





So read: Volume 14, number 1 (issue
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CLICK CLOCK

Got a clock that clicks.
Little flip cards with
luminous digits that flop
over every 60 seconds.
Sounds like a pen
knife snapping shut.
Sometimes at nite (waiting
for sleep) I stare at
the numbers trying to
anticipate the exact instant
catch the digits
in mid flip
flop it's too quick.

-- Phil Weidman

North Highlands CA

LAYING OVER WAITING, CANAL STREET BUFFALO

waited here for
passage to the
west waited
in taverns in
dance halls a
murder a day on
the buffalo water
front. laying
over got to
get on that
steamer west
boozing by 11 the
fights, singing
make rome by
7. damp wind rum
red light on the
water. 500 ladies
of the evening
in silk every
night when
the sun goes.
o buffalo girls

WATER ALWAYS PLEASES CHILDREN

I remember running
miles holding the lines.
Water always pleases
children. The canalers
coming back from albany,
from utica boats full
of coal and wheat,
bricks and maplewood.
We'd follow up james
street near erie
boulevard it
pleases me to talk
about being young.
Did you know this was
all swamp once?
We loved to watch
the barges get weighed.
Winters robert and billy
gee roped the
canal from clinton
to salina and charged
for skating. Apple
trees grew along the
bank we were
tied to the water.
Lock port weed port.
Gas port middleport.
There was no word
for pollution

A PAIR OF GLASS SLIPPERS, DAINTY AND INTACT UNIQUE
AMONG RELICS FOUND AT A CONSTRUCTION SITE IN COLOGNE

slippers made from
two glass bottles

buried since the
third century

the small bones
of the woman the

glass hardly
scratched. an

apprentice twisted
the glass, cologne

hands trembling he
put the slippers

into earth with
his young wife so

her soul could
move comfortably,

not come back to
haunt him while

he still walked
in his own body

KHFAF LASURA

in a garden of
children chickens
pigs the old
woman 130 on
the porch in
abkhazia under
a baboska her
eyes like cold
water cigarette
in her lips i
first married at
16 picked tea in
the hills a glass
of vodka in the
morning wine by
noon she remembers
the big snow how
her husband left
to fight in crimea
i was the fastest
tea leaf picker
married again
during the turkish
war i started
smoking in 1911 at
70 i shovelled
snow from the roof
i really think i'm
140 she drinks
to the women all
over the world for
them not to work
too hard and be
happy with their
families

NANTUCKET

narwhal

travelling in small
packs of one sex
mainly one

long tusk on the
left in
males on the
right for
the lady

unicorns in the
moonlight

the tusk for
catching fish
raking the
sand for clams
breaking holes
or to protect
their women

or maybe none
of the above

NANTUCKET

what's indigestible
tough the whale
can't use it held
inside so long
too much will
kill him

ambergris floats
to the surface
or stinks

sometimes perfume
comes out of it

it's like what
happens with poems

TUNDRA. JULY

poppies sedges tussock
buttercups lemmings

horizontal light
on the rain
deer moss the

warble fly planting
eggs in the
caribou's belly

they'll grow there
for a year in

a month there'll
be snow in the

sky willow
thickets tall enough
now to hide a
moose in

THE FIRST WEEK THIS TIME

at breakfast we
talk of water
birds those
birds that sing
all night in
california in
texas i remember
how my old man
would shoot off
beebees he
never aimed at
anything we were
married 45 years
now i just watch
people listen
so i tell her
about my room
over otter creek
how i still keep
faucets dripping
she writes this
down on bread
that she swallows
whole

WALKING AROUND FEELING I DON'T REALLY BELONG HERE

when a man asks
what is this
water do you
know he wants to
write it on the
back of his
hand seine
he asks would
you spell it
so i can send
it to someone
in syria

SNOW, PACIFIC GROVE

Do you want to make
some snow balls

No, I want to make
the whole man

NEW HAMPSHIRE

white
birch light

willow
buds last

years leaves

green comes
moves slow

toward the
desk starts

in the
branches a

bird comes
into bending

this poem

BONNIE, BONNIE

black at the roots
trying to sing a
glad song gin

and tonic afternoons
her daughter falls
in a pool of water

her son doesn't
understand the men
moaning in his
father's pillows

phones haunt her
if her husband would
only get deaf faster

eye lashes glued on
top of her own for
thirty dollars

she opens fat thighs
to anyone and knows
that nothing anyone
can touch about her
is real

YOUR EYE'S LIKE A CAT'S,
LIKE CLEAR GREEN MARBLES

rain in the
elms dripping

brandy in 1
cup of spearmint

tea thursday
thursday making

love thru stretch
nylon panties

-- Lyn Lifshin

Niskayuna NY

cultural exchange

in the garment factory where I work
all the young Chinese guys are
kung-fu freaks
they're always kicking at each other
punching boxes & hissing & spitting
moving sideways like crabs
showing me Chinese movie magazines
pictures of kung-fu heroes
smeared with blood
kicking their front legs up
seven feet or more.

they take in two or three movies a week
& the plot is almost always the same:
there is a small Chinese village
it looks somehow like an old western town
& the place is being terrorized
by some Japanese villains
they go around grimacing, making ugly faces
killing women & children
like marauding Indians
until a slim hipped hero emerges &
kicks the shit out of hundreds of
fat Japs
& he never has to worry about
running out of bullets.

