

Classic Poetry Series

Charles Bukowski

- poems -

Publication Date:

2004

Publisher:

PoemHunter.Com - The World's Poetry Archive

16-bit Intel 8088 chip

with an Apple Macintosh
you can't run Radio Shack programs
in its disc drive.
nor can a Commodore 64
drive read a file
you have created on an
IBM Personal Computer.
both Kaypro and Osborne computers use
the CP/M operating system
but can't read each other's
handwriting
for they format (write
on) discs in different
ways.
the Tandy 2000 runs MS-DOS but
can't use most programs produced for
the IBM Personal Computer
unless certain
bits and bytes are
altered
but the wind still blows over
Savannah
and in the Spring
the turkey buzzard struts and
flounces before his
hens.

Charles Bukowski

40,000

at the track today,
Father's Day,
each paid admission was
entitled to a wallet
and each contained a
little surprise.

Charles Bukowski

8 Count

from my bed
I watch
3 birds
on a telephone
wire.
one flies
off.
then
another.
one is left,
then
it too
is gone.
my typewriter is
tombstone
still.
and I am
reduced to bird
watching.
just thought I'd
let you
know,
fucker.

Charles Bukowski

A Challenge To The Dark

shot in the eye
shot in the brain
shot in the ass
shot like a flower in the dance

Charles Bukowski

A Following

the phone rang at 1:30 a.m.
and it was a man from Denver:

Charles Bukowski

A Man

Charles Bukowski

A Radio With Guts

it was on the 2nd floor on Coronado Street
I used to get drunk
and throw the radio through the window
while it was playing, and, of course,
it would break the glass in the window
and the radio would sit there on the roof
still playing
and I'd tell my woman,
"Ah, what a marvelous radio!"
the next morning I'd take the window
off the hinges
and carry it down the street
to the glass man
who would put in another pane.
I kept throwing that radio through the window
each time I got drunk
and it would sit there on the roof
still playing-
a magic radio
a radio with guts,
and each morning I'd take the window
back to the glass man.
I don't remember how it ended exactly
though I do remember
we finally moved out.
there was a woman downstairs who worked in
the garden in her bathing suit,
she really dug with that trowel
and she put her behind up in the air
and I used to sit in the window
and watch the sun shine all over that thing
while the music played.

Charles Bukowski

a smile to remember

we had goldfish and they circled around and around
in the bowl on the table near the heavy drapes
covering the picture window and
my mother, always smiling, wanting us all
to be happy, told me, "be happy Henry!"
and she was right: it's better to be happy if you
can
but my father continued to beat her and me several times a week while
raging inside his 6-foot-two frame because he couldn't
understand what was attacking him from within.

my mother, poor fish,
wanting to be happy, beaten two or three times a
week, telling me to be happy: "Henry, smile!
why don't you ever smile?"

and then she would smile, to show me how, and it was the
saddest smile I ever saw

one day the goldfish died, all five of them,
they floated on the water, on their sides, their
eyes still open,
and when my father got home he threw them to the cat
there on the kitchen floor and we watched as my mother
smiled

Charles Bukowski

Alone With Everybody

the flesh covers the bone
and they put a mind
in there and
sometimes a soul,
and the women break
vases against the walls
and the men drink too
much
and nobody finds the
one
but keep
looking
crawling in and out
of beds.
flesh covers
the bone and the
flesh searches
for more than
flesh.

there's no chance
at all:
we are all trapped
by a singular
fate.

nobody ever finds
the one.

the city dumps fill
the junkyards fill
the madhouses fill
the hospitals fill
the graveyards fill

nothing else
fills.

Anonymous submission.

Charles Bukowski

An Almost Made Up Poem

I see you drinking at a fountain with tiny
blue hands, no, your hands are not tiny
they are small, and the fountain is in France
where you wrote me that last letter and
I answered and never heard from you again.
you used to write insane poems about
ANGELS AND GOD, all in upper case, and you
knew famous artists and most of them
were your lovers, and I wrote back, it's all right,
go ahead, enter their lives, I'm not jealous
because we've never met. we got close once in
New Orleans, one half block, but never met, never
touched. so you went with the famous and wrote
about the famous, and, of course, what you found out
is that the famous are worried about
their fame & not the beautiful young girl in bed
with them, who gives them that, and then awakens
in the morning to write upper case poems about
ANGELS AND GOD. we know God is dead, they told
us, but listening to you I wasn't sure. maybe
it was the upper case. you were one of the
best female poets and I told the publishers,
editors, & her, print her, she's mad but she's
magic. there's no lie in her fire. I loved you
like a man loves a woman he never touches, only
writes to, keeps little photographs of. I would have
loved you more if I had sat in a small room rolling a
cigarette and listened to you piss in the bathroom,
but that didn't happen. your letters got sadder.
your lovers betrayed you. kid, I wrote back, all
lovers betray. it didn't help. you said
you had a crying bench and it was by a bridge and
the bridge was over a river and you sat on the crying
bench every night and wept for the lovers who had
hurt and forgotten you. I wrote back but never
heard again. a friend wrote me of your suicide
3 or 4 months after it happened. if I had met you
I would probably have been unfair to you or you
to me. it was best like this.

Charles Bukowski

And The Moon And The Stars And The World

Long walks at night--
that's what good for the soul:
peeking into windows
watching tired housewives
trying to fight off
their beer-maddened husbands.

Charles Bukowski

Another Day

having the low down blues and going
into a restraunt to eat.
you sit at a table.
the waitress smiles at you.
she's dumpy. her ass is too big.
she radiates kindess and symphaty.
live with her 3 months and a man would no real agony.
o.k., you'll tip her 15 percent.
you order a turkey sandwich and a
beer.
the man at the table across from you
has watery blue eyes and
a head like an elephant.
at a table further down are 3 men
with very tiny heads
and long necks
like ostiches.
they talk loudly of land development.
why, you think, did I ever come
in here when I have the low-down
blues?
then the the waitress comes back eith the sandwich
and she asks you if there will be anything
else?
snd you tell her, no no, this will be
fine.
then somebody behind you laughs.
it's a cork laugh filled with sand and
broken glass.

you begin eating the sandwhich.

it's something.
it's a minor, difficult,
sensible action
like composing a popular song
to make a 14-year old
weep.
you order another beer.
jesus, look at that guy
his hands hang down almost to his knees and he's
whistling.
well, time to get out.
pivk up the bill.
tip.
go to the register.
pay.
pick up a toothpick.
go out the door.
your car is still there.
and there are 3 men with heads
and necks

like ostriches all getting into one
car.
they each have a toothpick and now
they are talking about women.
they drive away first
they drive away fast.
they're best i guess.
it's an unberably hot day.
there's a first-stage smog alert.
all the birds and plants are dead
or dying.

you start the engine.

Anonymous submission.

Charles Bukowski

Are You Drinking?

washed-up, on shore, the old yellow notebook
out again
I write from the bed
as I did last
year.
will see the doctor,
Monday.
"yes, doctor, weak legs, vertigo, head-
aches and my back
hurts."
"are you drinking?" he will ask.
"are you getting your
exercise, your
vitamins?"
I think that I am just ill
with life, the same stale yet
fluctuating
factors.
even at the track
I watch the horses run by
and it seems
meaningless.
I leave early after buying tickets on the
remaining races.
"taking off?" asks the motel
clerk.
"yes, it's boring,"
I tell him.
"If you think it's boring
out there," he tells me, "you oughta be
back here."
so here I am
propped up against my pillows
again
just an old guy
just an old writer
with a yellow
notebook.
something is
walking across the
floor
toward
me.
oh, it's just
my cat
this
time.

Charles Bukowski

As The Poems Go

as the poems go into the thousands you
realize that you've created very
little.

Charles Bukowski

As The Sparrow

To give life you must take life,
and as our grief falls flat and hollow
upon the billion-blooded sea
I pass upon serious inward-breaking shoals rimmed
with white-legged, white-bellied rotting creatures
lengthily dead and rioting against surrounding scenes.
Dear child, I only did to you what the sparrow
did to you; I am old when it is fashionable to be
young; I cry when it is fashionable to laugh.
I hated you when it would have taken less courage
to love.

Charles Bukowski

back to the machine gun

I awaken about noon and go out to get the mail
in my old torn bathrobe.
I'm hung over
hair down in my eyes
barefoot
gingerly walking on the small sharp rocks
in my path
still afraid of pain behind my four-day beard.

the young housewife next door shakes a rug
out of her window and sees me:
"hello, Hank!"

god damn! it's almost like being shot in the ass
with a .22

"hello," I say
gathering up my Visa card bill, my Pennysaver coupons,
a Dept. of Water and Power past-due notice,
a letter from the mortgage people
plus a demand from the Weed Abatement Department
giving me 30 days to clean up my act.

I mince back again over the small sharp rocks
thinking, maybe I'd better write something tonight,
they all seem
to be closing in.

there's only one way to handle those motherfuckers.

the night harness races will have to wait.

Charles Bukowski

Be Kind

we are always asked
to understand the other person's
viewpoint
no matter how
out-dated
foolish or
obnoxious.

Charles Bukowski

Big Night On The Town

drunk on the dark streets of some city,
it's night, you're lost, where's your
room?

you enter a bar to find yourself,
order scotch and water.
damned bar's sloppy wet, it soaks
part of one of your shirt
sleeves.

It's a clip joint-the scotch is weak.
you order a bottle of beer.

Madame Death walks up to you
wearing a dress.

she sits down, you buy her a
beer, she stinks of swamps, presses
a leg against you.

the bar tender sneers.

you've got him worried, he doesn't
know if you're a cop, a killer, a
madman or an
Idiot.

you ask for a vodka.

you pour the vodka into the top of
the beer bottle.

It's one a.m. In a dead cow world.
you ask her how much for head,
drink everything down, it tastes
like machine oil.

you leave Madame Death there,
you leave the sneering bartender
there.

you have remembered where
your room is.
the room with the full bottle of
wine on the dresser.
the room with the dance of the
roaches.
Perfection in the Star Turd
where love died
laughing.

Charles Bukowski

Bluebird

there's a bluebird in my heart that
wants to get out
but I'm too tough for him,
I say, stay in there, I'm not going
to let anybody see
you.

Charles Bukowski

Carson McCullers

she died of alcoholism
wrapped in a blanket
on a deck chair
on an ocean
steamer.

all her books of
terrified loneliness

all her books about
the cruelty
of loveless love

were all that was left
of her

as the strolling vacationer
discovered her body

notified the captain

and she was quickly dispatched
to somewhere else
on the ship

as everything
continued just
as
she had written it

Charles Bukowski

Cause And Effect

the best often die by their own hand
just to get away,
and those left behind
can never quite understand
why anybody
would ever want to
get away
from
them

Charles Bukowski

close to greatness

at one stage in my life
I met a man who claimed to have
visited Pound at St. Elizabeths.

then I met a woman who not only
claimed to have visited
E.P.
but also to have made love
to him—she even showed
me
certain sections in the
Cantos
where Ezra was supposed to have
mentioned
her.

so there was this man and
this woman
and the woman told me
that Pound had never
mentioned a visit from this
man
and the man claimed that the
lady had had nothing to do
with the
master
that she was a
charlatan

and since I wasn't a
Poundian scholar
I didn't know who to
believe
but one thing I do
know: when a man is
living
many claim relationships
that are hardly
so
and after he dies, well,
then it's everybody's
party.

my guess is that Pound
knew neither the lady or the
gentleman

or if he knew
one
or if he knew
both

it was a shameful waste of
madhouse
time.

