

The Picture

Loudon Wainwright III

There are pictures on the piano,
Pictures of the family,
Mostly my kids but there's an old
Picture of you and me.
You were five and I was six
In 1952
That was forty years ago
How could it be true?

We were sitting outside drawing
At a table meant for cards,
And it must have been in autumn,
Falling leaves in the front yard,
With a shoe box full of crayons,
Full of colors oh so bright,
In a picture in a plastic frame,
A snapshot black and white.

You were looking at my paper,
Watching what I drew
It was natural: I was older,
Thirteen months more than you.
A brother and a sister,
A little boy and girl,
And whoever took that picture
Captured our own world.

A brother needs a sister
To watch what he can do,
To protect and to torture,
To boss around—it's true
But a brother will defend her
For a sister's love is pure,
Because she thinks he's wonderful
When he is not so sure.

In the picture there's a fender
Of our old Chevrolet
Or Pontiac—our dad would know,
Surely he could say
But dad is dead and we grow old
It's true that time flies by
And in forty years the world has changed
As well as you and I.