

Flirtation

By Rita Dove

After all, there's no need
to say anything

at first. An orange, peeled
and quartered, flares

like a tulip on a wedgewood plate
Anything can happen.

Outside the sun
has rolled up her rugs

and night strewn salt
across the sky. My heart

is humming a tune
I haven't heard in years!

Quiet's cool flesh—
let's sniff and eat it.

There are ways
to make of the moment

a topiary
so the pleasure's in

walking through.

Rita Dove, "Flirtation" from *Museum* (Pittsburgh: Carnegie Mellon University Press, 1983). Copyright © 1983 by Rita Dove. Reprinted with the permission of the author.

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The second African-American woman to be named Poet Laureate of the United States, and only the second to win a Pulitzer Prize for poetry (Thomas and Beulah, 1987), Rita Dove has achieved a great

deal in her career. Her multi-layered poems dramatize the stories of individuals both living and dead against the backdrop of larger historical forces.

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