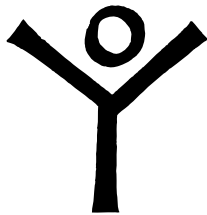


More Notes of a Dirty Old Man

The Uncollected Columns

Charles Bukowski

Edited, with an Afterword,
by David Stephen Calonne



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MORE NOTES OF A DIRTY OLD MAN

God knows I am not too hippy. Perhaps because I am too much around the hip and I fear fads for, like anybody else, I like something that tends to last. Then, too, the hippy foundation or diving board or resting place or whatever you want to call it does suck in its fair share of fakes, promoters and generally vicious people trying to overcompensate for some heinous psychological defect. But you have these everywhere—hippy and non-hippy. But, like I say, the few people that I know are either a bit on the side of the artistic, the pro-hip or the understanding-hip, so I have been generally getting more of this slice of cake and it has seemed a bit SWEET.

But, lo, the other day I got the OTHER bit and I think I'd rather eat sweet than shit. Being locked into a large building where 4,000 people work at dull and menial tasks has its compensations but it has disadvantages too—for instance, you can never be sure who is going to assigned to work next to you. A bad soul makes for a worse night. Enough bad souls can kill you.

He was balding, square-jawed, mannish???, with this look of hate-frustration upon his face. For months I had sensed that he had wanted to talk to me. Now I was hooked—he was assigned to the place to my left. He complained about the air-conditioning and a few other things, then worked in a question about my age. I told him that I would be 47 in August. He said he was 49.

"Age is only relative," he said. "It doesn't matter if you are 47 or 49, it doesn't make any difference."

"Umm," I said.

Then the speaker screamed out some announcement: ALL THOSE QUALIFIED ON THE L.S.M. MACHINES REPORT TO . . .

"I thought they were going to say LSD," he said.

"Umm," I said.

"You know," he said, "that LSD has put a lot of people in madhouses—brain damage."

"Everything puts people in madhouses."

"Whatcha mean?"

"I mean the LSD brain damage scare is probably an exaggeration percentage-wise."

"Oh no, leading doctors and laboratories and hospitals say so."

"O.K."

We worked away without conversation for awhile and I thought I had escaped him. He had one of those easy mel-low voices that drowned and warbled in its own conviction. But he began again:

"Are you for LSD?"

"I don't use it."

"Don't you think it's a passing fad?"

"Nothing that is against the law ever ceases to exist."

"Whatcha mean?"

"Forget it."

"Whatcha think of the hippies?"

"They don't harm me."

"Their hair stinks," he said. "They don't take baths. They don't work."

"I don't like to work either."

"Anything that is unproductive is not good for society."

"Umm."

"Some college profs say that these kids are our new leaders, that we should listen to them. HOW THE HELL CAN THEY KNOW ANYTHING? THEY DON'T HAVE ANY EXPERIENCE."

"Experience can dull. With most men experience is a series of mistakes; the more experience you have the less you know."

"You mean to say you are going to listen to what some 13-year-old kid tells you?"

"I listen to everything."

"But they aren't mature, they aren't MATURE, don't you see? That's why they're hippies."

"Suppose they got jobs? Suppose they went into industry, went to work turning bolts for General Motors? Wouldn't they still be immature?"

"No, because they'd be working," he said.

"Umm."

"Furthermore, I think a lot of these kids are going to be SORRY that they didn't go to the war. It's going to be an experience they'll wish they hadn't missed. They're going to regret it later on."

"Umm."

There fell again the peaceful silence. Then he said, "you're not a hippy, are you?"

"I'm working, damn it. And I told you I was 47."

"The beard doesn't mean anything then, does it?"

"Sure it does. It means, at the moment, I feel better wearing a beard than I do the other way. Maybe next week it will be different."

