





Dove Bar Poem

Michael Lee Johnson

Ex-lover told me Dove dark
chocolate bars were good for lovers.
She ate dark Dove bars,
I ate light Dove chocolate.
She was healthy, I was sad.
We often go into fights over this.
She was manic and I was depressed.
Sex was a bouncing basketball affair.
She was healthy without knowing her disease.
I was sad, stealing apples
out of farmer John's orchard.
Sleeping wherever
a pillow was found.



You Should be On a Porch Rocking

H.L. Dowless

Often I sit on my front porch
Rocking,
Wondering where I might have gone so horribly wrong.
Was it because there were no jobs with accessible
Entry points?
Might it have been because there were no longer any unions?
Could it have been because there were no such thing as
Pension plans?

I have what I own from buying a few acres of land years ago,
Way out back,
Then dwelling on the sly inside an old sun-faded
Clap-board shack.
Now I can afford living on social security,
Even though I have no alternative annuity.

I sit rocking in my castaway wooden chair,
Sipping coffee,
Gazing out upon this dilapidated,
Crumbling third world land-scape
Before me,

So gripped by extreme poverty
And grinding despair.

It's been good life,
A high rolling life,
A life of exotic adventure,
One of avoiding the bondage of indenture.
I moved all around
From town to town,
Kingdom to kingdom,
Seeking any golden opportunity,
Willing women,
And glory that might be found..

Now here I am.

The crumbling mill ruin entering city limits,
The ruined sun-faded empty apartment buildings,
The deep pit holes on every street,
The boarded up stores
And rusting,
Ripped up,
Castaway railroad tracts,
The dilapidated houses,
The many empty molding,
Crumbling,
Cookie-cutter neighborhoods..

An ancient ruined brick church building stands up the street from me
Maybe a quarter mile.
Once they had fine services,
Outstanding youth and holiday programs.
I recall going to sunrise service there maybe thirty years ago,
Back when this city once sparkled..,
When businesses were thriving,
Opportunity was readily available,
The local union was strong;
When workers had pension plans
And corporations matched contributions
Dollar for dollar..

The local peacher
And citizen prophets
Tried to warn us..
About the great national sell out,
The sickening corruption,
The disgusting greed,
The grotesque debauchery
And crime among the average people.

Where are they all at now?
Did they all perish in the horrendous looting,

The burning,
And the shooting?

Today
The icy wind is rather forceful,
The snow is falling,
Piling up all around,
Covering the oil spots on the streets,
Filling up the pot holes,
Blanketing the many rusting machinery wrecks.

I smile when I see that..
Such a vast improvement!

Now here I am..

I sit out here on my sun-warped wooden porch,
Donning thick castaway
Patched-over denim military rags,
Wrapped up inside an alpaca hair poncho,
Rocking,
Sipping coal-black coffee,
Eating hot grits from a trash dump bowl
Sitting up on a reworked age-faded wooden stool,
Observing,
Thinking.





A Coal Cellar, the Ceiling Painted with Stars

Robert Witmer

A patch-robed monk asks the Master how to rid his mind of doubt.

Watch the sacred turtle crawl across the mud.

And follow his tracks?

What tracks?

A wealthy man gathered together everything he had left behind in childhood. He was proud of himself, and danced around the room.

A pair of roller skates. That's all it took for the ballerina to go off the rails with the boy next door.

To see into the depths one must shade the sun from the water. A straw hat. Eaten by a jet-black mare. Who sees the shadow of the whip and runs too far.

Where are the tracks, the monk asks, if the horse never returns?

In the moonlight, the Master explains, with the olives in the saddle bags.