Charles Bukowski

Confession

waiting for death
like a cat
that will jump on the
bed

I am so very sorry for
my wife

she will see this
stiff
white
body
shake it once, then
maybe
again

"Hank!"

Hank won't
answer.

it's not my death that
worries me, it's my wife
left with this
pile of
nothing.

I want to
let her know
though
that all the nights
sleeping
beside her

even the useless
arguments
were things
ever splendid

and the hard
words
I ever feared to
say
can now be
said:

I love
you.

Charles Bukowski

Consummation Of Grief

I even hear the mountains
the way they laugh
up and down their blue sides
and down in the water
the fish cry
and the water
is their tears.
I listen to the water
on nights I drink away
and the sadness becomes so great
I hear it in my clock
it becomes knobs upon my dresser
it becomes paper on the floor
it becomes a shoehorn
a laundry ticket
it becomes
cigarette smoke
climbing a chapel of dark vines. . .
it matters little
very little love is not so bad
or very little life
what counts
is waiting on walls
I was born for this
I was born to hustle roses down the avenues of the dead.

Charles Bukowski

Cows In Art Class

good weather
is like
good women-
it doesn't always happen
and when it does
it doesn't
always last.
man is
more stable:
if he's bad
there's more chance
he'll stay that way,
or if he's good
he might hang
on,
but a woman
is changed
by
children
age
diet
conversation
sex
the moon
the absence or
presence of sun
or good times.
a woman must be nursed
into subsistence
by love
where a man can become
stronger
by being hated.

Charles Bukowski

Curtain

the final curtain on one of the longest running
musicals ever, some people claim to have
seen it over one hundred times.

I saw it on the tv news, that final curtain:
flowers, cheers, tears, a thunderous
accolade.

I have not seen this particular musical
but I know if I had that I wouldn't have
been able to bear it, it would have
sickened me.

trust me on this, the world and its
peoples and its artful entertainment has
done very little for me, only to me.

still, let them enjoy one another, it will
keep them from my door
and for this, my own thunderous
accolade.

Charles Bukowski

Cut While Shaving

It's never quite right, he said, the way people look,
the way the music sounds, the way the words are
written.

It's never quite right, he said, all the things we are
taught, all the loves we chase, all the deaths we
die, all the lives we live,
they are never quite right,
they are hardly close to right,
these lives we live
one after the other,
piled there as history,
the waste of the species,
the crushing of the light and the way,
it's not quite right,
it's hardly right at all
he said.

don't I know it? I
answered.

I walked away from the mirror.
it was morning, it was afternoon, it was
night

nothing changed
it was locked in place.
something flashed, something broke, something
remained.

I walked down the stairway and
into it.

Submitted by Tom

Charles Bukowski

Death Wants More Death

death wants more death, and its webs are full:
I remember my father's garage, how child-like
I would brush the corpses of flies
from the windows they thought were escape-
their sticky, ugly, vibrant bodies
shouting like dumb crazy dogs against the glass
only to spin and flit
in that second larger than hell or heaven
onto the edge of the ledge,
and then the spider from his dank hole
nervous and exposed
the puff of body swelling
hanging there
not really quite knowing,
and then knowing-
something sending it down its string,
the wet web,
toward the weak shield of buzzing,
the pulsing;
a last desperate moving hair-leg
there against the glass
there alive in the sun,
spun in white;
and almost like love:
the closing over,
the first hushed spider-sucking:
filling its sack
upon this thing that lived;
crouching there upon its back
drawing its certain blood
as the world goes by outside
and my temples scream
and I hurl the broom against them:
the spider dull with spider-anger
still thinking of its prey
and waving an amazed broken leg;
the fly very still,
a dirty speck stranded to straw;
I shake the killer loose
and he walks lame and peeved
towards some dark corner
but I intercept his dawdling
his crawling like some broken hero,
and the straws smash his legs
now waving
above his head
and looking
looking for the enemy
and somewhat valiant,
dying without apparent pain
simply crawling backward
piece by piece

leaving nothing there
until at last the red gut sack
splashes
its secrets,
and I run child-like
with God's anger a step behind,
back to simple sunlight,
wondering
as the world goes by
with curled smile
if anyone else
saw or sensed my crime

Charles Bukowski

Decline

naked along the side of the house,
8 a.m., spreading sesame seed oil
over my body, Jesus, have I come
to this?
I once battled in dark alleys for a
laugh.
now I'm not laughing.
I splash myself with oil and wonder,
how many years do you want?
how many days?
my blood is soiled and a dark
angel sits in my brain.
things are made of something and
go to nothing.
I understand the fall of cities, of
nations.
a small plane passes overhead.
I look upward as if it made sense to
look upward.
it's true, the sky has rotted:
it won't be long for any of
us.

Charles Bukowski

Eat Your Heart Out

I've come by, she says, to tell you
that this is it. I'm not kidding, it's
over. this is it.
I sit on the couch watching her arrange
her long red hair before my bedroom
mirror.
she pulls her hair up and
piles it on top of her head-
she lets her eyes look at
my eyes-
then she drops her hair and
lets it fall down in front of her face.
we go to bed and I hold her
speechlessly from the back
my arm around her neck
I touch her wrists and hands
feel up to
her elbows
no further.
she gets up.
this is it, she says,
this will do. well,
I'm going.
I get up and walk her
to the door
just as she leaves
she says,
I want you to buy me
some high-heeled shoes
with tall thin spikes,
black high-heeled shoes.
no, I want them
red.
I watch her walk down the cement walk
under the trees
she walks all right and
as the pointsettias drip in the sun
I close the door.

Charles Bukowski

Eulogy To A Hell Of A Dame

some dogs who sleep At night
must dream of bones
and I remember your bones
in flesh
and best
in that dark green dress
and those high-heeled bright
black shoes,
you always cursed when you drank,
your hair coming down you
wanted to explode out of
what was holding you:
rotten memories of a
rotten
past, and
you finally got
out
by dying,
leaving me with the
rotten
present;
you've been dead
28 years
yet I remember you
better than any of
the rest;
you were the only one
who understood
the futility of the
arrangement of
life;
all the others were only
displeased with
trivial segments,
carped
nonsensically about
nonsense;
Jane, you were
killed by
knowing too much.
here's a drink
to your bones
that
this dog
still
dreams about.

Charles Bukowski

Finish

We are like roses that have never bothered to
bloom when we should have bloomed and
it is as if
the sun has become disgusted with
waiting

Charles Bukowski

finished?

the critics now have me
drinking champagne and
driving a BMW
and also married to a
socialite from
Philadelphia's Main Line
which of course is going to prevent me
from writing my earthy
and grubby stuff.
and they might be
right,
I could be getting to be
more like them,
and that's as close to
death as you can
get.

we'll see.
but don't bury me yet.
don't worry if I drink with
Sean Penn.
just measure the poems
as they come off the
keyboard.
listen only to them.
after this long fight
I have no intention of
quitting short.
or late.
or satisfied.

Charles Bukowski

Flophouse

you haven't lived
until you've been in a
flophouse
with nothing but one
light bulb
and 56 men
squeezed together
on cots
with everybody
snoring
at once
and some of those
snores
so
deep and
gross and
unbelievable-
dark
snotty
gross
subhuman
wheezings
from hell
itself.
your mind
almost breaks
under those
death-like
sounds
and the
intermingling
odors:
hard
unwashed socks
pissed and
shitted
underwear
and over it all
slowly circulating
air
much like that
emanating from
uncovered
garbage
cans.
and those
bodies
in the dark
fat and
thin
and
bent

some
legless
armless
some
mindless
and worst of
all:
the total
absence of
hope
it shrouds
them
covers them
totally.
it's not
bearable.
you get
up
go out
walk the
streets
up and
down
sidewalks
past buildings
around the
corner
and back
up
the same street
thinking
those men
were all
children
once
what has happened
to
them?
and what has
happened
to
me?
it's dark
and cold
out
here.

Charles Bukowski

For Jane

225 days under grass
and you know more than I.
they have long taken your blood,
you are a dry stick in a basket.
is this how it works?
in this room
the hours of love
still make shadows.

when you left
you took almost
everything.
I kneel in the nights
before tigers
that will not let me be.

what you were
will not happen again.
the tigers have found me
and I do not care.

Charles Bukowski

For Jane: With All The Love I Had, Which Was Not Enough

I pick up the skirt,
I pick up the sparkling beads
in black,
this thing that moved once
around flesh,
and I call God a liar,
I say anything that moved
like that
or knew
my name
could never die
in the common verity of dying,
and I pick
up her lovely
dress,
all her loveliness gone,
and I speak to all the gods,
Jewish gods, Christ-gods,
chips of blinking things,
idols, pills, bread,
fathoms, risks,
knowledgeable surrender,
rats in the gravy of 2 gone quite mad
without a chance,
hummingbird knowledge, hummingbird chance,
I lean upon this,
I lean on all of this
and I know:
her dress upon my arm:
but
they will not
give her back to me.

Charles Bukowski

For Jane: With All the Love I Had, Which Was Not Enough:

I pick up the skirt,
I pick up the sparkling beads
in black,
this thing that moved once
around flesh,
and I call God a liar,
I say anything that moved
like that
or knew
my name
could never die
in the common verity of dying,
and I pick
up her lovely
dress,
all her loveliness gone,
and I speak to all the gods,
Jewish gods, Christ-gods,
chips of blinking things,
idols, pills, bread,
fathoms, risks,
knowledgeable surrender,
rats in the gravy of two gone quite mad
without a chance,
hummingbird knowledge, hummingbird chance,
I lean upon this,
I lean on all of this
and I know
her dress upon my arm
but
they will not
give her back to me.

Charles Bukowski

Freedom

he drank wine all night of the
28th, and he kept thinking of her:
the way she walked and talked and loved
the way she told him things that seemed true
but were not, and he knew the color of each
of her dresses
and her shoes-he knew the stock and curve of
each heel
as well as the leg shaped by it.

and she was out again and when he came home, and
she'd come back with that special stink again,
and she did
she came in at 3 a.m in the morning
filthy like a dung eating swine
and
he took out a butchers knife
and she screamed
backing into the rooming house wall
still pretty somehow
in spite of love's reek
and he finished the glass of wine.

that yellow dress
his favorite
and she screamed again.

and he took up the knife
and unhooked his belt
and tore away the cloth before her
and cut off his balls.

and carried them in his hands
like apricots
and flushed them down the
toilet bowl
and she kept screaming
as the room became red

GOD O GOD!
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?

and he sat there holding 3 towels
between his legs
no caring now whether she left or
stayed
wore yellow or green or
anything at all.

and one hand holding and one hand
lifting he poured
another wine

Charles Bukowski

Friends Within The Darkness

I can remember starving in a
small room in a strange city
shades pulled down, listening to
classical music
I was young I was so young it hurt like a knife
inside
because there was no alternative except to hide as long
as possible--
not in self-pity but with dismay at my limited chance:
trying to connect.

the old composers -- Mozart, Bach, Beethoven,
Brahms were the only ones who spoke to me and
they were dead.

finally, starved and beaten, I had to go into
the streets to be interviewed for low-paying and
monotonous
jobs
by strange men behind desks
men without eyes men without faces
who would take away my hours
break them
piss on them.

now I work for the editors the readers the
critics

but still hang around and drink with
Mozart, Bach, Brahms and the
Bee
some buddies
some men
sometimes all we need to be able to continue alone
are the dead
rattling the walls
that close us in.

