

THE LAST DAYS OF THE SUICIDE KID

Written by

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Based on the life,
writings & interviews
of Charles Bukowski

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FADE IN:

EXT. BUKOWSKI CAR - DOWNTOWN L.A. - NIGHT

PRESENT DAY is 1993. (B&W FILM)

LINDA LEE (BEIGHLE) BUKOWSKI, 40s, drives bald and terribly thin poet CHARLES "HANK" BUKOWSKI, 73, in jeans and sports coat, to his final reading.

EXT. LIQUOR STORE - DOWNTOWN L.A. - NIGHT

Charles exits the car. A camera crew jumps out of a nearby van and follows him inside.

[NOTE: all 1993 L.A. Bookstore Poetry reading scenes are in black and white (B&W)]

INT. LIQUOR STORE - DOWNTOWN L.A. - NIGHT

Charles comes through the door.

A clerk shouts a poem title at him.

LIQUOR STORE CLERK
Wings of song!

Charles smiles and waves. He gets a six-pack of beer from the cooler and waits in line. A WOMAN CUSTOMER is intrigued by the hubbub. She's a little drunk. Charles is a LOT drunk.

WOMAN CUSTOMER
(to camera man)
What're you doing?

CAMERA MAN 1
(pointing at Charles)
Making a movie on this guy right here.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
(to woman customer)
I'm the poet.

WOMAN CUSTOMER
A what?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
A poet. You know what poet—

WOMAN CUSTOMER
A Pollock?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
A poet. (spells) P-O-E-T.

WOMAN CUSTOMER
You're the poet? What kind of a poet?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
Modern. I've been in this
neighborhood a long time.

WOMAN CUSTOMER
I've never seen you before.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
I guess we have different hangovers
at different times.

WOMAN CUSTOMER
(laughs)
I guess so. You're a modern poet?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
You should buy some of my stuff. My
name's Bukowski.

WOMAN CUSTOMER
Boo?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
"Buk." Rhymes with "puke."

Woman Customer laughs.

POETRY READING ANNOUNCER (PRE-LAP)
Ladies and gentlemen ...

INT. L.A. BOOKSTORE - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

MOMENTS LATER. (B&W) Charles Bukowski waits backstage for
the host to announce him.

POETRY READING ANNOUNCER
... Charles Bukowski!

O.S. AUDIENCE CHEERS wildly. Charles Bukowski pukes in a
nearby trashcan. Wipes his mouth. Heads for the stage.

INT. L.A. BOOKSTORE - STAGE - NIGHT

The room is black but for the spotlight illuminating a desk topped with papers, microphone, and ashtray.

Carrying only his six-pack, Charles crosses the stage to a refrigerator and sets his beer inside.

He takes out a bottle, guzzles it by half, and belches loudly. O.S. the AUDIENCE CHEERS.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
You want some poems?

AUDIENCE (O.S.)
Yeeaah!!!

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
Beg me. (laughs)

AUDIENCE (O.S.)
(laughter)

Charles sits at the desk and takes his time looking through the stack of poems, swigs his beer, lights a cigarette.

The audience is on his time now.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
(he's already drunk)
Tonight is going to be a very dig-ni-fied reading. I will not rejoin or have rejoinders with the audience. I shall read you dignified poetry in a dignified waaay. We shall comport ourselves as ladies and gentlemen (LOUD BELCH) of culture.

AUDIENCE (O.S.)
(cheering)

Charles finishes his beer and goes to the refrigerator for another. Someone in the audience O.S. GROANS at this blatant prima donna act.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
You motherfuckers paid to see this.
(laughs scornfully)

AUDIENCE (O.S.)
(cheering wildly)

Charles takes his seat.

He cracks the fresh beer and takes a big swig.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
Alright. Let's do this so we can get
paid and go home.

INT./EXT. SAN PEDRO WATERFRONT - MINIVAN - DAY

1993. SEVERAL HOURS EARLIER

A minivan drives slowly down beautiful South Harbor Blvd.

The three men inside include the INTERVIEWER, cameraman, and sound man. Interviewer in the passenger seat looks at a map. He points and the van turns down another street.

EXT. MINIVAN - BANDINI STREET - DAY

The minivan pulls up to a stop sign.

EXT. BANDINI STREET SIGN - DAY

Bandini Street sign.

So named for one of Charles Bukowski's literary idols.

EXT. BUKOWSKI SAN PEDRO HOME - DAY

Minivan pulls up to a nice two-story home set far back from the street in a nice quiet residential neighborhood.

The crew hauls its equipment up the long driveway.

The side door opens and Charles Bukowski greets them. He's dressed in jeans and a sport coat.

INT. BUKOWSKI SAN PEDRO HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Charles drinks a beer on the couch while the crew sets up. Through the archway between living room and kitchen, Linda Lee makes refreshments. She cranes to see Charles.

LINDA BUKOWSKI
Take it easy, Popsie. Not carrying
you off the stage tonight.

Charles puts his beer bottle on the coffee table. Lights a cheap hand-rolled Indian cigarette.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
She's added ten years to my life.

Linda enters with refreshments.

LINDA BUKOWSKI
You shoulda seen 'em when I found
him. He was half dead.

Charles hugs Linda around the neck.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
My good lady.

INTERVIEWER
Whenever you wanna, we're ready.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
Alright, baby.

INTERVIEWER
Let's start with your childhood.

LINDA BUKOWSKI
Let's not.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
You know that son of a bitch
pretended to go to work every day
after he lost his job. So the
neighbors wouldn't know he was a bum.

In his 70s and still broken up over his rotten childhood.

Linda pats Charles' arm to comfort him.

INT. L.A. BOOKSTORE - STAGE - NIGHT

1993. (B&W) LATER. POETRY READING.

Charles Bukowski has just finished a poem and the AUDIENCE
O.S. applauds/cheers/jeers.

MAN IN AUDIENCE 1 (O.S.)
Fuck you!

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
Do I know you? (swigs beer) One more
beer and I'll—I'll take alla ya.
(laughs devilishly)

AUDIENCE (O.S.)
(cheers)

Charles starts to read another poem.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
With one punch, at the age of 16-and-a-half, I knocked out my father. A cruel, shiny bastard with bad breath...

EXT. BUKOWSKI CHILDHOOD HOME - YARD - DAY

1932.

Sunny summer afternoon in the lower middle-class West Adams district of Los Angeles.

One of the many Spanish Houses there.

12-year-old Charles Bukowski wipes sweat from his forehead as he finishes mowing the final strip of grass with an old manual reel mower.

EXT. BUKOWSKI CHILDHOOD HOME - PORCH - DAY

Charles' FATHER, HEINRICH BUKOWSKI, a tall, mean man bursts from the house and marches toward the sidewalk.

EXT. BUKOWSKI CHILDHOOD HOME - SIDEWALK - DAY

Heinrich, on all fours.

Heinrich's POV shows perfectly mowed grass, his prized roses.

Heinrich has a look of grim seriousness and concentration as he surveys the yard. After a long intense moment, he rises.

EXT. BUKOWSKI CHILDHOOD HOME - BACKYARD - DAY

View of perfectly mowed grass in the backyard. Heinrich gets on all fours. Lays on his belly and points. Young Charles Bukowski joins him on his belly.

EXT. BUKOWSKI CHILDHOOD HOME - BACKYARD - DAY

As the camera pans across the yard, a tiny tuft of grass, taller than the rest, pokes up. Just a few blades taller than the others.

EXT. BUKOWSKI CHILDHOOD HOME - BACKYARD - DAY

Heinrich marches to the errant clump of un-mowed grass and dusts off his knees. Holds out his hand as if to ask why his son has betrayed him.

Young Charles looks sick. He hangs his head and walks into the house. Heinrich follows the boy inside.

INT. BUKOWSKI CHILDHOOD HOME - HALLWAY

MOMENTS LATER. CAMERA CREEPS down the hallway while O.S. FLAP! FLAP! FLAP! The sound of leather slapping flesh.

INT. BUKOWSKI CHILDHOOD HOME - BATHROOM - DAY

Young Charles, standing with pants and underwear around his ankles, receives a savage beating from his father.

Charles winces with each wallop from the razor strop but he does not shout. Only the tiniest sounds of agony escape him.

INT. BUKOWSKI SAN PEDRO HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

1993. INTERVIEW. Back to present day.

Interviewer appears concerned by the brutality, by Charles' nonchalance. Linda looks grim.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
That went on for a few years.

INTERVIEWER
What made it stop?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
I got bigger. Quieter. After a while I didn't even wince. My silence scared him.

With a faraway look, Charles lights a cigarette.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73 (cont'd)
If I could only kill the man who
killed the man.

INTERVIEWER
How do you feel your upbringing has
affected your life?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
A father is your master ... even when
he's gone.

Linda puts her hand on Charles' hand.

INTERVIEWER
Was the rest of your childhood so
grim?

Charles laughs.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
Hell has many levels.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

Following scenes OCCUR CIRCA 1920s-1930s in Los Angeles. A
series of brief vignettes from Charles Bukowski's boyhood.

INT. COMMUNITY POOL - LOS ANGELES - DAY

Young Charles Bukowski (10) swims with a one-armed boy his
age in a community pool. While playing, Charles bumps into a
large middle-aged woman who responds by grabbing Charles'
crotch and squeezing him painfully.

ANGRY WOMAN
Pervert!

INT. BUKOWSKI CHILDHOOD HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Young Charles' parents scream at each other while he sits
frozen in terror at the dinner table.

INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL - LOS ANGELES - DAY

Young Charles, late for class, comes upon a boy being
harassed by two older boys. The larger of the boys smashes
the youngest boy's face into the drinking fountain.

BROKEN TEETH AND BLOOD in the fountain.

Fearful Charles edges past the scene, the bullies eyeing him with murder in their eyes.

INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL - LOS ANGELES - DAY

Young Charles breathlessly bursts into his classroom, trying to tell the teacher what he saw.

YOUNG CHARLES BUKOWSKI

Ma'am—

FEMALE TEACHER

Take. Your. Seat.

INT. PHARMACY - LOS ANGELES- DAY

Charles looks at a rack of comic books while his father ARGUES with the pharmacist.

HEINRICH BUKOWSKI

Advertisement clearly said ten cents.

PHARMACIST

Ten cents OFF, sir. Not ten cents.

Heinrich slams his merchandise down on the counter and storms out, angrily jerking young Charles by the arm.

INT. BAKERY - LOS ANGELES - DAY

Charles stands with his hand and face pressed against the glass pastry display, eyeing doughnuts, while his father ARGUES with the baker at the cash register.

HEINRICH BUKOWSKI

If there's no difference in the
taste, why aren't the fresh the same
price as the day-old? Huh!? Right.
You don't have an answer for that.

BAKER

Sir, I—

Heinrich slams his merchandise down on the counter and storms out, angrily jerking young Charles by the arm.

INT./EXT. CAR - GAS STATION - NIGHT

Charles in the backseat reads a copy of A.A. Milne's "*When We Were Very Young*" while his father argues through the driver side window with the gas station attendant.

HEINRICH BUKOWSKI
The sign says "Full Service." I
expect full service.

GAS STATION ATTENDANT
It means pumping gas, checking the
oil, and cleaning the windshield,
sir. What you want goes well beyond—

Heinrich floors the gas pedal, tires squeal, as the car speeds away. Charles tumbles to the other side of the car and ends up on the floor.

INT. BUKOWSKI CHILDHOOD HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Young Charles calmly watches his parents argue.

EXT. ALLEY - CHARLES' BOYHOOD NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Charles walks an alley on a hot sunny day after school. He whacks garbage cans with a stick as he goes.

EXT. ALLEY/NEIGHBOR WOMAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Through a hedge, Young Charles spies the naked upper half of a woman smoking in the back window.

He pushes into the hedge for a better look. He's never seen breasts before. She sees him and smiles. He's paralyzed. She waves. He waves back.

Something inside the house gets her attention. A flash of annoyance in her face. Duty calls. One last drag on the cig before she's gone.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Charles stands there for a long time, mouth agape. His life will never be the same.

EXT. PERIMETER FENCE - AIRSHOW - DAY

A little older now, Charles and a few friends run along the fence until they find an opening they can squeeze through. Charles is scared but his FRIEND 1 eggs him on.

FRIEND 1
C'mon, sissy.

Charles hesitates but crawls under the fence.

EXT. UNDER BLEACHERS - AIRSHOW - DAY

The boys crawl along under the bleachers. Looking for something. The oldest boy waves them over.

FRIEND 1
(whispers)
Here's one.

The boys crawl to him. They look up to see the panties beneath a woman's polka dotted dress.

FRIEND 2
(whispers)
Holy cow.

FRIEND 1
Them ain't yer mama's undies.

Once again, Charles is mesmerized. He doesn't notice his friends run off as an AIRSHOW WORKER catches them.

AIRSHOW WORKER
Hey, you little shits!

Charles freezes in terror. Just as the Airshow Worker is about to grab him, O.S. a stunt plane ENGINE SCREAMS.

Young Charles watches over the Airshow Worker's shoulder as the plane hits the ground near the bleachers and explodes into a fireball, knocking them both to the ground.

In Charles' wide eyes, reflected flames. O.S. PEOPLE SCREAM, SIRENS WAIL.

INT./EXT. L.A. HOSPITAL - WAITING ROOM - DAY

1936.

16-year-old Charles Bukowski sits in the waiting area. His face plagued by REVOLTING acne vulgaris.

Nurse with a clipboard appears. She shudders a little at the sight of him.

NURSE 1
Henry Bukowski?

With a sigh of resignation, Charles gets up.

INT. L.A. HOSPITAL - PROCEDURE ROOM - DAY

Henry waits with his shirt off while a disinterested DERMATOLOGIST switches on a buzzing/smoking machine and holds up a great big medieval-looking torture needle.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 16
Gonna hurt?

The Doctor gives a "you don't know the half of it" laugh.

DERMATOLOGIST
Huh-huh-huh.

INT. L.A. HOSPITAL - WAITING ROOM - DAY

O.S. Charles GRUNTS and GROANS in pain.

INT. L.A. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Charles walks the busy hallway. His big ghastly boils have been replaced by horrific scabs from his medical procedure.

High school guys laugh and yell in disgust at the sight of him and the girls howl in shock. One girl who bumps into him tears up as she backs away.

All the while, Charles has a fixed look of resignation. He's uncomfortable but he's not about to run and hide.

INT./EXT. BUKOWSKI CHILDHOOD HOME - FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Charles staggers drunkenly to the door. It's locked. He knocks. His mother KATHARINA BUKOWSKI, answers.

She calls her son "Henry" and in her thick German accent she pronounces it "Hen-a-ry."

KATHARINA BUKOWSKI
Where've you been?

Charles glares at her, glassy-eyed. He sways and breathes heavy with drunkenness. He lights a cigarette.

KATHARINA BUKOWSKI (cont'd)
Henry. Put that out. If your father—

Heinrich Bukowski STUMBLES and GRUMBLES O.S.

HEINRICH BUKOWSKI (O.S.)
What the hell is.

Heinrich, in robe and pajamas, flings open the door.

INT. BUKOWSKI CHILDHOOD HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A fight already in progress. Heinrich whips Charles around the living room causing Charles to vomit on the rug.

HEINRICH BUKOWSKI
My son the drunk!

Heinrich struggles to force Charles to his knees.

HEINRICH BUKOWSKI (cont'd)
Dogs. Mess. Carpet. Rub his face—

Charles SCREAMS up from the floor with an uppercut that sends his father reeling onto the couch.

Katharina hates to see her husband mistreated.

KATHARINA BUKOWSKI
Oh, daddy!

Charles goes for the door but not before his mother CLAWS his already scarred face. He SCREECHES in agony and goes running out of the house.

EXT. BUKOWSKI CHILDHOOD HOME - PORCH - NIGHT

Blood gushes from Charles' wounds. He stops on the porch to look at his reflection in the window. Eyes his bloody hand.