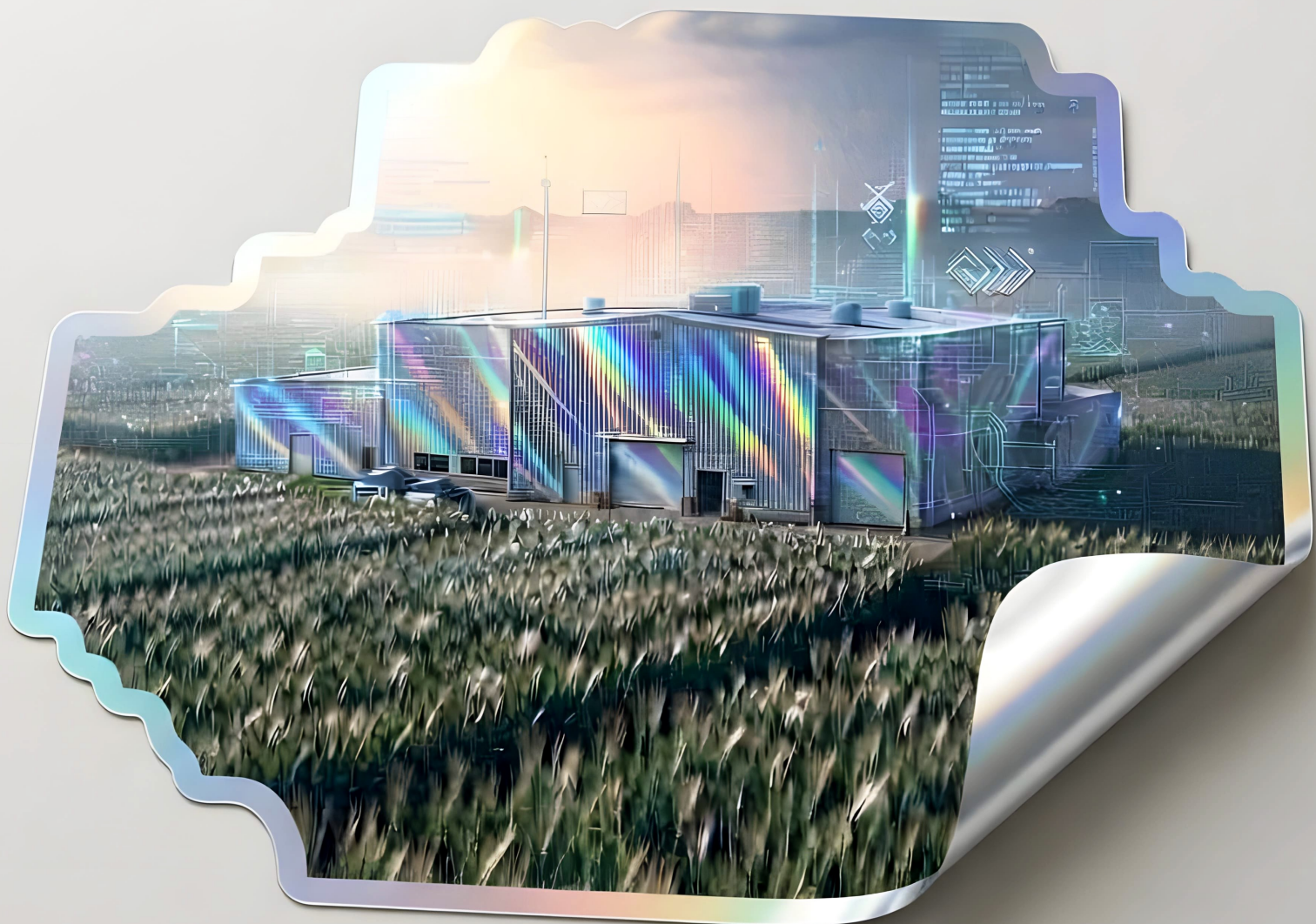
Outside the YMCA on Woodfin Street

David Stern

A youthful woman approaches, emerges
from under an oak tree, bursts into a palette
of yellows and rich reds from reflected sun,
her bare arms are graceful wings,
her legs propel her into flight, her hair
radiant in this afternoon light as she skips
into the wind for liftoff, her smile
tinged with nostalgia for the waning summer.

I walk towards her at senior pace,
winter coat loose 'round my waist, dungarees
covering stiff, earthbound legs, and a stocking cap
against my bald head. Afternoon sunlight forces
me to look away. My body deflects
the wind as it leaps over garbage cans
and encircles me in a clot of flying leaf fragments.

