

# POETRY OUT LOUD



## The Illiterate

by William Meredith

Touching your goodness, I am like a man  
Who turns a letter over in his hand  
And you might think this was because the hand  
Was unfamiliar but, truth is, the man  
Has never had a letter from anyone;  
And now he is both afraid of what it means  
And ashamed because he has no other means  
To find out what it says than to ask someone.

His uncle could have left the farm to him,  
Or his parents died before he sent them word,  
Or the dark girl changed and want him for beloved.  
Afraid and letter-proud, he keeps it with him.  
What would you call his feeling for the words  
That keep him rich and orphaned and beloved?

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*Poetry Out Loud is sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation.  
It is a partnership with the Alabama State Council on the Arts and the Alabama Arts Alliance.  
Original Poetry State Awards are provided by the Alabama Writer's Forum.*



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