

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 087

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

The first poem we ran in this column was by David Allan Evans of South Dakota, about a couple washing windows together. You can find that poem and all the others on our website, www.americanlifeinpoetry.org. Here Tania Rochelle of Georgia presents us with another couple, this time raking leaves. I especially like the image of the pair “bent like parentheses/ around their brittle little lawn.”

Raking

Anna Bell and Lane, eighty,
make small leaf piles in the heat,
each pile a great joint effort,
like fifty years of marriage,
sharing chores a rusty dance.
In my own yard, the stacks
are big as children, who scatter them,
dodge and limbo the poke
of my rake. We're lucky,
young and straight-boned.
And I feel sorry for the couple,
bent like parentheses
around their brittle little lawn.
I like feeling sorry for them,
the tenderness of it, but only
for a moment: John glides in
like a paper airplane, takes
the children for the weekend,
and I remember,
they're the lucky ones—
shriveled Anna Bell, loving
her crooked Lane.

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