

# 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 159

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

Bad news all too often arrives with a ringing telephone, all too early in the morning. But sometimes it comes with less emphasis, by regular mail. Here Allan Peterson of Florida gets at the feelings of receiving bad news by letter, not by directly stating how he feels but by suddenly noticing the world that surrounds the moment when that news arrives.

### The Inevitable

To have that letter arrive  
was like the mist that took a meadow  
and revealed hundreds  
of small webs once invisible  
The inevitable often  
stands by plainly but unnoticed  
till it hands you a letter  
that says death and you notice  
the weed field had been  
reaching its many damp handkerchiefs  
all along

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