most of these guys are students
they study business or accounting
have their hair done
so it doesn't look so straight
go to ball games when they
run out of kung-fu movies.

their young anglo co-workers come in
carrying Lao-tzu & talking of
buddhism & last night's opium.

the failed novelist

he watches tv every night
I see the blue glow from my place
stays up till dawn
watching old movies
hosted by a used car salesman
talks about that salesman
like he was a drinking buddy.

spent years writing the novel
living the bohemian life in Paris
then came home & started collecting
rejection slips
doesn't write much anymore
says whenever he gets going
something snaps & he finds
he's writing the same thing
all over again.

in conversation he is sometimes brilliant
when he's had enough to drink
telling stories & cracking jokes
as much aglow as the tv.

he has this ninety year old aunt
living down the peninsula
can't ever remember talking to her
about anything but his bowels
she just assumed everyone was constipated
used to make his lunch
when he was a kid
never failed to give him the shits.

recently she sent him a care package
for his birthday
the usual t-shirts & drawers & socks
plus a bag of prunes &
a few hard boiled eggs.

she hoped all was well with him
the brief note said
& that he was regular.

the suffering artist

he gets drunk & starts insulting everyone
it's always the same
a bunch of people sitting around
drinking beer & talking
& suddenly he whips out his suffering
exposes his bleeding heart
like a pervert in a raincoat
there you are, look at that
I'm suffering, heh heh.

no one knows what he's talking about
no one else suffers
or at least not like he suffers
he's an artist
& that makes everything okay

all is permissible
waving his suffering in their faces
talking about it in words
that mean nothing to anyone
but himself.

they don't appreciate his genius
& he hammers away at them
until it's too much to bear
& people start getting up &
leaving.

they leave a few at a time
like in the late innings
of a one-sided ball game.

reading you my new poems

as you dried your hair
wanting you to hear them all
before you left for work
getting all excited & nervous
feeling somewhat ridiculous
my voice real loud like maybe
you were a hard of hearing old woman
over some back fence
& the poems were neighborhood gossip
juicy tales of infidelity & child beating
better than Readers' Digest & television
& you sitting there
brushing your hair
clothes pins in mouth
squinting your eyes so you could hear
taking it all in
as if my words really mattered
as if you couldn't wait
to get to a telephone
& repeat them
to all your friends.

Dumbarton Bridge

it's a drawbridge, one of the first bridges
to cross San Francisco Bay
looks like it was built with an erector set
& it's often closed, seldom used
if someone jumps from this bridge
it's a tragedy, not a statistic
they might even come back to walk it
on full moon nights.

the narrow macadam road leading to it
winds thru farm country
thru small redneck towns
that don't seem like California
at all.

you feel like you're driving
on a pontoon
the road cutting thru tidelands
the bay just a few feet
from your tires
gulls lining the road
like hitchhikers
thick cattails growing wild
an abandoned radio station.

a pontoon back thru time
Hank Williams on the radio
instead of Neil Young
crawfish pie more important
than acoustics.

you might want to stop &
get some cattails
see if they still keep
the mosquitoes away.

small press scene

the little mag as starlet couch
drop your drawers for the editor
& his casting crew
you'll make the big time
one day kid
meanwhile stretch out here
show your long legs off
tighten up your lines
don't worry about a thing
I been doing this 20 years
ain't seen nothing the likes
of you
relax, roll over there
show me some more leg
baby.

change of diet

I haven't been able to sleep
since she left
it could be habit
as much as love
or anything else.

the carcass of our life
is hung before my eyes
swinging from a hook
like a steer in a
slaughterhouse
& I keep turning it
inspecting it
tearing off hunks of meat
& jamming them inside
fisting them into my mouth
like a hungry kid.

no matter how much I eat
the bones never poke thru
the more meat I pull off
the more I see
the thing grows before my eyes.

I need a change of diet
need to stop feeding the thing
that's feeding on me.

-- Al Masarik

San Francisco CA

catalogue

zinnias

in
color tv
colors

weddings

sly
as
pigs
eating
cake
dressed
in
veils

girls

small
or beefy
in yellow
socks
& bows

beans

a row
of
green
baskets
& brooms

message
bent
chairs
a
fireplace
messages
from
walt
whitman
bricks
& mantle

work
trading
economy
cars
in dusty
lots

photo
hedge
(blossoms
cut off)
stone
house

gift
a purple
can opener
for
a king

making fun
big
long
elephant
tiny
green
tassel

lowly
following
the
brown dog
hanging
tongue
one room
or another

city scene
two
sailors
in a
boat
too big
for a
park
pond

vacant house
field mice
in the
glider
rats
in the
pantry
eating
curry

often
morning
seen
through
eggs
& birdcalls
willow
est

guidebook
in the
courtyard
of a
famous
inn
pigs
say
poetry
every
day

event
long
life
to
piranhas

put on boots
when
walking
far
in
legend
land

stare
showing
teeth
in
monkey
mask

axe
wood
green
wood
chips
fly

silence
sober
wits'
end
bowl
&
saucer

place of
business
a
spinster
packing
artichokes
makes
war
on
mice

cupboard
a jar
of
onion
relish
& turnips
& suet

egg
smashed
shell
red
stain
& yolk

asphalt
cat
cat
run
gray
man

store
a cabbage
&
corners
everywhere
a
box of
cherries
under
blue

layers
dark
whitish
dark
white
camphor
bird

preach
to saints
in tumbled
hair

majorette
one girl
in a
tall hat
shows a
pink
tongue
hustles
along
in a
parade

crowd
10 million
ants
in an
apricot

a lesson
today
many fish
tomorrow
a dozen
turtles

entryway
dark
hall
stained-
glass
windows
on the
stairs

"vogue" says
"run along
a mossy gutter
pricked with
red thorns
sing risky songs
for an otter
& help a cow
come home"

