

Joe Cottonwood

Mamarki

Mamarki, sickly for too long,
cleans houses of the rich.
Dust from the bookshelves coating old volumes
she funnels into a jar.
Footprints, heel and toe on the floor
she peels into a pot.
Fingerprints, vibrant whorls
she rubs with a calico rag.

At night in her basement room
Mamarki disrobes.
Sprinkling the book dust,
she rubs her scalp.
Mixing a potion of footprints,
she rubs her legs.
Over her entire body
she rubs oil of flesh from the calico rag.

Day by day
Marmarki thinks faster, remembers better.
Day by day
her stride grows stronger.
Day by day
her flesh learns to sparkle.

The rich in their houses seem to forget.
They stumble, they fall.
Their skin has no color,
no color at all.

Joe Cottonwood has built or repaired hundreds of houses in his day job as carpenter/contractor. Nights, he writes. His latest book is *Foggy Dog: Poems of the Pacific Coast*.