

Rolling

A spangled ball, blue with silver glitter
is the one my friend chooses from the racks
of orange and black and green loaners, some
with finger holes so wide they look like mouths
stunned open from a slap. The ball
she picks slams her through strikes and spares,
a few loose pins that make her fists clench
with souped-up anger. By the second game,
we're strutting down the lane, the men nearby
in awe of our uproar, our cursing
so extravagant we think they'll applaud.
My friend tosses back her hair when I drop
to my knees and pound the floor, my ball
in the gutter on a shoo-in spare. She laughs
and gasps, hoots my name through swigs of beer,
says I'm too weak for a sixteen-pound ball
but I scowl, say I want to armwrestle the cowboy
in the bar to prove I'm tough and ready
for any ten pin huddle down in the darkened
pit of our lane. The pins are jaundiced white,
older than us, so when the last one wobbles and
manages to stand we yell we've been robbed by
Gramps, the headpin that's kept us from a tenth-
frame strike. We're envious of Larry and Tina,
these people with green glitter names on the alley's
A-list, their best games a perfect score -
three hundred points, twelve strikes in a row,
the bowler's PhD, the coup de grace, the coupe de
ville, the cadillac, the one percent of people
in the U.S. who've laminated their score sheets
and covered their balls with gold.

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