

# 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 446

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

Anyone who has followed this column since its introduction in 2005 knows how much I like poems that describe places. Here's one by Joseph Hutchison, who lives in Colorado. This is the kind of scene that Edward Hopper might have painted. I especially love the way Hutchison captures the buzz of the neon sign.

### Winter Sunrise Outside a Café Near Butte, Montana

A crazed sizzle of blazing bees  
in the word EAT. Beyond it,

thousands of stars have faded  
like deserted flowers in the thin

light washing up in the distance,  
flooding the snowy mountains

bluff by bluff. Moments later,  
the sign blinks, winks dark,

and a white-aproned cook—  
surfacing in the murky sheen

of the window—leans awhile  
like a cut lily . . . staring out

into the famished blankness  
he knows he must go home to.

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