HEINRICH BUKOWSKI (O.S.)
A loser is a loser!

The front door SLAMS shut.

INT./EXT. L.A. HIGH SCHOOL GYM - PROM - NIGHT

1939.

From outside, 19-year-old Charles Bukowski watches through a sliver of space between curtain and window frame as the other students laugh and dance in their fine attire.

INT. GYM - PROM - NIGHT

Graduating seniors of the class of 1939 laugh and dance. Some chat. Someone spikes the punchbowl.

EXT. GYM - PROM - NIGHT

Charles sees the spiking of the punchbowl and smiles. He changes his angle so he can see the other side of the room.

INT. GYM - PROM - NIGHT

CLOSE ON a beautiful young woman, then another, then another. Finally, a somewhat homely girl.

EXT. GYM - PROM - NIGHT

Charles smiles, staring at the homely girl. He won't even let himself fantasize about the beautiful ones.

INT. GYM - PROM - NIGHT

The homely girl is looking for someone to dance with. She finds a homely boy.

EXT. GYM - PROM - NIGHT

Charles watches them dance. Something funny happens O.S. because Charles laughs again. He lights a cigarette. He's actually enjoying himself when there comes a RUSTLING O.S.

The SCHOOL SECURITY GUARD comes around the corner to find Charles peeping in the window. The guard taps his nightstick on his own leg.

SCHOOL SECURITY GUARD
Get a good look?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 19
(startled)
Shit.

Security guard points his flashlight on Charles' badly scarred face and reacts accordingly.

SCHOOL SECURITY GUARD
Good Christ.

Charles puts his hands up to shield his eyes from the blinding light.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 19
It's alright. I go here. Well, I did.

SCHOOL SECURITY GUARD
Best get back inside. No good ever come from lurkin'.

Charles looks at himself. He's shabbily dressed in old wool trousers, holey shoes, stained short-sleeved shirt.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 19
I don't dance.

SCHOOL SECURITY GUARD
Well, ya can't hide out here like some kind a pervert.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 19
Just wanted to see.

Guard turns off the flashlight.

SCHOOL SECURITY GUARD
This here won't win ya any friends.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 19
And going in there will?

Security guard puts his nightstick away and makes to leave.

SCHOOL SECURITY GUARD
Guessin' this won't be news to you, but the world's full a assholes. All we can do is try not to add to their number.

END MONTAGE

INT. BUKOWSKI SAN PEDRO HOME - DAY

1993. AFTERNOON. INTERVIEW. Back to present day.

Back to present day. Interviewer is mortified at Charles Bukowski's tales of woe.

INTERVIEWER
Ever go back?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
To school?

INTERVIEWER
Your folks'.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
Oh, I Crawled on my belly a few times
to beg forgiveness and a dollar from
sweet mama.

INTERVIEWER
Couldn't've been all bad.

Charles takes a long drink of beer. Thinks a moment. Smiles
at a fond memory.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
OK.

INT. BUKOWSKI CHILDHOOD HOME - BEDROOM - DAY

1933. DAWN.

13-year-old Charles Bukowski is awakened by his father.
Heinrich gently touches his son on the shoulder. The boy
looks in mild fear at his father.

Heinrich motions for the boy to follow. Dressed in flannel
pajamas, young Charles gets warily out of bed.

EXT. BUKOWSKI CHILDHOOD HOME - DAWN

Charles follows his Father into the street. Out in the front
of their house, a horse-drawn milk wagon is parked.

Heinrich feeds the horse a sugar cube. He places a sugar
cube on Charles' palm so he may do likewise.

The horse snuffles up the sugar, licking Charles palm. The
boy smiles. Heinrich, too, is smiling for once. Charles is
happy but a little wary of his father's tender behavior.

INT. BUKOWSKI SAN PEDRO HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

1993. AFTERNOON. INTERVIEW. Back to present day.

INTERVIEWER
Is that why you drink so heavily?
Your rocky childhood?

Linda laughs nervously. Charles swigs his beer.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
 You think I drink out of sadness? Ha!
 Liquor's like a symphony. You use it
 to leap up into the sky or when
 you're in pain or when you have
 depression. You use it to get
 yourself up out of the dirt. My god,
 I'm so tired of people who are sober
 everyday. They never get sick, they
 never get up, they never get down,
 they never go crazy.

INT. L.A. BOOKSTORE - STAGE - NIGHT

1993. (B&W) LATER THAT NIGHT. POETRY READING.

Charles Bukowski gets another beer from the refrigerator.

The audience, now considerably more raucous, SHOUTS O.S. non
 sequitur epithets, challenges, slogans of adoration.

WOMAN 1 (O.S.)
 I love you!

MAN 1 (O.S.)
 Go to Hell!

WOMAN 2
 Love is a dog from hell!

With his back to the audience, Charles speaks.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
 Jesus! (turns to face audience)
 You're drunker'n I am.

Goes back to his desk and begins to read the next poem.

This is a V.O. for the next few scenes.

BEGIN V.O.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73 (V.O.)
 A woman. A tire that's flat. Disease.
 Desire. Fears in front of you. Fears
 that hold so still you can study them
 like pieces on a chessboard. It's not
 the large things that send a man to
 the madhouse ...

INT. HOSPITAL EXAM ROOM - DAY

Charles, 17, back for more treatment of his acne, sits on an exam table while a doctor lances his giant cysts with the dreaded needle.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73 (V.O.)
 ... it's the continuing series of
 small tragedies that send a man to
 the madhouse. Not the death of his
 love. But a shoelace that snaps with
 no time left ...

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

1938.

18-year old Charles Bukowski reads John Fante's novel "Ask the Dust" and falls in love. He looks happy that he's found someone who "gets" him ... when a passing librarian scowls in disgust.

His grotesque features and terrible acne make Charles an easy target for ridicule.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73 (V.O.)
 The dread of life is that swarm of
 trivialities that can kill quicker
 than cancer and which are always
 there.

EXT. L.A. CITY COLLEGE - DAY

1940.

Now a man of 20, Charles exits the college looking very disappointed. He drops a form letter from the college bearing the heading: ACADEMIC PROBATION.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73 (V.O.)
 With each broken shoelace. Out of one
 hundred broken shoelaces. One man,
 one woman, one thing enters a
 madhouse. So be careful when you bend
 over.

INT. BUKOWSKI CHILDHOOD HOME - CB'S BEDROOM - DAY

Heinrich sits on Charles' bed, reading one of his son's short stories. ABSOLUTELY DISGUSTED with what he reads, Heinrich crumples the page.

END V.O.

EXT. BUKOWSKI CHILDHOOD HOME - PORCH - SAME

Heinrich bursts from the front door with an armload of his son's belongings. Clothes, notepads, etc.

EXT. BUKOWSKI CHILDHOOD HOME - STREET - SAME

Charles, just returning from learning he's been put on academic probation, walks up the street to see his father throwing his things onto the sidewalk.

EXT. BUKOWSKI CHILDHOOD HOME - PORCH - SAME

Charles' mother exits the house and tries to stop Heinrich.

KATHARINA BUKOWSKI

Daddy, no.

Heinrich shakes the fist with the crumpled story at his son.

HEINRICH BUKOWSKI

Filthy! Filthy! Why're you like this?

Katharina presses money into Charles' hand.

KATHARINA BUKOWSKI

Find a room. Just for tonight.

Charles is confused and heartbroken.

KATHARINA BUKOWSKI (cont'd)

He'll kill you if you stay.

Charles runs around picking up pages of his manuscript blowing across the lawn and into the street.

Heinrich shoves Katharina out of the way. He and Charles stare at each other a moment.

Charles picks his typewriter out of the pile of belongings, and walks away.

INT. BUKOWSKI SAN PEDRO HOME - LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

1993. INTERVIEW. Back to present day.

INTERVIEWER

You ended up writing about your life in the 1920s through the early 1940s in your book *Ham On Rye*. But not until 1982.

Charles shakes his head "no."

INTERVIEWER (cont'd)

Took you nearly thirty years of serious writing to realize that?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73

Never dawned on me those experiences would be of interest to anyone. Not in the early days. A publisher actually encouraged me to write the damn thing. I mean, look at me.

INT. BLACK SPARROW PRESS - SANTA ROSA - DAY

1982.

CLOSE ON printing press churns out hardcover copies of the novel *Ham On Rye*. Bukowski V.O. reads from *Ham On Rye*.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI (V.O.)

I often stood in front of the mirror alone, wondering how ugly a person could get.

INT. BUKOWSKI SAN PEDRO HOME - DAY

1993. AFTERNOON. INTERVIEW. Back to present day.

An empty beer bottle sits on the coffee table. Charles opens a fresh one, takes a swig, and lights a cigarette.

INTERVIEWER

And then you went off to make your way in the world?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73

Inauspicious beginnings.

Interviewer reads from notes.

INTERVIEWER

Slaughterhouse, paint store, shipping clerk, postal carrier, errand boy, gigolo, truck driver, gas station attendant, custodian, maintenance.

(MORE)

INTERVIEWER (cont'd)
The list goes on. Why have you had such trouble keeping a job?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
I simply had no interest in the day-to-day grind. That nine to five is a soul killer.

INTERVIEWER
Nobody wants to go to a job they hate but most of us don't have any choice. What makes you special?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
How in fuck can a man be jolted out of bed at dawn, gulp down gruel, shit, shower, and shave, battle through rush-hour traffic with a bunch of other poor slobs who then spend eight, ten, twelve hours making someone else rich ... and be grateful for the opportunity?

INTERVIEWER
So, you do think you're better than everyone else?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
I think we have one life to live. Why waste such a precious gift doing something you hate?

INT. L.A. BOOKSTORE - STAGE - NIGHT

1993. (B&W) LATER THAT NIGHT. POETRY READING.

Old Charles Bukowski is visibly drunk.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
(reads poem)
I can hardly get a job now for the same reason I couldn't then. I don't know anything, I can't do anything.

INT. PAWNSHOP - SAN FRANCISCO - DAY

1942.

Now homeless, Charles Bukowski, 22, tries selling his typewriter to a fat man wearing too many gold chains to help fund his wanderings in search of a job, a woman, a life.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 22
It's a \$335 machine for chrissake.

PAWNBROKER
Maybe new from the manufacturer. In
this condition (points to wear,
clacks a key), it's twenty-six bucks.

Charles looks around. Thinks a moment. Pushes this only
thing he truly cares about across the counter-top.

INT./EXT. BUS - HIGHWAY - MIAMI - DAY

1943.

22-year-old Charles Bukowski stares out at the passing
landscape. A highway sign reads "WELCOME TO MIAMI."

He looks at the blank page of his notebook, taps it with his
pencil, and goes back to staring out the window.

INT. BUS - HIGHWAY - NEW ORLEANS - NIGHT

Sign welcoming travelers to New Orleans.

INT./EXT. SEARS ROEBUCK LOADING DOCK - NEW ORLEANS - DAY

23-year-old Charles Bukowski and several other WORKERS in
coveralls unload a truck.

The other men talk and joke while Charles works silently.

WORKER 1
You're nuts. Benny Lynch 'd cream
Jackie Brown any day a the week and
twice on Sunday.

WORKER 2
Two words: horse and shit.

WORKER 3
Joe Louis tan both their hides.

WORKER 2
Louis's a heavyweight, fat-head.
Course he'd cream 'em.

WORKER 1
(motions to Charles)
What's with blabbermouth?

WORKER 2
Fuckin' new guy.

WORKER 1
(to Charles)
Hey, handsome.

Charles, up in the back of the truck, picks up a box and looks at Worker 1, waiting to see what he wants.

WORKER 1 (cont'd)
Why don't you shut up.

The other two workers laugh. Stone-faced, Charles gives no response and goes back to work. The men go on talking about Charles loud enough for him to hear.

WORKER 3
There you have it, ladies and gentlemen, the Phantom of the fucking Opera deigns not speak to us lowly peasants.

WORKER 2
That it, Puke-cow-ski? Too good fer us?

WORKER 1
Maybe he's addled.

WORKER 3
Looks like he went ten rounds with a cheese grater.

On his way back from stacking a box in the big warehouse, Charles stops by the tailgate of the truck where the three workers have gathered for a cigarette break.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 23
Wanna do my work. And go home. Just like everybody else.

WORKER 2
It speaks!

The bullies laugh.

WORKER 1
Jesus Christ, you're ugly.

WORKER 3
What happen your face? Fall in a sausage grinder or sumpin?

Worker 1 reaches to touch Charles' face and Charles punches him. The other two workers shove Charles to the ground and all three of the workers commence to beating him.

INT. SEARS ROEBUCK - NEW ORLEANS - DAY

Work clothes dirty and torn, his face bruised, Charles punches out at the time clock after a hard day.

EXT. DOWNTOWN NEW ORLEANS - OFFICE SUPPLY SHOP - DAY

Still in his work clothes, Charles walks past a little office supply shop featuring new typewriters in the big display window.

Advertisement reads: "NEW FOR '23 ~ \$365.00"

He stops and looks longingly at a machine, and at the price with disappointment.

EXT. BOARDING HOUSE - NEW ORLEANS - DAY

Charles walks down the sidewalk to a slum of a boarding house. Gets his mail and opens a letter from the New Orleans Draft Board.

Reads with confusion and then disgust.

Crumples the paper angrily and stuffs it in his coat pocket.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - NEW ORLEANS - NIGHT

Charles writes a letter in pencil to the New Orleans Draft Board informing them that he won't be reporting.

He holds up the letter and checks it over.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 23 (V.O.)
New Orleans Draft Board. Dear
Gentlemen, this is to inform you that
I regret I will not be reporting for
duty due to my own personal
philosophy regarding the war. And
further ...

INT./EXT. SEARS ROEBUCK - TIME CLOCK - DAY

Charles punches in for work.

INT. SEARS ROEBUCK - LOADING DOCK - DAY

Charles unloads boxes from the back of a truck with his three bully co-workers.

Worker 1 purposely bumps into Charles in the back of the truck. Worker 2 bumps into Charles in the warehouse. Worker 3 trips Charles on his way back to the truck.

Charles gets up and hits worker 3. The other two join in the fracas when the LOADING DOCK SUPERVISOR walks in and breaks up the fight.

LOADING DOCK SUPERVISOR
Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, this isn't a
playground.

INT. SEARS ROEBUCK - OUTER OFFICE - DAY

Charles waits with the bullies outside the manager's office.

They glower at him but he sits stone-faced.

Receptionist answers the phone then hangs up.

RECEPTIONIST 1
Mr. Bukowski.

INT. SEARS ROEBUCK - OFFICE - DAY

Charles sits in the main office of the SEARS MANAGER, who's looking at a file.

SEARS MANAGER
One complaint after another. In a
very short time, Mr. Bukowski.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 23
Why don't you talk to them? Trying to
do my work and they won't leave me—

SEARS MANAGER
Least you could do is take
responsibility for your actions. Is
there any good reason I shouldn't
just let you go?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 23
Can I get my final check?

SEARS MANAGER
We'll mail it.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - NEW ORLEANS - NIGHT

Charles hastily, angrily packs his meager possessions

INT. BUS - HIGHWAY - PHILADELPHIA - DAY

1944.

Charles looks out the window at the "WELCOME TO PHILADELPHIA" sign.

INT./EXT. DOG BISCUIT FACTORY - PHILADELPHIA - DAY

"Help Wanted" sign at a dog food factory.

Charles goes inside.

With ratty old oven mitts, 24-year-old Charles pulls tray after tray of dog biscuits out of an industrial oven.

A stern manager approaches trailed by two FBI AGENTS.

DOG BISCUIT MANAGER
(shouts over loud
machinery)
Bukowski!

Charles looks up to see the feds coming and takes off the mitts and apron. He sits on a crate and lights a cigarette.

FBI AGENT 1
Heinrich Karl Bukowski?

DOG BISCUIT MANAGER FBI AGENT 2
Put that out! Mr. Bukowski—

Charles nods nonchalantly, exhales a cloud of smoke.

