

THE EMPTIES

we emptied wine bottles of the worst brands as if they were
thimbles
and our 4 a.m. battles had us evicted from apartment after
apartment all over the city
and one of our worst problems was the disposal of the
empties,
we were afraid the landlord would get the tip-off from the
trashcans that there were drunks upon his premises
so we snuck some of the empties into trashcans of other
apartment houses
but we still had leftovers
so we stored them inside our place
in cartons and bags until we were surrounded by
these
until finally
upon the night of nights
(and it happened often)
we'd sneak the bags and boxes
down the back stairway and
into the old car
(luckily, a sedan)
and we'd get in
the whole floor in the back
stacked
bag and box upon bag and box
and the whole back seat jammed with
boxes and sacks of empties
rising up against the back window
so visibility was almost
impossible
while in the front seat
between us
sat boxes and bags of
empties
and also upon the floor
where they often shifted and fell
getting in the way of the
clutch, the brake, the gearshift
while, of course, between us we also had
a couple of fulls
at the ready . . .
such a clinking and clanking of empties
in the moonlight!

. . . driving slowly up into Baldwin
Hills
terrified that the police might stop
us
and give us a life sentence
or at least a couple of years in a
madhouse,
we'd make it up there
along the side roads
in that old car
we knew could quit at any
moment
we'd cut off the headlights
and drive in among the silent sucking
oilwells standing there and working away
indifferent to us
we'd get to where the road got
both rocky and muddy
and I'd say,
"THIS IS IT!"
then
as if the very searchlights of
hell were upon me
I'd leap out and begin throwing
sacks and boxes of empties into the
pumping dark moonlight,
hearing tumbles and crashes
the familiar sound of breaking glass as
per our 4 a.m. battles
I'd grab for more and more,
sweating, dizzy and sick
I'd hurl the empties into the
night
until the entire car was
cleaned out.
then
she would look at the mounds of
glass and say,
"Jesus Christ, did we we drink all
that?"
I'd survey the mass and the thought of
that would always make me
vomit
then she'd open the door and vomit
out the side
then

I'd get in
take a new hit
start the car and
we'd roll out of the hills
in an attempt to find our way back to
the Westlake district,
it took some gas, more than we could
afford

but it felt very good to get rid of
all those empties
I'd cut the engine
to save on fuel
and we'd glide down out of the
hills
being passed by the proper
people
she'd hand me another
hit
and I'd pass it back
then
she'd say,
"Geez, don't you feel
better?"
and I'd answer, "yeah, how much
we got left?"
she'd hold up the
bottle: "enough to get us
in."

it was a victory that
only those in the know could
appreciate.
"I think we got 3 bottles at the
apartment," I'd say.
"maybe 4, maybe 5," she'd
say,
and we'd head back toward our
place,
a place we hoped would be ours
for a while . . .
we'd done what we could to appear to be
decent citizens
although we knew that our time was
limited--
in all manners and ways

we tried to keep it going
even though we knew they would never
understand, nor did we ever
expect them
to.

Charles Bukowski

DO YOU THINK HEMINGWAY OR CELINE WOULD ACT LIKE THIS?

"Yes, Chinaski, we are one of your main publishers over here, I am phoning
from _____."

"yes?"

"I phoned you once before, remember?"

"no."

"it was about a title for one of your books. the english title would not
translate well and you were very helpful, you gave us another title."

"uh."

"well, there's a book fair in Los Angeles and my publisher is coming with
me, I'm the editor and we'd like to visit you."

"I don't have visitors."

"you don't have visitors?"

"no."