

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 197

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

I suspect that one thing some people have against reading poems is that they are so often so serious, so devoid of joy, as if we poets spend all our time brooding about mutability and death and never having any fun. Here Cornelius Eady, who lives and teaches in Indiana, offers us a poem of pure pleasure.

A Small Moment

I walk into the bakery next door
To my apartment. They are about
To pull some sort of toast with cheese
From the oven. When I ask:
What's that smell? I am being
A poet, I am asking

What everyone else in the shop
Wanted to ask, but somehow couldn't;
I am speaking on behalf of two other
Customers who wanted to buy the
Name of it. I ask the woman
Behind the counter for a percentage
Of her sale. Am I flirting?
Am I happy because the days
Are longer? Here's what

She does: She takes her time
Choosing the slices. "I am picking
Out the good ones," she tells me. It's
April 14th. Spring, with five to ten
Degrees to go. Some days, I feel my duty;
Some days, I love my work.

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