FBI AGENT 2 (cont'd)
Mr. Bukowski, you're under arrest on
suspicion of draft evasion.

DOG BISCUIT MANAGER
Goddamn Heinie. Why don'tcha go back
to the Fatherland. Draft dodger.

Charles takes another puff and stubs out the cig. Puts his hands behind his back for the agent to cuff him.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 24
'Bout my check?

DOG BISCUIT MANAGER
(completely disgusted)
We'll mail it.

EXT. FBI BUILDING - NEW ORLEANS DAY

FBI agents walk handcuffed Charles into the building.

INT. MOYAMENSING PRISON - PHILADELPHIA - DAY

Charles sits in a prison cell, staring off into space.

INT. MOYAMENSING PRISON - INFIRMARY - DAY

MILITARY DOCTOR checks Charles' pulse, blood pressure, eyes, ears, before performing a psychological evaluation.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 24
Two weeks to be seen by a doctor? No
wonder we're getting our ass kicked.

MILITARY DOCTOR
I'll ask you some questions. Please
answer as honestly as you're able.
Are you ready?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 24
That the first question?

MILITARY DOCTOR
Mr. Bukowski, you're already in a lot
of trouble. This'll go much easier—

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 24
Sure thing, baby.

INT. MOYAMENSING PRISON - INFIRMARY - DAY

ONE HOUR LATER. The doctor is disheveled and unnerved as he tallies the "score" Charles got on his psychological exam. Charles does his best to seem sincere.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 24
Well, Doc, how'd I do?

MILITARY DOCTOR
Having a party Saturday. Poets,
musicians, professors. Like you to
come.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 24
Ha-ha. What?

MILITARY DOCTOR
People I think you might find
interesting.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 24
Not a fan a parties, Doc. No offense.

The Doctor finishes filling out a paper, makes a "suit
yourself" face, and hands it to Charles.

MILITARY DOCTOR
You can go.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 24
Go?

MILITARY DOCTOR
You're free to leave. Don't have to
go to the war.

A shocked Charles takes the paper and goes to speak but
thinks better of it.

INT. MILITARY RECORDS OFFICE - DAY

A big red "4F" is stamped on Charles Bukowski's draft
registration card.

INT./EXT. MOYAMENSING PRISON - PHILADELPHIA - DAY

Charles is walked down a row of prison cells to an office.

INT. MOYAMENSING PRISON - MAIN OFFICE - DAY

A PRISON SECRETARY at a desk fills out paperwork while
Charles, no longer in handcuffs, waits.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 24
Free to go. Just like that.

PRISON SECRETARY
Might think twice about being so
gleeful over shirking your duty.
(looks up) Good men die by the
thousand while you sit there
smirking.

Gravity of her words sobers Charles. His smile goes away.

EXT. BUKOWSKI CHILDHOOD HOME - DAY

1947.

27-year-old Charles stands outside his parents' home with a suitcase. The last thing he wants is to be here.

His overjoyed mother comes outside.

KATHARINA BUKOWSKI

Henry!

They hug.

INT. BUKOWSKI CHILDHOOD HOME - DINNER TABLE - NIGHT

Heinrich, Katharina, and Charles eat supper.

Heinrich watches his son with open disgust and latent rage.

HEINRICH BUKOWSKI

Going to get a job. Immediately.
Better believe you're paying rent.
This isn't some kind of flophouse.

KATHARINA BUKOWSKI

But daddy.

HEINRICH BUKOWSKI

You know how you get ahead in this world? Find a good job. You work very very hard. Keep your mouth shut. You move up. Buy a house. Someday, you leave that house to your ... son. He does the same. And his son and his son. That's how a man gets rich. Not by drinking and whoring and wandering the countryside like a—

KATHARINA BUKOWSKI

Almost forgot.

Katharina brings out her purse. Under the angry watchful eye of Heinrich, Katharina nervously fishes around in her purse and hands her son several dollars.

Heinrich sighs heavily.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 27

Just a loan.

HEINRICH BUKOWSKI

Couldn't wait a day.

INT./EXT. BAR - LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

LATER THAT NIGHT. Charles sits on a bar stool. Empty beer glass before him. He gets up and stumbles, nearly falls, to the bathroom.

Stops just outside the bathroom door and holds his stomach. He grimaces. He's not nauseated. This is pain. When the feeling passes, he stumbles into the bathroom.

The bartender shakes his head in disgust.

INT. BAR - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Charles has to use the wall to make his way to the stall. He sits on the toilet to relieve himself and lets out a loud echoing FART. He giggles at his own buffoonery.

INT. BAR - BATHROOM - NIGHT

LATER THAT NIGHT. BLACK SCREEN. SNORING O.S. Charles snores himself awake. O.S. CLINK of a Zippo lighter.

In the glow of his cigarette lighter, Charles sees he's still in the bathroom stall, sitting on the toilet with his pants around his ankles.

He gets up and goes to walk but trips on his pants. The light goes out.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 27 (O.S.)

Shit!

INT. BAR - MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Charles flips on the dim back bar lights and looks around in disbelief at his luck. Picks up a cheap bottle of whiskey, realizes, sets it down and grabs a the top-shelf booze.

He wanders around the bar, sipping his drink and munching on snacks. He turns jukebox on, drops a coin in the slot, and chooses something like *"Don't Fence Me In."*

He turns in a slow dance until he sees a cigarette ad illustrating a family on a Sunday drive. Disgusted, he gives the sign the MIDDLE FINGER and downs his drink.

He goes to the bar and pours another. Downs it. Forgoes the glass and drinks straight from bottle.

EXT. BAR - NIGHT

LATER THAT NIGHT. Charles, once again VERY DRUNK, staggers down the street.

INT./EXT. POLICE CAR - NIGHT

Two cops watch Charles walk unsteadily and plop on a fire hydrant. They pull up and talk to him from inside the car.

POLICEMAN 1
Whatta ya think you're doing?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 27
Communing with the almighty.

POLICEMAN 1
Just watched you walk outta that bar over there, son.

POLICEMAN 2
And barely.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 27
Then why'd ya ask?

Policeman 1 confers with Policeman 2.

POLICEMAN 1
You can't be on the street in your condition.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 27
I'm not as drunk as you think I am.

POLICEMAN 1
(annoyed but can't
help smiling)
Get your ass in the back.

Charles gets daintily up and tips his imaginary cap.

EXT. POLICE CAR - BUKOWSKI CHILDHOOD HOME - NIGHT

Police car pulls up. Cops escort Charles to the front stoop.

EXT. BUKOWSKI CHILDHOOD HOME - PORCH - NIGHT

Katharina answers the door in her housecoat. She's very upset and their conversation awakens Heinrich.

POLICEMAN 1
Ma'am, is this your son?

KATHARINA BUKOWSKI
Oh, Henry. Why do you do this?

POLICEMAN 1
Next time he's gonna get more than a warning.

The policemen tip their caps and leave.

Charles stands silent in the dismayed eyes of his mother.

Heinrich comes to the door in his pajamas and robe.

HEINRICH BUKOWSKI
My son the drunk.

Katharina goes to let Charles in but Heinrich stops her. He glares at Charles as he closes and locks the door.

Charles turns to leave, lights a cig, and looks longingly into the night. He's going nowhere and he knows it.

INT. BUKOWSKI SAN PEDRO HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

1993. AFTERNOON. INTERVIEW. Back to present day.

INTERVIEWER
Then your drinking goes back quite—

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
Drank but I wasn't a drunk. Not at first. Shit. Takes decades to become a real alcoholic. I was just coping.

INTERVIEWER
Or an escape from reality.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
Practice makes perfect.

Interviewer laughs.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73 (cont'd)
Everybody tries to escape life every day. Food, religion, TV, work, golf, sex, books, music. Far as I see, the entire contribution of the human race is distraction from death.

INTERVIEWER

Alcohol has been such an integral part of your life. It must have had a large impact on your ability to keep those jobs you hated.

Linda smiles at Charles. She, too, awaits an answer.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73

My drinking never got in the way of my jobs. It was the jobs (swigs beer) got in the way of the drinking. Jobs got in the way of the writing, too. Only reason I became a writer was so I didn't have to get up before noon.

INT. CHARLES (26) APARTMENT - L.A. - NIGHT

1946.

26-year-old Charles sits in bed in his cheap and messy apartment. He's writing poetry in the margins of an old newspaper because it's all he can afford.

Half-full bottle of cheap wine on the bedside table.

Scribbles, single words, nonsense phrases. Some promising sentence fragments. Pages of newspapers scattered around his bed are filled in every white space with his words.

After a moment of writing, Charles roars, throwing the papers off the bed. He takes a big gulp of wine and grimaces.

Puts his hand to his belly. The pain lasts a moment and passes. He worriedly looks at the wine bottle before putting it back on the bedside table.

INTERVIEWER (V.O.)

You even gave up writing at one point, isn't that true?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73 (V.O.)

For about ten years. Until 1955.

INTERVIEWER (V.O.)

And you don't think the alcohol had anything to do with your quitting?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73 (V.O.)

No. That was all me.

INTERVIEWER (V.O.)
Is it possible the writing would've
come easier if you hadn't drank?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73 (V.O.)
We'll never know.

INT. RESTAURANT KITCHEN - SINK - DAY

27-year-old Charles Bukowski washes dishes in the steamy
kitchen of a greasy spoon. In storms the KITCHEN MANAGER.

KITCHEN MANAGER
You can't fuck the waitresses.
Especially not the married ones.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI
Can I get my check?

KITCHEN MANAGER
We'll mail it to you.

EXT. LIQUOR STORE - SLUM - NIGHT

Having recently lost yet another job, Charles turns to his
only means of solace, the bottle. He pulls the brown paper
bag down to twist the metal top off a pint of whiskey.

He takes a long pull, swallows. His eyes water. The cheap
booze burns his guts. Another long drink. A wave of peace
washes over him. He lights a cigarette.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

EXT. L.A. COUNTY JAIL - NIGHT

LATER THAT NIGHT.

INT. L.A. COUNTY JAIL - NIGHT

ARREST 1 - 20-year-old Charles Bukowski is led across the
police station by BEAT COP 1.

The Beat Cop hands Bukowski over to the jail booker.

BEAT COP 1
Drunk in public.

INT. L.A. COUNTY JAIL - BOOKING AREA - NIGHT

Charles is fingerprinted by a police woman.

INT. L.A. COUNTY JAIL - BOOKING AREA - NIGHT

Charles has his mugshot taken.

EXT. GAS STATION - LOS ANGELES - MORNING

1950.

30-year-old Charles Bukowski pumps gas into a brand new 1950 model car driven by a well-to-do man in a fine suit.

Charles looks envious as he cleans the windshield and checks the oil. Closes the hood and wipes his hands in a grease-blackened rag, and puts the gas nozzle away.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 30
(jovially)
Be a dollar-thirty-five, sir.

The man takes one look at Charles' gruesome face and shudders. He's not shy about not wanting to be touched by Charles as he hands over the cash.

Charles goes to make change, but ...

MAN IN CAR
(grossed out)
Just keep it.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 30
Thank-you.

As the man drives away, Charles turns in shame. He catches his own reflection in the high shine of the gas pump and wipes at it with the greasy rag, which obscures his reflection.

INT. DIVE BAR - LOS ANGELES - DAY

Charles sits drinking shoulder to shoulder with some very old and very drunk men. His future if he's not careful. He looks around. There's no lunch crowd in this kind of a bar. The day-drinkers here are professional alcoholics.

EXT. L.A. COUNTY JAIL - DAY

LATER THAT DAY.

INT. L.A. COUNTY JAIL - DAY

ARREST 2 - Charles is led across the police station by BEAT COP 2. The Beat Cop hands Charles over to the jail booker.

BEAT COP 2
Driving drunk.

INT. L.A. COUNTY JAIL - BOOKING AREA - NIGHT

Charles is fingerprinted by a police woman.

INT. L.A. COUNTY JAIL - BOOKING AREA - NIGHT

Charles has his mugshot taken.

INT. RED CROSS BLOODMOBILE - DAY

1955.

MORNING. 35-year-old Charles Bukowski looks confused as he surveys a map in his lap. The nurse in the seat next to him is losing her patience.

RED CROSS NURSE
This ain't a part a town you wanna
stop too long in.

Charles puts down the map, looks both ways, and pulls through the intersection.

RED CROSS NURSE (cont'd)
They said you knew how to drive.

Charles doesn't know what to say.

EXT. RED CROSS BLOODMOBILE - EVENING

It's getting dark. The bloodmobile piloted by Charles is still lost. They drive through a terrible inner-city slum.

INT. RED CROSS OFFICE - EVENING

LATER THAT EVENING. The Red Cross manager berates Charles.

RED CROSS MANAGER
It's a simple route. No one else gets
lost. No one has ever gotten lost.
And certainly not for twelve hours.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI
(half-hearted)
Sorry.

RED CROSS MANAGER
What were you doing all day?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI
I couldn't figure out the map.

RED CROSS MANAGER
Are you simple?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI
Maybe.

Charles starts to walk away.

RED CROSS MANAGER
Get back here!

Charles continues to walk out of building.

INT. APARTMENT - L.A. SLUM - NIGHT

Charles and a shabbily dressed, ugly woman sit fully clothed
on the edge of his bed. They share a bottle of wine.
Classical music plays on the little red radio.

EXT. L.A. COUNTY JAIL - NIGHT

LATER THAT NIGHT.

INT. L.A. COUNTY JAIL - NIGHT

ARREST 3 - Charles is led across the police station by BEAT
COP 3. Beat Cop hands Charles over to the jail booker.

BEAT COP 3
Public intoxication.

INT. L.A. COUNTY JAIL - BOOKING AREA - NIGHT

Charles is fingerprinted by a police woman.

INT. L.A. COUNTY JAIL - BOOKING AREA - NIGHT

Charles has his mugshot taken.

INT. NEWSPAPER OFFICE - STORE ROOM - DAY

1957.

37-year-old Charles climbs a very tall ladder trying to reach a light bulb in an impossibly high ceiling. Once at the top, he gets vertigo and nearly falls.

Charles hurries out the front door of the newspaper.

EXT. NEWSPAPER OFFICE - DAY

Charles wipes sweat from his brow. He can't do heights. He can't do another tedious dead-end job. He walks down the sidewalk to a bar.

EXT. BAR - DAY

Charles enters the bar.

INT. BAR - DAY

It's very dark and nearly empty in this Los Angeles dive bar. Charles takes a stool at the bar.

CHARLES
Bottle a Schlitz.

INT. BAR - DAY

LATER. Charles has been drinking for a couple hours when in walks the maintenance manager from the newspaper. He approaches Bukowski and stands there staring. Bukowski looks ahead, pretending not to notice, and sips his beer.

MAINTENANCE MANAGER
What in thee Christ are you doing?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 37
Takin' a break.

MAINTENANCE MANAGER
It's ten-thirty in the morning.

Charles finishes his beer and motions to the bartender for another. Lights a cigarette.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 37

Look ...

MAINTENANCE MANAGER

All that time spent interviewing, training you, your uniform, the paperwork. That cost us time. Money. Least you could do is give it a real shot.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 37

I'm not cut out for this.

MAINTENANCE MANAGER

Bit of free advice—you're too old to keep starting over from scratch. You really want to end up one of these old men working next to teenagers?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 37

(exhausted by the conversation, he pleads)

I just wanna drink my beer.

EXT. L.A. COUNTY JAIL - NIGHT

LATER THAT NIGHT.

INT. L.A. COUNTY JAIL - NIGHT

ARREST 4 - Charles is led across the police station by BEAT COP 4. Beat Cop hands Charles over to the jail booker.

BEAT COP 4

Drunk in public.

INT. L.A. COUNTY JAIL - BOOKING AREA - NIGHT

Charles is fingerprinted by a police woman.

INT. L.A. COUNTY JAIL - BOOKING AREA - NIGHT

Charles has his mugshot taken.