Silence, silence. Then he switched his stool, turned his back to me as much as possible and continued working. I got up and walked to the men's crapper and stuck

my head out the window for fresh air. The guy was my father all over again: RESPONSIBILITY, SOCIETY, COUNTRY, DUTY, MATURITY, all the dull-sounding hard words. But why were they in such agony? Why did they hate so much? It seemed simply that they were very much afraid that somebody else was having a damn good time or was not unhappy most of the time. It seemed that they wanted everybody to carry the same damn heavy rock they were carrying. It wasn't ENOUGH that I was working beside him like an idiot; it wasn't enough for him that I was wasting the few good hours left in my life—no, he also wanted me to share his own mind-soul, to sniff his dirty stockings, to chew on his angers and hates with him. I was not PAID for that, the fucker. And that's what killed you on the job—not the actual physical work but being closed in with the dead.

I got on back to my stool. He had his back turned to me. Poor, poor fellow. I had let him down. He'd have to look elsewhere. And I was white and he was white and most of them were black. Where ya gonna find a decent white man in a place like this? I could sense him thinking.

I suppose he would have gotten around to the Negro question if I had sent out the proper rays. I had been spared that.

His back was to me. His back was broad, American and hard. But I couldn't see his face and he didn't speak any more. What had hurt him worst was that I had neither agreed with or argued with him. His back was to me. The remainder of the night was peaceful and almost kind.



Tucson, Arizona, 6-29-67

Sitting in a country store that went broke, sitting at last after getting out Henry Miller's *Order and Chaos Chez Hans Reichel*, one year's work, putting the thing together piece by piece, magic by magic, held up by lack of funds and a praying, quivering, shaking 8x12 Chandler & Price, 50 or 60 years old, that fell apart on the last page; sitting there a moment, moulding their next move, hoping there is enough money for a next move are Jon and Louise (Gypsy Lou) Webb, who wrought the miracle of this third book out of LOUJON PRESS—which already has won awards in Typography, Type Direction & Design in TDC's 13th annual awards show in New York City.

Sitting here now behind an abandoned store front of crumbling adobe—they call it their “desert workshop printery”—they are almost broke.

It is Tucson and I am down here interviewing Jon Webb in 105 heat, and you know that Art can come from anywhere: the center of hot hell and the ghosts of old bean cans. I begin the interview:

“Both of you are great editors and bookmakers. Loujon Press is up there with the gods with your books and the Outsider Magazine. Your Miller book is perhaps the most revolutionary piece of bookmaking in the past several hundred years. My question is, do you think that you will be able to survive or will the walls fall in and eliminate you?”

Jon: We'll survive, but the walls suddenly will fall in, they always do, same as they did on Alan Swallow—tho we don't put ourselves up in his area of greatness, we're far from it.”

Buk: “O.K., so, well where did the idea ever begin to become editors of this sort?”

Jon: "I gave up writing after two or three million published words because I felt that I'd never make it creatively, that I'd never get published without making compromises of some sort. Of course, that could have been an excuse for laziness or inadequacy—but I'm convinced I made a good move, from writing into publishing. I think I'm a better editor than I was a writer. If I keep going, tho, I'll only get into a morass of rationalizations."

Buk: "Fair enough. Let's leap into something else: the inflation spiral on paper, ink, type, everything from hamburgers to paperclips has, in a sense, become ridiculous. Don't you feel that after finishing one project that the next one has become almost priced out of reach?"

Jon: "I was pretty ignorant at this business when I started but I learned to become an honest con-man, meaning I've given in to developing cordial relationships with businessmen—the ones who sell me these things at such high prices. I simply con them into thinking my small order is only a sampler, the first part of a huge order, and in so doing lay the groundwork for a deal, which in business parlance means getting a cut in price. In other words, I talk in carloads until they quote me carload prices. It's a dirty approach, but the fact I have to wear a starched collar and conservative necktie to put the approach over sort of cancels in my mind the dirtiness out of it."

Buk: "I agree. Now, all of your work is done by the two of you. Breaking down your total profit and dividing the hours worked, what do you judge your hourly wage, per person, to be?"

Jon: "If it turns out there is a profit—we call anything above cost profit—our net income for hours worked so far has never exceeded 8 cents an hour."

Buk: "Is it worth it? Wouldn't you rather be picking beets or selling Fuller brushes door to door? And how about those editing and design offers from New York publishers? Don't you ever get tired of the hard road?"