Anonymous submission.

Charles Bukowski

gamblers all

sometimes you climb out of bed in the morning and you think,
<i>I'm not going to make it</i>, but you laugh inside
remembering all the times you've felt that way, and
you walk to the bathroom, do your toilet, see that face
in the mirror, oh my oh my oh my, but you comb your hair anyway,
get into your street clothes, feed the cats, fetch the
newspaper of horror, place it on the coffee table, kiss your
wife goodbye, and then you are backing the car out into life itself,
like millions of others you enter the arena once more.

you are on the freeway threading through traffic now,
moving both towards something and towards nothing at all as you punch
the radio on and get Mozart, which is something, and you will somehow
get through the slow days and the busy days and the dull
days and the hateful days and the rare days, all both so delightful
and so disappointing because
we are all so alike and so different.

you find the turn-off, drive through the most dangerous
part of town, feel momentarily wonderful as Mozart works
his way into your brain and slides down along your bones and
out through your shoes.

it's been a tough fight worth fighting
as we all drive along
betting on another day.

Charles Bukowski

Girl In A Miniskirt Reading The Bible Outside My Window

Sunday, I am eating a
grapefruit, church is over at the Russian
Orthodox to the
west.

she is dark
of Eastern descent,
large brown eyes look up from the Bible
then down. a small red and black
Bible, and as she reads
her legs keep moving, moving,
she is doing a slow rythmic dance
reading the Bible. . .

long gold earrings;
2 gold bracelets on each arm,
and it's a mini-suit, I suppose,
the cloth hugs her body,
the lightest of tans is that cloth,
she twists this way and that,
long yellow legs warm in the sun. . .

there is no escaping her being
there is no desire to. . .

my radio is playing symphonic music
that she cannot hear
but her movements coincide exactly
to the rythms of the
symphony. . .

she is dark, she is dark
she is reading about God.
I am God.

Charles Bukowski

having the flu and with nothing else to do

I read a book about John Dos Passos and according to
the book once radical-communist
John ended up in the Hollywood Hills living off investments
and reading the
<i>Wall Street Journal </i>

this seems to happen all too often.

what hardly ever happens is
a man going from being a young conservative to becoming an
old wild-ass radical

however:
young conservatives always seem to become old
conservatives.
it's a kind of lifelong mental vapor-lock.

but when a young radical ends up an
old radical
the critics
and the conservatives
treat him as if he escaped from a mental
institution.

such is our politics and you can have it
all.

keep it.

sail it up your
ass.

Charles Bukowski

hello, how are you?

this fear of being what they are:
dead.

at least they are not out on the street, they
are careful to stay indoors, those
pasty mad who sit alone before their tv sets,
their lives full of canned, mutilated laughter.

their ideal neighborhood
of parked cars
of little green lawns
of little homes
the little doors that open and close
as their relatives visit
throughout the holidays
the doors closing
behind the dying who die so slowly
behind the dead who are still alive
in your quiet average neighborhood
of winding streets
of agony
of confusion
of horror
of fear
of ignorance.

a dog standing behind a fence.

a man silent at the window.

Charles Bukowski

Here I Am ...

drunk again at 3 a.m. at the end of my 2nd bottle
of wine, I have typed from a dozen to 15 pages of
poesy
an old man
maddened for the flesh of young girls in this
dwindling twilight
liver gone
kidneys going
pancrea pooped
top-floor blood pressure

Charles Bukowski

His Wife, The Painter

There are sketches on the walls of men and women and ducks,
and outside a large green bus swerves through traffic like
insanity sprung from a waving line; Turgenev, Turgenev,
says the radio, and Jane Austin, Jane Austin, too.
"I am going to do her portrait on the 28th, while you are
at work."

Charles Bukowski

Hooray Say The Roses

hooray say the roses, today is blamesday
and we are red as blood.

hooray say the roses, today is Wednesday
and we bloom wher soldiers fell
and lovers too,
and the snake at the word.

hooray say the roses, darkness comes
all at once, like lights gone out,
the sun leaves dark continents
and rows of stone.

hooray say the roses, cannons and spires,
birds, bees, bombers, today is Friday
the hand holding a medal out the window,
a moth going by, half a mile an hour,
hooray hooray
hooray say the roses
we have empires on our stems,
the sun moves the mouth:
hooray hooray hooray
and that is why you like us.

Submitted by .eve.

Charles Bukowski

Hot

she was hot, she was so hot
I didn't want anybody else to have her,
and if I didn't get home on time
she'd be gone, and I couldn't bear that-
I'd go mad. . .
it was foolish I know, childish,
but I was caught in it, I was caught.
I delivered all the mail
and then Henderson put me on the night pickup run
in an old army truck,
the damn thing began to heat halfway through the run
and the night went on
me thinking about my hot Miriam
and jumping in and out of the truck
filling mailsacks
the engine continuing to heat up
the temperature needle was at the top
HOT HOT
like Miriam.
leaped in and out
3 more pickups and into the station
I'd be, my car
waiting to get me to Miriam who sat on my blue couch
with scotch on the rocks
crossing her legs and swinging her ankles
like she did,
2 more stops. . .
the truck stalled at a traffic light, it was hell
kicking it over
again. . .
I had to be home by 8,8 was the deadline for Miriam.
I made the last pickup and the truck stalled at a signal
1/2 block from the station. . .
it wouldn't start, it couldn't start. . .
I locked the doors, pulled the key and ran down to the
station. . .
I threw the keys down. . .signed out. . .
your goddamned truck is stalled at the signal,
I shouted,
Pico and Western. . .
. . .I ran down the hall,put the key into the door,
opened it. . .her drinking glass was there, and a note:

Charles Bukowski

How Is Your Heart?

during my worst times
on the park benches
in the jails
or living with
whores
I always had this certain
contentment-
I wouldn't call it
happiness-
it was more of an inner
balance
that settled for
whatever was occurring
and it helped in the
factories
and when relationships
went wrong
with the
girls.

Charles Bukowski

I like your books

In the betting line the other
day
man behind me asked,
"are you Henry
Chinaski?"

"uh huh," I answered.

"I like your books," he went
on.

"thanks," I answered.

"who do you like in this
race?" he asked.

"uh uh," I answered.

"I like the 4 horse," he
told me.

I made my bet and went back
to my seat....

the next race I am standing in
line and here is this same man
standing behind me
again.
there are at least 50 lines at
the windows but
he has to find mine
again.

"I think this race favors the
closers," he said to the back of
my neck. "the track looks
heavy."

"listen," I said, not looking
around, "it's the kiss of death to
talk about horses at the
track..."

"what kind of rule is that?"
he asked. "God doesn't make
rules..."

I turned around and looked at him:
"maybe not, but I
do."

after the next race

I got in line, glanced behind
me:
he was not there:

lost another reader.

I lose 2 or 3 each
week.

fine.

let 'em go back to
Kafka.

Charles Bukowski

I Made A Mistake

I reached up into the top of the closet
and took out a pair of blue panties
and showed them to her and
asked "are these yours?"

Charles Bukowski

I Met A Genius

I met a genius on the train
today
about 6 years old,
he sat beside me
and as the train
ran down along the coast
we came to the ocean
and then he looked at me
and said,
it's not pretty.

Charles Bukowski

I'm In Love

she's young, she said,
but look at me,
I have pretty ankles,
and look at my wrists, I have pretty
wrists
o my god,
I thought it was all working,
and now it's her again,
every time she phones you go crazy,
you told me it was over
you told me it was finished,
listen, I've lived long enough to become a
good woman,
why do you need a bad woman?
you need to be tortured, don't you?
you think life is rotten if somebody treats you
rotten it all fits,
doesn't it?
tell me, is that it? do you want to be treated like a
piece of shit?
and my son, my son was going to meet you.
I told my son
and I dropped all my lovers.
I stood up in a cafe and screamed
I'M IN LOVE,
and now you've made a fool of me. . .
I'm sorry, I said, I'm really sorry.
hold me, she said, will you please hold me?
I've never been in one of these things before, I said,
these triangles. . .
she got up and lit a cigarette, she was trembling all
over. she paced up and down, wild and crazy. she had
a small body. her arms were thin, very thin and when
she screamed and started beating me I held her
wrists and then I got it through the eyes: hatred,
centuries deep and true. I was wrong and graceless and
sick. all the things I had learned had been wasted.
there was no creature living as foul as I
and all my poems were
false.

Charles Bukowski

it was just a little while ago

almost dawn
blackbirds on the telephone wire
waiting
as I eat yesterday's
forgotten sandwich
at 6 a.m.
an a quiet Sunday morning.

one shoe in the corner
standing upright
the other laying on it's
side.

yes, some lives were made to be
wasted.

Charles Bukowski

It's Ours

there is always that space there
just before they get to us
that space
that fine relaxer
the breather
while say
flopping on a bed
thinking of nothing
or say
pouring a glass of water from the
spigot
while entranced by
nothing

that
gentle pure
space

it's worth

centuries of
existence

say

just to scratch your neck
while looking out the window at
a bare branch

that space
there
before they get to us
ensures
that
when they do
they won't
get it all

ever.

Anonymous submission.

Charles Bukowski

Jane Icin (For Jane - In Turkish)

cimen altinda gecen 225 gunden sonra benden daha cok sey biliyor olmalisin.

Charles Bukowski

Layover

Making love in the sun, in the morning sun
in a hotel room
above the alley
where poor men poke for bottles;
making love in the sun
making love by a carpet redder than our blood,
making love while the boys sell headlines
and Cadillacs,
making love by a photograph of Paris
and an open pack of Chesterfields,
making love while other men- poor folks-
work.

That moment- to this. . .
may be years in the way they measure,
but it's only one sentence back in my mind-
there are so many days
when living stops and pulls up and sits
and waits like a train on the rails.
I pass the hotel at 8
and at 5; there are cats in the alleys
and bottles and bums,
and I look up at the window and think,
I no longer know where you are,
and I walk on and wonder where
the living goes
when it stops.

Charles Bukowski

Let It Enfold You

either peace or happiness,
let it enfold you

when I was a young man
I felt these things were
dumb, unsophisticated.
I had bad blood, a twisted
mind, a precarious
upbringing.

I was hard as granite, I
leered at the
sun.
I trusted no man and
especially no
woman.

