

AMERICAN LIFE IN POETRY

A FREE COLUMN FOR NEWSPAPERS BY TED KOOSER, THE POET LAUREATE OF THE UNITED STATES

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American Life in Poetry: Column 033

BY TED KOOSER, U.S. POET LAUREATE

Katy Giebenhain, an American living in Berlin, Germany, depicts a ritual that many diabetics undergo several times per day: testing one's blood sugar. The poet shows us new ways of looking at what can be an uncomfortable chore by comparing it to other things: tapping trees for syrup, checking oil levels in a car, milking a cow.

Glucose Self-Monitoring

A stabbing in miniature, it is,
a tiny crime,
my own blood parceled
drop by drop and set
on the flickering tongue
of this machine.
It is the spout-punching of trees
for syrup new and smooth
and sweeter
than nature ever intended.
It is Sleeping Beauty's curse
and fascination.
It is the dipstick measuring of oil
from the Buick's throat,
the necessary maintenance.
It is every vampire movie ever made.
Hand, my martyr without lips,
my quiet cow.
I'll milk your fingertips
for all they're worth.
For what they're worth.
Something like a harvest, it is,
a tiny crime.

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