

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 218

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

Here is one of my favorite mother-daughter poems, by Marie Howe, who lives in New York City and who has a charming little girl.

Hurry

We stop at the dry cleaners and the grocery store
and the gas station and the green market and
Hurry up honey, I say, hurry,
as she runs along two or three steps behind me
her blue jacket unzipped and her socks rolled down.

Where do I want her to hurry to? To her grave?
To mine? Where one day she might stand all grown?
Today, when all the errands are finally done, I say to her,
Honey I'm sorry I keep saying Hurry—
you walk ahead of me. You be the mother.

And, Hurry up, she says, over her shoulder, looking
back at me, laughing. Hurry up now darling, she says,
hurry, hurry, taking the house keys from my hands.

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