I was living a hell in
small rooms, I broke
things, smashed things,
walked through glass,
cursed.
I challenged everything,
was continually being
evicted, jailed, in and
out of fights, in and out
of my mind.
women were something
to screw and rail
at, I had no male
freinds,

I changed jobs and
cities, I hated holidays,
babies, history,
newspapers, museums,
grandmothers,
marriage, movies,
spiders, garbagemen,
english accents, spain,
france, italy, walnuts and
the color
orange.
algebra angered me,
opera sickened me,
charlie chaplin was a
fake
and flowers were for
pansies.

peace and happiness to me
were signs of

inferiority,
tenants of the weak
an
addled
mind.

but as I went on with
my alley fights,
my suicidal years,
my passage through
any number of
women-it gradually
began to occur to
me
that I wasn't different

from the
others, I was the same,

they were all fulsome
with hatred,
glossed over with petty
grievances,
the men I fought in
alleys had hearts of stone.
everybody was nudging,
inching, cheating for
some insignificant
advantage,
the lie was the
weapon and the
plot was
empty,
darkness was the
dictator.

cautiously, I allowed
myself to feel good
at times.
I found moments of
peace in cheap
rooms
just staring at the
knobs of some
dresser
or listening to the
rain in the
dark.
the less I needed
the better I
felt.

maybe the other life had worn me
down.
I no longer found
glamour
in topping somebody
in conversation.
or in mounting the
body of some poor
drunken female
whose life had
slipped away into
sorrow.

I could never accept
life as it was,
i could never gobble
down all its
poisons
but there were parts,
tenuous magic parts
open for the
asking.

I re formulated
I don't know when,
date, time, all
that
but the change
occured.
something in me
relaxed, smoothed
out.
i no longer had to
prove that I was a
man,

I did'nt have to prove
anything.

I began to see things:
coffee cups lined up
behind a counter in a
cafe.
or a dog walking along
a sidewalk.
or the way the mouse
on my dresser top
stopped there
with its body,
its ears,
its nose,
it was fixed,

a bit of life
caught within itself
and its eyes looked
at me
and they were
beautiful.
then- it was
gone.

I began to feel good,
I began to feel good
in the worst situations
and there were plenty
of those.
like say, the boss
behind his desk,
he is going to have
to fire me.

I've missed too many
days.
he is dressed in a
suit, necktie, glasses,
he says, "I am going
to have to let you go"

"it's all right" I tell
him.

He must do what he
must do, he has a
wife, a house, children.
expenses, most probably
a girlfreind.

I am sorry for him
he is caught.

I walk onto the blazing
sunshine.
the whole day is
mine
temporailiy,
anyhow.

(the whole world is at the
throat of the world,
everybody feels angry,
short-changed, cheated,
everybody is despondent,
dissillusioned)

I welcomed shots of
peace, tattered shards of
happiness.

I embraced that stuff
like the hottest number,
like high heels, breasts,
singing, the
works.

(don't get me wrong,
there is such a thing as cockeyed optimism
that overlooks all
basic problems just for
the sake of
itself-
this is a shield and a
sickness.)

The knife got near my
throat again,
I almost turned on the
gas
again
but when the good
moments arrived
again
I didn't fight them off
like an alley
adversary.
I let them take me,
I luxuriated in them,
I bade them welcome
home.
I even looked into
the mirror
once having thought
myself to be
ugly,
I now liked what
I saw, almost
handsome, yes,
a bit ripped and
ragged,
scars, lumps,
odd turns,
but all in all,
not too bad,
almost handsome,
better at least than
some of those movie
star faces

like the cheeks of
a baby's
butt.

and finally I discovered
real feelings of
others,
unheralded,
like lately,
like this morning,
as I was leaving,
for the track,
i saw my wife in bed,
just the
shape of
her head there
(not forgetting
centuries of the living
and the dead and
the dying,
the pyramids,
Mozart dead
but his music still
there in the
room, weeds growing,
the earth turning,
the toteboard waiting for
me)
I saw the shape of my
wife's head,
she so still,
I ached for her life,
just being there
under the
covers.

I kissed her in the,
forehead,
got down the stairway,
got outside,
got into my marvelous
car,
fixed the seatbelt,
backed out the
drive.
feeling warm to
the fingertips,
down to my
foot on the gas
pedal,
I entered the world
once

more,
drove down the
hill
past the houses
full and empty
of
people,
I saw the mailman,
honked,
he waved
back
at me.

Anonymous submission.

Charles Bukowski

Like A Flower In The Rain

I cut the middle fingernail of the middle
finger
right hand
real short
and I began rubbing along her cunt
as she sat upright in bed
spreading lotion over her arms
face
and breasts
after bathing.
then she lit a cigarette:
"don't let this put you off,"
an smoked and continued to rub
the lotion on.
I continued to rub the cunt.
"You want an apple?" I asked.
"sure, she said, "you got one?"
but I got to her-
she began to twist
then she rolled on her side,
she was getting wet and open
like a flower in the rain.
then she rolled on her stomach
and her most beautiful ass
looked up at me
and I reached under and got the
cunt again.
she reached around and got my
cock, she rolled and twisted,
I mounted
my face falling into the mass
of red hair that overflowed
from her head
and my flattened cock entered
into the miracle.
later we joked about the lotion
and the cigarette and the apple.
then I went out and got some chicken
and shrimp and french fries and buns
and mashed potatoes and gravy and
cole slaw, and we ate. she told me
how good she felt and I told her
how good I felt and we
ate the chicken and the shrimp and the
french fries and the buns and the
mashed potatoes and the gravy and
the cole slaw too.

Charles Bukowski

Love & Fame & Death

it sits outside my window now
like an old woman going to market;
it sits and watches me,
it sweats nervously
through wire and fog and dog-bark
until suddenly
I slam the screen with a newspaper
like slapping at a fly
and you could hear the scream
over this plain city,
and then it left.

the way to end a poem
like this
is to become suddenly
quiet.

Charles Bukowski

Love & Fame & Death

it sits outside my window now
like an old woman going to market;
it sits and watches me,
it sweats nervously
through wire and fog and dog-bark
until suddenly
I slam the screen with a newspaper
like slapping at a fly
and you could hear the scream
over this plain city,
and then it left.

the way to end a poem
like this
is to become suddenly
quiet.

Submitted by .eve.

Charles Bukowski

Luck

once
we were young
at this
machine. . .

Charles Bukowski

magical mystery tour

I am in this low-slung sports car
painted a deep, rich yellow
driving under an Italian sun.
I have a British accent.
I'm wearing dark shades
an expensive silk shirt.
there's no dirt under my
fingernails.
the radio plays Vivaldi
and there are two women with
me
one with raven hair
the other a blonde.
they have small breasts and
beautiful legs
and they laugh at everything I
say.

as we drive up a steep road
the blonde squeezes my leg
and nestles closer
while raven hair
leans across and nibbles my
ear.

we stop for lunch at a quaint
rustic inn.
there is more laughter
before lunch
during lunch and after
lunch.

after lunch we will have a
flat tire on the other side of
the mountain
and the blonde will change the
tire
while
raven hair
photographs me
lighting my pipe
leaning against a tree
the perfect background
perfectly at peace
with
sunlight
flowers
clouds
birds
everywhere.

Charles Bukowski

Mama

here I am
 in the ground
 my mouth
 open
 and
 I can't even say
 mama,
 and
the dogs run by and stop and piss
on my stone; I get it all
except the sun
and my suit is looking
 bad
and yesterday the last of my left
 arm gone
very little left, all harp-like
without music.

at least a drunk
in bed with a cigarette
might cause 5 fire
 engines and
 33 men.

I can't
 do
 any
 thing.

but p.s. -- Hector Richmond in the next
tomb thinks only of Mozart and candy
caterpillars.
 he is
 very bad
 company.

Submitted by .eve.

Charles Bukowski

Marina

majestic, majic
infinite
my little girl is
sun
on the carpet-
out the door
picking a flower, ha!
an old man,
battle-wrecked,
emerges from his
chair
and she looks at me
but only sees
love,
ha!, and I become
quick with the world
and love right back
just like I was meant
to do.

Charles Bukowski

Melancholia

the history of melancholia
includes all of us.

Charles Bukowski

Metamorphosis

a girlfriend came in
built me a bed
scrubbed and waxed the kitchen floor
scrubbed the walls
vacuumed
cleaned the toilet
the bathtub
scrubbed the bathroom floor
and cut my toenails and
my hair.
then
all on the same day
the plumber came and fixed the kitchen faucet
and the toilet
and the gas man fixed the heater
and the phone man fixed the phone.
now I sit in all this perfection.
it is quiet.
I have broken off with all 3 of my girlfriends.
I felt better when everything was in
disorder.
it will take me some months to get back to normal:
I can't even find a roach to commune with.
I have lost my rhythm.
I can't sleep.
I can't eat.
I have been robbed of
my filth.

Charles Bukowski

my computer

"what?" they say, "you got a
<i>computer</i>?"

it's like I have sold out to
the enemy.

I had no idea so many
people were prejudiced
against
computers.

even two editors have
written me letters about
the computer.

one disparaged the
computer in a mild and
superior way.
the other seemed
genuinely
pissed.

I am aware that a
computer can't create
a poem.
but neither can a
typewriter.

yet, still, once or
twice a week
I hear:
"what?
you have a
<i>computer</i>?
<i>you</i>?"

yes, I do
and I sit up here
almost every
night,
sometimes with
beer or
wine,
sometimes
without
and I work the
computer.
the damn thing
even corrects
my spelling.

and the poems

come flying
out,
better than
ever.

I have no
idea what causes
all this
computer
prejudice.

me?
I want to go
the next step
beyond the
computer.
I'm sure it's
there.

and when I get
it,
they'll say,
"hey, you hear,
Chinaski got a
<i>space-biter</i>!"

"what?"

"yes, it's true!"

"I can't believe
it!"

and I'll also have
some beer or
some wine
or maybe nothing
at all
and I'll be
85 years old
driving it home
to
you and me
and to the little girl
who lost her
sheep.
or her
computer.

Charles Bukowski

my father

was a truly amazing man
he pretended to be
rich
even though we lived on beans and mush and weenies
when we sat down to eat, he said,
"not everybody can eat like this."

and because he wanted to be rich or because he actually
thought he was rich
he always voted Republican
and he voted for Hoover against Roosevelt
and he lost
and then he voted for Alf Landon against Roosevelt
and he lost again
saying, "I don't know what this world is coming to,
now we've got that god damned Red in there again
and the Russians will be in our backyard next!"

I think it was my father who made me decide to
become a bum.
I decided that if a man like that wants to be rich
then I want to be poor.

and I became a bum.
I lived on nickles and dimes and in cheap rooms and
on park benches.
I thought maybe the bums knew something.

but I found out that most of the bums wanted to be
rich too.
they had just failed at that.

so caught between my father and the bums
I had no place to go
and I went there fast and slow.
never voted Republican
never voted.

buried him
like an oddity of the earth
like a hundred thousand oddities
like millions of other oddities,
wasted.

Charles Bukowski

My First Affair With That Older Woman

when I look back now
at the abuse I took from
her
I feel shame that I was so
innocent,
but I must say
she did match me drink for
drink,
and I realized that her life
her feelings for things
had been ruined
along the way
and that I was no more than a
temporary
companion;
she was ten years older
and mortally hurt by the past
and the present;
she treated me badly:
desertion, other
men;
she brought me immense
pain,
continually;
she lied, stole;
there was desertion,

other men,
yet we had our moments; and
our little soap opera ended
with her in a coma
in the hospital,
and I sat at her bed
for hours
talking to her,
and then she opened her eyes
and saw me:
"I knew it would be you,"
she said.
then she closed her
eyes.

the next day she was
dead.

I drank alone
for two years
after that.