INT. BUKOWSKI SAN PEDRO HOME - LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

1993. INTERVIEW. Back to present day.

INTERVIEWER

And it was these experiences working your many jobs that lead you to write your novel "Factotum."

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73

I always knew I was going to write it but I had to wait until I was worthy of the material.

INTERVIEWER

Worthy?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73

A man has to live and die a certain number of years before he can speak, or write, with any real authority.

INT. BLACK SPARROW PRESS - SANTA ROSA - DAY

1975.

CLOSE ON printing press churns out hardcover copies of the novel *Factotum*. Bukowski V.O. reads from *Factotum*.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI (V.O.)

Go all the way. Otherwise, don't even start. This could mean losing wives, relatives, and even your mind. It could mean not eating for three days. It could mean freezing on a park bench. It could mean jail, derision, isolation. Isolation is the gift. All the others are a test of your endurance, of how much you really want it. And, if you do it, despite rejection and the worst odds, it will be better than anything else you can imagine.

EXT. L.A. NEIGHBORHOOD - MAILBOX - DAY

1954.

34-year-old Charles Bukowski, in a United States Postal Service uniform, puts letters into a mailbox.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

Many mailboxes being opened and closed: some with mail going out, some with mail going in. Scene REPEATS quickly, many times with different mailboxes.

This job is long and tedious.

END MONTAGE

INT. CHARLES' L.A. APT. - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Exhausted Charles enters his crappy little apartment after a long day of delivering mail. He throws his hat in a chair, unbuttons and walks out of his pants, unbuttons his shirt.

INT. CHARLES' L.A. APT. - KITCHEN - EVENING

Charles pours a whiskey, sits at the kitchen table, downs the drink. He stares at the blank wall. Pours another.

A sudden wave of pain clutches his stomach. He grabs his belly, grimacing terribly, and PUKES a great amount of BLOOD onto the white linoleum between his feet.

Charles tries to get up and knocks the whiskey bottle over. As he falls, he hits his head on the table. The whiskey bottle slowly glugs out onto the floor as he struggles.

Charles crawls to his front door and outside.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 34
Somebody? Hey. Hello?

EXT. CHARLES' L.A. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Outside his apartment, Charles crawls down the cement path to the apartment next door. His forehead bleeds a little but his chin and shirtfront are DOUSED IN BLOOD.

He knocks on the white door, his bloody fist making and awful mess. Just as someone's about to answer, Charles vomits another gout of blood.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 34
Help me! Please!

INT. L.A. CHARITY HOSPITAL - RECOVERY ROOM - DAY

With a bandaged head, Charles rests comfortably in a hospital bed.

A chubby young nurse tends to the patient in the next bed over. Charles admires her figure with a grin until DOCTOR 2 enters.

DOCTOR 2
How are we feeling?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 34
Like Satan's bunghole. I'm still here.

Doctor 2 looks at his chart.

DOCTOR 2
Just barely. Mr. Bukowski, we were able to repair the bleeding ulcer. But the recovery.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 34
Could use a vacation.

The doctor points to Charles' trembling hand.

DOCTOR 2
How long?

Charles holds his hands to still their shaking.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 34
Seven-and-three-quarter inches.

Charles winks at the nurse who blushes.

DOCTOR 2
I want to be perfectly clear here: you can't go on the way you've been. No more whiskey, no more beer, not so much as a sip of wine at communion. If you take another drink, you are going to die.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 34
Oh, hell, Doc, I—

DOCTOR 2
You are going to die.

Smile disappears from Charles' face.

DOCTOR 2 (cont'd)
You're still a young man with a lot of good years ahead. If you take care of yourself.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 34
Appreciate the concern, doc, but I'm
gonna live to be 80.

DOCTOR 2
Keep this up and you won't see 40.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 34
Can I go home now?

DOCTOR 2
Keep you here a week or so. Just to
be safe. For now, rest. Think about
what you want out of your future. Or
if you even want one.

As the doctor leaves, a grim look comes over Charles' face.

EXT. DOWNTOWN L.A. - HOTDOG STAND - DAY

NINE DAYS LATER. Fresh out of the hospital, Charles pays and
takes his hotdog and soda. He eats as he leisurely strolls.

At a trash can, he takes a final sip of the soda and throws
most of the hotdog away. He walks on.

EXT. DOWNTOWN L.A. - BAR - DAY

MINUTES LATER. Walking past a bar, Charles stops, looks
around. Goes to open the door but stops his hand. He's
struggling not to go in.

Someone else comes up to the door. Charles steps out of the
way to let them through. They hold the door for Charles. He
hesitates a second and shakes his head "no."

The door slowly closes on him.

EXT. DOWNTOWN L.A. - DAY

Charles continues walking down the street. Over his
shoulder, the bar slowly disappears as he walks away.

This decision is causing him a great amount of consternation
bordering on agony. He NEEDS A DRINK.

A moment later, Charles passes a second-hand store. In the
window, a 1952 OLYMPIA PORTABLE TYPEWRITER. As if the voice
of God spoke, he stops dead, both hands on the window.

Saleswoman inside angrily taps on the glass. She's concerned about hand prints. Charles doesn't even notice her. It's in his face. He's ready to start writing for real.

EXT. L.A. - SUBURB - SIDEWALK - DAY

1966-1969.

YEARS LATER. Bukowski's LAST FEW post office years. Charles Bukowski, 46, in his USPS uniform, shouts at a tall wooden fence while O.S. A DOG BARKS/SNARLS and shakes the fence with its lunges.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 46
C'mon, you son-a-bitch!

EXT. L.A. SUBURB - SIDEWALK - DAY

RAINING HARD. Charles' USPS uniform is soaked. His mailbag soaked. Trying to light a cigarette in the rain but can't.

EXT. L.A. SUBURB - SIDEWALK - DAY

Man throws a pile of mail at Charles the mailman, who scrambles to pick up the pieces.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 46
Sir.

ANGRY MAN
Don't live here no mo'!

INT. STRANGE WOMAN'S LIVING ROOM - COUCH - DAY

Mailman Charles Bukowski, his USPS pants down around his ankles, mail cap on backwards, does a plump woman in a see-through negligee doggy-style on her couch.

PLUMP WOMAN
Deliver me! Deliver me!

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 46
The mails [sic] must get through!

INT. POST OFFICE - MAIL SORTING AREA - NIGHT

Mailman Charles Bukowski sits atop a stool and tosses letters into a large sorting box.

He swoons, catches himself, and stops a moment. Closes his eyes and opens them. Steadies himself a moment until the dizziness passes.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Charles is on the examination table.

Doctor finishes checking blood pressure.

DOCTOR 1
Put your shirt on.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 46
Comes on just about every night.

DOCTOR 1
Just about?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 46
I'll be working along fine and then
(snaps fingers) feels like I'm gonna
fall off the Earth.

DOCTOR 1
Does this happen at home as well?

Charles has to think.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 46
Not really sure.

DOCTOR 1
Do you ever experience bouts of
nervousness?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 46
I drink. At night. So it's hard to.

DOCTOR 1
How often?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 46
At night.

DOCTOR 1
Every night?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 46
Weeell.

DOCTOR 1 CHARLES BUKOWSKI 46
You can't drink like that. Alright, mother.
You do know that, right? The
negative health effects are
well established.

Before the doctor's even finished, Charles starts to get dressed.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 46 (cont'd)
You people been tellin' me that for
ten years. Send me the bill, doc.

DOCTOR 1
Wait.

Doctor writes on a prescription pad.

DOCTOR 1 (cont'd)
These might help.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 46
With what?

INT. BUKOWSKI APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

1966.

Absolutely miserable and exhausted Charles, 46, staggers into his crappy apartment after yet another long shift at the Post Office.

Tears off his USPS coat and hat, throws them on a chair.
Unbuckles his pants and walks out of them as he crosses the
room, leaving his pants where they fell.

INT. BUKOWSKI APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Charles enters the kitchen. Pants-less, he unbuttons his postal uniform shirt, exposing a stained, sweat-yellowed undershirt that hasn't been washed for days. For weeks?

Charles reaches into the refrigerator filled with nothing but beer and pulls out two bottles.

INT. BUKOWSKI APARTMENT - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Charles sits in a hot bath, drinking his beer and reading the horseracing results in the newspaper. Suddenly, he looks up. He's got an idea. He hurries out of the bath.

INT. BUKOWSKI KITCHEN - EVENING

Charles tucks one beer in his armpit. Opens the other bottle and guzzles it entirely. Sets the empty in the sink, which is full of empties, and opens the second beer.

Charles sits at a rickety kitchen table topped by: ashtray brimming with butts, old Olympia typewriter, stack of fresh typing paper, even bigger stack of typed pages marked by coffee, wine, pencil and ink editing marks.

Swigs the beer, lights a cig, and closes his eyes. As he exhales that first lungful of smoke, PEACE WASHES over his face. Fingers hit keys. Tentatively at first. Then faster.

Flips on the switch of the little red radio on the nearby windowsill. Classical music plays. A jaunty tune. The typing grows furious. He smashes the keys.

EXT. BUKOWSKI APARTMENT - KITCHEN WINDOW - NIGHT

SAME.

In the dirty yellow light, the silhouette of Charles Bukowski typing with vigor.

O.S. the TICK-A-TACK of typing, and CLASSICAL MUSIC.

Also O.S. one hearty self-satisfied "HA!" from Bukowski followed by the DING of his typewriter.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 46 (O.S.)

Ha!

INT. BLACK SPARROW PRESS - SANTA ROSA - DAY

1971.

CLOSE ON printing press churns out hardcover copies of the novel *Post Office*. Bukowski V.O. reads from *Post Office*.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI (V.O.)

What's wrong with assholes, baby?
You've got an asshole, I've got an
asshole. You go to the store and buy
a porterhouse steak. That had an
asshole. Assholes cover the earth. In
a way, trees have assholes, but you
can't find them. The president has an
asshole, the carwash boy has an
asshole, the judge and the murderer
have assholes.

INT. BUKOWSKI SAN PEDRO HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

1993. AFTERNOON. INTERVIEW. Back to present day.

INTERVIEWER

And that was your last.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73

Real job? Thank Christ.

LINDA BUKOWSKI

Thank John Martin.

Charles Bukowski lifts his beer in agreement.

INTERVIEWER

Well, I wouldn't call it.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73

Typing isn't work. It's typing.
Anyone who tells ya different is
looking for accolades or sympathy. Or
a free fuck.

INTERVIEWER

So you don't consider your writing
work?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73

Plumbers and carpenters work.
Waitresses and bus drivers. This is
more like a form of madness.

Linda leaves the room.

INTERVIEWER

(confidentially)

I meant to ask you did you ever
reconcile with your father?

Linda returns with a plate of sandwiches.

Charles picks one up and takes a bite, talks as he chews.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73

You know that sonofabitch banished me
to Philadelphia in 1946.

INTERVIEWER

See it didn't take.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73

This's my town. It gets in your
bones.

INTERVIEWER

When did you first notice your drinking getting out of control?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73

Drinking is the one thing in my life that's ever been in my control.

LINDA BUKOWSKI

(calling bullshit)

Popsie.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73

Guess the drink got heavy about the same time I really discovered women.

Linda mocks being offended.

INTERVIEWER

So you blame women for your excessive drinking?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73

Purely coincidental. That's the thing with drinking. If something bad happens, you drink to forget. If something good happens, you drink to celebrate. If nothing happens ... you drink to make something happen.

INTERVIEWER

You write a lot about women. About sex. The focus seems to always be on the act, and the rocky relationships. Many call you a misogynist, a sexist. What do you say to that?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73

I have lotsa trouble with my women. (looks at Linda) Used to. They'd read my poetry and find all these profundities or whatever you might call them. Then, you know, you get in bed with 'em, you talk with them, you're living with them four, five days. They're waiting for you to say these grand statements. Expect you to march across the room and say, (yells it) "Death has 12 wings like the Angel of Hell!" But you, y'know, people aren't built that way. You say, "Hey, baby, why don'tcha make me a cup a coffee." It's not very poetic. They don't understand that.

INTERVIEWER
(to Linda)
Do you agree?

Linda shakes her head "no."

INTERVIEWER (cont'd)
(laughs)
No comment?

Linda just smiles and pats Charles' hand.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
They expect you to go marching around
the room with fire coming out your
ass. But you save your balls and your
juice for the typer. [typewriter]

INTERVIEWER
But what about your treatment of
women?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
My treatment of women. Hmm. That's
for them to say.

Linda laughs scornfully.

Charles gives her a displeased look.

INTERVIEWER
You've written some pretty awful
things.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
I've lived some pretty awful things.

INTERVIEWER
Linda?

She waves her hands in surrender.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
They wanna think I'm a woman-hater,
let 'em. Sure, I sometimes make women
look bad, but I make men look bad,
too. Hell, I make myself look bad
most of all. Honesty's the thing.
Without honesty, my stuff would've
just been more bad fiction.

INTERVIEWER
It's that brutal honesty that's
connected with readers?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
Hey, baby, if I think something's
bad, I say it.

LINDA BUKOWSKI
Sure does.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
The problem is, some of these women
are so touchy, they think they're
being singled out.

INTERVIEWER
You once wrote your first love was a,
and I'm quoting here, "300 pound
whore."

Charles shakes his head adamantly "no."

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
Not first love. First lay.

INTERVIEWER
That's not a very kind assessment.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
I wasn't a very kind individual when
I wrote that. But it was the truth.

INTERVIEWER
Would you say you're kinder now?

LINDA BUKOWSKI
He's softened around the edges.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
One of the few people in my life I
wish I could go back and apologize
to. She deserved better.

INTERVIEWER
What did you do?

Charles slowly shakes his head. There is a tremendous amount
of shame in his face.

INT. NEW ORLEANS - DIVE BAR - NIGHT

1943.

23-year-old Charles Bukowski sits drinking on a stool in
this dingy, nearly empty bar.

A very fat LONELY WOMAN twice Charles' age takes the stool next to him. She appears as miserable and lonely as he.

She glances at his glass. Charles checks his wallet on the sly and motions to the bartender to pour her a beer. She guzzles it down. Impressed, Charles orders two more.

The big woman kisses his cheek. He looks around to see if he's being put on. No woman has ever approached him.

LONELY WOMAN
Whatta ya do?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 23
Lotsa things.

She laughs and shoves him playfully.

INT. DIVE BAR - NIGHT

HOURS LATER. Charles and Lonely Woman at a dark corner table, laughing and sharing a cigarette. There's a mostly empty pitcher of beer and two glasses between them.

EXT. CHARLES' NEW ORLEANS APARTMENT - NIGHT

HOURS LATER. Charles and the lonely woman stagger up to his ramshackle apartment in a very seedy part of the city.

O.S. sounds of: People YELLING, a cat SCREECHES, a woman makes VERY LOUD SEX NOISES, a GUNSHOT, more YELLING, tires SQUEAL.

INT. CHARLES' APARTMENT - NIGHT

Charles and the lonely woman enter his one-room basement apartment. There are clothes on the floor, a pile of books on a little table with one chair.

Empty beer bottles all over the floor by the head of the rickety cot.

LONELY WOMAN
Cozy.

The big lonely woman sits on his bed. The springs groan under her girth.

Charles stands by the door. He's never done this before.

She pats the bed.

He hesitates then approaches her.

She unzips his fly. Charles lets out a startled groan.

EXT. CHARLES' APARTMENT - DAY

SEVERAL HOURS LATER. The morning after.

LOUD SNORING O.S. comes from inside the apartment.

INT. CHARLES' APARTMENT - DAY

Harsh light of the morning after streams through the high, curtain-less basement windows. The big woman lies snoring on her back, her big belly rising and falling.

Charles awakens, still in his pants but shirtless. His upper body is scourged by acne and scars. As he smokes, he thinks about last night and cringes.

Reaches into his back pocket to see how much he spent but his wallet is gone. Pats himself all over. Looks frantically around the room. In the commotion, Lonely Woman wakes.

LONELY WOMAN
(squinting)
What's a matter?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 23
Where's it?

