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John Sprockett Recalls a Horrifying Incident from His Years with Raiders in Bloody Kansas

by Robert Cooperman

The farmhouse and barn burned
yellow as Hell-flames.
The farmer and his sons lay dead,
their women staked spread-eagle,
like we was marauding Apaches
and not proud Rebel raiders.

Colonel let the men take turns
on the mother and daughter;
their shrieks for mercy
cut me like broken whiskey bottles.

“Sprockett!” Quantrill spoke sharp
as a flywheel honing swords,
“you gonna try your luck,
or afraid even these two’ll object
to your grizzly-ripped face ?”

“Mister,” the older one begged,
both their legs blood-smeared,
“if you ever loved your mama,
kill us quick.” The other sobbed,
young enough to hope we’d let her live.

A bullet apiece,
and they were in Heaven
with Mama, praying for me,
I hope. That was the end
of my raiding days,
though I had to ride hard
to put miles between me
and the Colonel’s balked pleasure.

