

AMERICAN LIFE IN POETRY

A FREE COLUMN FOR NEWSPAPERS BY TED KOOSER, POET LAUREATE OF THE UNITED STATES, 2004-2006
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American Life in Poetry: Column 084

BY TED KOOSER, U.S. POET LAUREATE, 2004-2006

Many of this column's readers have watched an amaryllis emerge from its hard bulb to flower. To me they seem unworldly, perhaps a little dangerous, like a wild bird you don't want to get too close to. Here Connie Wanek of Duluth, Minnesota, takes a close and playful look at an amaryllis that looks right back at her.

Amaryllis

A flower needs to be this size
to conceal the winter window,
and this color, the red
of a Fiat with the top down,
to impress us, dull as we've grown.

Months ago the gigantic onion of a bulb
half above the soil
stuck out its green tongue
and slowly, day by day,
the flower itself entered our world,

closed, like hands that captured a moth,
then open, as eyes open,
and the amaryllis, seeing us,
was somehow undiscouraged.
It stands before us now

as we eat our soup;
you pour a little of your drinking water
into its saucer, and a few crumbs
of fragrant earth fall
onto the tabletop.

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