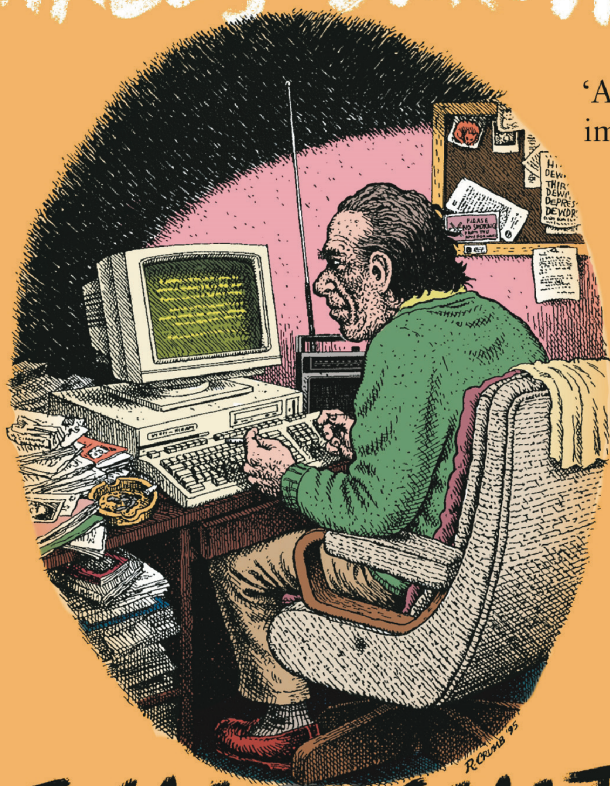


CHARLES BUKOWSKI



'A literary
immortal'
Time

THE MATHEMATICS OF THE BREATH AND THE WAY

The Writing Life

MANIFESTO



Upon the Mathematics of the Breath and the Way

I was going to begin this with a little rundown on the female but since the smoke on the local battlefield has cleared a bit I will relent, but there are 50,000 men in this nation who must sleep on their bellies for fear of losing their parts to women with wild-glazed eyes and knives. Brothers and sisters, I am 52 and there is a trail of females behind me, enough for five men's lives. Some of the ladies have claimed that I have betrayed them for drink; well, I'd like to see any man stick his pecker into a fifth of whiskey. Of course, you can get your tongue in there but the bottle doesn't respond. Well, haha among the trumpets, let's get back to the word.

The word. I'm on my way to the track, opening day at Hollywood Park, but I'll tell you about the word. To get the word down proper, that takes courage, seeing the form, living the life, and getting it into the line. Hemingway takes his critical blows now from people who can't write. There are hundreds of thousands of people who *think* they can write. They are the critics, the bellyachers and the mockers. To point to a good writer and call him a hunk of shit helps satisfy their loss as creators, and the better a man gets the more he is envied and, in turn, hated. You ought to hear them razz and demean Pincay and Shoemaker, two of the greatest jocks ever to steer a horse. There's a little man outside our local tracks who sells newspapers and he says, "Get your paper, get your info on Shoemaker the Faker." Here he is calling a man who has ridden more winners than any other jock alive (and he's still riding and riding well) and here's this newspaper guy selling papers for a dime and calling the Shoe a fraud. The Shoe is a millionaire, not that that's important, but he did get it with his talent and he could buy this guy's newspapers, all of them, for the rest of this guy's life and into a half-dozen eternities. Hemingway, too, gets the sneers from the newspaper boys and girls

of writing. They didn't like his exit. I thought his exit was quite fine. He created his own mercy killing. And he created some writing. Some of it depended too much on style but it was a style he broke through with; a style that ruined thousands of writers who attempted to use any portion of it. Once a style is evolved it is thought of as a simple thing, but style not only evolves through a method, it evolves through feeling, it is like laying a brush to canvas in a certain way and if you're not living along the path of power and flow, style vanishes. Hemingway's style did tend to vanish toward the end, progressively, but that's because he let down his guard and let people do things to him. But he gave us more than plenty. There is a minor poet I know who came over the other night. He is a learned man, and clever, he lets the ladies support him so you know he's good at something. He is a very powerful figure of a man growing soft around the edges, looks quite literary and carries these black notebooks around with him and he reads to you from them. This boy told me the other night, "Bukowski, I can write like you but you can't write like me." I didn't answer him because he needs his self-glory, but really, he only *thinks* he can write like me. Genius could be the ability to say a profound thing in a simple way, or even to say a simple thing in a simpler way. Oh, by the way, if you want to get one angle on a minor writer, it is one who throws a party or gets one thrown for him when his book comes out.