Jon: "No, we work out of a compulsion, same as I always did when writing. It's a love that's transferred, that's all. Just like when a loved one dies, the idea of writing died too. I simply transferred the love for writing to the love for publishing. I could go on but I would only get increasingly flip. Because the reason any of us are in a work that is economic suicide can't logically be articulated upon without getting into a bragging—like calling oneself an artist. I think we're artists, but it could be everything we're doing that's good is just accidental. We've still a long way to go."

Buk: "All right, fair enough. But now let's talk about 'angels'. Where are the angels? I know that they DO exist. For instance, there is a poet in Europe, an American exile, not overly exceptional who is supported by some rich folk who rarely ask questions or slug him with demands and he is simply not that good. Frankly, I think you deserve an angel or 2 or 3. Do you think that yours will ever appear?"

Jon: "Everybody who buys our books are angels. But getting back into the meat of it, you have to go after angels and we haven't had the time. We will eventually put on a big promotion for an angel. A good angel. We've had lots of offers from bad angels, the ones with strings attached. Like the rich widow in Louisiana who owns 4,000 acres of bottom land that's zooming in value because the Northern manufacturers are coming in. She offered us 40 acres plus a plantation house if we published her True Story Magazine style book under our Loujon Press imprint. Book was about her discovery after her husband's death that he once had

a mistress. This book she wrote was an unending lambasting of him, hoping to turn him over in his grave. Broke our hearts, but we had to turn her down."

Buk: "Is the Miller book moving?"

Jon: "How could a Miller book not move?"

Buk: "I mean fast. How can we let people know that if they see these books with their eyes they will buy them? How can we let people know that these books you do will be collector's items selling for 5 or 10 times their publication price in 4 or 5 years, or less?"

Jon: "We're not much interested in selling to those people, the ones we have to let know these books we do are eventual collectors' pieces. But a lot of those people buy our books, and without knowing it are angels of a sort. So we love them, they help us keep going."

Buk: "Very true. But these formats you use that scream collectors' item at one look, what's behind them?"

Jon: "Behind them is the fact that all rules of book publishing have come to a deadend, especially in design. All we're doing with our mixed-up formats is fumbling for a way out of that deadend, or past it. If we don't get past it we'll get out of this work, same as I got out of writing—and into something else. Like maybe underground filmmaking.

"But getting back to design, I believe with McLuhan that the medium is the message. And it has been our good luck, so far, to publish writers who will let us dress them up in our particular types of format, our packaging. So far, in the books we've done it hasn't hurt either of us."

Buk: "Have basic type styles changed? How do you select your types?"

Jon: "By eye. The more you pore over books of type-faces, type samples, so forth, the more type you might tend

to like, and after weeks of studying you end up picking a certain typeface, cable some far-away country and you get a reply that that particular typeface has not been cast for 20 or 30 years, so you begin all over again. This happens mostly because, in our opinion, type design has also come to a deadend. So you start going back into time to find something good. You can't do that with book design, because you can't create new book design by copying the old masters at it. But type is okay to copy. It's merely one of the tools you work with to create."

Buk: "How do you decide on publishing a book?"

Jon: "It's rough, but mostly it's a case of love, of the work to be published, and the writer too. Because around that work, also the writer, you have to work months creating a format which fits that writer. Not one that fits us, that's silly. The whole format has to be an extension of both the writer's personality and the work of his we're publishing. And you'd get nowhere there without a love involved for the writer embodied in his talent. People say we must love our work. We don't. Work always is pretty drab, if it isn't just plain hell. But we love what comes out of the work. And when it's done, there's another hell in which we have to transfer the love for a book just done to the next one in line. To the next writer in line. Queer, eh?"

Buk: "Hell, no. But go on, what is the ultimate you would like to do in book design?"

Jon: "Well, if I'm constantly mulling over an elusive idea, Gypsy is too. It's to put out a book of great beauty and original design with which the buyer immediately falls in love and which is certain to become a top value collector's item, but which on opening and reading to the last page suddenly falls apart in the reader's hands, virtually disintegrates, and can in no way be put back together again."

Buk: "I get you. The buyer will buy another book at once to see if the same thing happens with the second copy."

Jon: "That isn't the reason for it, no. But you've given me an idea—thanks."

