

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 246

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

Childhood is too precious a part of life to lose before we have to, but our popular culture all too often yanks our little people out of their innocence. Here is a poem by Trish Crapo, of Leyden, Massachusetts, that captures a moment of that innocence.

Back Then

Out in the yard, my sister and I
tore thread from century plants
to braid into bracelets, ate
chalky green bananas,
threw coconuts onto the sidewalk
to crack their hard, hairy skulls.

The world had begun to happen,
but not time. We would live
forever, sunburnt and pricker-stuck,
our promises written in blood. Not yet

would men or illness distinguish us,
our thoughts cleave us in two.
If she squeezed sour calamondins
into a potion, I drank it. When I jumped
from the fig tree, she jumped.

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