Hemingway studied the bullfights for form and meaning and courage and failure and the way. I go to boxing matches and attend horse races for the same reason. There is a feeling at the wrists and the shoulders and the temples. There is a manner of watching and recording that grows into the line and the form and the act and the fact and the flower, and the dog walking and the dirty panties under the bed, and the sound of the typewriter as you're sitting there, that's the big sound, the biggest sound in the world, when you're getting it down in your way, the right way, and no beautiful woman counts before it and nothing that you could paint or sculpt counts before it; it is the final art, this writing down of the word, and the reason for valor

is all there; it is the finest gamble ever arranged and not many win.

Somebody asked me, "Bukowski, if you taught a course in writing what would you ask them to do?" I answered, "I'd send them all to the racetrack and force them to bet \$5 on each race." This ass thought I was joking. The human race is very good at treachery and cheating and modifying a position. What people who want to be writers need is to be put in an area that they cannot maneuver out of by weak and dirty play. This is why groups of people at parties are so disgusting: all their envy and smallness and trickery surfaces. If you want to find out who your friends are you can do two things: invite them to a party or go to jail. You will soon find that you don't have any friends.

If you think I am wandering here, hold your tits or your balls or hold somebody else's. Everything fits here.

And since I must presume (I haven't seen any of it) that I am being honored and criticized in this issue I should say something about the little magazines, although I might have said some of it elsewhere?—at least over a row of beer bottles. Little magazines are useless perpetuators of useless talent. Back in the '20s and '30s there was not an abundance of littles. A little magazine was an event, not a calamity. One could trace the names from the littles and up through literary history; I mean, they began there and they went *up*, they became. They became books, novels, things. Now most little magazine people begin little and remain little. There are always exceptions. For instance, I remember first reading Truman Capote in a little named *Decade*, and I thought here is a man with some briskness, style and fairly original energy. But basically, like it or not, the large slick magazines print a much higher level of work than the littles—and most especially in *prose*. Every jackass in America pumps out countless and ineffectual poems. And a large number of them are published in the littles. Tra la la, another edition. Give us a grant, see what we are doing! I receive countless little magazines through the mail, unsolicited, un-asked-for. I flip through them. Arid vast nothingness. I think that the miracle of our times is that so many people can write

down so many words that mean absolutely nothing, but they can do it, and they do it continually and relentlessly. I put out 3 issues of a little, *Laugh Literary and Man the Humping Guns*. The material received was so totally inept that the other editor and myself were forced to write most of the poems. He'd write the first half of one poem, then I'd finish it. Then I'd go the first half of another and he'd finish it. Then we'd sit around and get to the names: "Let's see, whatta we gonna call this cocksucker?"

And with the discovery of the mimeo machine everybody became an editor, all with great flair, very little expense and no results at all. *Ole* was an early exception and I might grant you one or two other exceptions if you corner me with the facts. As per the better printed (non-mimeo) mags one must grant *The Wormwood Review* (one-half hundred issues now) as the outstanding work of our time in that area. Quietly and without weeping or ranting or bitching or quitting or pausing, or without writing braggadocio letters (as most do) about being arrested for driving drunk on a bicycle in Pacific Palisades or corn-holing one of the National Endowment for the Arts editors in a Portland hotel room, Malone has simply gone on and on and compiled an exact and lively talent, issue after issue after issue. Malone lets his issues speak for themselves and remains invisible. You won't find him beating on your door one night with a huge jug of cheap port wine saying, "Hey, I'm Marvin Malone, I printed your poem *Catshit in a Bird's Nest* in my last issue. I think I'm gonna kick me some ass. Ya got anything for me to fuck around here?"

A vast grinding lonely hearts club of no-talents, that's what the littles have evolved to, with the editors a worse breed than the writers. If you are a writer seriously interested in creating art instead of foolishness, then there are, at any moment, a few littles to submit to, where the editing is professional instead of personal. I haven't read the mag that this piece is submitted to but I would suggest, along with *Wormwood*, as decent arenas: *The New York Quarterly*, *Event*, *Second Aeon*, *Joe DiMaggio*, *Second Coming*, *The Little Magazine*, and *Hearse*.