LONELY WOMAN
I don't—

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 23
Fucking. Bitch. My wallet.

LONELY WOMAN
Heeey.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 23
Seventeen dollars and I want it back.

LONELY WOMAN
Didn't touch—

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 23
You god damned whore!

Charles goes for the woman's coat hanging on the back of a chair but she jumps out of bed and grabs it first.

They tug-of-war.

She wins.

LONELY WOMAN
I dint steal no money.

Charles rifles the blanket, pillow, and bed sheet.

LONELY WOMAN (cont'd)
(verge of tears)
I swear!

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 23
Gimme my fuckin' money or.

Sobbing, the lonely woman runs out, leaving the door open.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 23 (cont'd)
Better run! Fucking cunt!

Charles goes round and round, ransacking his place.

Holds his head. The hangover is killing him.

Flops panting on the bed and angrily takes a drag off his cigarette. It sticks to his lips and, as he slides his fingers down the cigarette, the cherry comes off and lands on his bare stomach.

Charles swats it toward the wall, shouting as he burns himself and now he searches for the cigarette coal in between the bed and the wall when he FINDS HIS WALLET.

Realizing what an asshole he is, Charles closes his eyes. He looks terribly heartsick. He sits up and calls after the Lonely Woman who's long gone.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 23 (cont'd)
Sorry! (barely audible) I'm sorry.

INT. BUKOWSKI SAN PEDRO HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

1993. AFTERNOON. INTERVIEW. Back to present day.

The interviewer is left reeling from Charles' story.

Charles wipes the his eye. Tries to contain the emotion.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
(embarrassed)
Shit.

Linda pats his free hand.

LINDA BUKOWSKI
(whispers)
It's OK, Popsie.

INTERVIEWER
Do we wanna have a short break?

Linda shakes her head "no." Tries to cheer Charles up.

LINDA BUKOWSKI
Anyway, I'm your first true love,
right?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
(bucks up)
Riiight.

INTERVIEWER
I thought I'd read somewhere that
you've been in love four times.

LINDA BUKOWSKI
I was just kidding.

INTERVIEWER
Who was your actual first? Love, I
mean. If that's—

LINDA BUKOWSKI
(terribly annoyed)
Jane. Cooney. Baker.

The Interviewer fruitlessly checks his notes.

INTERVIEWER
I don't have anything on her.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
(to himself)
Poor Jane.

LINDA BUKOWSKI
Can't compete with a dead girlfriend.

INTERVIEWER
How long were you together?

Charles takes a deep cleansing breath.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
 Oh, we met in '47, maybe. Together
 until around the time I nearly bled
 to death from my ulcer. Maybe '54.
 Lived off and on for about (looks at
 Linda) what? Seven years? Total.

LINDA BUKOWSKI
 How the hell would I know? (laughs) I
 wasn't there.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
 Never met anyone so hellbent on
 drinking them-self to death.

Interviewer snorts with surprise at such irony.

Linda flashes the interviewer a stern look.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73 (cont'd)
 Blamed herself for her husband's
 death. She never got over him.

Linda looks lovingly at Charles.

LINDA BUKOWSKI
 Just like you.

Charles' breath hitches.

He reaches to pour a glass of whiskey.

Linda takes his hand to stop him.

He hesitates a moment then angrily jerks his hand away,
 pours the drink, and gulps it down.

INT. L.A. BOOKSTORE - STAGE - NIGHT

1993. (B&W) LATER. POETRY READING.

Charles lights a cigarette and sets it in the ashtray,
 noticing there's already a lit cigarette there.

He reads the next poem.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
 And so you go. Leaving me here. In a
 room with a torn shade.

MUSIC UP: Wagner's Siegfried Idyll (PRE-LAP)

INT. SHABBY ROOM - BOARDING HOUSE - NIGHT

1962.

41-year-old Charles Bukowski looks around the shabby rented room of a skid row boarding house rented by his first love, Jane Cooney Baker.

The place is a mess. Empty wine bottles EVERYWHERE.

Charles looks distraught. He collapses on the bed and picks up a framed photo of Jane with her (now deceased) husband.

Charles holds the photo frame to his forehead and sobs.

INT. BUKOWSKI SAN PEDRO HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

1993. AFTERNOON. INTERVIEW. Back to present day.

Charles Bukowski, now in tears, gets up from the couch and leaves the room.

Linda calls after him.

LINDA BUKOWSKI
C'mon, Popsie.

The camera crew stops recording.

Linda goes after Charles.

LINDA BUKOWSKI (O.S.)
Popsie? (muffled words follow)

INTERVIEWER
(to crew)
I guess we'll take a break.

Crew stands around awkwardly while O.S. A MUFFLED ARGUMENT.

Only Linda's voice is somewhat audible.

LINDA BUKOWSKI
I told you not to do it in the first place. No, you don't listen. I don't care. I don't care. Tough.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
(words unintelligible)

LINDA BUKOWSKI
Then you tell them. Absolutely not!

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
(words unintelligible)

EXT. BUKOWSKI SAN PEDRO HOME - DAY

The Interviewer, Camera Man, Sound Guy take a break outside.

From inside the house O.S. Charles can be heard YELLING unintelligibly.

SOUND GUY
Maybe we should wrap it up.

INTERVIEWER
It's fine. Just give 'em a—

CAMERA GUY
He don't look good, man. Maybe we should just—

INTERVIEWER
It's fine. He wants to quit, he can say so. Til then.

Fine. SOUND GUY Fine. CAMERA GUY

A door SLAMS O.S. from INSIDE.

INTERVIEWER
Back to it.

The Sound Guy and Camera Guy look at each other warily.

INT. BUKOWSKI SAN PEDRO HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Linda returns, flustered.

LINDA BUKOWSKI
He'll be out.

INTERVIEWER
No problem.

The Interviewer motions for the crew to turn the equipment back on. They settle in.

INTERVIEWER (cont'd)
What about you two? How'd you meet?

Linda sits on the couch. She really doesn't want to be doing this interview.

Charles reenters the room and sits next to Linda.

The interviewer retakes his seat.

INTERVIEWER (cont'd)
I read something about you sculpting his face.

LINDA BUKOWSKI
Different Linda.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
Different Linda.

Interviewer checks his notes.

INTERVIEWER
Oh. Sorry.

LINDA BUKOWSKI (V.O.)
She was (finger quotes) "sculpting the faces" of L.A. poets.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
(amused snort)
A groupie who got in over her head.

Linda points to the infamous sculpture of Charles Bukowski's head on a corner table.

LINDA BUKOWSKI
That fucking head.

Charles and Linda laugh. Hard.

The Interviewer is relieved.

INTERVIEWER
How many women would you say you've had? Or, been with, I should say.

Linda laughs scornfully.

Charles waves his hand as a maestro.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
Haven't kept count.

LINDA BUKOWSKI
Oh, bull.

Caught in the lie, Charles smiles a big wolf grin.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
Weeell ... shit. The thing they don't
tell you ... is men have always been
at the mercy of the women who will
have them.

LINDA BUKOWSKI
Poor baby.

INT. BOOKSTORE - STAGE - NIGHT

1993. (B&W) LATER. POETRY READING.

Charles Bukowski reads the end of his poem *The Rat*.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
Sex? well, just the old ones knock on
my door after midnight. I can't sleep
and they see the lights and are
curious. The old ones. Their husbands
no longer want them, their children
are gone, and if they show me enough
good leg—the legs go last—I go to
bed with them. So the old women bring
me love and I smoke their cigarettes
as they talk talk talk and then we go
to bed again and I bring them love
and they feel good and talk until the
sun comes up. Then we sleep.

EXT. LINDA KING'S APT. - L.A. - MORNING

1970.

Charles (50) parks 1967 Volkswagen Beetle at the apt. of
LINDA KING, 30. He's agreed to let her sculpt his face.

INT. LINDA'S APT. - FRONT DOOR - MORNING

Linda opens the door to let her daughter leave for school,
just as Charles pulls up.

EXT. LINDA'S APT. - L.A. - MORNING

Charles waves at the little girl as he walks up to Linda
standing in the open doorway.

The little girl grimaces and shies away.

Charles shows an almost imperceptible flash of sadness. The old shame about his appearance is always just under the surface.

LINDA KING
You made it.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 50
Never miss a chance to get head.

Linda slaps his arm as he enters her apartment.

LINDA KING
Dirty old man.

INT. LINDA'S APT. - KITCHEN - DAY

FEW HOURS LATER.

Charles sits smoking at the kitchen table while Linda works on a hunk of clay a little bigger than Charles' own big head.

LINDA KING
Heard all about you.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 50
Some good. I hope.

LINDA KING
I heard you beat your women.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 50
Beat my wim? Where the hell'd you hear that?

LINDA KING
Say you keep whores all over the country.

Charles wishes that were true.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 50
I'm not that lucky. Or energetic.

Linda King laughs.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 50 (cont'd)
Hey, I'm gettin' thirsty over here.

LINDA KING
There's water, coffee. Tea, maybe.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 50
Five fuckin' hours. I need a drink.

Linda's trying to concentrate on her sculpting.

LINDA KING
Try the cupboard over the fridge.

Charles jumps up and goes to the cupboard.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 50
Aaall riiight.

LINDA KING
And then you've got to hold still.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 50
Whatever mama wants, mama gets.

LINDA KING
Suuure.

Linda's carefree attitude then quickly changes to very grim.

LINDA KING (cont'd)
One thing: don't tell me about your
women. I don't ever wanna hear about
your women.

Fishing for the booze bottle, Charles barely registers
Linda's grim warning.

He hunts a glass, fills it by half with whiskey and tops it
with water. Drinks the booze.

With a satisfied gasp, he refills the drink and walks behind
Linda, still sculpting, grabs her ass before he sits.

INT. LINDA KING'S APT. - KITCHEN - DAY

Charles and Linda are on the floor having sex when they hear
Linda's daughter return from school.

They scramble to get dressed before she walks in.

EXT. CHARLES' DELONGPRE APT. STEPS - L.A. - DAY

Charles stands in the open door as Linda brings him the
finished sculpture of his head.

It's big and grotesque and accurate.

LINDA KING

Well?

He holds the sculpture up to get a good look.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 50

Your artistic integrity's intact.
Because you did not spare my
feelings.

LINDA KING

I'm gonna put you in your grave, old
man.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 50

Not if I send you back to the
madhouse first.

They laugh.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

Series of BRIEF scenes showing Charles' and Linda King's
tempestuous relationship, which involved them trading the
sculpted head back and forth while fighting.

INT. LINDA KING'S APT. - BEDROOM - MORNING

Charles and Linda King having sex.

INT. LINDA KING'S APT. - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Charles and Linda King arguing.

EXT. CHARLES' DELONGPRE APT. STEPS - L.A. - DAY

Linda angrily leaves the Charles Bukowski head sculpture on
Charles' apartment steps.

EXT. LINDA KING'S APT. - FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Charles angrily leaves the head sculpture at Linda King's
front door.

INT. LINDA KING'S APT. - BEDROOM - MORNING

Charles and Linda King having sex.

INT. LINDA KINGS APT. - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Charles and Linda King arguing.

EXT. CHARLES' DELONGPRE APT. STEPS - L.A. - DAY

Linda angrily leaves the head sculpture on Charles' apartment steps.

EXT. LINDA KING'S APT. - FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Charles angrily leaves the head sculpture at Linda King's front door.

INT. LINDA KING'S APT. - BEDROOM - MORNING

Charles and Linda King having sex.

INT. LINDA KING'S APT. - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Charles and Linda King arguing.

EXT. CHARLES' DELONGPRE APT. STEPS - L.A. - DAY

Linda angrily leaves the head sculpture on Charles' apartment steps.

EXT. LINDA KING'S APT. - FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Charles angrily leaves the head sculpture at Linda King's front door.

END MONTAGE

INT./EXT. PLANE LANDING - KANSAS CITY - DAY

1973. FEBRUARY.

Charles Bukowski's plane lands in cold and snowy Kansas City.

In his light trousers, thin summer sport jacket, and hole-filled loafers, he is NOT ready for cold weather.

INT. AIRPORT - KANSAS CITY - DAY

Charles Bukowski walks with only a plane ticket and shaving kit through the Kansas City International Airport.

EXT. AIRPORT - PICKUP/DROP-OFF - DAY

A taxi driver pulls up to the curb. Shivering, MISERABLE Charles gets in.

INT./EXT. TAXI - DOWNTOWN KC - DAY

Charles Bukowski's taxi drives through downtown Kansas City. Charles watches the city go by out his window.

EXT. BOOKSTORE - DOWNTOWN KC - DAY

MINUTES LATER.

Taxi pulls up to a bustling bookstore.

Sign out front reads: "TONIGHT ONLY - CHARLES BUKOWSKI"

INT. TAXI - OUTSIDE BOOKSTORE - DAY

Charles sits a moment before getting out. Watches people filing into the bookstore. Looks up at the sign.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 53
Not too late to make a run for it.

TAXI DRIVER
Won't catch me dead in no poetry
readin'.

EXT. OUTSIDE BOOKSTORE - MARQUEE - DAY

CLOSE ON sign featuring Bukowski's poetry reading.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 53
Funny. I said the same exact thing.

INT. TAXI - OUTSIDE BOOKSTORE - DAY

Charles smiles a little, shakes head.

He can't believe his luck.

He gets out of the taxi.

INT. BOOKSTORE - STAGE - DAY

TWO HOURS LATER.

Charles Bukowski is just finishing his reading.

The packed crowd APPLAUDS WILDLY.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 53
Thank-you, babies.

INT. TAXI - OUTSIDE BOOKSTORE - EVENING

Charles Bukowski is exhausted from the trip and the reading.
Leans forward in the backseat and puts his hand on the
cabby's shoulder.

TAXI DRIVER
Where to?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 53
Bar with the best leg.

Taxi Driver snorts, nods, and peels out.

INT. DIVE BAR - KANSAS CITY - NIGHT

Charles Bukowski is DRUNK.

He's surrounded by college students, barflies, and people
from the reading.

He's turned on the charm—"the old Bukowski bullshit," as he
likes to call it.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 53
Fuck Shakespeare!

Many in the bar respond in kind.

BARGOERS
Fuck Shakespeare!

INT. WOMEN'S DORM - COLLEGE - NIGHT

SEVERAL HOURS LATER.

Obnoxiously drunk Charles Bukowski roams the halls of a women's college dormitory.

He staggers door to door, banging his fists and shouting.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 53
Wakey wakey, time for snaky!

Giggling O.S. of some college girls in their rooms.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 53 (cont'd)
Who wants some turkey neck?

GIRL YELLS O.S.

COLLEGE GIRL (O.S.)
Go away! Or I'm calling the police!

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 53
Which a you cunts'll make it with the
woorld's greatest writer?

Charles stops, bends, pukes on his own feet.

More O.S. LAUGHTER from girls in their rooms.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 53 (cont'd)
Don't wanna make it with the immortal
writer? Then fuck you.

INT. CHEAP MOTEL ROOM - KANSAS CITY - DAY

SEVERAL HOURS LATER.

Charles Bukowski awakens gasping and coughing just as the sun comes up over the wintry wasteland outside his window.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Charles bursts into the bathroom, cranks faucet, fills his cupped hands and slurps water over and over until his belly is full.

He stands panting, looking at his own disgusting shirtless body. His ravaged face in the mirror. HE HATES HIMSELF.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 53
(resigned; to himself)
Fuck you.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Frantically, Charles sits on the edge of the bed, hands shaking, lights a cigarette and dials Linda King's phone number.

LINDA KING (O.S.)

Hello?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 53

(into phone)

Help me.

LINDA KING (O.S.)

Where are you?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 53

(into phone)

I-uh. I don't know.

LINDA KING (O.S.)

Are you still in Kansas City?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 53

(into phone)

I think so. I had a room in the girls dormitory. But I'm not there.

LINDA KING (O.S.)

Well where the hell are you now?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 53

(into phone)

Motel somewhere.

