

# AMERICAN LIFE IN POETRY

A FREE COLUMN FOR NEWSPAPERS BY TED KOOSER, THE POET LAUREATE OF THE UNITED STATES

AMERICAN LIFE IN POETRY © 2005 THE POETRY FOUNDATION WEBSITE: WWW.AMERICANLIFEINPOETRY.ORG CONTACT: ALP@POETRYFOUNDATION.ORG

## American Life in Poetry: Column 004

BY TED KOOSER, U.S. POET LAUREATE

None of us can fix the past. Mistakes we've made can burden us for many years, delivering their pain to the present as if they had happened just yesterday. In the following poem we join with Ruth Stone in revisiting a hurried decision, and we empathize with the intense regret of being unable to take that decision back, or any other decision, for that matter.

### Another Feeling

Once you saw a drove of young pigs  
crossing the highway. One of them  
pulling his body by the front feet,  
the hind legs dragging flat.  
Without thinking,  
you called the Humane Society.  
They came with a net and went for him.  
They were matter of fact, uniformed;  
there were two of them,  
their truck ominous, with a cage.  
He was hiding in the weeds. It was then  
you saw his eyes. He understood.  
He was trembling.  
After they took him, you began to suffer regret.  
Years later, you remember his misfit body  
scrambling to reach the others.  
Even at this moment, your heart  
is going too fast; your hands sweat.

Reprinted from "In the Dark," Copper Canyon Press, 2004, by permission of the author and publisher. This weekly column is supported by The Poetry Foundation, The Library of Congress, and the Department of English at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

American Life in Poetry ©2005 The Poetry Foundation

Contact: alp@poetryfoundation.org

This column does not accept unsolicited poetry.