Buk: "Whatever the reason, seems like a dirty trick on the writer. All his work and yours too shot to hell forever."

Jon: "Oh, I'd first find a writer who didn't mind, be sure of that. Like you maybe."

Buk: "Come to think of it, I probably wouldn't mind. Might be fun writing for a posterity that disintegrated in the reader's hands instead of his brain. But space is running out. Any final good word to the reader of this column or any readers anywhere?"

Jon: "Well, even the broadside announcement on the Miller book, printed on Parchment paper, 19 by 25 inches, is now a collector's item. But we'll mail one to anybody who sends us a postcard, and we'll go the postage. Our address is 1009 East Elm, Tucson, Arizona 85719. LOUJON PRESS."

Buk: "How come it's so damned hot down here in June and July?"

Jon: "I don't know, but it's the next best thing to hell. That's probably why we're here."

Buk: "I think this interview is over."

Jon: "Me, too."

Buk: "You got anymore beer?"

Jon: "We knew you were coming by."

Bukowski goes out into the kitchen of the Desert Workshop Printery and gets one. The interview is over. The great poet Bukowski and the great editor Webb sit across from each other, looking in and out and over with glazed and perhaps? immortal spirits. Life goes on anyhow.



I was going over my old *Racing Forms*, having a beer and a smoke, really hungover, shaky, depressed; gently thinking suicide but still hoping for a lucky angel when there was a knock on the door, a very light knock, I barely heard it. I listened and there it was again. I hid my bag of Chesterfields under the fireplace and opened the door just a slit. "Bukowski?" said the voice. "Charles Bukowski?" and there was this woman standing out in a light rain, in the 9 p.m. rain between 2 dying plants on the front porch of the front court in which I lived, badly, among beer, and mouse-shadows, and old copies of Upton Sinclair and Thomas Wolfe and Sinclair Lewis, and I looked out looked out looked out and IT WAS A WOMAN and WHAT a woman in that 9 p.m. rain—long red hair all down the back, jesus: tons of red miracle. And the face, open with passion, like a flower ripped open with the fingers from the bud, a kind of fire-cheating, and the body, the body was nothing but SEX, sex standing still jumping singing looking flowing humming in the 9 p.m. rain saying, "Bukowski, Charles Bukowski?" and I said, "Come on in," and she did, she came in and sat on the chair in front of the fireplace and the walls of the room began to weave in and out like on a trip, and the rug said, what the hell oh my god ooh ooooooooooooooh, and she **CROSSED HER LEGS** and the skirt was high and I looked up the thighs, boldly, jesus, I was out of my skull, thighs knees high heels long tight stockings flow and flesh oh lord and she kicked her foot, turned on ankle, ow ow ow, mercy! And the red hair the red hair flocked all along the back of

the chair, the red hair on fire in the lamplight, I could barely hold on I could barely understand, I did not deserve to even LOOK, and I knew it.

“Care for a beer?” I asked.

“All right,” she said.

I got up and I could hardly walk. I had enough hose to put out a forest fire of napalm.

I came back with the beer, didn’t give her a glass, watched her drink it from the bottle, that stuff going into her, into her red hair into her body into her everywhere and I peered up her legs not getting enough and I drank out of the bottle.

She put down her bottle. “You are a great writer,” she said.

“That’s no reason for coming to see me.”

“Yes it is, yes it is. You see you fascinate me, you write this way and you look like, you look like—”

“The trashman?”

“Yes, or a diseased gorilla, an undergrown aged gorilla dying of cancer. And those goddamn eyes, slits of eyes but when you finally OPEN them for just that second—shit, I never saw eyes LIKE THAT, that COLOR, that VICIOUS FIRE—”

“And you came here to see what I was, see what I am, oh?”

“I guess so. I don’t know. I don’t know why I’m here. I don’t. I only know that I’m here. I can’t help it. You’re a gorilla. You’re some kind of snake. You’re anything filthy. You stink. I don’t know you. I know that you’re not the guy at Bryan’s staff meetings, threatening cripples, staggering about the room, cursing everybody and looking for more to drink more to drink more to drink. Such a swine you are!”