historical
novel
the young sire
on your
doorstep
yellow clothes
a crow's
plume

centre
street,
newton,
mass.
wandering
past
the
jewish
bakery
& the
home
for the
blind

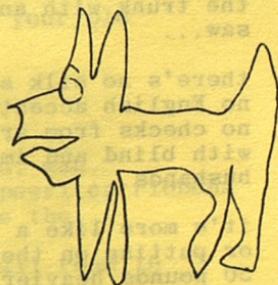
-- Gloria Kenison

Millis MA



CHARLES BUKOWSKI'S

55 BEDS IN THE SAME DIRECTION



200 years

sitting over this white sheet
sober at 4 p.m. in the afternoon,
I received a letter from a poet this morning
telling me that I was one of the most
important writers of the last
200 years.

well, now, one needn't believe that
especially if one has felt as I have
this past month,
walking about,
thinking,
surely I am going crazy,
and then thinking,
I can't write
anymore.

then I think of the factories
the production lines
the warehouses
the timeclocks,
overtime and layoffs
and flirtations with the Mexican girls
on the soldering line...
everything was handled for one,
there was always something to do,
there was more than enough to do,
and if you didn't keep up,
if you weren't clever and swift and
obedient
you were out with the sparrows and
the bums.

writing's different, you're laying out in the
white air, you're hanging from the wire,
you're sitting in a tree and they're getting at
the trunk with an electric
saw...

there's no silk scarf about one's neck,
no English accents,
no checks from aristocratic ladies in Europe
with blind and impotent
husbands...

it's more like a hockey game
or putting on the gloves with a man
50 pounds heavier and ten years
younger, or
it's like steering a ship through fog

while a mad damsel sucks at your
left ball.

and all along you know you've gotten away
with some tricks, quite obvious stuff that
you've been given immense credit for.
that you either wrote off-hand or
hardly meant or hardly cared
for.

well, it helps to be
lucky.

yet, in reverse, you have sometimes done
it as if you always knew how it was to be
properly done, and you knew it was there
and you knew that you were there
and that you had done it better,
in a way,
than anybody in a long time
or
than anybody about, and
you allowed yourself to feel
good about it
for a very short
time.

they put the strain on you
with statements about 200 years,
and when only one says it, that's all
right
but when 2 or 3 or 4 say it --
that's when they tend to lay you open for the
kookoo bin.
they tell you to give up cigarettes and
booze, and then they tell you that you
have 25 more years of good production and
then
ten years to loll about in your old
age
to suck upon
carrots, rewards and
memories.

Patchen's gone, we need you, man.
we all need you for our typewriter ribbons
and that feeling just above the
bellybutton --
knowing you are in some small room in
West Pasadena killing
flies with a torn
flyswatter.

they can kill you,
the praisers can kill you,
the young girls can kill you,
the blue-eyed boys in English I
who send warm letters
hand-written
on lined paper
can kill you,
and they're right:
2 packs a day and the bottle
can kill you
too.

of course,
anything can kill you
and something eventually
will. all I can say is that
today
I have just inserted a new
typewriter ribbon
into this old machine
and I am pleased with the way it
works. that makes for more than just an
ordinary day, thank
you.

finish

it's all over, she says,
laying on top of me,
it's all over, I can feel that it's
all over.

it is 11 a.m. and the sun is coming
through the curtains and in the upper left
corner of the room
a red spider builds a new
web.

you've got all these women primed,
she says,
you laying around on their beds and
smoking cigarettes and talking about
books and music, Virginia Woolf and
Bach and all that
shit.

but they don't kiss like I do, she continues,
they kiss like this...

like that? I ask. umm, that's pretty good.

like this, this is how they kiss, she says.

ah, that's nice, I say.

how about a shave? she asks.

o.k. but if you cut my throat I promise you I will strangle you to death before I die.

(she gets the things and comes back, lathers me and begins...)

you oughta let the hair grow more on the sides... you got those two holes there where you got teeth missing and your face goes in there. open your mouth. I want to see your teeth.

no.

come on, open your mouth.

no.

ooo, I cut you! I cut your throat.

it's all right.

now I've cut your throat on the other side.

it's all right, I do it myself.

you'll never know another woman like me.

I suppose not.

(she puts the things away and comes back...)

I've picked every blackhead out of you, now you'll be ready for the next woman.

I better get out of here, I say,
I haven't done any work
today.

here, let me comb your
hair. going to take me to the harness
races tonight?

they don't run until
September.

o. well, let's have a baby then.
a little Charles. wouldn't that be sweet,
running about?