Charles Bukowski

my friend, the parking lot attendant

—he's a dandy
—small moustache
—usually sucking on a cigar

he tends to lean into cars as he
transacts business

first time I met him, he said,
"hey! ya gonna make a
killin'?"

"maybe," I answered.

next meeting it was:
"hey, Ramrod! what's
happening?"

"very little," I told
him.

next time I had my girlfriend with me
and he just
grinned.

next time I was
alone.

"hey," he asked, "where's the young
chick?"

"I left her at home...."

"*Bullshit*! I'll bet she dumped
you!"

and the next time
he really leaned into the car:

"what's a guy like *you* doing driving a
BMW! I'll bet you inherited your
money, you didn't get this car with your
brains!"

"how'd you guess?" I
answered.

that was some weeks ago.
I haven't seen him lately.
feIlow like that, chances are he just moved on
to better
things.

Charles Bukowski

My Groupie

I read last Saturday in the
redwoods outside of Santa Cruz
and I was about 3/4's finished
when I heard a long high scream
and a quite attractive
young girl came running toward me
long gown & divine eyes of fire
and she leaped up on the stage
and screamed: "I WANT YOU!
I WANT YOU! TAKE ME! TAKE
ME!"
I told her, "look, get the hell
away from me."
but she kept tearing at my
clothing and throwing herself
at me.
"where were you," I
asked her, "when I was living
on one candy bar a day and
sending short stories to the
Atlantic Monthly?"
she grabbed my balls and almost
twisted them off. her kisses
tasted like shitsoup.
2 women jumped up on the stage
and
carried her off into the
woods.
I could still hear her screams
as I began the next poem.
mabye, I thought, I should have
taken her on stage in front
of all those eyes.
but one can never be sure
whether it's good poetry or
bad acid.

Charles Bukowski

New Mexico

I was fairly drunk when it
began and I took out my bottle and used it
along the way. I was reading a week or two after
Kandel and I did not look quite as
pretty but
I brought it off and we
ended up at the Webbs, 6, 8, 10 of
us, and I drank scotch, wine, beer, tequila
and noticed a nice one sitting next to me -
one tooth missing when she smiled,
lovely, and I put my arm around her
and began loading her with bullshit. when I awakened at 10 a.m. the next morning
I was in a strange house
in bed with this
woman. she was asleep but looked
familiar.

Charles Bukowski

Nirvana

not much chance,
Charles Bukowski

No. 6

I'll settle for the 6 horse

Charles Bukowski

Now

I sit here on the 2nd floor
hunched over in yellow
pajamas
still pretending to be
a writer.
some damned gall,
at 71,
my brain cells eaten
away by
life.
rows of books
behind me,
I scratch my thinning
hair
and search for the
word.

Charles Bukowski

O, We Are The Outcasts

ah, christ, what a CREW:
more
poetry, always more
P O E T R Y .

if it doesn't come, coax it out with a
laxative. get your name in LIGHTS,
get it up there in
8 1/2 x 11 mimeo.

keep it coming like a miracle.

ah christ, writers are the most sickening
of all the louts!
yellow-toothed, slump-shouldered,
gutless, flea-bitten and
obvious . . . in tinker-toy rooms
with their flabby hearts
they tell us
what's wrong with the world-
as if we didn't know that a cop's club
can crack the head
and that war is a dirtier game than
marriage . . .
or down in a basement bar
hiding from a wife who doesn't appreciate him
and children he doesn't
want
he tells us that his heart is drowning in
vomit. hell, all our hearts are drowning in vomit,
in pork salt, in bad verse, in soggy
love.
but he thinks he's alone and
he thinks he's special and he thinks he's Rimbaud
and he thinks he's
Pound.

and death! how about death? did you know
that we all have to die? even Keats died, even
Milton!
and D. Thomas-THEY KILLED HIM, of course.
Thomas didn't want all those free drinks
all that free pussy-
they . . . FORCED IT ON HIM
when they should have left him alone so he could
write write WRITE!

poets.

and there's another
type. I've met them at their country
places (don't ask me what I was doing there because

I don't know).

they were born with money and
they don't have to dirty their hands in
slaughterhouses or washing
dishes in grease joints or
driving cabs or pimping or selling pot.

this gives them time to understand
Life.

they walk in with their cocktail glass
held about heart high
and when they drink they just
sip.

you are drinking green beer which you
brought with you
because you have found out through the years
that rich bastards are tight-
they use 5 cent stamps instead of airmail
they promise to have all sorts of goodies ready
upon your arrival
from gallons of whisky to
50 cent cigars. but it's never
there.
and they HIDE their women from you-
their wives, x-wives, daughters, maids, so forth,
because they've read your poems and
figure all you want to do is fuck everybody and
everything. which once might have been
true but is no longer quite
true.

and-
he WRITES TOO.
POETRY, of
course. everybody
writes
poetry.

he has plenty of time and a
postoffice box in town
and he drives there 3 or 4 times a day
looking and hoping for accepted
poems.

he thinks that poverty is a weakness of the
soul.

he thinks your mind is ill because you are
drunk all the time and have to work in a

factory 10 or 12 hours a
night.

he brings his wife in, a beauty, stolen from a
poorer rich
man.

he lets you gaze for 30 seconds
then hustles her
out. she has been crying for some
reason.

you've got 3 or 4 days to linger in the
guesthouse he says,
"come on over to dinner
sometime."
but he doesn't say when or
where. and then you find out that you are not even
IN HIS HOUSE.

you are in
ONE of his houses but
his house is somewhere
else-
you don't know
where.

he even has x-wives in some of his
houses.

his main concern is to keep his x-wives away from
you. he doesn't want to give up a
damn thing. and you can't blame him:
his x-wives are all young, stolen, kept,
talented, well-dressed, schooled, with
varying French-German accents.

and!: they
WRITE POETRY TOO. or
PAINT. or
fuck.

but his big problem is to get down to that mail
box in town to get back his
rejected poems
and to keep his eye on all the other mail boxes
in all his other
houses.

meanwhile, the starving Indians
sell beads and baskets in the streets of the small desert
town.

the Indians are not allowed in his houses
not so much because they are a fuck-threat
but because they are
dirty and
ignorant. dirty? I look down at my shirt
with the beerstain on the front.
ignorant? I light a 6 cent cigar and
forget about
it.

he or they or somebody was supposed to meet me at
the
train station.

of course, they weren't
there. "We'll be there to meet the great
Poet!"

well, I looked around and didn't see any
great poet. besides it was 7 a.m. and
40 degrees. those things
happen. the trouble was there were no
bars open. nothing open. not even a
jail.

he's a poet.
he's also a doctor, a head-shrinker.
no blood involved that
way. he won't tell me whether I am crazy or
not-I don't have the
money.

he walks out with his cocktail glass
disappears for 2 hours, 3 hours,
then suddenly comes walking back in
unannounced
with the same cocktail glass
to make sure I haven't gotten hold of
something more precious than
Life itself.

my cheap green beer is killing
me. he shows heart (hurrah) and
gives me a little pill that stops my
gagging.
but nothing decent to
drink.

he'd bought a small 6 pack
for my arrival but that was gone in an
hour and 15
minutes.

"I'll buy you barrels of beer," he had said.

I used his phone (one of his phones) to get deliveries of beer and cheap whisky. the town was ten miles away, downhill. I peeled my poor dollars from my poor roll. and the boy needed a tip, of course.

the way it was shaping up I could see that I was hardly Dylan Thomas yet, not even Robert Creeley. certainly Creeley wouldn't have had beerstains on his shirt.

anyhow, when I finally got hold of one of his x-wives I was too drunk to make it.

scared too. sure, I imagined him peering through the window- he didn't want to give up a damn thing- and leveling the luger while I was working while "The March to the Gallows" was playing over the Muzak and shooting me in the ass first and my poor brain later.

"an intruder," I could hear him telling them, "ravishing one of my helpless x-wives."

I see him published in some of the magazines now. not very good stuff.

a poem about me too: the Polack.

the Polack whines too much. the Polack whines about his country, other countries, all countries, the Polack works overtime in a factory like a fool, among other fools with "pre-drained spirits." the Polack drinks seas of green beer full of acid. the Polack has an ulcerated hemorrhoid. the Polack picks on fags "fragile fags." the Polack hates his wife, hates his daughter. his daughter will become an alcoholic, a prostitute. the Polack has an

"obese burned out wife." the Polack has a
spastic gut. the Polack has a
"rectal brain."

thank you, Doctor (and poet). any charge for
this? I know I still owe you for the
pill.

Your poem is not too good
but at least I got your starch up.
most of your stuff is about as lively as a
wet and deflated
beachball. but it is your round, you've won a round.
going to invite me out this
Summer? I might scrape up
trainfare. got an Indian friend who'd like to meet
you and yours. he swears he's got the biggest
pecker in the state of California.

and guess what?
he writes
POETRY
too!

Charles Bukowski

Oh Yes

there are worse things than
being alone
but it often takes decades
to realize this
and most often
when you do
it's too late
and there's nothing worse
than
too late.

Charles Bukowski

On Going Back To The Street After Viewing An Art Show

they talk down through
the centuries to us,
and this we need more and more,
the statues and paintings
in midnight age
as we go along
holding dead hands.

and we would say
rather than delude the knowing:
a damn good show,
but hardly enough for a horse to eat,
and out on the sunshine street where
eyes are dabbled in metazoan faces
i decide again
that in theses centuries
they have done very well
considering the nature of their
brothers:
it's more than good
that some of them,
(closer really to the field-mouse than
falcon)
have been bold enough to try.

Anonymous submission.

Charles Bukowski

one thirty-six a.m.

I laugh sometimes when I think about
say
Céline at a typewriter
or Dostoevsky...
or Hamsun...
ordinary men with feet, ears, eyes,
ordinary men with hair on their heads
sitting there typing words
while having difficulties with life
while being puzzled almost to madness.

Dostoevsky gets up
he leaves the machine to piss,
comes back
drinks a glass of milk and thinks about
the casino and
the roulette wheel.

Céline stops, gets up, walks to the
window, looks out, thinks, my last patient
died today, I won't have to make any more
visits there.
when I saw him last
he paid his doctor bill;
it's those who don't pay their bills,
they live on and on.
Céline walks back, sits down at the
machine
is still for a good two minutes
then begins to type.

Hamsun stands over his machine thinking,
I wonder if they are going to believe
all these things I write?
he sits down, begins to type.
he doesn't know what a writer's block
is:
he's a prolific son-of-a-bitch
damn near as magnificent as
the sun.
he types away.

and I laugh
not out loud
but all up and down these walls, these
dirty yellow and blue walls
my white cat asleep on the
table
hiding his eyes from the
light.

he's not alone tonight

and neither am

I.

Charles Bukowski

Out Of The Arm Of One Love...

out of the arm of one love
and into the arms of another

Charles Bukowski

Paris

never
even in calmer times
have I ever
dreamed of
bicycling through that
city
wearing a
beret

and
Camus
always
pissed
me
off.

Charles Bukowski

Poem For My 43rd Birthday

To end up alone
in a tomb of a room
without cigarettes
or wine--
just a lightbulb
and a potbelly,
grayhaired,
and glad to have
the room.

