

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 568

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

It's said that each of us undergoes gradual change and that every seven years we are essentially a new person. Here's a poem by Freya Manfred, who lives in Stillwater, Minnesota, about the changes in a long marriage. Her most recent book is *Speak, Mother*, published by Red Dragonfly Press.

This Stranger, My Husband

The older we get the stranger my husband becomes,
and the less certain I am that I know him.
We used to lie eye to eye, breathing together
in the immensity of each moment.
Lithe and starry-eyed, we could leap fences
even with babies on our backs.

His eyes still dream off
toward something in the distance I can't see;
but now he gazes more zealously,
and leaps into battle with a more certain voice
over politics, religion, or art,
and some old friends won't come to dinner.

The molecules of our bodies spiral off into the stars
on winds of change and chance,
as we welcome the unknown, the incalculable,
the spirit and heart of everything we named and knew so well—
and never truly named, or knew,
but only loved, at last.

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