

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 152

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

A child with a sense of the dramatic, well, many of us have been that child. Here's Carrie Shipers of Missouri reminiscing about how she once wished for a dramatic rescue by screaming ambulance, only to find she was really longing for the comfort of her mother's hands.

Medical History

I wanted it: arc of red and blue
strobing my skin, sirens singing
my praises, the cinching embrace
of the cot as the ambulance
slammed shut and steered away.
More than needle-pierce
or dragging blade, I wanted the swab
of alcohol and cotton, the promise
of gauze-covered cure.
My mother saved anyone
who asked, but never me,
never the way I wanted:
her palms skimming my limbs
for injury, her fingers finding
what hurt, her lips whispering,
I got here just in time.

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