

AMERICAN LIFE IN POETRY

A FREE COLUMN FOR NEWSPAPERS BY TED KOOSER, POET LAUREATE OF THE UNITED STATES, 2004-2006
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BY TED KOOSER, U.S. POET LAUREATE, 2004-2006

When spring finally arrives, it can be fun to see what winter left behind, and Jeffrey Harrison of Massachusetts is doing just that in this amusing poem.

Mailboxes in Late Winter

It's a motley lot. A few still stand
at attention like sentries at the ends
of their driveways, but more lean
askance as if they'd just received a blow
to the head, and in fact they've received
many, all winter, from jets of wet snow
shooting off the curved, tapered blade
of the plow. Some look wobbly, cocked
at oddball angles or slumping forlornly
on precariously listing posts. One box
bows steeply forward, as if in disgrace, its door
lolling sideways, unhinged. Others are dented,
battered, streaked with rust, bandaged in duct tape,
crisscrossed with clothesline or bungee cords.
A few lie abashed in remnants of the very snow
that knocked them from their perches.
Another is wedged in the crook of a tree
like a birdhouse, its post shattered nearby.
I almost feel sorry for them, worn out
by the long winter, off-kilter, not knowing
what hit them, trying to hold themselves
together, as they wait for news from spring.

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