“A woman always wants to find the core, tame it, mold

it; a wise man never shows the core to a woman. He just gives her a shot of light, shuts it off, becomes himself again. A woman practices rearing the child by taming the man first. I've got no use for women except to fuck them. I won't be trapped in. Love is a form of selfishness. Love is an excuse for cowards to quit."

"Nicely spoken. Sounds all right, bastard, but what does it mean?"

She lifted her beerbottle again, recrossed her legs, the skirt going HIGHER, jesus have mercy, the skirt going HIGHER, all that leg, all that thigh, all that red HAIR, god.

I got up and pulled the beerbottle from her mouth and put my dirty bearded face to hers, my lips sucking and twisting at hers, hard full crazy, she did not push me away, I grabbed her under the back, I had her back arched, I had her head rolling on the back of the chair, our lips splashed together spliced together crazy, my hand under the back of that BIG body, god, the beerbottle knocked over and spewing on the floor, and I reached down with the other hand and ripped her skirt all the way UP, lord lord lord then I had her standing, I was walking, pushing her all over the room, feeling that red hair around my ears across my face, feeling miracle and madness, and then I worked the pants down and then I HAD HER, I HAD HER, I HAD HER, and I worked, I grabbed that long red hair and I yanked down on it. I had her back arched arched hurting her and I HAD HER I worked and holding the hair still in my hands in back I got the cheeks and spread them, I had her nailed in the center of the rug, I had her on the cross, it was too late for her, she was on the spike, ripped ripped and the yellow light from the lamps bathed us and all that could be heard was our breathing and our grappling. Who would have guessed? Who? And then BANG the walls shook, a man on the street

stepped on a grease spot, fell and broke his ankle and we slid apart like worms going in different directions, and she stood there and said, “ooooh oooooh oooooh I liked it, I liked it I liked it, you filthy greasy pig,” and then she turned and walked into the bathroom and closed the door. I went into the kitchen, took a dishtowel, wiped off. Got out 2 more beers. Lit a smoke.

She came on out, looking better than ever, she glowed all over burning, she was really beautiful, I could say it easy, she was really beautiful. I drank my beer and looked at her, neither of us saying anything. I lit her a cigarette. Then I had to piss. I went to the bathroom, closed the door, pissed, flushed, washed my hands, came out, and she was . . . gone. Fast like that. No goodbye. Nothing. I looked at the chair she had sat in. At the beerbottle on the floor. No, it had happened. Yes, I found one of her earrings. A green earring. Just one. It’s always ONE earring. What the hell? But never an earring like this.

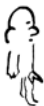
I drank my beer straight down, walked outside. It was cold. All up and down DeLongpre it was the same. People locked in tight. Behind doors, behind windows. Everybody with their possessions, their people, their madness, their bank accounts, their car keys, their walnut faces, their constipation.

I looked north where I figured she lived with some fine intellectual chap who spoke the big words and the big meaning; some guys got these dolls automatically, I was lucky to see a photo in a newspaper. I took the earring the green earring and threw it north, hard, high in the dark sky, it flew out of sight in the neon mash of light from Sunset Boulevard a block north and I said, “Here, baby, your earring back and your life and all the rest, baby baby. But thanks for the splendid grade-AAA fuck.”

Then I went back inside, found her still untouched beer, picked it up, drank drank drank. Found the *Racing Form*, sat down in HER chair and began checking out my plays for the Santa Anita meet, and then I found one long red hair, one very long red hair along the arm of my chair and I picked it up and touched the end of it to my cigarette; it sizzled and shriveled and smoked ever so slightly. I moved the cigarette right up along the hair until it was all burned except to the smallest bit in my fingers and then I put that in the ashtray and burned that.

Charles Bukowski. Immortal writer. Immortal lover. You can't go home again. It's all too late.

I worked at the beer.



