

Ode to los raspados
By Gary Soto

Papa says

They were

A shiny dime

When he was

Little

But for for me

His daughter

With hair that swings

Like jump ropes

They're free:

Papa drives a truck of helados and snow cones

The music of arrival

Playing block

After block

It's summer now

The sun is bright

As a hot dime.

You need five

Shiny ones

For a snow cone:

Strawberry and root beer

Grape that stains

The mouth with laughter,

Orange that's a tennis ball
Of snow
You could stab
With a red-striped straw
We have green lime
And dark-cola
And we have
An umbrella of five colors.
When the truck stops,
The kids come running.
Some barefoot,
Some in t-shirts
That end at the
Cyclone knot
Of belly buttons.
Some in swimming
Trunks and dripping
Water from a sprinkler
On a brown lawn.
I'm twelve going
On thirteen
And i know what's what
When it comes to snowcones
Packed with the flat
Of a hand and laced

With a gurgle
Of surgary water
I know the rounds
Of the neighborhood
I know the kids
Gina and ofelia
Juan and amanda
Shorty and sleepy
All running
With dimes pressed
To thier palms,
Salted from play
Or mowing the lawn
The dime of sun
Pays them back
With laughter
And the juice runs
To thier elbows
Sticky summer rain
That sweetens the streets.