

AMERICAN LIFE IN POETRY

A FREE COLUMN FOR NEWSPAPERS BY TED KOOSER, POET LAUREATE OF THE UNITED STATES, 2004-2006
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BY TED KOOSER, U.S. POET LAUREATE, 2004-2006

A part of being a parent, it seems, is spending too much time fearing the worst. Here Berwyn Moore, a Pennsylvania poet, expresses that fear—irrational, but exquisitely painful all the same.

Driving to Camp Lend-A-Hand

for Emma Grace

The day we picked our daughter up from camp,
goldenrod lined the road, towheaded scouts
bowing on both sides, the parting of macadam
as we drove, the fields dry, the sky lacy with clouds.
A farmer waved. A horse shrugged its haughty head.
We stopped for corn, just picked, and plums and kale,
sampled pies, still warm, and tarts and honeyed bread.
Sheets on a line ballooned out like a ship's sail.
Time stopped in those miles before we saw her.
For eight days we hadn't tucked her in or brushed
her hair or watched her grow, the week a busy blur
of grown-up bliss. It came anyway, that uprush
of fear—because somewhere a child was dead:
at a market, a subway, a school, in a lunatic's bed.

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