

AMERICAN LIFE IN POETRY

A FREE COLUMN FOR NEWSPAPERS BY TED KOOSER, POET LAUREATE OF THE UNITED STATES, 2004-2006
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BY TED KOOSER, U.S. POET LAUREATE, 2004-2006

Here's a lovely poem that imagines the afterlife by Emily Ransdell, who divides her time between Washington and the Oregon coast. This poem appeared first in *The Cortland Review*.

Bowling in Heaven

Like newlyweds,
my parents slip out of their clothes.
He puts aside the sweater I chose
for him, she undoes her pearls.

They rise up from their old ailments,
their fears of falling, broken hips
and other bad news.

Now they dance
barefoot in their living room,
go bowling on a whim.
They garden all day without pain,
calling out like songbirds,
come see the hollyhocks,
they have grown so tall!

Nights, they lie down
like dolls and their sleepless eyes
glide closed. They seem so eager
for morning, I pray they will find each other
again and again.

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