LINDA KING (O.S.)

With some slut.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 53

(into phone)

No. There's nobody else here.

He looks around to make sure he's really alone.

LINDA KING (O.S.)

I can't keep doin' this, Hank. You drink yourself stupid and whore around and then call me every time you think you're dyin'.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 53

(into phone)

I'm sorry, baby. Please. Just help me.

LINDA KING (O.S.)
When's your plane leave?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 53
(into phone)
Three ... thirty? I think.

LINDA KING (O.S.)
Take a hot shower. Get something to
eat. And get your ass back to L.A.

Like a lost child, he nods eagerly at her advice.

INT. LINDA'S APT. - BEDROOM - NIGHT

LATER THAT NIGHT.

Charles and Linda King have just finished having sex.

There's an UNSPOKEN TENSION between them.

LINDA KING
You need to decide.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 53
I just got home.

LINDA KING
I can't go on playing third fiddle to
your whores.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 53
There wasn't any woman. I blacked
out. Someone stuffed me in a taxi and
sent me to a motel. End of story.

LINDA KING
Not "end of story."

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 53
I don't need this shit.

LINDA KING
Right. The world's greatest writer
does whatever he pleases. To hell
with everybody else.

Charles gets out of bed and begins dressing.

LINDA KING (cont'd)
(teary)
Where're you going?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 53
I d'know. Maybe Kansas City.

LINDA KING
(crying)
Asshole.

Charles leaves.

LINDA KING (cont'd)
(screams)
Asshole!

INT. FINE HOTEL - CATALINA - DAY

WEEKS LATER.

Charles is in a fancy hotel room with longtime friend LIZA WILLIAMS, late-30s, a smart, sophisticated music producer.

LIZA WILLIAMS
Aren't you enjoying yourself?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 53
I gotta be gettin' back to the typer.

LIZA WILLIAMS
(worried)
Please?

Charles sits at a writing desk and dials Linda King's phone number. Liza sits on the bed, trying not to cry.

Charles gives her a sad, sympathetic look. He sees she has something else to say and puts his hand over the mouthpiece.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 53
(into phone)
Hold on. Just hold on. That's what.

Charles listens to Liza now.

LIZA WILLIAMS
I can't be alone.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 53
(sincere to Liza)
I'm really sorry. I just ... (into phone) Yes. Yes. Tomorrow sometime.
(annoyed) I don't know. No one! OK.
Love you, too.

Liza puts her face in her hands and sobs.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 53 (cont'd)
(feels terrible but
into phone)
Nothing.

INT. CHARLES/LINDA KING APT. - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

FEW WEEKS LATER.

Charles and Linda King are back together. Lounging after dinner. He reads a Los Angeles Times newspaper.

Linda sketches a picture of something in charcoal.

PHONE RINGS O.S.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 53
(into phone)
Hello? (sighs) Where's she now?
Alright. Well why not goddammit?
Fine. Yes. (looks at watch) Thirty
minutes. At least. Alright. I said
alright.

LINDA KING
Now what?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 53
Liza's not well.

LINDA KING
Thought you were done with her.

Linda stops drawing.

Charles gives her a "what else can I do?"

LINDA KING (cont'd)
Run to your whore.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 53
I wasn't good to her. Now she's
hurting herself. I can't not go.

EXT. LIZA WILLIAMS' APARTMENT - L.A. - NIGHT

HOURLY LATER.

Charles drives up to the curb of an upscale apartment complex.

EXT. LIZA WILLIAMS' APARTMENT - L.A. - NIGHT

Charles knocks on Liza's door. LIZA'S FRIEND answers.

LIZA'S FRIEND
Fuck d'you want?

Charles shrugs in apology.

LIZA'S FRIEND (cont'd)
She's really sick.

Charles takes a last drag from his cigarette. Drops it and grinds it under his toe.

LIZA'S FRIEND (cont'd)
Need to tell her she needs to go the hospital. Won't listen to me.

Charles nods and enters.

INT. LIZA WILLIAMS' APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Charles enters an open bedroom door.

Liza is sprawled on the bed, half covered with a blanket. She's breathing hard and barely conscious.

Charles lifts her to a sitting position and holds a bucket up to her face. He sticks his fingers down her throat. She pukes geyser after geyser of booze and undigested pills.

LIZA WILLIAMS
(sing-song slurring
from pills and booze)
You caaame baaack.

Charles wipes her mouth off with the bed sheet.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 53
I can be stupid but I don't believe
in outright cruelty.

LIZA WILLIAMS

It's so bad.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 53
I know it hurts. You don't need me.
Look at you. You're amazing.

LIZA WILLIAMS
Please stay. Pleeaase?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 53
We'll always be friends.

LIZA WILLIAMS
You rather be with that crazy whore.
(sobbing) Why!?

Liza puts her head in Charles' lap. He strokes her naked shoulder. She sits up to kiss him. He lets her.

She tries to make it something more. Grabs at his crotch. Charles gently pushes her back down.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 53
I'm sorry.

Liza punches him all over. He lets her. When she's out of gas, he lies her back and covers her with the blanket.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 53 (cont'd)
Sleep on your side.

EXT. CHARLES/LINDA KING APT. - COURTYARD - NIGHT

SEVERAL HOURS LATER.

Charles pulls up to he and Linda King's place to see all his things in the courtyard.

There are a dozen of Charles's paintings, manuscripts, clothes, and the big clay Bukowski head.

He parks, rests his hand and chin atop the steering wheel. Surveys the scene with resignation.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
Shiiit.

THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD Linda King storms out of their apartment. She chucks one last item onto the pile of shame.

Bukowski's typewriter lands with a sad "DING" that rings through the quiet night.

Charles winces at this display of savagery.

LINDA KING
You want your goddamn women!? You can have 'em! I'm done with ya!

Charles locks his doors, reclines his seat, and closes his eyes. He's sleeping in the car tonight.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 53
 (to himself)
 Valentino where are you?

INT. BUKOWSKI SAN PEDRO HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

1993. AFTERNOON. INTERVIEW. Back to present day.

LINDA BUKOWSKI
 You and your damsels in distress.

Charles tilts his head; his expression: "Well, you know."

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
 Not you. You saved me.

Linda Lee hugs his arm.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73 (cont'd)
 My good lady.

INTERVIEWER
 Might get in trouble for asking this
 but ... is she your last?

Linda half-seriously awaits an answer.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
 (laughing)
 Next question.

Linda slaps his arm.

EXT. TROUBADOUR CLUB - WEST HOLLYWOOD - NIGHT

1976.

Sign reads: "TONIGHT ONLY - POETRY BY CHARLES BUKOWSKI"

INT. TROUBADOUR CLUB - MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Standing room only.

Over the heads of this packed crowd, up on the stage, 56-year-old Charles Bukowski sits at a table topped by papers, ashtray, a bottle of beer.

Hair unkempt, face unshaven, VERY DRUNK, and slovenly dressed. This is peak dirty old man.

INT. TROUBADOUR CLUB - STAGE/AUDIENCE - NIGHT

Charles eyes the pages of poetry on the table before him.
His look is one of concentration, consternation, contempt.
O.S. A man SHOUTS.

MAN IN AUDIENCE 3
Hurry the fuck up!

Charles sorts his paper at leisure.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56
Don't rush me, baby. Might just pull
my steel.

Audience O.S. CHEERS.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56 (cont'd)
Let's don't forget who's in charge.

WOMAN IN AUDIENCE 1
Eat my pussy!

Without looking up and without missing a beat ...

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56
Bring it on a plate.

Audience O.S. ROARS with delight.

IN THE AUDIENCE, Linda Lee Beighle (eventually Linda
Bukowski) shakes her head with shock at such brashness.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56 (O.S.)
I was going to read some more poems.
Think I'll just watch for a while.
Entertain me.

Charles looks out over the audience with disgust.

MAN IN AUDIENCE 3 (O.S.)
Screw this!

Charles put his mouth CLOSE to the microphone. He's the
voice of God now.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56
NO. REFUNDS.

Audience O.S. BOOS.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56 (cont'd)
Unconvincing.

Audience O.S. LAUGHS.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56 (cont'd)
Christ, you people are boring. I
oughtta be booing you.

Audience O.S. LAUGHS.

Linda Lee laughs hard in the audience.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56 (cont'd)
I've come to save your souls.
(uproarious drunken laughs)

Audience O.S. JEERS.

WOMAN IN AUDIENCE 2 (O.S.)
(yells unintelligibly)

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56
Is that you, Catullus? No, I will not
read your shitty little poems.

Audience O.S. LAUGHS.

Linda Lee laughs.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56 (cont'd)
I will read you myyy shitty poems.

Audience O.S. ROARS.

Out in the audience, Linda Lee is enamored.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56 (cont'd)
You might (swigs beer) have overpaid.

A college girl brings a six-pack of beer up onto the stage
and sets it on Charles' table. He tilts his head. She kisses
his cheek.

The audience GOES WILD.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56 (cont'd)
Wait, how'd I get here? Who are you
people? Right, right. Poems. Wanna
hear the poems. The goddamn mother
fucking poems. Well let's get it.

Audience O.S. CHEERS.

Three people at a table up front are DISGUSTED by Bukowski's display. They get up and walk out. One flips him off.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56 (cont'd)
 (to people leaving)
 Wait for me!

Audience ROARS.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56 (cont'd)
 (re-energized)
 OK. Let's make these last lines
 really count. Might have just enough
 time to make that last race at
 Hollywood Park.

Audience O.S. LAUGHS/CHEERS.

ONE HOUR LATER.

Charles Bukowski finishes reading his final poem of the night entitled, *Thinking*.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56 (cont'd)
 Eighteen cars full of men. Thinking
 about what could've been. About the
 one who got away. It was sunset. In
 heavy traffic. In heavy life.

With the poems done for the night, the audience is suddenly, temporarily quiet.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56 (cont'd)
 Look, I've given you people
 everything I have. Time to release
 the hostage.

MAN IN AUDIENCE 2 (O.S.)
 (uncertain insult)

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56
 (for once, serious)
 Call it a night, buddy. Alright?
 (waves to audience) Thank-you.

Raucous cheers, clapping from audience.

INT. TROUBADOUR CLUB - BAR - EVENING

Bukowski makes his way to the bar where he's approached and first meets his future and second wife Linda Lee Beighle,
 31.

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
 (shy, nervous)
 That was different.

Charles gets the bartender's attention.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56
 Boilermaker.

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
 They seemed to like it.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56
 It's a freak show. They pay to see
 the caveman rip out his intestines.

Linda laughs.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56 (cont'd)
 But, it keeps me in wine and
 cigarettes and steak sandwiches.

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
 Don't have to justify your art.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56
 (laughs scornfully)
 Art. Ha-ha-ha. It's typing.

Charles really notices her for the first time. Gazes at her.

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
 (self-conscious)
 What?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56
 I don't know.

Charles writes something on a small scrap of paper and hands it to Linda.

She holds it up. It's a phone number and a crude drawing of himself holding a beer bottle.

Linda laughs, holds out her hand. Charles gives her his pen.

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
 Need to lay off that hard liquor.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56
 I'm gonna live to eighty.

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
 Not if you don't make some changes.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56

OK, baby.

Charles downs his drink, motions for another.

Linda hands him a business card for the Dew Drop Inn Health food restaurant.

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE

Come see me.

Charles eyes the card.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56

Health food. Ha. Tryin' to kill me?

INT. CHARLES' CARLTON WAY APT - DAY.

MORNING.

The ringing phone wakes Charles, who swats the receiver groggily off the base.

Grumbling and confused with hangover, Charles hoists the phone up by its spiral cord.

CHARLES 56

Who doesn't fucking know better?

INT. DEW DROP INN - DAY

Linda Lee Beighle, in an apron behind the lunch counter of her restaurant, talks on the phone with Charles Bukowski.

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE

Good morning, glory. Interrupt your hangover?

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

CHARLES 56

Don't get 'em.

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE

Then what're you still doing in bed?
You've slept half the morning away.

CHARLES 56

My day starts at noon.

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
Well, I was going to invite you down
for a nice healthy lunch.

Charles finally realizes who it is and softens.

CHARLES 56
Oh, Linda.

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
Can't keep your women straight? Not a
good sign.

CHARLES 56
Nooo. Just a little hungover.

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
Thought you didn't get those.

CHARLES 56
Shit. (laughter turns to coughing
fit) You don't miss a trick.

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
Don't you have enough starry-eyed
bimbos blowing smoke up your ass?

CHARLES 56
I'll have to look into that.

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
Look, if we're going to become
entangled, I'd like us to be straight
with each other. That's all.

CHARLES 56
That's a good word. "Entangled."

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
I'm serious.

CHARLES 56
So am I.

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
I don't want to be just another one
of your "women."

CHARLES 56
Aw, that's just research.

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
Save the Casanova act for your
bimbos.

(MORE)

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE (cont'd)
I can see right through your macho
bullshit. There's a man in there
somewhere. If you'd just let him out.

Caught, assuming he's blown it, Charles isn't sure how to proceed.

CHARLES 56
Still want me for lunch?

EXT. VOLKSWAGEN - FREEWAY - DAY

AN HOUR LATER.

Charles Bukowski's Volkswagen Beetle fights traffic on a busy California freeway.

INT. VOLKSWAGEN - FREEWAY - DAY

Hungover and perturbed by his fellow motorists, Charles weaves in and out of traffic, rushing to get to Linda's Dew Drop Inn restaurant in Redondo Beach.

He's got on fresh clothes but he's still unshaven and looking rough.

EXT. VOLKSWAGEN - FREEWAY - DAY

Volkswagen takes the exit for REDONDO BEACH.

EXT. VOLKSWAGEN - REDONDO BEACH - DAY

Charles drives slowly down a street.

INT. VOLKSWAGEN - REDONDO BEACH - DAY

While stopped to check his map, Charles is honked at by cars pulling up behind him.

He sticks his hand out the window to flip them off and drives on.

EXT. VOLKSWAGEN - REDONDO BEACH - DAY

The Volkswagen goes around the block and stops in the same place where Charles was looking over his map. He is lost.

INT. REDONDO BEACH - BAR - DAY

MINUTES LATER.

Charles on a bar stool, glass of beer in hand, phone to his ear getting directions from Linda Lee for the second time.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56
Oh. A left. Alright. No, I said,
"alright." Yes, I know. A left.

EXT. DEW DROP INN - REDONDO BEACH - DAY

Charles parks the Volkswagen on the street outside the Dew Drop Inn.

INT. DEW DROP INN - REDONDO BEACH - DAY

Charles enters the Dew Drop Inn restaurant. It's very homey inside. Comfortable chairs, reading material, a couch, floor lamps.

More like someone's living room than a restaurant.

Linda comes out of the kitchen with a plate of food.

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
Avocado melt?

Charles holds his stomach, makes a skeptical face.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56
Some kind a hippie crap.

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
Just try it.

Charles takes a stool at the counter and bites into the sandwich. It's surprisingly good.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56
Hmm.

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
Almost sounded like a compliment.

LATER.

Charles sips a glass of fruit juice while Linda finishes closing up the restaurant after lunch.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56
Shit. Think I scared all your
customers away.

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
We don't serve dinner.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56
Too bad. Hoping to try the grilled
unicorn.

Linda wipes a table down.

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
Keep it up and next time you'll get
the tofu surprise.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56
I need a drink.

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
I have to open early.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56
No tofu beer, I promise.

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
Can we stop somewhere first?

INT. HEALTH FOOD STORE - DAY

MINUTES LATER.

Charles, pushing a shopping cart, follows Linda Lee down an
aisle. She fills the cart with bottles of vitamins, whole
grain bread, carrot juice, vegetables.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56
Really isn't necessary.

Linda looks at a rack of supplements.

LINDA BUKOWSKI
If that body's going to make it to
eighty, it's going to need all the
help it can get.

EXT. CHARLES' APT. - CARLTON WAY - DAY

TWO HOURS LATER.

