

there's no better fort
no better flag
no better woman
no better way; yet there's else to say --
there seems as much hell in it as
magic; death gets as close as any lover has,
closer,
you know it like your right toe
like a mark on your hand
like your daughter's name,
you know it like the face of the corner
newsboy,
and you sit down among flowers and houses
among dogs and death and a boil on the neck,
you sit down and do it again and again
the machine gun sounds by the window
and the people walk by
as you sit in your undershirt,
50, in an indelicate March,
and their faces look in and write the next 5
lines, thank you, friends,
and they walk by and say,
"That old man in the window, what's the matter with
him?"
-- fucked by the muse, friends,
thank you,
and I roll a cigarette with one hand
like the old bum
I am, and then thank and curse the gods
all alike,
lean forward
after a bit of a drink,
think of various good fighters
like poor Hem, poor Beau Jack, poor Sugar Ray,
poor Kid Gavilan, poor Villon, poor Babe, poor
me, hahaha,
I lean forward
little bits of redhot ash
falling to my wrists,
teeth into the word
crazy at the age of 50,
I send it
home.

Moonlight Ride

we came out of The Bridge
to go home
and before Neeli could start the car
Peter walked out and sat
on the front of the hood.
"What the hell?" I asked
and Neeli started up.

it was ten minutes after midnight
and we drove along
with Peter sitting on the hood.
we took a right at Hollywood Blvd.
and Peter waved to passing cars.
I started laughing
"That son of a bitch is crazy,
that son of a bitch is crazy!"
we passed 2 women sitting on a bus stop
bench
and they didn't even look at Peter
they looked at me laughing behind my window.
stupid bitches! they hadn't even noticed the
gargoyle on the hood.
Neeli took another right
and then Peter leaned back
and stretched out on top of the hood.
Neeli speeded up and Peter sat up again.
"No, no, Neeli, have mercy!
he can fall off in a flick
and be under the wheels
and we'll have to carry him back to Bonnie
and say, 'Bonnie, here's what's left of
Peter.' a dangly little red thing of
crushed arms and legs and guts and
balls...."
Neeli slowed down, we took 2 more rights
came back down
Kenmore.
Peter got off
I waved goodnight to him
and he walked into
The Bridge.
"That son of a bitch is crazy!"
I started laughing again
"that son of a bitch is crazy!"
and here we came past the 2 women
still sitting at the bus stop
bench
and they stared at me as I laughed behind
my window.
"Stupid bitches...they're
crazy!"

Neeli, for a change, didn't say
anything.

-- Charles Bukowski

Los Angeles, California