Charles Bukowski

Poetry

it
takes
a lot of

Charles Bukowski

Prayer In Bad Weather

by God, I don't know what to

Charles Bukowski

Pull A String, A Puppet Moves

each man must realize
that it can all disappear very
quickly:
the cat, the woman, the job,
the front tire,
the bed, the walls, the
room; all our necessities
including love,
rest on foundations of sand -
and any given cause,
no matter how unrelated:
the death of a boy in Hong Kong
or a blizzard in Omaha ...
can serve as your undoing.
all your chinaware crashing to the
kitchen floor, your girl will enter
and you'll be standing, drunk,
in the center of it and she'll ask:
my god, what's the matter?
and you'll answer: I don't know,
I don't know ...

Charles Bukowski

Question And Answer

he sat naked and drunk in a room of summer
night, running the blade of the knife
under his fingernails, smiling, thinking
of all the letters he had received
telling him that
the way he lived and wrote about
that--
it had kept them going when
all seemed
truly
hopeless.

Charles Bukowski

Rain

a symphony orchestra.

Charles Bukowski

Rain Or Shine

the vultures at the zoo
(all three of them)
sit very quietly in their
caged tree
and below
on the ground
are chunks of rotten meat.
the vultures are over-full.
our taxes have fed them
well.

we move on to the next
cage.
a man is in there
sitting on the ground
eating
his own shit.
i recognize him as
our former mailman.
his favorite expression
had been:
"have a beautiful day."

that day i did.

Charles Bukowski

Raw With Love

little dark girl with
kind eyes
when it comes time to
use the knife
I won't flinch and
I won't blame
you,
as I drive along the shore alone
as the palms wave,
the ugly heavy palms,
as the living does not arrive
as the dead do not leave,
I won't blame you,
instead
I will remember the kisses
our lips raw with love
and how you gave me
everything you had
and how I
offered you what was left of
me,
and I will remember your small room
the feel of you
the light in the window
your records
your books
our morning coffee
our noons our nights
our bodies spilled together
sleeping
the tiny flowing currents
immediate and forever
your leg my leg
your arm my arm
your smile and the warmth
of you
who made me laugh
again.
little dark girl with kind eyes
you have no
knife. the knife is
mine and I won't use it
yet.

Charles Bukowski

Revolt In The Ranks

I have just spent one-hour-and-a-half
handicapping tomorrow's
card.
when am I going to get at the poems?
well, they'll just have to wait
they'll have to warm their feet in the
anteroom
where they'll sit gossiping about
me.
"this Chinaski, doesn't he realize that
without us he would have long ago
gone mad, been dead?"
"he knows, but he thinks he can keep
us at his beck and call!"
"he's an ingrate!"
"let's give him writer's block!"
"yeah!"
"yeah!"
"yeah!"
the little poems kick up their heels
and laugh.
then the biggest one gets up and
walks toward the door.
"hey, where are you going?" he is
asked.
"somewhere where I am
appreciated."
then, he
and the others
vanish.

Charles Bukowski

Rhyming Poem

the goldfish sing all night with guitars,
and the whores go down with the stars,
the whores go down with the stars

Charles Bukowski

Shoes

when you're young
a pair of
female
high-heeled shoes
just sitting
alone
in the closet
can fire your
bones;
when you're old
it's just
a pair of shoes
without
anybody
in them
and
just as
well.

Charles Bukowski

Short Order

I took my girlfriend to your last poetry reading,
she said.
yes, yes? I asked.
she's young and pretty, she said.
and? I asked.
she hated your
guts.

Charles Bukowski

Show Biz

I can't have it
and you can't have it
and we won't
get it

so don't bet on it
or even think about
it

just get out of bed
each morning

wash
shave
clothe
yourself
and go out into
it

because
outside of that
all that's left is
suicide and
madness

so you just
can't
expect too much

you can't even
expect

so what you do
is
work from a modest
minimal
base

like when you
walk outside
be glad your car
might possibly
be there

and if it is-
that the tires
aren't
flat

then you get
in
and if it

starts--you
start.

and
it's the damndest
movie
you've ever
seen
because
you're
in it--

low budget
and
4 billion
critics

and the longest
run
you ever hope
for
is

one
day.

Submitted by Tom

Charles Bukowski

Sleep

she was a short one
getting fat and she had once been
beautiful and
she drank the wine
she drank the wine in bed and
talked and screamed and cursed at
me
and i told her

Charles Bukowski

small conversation in the afternoon with John Fante

he said, "I was working in Hollywood when Faulkner was working in Hollywood and he was the worst: he was too drunk to stand up at the end of the afternoon and so I had to help him into a taxi day after day after day.

"but when he left Hollywood, I stayed on, and while I didn't drink like that maybe I should have, I might have had the guts then to follow him and get the hell out of there."

I told him, "you write as well as Faulkner.:"

"you mean that?" he asked from the hospital bed, smiling.

Charles Bukowski

So Now?

the words have come and gone,
I sit ill.
the phone rings, the cats sleep.
Linda vacuums.
I am waiting to live,
waiting to die.

Charles Bukowski

Some People

some people never go crazy.
me, sometimes I'll lie down behind the couch
for 3 or 4 days.
they'll find me there.
it's Cherub, they'll say, and
they pour wine down my throat
rub my chest
sprinkle me with oils.

Charles Bukowski

Somebody

god I got the sad blue blues,

Charles Bukowski

Something For The Touts, The Nuns, The Grocery Clerks, And You . . .

we have everything and we have nothing
and some men do it in churches
and some men do it by tearing butterflies
in half
and some men do it in Palm Springs
laying it into butterblondes
with Cadillac souls
Cadillacs and butterflies
nothing and everything,
the face melting down to the last puff
in a cellar in Corpus Christi.
there's something for the touts, the nuns,
the grocery clerks and you . . .
something at 8 a.m., something in the library
something in the river,
everything and nothing.
in the slaughterhouse it comes running along
the ceiling on a hook, and you swing it --
one
two
three
and then you've got it, \$200 worth of dead
meat, its bones against your bones
something and nothing.
it's always early enough to die and
it's always too late,
and the drill of blood in the basin white
it tells you nothing at all
and the gravediggers playing poker over
5 a.m. coffee, waiting for the grass
to dismiss the frost . . .
they tell you nothing at all.

we have everything and we have nothing --
days with glass edges and the impossible stink
of river moss -- worse than shit;
checkerboard days of moves and countermoves,
fagged interest, with as much sense in defeat as
in victory; slow days like mules
humping it slugged and sullen and sun-glazed
up a road where a madman sits waiting among
bluejays and wrens netted in and sucked a flakey
grey.
good days too of wine and shouting, fights
in alleys, fat legs of women striving around
your bowels buried in moans,
the signs in bullrings like diamonds hollering
Mother Capri, violets coming out of the ground
telling you to forget the dead armies and the loves
that robbed you.
days when children say funny and brilliant things
like savages trying to send you a message through

their bodies while their bodies are still
alive enough to transmit and feel and run up
and down without locks and paychecks and
ideals and possessions and beetle-like
opinions.

days when you can cry all day long in
a green room with the door locked, days
when you can laugh at the breadman
because his legs are too long, days
of looking at hedges . . .

and nothing, and nothing, the days of
the bosses, yellow men
with bad breath and big feet, men
who look like frogs, hyenas, men who walk
as if melody had never been invented, men
who think it is intelligent to hire and fire and
profit, men with expensive wives they possess
like 60 acres of ground to be drilled
or shown-off or to be walled away from
the incompetent, men who'd kill you
because they're crazy and justify it because
it's the law, men who stand in front of
windows 30 feet wide and see nothing,
men with luxury yachts who can sail around
the world and yet never get out of their vest
pockets, men like snails, men like eels, men
like slugs, and not as good . . .

and nothing, getting your last paycheck
at a harbor, at a factory, at a hospital, at an
aircraft plant, at a penny arcade, at a
barbershop, at a job you didn't want
anyway.

income tax, sickness, servility, broken
arms, broken heads -- all the stuffing
come out like an old pillow.

we have everything and we have nothing.
some do it well enough for a while and
then give way. fame gets them or disgust
or age or lack of proper diet or ink
across the eyes or children in college
or new cars or broken backs while skiing
in Switzerland or new politics or new wives
or just natural change and decay --
the man you knew yesterday hooking
for ten rounds or drinking for three days and
three nights by the Sawtooth mountains now
just something under a sheet or a cross
or a stone or under an easy delusion,
or packing a bible or a golf bag or a
briefcase: how they go, how they go! -- all

the ones you thought would never go.

days like this. like your day today.
maybe the rain on the window trying to
get through to you. what do you see today?
what is it? where are you? the best
days are sometimes the first, sometimes
the middle and even sometimes the last.
the vacant lots are not bad, churches in
Europe on postcards are not bad. people in
wax museums frozen into their best sterility
are not bad, horrible but not bad. the
cannon, think of the cannon, and toast for
breakfast the coffee hot enough you
know your tongue is still there, three
geraniums outside a window, trying to be
red and trying to be pink and trying to be
geraniums, no wonder sometimes the women
cry, no wonder the mules don't want
to go up the hill. are you in a hotel room
in Detroit looking for a cigarette? one more
good day. a little bit of it. and as
the nurses come out of the building after
their shift, having had enough, eight nurses
with different names and different places
to go -- walking across the lawn, some of them
want cocoa and a paper, some of them want a
hot bath, some of them want a man, some
of them are hardly thinking at all. enough
and not enough. arcs and pilgrims, oranges
gutters, ferns, antibodies, boxes of
tissue paper.

in the most decent sometimes sun
there is the softsmoke feeling from urns
and the canned sound of old battleplanes
and if you go inside and run your finger
along the window ledge you'll find
dirt, maybe even earth.
and if you look out the window
there will be the day, and as you
get older you'll keep looking
keep looking
sucking your tongue in a little
ah ah no no maybe

some do it naturally
some obscenely
everywhere.

Submitted by Dylan Skola

Charles Bukowski

splash

the illusion is that you are simply
reading this poem.
the reality is that this is
more than a
poem.
this is a beggar's knife.
this is a tulip.
this is a soldier marching
through Madrid.
this is you on your
death bed.
this is Li Po laughing
underground.
this is not a god-damned
poem.
this is a horse asleep.
a butterfly in
your brain.
this is the devil's
circus.
you are not reading this
on a page.
the page is reading
you.
feel it?
it's like a cobra. it's a hungry eagle circling the room.

this is not a poem. poems are dull,
they make you sleep.

these words force you
to a new
madness.

you have been blessed, you have been pushed into a
blinding area of
light.

the elephant dreams
with you
now.
the curve of space
bends and
laughs.

you can die now.
you can die now as
people were meant to
die:
great,
victorious,
hearing the music,

being the music,
roaring,
roaring,
roaring.

Charles Bukowski

Sway With Me

sway with me, everything sad --
madmen in stone houses
without doors,
lepers steaming love and song
frogs trying to figure
the sky;
sway with me, sad things --
fingers split on a forge
old age like breakfast shell
used books, used people
used flowers, used love
I need you
I need you
I need you:
it has run away
like a horse or a dog,
dead or lost
or unforgiving.

Submitted by .eve.

Charles Bukowski

The Aliens

you may not believe it
but there are people
who go through life with
very little
friction or
distress.
they dress well, eat
well, sleep well.
they are contented with
their family
life.
they have moments of
grief
but all in all
they are undisturbed
and often feel
very good.
and when they die
it is an easy
death, usually in their
sleep.