I suppose. listen, I'll be back tonight,
9:30 o.k.?

o.k. look, that red spider gets closer and
closer...

don't worry, if he's male you won't have any
trouble.

don't forget, she says, to clean your teeth with
dental floss or you're going to lose the rest
of them.

sure, I say,
9:30.

55 beds in the same direction

these brilliant midnights
gabardine snakes passing through
walls, sounds
broken by car crashes of drunks in
ten year old cars

you know it's soiled again and then
again

it's in these brilliant midnights
while fighting moths and tiny
mosquitoes,
your woman behind you
twisting in the blankets
thinking you no longer love her;
that's untrue, of course,
but the walls are familiar and

I've liked walls
I've praised walls:
give me a wall and I'll give you a way --
that's all I asked in
exchange. but I suppose I meant:
I'll give you my
way.

it's very difficult to compose a
sonnet while sleeping in a flophouse with
55 snoring men
in 55 beds all pointed in the same direction.

I'll tell you what I thought:
these men have lost both chance and
imagination.

you can tell as much about men in the
way they snore as in the way they
walk, but then
I was never much at sonnets.

but once I thought I'd find all great men on
skid row
I once thought I'd find great men down there
strong men who had discarded society,
instead I found men who society had fiddled
away.

they were dull
inept and
still
ambitious.

I found the bosses more
interesting and more alive than the
slaves.

and that was hardly romantic. one would like things
romantic.

55 beds pointed in the same
direction and
I couldn't sleep
my back hurt
and there was a steady feeling on my
forehead like a piece of
sheet metal.

it really wasn't very terrible but somehow
it was very impossible.

and I thought,
all these bodies and all these toes and all
these fingernails and all these hairs in
assholes and all this stink

immaculate and accepted mauling of
things,
can't we do something with it?

no chance, came the answer, they don't
want it.

then, looking all about
all those 55 beds pointed in the same
direction
I thought
all these men were babies once
all these men were cuddly and
pink (except the black ones and the yellow ones
and the red ones and the others).

they cried and they felt,
had a way.

now they've become
sophisticated
phlegmatic
unwanted.

I got
out.

I got between 4 walls
alone.

I gave myself a brilliant
midnight. other brilliant midnights
arrived. it wasn't that
difficult.

but if they had been there:
(those men) I would have stayed there with
them.

if I can save you the same years of error
let me:

the secret is in the walls
listening to a small radio
rolling cigarettes
drinking

coffee
beer
water
grape juice

a lamp burning near you
it comes along --
the names
the history
a flow a flow
the downward glance of psyche
the humming effect
the burning of monkeys

the brilliant midnight walls:
there's no stopping even as your head rolls
under the bed and the cat buries
its excreta.

well, now that Ezra has died...

well, now that Ezra has died
we are going to have a great many poems written
about Ezra and what he meant and who he
was and how it went
and how it still is with
Ezra gone.

well, I was shackled with this alcoholic woman
for 7 years
and I kept packing home the CANTOS through the
door, and she kept saying,
"For God's sake, you got POUND again? You know
you can't read him. Did you bring any
wine?"

she was right. I couldn't read the CANTOS.
but I usually brought the wine
and we drank the
wine.

I don't know how many years I packed those
CANTOS back and forth from the downtown public
library
but they were always available in the shelves of
the Literature and Philology section.

well, he died, and I finally went from wine to
beer and now he's died,
I suppose he was a great writer
it's just that I'm so lazy in my reading habits,
I detest any sort of immaculate strain,
but I still feel rather warm for him and Ernie
and Gertie and James J., all that gang
gripping to world war one
making the 20's and 30's available
in their special way; then there was world war 2,
Ezra backed a loser and got 13 years in with the
loonies, and now he's dead at 87 and his mistress is
alone.

well, this is just another Ezra Pound poem
except to say
I could never read or understand the CANTOS
but I'll bet I carried them around more than
almost anybody, and all the young boys
are trying to check them out at the library
tonight.

tarot

the world has a rose in its mouth
the world has a tongue in its mouth
the world has blood in its mouth
the world has me in its mouth
and I taste like
vanilla, apricots and
dogshit.
when I met Gregory Corso
he read the tarot cards for me
and some good cards were pulled,
then he said, "now, this last card is very
important; it will really be
you," and he had many rings on his fingers
and he wore a medallion
and a bright red shirt
and he was high on wine and pills
and the world had a rose in its mouth
the world had a tongue in its mouth
the world had blood in its mouth
and me in its mouth
and Gregory held the cards to me
and I pulled one and it said --
THE EMPEROR.
I liked Gregory very much, a
very fine sort.
and then he gave a tarot reading for Jon
Webb
and one for Louise Webb
and one for this professor
but they weren't as lucky
and we drank and talked the remainder of the
night and then they left
and I slept on Jon and Louise's couch
and the next day I met Corso
and we drank in a bar on skid row across
from the train station
as two bums had a fistfight in the center of
the bar
and the bartender was a 280 pound woman
with the word LOVE

tattooed above her right wrist
as the world spit out the rose
and one of the bums fell to the floor
losing the fight
and as the other kicked him in the ribs
I bought Gregory another
drink. I liked him very much, a very
fine sort.

