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The Widow Burden's Suspicions About John Sprockett

by Robert Cooperman

When Mr. Sprockett haunted my cottage —
the night my husband never returned —
and left that pouch Christmased with nuggets,
he refused to say why the gold belonged to me.

Whenever I've thought of his visit,
a scorpion chill creeps into my heart,
For the one offense that badman finds
unforgivable: disrespect to the weaker sex.

Alive, my husband cast amorous eyes —
and more — at Mary LaFrance.
Not a large leap across a narrow chasm
to think Thomas would leave a barren wife:
an abomination to Gold Creek's preacher.

From there, no more than a stride
over a dry stream bed
for him to consider divorce a sin
he could no more countenance
than deny Jesus spoke directly to him.

And from believing
a legal sundering blasphemous,
Thomas had only one course left,
my heart rasping like a rabbit
in one of Mr. Eagle Feather's snares,
to contemplate his dread logic.