I'm not feeling good. Jesus, man, throw those beercans in the trashbag. Fuck, I got no old lady to pick up the shit, and thank god for that. Maybe that's why I'm a peepfreak and a jackoff artist. I can't stand pussy around all the time. I mean sitting around terrorizing me with her up and down emotions and crazy head. Another beer? Right at your foot there, half a six-pack. More in the box. Here in America a man ain't a man unless he's got three or four whores and a late model car. All right, I'm a little drunk. Maybe that's why I mock myself. But put a new car and 3 women on my back and I'm fucked. I don't have a t.v. I don't even have a radio. A big Brazilian cunt who wants to put that thing on me, calls me the last of the monsters. A monster-angel, whatever that means. But I'm running from *her* too, tho she'd be a beautiful fuck, a tremendous fuck. There's something inside of me

grown a little wiser. After that walk back from the bathroom you start sharing a little two person hell. Yes, I've got a story, but wait, let me get another beer. Sure, I'm a degenerate peepfreak. I'd rather look at it. I don't want to get on top of it. Understand? So, I got this funny story. For peepfreaks. All right, Frank, I know you ain't a peepfreak. But pretend you're one. No, I ain't a homo, goddamn, why does *that* always come up?

I *said* I wasn't feeling good, so don't give me any shit. Sometimes I feel so bad I think I'm going nuts. You ever felt that way, Frank? No? Well, you're just a nice American beerdrunk with standard American feelings. You like to feel like a MAN. Doesn't that make you feel good to feel like a MAN, Franky boy? No, I don't want to fight. Suppose I won the fight? Your whole life would be ruined. Why do you interrupt me? I'm trying to get over and tell this funny peepfreak story, and I'll bet you've done some peeping too—on buses or with the ladies climbing out of cars or bending over garbage cans. No, I don't have a dirty mind; I just enjoy myself the way I am. Fuck off. I told you I'm not feeling good. Throw me another beer. Shit. I can't even go get my laundry. I'm going nuts. I even forgot where I TOOK my laundry! And when I find *that*, there'll be another chickenshit thing I'll have to do that is driving me crazy. What's that? I have to get a HAIRCUT! Look, dentists are nothing, but barbers TERRORIZE me! They are such ASSHOLES, that's why, Frank. That's why! You know the most TERRIBLE thing?? Eh? Frank, when they finish, they've just got to SPIN me in that chair, right BLAM in front of that MIRROR and I've got to look at my FACE, *pretend* to look at my HAIR, as if I gave a damn whether there was a piece of hair sticking up here or there! Who cares? Shit, man, I just want to get OUT of there! And there's that

asshole barber standing behind me, I see him in the mirror, he's yawning and I'm on fire, and then I'm supposed to say "fine" or "o.k." I don't know where hell is, but it's gotta be in a barbershop. It's such smucky vain finky shit, Jesus, who built men this way? Give me a dentist putting his elbow on my chest, sweating, with liquor on his breath. He gets the thing—"narrrrrr, that didn't hurt, did it?" and then you spit out the blood and half of your jaw: "narrrrrb, narrrrrb, o.k., blooooooop . . ." You're not indebted—spiritually—and he begins whistling. Dentists always have this wonderful lack of faith in their ability that barbers don't have, no matter how lousy barbers are. And most of them are, not that it matters. So then the son of a bitch of a barber unfrocks you and you are supposed to get up real calm, like the whole thing was so lovely and sweet and you are now a new man, and then you have to pay and TIP the son of a bitch! "Goodbye, now," he says, "see you later." "Goodbye," you say. Goodbye, goodbye, goodbye.

I'm trying to tell this peepfreak story. What? Yeah. I know, I KNOW! I know that many men *like* barbers. Many men sit in barbershops for *hours* and they don't even *need* haircuts. They don't need *anything*. They just play cribbage and talk about sports. They can look upon that dirty linoleum floor with dead sad hair upon it and they don't feel anything. They are the *sane* men of the universe. They have nothing to do with their time except watch it die. They are goldfish. I'm *not* sane. They are always fucking with me. By they, I mean the must-do people. Shit, just thinking about getting a new driver's license almost made me cut my throat. All those people in there taking their shitty little tests. Questions so simple that they are terrifying. People rubbing their heads—"psst, hey buddy, what'd de ansaw to the question number 3? Hey, I don't unnerstan that one a tall . . ." Lines,