Eleven

now I've been to the tracks for 32 years
and I've seen some strange things
but the other day
it's the first race
they're putting them into the gate
I'm 3 or 4 away from the betting window
I want to bet five win
when the announcer says, "The flag's up!"
I am about to say, "Eleven,"
and this arm comes up from below me with a five
in its hand and the voice says,
"Eleven," and I grab the arm by the wrist
and look down and here's some guy on his hands and
knees, he's crawled up under me and
I hold his wrist and tell him,
"just wait a god damned minute!"
and then I say, "Eleven,"
and I get my ticket just as the buzzer rings
shutting off the machines
and I go out to watch the race.
the Eleven runs up to fourth around the final curve
then falls back.
I lost my five dollars
and I saved him five,
but I wondered what could look so good about a
fifteen to one shot
reading up off of an eight to one morning line.
this man actually crawled on his knees,
his hands and knees and came up under me
with a loser.
I almost hit him
but I got my ticket
and I saw the cop running up to ask this man
what he was doing
and then I went out to see the Eleven come up to
4th., then fall
back. I still don't understand
it. it was a bad bet.

I think the next time I see that track cop
I'll ask him what he did
with that guy.
I've never seen him before.
I know they put the Eleven horse back in the barn.
the winner paid \$11.40, which is reasonable,
and the girls were wobbling and shaking and looking
for a winner, but I tell you
after 32 years at the track
this guy crawling on his hands and knees to bet
a loser
was one of the saddest acts I have ever
witnessed
as the girls wobbled and shook and the sky
was almost
blue.

no bra, no panties...

the lights are on, the lights are
off, I am sitting in an apt. on
S. Oxford Ave., I am 53 years old
and I do not answer the door and the
telephone co. says they can't give me a
telephone, well, there are many things I can't get
and now that I think of it I really don't want a
telephone because whenever it rings it is usually
somebody I don't want to see who wants to come over
and we end up drinking until 4 a.m.

but the other day I did let one
in, she had on a light green smock
no bra no panties...
looked like she'd been living with a jazz musician
who was on the shit and beat her 5 or 6 times a
week.
anyhow, she sifted about the room, ass wobbling,
standing in front of the blinds
letting me look at her cunt and her ass
and she said she knew
Bob Dylan, Ginsberg, knew Kerouac too once, even
met Mailer (a real shit), and Capote (a real shit) and
she knew McClure and some of the Beatles and even
Rod McK., and she knew Neal too once, and Ken, and she
knew Edward A. and this guy on the Rolling Stones, she'd
met Burroughs, Captain Kangaroo and x-mayor Yorty...

"what can I do for you?" I asked.

she stood in front of the blinds and said,
"do you have a shower?"

she went in and took a shower and I presume she washed away Karl Shapiro, Native Diver, Jesus Christ, the Stanley Steamer, Ezra Pound, Sugar Ray Robinson, Tom Jones, and Mickey Mouse...

she then sat in a chair across from me:
"you got real soul."

"yeh?"

15 minutes went by. 30 minutes. then she said,
"what the hell's wrong with you?"

"I don't know."

"are you a fag?"

"I don't think so."

then she got up, pulled this cape out of her purse made out of tabby cats, put it on, faced me:

"well, I'm going..."

"can I drive you somewhere?"

"you're too drunk..."

then she walked over to the couch, unzipped me and gave me 8 or 9 sucks...

"I'm going," she said.

"got any cigarettes?" I asked.

she threw half a pack, soft red cover, down near my genitals. by the time I lit up she was gone. somehow I did feel a sense of loss. she knew the big ones, had known. she had come to see me. it was like a god being honored before he died. i understood her viewpoint. I had deserved her. well, next time around with the next one. I finished that cigarette and then I lit another, and by the time I had finished that one I was thinking of something else.

a bit of light for the toad:

friend, I thought you understood that the parties were for her, not me.

I dislike parties, you see I am not too happy with the human race

I've been crowded in with them for years in roominghouses, jails, railroad track gangs, the L.A. Country General Hospital, the slaughterhouses and the factories and the warehouses,

I've seen plenty of the crowd...

but she's country, she likes people, she likes to dance and flirt and be happy, play a bit of the sexpot...

she finds all manners of interesting things in people that I find to be just simple state old shit or just a drag-down come-on...

but I lived with her and loved her, anyhow, I understood that there was a 20 year's difference between us on viewpoint and experience

so I made certain sacrifices

one of them being "the party" ...

and for her there always seemed a reason for a

party: New Year's or a housewarming or her first

book, so I handed her a list of names and I said,

"Here, you call them. They're your friends, not mine."

by that I meant that she would enjoy them, I wouldn't.

the list contained editors, professors and tenth-rate

writers who had pushed their way through my door.

and there are tenth-rate writers, toad, plenty of them

and they live in Los Angeles and in Hollywood and

all over the world, even in Long Beach, California.

the parties, the meetings are for her, I don't want

these I don't need these.

when the boy from your English class danced cheek

to cheek with her when nobody else was dancing

that was for her, not for me;

when she got kissed under the stairway by the nice

guy who had been good enough to drive the mimeo editor

and his wife all the way to the party from Frisco

that was for her, not for me;

when I sat there and she sculpted your head making

you look like a Greek god

that was for her (and you) not for me.

take Neeli. when he comes on with that Groucho Marx

shot that you can smell coming and you can smell

long after it has left

she sits there and giggles and laughs,

"O, he's so funny, he's truly comic, I like Neeli."

well, she likes to be entertained and Neeli

entertains her.

