

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

My father spent his life in the retail business, and loved almost every minute of it, so I was especially pleased to see this poem by David Huddle, from his new book, *Dream Sender*, from Louisiana State University Press. The poet lives in Vermont.

Stores

Fifteen I got a job at Leggett's, stock
boy, fifty cents an hour. Moved up—I come
from that kind of people—to toys at Christmas,
then Menswear and finally Shoes.

Quit to go
to college, never worked retail again, but
I still really like stores, savor merchandise
neatly stacked on tables, sweaters wanting
my gliding palm as I walk by, mannequins
weirdly sexy behind big glass windows,
shoes shiny and just waiting for the right feet.

So why in my seventies do Target, Lowes,
and Home Depot spin me dizzy and lost,
wanting my mother to find me, wipe my eyes,
hold my hand all the way out to the car?

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