

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

I live in Nebraska, out in the country where summers have two seasons, ticks and chiggers, and both the ticks and chiggers like nothing better than a sip of me. So how could I resist seeing what a tick might have to say for itself? Here's a poem by Jim Zimmerman, who lives in Pleasantville, New York, which when the ticks are hungry may not be so Pleasantville. His most recent book of poems is *Family Cookout* (The Comstock Review).

Listen to the Deer Tick Sing

I wait for you to come
to brush your shoe against
the blade of grass I'm sitting on
touch me with your hand
as you reach for one last
violet to take home

or pick up a worm to place
gracefully in the garden

even better if you lie
on a hillside to watch the sunset
or breathe in stars

I will feel your warmth, bury
my head next to that freckle
on your calf, that hair
on your forearm, or just behind
the lobe of your left ear

I promise not to take too much
blood into my swelling body

only what I think I need

and I will never
let you know I am here
though I will love you

deeply

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The introduction's author, Ted Kooser, served as United States Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress from 2004-2006. We do not accept unsolicited manuscripts.

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