

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 290

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

During our more than four years of publishing this column we've shown you a number of poems about motherhood. Here's another, beautifully observed by Liz Rosenberg, who lives in New York State.

I Leave Her Weeping

I leave her weeping in her barred little bed,
her warm hand clutching at my hand,
but she doesn't want a kiss, or to hug the dog goodnight—
she keeps crying mommy, uh-hh, mommy,
with her lovely crumpled face
like a golden piece of paper I am throwing away.
We have been playing for hours,
and now we need to stop, and she does not want
to. She is counting on me to lower the boom
that is her heavy body, and settle her down.
I rub her ribcage, I arrange the blankets around her hips.
Downstairs are lethal phonecalls I have to answer.
Friends
dying, I need to call.
My daughter may be weeping all my tears,
I only know
that even this young
and lying on her side,
her head uplifted like a cupped tulip,
sometimes she needs to cry.

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