

Beside The Rio Grande

Strawbs

It happened rather suddenly that the Preacher came to town
With stories from the Testaments of men of great reknown
With his box of patent medicines he swore to cure all ill
From the lameness in the horses, to the children's colds and ch
ills
And he had along his Indian wife and a country music band
Who sang of peace and brotherhood beside the Rio Grande.

Now the Preacher quickly gathered sick and poor from miles arou
nd
Who came to him for comfort and to hear his country sound
But the mayor thought he was trouble when he spoke against the
law
And he saw the growing power of the crowds that he could draw
And he worried when the Preacher bought himself a plot of land
To settle with his family beside the Rio Grande.

The saloon was pretty crowded and the stakes was a-running high
And the girls sang sentimental songs that made us cowboys cry
We began to criticise the Preacher marrying a squaw
And how could he associate with cripples, drunks and whores
And in a crazy fit the Preacher scattered chips and winning han
ds
And condemned it as a den of vice beside the Rio Grande.

Now the boys were drunk and rowdy, and mostly pretty mean
And we dragged him to the sidewalk and whipped his shoulders cl
ean
We said he was responsible for bringing on the drought
That had burned off all the spring grass and had wiped the youn
g herd out
The sheriff would not get involved, the law could take no hand
The Preacher had not harmed a soul.

We pegged him on the hillside alongside two Apache braves
Who'd been given picks and shovels and been made to dig their g
raves
And when he asked for water stood and pissed around his feet
While his tongue swelled up and blackened in the burning desert
heat
And someone said we ought to mark the Preacher with a brand
To show that he did not belong beside the Rio Grande.

Then the sky began to darken and a breeze whipped up the dust
And some of us were frightened while others swore and cursed
And the Preacher said a few words with his final dying breath
About forgiving us for what we had done to bring about his deat
h

And as the night began to fall we covered him with sand
And left his weary bones to bleach