I like to be entertained too
but Neeli is not for
me.

these are parties where there are ten men to every
woman. the men either don't have any women or
have enough sense to leave their own
at home. these are parties where the human spirit
hardly emerges as something redeemable.
these are parties where if you called these people
"friends" you'd truly be considered
idiotic -- friends don't try to put the make on your
girlfriend even when she has a nature
that either consciously or unconsciously lures them
to do it.

you tell me that I demonstrate a need for such people;
I tell you that these parties are for her,
not me.

at the last one when the music started and the games
began I quietly took a keg of beer and walked out
into the backyard and sat under a tree and drank my
beer and let all those in there work upon
each other.

I have always been a loner, toad.
it's stuck deep down by the bellybutton,
it will never change.

that I'm not as good as I think,
as you charge,
that's possible,
and that I've been writing a lot of beery crap
lately,
that's possible.
perhaps I have slipped, people do
slip...

but, toad, don't put me down as wanting those
parties,
I may not be as good as Ernie like you claim,
but the parties are for her
not me --
let's get that straight and keep that
straight...
you like to talk the football lingo:

I'm sorry I grabbed at your face mask, Scibelli,
I thought it was your
soul.

p.s. -- o yes, meanwhile, to keep you up to date:
the lady and I no longer live

together. she has her parties
and I have
myself. I read her this poem and she got
mad. she said, "People are going to think
you no longer see me." o.k., people, I
still see her but it's one on
one. o.k., toad, and thanks for the postcard
from Paris.

demise

the son of a bitch
was one of those soft left wing guys
belly like butter who
lived in a big house, he
was a businessman
and he told
her:
"he'll be your
demise."

imagine anybody saying
that: "demise."

we drove in from the track,
she'd lost \$57 and she said:
"you'd better stop for something to
drink."

she wore an old army jacket
and when I came out with the bottle
she took the cap off
and took a straight swallow right down --
a longshoreman's suicide gulp
tilting her head back under dark glasses.

my god, I thought.

a nice country girl like that
who loves to dance.

her 4 mad sisters will never forgive me
and that soft left wing son of a bitch
with a belly like butter (in that big
house) was
right.

-- Charles Bukowski

Los Angeles CA

My Wife

is outside calling the cat. She is barefoot and the wind under her dress holds it high on her thighs.

Grief has softened her pleas to a single cry. I hear her advance and retreat on the dark boulevard. She has one hand to her lips, echo-style.

Now the neighbors will think that she is near mad from malignancy or that our life together is empty as a cave.

The truth is that she admires the cat who eats here. He has balls like ornaments and is fierce in his affections.

A One-Armed Man

and his wife came into the doctor's office together and sat down on a small bench.

Pretty soon the receptionist brought some forms to fill out and he moved to a chair a few yards away.

"How old is he?" asked the nurse.
"Does he have insurance?"

His wife took the papers back and filled in some more blanks.

"How old are you, anyway?" she asked.

He held up five fingers and then two.

Ozymandias And Harriet

"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings,
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and . . ."
"Ozzie, the Thornberrys want us to make
four for bridge so stop standing around
in that pile of sand you call a back yard."
"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings,

Look on my works"

"Ozzie, David and Ricky just called from the malt shop. Do you really owe \$11.00 for banana splits? No wonder you're such a colossal wreck."

"My name is Ozymandias, king of"

"Ozzie, now the grass is dying in front, too. What will the neighbors say? Can't you do something? It's not like you held down a regular job, you just sit around the house in your cardigan."

"My name is Oz...."

"Ozzie, don't frown and wrinkle your lip that way. It looks like you've got gas."

Boundless and bare the level lawn stretches far away.

Folding The Panties

The washwater blond said that no self-respecting man would do his own laundry much less a woman's.

I rehearsed some face saving lines:

My wife is ill.

My old lady's sick.

My tramp is on the skids.

She interrupted, my excuses hung there edgewise:

Your woman's not home, neither, she said.

Out with a real man, that's where she is

and you with every panty she owns right there in your basket.

I smiled politely, strolled outside, sprinted for a phone.

She was there alright, the crafty bitch. But

I smelled the whiskey on her breath, heard

the bed slosh and then more pairs of boots

hit the floor than I cared to count.

On The Horn

You know the kind of day: till 3:00 a.m. with The Hooch and then up at 7:00 with The Fear. Even Miller's doesn't seem to be working this morning and I hate like hell to start the day with a Ramos Fizz

because I've taken The Reader's Digest quiz and I know what that means.

So I'm wandering around the house throwing up on my feet like a prince of a fellow when someone calls and lays waste my last name. I thought I'd heard them all: Kurch, Kohurchy, Kurtgah, and Kerchoo. but I've never heard anything like this.

It pisses me off, but while I'm looking among the pools of old booze in my brain for a smart-assed remark, he tells me what he wants:

The University of Southern California is having a month-long festival of the arts.. There will be music, dance, painting, mime, puppetry, and poetry.

