

# 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 085

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

The Illinois poet, Lisel Mueller, is one of our country's finest writers, and the following lines, with their grace and humility, are representative of her poems of quiet celebration.

### In November

Outside the house the wind is howling  
and the trees are creaking horribly.  
This is an old story  
with its old beginning,  
as I lay me down to sleep.  
But when I wake up, sunlight  
has taken over the room.  
You have already made the coffee  
and the radio brings us music  
from a confident age. In the paper  
bad news is set in distant places.  
Whatever was bound to happen  
in my story did not happen.  
But I know there are rules that cannot be broken.  
Perhaps a name was changed.  
A small mistake. Perhaps  
a woman I do not know  
is facing the day with the heavy heart  
that, by all rights, should have been mine.

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