"You're supposed to be a writer," she says, "if you put all the energy into writing that you put into the racetrack you'd be great." I think of something Wallace Stevens once said, "Success as a result of industry is a peasant's ideal." Or if he didn't say that he said something close to that. The writing arrives when it wants to. There is nothing you can do about it. You can't squeeze more writing out of the living than is there. Any attempt to do so creates a panic in the soul, diffuses and jars the line. There are stories that Hemingway would get up early in the morning and have all his work done at noon, but though I never met him personally I feel as if Hemingway were an alcoholic who wanted to get his work out of the way so he could get drunk.

What I have seen evolve in the littles with most new and fresh talent is an interesting first splash. I think, ah, here's finally one. Maybe we have something now. But the same mechanism begins over and over again. The fresh new talent, having splashed, begins to appear everywhere. He sleeps and bathes with the goddamned typewriter and it's running all the time. His name is in every mimeo from Maine to Mexico and the work grows weaker and weaker and weaker and continues to appear. Somebody gets a book out for him (or her) and then they are reading at your local university. They read the 6 or 7 good early poems and all the bad ones. Then you have another little magazine "name." But what has happened is that instead of trying to create the poem they try for as many little mag appearances in as many little magazines as possible. It becomes a contest of publication rather than creation. This diffusion of talent usually occurs among writers in their twenties who don't have enough experience, who don't have enough meat to pick off the bone. You can't write without living and writing all the time is not living. Nor does drinking create a writer or brawling create a writer, and although I've done plenty of both, it's merely a fallacy and a sick romanticism to assume that these actions will make a better writer of one. Of course, there are times when you have to fight and times when you have to drink, but these times are really anti-creative and there's nothing you can do about them.

Writing, finally, even becomes *work* especially if you are trying to pay the rent and child support with it. But it is the finest work and the only work, and it's a work that boosts your ability to live and your ability to live pays you back with your ability to create. One feeds the other; it is all very magic. I quit a very dull job at the age of 50 (twas said I had security for life, ah!) and I sat down in front of the typewriter. There's no better way. There are moments of total flaming hell when you feel as if you're going mad; there are moments, days, weeks of no word, no sound, as if it had all vanished. Then it arrives and you sit smoking, pounding, pounding, it rolls and roars. You can get up at noon, you can work until 3 a.m. Some people will bother you. They will not understand what you are trying to do. They will knock on your door and sit in a chair and eat up your hours while giving you nothing. When too many nothing people arrive and keep arriving you must be cruel to them for they are being cruel to you. You must run their asses out on the street. There are some people who pay their way, they bring their own energy and their own light but most of the others are useless both to you and to themselves. It is not being humane to tolerate the dead, it only increases their deadness and they always leave plenty of it with you after they are gone.

And then, of course, there are the ladies. The ladies would rather go to bed with a poet than anything, even a German police dog, though I knew one lady who took very much delight in claiming she had fucked one President Kennedy. I had no way of knowing. So, if you're a good poet, I'd suggest you learn to be a good lover too, this is a creative act in itself, being a good lover, so learn how, learn how to do it very well because if you're a good poet you're going to get many opportunities, and though it's not like being a rock star, it will come along, so don't waste it like rock stars waste it by going at it rote and half-assed. Let the ladies know that you are really there. Then, of course, they will keep buying your books.

And let this be enough advice for a little while. Oh yes, I won \$180 opening day, dropped \$80 yesterday, so today

is the day that counts. It's ten minutes to eleven. First post 2 p.m. I must start lining up my horse genes. There was a guy out there yesterday with a heart machine attached to himself and he was sitting in a wheelchair. He was making bets. Put him in a rest home and he'll be dead overnight. Saw another guy out there, blind. He must have had a better day than I did yesterday. I've got to phone Quagliano and tell him I've finished this article. Now there's a very strange son of a bitch. I don't know *how* he makes it and he won't tell me. I see him at the boxing matches sitting there with a beer and looking very relaxed. I wonder what he's got going. He's got me worried. . . .

