

# 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 317

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

Our wars come home, sooner or later. Judith Harris lives in Washington, D.C., and in this poem gives us a veteran of Iraq back among the ordinary activities of American life.

### End of Market Day

At five, the market is closing.  
Burdock roots, parsley, and rutabagas  
are poured back into the trucks.  
The antique dealer breaks down his tables.

Light dappled, in winter parkas  
shoppers hunt for bargains:  
a teapot, or costume jewelry,  
a grab bag of rubbishy vegetables for stew.

Now twilight, the farmer's wife  
bundled in her tweed coat and pocket apron  
counts out her cash from a metal box,  
and nods to her grown-up son

back from a tour in Iraq,  
as he waits in the station wagon  
with the country music turned way up,  
his prosthetic leg gunning the engine.

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