we were some gang in that death ballet

we were magnificent

we gave them better than they asked

yet

we gave them nothing.

DEAR PAW AND MA

my father liked Edgar Allen Poe and my mother liked The Saturday Evening Post and she died first the priest waving a smoking stick above her casket and my father followed a year or so later and in that purple velvet his face looked like ice painted yellow.

my father never liked what I wrote: "people don't want to read this sort of thing."

"yes, henry," said my mother, "people like to read things that make them happy."

they were my earliest literary critics and they were both right.

> - Charles Bukowski San Pedro CA