Small Press Review, Vol. 4, no. 4, 1973

TALES



A Dollar for Carl Larsen

dedicated to Carl Larsen
owed to Carl Larsen
paid to Carl Larsen

... it was a lazy day and a lousy day to work, and it seemed that even spiders hadn't thrown out their webs. And when I got to the railroad yards I found out that Henderson was the new foreman.

The old Mexican, Al or Abe or somebody had retired or died or gone insane. The boys were matching pennies down by the barn when Henderson called me over.

"Gaines," he said, "Gaines, I understand you're somewhat of a playboy. Well, that's all right. I don't mind a little horseplay now and then, but we'll get our work done first and then we'll play."

"Just like recess at school, eh, coach?"

Henderson put his face real close to mine. I put mine real close to his.

"Or haven't you *been* to school, Hendy?"

I could look right down into his red mouth and his frog jaws as he spoke: "I can tie the can to you, boy."

"Proving what?" I asked.

"Proving you are out of position."

Which was a pretty good answer, and a pretty good criticism: I was always out of position.

I took a nickel out of my pocket and flipped it to the cement where the boys were lagging to the line. They stood back stunned, looking from the nickel to me. I turned and walked the hell out of there.

II

I lay up in my room and studied the *Racing Form* for a couple of hours and knocked off half a bottle of leftover wine. Then I got into my '38 Ford and headed for the track. . . .

I wrote the morning line down on my program and

walked over to the bar where I noticed a big blonde about 35, and alone—well, about as alone as a big babe like that can get in amongst 8,000 men. She was trying her damndest to burst and pop out of her clothes, and you stood there watching her, wondering which part would pop out first. It was sheer madness, and every time she moved you could feel the electricity running up the steel girders. And perched on top of all this madness was a face that really had some type of royalty in it. I mean, there was a kind of stateliness, like she'd lived beyond it all. I mean, there were some women who could simply make damned fools out of men without making any type of statement, or movement, or demand—they could simply stand there and the men would simply feel like damned fools and that was all there was to it. This was one of those women.



I looked up from my drink as if it didn't matter and as if she were anybody else, and as if I were a pretty jaded type (which, to tell the truth, I was) and said, "How you been doin' . . . with the ponies, I mean?"

"All right," she said.

I'd expected something else. I don't know what. But the "all right" sounded good, though.

I was about half-gone on the wine and felt I owned the world, including the blonde.

"I used to be a jockey," I told her.

"You're pretty big for a jock."

"210, solid muscle," I said.

"And belly," she said, looking right above my belt.

We both kinda laughed and I moved closer.

"You want the winner of the first race? To kinda start you off right?"

"Sure," she said, "sure," and I just felt that big hip-flank touch the upper side of my leg a moment and I felt on fire.

I smelled perfume, and imagined waterfalls and forests and throwing scraps to fine dogs, and furniture soft as clouds and never awakening to an alarm clock.

I drained my drink. "Try six," I said. "Number six: *Cat'shead*."

"*Cat'shead*?"

Just then somebody tapped me. I should say—rapped me on the back of one of my shoulder blades.



"Boy," this voice said, "get lost!"

I stared down into my drink waiting for *her* to send this stranger away.

"I said," the voice got a little louder, "run along and play with your marbles!"

As I stared down into my drink I realized it was empty.

"I don't like to play marbles," I told the voice.

I motioned to the bartender. "Two more—for the lady and myself."

I felt it in my back then: the sure, superior nudge of a peerless and no doubt highly efficient automatic.

"Learn," said the voice, "learn to *like* to play marbles!"

"I'm going right away," I said. "I brought my agate. I hear there's a big game under the grandstand."

I turned and caught a look at him as he slid into my seat, and I'd always thought *I* was the meanest-looking son of a bitch in the world.

"Tommy," I heard her tell him, "I want you to play a hundred on the nose for me."

"Sure. On who?"

"Number six."

"Number SIX??"

"Yes: six."

"But that stiff is 10 to 1!"

"Play it."

"O.K., baby, O.K., but . . ."

"Play it."

"Can I finish my drink?"

"Sure."

