

AMERICAN LIFE IN POETRY

A FREE COLUMN FOR NEWSPAPERS BY TED KOOSER, POET LAUREATE OF THE UNITED STATES, 2004-2006
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American Life in Poetry: Column 678

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

With Dorianne Laux I've shared the experience of having a bird enraged at her reflection in a window. Laux lives in North Carolina and this is her third poem to be published in this column. Are you familiar with the archives on our website? You can find more than five hundred of our weekly columns posted there, indexed by poet or by the title of the poem. Ms. Laux's most recent collection is *The Book of Men* (W.W. Norton & Co., 2012).

Bird

For days now a red-breasted bird
has been trying to break in.
She tests a low branch, violet blossoms
swaying beside her, leaps into the air and flies
straight at my window, beak and breast
held back, claws raking the pane.
Maybe she longs for the tree she sees
reflected in the glass, but I'm only guessing.
I watch until she gives up and swoops off.
I wait for her return, the familiar
click, swoosh, thump of her. I sip cold coffee
and scan the room, trying to see it new,
through the eyes of a bird. Nothing has changed.
Books piled in a corner, coats hooked
over chair backs, paper plates, a cup
half-filled with sour milk.
The children are in school. The man is at work.
I'm alone with dead roses in a jam jar.
What do I have that she could want enough
to risk such failure, again and again?

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