverns  
and was reporting to the rest of us.

After my monthlies stopped,  
he'd crow about the life inside me  
like it was a mountain of gold.  
I wanted us to run off together.  
The funds he'd hid would set us up  
till he could gather  
a new congregation to toss nuggets  
like we was sacred idols,  
but he always said Gold Creek  
was his home, his tabernacle.

Maybe he was finally fetching  
that loot for our getaway,  
and fell. I'd search it out,  
but I'm heavy as that melon  
I ate once, juice dripping  
down my cheeks and fingers.  
Lucky I never spent the presents  
he was always laying at my feet.  
I could sell some, and find a squaw  
who knows how to get rid of  
unwanted gifts from men who leave.