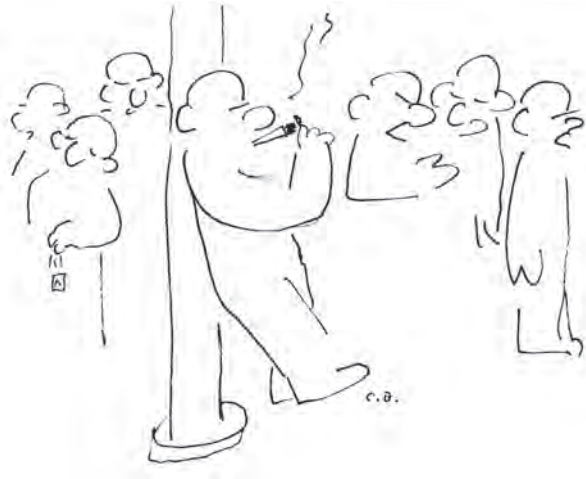
I walked over to the two-dollar win window.

"Number six," I said, "once."

It was my last two dollars. . . .

Six paid \$23.40.

I watched my horse go down into the Winner's Circle like I do all my winners, and I felt as proud of him as if I had ridden him or raised him. I felt like cheering and telling everybody he was the greatest horse that had ever lived, and I felt like reaching out and grabbing him around the neck, even though I was two or three hundred feet away.



But I lit a cigarette and pretended I was bored. . . .

Then I headed back to the bar, kind of to see how she took it, intending to stay pretty far away. But they weren't there.

I ordered a double backed by a beer, drank both, ordered up again and drank at leisure, studying the next race. When the five-minute warning blew, they still hadn't shown and I went off to place my bet.

I blew it. I blew them all. They never showed. At the end of the last race I had 35 cents, a 1938 Ford, about two gallons of gas, and one night's rent left.

I went into the men's room and stared at my face in disgust. I *looked* like I knew something, but it was a lie, I was a fake and there's nothing worse in the world than when a man suddenly realizes and admits to himself that he's a phony, after spending all that time up to then trying to convince himself that he wasn't. I noticed all the sinks and pipes and bowls and I felt like them, worse than them: I'd rather be them.

I swung out the door feeling like a hare or a tortoise or something, or somebody needing a good bath, and then I felt her swinging against me like the good part of myself

suddenly coming back with a rush. I noticed how green her dress was, and I didn't care what happened: seeing her again had made it O.K.

"Where've you been?" she said hurriedly. "I've been looking all over for you!"

"What the hell is this?" I started to say, "I've been looking—"

"Here comes *Tommy!*" she halted me, and then I felt something in my hand and then she walked out, carefully, slowly to meet him. I jammed whatever it was into my pocket and walked out toward the parking lot. I got into my car, lit my next-to-last cigarette, leaned back and dropped my hand into my pocket.

I unfolded five one hundred dollar bills, one fifty, two tens, and a five. "Your half," the note said, "with thanks." "Nicki." And then I saw the phone number.

I sat there and watched all the cars leave, I sat there and watched the sun completely disappear; I sat there and watched a man change a flat tire, and then I drove out of there slowly, like an old man, letting it hit me, inch by inch, and scared to death I'd run somebody over or be unable to stop for a red light. Then I thought about the nickel I'd thrown away and I started to laugh like crazy. I laughed so hard I had to park the car. And when the guy who'd changed his flat came by I saw his white blob of a face staring and I had to begin all over again. I even honked my horn and hollered at him.

Poor devil: he had no soul.

Like me and one or two others. I thought about Carl Larsen down at the beach rubbing the sand from between his toes and drinking stale beer with Curtis Zahn and J.B. May. I thought about the dollar I owed Larsen. I thought maybe I'd better pay it. He might tell J.B.

Unpublished

Hell Yes, the Hydrogen Bomb

He felt tremendously bored and disgusted; his back ached from being in bed all morning. He folded the paper and threw it into the cubbyhole behind his desk. He tried the second best thing: he got up and opened all the drawers, took the papers out, and spread them on the bed. Sometimes on things you started and couldn't finish, sometimes you took two or three things like that, put them together, and by knocking off the edges you could get an unusual story—they'd never know, they'd think it was the same thing straight through. As long as the lines had blood in them. . . . Sometimes you could take all the lines that had blood in them . . . or you could get away from subjectiveness by making the musician a barber, and your lines of bemoaning would be forgiven because they'd think it was *he* instead of *you*.

