American Life in Poetry: Column 649

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

We've published several poems from The University of Minnesota Press's collection of bee poems, If Bees Are Few. Here's one about the recent decline in the world's bee population by the distinguished poet Linda Pastan, who lives in Maryland. Her most recent book is Insomnia, W. W. Norton & Co.

The Death of the Bee

The biography of the bee
is written in honey
and is drawing
to a close.

Soon the buzzing
plainchant of summer
will be silenced
for good;

the flowers, unkindled
will blaze
one last time
and go out.

And the boy nursing
his stung ankle this morning
will look back
at his brief tears

with something
like regret,
remembering the amber
taste of honey.

Kooser, served as United States Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress from 2004-2006. We do not accept unsolicited manuscripts.

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