

The background of the cover is a photograph of a dirt path winding through a field of tall grass and trees. The scene is heavily misted or fogged, creating a soft, ethereal atmosphere. The entire image is tinted with a monochromatic blue color. The path leads from the bottom center towards the middle ground, where a large, leafy tree stands on the left side. The mist obscures the background, making the trees and grass appear as soft, blurred shapes.

This  
Raucous  
Worship

Poems  
Denise Coffey

# **This Raucous Worship**

Poems  
By  
Denise Coffey

*Cover and interior images: Robert Craig*

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## *Bittersweet*

1.

Gold blazes across a fifteen-acre field,  
the stone wall separating neighbors,  
the honeysuckle and wild raspberry  
with their gorgeous perfumes.  
Above the rough lawn a puzzle  
of bittersweet clings to the wire  
frame of a livestock fence.

The vine makes a mountain range.  
Soon small bundles of green unfurl  
into ovals like cupped hands.  
It's green curtain hides the mockingbird,  
sheaths its silver sword. With long  
loose arms it throws birdsong  
to the wind.

2.

October light turns rusty wire  
to gold and the gold anchors itself  
to the level earth. A handful of leaves  
still cling to the bittersweet vine.  
Yellow berries dot the fence.  
When they crack open, their  
crisp yellow jackets cover  
plush red skin.

The mockingbird's nest is a small  
cup of twigs and grass. A leaf  
rests easy in the bowl of it.  
Berries surround it like a necklace  
of golden pearls.

3.

The wide sky is a watercolor canvas  
of boundless gray. Shadows play  
along every hollow in the field.  
A chimney's smoke turns a column  
of sky into the color of birch,  
then disappears.

Wind rushes the rusty livestock fence.  
It holds nothing in- nothing out.  
Long tendrils of vine dance wildly  
in the storm. Where wire has let go  
of metal pole, a rough fist  
of bittersweet holds tight.

4.

Snow drifts lean against the fence.  
The hard, dark sticks of the bittersweet  
turn in the winter wind. The cold  
is close, the arc of the sky immense.

What's left of the bittersweet's heart  
red berries lie covered in icy crystals,  
like diamonds in the cold sunlight,  
like sparkle on a moving ocean, part  
of a blinding, gorgeous light.

