

# 'The Good Life' Not by Bud Smith

*by* Bud Smith

they have these posters on NYC subways now  
corner of the car, over there where the cobwebs grow  
Poetry in Motion the MTA calls it

it's a real peaceful thing  
better than Dr. Zizmore ads  
anyway

middle of the day, coming  
north from Far Rockaway  
instead of staring at nothing  
I look over in the far corner and try to read  
a poster with 'The Good Life'  
by Tracy K. Smith  
on it

there's a guy sitting with his elbows  
on his knees and he looks like  
he's eaten a junkyard dog  
for lunch and he sees me looking  
to the corner where he's at  
in the cobwebs and the flickering light

I'm looking past his shoulder  
trying to read the Poetry  
in Motion poster

a lady with a bag blocks my view  
and I move my head

*'When some people talk about money  
They speak as if it were a mysterious lover'*

elbow guy stills sees me looking over by him  
sees me squinting

"You got a problem?" he says

I shake my head no, and I lean in a little closer

*'Who went out to buy milk and never  
Came back, and it makes me nostalgic  
For the years I lived on coffee and bread'*

"Wut you staring at me for?"

*'Hungry all the time, walking to work on payday  
Like a woman journeying for water'*

"Get a good look, bitch."

I can't read the end of this  
because elbow guy's head is in the way  
now that he's turned his baseball cap  
to the side

he stands up

"STILL LOOKING AT ME BRO?  
MEAN MUGGING ME, MOTHERFUCKER!"

he's tall, scarred fists hanging

hurray

I say, "Nah, move to the side, move out of the way."

"WUT THE FUCK YOU SAY TO ME FAG?"

I stand up and scream, "I SAID MOVE OUT OF THE WAY!  
I'M TRYING TO READ THAT SWEET FUCKING POEM  
HANGING THERE BEHIND YOUR IGNORANT ASS!"

he turns, surprised  
like ... ah look at that  
a beautiful poem  
he faces the poster  
like it's the sun  
and he reads it

I watch him mouth the words

*'From a village without a well, then living  
One or two nights like everyone else  
On roast chicken and red wine.'*

\* \* \* *italics by Tracy K. Smith's poem 'The Good Life' as seen on  
an MTA poster on the A train*

