

from his coat pocket, go into the cave of the chef's cocina, help the chef celebrate his ghost dance by beating rhythm breaks on pots & pans, weaving in the fry smoke, sneaking bits from the chef's breakfast plates lined up behind the kid waiter scared shitless in the corner watching buford & the chef's performance.

BUFORD & THE WALL STREET TRADER

buford finds a wall street journal in the trash bin, circles the hang seng index on the hong kong exchange with the barkeep's pen.

a real tweedy trader sits down, takes an interest, buys buford a beer, whaddya think today? buford points out an undecipherable chinese stock the trader turns the next day into a couple thou profit. he's back asking for buford. dunno, says the bartender. taking another cruise to the bahamas? economic summit? buford could be most anywhere, but i wouldn't wait around.

BUFORD AT THE COUNTY HOSPITAL

i think old buford goes for sour mash like a pig goes for oreo cookies. the nurse seems sensitive to my mission, leaving us alone in his room as i slip a pint of 100-proof beneath his pillow. buford's grip is strong, almost fierce, like an eagle clamps talons on windswept rock. i pour buford a taste in a dixie cup. he whoops & cackles, says something about how you can put lipstick on a pig but it's still a hog. i quiet the old man with another sip, turn off my pocket recorder, i want nothing to get in the way of my ears, trust heart & memory alone to record buford's last stories before the nurse comes back & breaks the spell & the dreary business of dying begins again.

— Ray Clark Dickson

Shell Beach CA

EMBARRASSED

Embarrassed to be watering petunias,
Ted turns his back to passing cars.