

AMERICAN LIFE IN POETRY

A FREE COLUMN FOR NEWSPAPERS BY TED KOOSER, THE POET LAUREATE OF THE UNITED STATES

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BY TED KOOSER, U.S. POET LAUREATE

Many of us have felt helpless when we've tried to assist friends who are dealing with the deaths of loved ones. Here the Kentucky poet and publisher, Jonathan Greene, conveys that feeling of inadequacy in a single sentence. The brevity of the poem reflects the measured and halting speech of people attempting to offer words of condolence:

At the Grave

As Death often
sidelines us

it is good
to contribute

even if so little
as to shovel

some earth
into earth.

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