

TAKE HEART

A Conversation in Poetry

*Edited & Introduced by Wesley McNair,
Maine Poet Laureate*

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.

Take Heart: A Conversation in Poetry is produced in collaboration with the Maine Writers & Publishers Alliance. Poem copyright © 1994 Kate Barnes. Reprinted from *Where the Deer Were*, David R. Godine, 1994, by permission of the Catherine B. Barnes Estate. Please note that the column is no longer accepting submissions; comments about it may be directed to special consultant to the poet laureate, Gibson Fay-LeBlanc, at mainepoetlaureate@gmail.com or 207-228-8263. *Take Heart: Poems from Maine*, an anthology collecting the first two years of this column, is now available from *Down East Books*.