He lit a cigarette and began to read the various sheets. There were dozens of them—wild scrawlings, neat printing, pencil, ink—and he'd forgotten most of them, and reading them again, there was something hellishly funny in them—one grows, you know, gets over extravagances. The drawers were always full because he was afraid to throw the stuff into the wastebaskets, and when he did, he tore the papers into very small sections and then swirled them all around with his hands:

. . . there's no telling when something will break. You can't believe the voices, or the faces of the voices . . .

. . . I said, automatic profusion

. . . I lit a cigarette but found it was an ember bud and threw it away.

. . . I cower before the look of eyes . . . this fat whore says, I've had nine glasses of port since this morning . . . the whore turns away, a little frozen . . . I shake my beer and look down into the glass . . . I phone my father from the Culver City Courthouse. I understand I am in the judge's chambers. The operator gives me the wrong number. A

well-dressed woman stares at me. My hands tremble. I have a three-day beard and a hole in my pants . . .

. . . sickened, in a rage . . . rattle of glass . . . water pouring . . . her cough . . . footsteps . . . winding clock . . . washing dishes . . . eating . . . frying things . . . opening, closing drawers . . . vacuuming . . . strange sound, like a spray . . . night . . . snoring . . . her goddamned room, her pot lids, her spoons . . . that doesn't matter. She'll be dead by the time they get there. I don't want to wait till she's asleep . . . this is a thing to be done now . . . Rain. It rains. You'll see them hurrying in the rain . . .

. . . too often a brilliant mind makes a brilliant face, alas, alas. (These lines were underlined.)

. . . the guitar has been played too violently . . . lost another job drinking . . . 55 cents left . . . it's snowing and the want ads look terrible . . . Christ!—to be a fat, rich bastard with bullfrog eyes! . . . end product of American industry: the dead end: fear. 1931, 1932, 1933, 1934, 1935, 1936, 1937 . . . fear, fear, fear! . . . *everything* (march, boys!) to the job: the body, the voice, the soul . . . this type and nothing else . . . a suggestion of weariness . . . Hell yes, the hydrogen bomb! *Break* the tables, as N. said . . .

. . . Saroyan . . . didn't speak the truth . . . reason he didn't burn his 500 books in a tub when he was freezing in San Francisco was not because he saw value in the cheapest, most false book, but because he was afraid the fire would make the room too damned smoky and the landlady would raise hell . . . if he *had* 500 books and *did* think of burning them . . .

. . . Christ, what time is it? My feet are asleep!

. . . Iron Curtain, politics in Art . . . I, and them, and all, at last with pinch-bud faces, lost count, seeking electric altogether . . . brain suspends spirit like a hoyden insect . . . when waitress drops a plate I cry . . .

. . . he'd evidently had an education of some sort, and when I saw him there eating, I walked over and sat down across from him, "What are you doing in a dump like this?" . . . frightened, wild, unsteady eyes . . .

. . . Say words. Volcano. Interim. Daze.

. . . Battle plans

Sat. Sun.—\$1.33 peanut butter 4.50 rent

bread

knife

newspaper leave—3

Thurs.—Dishwashing, anything. Gloves—75 cents.

Suit \$8.00—Food—carfare—if money comes, keep suit.

Nxt. Wk. Fri.—1.00 (save 12 cents)

Sat.—Try Harry's credit

Sun.—Skip rent

Mon.—(Social sec.) get \$20.00?

If not—*finis*

. . . drink goes well in novels . . . or in magazine advertisements . . . wrote home and asked his mother for money . . . stood before the mirror . . . posing wise and profligate—not quite bringing it off.

. . . too much electric altogether . . . hoyden insect . . . politics in Art . . . politics in Science . . . politics in breast-plate . . . asphalt, people, tracks . . . Eve's infinite copulation . . . say that Birdie told you so.

. . . easy does it, Charles. I am bored, a little dull and rather dissatisfied altogether.

what the hell's that noise?

a pipe

She always dreamed of lilies and loved Strauss (Blue Danube Strauss) quite so much

door slamming

feet, feet

how horrible, how mockingly

purposely horrible

I think

they enjoy it.

. . . Dear J—

I hate to be ridiculous—but could you loan me five bucks? I know this stuns you beyond measure—this encroachment, or what—but I've lost my job through drink, it's the night before Thanksgiving, everything's hocked and my landlady a pragmatic bitch.

