

Poetry Porch: Poetry

At the Fireworks Factory

By William Doreski

Working at the fireworks factory,
stuffing cardboard tubes with powder,
pleases me with a spark-free
environment, disciplined colleagues.
No smoking within a quarter
mile of the plant. No gossiping
on the assembly line. No love
making in back seats of cars
sulking in the parking lot.
The days pass without rumors,
without political arguments,
without threats of unionization.
My fellow workers look almost
as artificial as I feel.

The pay isn't bad. Fireworks
sell briskly, even in states
that prohibit the big bangers
and fiery rockets and twirlers
that so handily start wildfires
and burn down entire villages.
Tamping the powder with my thumb,
I can feel the latent force building.
I never wash my hands before
licking off the powder, sampling
the source of power in this world
of nation states run amok.

Every Friday we're paid in cash.
When I bank the bills the teller
always flinches at the smell
of smokeless powder. A whiff
of Satan at work. I spend
as little as possible, living
only for my job, working myself

into a febrile state of grace
no one whose life is deprived
of explosives can understand.