

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

Jehanne Dubrow is the wife of a recently retired naval officer and has written very moving poems about their life. This fine love poem is from an as-yet unpublished manuscript. She lives in Texas and has, at quite a young age, already published eight collections of poems. The newest, due out this year, is *Simple Machines*, from University of Evansville Press.

Pledge

Now we are here at home, in the little nation
of our marriage, swearing allegiance to the table
we set for lunch or the windchime on the porch,

its easy dissonance. Even in our shared country,
the afternoon allots its golden lines
so that we're seated, both in shadow, on opposite

ends of a couch and two gray dogs between us.
There are acres of opinions in this house.
I make two cups of tea, two bowls of soup,

divide an apple equally. If I were a patriot,
I would call the blanket we spread across our bed
the only flag—some nights we've burned it

with our anger at each other. Some nights
we've welcomed the weight, a woolen scratch
on both our skins. My love, I am pledging

to this republic, for however long we stand,
I'll watch with you the rain's arrival in our yard.
We'll lift our faces, together, toward the glistening.

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