Charles and Linda sit drinking, talking, and laughing in his apartment the rest of the afternoon.

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
No. I'm serious. Your work speaks to me. You have an old soul.

CHARLES 56
I'm an old man. OK, whaddas it say?

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
Despite your vulgarity and childishness, you're a lot more intuitive than you come off. At first read. You've endured an incredible amount of pain in your life. Most of which I don't think you've gotten over.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56
With all the boozing, whoring, just plain stupidity in my writing, that's what you came away with?

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
I think you might be the saddest man I ever met.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56
Shit.

They sit with the heaviness of her statement a moment.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56 (cont'd)
You may wanna rethink the groupie business. Cuz you're terrible at it.

They laugh.

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
That what you think I am?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56
I haven't figured you out yet.

Charles gets up and goes to the little kitchenette and pulls two fresh beers out of the refrigerator while Linda talks.

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
I have plans. I'm not just going to fix sandwiches for the rest of my life.

On his way back to his seat.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56
And fuck major-minor poets.

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
Who said anything about fucking?

Charles appreciates her vulgarity. Hands her a beer.

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE (cont'd)
I've been taking acting classes. For
a while now.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56
Just what Hollywood needs, another
struggling actress.

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
I'd hoped to be a cynical, self-
important writer, but they said they
were all full up.

Charles laughs.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56
That why you won't fuck me? I'm too
cynical?

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
I haven't been with anyone in nearly
seven years.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56
By choice? (off her silence) I went
seven years without sex once. But it
wasn't voluntary.

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
Meher Baba teaches that relations
should be between husband and wife
only for the purposes of expressing
perfect love. Not imperfect lust.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56
Mayor, who?

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
My spiritual leader. You really
haven't heard of him?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56
Explains the health food.

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
Shoot. I've got to open the
restaurant first thing.

Linda gets up and tries to put her sandals on but stumbles
and nearly falls.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56
I should be writing but (realizing
how drunk he is) think I might need
to call it a night.

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
Seen my keys?

Charles points to her hand.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56
Uh.

Linda laughs.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56 (cont'd)
Welcome to camp over.

She knows she really shouldn't.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56 (cont'd)
What you shouldn't do is try to drive
that fuckin' insane asylum of a
freeway in your condition.

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
We can't do anything.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56
Writing's not the only thing I'm no
good for at the moment.

Linda laughs.

INT. BEDROOM - CHARLES' APT. - NIGHT

LATER THAT NIGHT.

Charles and Linda, fully clothed, sleep spooned on his
rickety old bed.

INT. BEDROOM - CHARLES' APT. - MORNING

DAWN.

Linda sneaks out of bed at sunrise.

Charles doesn't wake up.

INT. BEDROOM - CHARLES' APT. - MIDDAY

SEVERAL HOURS LATER.

The phone awakens Charles.

He answers it like death warmed over.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56
(into phone)
Cynical self-important writer
speaking.

INT. DEW DROP INN - LUNCH COUNTER - MIDDAY

Linda Lee is on the phone with Charles. She laughs.

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
(into phone)
You gonna make it?

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56
Too early to tell. But a man tends to
get a bit paranoid when he has 300
hangovers a year.

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
I'm alright. Except for my neck. That
bed of yours is a medieval torture
device. I'm serious.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56
I might be inclined to get a new one,
if I thought I was going to get some
use out of it. What? No. I couldn't
ask you—

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
I mean it. I built mine. Yes, really.
Custom queen-size. Last a hundred
years.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56
Don't know how much help I'll be. My
soul doesn't bend toward manual
labor. Alright. Tell me what ya need.

INT. HARDWARE STORE - DOWNTOWN L.A. - DAY

Charles follows Linda with a shopping cart.

She stocks up on nails, screws, glue, boards.

INT. CHARLES' CARLTON WAY APT. - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Charles drinks a beer in a chair in the corner while Linda Lee measures the room.

EXT. APARTMENT - DUMPSTER - DAY

Linda and Charles haul pieces of his old bed to the trash.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Charles drinks a beer while Linda Lee drills holes in boards of the bed frame she's building.

Charles holds a board while Linda cuts it with a saw.

Charles holds pieces of the frame together while Linda drives screws into them.

EXT. APARTMENT - DAY

Charles and Linda haul a new box spring up the steps.

INT. APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

Charles and Linda put the box spring onto the big beautiful custom bed frame. They sit on the bed to catch their breath.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56
Can I ask you a question?

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
You just did.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56
Why bother with this dirty old man?

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
Beneath this sorrowful asshole lies a
good heart. I hope.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56
My sorrowful asshole. Careful.
Starting to sound like a poet.

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
C'mon, popsie. Let's get the mattress
and test it for real.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56
Alright!

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
With a nap.

EXT. DEW DROP INN - DAY

WEEKS LATER.

Charles pulls up in the Volks just as Linda Lee locks up the
restaurant for the day.

INT. APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

MONTHS LATER.

Charles and Linda lie cuddling in their clothes in the bed
Linda built. They're bathed in moonlight.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56
Part a me just wants to see how long
you'll hold out.

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
Patience is a virtue.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56
Patience is a con.

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
Hafta decide whether I'm just another
one a your "women." All up to you.

Long moment of contemplation.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56
You were like the others, wouldn't
still be in my bed.

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
Meaning what?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 56
The book's finished. My research is
through. I'm done with whores.

She takes his hand from her shoulder and hugs herself with
it. He holds her tight. They sleep.

INT. BLACK SPARROW PRESS - SANTA ROSA - DAY

1978.

CLOSE ON printing press churns out hardcover copies of the
novel *Women*. Bukowski V.O. reads from *Women*.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI (V.O.)
I was sentimental about many things:
a woman's shoes under the bed, one
hairpin left behind on the dresser,
the way they said, "I'm going to
pee." Long nights of drinking and
smoking, talking and arguing,
thoughts of suicide, eating and
feeling good, laughter out of
nowhere, miracles in the air, your
fucking on the side and her doing the
same.

INT. BUKOWSKI SAN PEDRO HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

1993. AFTERNOON. INTERVIEW. Back to present day.

INTERVIEWER
So it wasn't love at first sight?

LINDA BUKOWSKI
(laughing)
Like.

INTERVIEWER
"Like" at first sight?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
She made me work for it.

INTERVIEWER
That's how you knew she was the one?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
That she wasn't a typical whore.

Linda playfully slaps Charles on the shoulder. He laughs.

He puts his arm around her neck and pulls her in to kiss her atop the head.

INTERVIEWER

What's kept you together all these years?

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE

Patience.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73

Laziness. Kidding.

INTERVIEWER

His?

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE

God no.

Charles simultaneously shakes his head "no" with gusto.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73

You wanna know the truth? She never interfered with the wine or the typer.

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE

There's a lot more to it than that. But he gets uncomfortable when things get too close to his heart. And so he makes jokes.

Charles is looking away. Terribly embarrassed.

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE (cont'd)

He is The Bluebird.

INTERVIEWER

That's actually one of my—maybe even my favorite—poem.

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE

Well, it's not just words. It's really how he is.

INTERVIEWER

(very uncomfortable)

Balls.

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE

Deep down. Deeep. (laughs) Way down.

INTERVIEWER

Your list of "interesting" loves is fairly well-known. What about encounters with your fans?

Linda laughs loud, knowingly.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
Are we talking readers or fans?

INTERVIEWER
What's the difference?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
A reader wants strangeness,
familiarity, dirt, daring, and most
of all he wants someone to say, "I,
too, have been where you have been."

INTERVIEWER
And fans?

Charles swigs his beer, shakes his head.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
They feel entitled to a bloody chunk
of your hide. Anyway, they want
something that I cannot give them ...

Interviewer leans forward. All is quiet.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73 (cont'd)
... their ridiculous ideas of me.

INTERVIEWER
How do you mean?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
They seem to think somehow, if we sit
and talk and drink beer together and
eat ham sandwiches and go to the
racetrack and breathe the same
cigarette smoke, the answer, the
answers, will find them. I don't even
have an answer for myself.

INT. BOOKSTORE - STAGE - NIGHT

1993. (B&W) LATER. POETRY READING.

Charles is already reading his poem *The Shoelace*.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
... it's not the large things that
send a man to the madhouse. Death
he's ready for. Or murder, incest,
robbery, fire, flood.
(MORE)

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73 (cont'd)
 No, it's the continuing series of
 small tragedies...

INT. BUKOWSKI SAN PEDRO HOME - KITCHEN TABLE - DAY

1980. EARLY MORNING.

Charles, now 60, reads through bills and fan mail while
 Linda Lee, back turned, cooks breakfast.

Charles takes a typewritten manuscript out of a large
 envelope.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 60
 (exaggerated laugh)
Ha! Listen to this one.

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
 Oh, god. Not another fan letter.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 60
 Naw. This one's good.

As Bukowski reads the letter, the unseen LETTER WRITER
 narrates his own words.

LETTER WRITER (O.S.)
 Piss on you, Bukowski. You were once
 a great writer but you sold out. My
 grandmother writes better shit than
 you. You've had your head up your
 asshole too long. I sent my stuff to
 your publisher and he sent back a
 letter saying he was overstocked.
 I'll overstock his butthole, the
 prick. The great poets are ignored.
 You were once a great poet but now
 you are only a band-aid covering a
 puss hole. You gobble your own weenie
 under a sky of vomit. You've sold
 your balls to the butcher. You've
 killed the baby of your love. You are
 monkey stink forever and ever. I
 enclose some of my latest work.

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
 Good god. Don't any normal people
 read you?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 60
 I hope so.

INT. BUKOWSKI SAN PEDRO HOME - OFFICE - NIGHT

1985.

With CLASICAL MUSIC playing, Charles, 65, writes in his home office. He speaks as he types.

The pre-lap turns to voice-over.

Working on his book *Hollywood*, about his time writing the screenplay for *Barfly*.

CLOSE ON typed pages of the manuscript bearing header: *The Rats of Thirst* (original title for *Barfly* movie)

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 65 (PRE-LAP)
(speaks as he types)
We found a couple of stools. "Two
beers," I said. "Anything in a
bottle."

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT./EXT. BIKER BAR - HOLLYWOOD HILLS - NIGHT

1979.

Charles and girlfriend Linda Lee Beighle stop for a drink.

Charles is immediately recognized by several BIKERS.

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
You couldn't've waited?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 65
I need a drink.

LINDA BUKOWSKI
You always need a drink.

Charles smiles, puts hands up as if to say, "guilty."

From some dark corner ...

BIKER 1 (O.S.)
Bukowski? Sonofabitch.

BIKER 2
Holy shit.

BIKER 3
It's him.

Charles looks around and waves.

A murmur goes through the bar.

BARTENDER plunks down a shot of whiskey.

Charles drinks it. The bar cheers.

LINDA BUKOWSKI
Go easy. I don't wanna be here all
night.

Bartender pours another.

BARTENDER
For the world's greatest writer.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 65
If you insist.

Linda Lee drinks the second shot before he can get to it.

LINDA BUKOWSKI
Only (cough) did that to save you
from yourself.

BIKER 2 (O.S.)
I read all your stuff.

BIKER 3 (O.S.)
Hey, I got one you can read.

Linda, giving Charles a stern look, fishes money from her purse and puts it on the bar as she gets up off her stool.

Charles downs his beer and gets up to leave as the bikers crowd and follow them to the door.

BIKER 4
One more drink!

BIKER 1
I could kick your ass!

BIKER 2
Can you still get it up?

BIKER 3
Read something!

Shouting of bikers follows Charles and Linda Lee out the door as the voices muffle, shouting increases, and fades.

END FLASHBACK

INT. BUKOWSKI SAN PEDRO HOME - OFFICE - NIGHT

1985. SAME NIGHT.

Charles is hunched over his typewriter.

He speaks in V.O. as he types.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 65 (V.O.)
 I noticed the blandness of the faces
 and the feeling that there wasn't
 much joy or daring in any of them.
 There was something totally missing
 in the poor fellows and something in
 me wrenched for just a moment. And I
 felt like throwing my arms around
 them, consoling and embracing them
 like some Dostoevsky. But I knew that
 would finally lead nowhere but to
 ridicule and humiliation. For myself
 ... and for them. The world had
 somehow gone too far. And spontaneous
 kindness could never be so easy. It
 was something that we would all have
 to work for once again.

INT. BUKOWSKI SAN PEDRO HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

1993. LATE AFTERNOON. INTERVIEW. Back to present day.

Linda checks her watch.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
 We good?

LINDA BUKOWSKI
 Still have a bit of time.

INTERVIEWER
 In 1986, you wrote, "My home life has
 developed into nightmare proportions.
 I'm unable to write about this now,
 and may never be able to, but if I
 ever get the space to, I've got a
 novel that will make *Post Office*,
Factotum, and *Ham on Rye* look like
 kindergarten stuff. Some people seem
 to envision me floating in an easy
 dream world now. If they only knew.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
 Next question.

INTERVIEWER
What did you mean by that?

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
(laughing evilly)
Yes, *Charles*. What *did* you mean by that?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
I never pretended to be easy to live with. Quite open about it. In both my writing and my life. But being an asshole doesn't leave you devoid of feelings of your own.

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
Oh, Popsie.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
(snottily mocking)
Oh, Popsie.

INTERVIEWER
Is it true you nearly bought one of the Manson Family murder houses?

LINDA BUKOWSKI
Looked at.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
Looked at.

Charles and Linda look at each other and laugh.

LINDA BUKOWSKI
We didn't know going in.

INTERVIEWER
Is there anything about you your readers don't know?

Thinks a moment and snaps his fingers.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
Didn't learn to eat pussy until the '70s.

Interviewer goes RED in the face.

Linda blurts uncontrollable laughter, puts both hands over her mouth. Charles joins with loud evil laughs.

When the interviewer has a moment to compose himself ...

INTERVIEWER
That would've made you?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
I'm slow gettin' there, but when I
hit top speed, baby I really make it.

LINDA BUKOWSKI
(rolls eyes)
Big man.

INTERVIEWER
OK. How about your foray into
screenwriting.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
To quote a friend, it was wild shit.

EXT. CHARLES' VOLKSWAGEN - MARINA DEL RAY - NIGHT
1979.

Driving through beautiful wealthy Marina Del Ray, far from
the slums of most of Bukowski's life.

Charles and Linda Lee have been invited to a party to
discuss Bukowski's writing a screenplay for Swiss director
BARBET SCHROEDER.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 59
Look, we have just landed upon the
outpost of death. My soul is puking.

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
Will you stop worrying about your
soul?

INT./EXT. MARINA DEL RAY - FANCY MANSION - EVENING

Charles and Linda Lee enter the big fancy party, wading
through sexy young women, expensively attired men—the usual
Hollywood party scum.

Charles and Linda Lee are lead to the back of the house
where they meet Barbet and other bizarre characters.

WAITRESS 1
Cocktail?

Linda throws Charles a stern look.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 59
We'll stick with wine.

WAITRESS 1
We have some red and white. It's French.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 59
I forgive you.

Linda smiles knowingly.

BARBET SCHROEDER
(to Charles)
You brought your beautiful daughter?

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
Girlfriend.

Barbet holds his hand to his chest in "mea culpa" and takes Charles aside. He's very serious now.

BARBET SCHROEDER
I've known for a very long time that you would write a movie. And I would direct it.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 59
Don't know if I got it in me. I mean, it seems like an ultimately stupid thing to do.

BARBET SCHROEDER
I believe in you. My Christ, would I have flown to Moscow? Professed my love to a decrepit millionairess? In the middle of dee unholy Russian winter if I did not truly believe in your abilities?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 59
Millionairess?

BARBET SCHROEDER
Turned out to be a destitute old hag. Which I only discovered after kissing her toothless cesspool of a mouth.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 59
Starting to sound like one a my stories.

Barbet notices someone in the room he's looking for.

BARBET SCHROEDER
 Sheet. (shit) I must talk wiss dee
 financier about dee money before he
 escapes into dee night. Write me a
 movie, Hank, that will show dee world
 your true genius.

