

AMERICAN LIFE IN POETRY

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

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American Life in Poetry: Column 066

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

Some of the most telling poetry being written in our country today has to do with the smallest and briefest of pleasures. Here Marie Howe of New York captures a magical moment: sitting in the shelter of a leafy tree with the rain falling all around.

The Copper Beech

Immense, entirely itself,
it wore that yard like a dress,

with limbs low enough for me to enter it
and climb the crooked ladder to where

I could lean against the trunk and practice being alone.

One day, I heard the sound before I saw it, rain fell
darkening the sidewalk.

Sitting close to the center, not very high in the branches,
I heard it hitting the high leaves, and I was happy,

watching it happen without it happening to me.

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