Charles Bukowski

The Blackbirds are Rough Today

lonely as a dry and used orchard
spread over the earth
for use and surrender.

shot down like an ex-pug selling
dailies on the corner.

taken by tears like
an aging chorus girl
who has gotten her last check.

a hanky is in order your lord your
worship.

the blackbirds are rough today
like
ingrown toenails
in an overnight
jail---
wine wine whine,
the blackbirds run around and
fly around
harping about
Spanish melodies and bones.

and everywhere is
nowhere---
the dream is as bad as
flapjacks and flat tires:

why do we go on
with our minds and
pockets full of
dust
like a bad boy just out of
school---
you tell
me,
you who were a hero in some
revolution
you who teach children
you who drink with calmness
you who own large homes
and walk in gardens
you who have killed a man and own a
beautiful wife
you tell me
why I am on fire like old dry
garbage.

we might surely have some interesting
correspondence.

it will keep the mailman busy.
and the butterflies and ants and bridges and
cemeteries
the rocket-makers and dogs and garage mechanics
will still go on a
while
until we run out of stamps
and/or
ideas.

don't be ashamed of
anything; I guess God meant it all
like
locks on
doors.

Charles Bukowski

the crunch

too much too little

too fat
too thin
or nobody.

laughter or
tears

haters
lovers

strangers with faces like
the backs of
thumb tacks

armies running through
streets of blood
waving winebottles
bayoneting and fucking
virgins.

an old guy in a cheap room
with a photograph of M. Monroe.

there is a loneliness in this world so great
that you can see it in the slow movement of
the hands of a clock

people so tired
mutilated
either by love or no love.

people just are not good to each other
one on one.

the rich are not good to the rich
the poor are not good to the poor.

we are afraid.

our educational system tells us
that we can all be
big-ass winners

it hasn't told us
about the gutters
or the suicides.

or the terror of one person
aching in one place
alone

untouched
unspoken to

watering a plant.

people are not good to each other.
people are not good to each other.
people are not good to each other.

I suppose they never will be.
I don't ask them to be.

but sometimes I think about
it.

the beads will swing
the clouds will cloud
and the killer will behead the child
like taking a bite out of an ice cream cone.

too much
too little

too fat
too thin
or nobody

more haters than lovers.

people are not good to each other.
perhaps if they were
our deaths would not be so sad.

meanwhile I look at young girls
stems
flowers of chance.

there must be a way.

surely there must be a way that we have not yet
thought of.

who put this brain inside of me?

it cries
it demands
it says that there is a chance.

it will not say
"no."

Charles Bukowski

The Genius Of The Crowd

there is enough treachery, hatred violence absurdity in the average
human being to supply any given army on any given day

and the best at murder are those who preach against it
and the best at hate are those who preach love
and the best at war finally are those who preach peace

those who preach god, need god
those who preach peace do not have peace
those who preach peace do not have love

beware the preachers
beware the knowers
beware those who are always reading books
beware those who either detest poverty
or are proud of it
beware those quick to praise
for they need praise in return
beware those who are quick to censor
they are afraid of what they do not know
beware those who seek constant crowds for
they are nothing alone
beware the average man the average woman
beware their love, their love is average
seeks average

but there is genius in their hatred
there is enough genius in their hatred to kill you
to kill anybody
not wanting solitude
not understanding solitude
they will attempt to destroy anything
that differs from their own
not being able to create art
they will not understand art
they will consider their failure as creators
only as a failure of the world
not being able to love fully
they will believe your love incomplete
and then they will hate you
and their hatred will be perfect

like a shining diamond
like a knife
like a mountain
like a tiger
like hemlock

their finest art

Submitted by Holt

Charles Bukowski

the German hotel

the German hotel was very strange and expensive and had double doors to the rooms, very thick doors, and it overlooked the park and the vasser tern and in the mornings it was usually too late for breakfast and the maids would be everywhere changing sheets and bringing in towels, but you never saw any hotel guests, only the maids and the desk man and the day desk man was all right because we were sober during the day but we had trouble with the night man who was some sort of snob and not very good with getting the corkscrews and ice and wine glasses up to us and he was always phoning to say the other guests objected to our noise.

what other guests?

I always told him that everything was very quiet, nothing was going on, that somebody must be crazy, so will you please stop ringing?

but he kept ringing, he became almost like a companion to us through the night.

but the day man was very nice, he always had little messages of importance that either meant money, or a good friend coming to see us, or both.

we stayed at the hotel twice during our trip to Europe and each time we checked out the day clerk bowed ever so slightly, he was tall and well-dressed and pleasant and he said each time: "it was nice to have you with us. please come here again if you return."

"thank you," we said, "thank you."

it's our favorite hotel and if I ever get rich I am going to buy it and fire the night clerk and there will be enough ice cubes and corkscrews for everybody.

Charles Bukowski

the great slob

I was always a natural slob
I liked to lay upon the bed
in undershirt (stained, of
course) (and with cigarette
holes)
shoes off
beerbottle in hand
trying to shake off a
difficult night, say with a
woman still around
walking the floor
complaining about this and
that,
and I'd work up a
belch and say, "HEY, YOU DON'T
LIKE IT? THEN GET YOUR ASS
OUT OF HERE!"

I really loved myself, I
really loved my slob-
self, and
they seemed to also:
always leaving
but almost
always
coming
back.

Charles Bukowski

The History Of One Tough Motherfucker

he came to the door one night wet thin beaten and
terrorized
a white cross-eyed tailless cat
I took him in and fed him and he stayed
grew to trust me until a friend drove up the driveway
and ran him over
I took what was left to a vet who said, "not much
chance...give him these pills...his backbone
is crushed, but is was crushed before and somehow
mended, if he lives he'll never walk, look at
these x-rays, he's been shot, look here, the pellets
are still there...also, he once had a tail, somebody
cut it off..."

Charles Bukowski

The House

They are building a house
half a block down
and I sit up here
with the shades down
listening to the sounds,
the hammers pounding in nails,
thack thack thack thack,
and then I hear birds,
and thack thack thack,
and I go to bed,
I pull the covers to my throat;
they have been building this house
for a month, and soon it will have
its people...sleeping, eating,
loving, moving around,
but somehow
now
it is not right,
there seems a madness,
men walk on top with nails
in their mouths
and I read about Castro and Cuba,
and at night I walk by
and the ribs of the house show
and inside I can see cats walking
the way cats walk,
and then a boy rides by on a bicycle
and still the house is not done
and in the morning the men
will be back
walking around on the house
with their hammers,
and it seems people should not build houses
anymore,
it seems people should not get married
anymore,
it seems people should stop working
and sit in small rooms
on 2nd floors
under electric lights without shades;
it seems there is a lot to forget
and a lot not to do,
and in drugstores, markets, bars,
the people are tired, they do not want
to move, and I stand there at night
and look through this house and the
house does not want to be built;
through its sides I can see the purple hills
and the first lights of evening,
and it is cold
and I button my coat
and I stand there looking through the house

and the cats stop and look at me
until I am embarrassed
and move North up the sidewalk
where I will buy
cigarettes and beer
and return to my room.

Charles Bukowski

The Icecream People

the lady has me temporarily off the bottle
and now the pecker stands up
better.

however, things change overnight--
instead of listening to Shostakovich and
Mozart through a smeared haze of smoke
the nights change, new
complexities:

we drive to Baskin-Robbins,
31 flavors:
Rocky Road, Bubble Gum, Apricot Ice, Strawberry
Cheesecake, Chocolate Mint...

we park outside and look at icecream
people

a very healthy and satisfied people,
nary a potential suicide in sight
(they probably even vote)
and I tell her

"what if the boys saw me go in there? suppose they
find out I'm going in for a walnut peach sundae?"

"come on, chicken," she laughs and we go in
and stand with the icecream people.

none of them are cursing or threatening
the clerks.

there seem to be no hangovers or
grievances.

I am alarmed at the placid and calm wave
that flows about. I feel like a leper in a
beauty contest. we finally get our sundaes and
sit in the car and eat them.

I must admit they are quite good. a curious new
world. (all my friends tell me I am looking
better. "you're looking good, man, we thought you
were going to die there for a while...")
--those 4,500 dark nights, the jails, the
hospitals...

and later that night
there is use for the pecker, use for
love, and it is glorious,
long and true,
and afterwards we speak of easy things;
our heads by the open window with the moonlight
looking through, we sleep in each other's
arms.

the icecream people make me feel good,
inside and out.

Submitted by Holt
Charles Bukowski

the lucky ones

stuck in the rain on the freeway, 6:15 p.m.,
these are the lucky ones, these are the
dutifully employed, most with their radios on as loud
as possible as they try not to think or remember.

this is our new civilization: as men
once lived in trees and caves now they live
in their automobiles and on freeways as

the local news is heard again and again while
we shift from first gear to second and back to first.

there's a poor fellow stalled in the fast lane ahead, hood
up, he's standing against the freeway fence
a newspaper over his head in the rain.

the other cars force their way around his car, pull out into
the next lane in front of cars determined to shut them off.

in the lane to my right a driver is being followed by a
police car with blinking red and blue lights - he surely
can't be *speeding* as

suddenly the rain comes down in a giant wash and all the
cars stop and

even with the windows up I can smell somebody's clutch
burning.

I just hope it's not mine as

the wall of water diminishes and we go back into first
gear; we are all still
a long way from home as I memorize
the silhouette of the car in front of me and the shape of the

driver's head or
what

I can see of it above the headrest while
his bumper sticker asks me
HAVE YOU HUGGED YOUR KID TODAY?

suddenly I have an urge to scream
as another wall of water comes down and the
man on the radio announces that there will be a 70 percent
chance of showers tomorrow night

Charles Bukowski

The Meek Shall Inherit The Earth

if I suffer at this
typewriter
think how I'd feel
among the lettuce-
pickers of Salinas?

Charles Bukowski

The Most

here comes the fishhead singing

Charles Bukowski

The Most Beautiful Woman In Town

Charles Bukowski

The Night I Was Going To Die

the night I was going to die

Charles Bukowski

The Poetry Reading

at high noon

Charles Bukowski

The Retreat

this time has finished me.

