

ACTION DOWN ON THE CORNER

a man hit a pregnant woman
he seemed to know her
knocked her down on the sidewalk
outside the Mexican food place
she was in a black dress with
orange dots
she fell on her back and screamed
she had a bloody nose
and the man was fat
in workingman's clothes
and a crowd gathered:
"you son of a bitch, what did you
hit her for?"
"we oughta cut your balls off!"
he just stood there
looking down at her
and she sobbed
the blood from her nose
running into her
mouth.
the people gathered
there must have been
50 people.
"let's waste the son of
a bitch!"
"yeah!"
just then an old battered black car
with headlights on
at noon
came down the street at
70 m.p.h.
swerving to avoid a car
he flashed by with 2 wheels
momentarily on the
curbing near the
crowd.
"SHIT!"
"JESUS!"
then he got the wheels down
fired through the
red light
without hitting a thing and
was gone.
when the people recovered
and looked about again
the pregnant woman
was still on the
sidewalk
she almost looked
asleep
but the man was
gone.

"the son of a bitch got
away," somebody
said.
one man glanced toward the
sky
as if looking for an invasion
from space.
the cook from the Mexican cafe
stood in his
dirty apron.
then somebody moved forward and
helped the pregnant woman
to her feet.

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 us saying 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 always 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 two trips 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

San Pedro CA