We exchange a quick smile and walk on.



Birthday

Fabrice B. Poussin

This morning I look to Heaven and see him
as he smiles of his warmest heart as always;
comfortable on a throne eternal now;
that day, cold of winter, he brought joy.

His works are done, restful in contemplation,
he sighs deep, his soul filled with the wisdom
reaped in the wrinkles of a tired Earth;
still he nurtures the abandoned soil.

Happy birthday forever to the one who made
a meal of dust, fabric of the air; content
as he brought home the light each evening
to rearrange the collected fragments.

All is well he says, with his languorous greens;
an almost unperceivable breeze moves through
time and space, across dimensions to which
only he and his angelic brethren are privy.

Smile daddy, smile, we eat your repast again
this night, and remember your sad hours too
within the walls, the receptacle of your being;
it is your birthday now, and forever more.



The Hungry and Invisible River

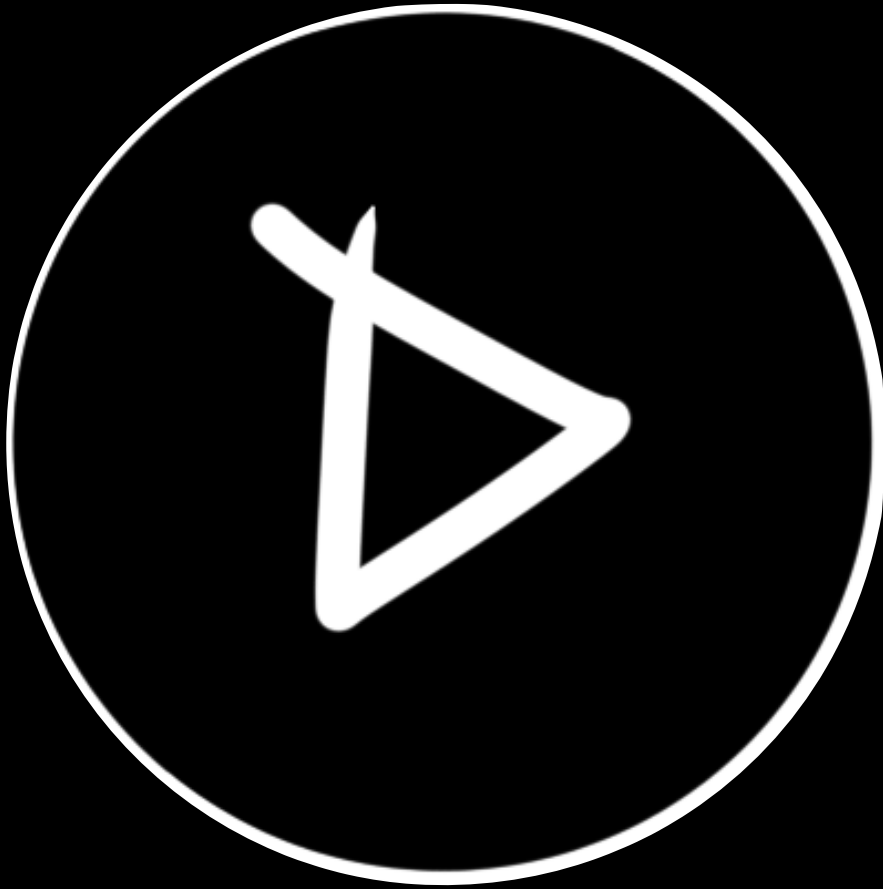
Kushal Poddar

The notion of being a no one
never leaves the mirror.

This house, built by my grandfather,
ferries light from glass to glass,
and yet the mossy darkness thickens.

Sometimes I open the old jars
of pickles I do not dare to sniff
to release a wisp of my gene.

I desire to desire something, bleed.
The last vessel disappears. The intense
feeling I writhe for eludes even this Spring.
Light draws figures it corrodes.
The house shivers on the edge of erosion,
and the level of an invisible stream rises.



