

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 111

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

As poet Felecia Caton Garcia of New Mexico shows us in this moving poem, there are times when parents feel helpless and hopeless. But the human heart is remarkable and, like a dry creek bed, somehow fills again, is renewed and restored.

Drought

Try to remember: things go wrong in spite of it all.
I listen to our daughters singing in the crackling rows
of corn and wonder why I don't love them more.
They move like dark birds, small mouths open

to the sky and hungry. All afternoon I listen
to the highway and watch clouds push down over the hills.
I remember your legs, heavy with sleep, lying across mine.
I remember when the world was transparent, trembling, all

shattering light. I had to grit my teeth against its brilliance.
It was nothing like this stillness that makes it difficult
to lift my eyes. When I finally do, I see you
carrying the girls over the sharp stones of the creek bed.

When they pull at my clothes and lean against my arms,
I don't know what to do and do nothing.

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