

# 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 059

BY TED KOOSER, U.S. POET LAUREATE

Contrary to the glamorized accounts we often read about the lives of single women, Amy Fleury, a native of Kansas, presents us with a realistic, affirmative picture. Her poem playfully presents her life as serendipitous, yet she doesn't shy away from acknowledging loneliness.

### At Twenty-Eight

It seems I get by on more luck than sense,  
not the kind brought on by knuckle to wood,  
breath on dice, or pennies found in the mud.  
I shimmy and slip by on pure fool chance.  
At turns charmed and cursed, a girl knows romance  
as coffee, red wine, and books; solitude  
she counts as daylight virtue and muted  
evenings, the inventory of absence.  
But this is no sorry spinster story,  
just the way days string together a life.  
Sometimes I eat soup right out of the pan.  
Sometimes I don't care if I will marry.  
I dance in my kitchen on Friday nights,  
singing like only a lucky girl can.

"At Twenty-Eight" by Amy Fleury is reprinted from "Beautiful Trouble," Southern Illinois University Press, 2004, by permission of the author. The poem was originally published in Southern Poetry Review, Volume 41:2, Fall/Winter 2002. This weekly column is supported by The Poetry Foundation, The Library of Congress and the Department of English at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. The column does not accept unsolicited poetry.

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