

# 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 210

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

My father was the manager of a store in which chairs were strategically placed for those dutiful souls waiting and waiting and waiting and waiting for shoppers. Such patience is the most exhausting work there is, or so it seems at the time. This poem by Joseph O. Legaspi perfectly captures one of those scenes.

### At the Bridal Shop

The gowns and dresses hang  
like fleece in their glaring  
whiteness, sheepskin-softness,  
the ruffled matrimonial love in which the brides-  
in-waiting dance around, expectantly,  
hummingbirds to tulips. I was dragged here:  
David's Bridal, off the concrete-gray arterial  
highways of a naval town. I sink into the flush  
bachelors' couch, along with other men sprinkled  
throughout the shop, as my friend and her female compatriots parade  
taffeta dresses in monstrous shades of pastels—persimmons,  
lilacs, periwinkles—the colors of weddings and religious  
holidays. Trains drag on the floor, sleeves drape  
like limp, pressed sheets of candied fruits,  
ribbons fluttering like pale leaves. I watch  
families gathered together: the women, like worshippers,  
circling around the smiling brides-to-be, as if they were  
the anointed ones. The men, in turn, submerge  
deeper into couches, into sleep, while the haloed,  
veiled women cannot contain their joy,  
they flash their winning smiles, and they are beautiful.

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