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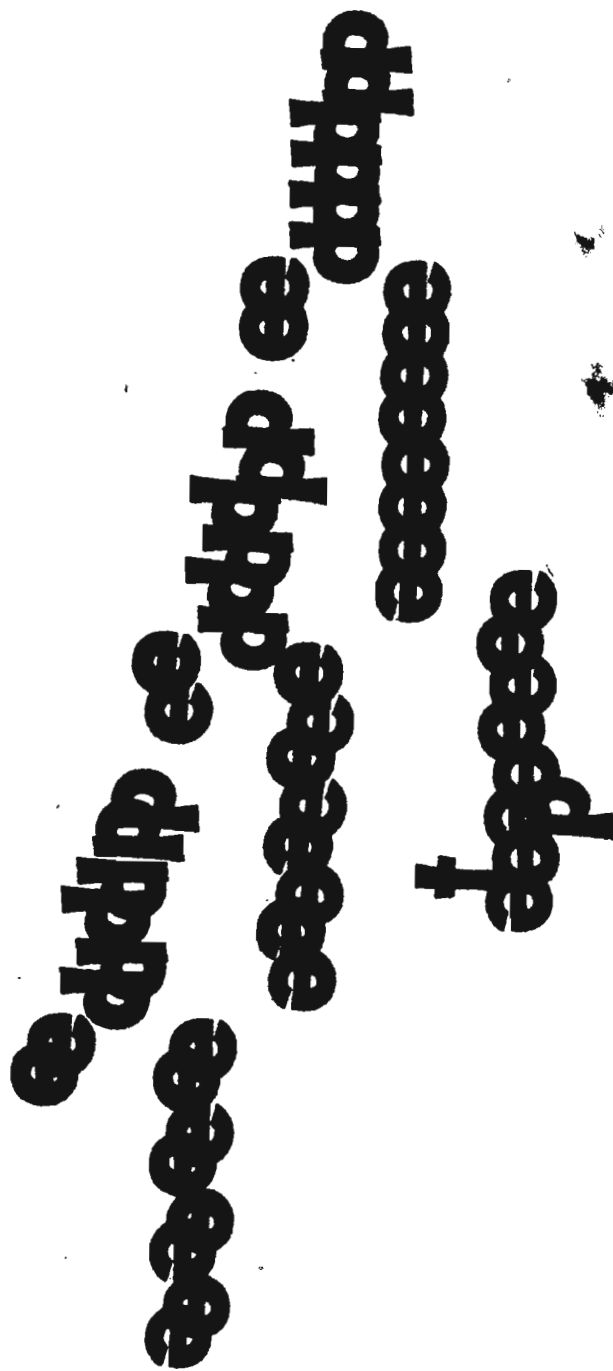
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slim killers

there are 4 guys at the door
all 6 feet four
and checking in at
around 210 pounds,
slim killers.

come in, I say,
and they walk in with their drinks
and circle the old man--
so you're Bukowski, eh?
yeh, you fucking killers, what you
want?

well, we don't have a car
and Lee needs a ride to this nightspot
in Hollywood.

let's go, I say.
we get into my car
all of us drunk, and
somebody in back says,
we've been reading your poetry a long time,
Bukowski, and I say,
I've been writing it a long time,
kid. we dump Lee at the nightspot
then stop off for enough beer and cigars
to demolish the
stratesphere.

back at my place I sit with the killers and
we drink and smoke.

it is somehow enjoyable.

I find I can outdrink and outsmoke them
but I realize that in such areas as fights on
the front lawn
my day is done.

the motherfuckers are just getting too young and
too big.

after they passed out
I gave each of them a pillow and a blanket
and made sure all the cigars were
out.

in the morning they were just 3 big kids
untrapped, a couple of them

heaving in the bathroom.
 an hour later
 they were gone.

readers of my poems
 I can't say that
 I disliked them.

poem for dante

Dante, baby, the Inferno
 is here now.
 I wish you could see
 it. for some time
 we've had the power to
 blow up the earth
 and now we're finding
 the power to leave
 it. but most will have to
 stay and
 die. either by the Bomb
 or the refuse of stacked-up
 bones
 and other emptied containers,
 and shit and glass and smoke,
 Dante, baby, the Inferno
 is here now.
 and people still look at roses
 ride bicycles
 punch timeclocks
 buy homes and paintings and cars;
 people continue to
 copulate
 everywhere, and the young look around
 and scream
 that this should be a better place,
 as they've always done,
 and then gotten old
 and played the same dirty game.
 only now

all the dirty games of the centuries
 have added to a score that seems almost
 impossible to right.
 some still try--
 we call them saints, poets, madmen, fools.
 Dante, baby, o Dante, baby,
 you should see us
 now.

the conditions

presently, under the conditions of the sun
 my world is ending.
 marked by the worm,
 haggled by a world population
 that has no reference to me.
 presently, under the conditions of the sun
 my world is ending.
 my friends, it has hardly ever been
 a kind time.
 I've shown courage, drunkenness and
 fear.
 the heart continues to work
 through unquestionable terror.

under the conditions of the sun
 I make ready to lay down
 the labor, the pain and whatever
 honor is left.

charles bukowski