

'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*

