

spot, and ever since then i've kept my stash of soft drinks hidden."

she looks around the room for approbation.

WE LIVE IN AN IMPERFECT WORLD

she doesn't really want me, but she doesn't want anyone else to have me either.

thus, she can sense when there's a potential rival in the room, and she moves quickly to my side, asserting her ownership.

i find it more touching than annoying. it's the closest she can bring herself to an expression of affection.

SELECTIVE STUDYING

those who would write like bukowski know that he, as a young man, loved classical music, wrote every day, read world literature, supported himself without parental or government assistance, and drank a lot.

but when it comes to modeling themselves on him as writers they tend to forget everything except the drinking.

FATHERLY CONCERN IS SOMETIMES WARRANTED

t.s. eliot's father died in 1919 considering his son a failure who had wasted his talents.

war had prevented eliot from returning from england to harvard to make his oral defense of his dissertation in philosophy, and anyway he had already made his decision to abandon academic life for poetry.

i suppose in hindsight we could snicker at his dad, but, you know, eliot did have extraordinary intellectual abilities and

academic preparation and if he hadn't
(as is true in the vast majority of cases)
had genuine literary genius as well,
his choice of vocations would in fact have
been a tragic waste.

MY FATHER-IN-LAW'S BRIEF CASE

it has a strong tobacco odor.

i suspect he used to smuggle
cuban cigars back from mexico in it.
just for his own use.
maybe some jewelry for
his wife and little girl.
a middle-class salesman
of agricultural and office supplies,
he was above suspicion.

he loved his daughter.
he loved his granddaughter.
he always dealt with me
man to man. he was
a gracious host.

i'm glad my mother-in-law
offered his brief case to me.

TWO KINDS OF KINDNESS

the old guy at the y
who swims about the same time i do
and never fails to show up with
a new joke or two
asks me if i have any trips coming up,

and i say, yes, as a matter of fact, i'm
flying out with my family next week
for a month or so in england,

and he immediately becomes concerned
with how we are going to get to
l.a.x. and offers to drive us all
there and pick us up on our return.

i didn't even know his name.
he writes that and his phone number down
for me in case the plans i have
for a buddy to take us fall through.