

The Book

PETER VERTACNIK

There's one book in his house he hasn't read,
its pages yellowing, its cover dirty.
This book lies next to him each night in bed.

Keeping it close, he feels some hunger fed,
as when a calm voice whispers, *Don't be worried.*
There's one book in his house he hasn't read

but clings to, like a skin he's scared to shed
(and won't, just yet, refusing to be hurried).
This book lies next to him each night. In bed

it's splayed across his chest, set near his head,
or nudging his back as he wakes, still weary.
There's one book in his house he hasn't read;

most nights he dwells on that last fight instead,
parsing every phrase. Since she remarried,
this book lies next to him each night in bed,

the bed where once she lay, bent limbs outspread
and warm, where even sleep now leaves him harried.
There's one book in his house he hasn't read;
this book lies next to him each night in bed.

