

AMERICAN LIFE IN POETRY

A FREE COLUMN FOR NEWSPAPERS BY TED KOOSER, POET LAUREATE OF THE UNITED STATES, 2004-2006
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A wise friend told me that since the Age of Reason we've felt we had to explain everything, and that as a result we've forgotten the value of mystery. Here's a poem by Lisel Mueller that celebrates mystery. Mueller is a Pulitzer Prize winning poet from Illinois.

Sometimes, When the Light

Sometimes, when the light strikes at odd angles
and pulls you back into childhood

and you are passing a crumbling mansion
completely hidden behind old willows

or an empty convent guarded by hemlocks
and giant firs standing hip to hip,

you know again that behind that wall,
under the uncut hair of the willows

something secret is going on,
so marvelous and dangerous

that if you crawled through and saw,
you would die, or be happy forever.

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