AMERICAN LIFE IN POETRY

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

Anton Chekhov, the master of the short story, was able to see whole worlds within the interactions of simple Russian peasants, and in this little poem by Leo Dangel, who grew up in rural South Dakota, something similar happens.

One September Afternoon

Home from town
the two of them sit
looking over what they have bought
spread out on the kitchen table
like gifts to themselves.
She holds a card of buttons
against the new dress material
and asks if they match.
The hay is dry enough to rake,
but he watches her
empty the grocery bag.
He reads the label
on a grape jelly glass
and tries on
the new straw hat again.

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