I swear, sincerely, I'll repay you when I get over the

hump. Take a chance—the odds are good—and I'm really quite alone . . .

. . . he heard the voices downstairs, he heard the downstairs voices, he heard voices . . .

. . . Bar scene: a series of comments on . . . unfortunately . . . writers are mostly people with upper-strata jobs . . . English teachers . . . newspaper reporters . . . book reviewers . . . these people . . . attached to rather arched little physiognomies . . . brimstone eyes . . . or something . . . have a certain thing about them . . . sometimes claim they have washed dishes or boxed in the ring . . . generally it is a goddamned lie . . . and when they write their bar scenes . . . oh Jesus Christ! . . . few real men write . . . the living kills that . . .

. . . could try to escape by jumping from Russian trains . . . cold blood, areas of cold blood—rivers of dead, rivers . . . Karel Capek, *Benedicite coeli Domino* . . . today is a holiday of some sort. The people are singing and eating huge dinners.

. . . I got drunked-up and noticed a man next to me reading a sheet of music.

“Are you a music writer?” I asked him.

“Yes,” he said . . .

. . . I'm done . . . through . . . botched it all up . . . Oh, if you could only know how terrible I feel . . . there are all these good people I hurt . . . good chances I've missed . . . chances, chances . . . little things, like Don putting the packages on my wrapping table—“*Happy Birthday!*”—and a little cake in there . . . and three cigars . . . Oh, I know this is wild, but it's the way I feel inside . . . let me speak a while, Father, there is nobody outside, there is no line . . .

. . . I could hear my mother in the kitchen, but the bedroom door was closed and I got up on the chair and peeked through the hole in the shade. The excitement flushed through me fiercely. What a break, what a *lucky* break! Miss Philippe-Cret, the new roomer, was in the garden swing. Her dress was high over her knees and as she rocked back and forth in the swing, the crossed legs changed their pose and I could see flashes of upper leg, where the stocking

ended and the flesh began. I stood peering, my body tense, aching with excitement . . .

. . . You tell me to go out and get a job . . . why goddamn you man . . . where have you been living . . . don't you know when you've been drinking as long as I have you are just too goddamned nervous and frightened . . .

. . . he saw the sailors coming, five or six of them, wandering across the sidewalk, shouting, laughing over some ever-perpetual joke, mob-happy. He crossed to the other side of the street, but it was too late: there were whistles, shouts, as if to a passing girl, only with mocking intonations . . .

. . . Dear J—

Glad I'm not in L.A. now. Don't think I could swallow the "New Man." But I haven't given up on you yet: you're too inconsistent to maintain any attitudes for length . . . Political fervor is the blight of the young. History is too long—the tail swings the dog.

Well, bud, should you ever blow your top and throw in the towel as I have done, you are always welcome to join my troupe: voices out of air, worm's-eye of death, stockings of steel, wax bullets, creosote dawns, eternal confusion.

So your old man goes to the opera? Well, there are a few good ones. Do you think he's playing dilettante? I doubt if he amuses you as much as he irritates you. You laughter seems forced.

I'm still making plans to gorge myself on ancient literature, a study of the *Harvard Classics*—and so far, all I've read is a book on duck hunting. This, added to my former study on the operation of the mesocolon gives me a solid literary background . . .

There were more papers on the bed, but he didn't read them. It wasn't any good. Too disjointed. He went back to the desk, sat down, dipped his pen and wrote:

"A fit of terrible gloom came over him. It was Sunday, a cold, dark December Sunday and there wasn't any heat in the room. One shade was down, the other up; the electric lights were on but the room was full of shadow. Newspapers were all over the floor, covered with shoeprints,

dirt; an empty cracker box, an unmade bed, the immense tick of clock. It was too cold to go out, he was broke, two bottles (empty of whisky) stood on the dresser. All his clothing was hocked, and open on the table was the 'Help Wanted' section of the newspaper, three or four ads circled. His back ached, he was sick: the rent was due, and it was cold, very cold.

"If I ever get over this, he thought, I'll save money. I'll get a nice apartment with a refrigerator. I'll cook, I'll drink fruit juices, I'll smoke a pipe, I'll wear clean, bright sweaters and buy rare and unusual books . . ."

He wrote on and on, and on.

Quixote 19, Autumn 1958