"And when would you like to read, Ron?"

"How much are you paying?"

"We're not paying."

"I don't want much, but I've been betting on horses lately that drag themselves right off the track and into the Alpo can."

"We can't pay anybody, Koerzxjo. Everybody's volunteered so far. Do you really think you're better than" And then he lists some good people but also a collection of scumbags who publish each other's stuff and then put out anthologies of it called Whom's Who In Poems.

But I want to get off the horn and throw up in the toilet for a change because my feet are beginning to stick to the rug, so I say, "Okay, okay. I'll do it if I can read with somebody I know."

Now that's a good idea. First of all it's an excuse to go out for a few drinks afterward and second of all it's terrible to go to those things alone. I used to imagine that the nymphomaniacs tearing at their underwear would drown out the moaning virgins who had drowned out my deep, masculine voice.

What really happens is that you read, listen to the fishy looks, get a limp handshake or two and then stand there in the sun with the new editor of Menses Quarterly.

"You'd read alone, a different poet every day; I've got you down for a Monday morning."

Oh, Jesus. With a head like the "Hindenburg" the kind of shakes a Studebaker gets at 95 and two English I classes sitting there shoving pins in UCLA dolls.

"I can't do it, man. I'm sorry."

So it started: he called me mercenary and pig-headed and said that from now on my name was shit in this town. So I said that if my name was Shit, he'd pronounce it Shirt or Short.

And then he said something and then I said something and then I held the phone away from my ear like a mother-in-law joke and then I hung up.

I felt awful. Worse than before. And I knew I had two choices. I could call my mother or I could have a couple of drinks.

Now Locklin has told me more than once that it's never smart to call your mother, so I had a short one and then one a little longer. I was starting to get well when the phone rang.

"It's Gerry Locklin," he said, "It was either you or my mother."

"Trouble in Long Beach?"

"Out of the fucking blue. I was just sitting here having a fifth of Beaujolais to get my eyes open and the phone rang.

"Some culture-hustler on the line and the first thing he said was, "Is this Mr. Lapland? Mr. Gary Lapland?"

"Ron, from then on it was downhill all the way."

No Visible Means Of Support

The two blind students who are in love meet in the center of the drive,

canes tucked under their arms like crutches.

No, wait.

Another look and I see they do not
touch the ground after all,

only one another.

-- Ronald Koertge

Pasadena CA

the bells were ringing for me and my gal

i was reading a book yesterday
when the doorbell rang.
it was a bad book,
but it was necessary that i read it.
in order not to be interrupted
on those rare occasions
when i am trying to do some work,
i give almost nobody my address or telephone number.
nonetheless, the doorbell went ding-dong.

it was a hare-krishna.
he wore a shaved head, salmon negligee,
and bad skin.
i sympathize with bad skin,
having always had a bad skin myself,
but that does not oblige me to enjoy
the sight of it.

"happy tomorrow," he said,
"i have a book i'd like you to read."
it was the bhagavad-gita.
"i've read it," i said,
"i've read it five or six times;
i teach folklore-mythology."
"oh," he said, visibly disconcerted,
"then perhaps you'd care to make a contribution."
"do you recall," i asked, "the advice
that krishna tendered us concerning panhandlers?"
"no," he said, tugging at his pigtail.
"it's in the apocrypha," i said;
"a loose translation would be 'fuck 'em.'"
and i shut the door in his face.

a while later the doorbell rang again,
ding-dong-ding-dong.
it was a straight-looking young man

who nonetheless had bad skin.
"hello," he said, "my name is kenny warmth
and i've taken this time away from my family
to chat with my fellow christians concerning our Creator."

i stood there looking at him.

"you do believe in the Creator, don't you?"

"no," i said.

"you don't? may i inquire why?"

"no," i said, and i shut the door in his face.

then i went back to my book.
it was truly a bad book,
an urban-jewish-pseudo-radical-pseudo-joycean crapola.
my girlfriend was in the bedroom
flat on her ass with a hangover.
i don't think she'd ever had a classic one before
because she kept saying, "i think i have a brain tumor."
every fifty pages i would take a break
and bring her a dram of coke
and a fresh cold compress.

about page 375 the doorbell went crazy:
ding-dong-ding-dong-ding-dong-ding-dong-
ding-dong-ding-dong-ding-dong-ding-dong-
ding-dong-ding-dong-ding-dong-ding-dong-
ding-dong-ding-dong-ding-dong-ding-dong-

whatever maniac was out there had to be
operating under the delusion that he was
either zubin mehta, a fire truck, santa's sled,
or the whole fucking salvation army.

i was at that door in the wink of a sphincter.
it was another hare-krishna.
this one wore glasses along with
his shaved head, pigtail, salmon negligee,
and bad skin.