As Barbet leaves, Linda Lee approaches.

Sipping his wine, Charles stares into a mirror, trying to
 comprehend this strange turn of fortune.

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
 You alright?

Charles nods at the mirror, disappointed.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 59
 I don't look like that. Do I?

She gives his arm a comforting squeeze.

LINDA LEE BEIGHLE
 Not really gonna write a movie.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 59
 Fuuuck no.

Nearby, a little crowd has gathered around French actor/
 writer STEVE BAES.

Charles and Linda Lee step up with the others to listen.

STEVE BAES
 (French accent)
 I'm \$5,000 ahead, I hold destiny in
 my hand. I know everything. I am
 everything. The continents tremble.
 Barbet taps me on the shoulder and
 says, "Lets go see Tom Jones." Who is
 this Tom Jones? "Never mind," he
 says. "Let's go see him." Tom Jones
 sings with his shirt open. His mouth
 is a horrible hole cut into a
 pancake. Under his tight pants, he's
 wearing a dildo. He grabs his balls
 and sings about all the good things
 he can do to women but he's a fake.
 He really wants his tongue up some
 man's anus. I am to puke listening to
 him. And we paid this good money,
 too? And when you pay for a
 nightmare, you are really a fool.
 (MORE)

STEVE BAES (cont'd)

Good men starve in the streets and here is this *eediot* being adored. "Barbet," I say, "Please, let's leave. My mind is sliding away. Well, he says, maybe it will get better." It only gets worse. A woman sitting next to me moans and reaches into her panties. "Madame?" I ask her, "Did you lose something?" You know, I've been beaten by the police for nothing. Well, almost for nothing. But watching Tom Jones, I felt worse than when the police were beating me. "Barbet," I say, "We must leave or my life is over."

BARBET SCHROEDER

I just wanted to see Tom Jones.

STEVE BAES

After Tom Jones, we go back to the roulette table but my concentration is broken. The wheel spins but it is a stranger. I'm like a baby dumped into a barrel of tarantulas. What are these numbers? What are these colors? The little white ball leaps and buries itself in my heart. I lose.

Sadly, Steve Baes takes a bottle of wine and refills some of his audience's glasses.

STEVE BAES (cont'd)

(fills Charles' glass)

Sheet, (shit) I probably would have lost anyhow. A gambler without an excuse is a gambler who can't go on.

Charles raises his glass to Steve Baes.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 59

You talk like a writer.

STEVE BAES

If I could write like one, I'd write that screenplay for you and we would split the money.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 59

Aaalriiight.

BARBET SCHROEDER

Nooo. I would know the difference.

STEVE BAES
 Fine. Tom Jones will write it with
 his dildo.

Everyone laughs and toasts to that.

INT. BUKOWSKI SAN PEDRO HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

1993. LATE AFTERNOON. INTERVIEW. Back to present day.

Charles and Linda are still on the couch.

Charles nurses a large glass of water.

INTERVIEWER
 Well? What happened?

LINDA BUKOWSKI
 (laughing)
 He wrote the damn thing.

INT. BUKOWSKI SAN PEDRO HOME - OFFICE - NIGHT

1979.

Charles and Linda Lee Beighle are living in the same San Pedro house where the 1993 interview takes place.

Charles is in his upstairs office working on *The Rats of Thirst* screenplay which will eventually become the movie *Barfly*.

The PHONE RINGS O.S.

Charles stops typing to pick up the phone.

It's CARL WEISSNER, his German translator.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 62
 (on phone)
 Hey, baby. Aaalriiight. How much?
 (surprised laugh) Sounds good, baby.
 I will. Give my best. (hangs up
 phone, shouts over his shoulder to
 Linda in another room) German
 translation went for thirty-five big
 ones.

Turns up the radio. Shostakovitch's 5th Symphony plays.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 62 (cont'd)
 (to himself in awe)
 Starving all these years. Whatta ya
 gonna do now?

Charles goes back to typing.

He recites as he types in V.O.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 59 (V.O.)
 Henry Chinaski says (pauses typing a
 moment; looks up at the wall) What
 does Henry Chinaski say? (starts
 typing) "Some people ... never ... go
 crazy. What truly horrible ... lives
 they must lead."

INT. BARFLY MOVIE SET - BAR - NIGHT

1986.

The real Charles bukowski sits at the bar. He's playing a
 barfly in the movie he wrote.

The movie crew has finished setting up the shot. Director
 Barbet Schroeder calls "ACTION!" O.S. Charles takes a drink.
 Director yells "CUT!" O.S.

INT. BUKOWSKI SAN PEDRO HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

1993. LATE AFTERNOON. INTERVIEW. Back to present day.

Interviewer asks Charles a question. Charles' answer is a
 V.O. as onscreen his novel *Hollywood* is being printed,
 copies being whisked on a conveyor belt.

INTERVIEWER (V.O.)
 Speaking of prolific, you ended up
 writing a book about your time
 writing the screenplay for *Barfly*. Do
 you have any advice for hopeful
 scribes looking to follow in your
 footsteps.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73 (V.O.)
 Only assholes talk about writing.

INT. BLACK SPARROW PRESS - SANTA ROSA - DAY

1989.

CLOSE ON printing press churns out hardcover copies of the novel *Hollywood*.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73 (V.O.)
Fine. (loud breath, long pause) Two things: one, you need to figure it out for yourself. Nobody can tell you any secret to writing. Because there isn't one. Secondly, if it doesn't come bursting out of you in spite of everything, don't do it. Unless it comes unasked out of your heart and your mind and your mouth and your gut, don't do it. Find another hobby.

INT. BUKOWSKI SAN PEDRO HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

1993. LATE AFTERNOON. INTERVIEW. Back to present day.

INTERVIEWER
To what do you owe your longevity, your successes both literary and financial?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
Beer. Women. Typing. Not in that order.

LINDA BUKOWSKI
And John Martin.

INTERVIEWER
Your publisher?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
In my first twenty years of typing, I made less than fifty dollars.

INTERVIEWER
And John Martin's Black Sparrow Press helped you change all that.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
Believed in me when few others did.

INTERVIEWER
Is it true he paid you out of his own pocket so you could quit the post office and write full time?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
There was money. Yes. But, more, there was faith.

(MORE)

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73 (cont'd)
 (raises beer in toast) Writing saved
 my ass ... and John supported it.

INT. BOOKSTORE - STAGE - NIGHT

1993. (B&W) LATER THAT NIGHT. POETRY READING.

Bukowski reads his poem *The Secret of My Endurance*.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
 I still get letters in the mail.
 Mostly from crackup men in tiny rooms
 with factory jobs or no jobs. Who are
 living with whores or no women at
 all. No hope. Just booze and madness.
 I get most of their letters on lined
 paper. Written with an un-sharpened
 pencil. Or in ink. In tiny hand-
 writings that slant down to the left.
 And the paper is most often torn.
 Usually halfway up the middle. And
 they say they like my stuff. I've
 written from where it's at. They
 recognize it truly. I've given them
 some chance. Some recognition. Of
 where it's at. It's true, I was
 there. Even worse off than most of
 them. But I wonder if they realize
 where their letter arrives. Well, it
 is dropped into a box on a wire fence
 behind a six-foot hedge and a long
 driveway to a two-car garage, rose
 garden, fruit trees, animals, a
 beautiful woman, mortgage about half-
 paid after a year's residence, a new
 car, two cars, fireplace, and a green
 rug two inches deep. With a young boy
 to write my stuff now. I keep him in
 a ten-foot square cage with a
 typewriter. Feed him whiskey and raw
 whores. Belt-buckle him pretty good
 three or four times a week. I'm 60
 years old now. The critics say my
 stuff is getting better than ever.

INT. BUKOWSKI APARTMENT - DAY

1969.

Bukowski's skid row apartment. John Martin arrives to
 discuss publishing Charles' work. The men sit at the kitchen
 table. Charles smokes while John nurses a glass of water.

JOHN MARTIN

Thank-you for taking time out of your busy schedule. Let me just say that I think you're a most important and, OK, marvelous poet.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 49

Cut the shit.

JOHN MARTIN

No. Really. Your work really is a never-ending source of wonder and delight. For me personally. That's a rarity. Especially with modern poets. And writers in general.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 49

I don't know how busy I am. I wake up, I go to the track, I come home and sit at the typer.

JOHN MARTIN

You're onto something.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 49

Booze?

JOHN MARTIN

It's no joke. People are reading your stuff because it's real. Real in a way and at a level that most other art doesn't reach.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 49

Do go on. (laughs)

JOHN MARTIN

Like I said before, what Ideally I would love is to get ahold of some new or unpublished stuff.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 49

The poem.

JOHN MARTIN

Yes, poetry. Short stories, too.

Charles gets up with a groan, rubbing forehead. He's obviously hungover. Goes to a closet.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 49

Well, let's just have a look.

John follows. Charles opens the closet—it's stacked floor to ceiling with manuscripts, folders, stacks of loose leaf papers with scribbles and typing.

JOHN MARTIN
How much of this is unpublished?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 49
Most.

JOHN MARTIN
Poetry?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 49
It's mostly poems.

JOHN MARTIN
How many of these can I take?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 49
Take a stack and see how it goes.

INT. BUKOWSKI SAN PEDRO HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

1993. INTERVIEW. EVENING. Back to present day.

INTERVIEWER
Your first publication with Black Sparrow was a single-page broadside of the poem *True Story*, correct?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
Jesus. I'd forgotten all about that.

INT. BLACK SPARROW PRESS - SANTA ROSA - DAY

1966.

CLOSE ON printing press churns out 30 copies of a broadside of Charles Bukowski's poem *True Story*. Bukowski V.O. reads from *True Story*.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI (V.O.)
He had taken a rusty tin can and cut off his sexual machinery. As if to say, "See what you've done to me? You might as well have the rest."

INT. PRIVATE LIBRARY - BOOKSHELF - DAY

1993. LATE AFTERNOON. INTERVIEW. Back to present day.

CAMERA PANS across the bookshelf in Charles' and Linda's living room. Dozens and dozens of Charles Bukowski chapbooks, poetry collections, novels, etc.

The Interviewer ASKS a question O.S.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

Many critics have noted with concern your extreme level of political incorrectness when it comes to all manner of things.

LIVING ROOM INTERVIEW

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73

Political incorrectness. Baaalls. A phrase used by shit-heels to describe truths that upset them.

INTERVIEWER

You don't think there's any validity to some people's concerns about your use of language, the treatment of women in your prose, and poetry. The example set by your ... I'm sorry to say, excessive drinking?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73

Whoa, baby. That's a heavy load to strap onto the back of a broken down ex-postal carrier. Do I drink and smoke and fuck too much? I don't know. I never asked anyone to live like me. And I never forced anyone to read my shit. Do or don't. If they've got a problem with my mere existence, weeell, shit.

INTERVIEWER

Let's talk about your process.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73

With the horses?

INTERVIEWER

People want to know about how you write.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73

Balls. Who outside of that fuckin' door gives a hot beer shit about my so-called process. They wanna know how to get rich and famous.

(MORE)

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73 (cont'd)
And I can't tell 'em that because I
don't know. Still not sure any a
this's real.

INTERVIEWER
I disagree. True, you're not a
traditional literary icon. But your
popularity is undeniable. And many of
your readers, especially aspiring
writers, are curious.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
(groans)
If it's one thing I'm not keen on,
it's aspiring writers.

INTERVIEWER
Yet you were one yourself. Aspiring,
that is.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
I always was. Even when I wasn't
writing. You are or you aren't. No
amount of advice or college classes
is going to make you one.

INTERVIEWER
Isn't there something you can share?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
Nine and two.

Interviewer has no clue what Charles is talking about.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73 (cont'd)
Nine p.m. to two a.m. at the typer.
That's my process.

INTERVIEWER
Every night?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
Writers write. Talkers talk.

EXT. BUKOWSKI SAN PEDRO HOME - NIGHT

EVENING. The last light of day is fading.

INT. BUKOWSKI SAN PEDRO HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

1993. EVENING. INTERVIEW. Back to present day.

Charles is very drunk.

INTERVIEWER

Not sure how to say this without offending but.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73

Just say it.

INTERVIEWER

There's a rumor ... circulating ... that you're ... well ... ill.

Linda eyes the interviewer. Shakes her head "no"

INTERVIEWER (cont'd)

Sorry. I—

Charles rubs his bald head.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73

Doctors love to tell you you're gonna die. Devote seven percent of medical school to teaching them how to scare the shit outta their patients.

Interviewer starts to laugh but gets serious.

INTERVIEWER

That why you haven't done a public reading in nearly 25 years?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73

(to Linda)

Is he stupid?

LINDA BUKOWSKI

Be nice.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73

Whatta ya call tonight?

INTERVIEWER

I meant before—sorry. I'm sorry.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73

Getting old is a long series of illness. One of those ailments will end up being the last. Don't worry, you'll get your chance. Comes a lot sooner'n you think.

INTERVIEWER
It's been said that you hate live readings, is all.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
Depends on who's doing the reading.

INTERVIEWER
I wondered if it was that or ... or something else.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
Both could be true.

Linda is losing patience with the Interviewer.

LINDA BUKOWSKI
(confidentially)
We had an agreement.

INTERVIEWER
You're right. Sorry.

Charles pats Linda's leg.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
"Hate's" a strong word. They helped pay the rent. Kept me in wine and smokes. Took me to the track.

INTERVIEWER
And when the real money started coming in?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
A writer's job is to write. Not prance around a stage like a subnormal dancing bear.

INTERVIEWER
What about your fans?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
What about them?

INTERVIEWER
Don't you feel some debt to the people who've provided you with fame and fortune?

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
I can't help it that I've got a little bit more than some of them. I put my balls on the page. My heart.
(MORE)

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73 (cont'd)
 My spleen. If they wanna give a few dollars to see inside my head, I thank them kindly. (does a little seated bow) But I can't spend my days sucking their asses. I mean, c'mon.

INTERVIEWER
 Fair enough. Speaking of, who're some of your favorite modern poets?

Charles starts to answer but Linda knows this game and cuts him off.

LINDA BUKOWSKI
 (gruff-mimics Charles)
 Charles Bukowski, Charles Bukowski, and Charles Bukowski.

Both Charles and the interviewer laugh.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
 She's not wrong.

LINDA BUKOWSKI
 Getting to be about that time, Popsie.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
 Yeah. Alright. You guys got everything you need?

INTERVIEWER
 Before we go, if I could ask just one more thing? Would you read something?

Charles rubs his face. He's tired. But he nods.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
 Funny? Dirty?

INTERVIEWER
The Bluebird. If it's alright.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
 Linda.

Linda's already up and at the bookshelf behind the couch. She returns with a first edition hardcover of *The Last Night of the Earth Poems*. The interviewer's eyes light up.

Charles clears throat.

Adjusts eyeglasses.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73 (cont'd)

There's a bluebird in my heart that wants to get out. But I'm too tough for him. I say, "stay in there, I'm not going to let anybody see you." There's a bluebird in my heart that wants to get out. But I pour whiskey on him and inhale cigarette smoke. And the whores and the bartenders and the grocery clerks never know that he's in there. There's a bluebird in my heart that wants to get out. But I'm too tough for him. I say, "Stay down, do you want to mess. me up? You want to screw up the works? You want to blow my book sales in Europe?" There's a bluebird in my heart that wants to get out. But I'm too clever. I only let him out at night sometimes. When everybody's asleep. I say, "I know that you're there, so don't be sad." Then I put him back, but he's singing a little in there. I haven't quite let him die. And we sleep together like that with our secret pact. And it's nice enough to make a man weep. But I don't weep. Do you?

Interviewer, teary-eyed, holds up his hands in prayer and nods in thanks. Charles, too, snuffles the tiniest bit before grabbing hold of the reins.

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73 (cont'd)

(joking)

Alright. You vultures have picked my bones clean. Now get the hell out.

INTERVIEWER

We'll follow you there. