

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

This poem by Stella Nesanovich, who lives in Lake Charles, Louisiana, appeared in a recent issue of *Third Wednesday*, a literary journal. At this time of great national division it's good to see a few people in a tire shop, coming together to share their common humanity. Her most recent book is *Colors of the River: Poems*, from Yellow Flag Press.

Everyday Grace

It can happen like that:
meeting at the market,
buying tires amid the smell
of rubber, the grating sound
of jack hammers and drills,
anywhere we share stories,
and grace flows between us.

The tire center waiting room
becomes a healing place
as one speaks of her husband's
heart valve replacement, bedsores
from complications. A man
speaks of multiple surgeries,
notes his false appearance
as strong and healthy.

I share my sister's death
from breast cancer, her
youngest only seven.
A woman rises, gives
her name, Mrs. Henry,
then takes my hand.
Suddenly an ordinary day
becomes holy ground.

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