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From "The Death of a Badman," a New Dime Novel by Percy Gilmore

by Robert Cooperman

"John Sprockett squinted into the late sun.
'I must be getting old,' he muttered,
'letting Kid Leeson maneuver me into the glare.'
Not that Sprockett feared dying,
his life over when Miss Sophia Starling had boarded
the east-bound out of Denver.
Still, pride was at stake: not to go easy
as a crippled fawn in a puma's claws.
He'd already faced down one grizzly,
his face scarred like cracks in ice;
and he would make The Kid pay
for insulting Miss Starling's virtue.

"'Make your play,' Sprockett sneered,
saw the rifleman on the whore house roof too late.
'Those girls never did shine to me,'
he laughed in the instant before he fired.
From the moan, he knew he'd finished Leeson,
but an ambush rifle slug caught him like a cougar
biting deep into his collarbone.
He stooped and fired at the roof,
switched hands, and fired again.
As the gunman toppled from his coward's perch,
Sprockett fell, blood pumping from his chest.

"Sheriff Casey and the whores gathered.
'A glass of your finest,' Sprockett rasped,
'to toast Miss Sophia Starling,
the one pure woman on this evil earth.'
Lola sobbed, 'If someone'd said that of me,
I wouldn't've ended trading clap with shaft rats.'
She kissed the good side of his face,
then leapt back as if he'd spring:
a gut-shot grizzly, one lunge left in its claws.
He lay still, devilry and poems fluttering away—
smoke from a campfire rising to badman's paradise."

To be continued in future issues.

The poems that comprise *The Badman and the Lady* are part of *IN THE COLORADO GOLD FEVER MOUNTAINS*.
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