

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

I've always been fascinated by miniatures of all kinds, the little glass animals I played with as a boy, electric trains, dollhouses, and I think it's because I can feel that I'm in complete control. Everything is right in its place, and I'm the one who put it there. Here's a poem by Kay Mullen, who lives in Washington, about the art of bonsai.

Bonsai at the Potter's Stall

Under fluorescent light,
aligned on a bench

and table top, oranges
the size of marbles dangle

from trees with glossy
leaves. White trumpets

bloom in tiny clay pots.
Under a firethorn's twisted

limbs, a three inch monk
holds a cup from which

he appears to drink
the interior life. The potter

prizes his bonsai children
who will never grow up,

never leave home.

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