

# AMERICAN LIFE IN POETRY

A FREE COLUMN FOR NEWSPAPERS BY TED KOOSER, POET LAUREATE OF THE UNITED STATES, 2004-2006  
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## American Life in Poetry: Column 172

BY TED KOOSER, U.S. POET LAUREATE, 2004-2006

I don't often talk about poetic forms in this column, thinking that most of my readers aren't interested in how the clock works and would rather be given the time. But the following poem by Veronica Patterson of Colorado has a subtitle referring to a form, the senryu, and I thought it might be helpful to mention that the senryu is a Japanese form similar to haiku but dealing with people rather than nature. There; enough said. Now you can forget the form and enjoy the poem, which is a beautiful sketch of a marriage.

### Marry Me

*a senryu sequence*

when I come late to bed  
I move your leg flung over my side—  
that warm gate

nights you're not here  
I inch toward the middle  
of this boat, balancing

when I turn over in sleep  
you turn, I turn, you turn,  
I turn, you

some nights you tug the edge  
of my pillow under your cheek,  
look in my dream

pulling the white sheet  
over your bare shoulder  
I marry you again

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