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Book: [Sunrise, in a Rabbit Hole](#)

“Outside the YMCA on Woodfin Street” by David Stern

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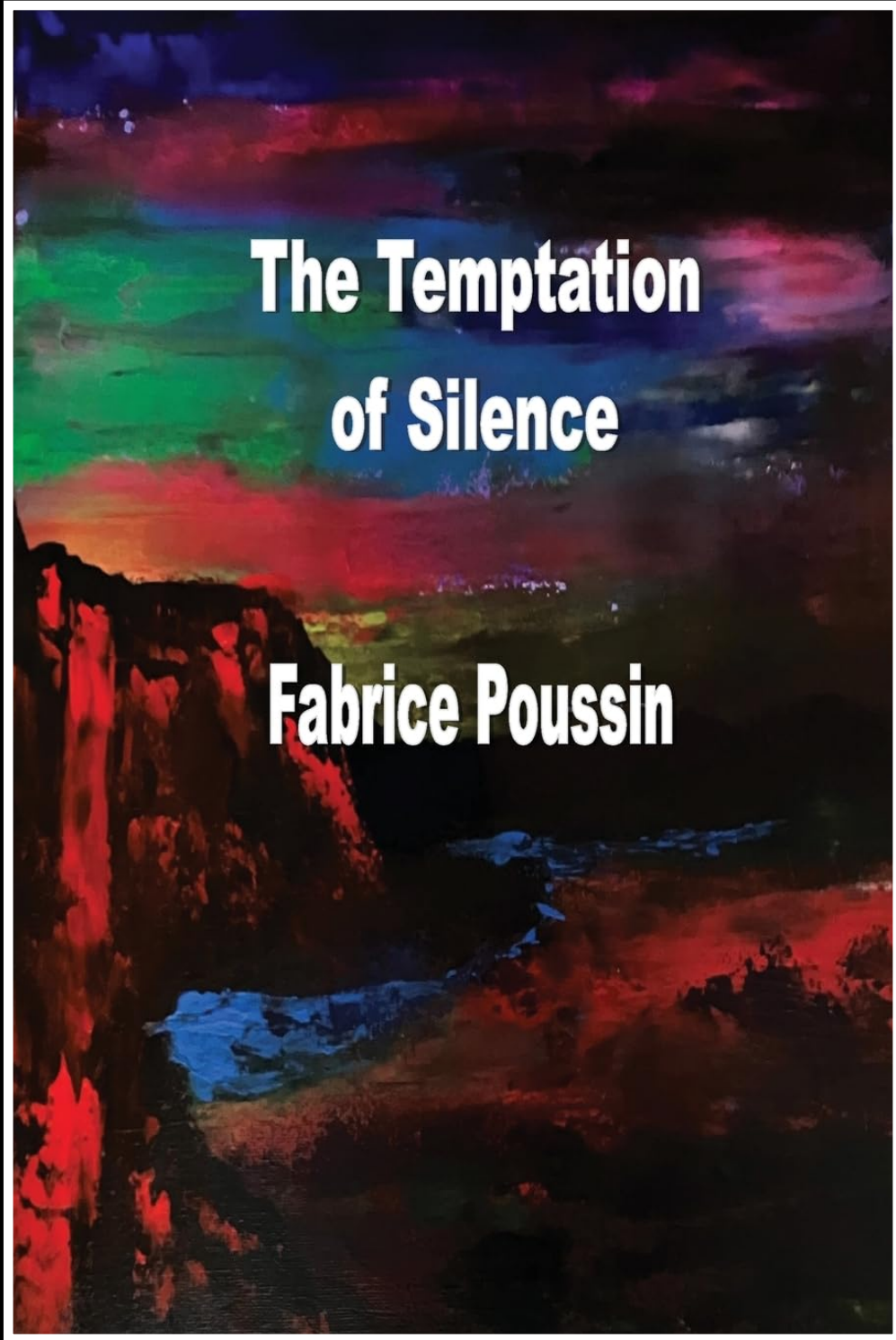


SUNRISE, IN A RABBIT HOLE

Robert Witmer

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