lines, lines, lines, lines—lonely ladies in their late forties talking to the clerks, asking them question after silly question just to have somebody to TALK to . . . holding up the line for 15 minutes and the clerk, also lonely and lazy and with a hard dick, smiling, answering question after silly question. Dick hard, hot in there, everybody sweating and on the cross. FOR CHRIST'S SAKE, EVERYTHING'S SO HARD AND STUPID! Dicks, barbers, cops, landlords, income tax; fried eggs for breakfast . . . it's looney. Give me another beer, shit, almighty, man. I'll never tell this funny peepfreak story. I can't pay my gas and light bills, my phone bill. It's like trying to lift 4,000 pounds. It just doesn't make sense. It's just this chickenshit GNAWING, all these little snotty bills, again and again and again, no sense. You take a breather, say fuck it, look at the clouds for a couple of weeks. You come to your rented hole one night—the gas is off, the lights are out, the phone yanked out—what for? You owe them *all* a total, combined, of \$39; they couldn't wait. Shit, you've got \$80 in your wallet. You just couldn't go to the post-office and ask for 3 stupid money orders—the lines are long, the girls are suffering or stupid, and there's always some idiot stepping on the backs of your shoes or trying to squeeze around in *front* of you. Madmen, dolts! A PISS UNIVERSE, I tell you! THERE ARE SO MANY STUPID THINGS TO DO THAT THERE ISN'T ANY TIME LEFT TO DO ANYTHING THAT ISN'T STUPID. And then you're driving along and a cop gives you a ticket because you haven't had TIME to get the motherfucking taillight fixed that somebody bashed while you were parked. And while he stops you he finds eight or ten things wrong—there's *never* enough brake, the headlights are out of line, the brake light doesn't work, the windshield wipers are *worn* and you only have one windshield wiper, on and on. Man, you're trying to *kill* yourself,

here, good thing I came along. Here, take this ticket. Sign. Thank you, sir. Oh, thank you, officer. I don't have brains enough to know whether I can drive this car safely or not—I really want to kill myself, you know.

Throw me another beer, Frank. Everything drags me down. That's why I can't have any cunt around here chopping me down with her yak and demands. The whole thing is a war, Frank, can't you see? And I'm weakening. I've got a week's worth of newspapers on the floor. I can't pick them up. I can't even put a roll of toilet paper on a roller. That's work. Springs and twisting. More work. I just sit the roll on the floor. My guts are shot, my soul is shot. You must believe me, friend—just to set my soul *halfway* straight is a monstrous and impossible task.

You say I need LOVE? Horseshit! All right, I'm a loner and a loner usually hangs himself; a lover needs help and usually gets it; it all ends up in hanging. Sure I'm sick. Dizzy spells, and these white blisters on the hands; boils on the ass; inflamed throat, heart flutter, glass in the feet, neuritis and bursitis, toothache, headache, ulcers, ingrown hair and toenails, broken fingers, insomnia, anxiety—what the fuck. Name it, I'll trot it out. And a peepfreak. Hell, yeah. Which brings us to *that*. Goddamn it, I been trying to get to this peepfreak thing!

So I'm in the doctor's office. What was it for? I hate to tell you, but there's this thin line along my ass, very thin, indented, like I been sitting in a slab chair and it won't go away, this thin indented line. It's stupid, sure. I once saw a pigeon lying on the sidewalk. It was sick or something. Its wings wouldn't work. I could see it breathing. And on its still alive body the ants were already crawling. The top eye was open and looking at me. There were ants crawling across that *eye*. I didn't know what to do. I stepped over the

bird and walked on down the street. 2 hours later I had forgotten about it. Now I had this line on my ass.

There were 3 of us waiting. Guy with crutch next to me. Girl with impossibly short skirt and fine nyloned legs all stilted up with very high heels. Holy, ummm, ummm. So I get a hard-on. I can't help looking. I want to look. Wow, it's all free. It's like walking into a closet full of gold. Such crazy things happen. And those broads are so off-hand about it. Real cinchy cool, which only makes it worse, and hotter. Oh my god. I am a peeper since the age of 6, 8, 10, 12, 48. When I was a kid we used to go under the slatted grandstands, crawl under there and peek up the women's legs, me and my buddy Harry. We used to go to the air races and do it. There was a lot of wind there and it was summertime. We saw some things. "Think of it," Harry said, "THOUSANDS OF PUSSIES!" "Jesus," I said, "you're making me a little sick." Harry is now a municipal court judge.

