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# *I Dreamed I Was Emily Dickinson's Boyfriend*

POETRY BY

Ron Koertge

Ron Koertge is a poet who wants to bring his readers nothing but pleasure.

*I Dreamed I Was Emily Dickinson's Boyfriend* easily solidifies his reputation as a poet who is very funny and also very serious. In these surprising and delightful poems, a mannequin joins the Me Too movement, a summer job turns into a lesson in class distinctions, and Jane Austen makes a surprise appearance at a mall. Ron Koertge's uniquely playful imagination is on display in poem after poem.

## **ADVANCE PRAISE**

"New and surprising poems—sly, inventive, and deeply good-hearted—that journey deep into the imagination's outer limits. A mannequin talks about her job, Mickey Mouse shops for shoes, and the Bride of Frankenstein remembers her wedding night. Full of surprises and satisfying on many levels, *I Dreamed I Was Emily Dickinson's Boyfriend* deserves a place in the poetry section of every heads-up reader."

—**Billy Collins**, author of *Whale Day: And Other Poems*

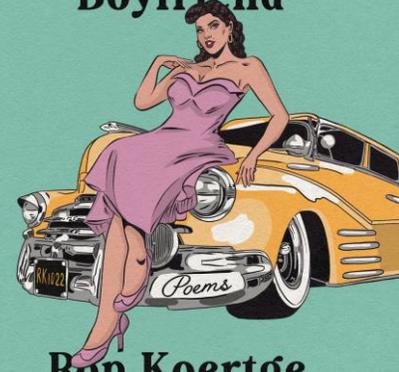
"Ron Koertge is a tenderhearted wiseguy wielding humor as a sword of truth. He's able to slip inside the minds of all manner of animals, cartoon characters, heroes, and monsters as they sorrow and rejoice and feel horny and grow old. A Barbie doll becomes an angry Old Testament God. A child's notion of Superman and Lois Lane's mutual devotion provides a little protection from full knowledge of parental infidelity. The Bride of Frankenstein erects a wall of NOs. Through his deft poetic mediumship Koertge illuminates our private lives and secret fears in liberating ways. His poems subvert expectations, resist easy closure, and admit what's poignant, funny, and heartbreaking about the hapless slapstick of being human."

—**Amy Gerstler**, author of *Scattered at Sea*

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Ron Koertge, a longtime resident of South Pasadena, taught at Pasadena City College for thirty-seven years. A prolific writer, he has published more than thirty books of poetry and prose. Some of his most recent books are *Fever* (Red Hen Press 2006), *Indigo* (Red Hen Press 2009), *The Ogre's Wife* (Red Hen Press 2013), and *Vampire Planet* (Red Hen Press 2015). He is the recipient of grants from the NEA and the California Arts Council and has poems in two volumes of *Best American Poetry* (1999 and 2005). A recent Pushcart Prize winner, he is also the author of "Negative Space," the prose poem upon which the stop-motion film by the same name was based and was shortlisted for an Oscar in *Animated Short Films* in 2018.

## **I Dreamed I was Emily Dickinson's Boyfriend**



**Ron Koertge**

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**FROM I DREAMED I WAS EMILY DICKINSON'S BOYFRIEND**

“Death’s Hankies”

Imagine how many of them he goes  
through in a day.

Good ones, bleached cotton, soft,  
easy on the eyes, easy on the nose.

Dozens in his dark car. Used ones  
in a spotless laundry bag.

Every night the washer churns  
and unless it’s raining he hangs

them out behind his blue house  
on a line that sags just a little.

“Yahweh Barbie”

Forget Nurse Barbie with her pink stethoscope. No more  
Fire Fighter Barbie who checks her make-up before rushing  
to the blaze.

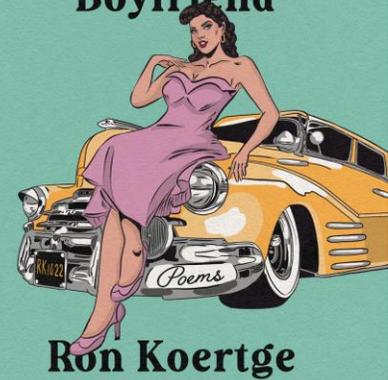
Yahweh Barbie is jealous and angry. She is a devouring  
Barbie. Imagine her at Becky’s next tea party with pretend  
this and pretend that and a kitten in a bonnet.

Barbie will bring a whirling tempest. Oreos and Ritz crackers  
utterly destroyed. Becky’s frilly room a wasteland.

DreamHorse running amok. DreamCamper exploding  
with Ken inside.

The army of Bratz will bend the knee and avert every eye  
since “Thou shalt have no other dolls before Barbie.”

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