Lynne Gammon of Portland chose this poem from a past column, writing that it was especially moving when she first read it. Her daughter had just left for Thailand, and Lynne missed her and worried about her decision to go there. Yet the “amazing truth” of Barnes’s words about her daughter caused her to reconsider. More amazing still, Lynne was 53 when she read “Peaches,” the very age Barnes is in the poem, and her daughter, like Barnes’s daughter, was 23.

Peaches
by Kate Barnes

Jenny, because you are twenty-three
(and my daughter),
you think you know everything;
and because I am fifty-three
(and your mother),
I think I know everything.
A week ago you picked up two green little peaches,
only half-grown and still hard,
from under the loaded peach tree
and put them on the kitchen window sill;
and I thought
(though I didn’t say a word):
they’re too small, they will just rot
but I won’t move them, Jenny put them there.

Now the summer is over and you are gone,
the mornings are cool, squashes conquer the garden,
the tree swallows have flown away, crickets sing—
and the sweet juice of your peaches runs down my chin.

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