

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

Most of us love to find things, and to discover a quarter on the sidewalk can make a whole day seem brighter. In this poem, Robert Wrigley, who lives in Idaho, finds what's left of a Bible, and describes it so well that we can almost feel it in our hands.

Finding a Bible in an Abandoned Cabin

Under dust plush as a moth's wing,
the book's leather cover still darkly shown,
and everywhere else but this spot was sodden
beneath the roof's unraveling shingles.
There was that back-of-the-neck lick of chill
and then, from my index finger, the book

opened like a blasted bird. In its box
of familiar and miraculous inks,
a construction of filaments and dust,
thoroughfares of worms, and a silage
of silverfish husks: in the autumn light,
eight hundred pages of perfect wordless lace.

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