

BARRY KITTERMAN

Elaine's Poem

Poems don't want to rhyme for Gerald
like they do for me.
He sits at the kitchen table, that stubby pencil
in his hand. I wonder why he couldn't find
a better one. I wonder why he's trying
not to smoke. The last brochure said
this might help: Go for a walk,
play your guitar, write a poem
to take your mind off your desire.

When I watch him sweat and stew
I think of words from the Bible,
 sweat drops of blood
Gerald looks like he could start to bleed
about the head. He won't give it up,
this urge to write a poem.

I need a word, says Gerald, that rhymes
with fury. There isn't one, I tell him.
Then it's no good, he says, any of it.

I can read what he's written so far:
 cigarette smoke fills my lungs with fury
 my eyes are red and blurry

It's hard, he says.

If it were my poem, I'd know how to end it.
 O the song that plays in my heart,
 mister man, you are the refrain.