"happy tomorrow -- " he began.

i won't reproduce here our somewhat one-sided
conversation. let it merely be suggested
that his departure was not long delayed
and that, from the shrinking terror in his eyes,
i think it safe to rack up one more convert
to the manichaeian view of life.

a letter to mike and lyn

my friends, do you remember how obese
i grew this summer,
dining copiously with you in bad kreuznach
on beer, wine, and sausages, potato salad,
wine,
and beer?

and do you remember how i pledged
that i would lose that weight on my return?
i think i mentioned three-mile runs each morning.
i think i said that i would send you
a shapshot of my depleted waistline.

well, i did run three miles one morning,
but that very afternoon i read about
a plane crash in alaska.
it seems the only victim to survive
was a fat man.
the others either starved or couldn't stand the cold.

and on another page i read about
the food shortage that threatens us,
and, on another, how our money ain't worth shit.
and it occurred to me
that soon enough we'll all be on a diet,
not from choice but from necessity,
and when the cold winds blow,
and there's no gas with which to light the fire,
a bit of meat upon the bones will be a comfort.

enclosed you will not find the promised "after" photograph.
i've put on five more pounds since my return.

the good old days

we were necking in my birdshit volkswagen
in the fifty-cent lot across from the campus.
she was a willowy blonde with a skirt
that slipped easily up above her dark pantyhose.
she looked about eighteen, but was actually twenty-seven
with three kids and ten years of marriage beneath her belt.

she didn't want to do it on a first date,
but still, coming up for air,
she said, with an air of great sophistication,
"god, i feel like we're back in high school."
"what was wrong with high school?" i said.

Then, because as it turned out she had misplaced her
car-keys,
we had to go back to the school
to search for them, and, finally, to call her husband
to come pick her up.
i was very drunk, very very very drunk,
and i insisted on holding her hand
in front of the indifferent janitors
and on feeling her up
while she was on the phone to her old man.
"holding hands," she said;
"jesus, i haven't held hands with anyone since high school."
"what was so bad about high school?" i said.

back in the parking lot, i knew i should hightail
it out of there, but, drunk as i was,
and so taken with her old-young sensuality,
i dallied to make protestations of a burgeoning affection.

"jesus christ." she said, "i haven't ..."
"yeah," i said, "i know: you haven't had anything
so gauche said to you since high school."

it was at that point that her husband's datsun
(she was driving the lincoln)
burst upon us in the nearly empty lot.
she leapt from the v.w. and i tore ass
(as we said in high school)
out of there,
checking in my rear-view mirror to make sure
homicide was not about to be committed upon her
or, worse yet, me,
and recalling, from the prelapsarian recesses,
a few of the things that were bad about high school.

an anti-semite for a saturday

i was getting a little work done for once on a saturday
afternoon in the office when, sure enough, hartz,
the guy from the office across the hall, had to
appear in the doorway.

"awful quiet around here today," he said.

"yeah," i said, "it's a nice change."

"how can you work without a little background noise?"

"i don't know," i said, "but i can."

"quiet as a tomb," he said. "i have to have a little
background noise."

"i don't," i said.

"i do," he said.

"look," i said, "you're probably a member of the younger generation. you probably grew up listening to little richard while you memorized your latin conjugations."

"no," he said, "i'm the same age you are."

"that's interesting," i said.

"warm in here," he said.

"is it?"

"sure is. can't you tell?"

"look, hartz," i said, "i'm basically an insensitive person."

"oh," he said, and wandered across the hall to his own office.

i was no sooner involved again in my writing than he was back in the doorway.

"i suppose you wonder what i'm doing over here on a saturday afternoon?"

"okay," i said. "i give up: what are you doing?"

"my wife has the flu and we had tickets to the drama department musical. i came over to sell them back. only took me a couple of minutes to unload them."

"i've never been to a play here," i said; "i keep meaning to go."

"how long have you been here?"

"nine years," i said.

he stood there looking at me for about thirty seconds. then he said, "like a tomb here. i don't know how you can work."

i'm going to murder him, i thought. i'm going to rise up from this swivel chair and strangle him with these bare ink-stained hands.

"awful warm," he said.

i started to get up from the chair. i'll cut up his
dead body, i thought, and i'll feed it in little
pieces to jacquith's piranha"

the phone rang. i swung around to answer it, and hartz
went off down the corridor with a wave.

it was my girlfriend. "i was wondering," she said, "if
you'd decided what you want me to fix for dinner."

"yes," i said. "a nice loin of new york academic jew."

-- Gerald Locklin

Long Beach CA

Hunch

There's this girl
with blond hair
parted down the center
of her head.

Sometimes she wears
it straight,
sometimes back,
less often circled
in a bun or
braided.

She never wears bangs
or eye makeup.

Charlene

We had lunch
together. I told her
about myself.
I even told her
how I had
watched her,
knew her habits,
the different ways
she wore her hair.

The years have gone
beyond computation
and where you are now
I can't imagine.

but I will always
remember the way
you walked in pink
shoes across the lake.

She was surprised.
She smiled.
She had a dimple
on the right side
of her mouth.
None on the other.

Honesty of Action

We have that only truly beautiful
thing: honesty of action. This means
what we mean, what we do.

I know your knock at my door.
I answer it if I can move
that far in that direction at that time.

When I reach for you, you may
walk away. When I find a bone
in my soup I either eat it

or leave it in the bowl or
place it in your bowl for you to eat.
If neither of us eats it we throw it away.

Dime

When my father was seven
his brother, my uncle,
was born. My father sold
his brother to his uncle
for a dime.

For as long as I can remember
my father has told me
how hard things were
in those days.

-- William Virgil Davis

Oak Park IL

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