

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 had my eye on American's obsessions for more than seventy years and I can't remember a time when public lying got as much attention as it does today. Attention yes, but consequences, no. I recently happened upon this clever poem about lying by Judith Askew. It's from her book *On the Loose*, from Bass River Press, South Yarmouth, Massachusetts, and she, too, is from Massachusetts.

Bakery of Lies

My favorite is the cream puff lie,
the kind inflated with hot air,
expanded to make an heroic-sized story.

Another is the cannoli, a long lie,
well-packed with nutty details,
lightly wrapped in flakey truth.

A macaroon isn't a *little* white lie,
but it's covered
with self-serving coconut.

The apple tart carries slices
of sour gossip, only
slightly sweetened with truth.

Then there's the napoleon,
an Iago lie of pernicious intent,
layer upon layer of dark deceit.

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