

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 739

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

I don't suppose there are many of our younger readers who have started to worry about the possibility of memory loss, but I'd guess almost everybody over fifty does. Peter Schneider lives in Massachusetts and this is from his book *Line Fence*, from Amherst Writers and Artists Press.

Lost in Plain Sight

Somewhere recently
I lost my short-term memory.
It was there and then it moved
like the flash of a red fox
along a line fence.

My short-term memory
has no address but here
no time but now.
It is a straight-man, waiting to speak
to fill in empty space
with name, date, trivia, punch line.
And then it fails to show.

It is lost, hiding somewhere out back
a dried ragweed stalk on the Kansas Prairie
holding the shadow of its life
against a January wind.

How am I to go on?
I wake up a hundred times a day.
Who am I waiting for
what am I looking for
why do I have this empty cup
on the porch or in the yard?
I greet my neighbor, who smiles.
I turn a slow, lazy Susan
in my mind, looking for
some clue, anything to break the spell
of being lost in plain sight.

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