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Robert Cooperman

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# Dying, the Reverend Burden Recalls Leading a Rescue Party

by Robert Cooperman

Oh, how I've fallen off!  
Now, I lie broken for my sins;  
once a good man. Ask Jack Manion,  
who never failed to thank me  
for saving his life, his soul.

Snow fell so satanically that year,  
I feared to ring the Sabbath bell,  
lest we'd be buried in drifts.  
Between blizzards, a lone ride  
gasp'd a tale of gold pilgrims  
trapped on Perdition Pass.

I ordered a rescue party.  
"They're dead, and we'll be too,"  
Sheriff Dennehy gulped down whiskey:  
my gaze determined as a hawk,  
its wings catching the glory  
of God's dawn.

Finally, we spotted five men.  
As I helped Jack Manion down  
the mountain—his toes frost-black  
as rotted potatoes—he confessed  
he'd shot a doomed soul  
who'd drawn cannibal's short twig.  
"He'll haunt me in Hell," he trembled.

"God forgives all," I assured.

He'll not forgive me, plotting  
to have my inconvenient wife erased.