Charles Bukowski

The Shower

we like to shower afterwards

Charles Bukowski

The Sun Weilds Mercy

and the sun weilds mercy
but like a jet torch carried to high,
and the jets whip across its sight
and rockets leap like toads,
and the boys get out the maps
and pin-cuishon the moon,
old green cheese,
no life there but too much on earth:
our unwashed India boys
crosssing their legs,playing pipes,
starving with sucked in bellies,
watching the snakes volute
like beautiful women in the hungry air;
the rockets leap,
the rockets leap like hares,
clearing clump and dog
replacing out-dated bullets;
the Chineses still carve
in jade,quietly stuffing rice
into their hunger, a hunger
a thousand years old,
their muddy rivers moving with fire
and song, barges, houseboats
pushed by drifting poles
of waiting without wanting;
in Turkey they face the East
on their carpets
praying to a purple god
who smokes and laughs
and sticks fingers in their eyes
blinding them, as gods will do;
but the rockets are ready: peace is no longer,
for some reason,precious;
madness drifts like lily pads
on a pond circling senselessly;
the painters paint dipping
their reds and greens and yellows,
poets rhyme their lonliness,
musicians starve as always
and the novelists miss the mark,
but not the pelican , the gull;
pelicans dip and dive, rise,
shaking shocked half-dead
radioactive fish from their beaks;
indeed, indeed, the waters wash
the rocks with slime; and on wall st.
the market staggers like a lost drunk
looking for his key; ah,
this will be a good one,by God:
it will take us back to the
sabre-teeth, the winged monkey
scrabbling in pits over bits

of helmet, instrument and glass;
a lightning crashes across
the window and in a million rooms
lovers lie entwined and lost
and sick as peace;
the sky still breaks red and orange for the
painters-and for the lovers,
flowers open as they always have
opened but covered with thin dust
of rocket fuel and mushrooms,
poison mushrooms; it's a bad time,
a dog-sick time-curtain
act 3, standing room only,
SOLD OUT, SOLD OUT, SOLD OUT again,
by god,by somebody and something,
by rockets and generals and
leaders, by poets , doctors, comedians,
by manufacturers of soup
and biscuits, Janus-faced hucksters
of their own indexery;
I can now see now the coal-slick
contaminated fields, a snail or 2,
bile, obsidian, a fish or 3
in the shallows, an obloquy of our
source and our sight.....
has this happend before? is history
a circle that catches itself by the tail,
a dream, a nightmare,
a general's dream, a presidents dream,
a dictators dream...
can't we awaken?
or are the forces of life greater than we are?
can't we awaken? must we foever,
dear freinds, die in our sleep?

Anonymous submission.

Charles Bukowski

The Sun Wields Mercy

and the sun wields mercy
but like a jet torch carried to high,
and the jets whip across its sight
and rockets leap like toads,
and the boys get out the maps
and pin-cushion the moon,
old green cheese,
no life there but too much on earth:
our unwashed India boys
crossing their legs, playing pipes,
starving with sucked in bellies,
watching the snakes volute
like beautiful women in the hungry air;
the rockets leap,
the rockets leap like hares,
clearing clump and dog
replacing out-dated bullets;
the Chinese still carve
in jade, quietly stuffing rice
into their hunger, a hunger
a thousand years old,
their muddy rivers moving with fire
and song, barges, houseboats
pushed by drifting poles
of waiting without wanting;
in Turkey they face the East
on their carpets
praying to a purple god
who smokes and laughs
and sticks fingers in their eyes
blinding them, as gods will do;
but the rockets are ready: peace is no longer,
for some reason, precious;
madness drifts like lily pads
on a pond circling senselessly;
the painters paint dipping
their reds and greens and yellows,
poets rhyme their loneliness,
musicians starve as always
and the novelists miss the mark,
but not the pelican, the gull;
pelicans dip and dive, rise,
shaking shocked half-dead
radioactive fish from their beaks;
indeed, indeed, the waters wash
the rocks with slime; and on wall st.
the market staggers like a lost drunk
looking for his key; ah,
this will be a good one, by God:
it will take us back to the
sabre-teeth, the winged monkey
scrabbling in pits over bits

of helmet, instrument and glass;
a lightning crashes across
the window and in a million rooms
lovers lie entwined and lost
and sick as peace;
the sky still breaks red and orange for the
painters-and for the lovers,
flowers open as they always have
opened but covered with thin dust
of rocket fuel and mushrooms,
poison mushrooms; it's a bad time,
a dog-sick time-curtain
act 3, standing room only,
SOLD OUT, SOLD OUT, SOLD OUT again,
by god, by somebody and something,
by rockets and generals and
leaders, by poets, doctors, comedians,
by manufacturers of soup
and biscuits, Janus-faced hucksters
of their own indexterity;
I can now see now the coal-slick
contaminated fields, a snail or 2,
bile, obsidian, a fish or 3
in the shallows, an obloquy of our
source and our sight.....
has this happened before? is history
a circle that catches itself by the tail,
a dream, a nightmare,
a general's dream, a presidents dream,
a dictators dream...
can't we awaken?
or are the forces of life greater than we are?
can't we awaken? must we forever,
dear friends, die in our sleep?

Anonymous submission.

Charles Bukowski

The Worst And The Best

in the hospitals and jails
it's the worst
in madhouses
it's the worst
in penthouses
it's the worst
in skid row flophouses
it's the worst
at poetry readings
at rock concerts
at benefits for the disabled
it's the worst
at funerals
at weddings
it's the worst
at parades
at skating rinks
at sexual orgies
it's the worst
at midnight
at 3 a.m.
at 5:45 p.m.
it's the worst

Charles Bukowski

These Things

these things that we support most well
have nothing to do with us,
and we do with them
out of boredom or fear or money
or cracked intelligence;
our circle and our candle of light
being small,
so small we cannot bear it,
we heave out with Idea
and lose the Center:
all wax without the wick,
and we see names that once meant
wisdom,
like signs into ghost towns,
and only the graves are real.

Anonymous submission.

Charles Bukowski

This

self-congratulatory nonsense as the
Charles Bukowski

Three Oranges

first time my father overheard me listening to
this bit of music he asked me,
"what is it?"
"it's called Love For Three Oranges,"
I informed him.
"boy," he said, "that's getting it
cheap."
he meant sex.
listening to it
I always imagined three oranges
sitting there,
you know how orange they can
get,
so mightily orange.
maybe Prokofiev had meant
what my father
thought.
if so, I preferred it the
other way
the most horrible thing
I could think of
was part of me being
what ejaculated out of the
end of his
stupid penis.
I will never forgive him
for that,
his trick that I am stuck
with,
I find no nobility in
parenthood.
I say kill the Father
before he makes more
such as
I.

Charles Bukowski

To The Whore Who Took My Poems

some say we should keep personal remorse from the
poem,
stay abstract, and there is some reason in this,
but jezus;
twelve poems gone and I don't keep carbons and you have
my
paintings too, my best ones; its stifling:
are you trying to crush me out like the rest of them?
why didn't you take my money? they usually do
from the sleeping drunken pants sick in the corner.
next time take my left arm or a fifty
but not my poems:
I'm not Shakespeare
but sometime simply
there won't be any more, abstract or otherwise;
there'll always be mony and whores and drunkards
down to the last bomb,
but as God said,
crossing his legs,
I see where I have made plenty of poets
but not so very much
poetry.

Charles Bukowski

Trapped

don't undress my love
you might find a mannequin:
don't undress the mannequin
you might find
my love.

Charles Bukowski

Trashcan Lives

the wind blows hard tonight

Charles Bukowski

True

one of Lorca's best lines
is,
"agony, always
agony ..."

Charles Bukowski

True Story

they found him walking along the freeway
all red in
front
he had taken a rusty tin can
and cut off his sexual
machinery
as if to say --
see what you've done to
me? you might as well have the
rest.

and he put part of him
in one pocket and
part of him in
another
and that's how they found him,
walking
along.

they gave him over to the
doctors
who tried to sew the parts
back
on
but the parts were
quite contented
the way they
were.

I think sometimes of all of the good
ass
turned over to the
monsters of the
world.

maybe it was his protest against
this or
his protest
against
everything.

a one man
Freedom March
that never squeezed in
between
the concert reviews and the
baseball
scores.

God, or somebody,
bless
him.

Submitted by .eve.

Charles Bukowski

We Ain't Got No Money, Honey, But We Got Rain

call it the greenhouse effect or whatever

Charles Bukowski

What A Writer

what i liked about e.e. cummings
was that he cut away from
the holiness of the
word
and with charm
and gamble
gave us lines
that sliced through the
dung.

how it was needed!
how we were withering
away
in the old
tired
manner.

of course, then came all
the e.e. cummings
copyists.
they copied him then
as the others had
copied Keats, Shelly,
Swinburne, Byron, et
al.

but there was only
one
e.e. cummings.
of course.

one sun.

one moon.

Charles Bukowski

What Can We Do?

at their best, there is gentleness in Humanity.
some understanding and, at times, acts of
courage
but all in all it is a mass, a glob that doesn't
have too much.
it is like a large animal deep in sleep and
almost nothing can awaken it.
when activated it's best at brutality,
selfishness, unjust judgments, murder.

Charles Bukowski

Whats The Use Of A Title?

They don't make it
the beautiful die in flame-
suicide pills, rat poison, rope what-
ever...
they rip their arms off,
throw themselves out of windows,
they pull their eyes out of the sockets,
reject love
reject hate
reject, reject.

they don't make it
the beautiful can't endure,
they are butterflies
they are doves
they are sparrows,
they don't make it.

one tall shot of flame
while the old men play checkers in the park
one flame, one good flame
while the old men play checkers in the park
in the sun.

the beautiful are found in the edge of a room
crumpled into spiders and needles and silence
and we can never understand why they
left, they were so
beautiful.

they don't make it,
the beautiful die young
and leave the ugly to their ugly lives.

lovely and brilliant: life and suicide and death
as the old men play checkers in the sun
in the park.

Anonymous submission.

Charles Bukowski

Who In The Hell Is Tom Jones?

I was shackled with a
Charles Bukowski

Working Out

Van Gogh cut off his ear
gave it to a
prostitute
who flung it away in
extreme
disgust.

Charles Bukowski

Writing

often it is the only
thing
between you and
impossibility.
no drink,
no woman's love,
no wealth
can
match it.

Charles Bukowski

Yes Yes

when God created love he didn't help most
when God created dogs He didn't help dogs
when God created plants that was average
when God created hate we had a standard utility
when God created me He created me
when God created the monkey He was asleep
when He created the giraffe He was drunk
when He created narcotics He was high
and when He created suicide He was low

when He created you lying in bed
He knew what He was doing
He was drunk and He was high
and He created the mountains and the sea and fire at the same time

He made some mistakes
but when He created you lying in bed
He came all over His Blessed Universe.

Submitted by .eve.

Charles Bukowski

Young in New Orleans

starving there, sitting around the bars,
and at night walking the streets for
hours,
the moonlight always seemed fake
to me, maybe it was,
and in the French Quarter I watched
the horses and buggies going by,
everybody sitting high in the open
carriages, the black driver, and in
back the man and the woman,
usually young and always white.
and I was always white.
and hardly charmed by the
world.
New Orleans was a place to
hide.
I could piss away my life,
unmolested.
except for the rats.
the rats in my dark small room
very much resented sharing it
with me.
they were large and fearless
and stared at me with eyes
that spoke
an unblinking
death.

women were beyond me.
they saw something
depraved.
there was one waitress
a little older than
I, she rather smiled,
lingered when she
brought my
coffee.

that was plenty for
me, that was
enough.

there was something about
that city, though
it didn't let me feel guilty
that I had no feeling for the
things so many others
needed.
it let me alone.

sitting up in my bed
the lights out,

hearing the outside
sounds,
lifting my cheap
bottle of wine,
letting the warmth of
the grape
enter
me
as I heard the rats
moving about the
room,
I preferred them
to
humans.

being lost,
being crazy maybe
is not so bad
if you can be
that way
undisturbed.

New Orleans gave me
that.
nobody ever called
my name.

no telephone,
no car,
no job,
no
anything.

me and the
rats
and my youth,
one time,
that time
I knew
even through the
nothingness,
it was a
celebration
of something not to
do
but only
know.

Charles Bukowski