

AMERICAN LIFE IN POETRY

A FREE COLUMN FOR NEWSPAPERS BY TED KOOSER, POET LAUREATE OF THE UNITED STATES, 2004-2006
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BY TED KOOSER, U.S. POET LAUREATE, 2004-2006

Jonathan Greene, who lives in Kentucky, is a master of the short poem, but while he prunes them down to their essentials he never cuts out the wonder and delight. Here's a good example from his most recent book. Can you feel the exclamation point that's suggested at the end? You can't see it, but it's there.

One Light to Another

The storm
turns off
the lights.

The lightning
lights the whereabouts
of the flashlight.

The flashlight
takes us to matches
and candles, the oil lamp.

Now we're back,
revisiting
the 19th century.

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