Well, anyhow, there I am in the doc's office with the line on my ass and there aren't thousands of pussies or millions, which is terrifying, but just one, and I can't *quite* see it and it's best that way. Of course, you imagine there might be something else there, some crazy kind of miracle.

Like a dick? There you go, Frank. I'm trying to tell this funny peepfreak story and you've got to come on like some dumb American lonely hero on the barstool of the good old neighborhood bar. Fuck you. This is the funny story. Listen. I told you I was a peepfreak. O.K. Listen, will you?

Right in the MIDDLE of my beautiful hard-on, I have to think, you KNOW what I HAVE to think? After all, she IS in a doctor's office. Christ, she might have the gon or the siff, right? AND THE THING DROPS RIGHT ON DOWN AND I ALMOST BEGIN HATING HER.

You think I'm nuts? The guy with the crutch must be

thinking the same thing for he has been staring straight ahead for ten minutes at one of the paintings of a castle on the Rhine that the good German doctor has hung all about the waiting room. He must have 5 or 6 paintings of castles on the Rhine in that waiting room.

Me, I reach out and get a magazine, a dull one. *News-week* or such.

I had to read all about the Russian tanks in Prague so long after it happened. More mad shit like getting a driver's license. Hardly ever occurred with reason. Just more waste and waiting and bullshit. So I read it all again to keep from looking at those siff legs. The magazine account seemed no different than the newspaper version. God drab yawn insanity. More barbershop. That's what's so terrible about doctors' waiting rooms. All the warmed-over con. You had to *read* it and wait wait wait, or else it was sit and look at each other's *FACES* and *that* couldn't be done, obviously. So, everybody turning pages, everybody reading these dull magazines and sitting there THINKING: I wonder why I feel so bad?—"Some of the Hungarians riding tanks were asked by the Czechs why they had helped do this thing when Hungary was the same victim of the same Russian tanks not so long ago. The Hungarians turned away."—I wonder why I feel so bad the people in the waiting room think, reading magazines. Do I have the clap, cancer, acidosis, hepatitis, catalepsy, pyemia, seborrhea or scarlet fever? Flip, flip, the pages go, thinking, thinking.

So, you find *another* magazine, and wait.

So, there I was, and then an old woman walked out, chirping chirping to the GIRL in the short short skirt: "Ooooh, he put a stitch in my eye! Ooooh, I feel so much *better* now! Ooooh, honey, I feel so much better now! The stitch will have to come out later but I feel so much *better* now!"

“Well, sit down a moment, mama, and then we’ll go home,” says the girl in the short short short skirt with the nyloned legs of magic on the high high black tight heels. God.

My mind got at me good: Idiot idiot peepfreak lost lost. Fool, you WASTED all this time! She’s the DAUGHTER! No CLAP! No nothing! Just the miracle of all those legs looking at you FREE, oh god have mercy, those clean miracle legs. WUNDERBAR!!!!

I began to leer over the top of a 4-week-old copy of LOOK.

I just got something GOING when mama and daughter rise and LEAVE. The daughter has on this short black slip, red dress, green panties, and after mama leaves out the doorway, she rather pulls the red dress down, stretches, bringing up the breasts, out the ass, then she is gone after mama and I am left with a shaft of pale sunlight in the doorway.

Then what happened? What could happen? The doc called in the guy with the crutch and I took down one of the paintings of a castle on the Rhine, took it down the elevator. Hit floor one, carried the castle on the Rhine to my car, threw it in the back seat and drove off.

What did I do that for? I don’t know. Maybe it was all I had left of the nylon legs, the green panties, I don’t know. Rather like taking one ant out of the eye of a living pigeon. Not much. Throw me a beer. I told you it was a funny peepfreak story. Why aren’t you laughing?

What? The line in my ass. It went away. I’d like to phone the doc and find out when the old lady is going to have the stitch out of her eye. But if I can’t hang up a simple roll of toilet paper then you know that I can’t do that either. Listen, Frank, I said THROW ME A BEER. I’m not feeling well, I told you so . . .