

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

Elsewhere in this newspaper you may find some advice for maintaining and repairing troubled relationships. Here, in a poem by Linda Pastan of Maryland, is one of those relationships in need of some help.

The Quarrel

If there were a monument
to silence, it would not be
the tree whose leaves
murmur continuously
among themselves;

nor would it be the pond
whose seeming stillness
is shattered
by the quicksilver
surfacing of fish.

If there were a monument
to silence, it would be you
standing so upright, so unforgiving,
your mute back deflecting
every word I say.

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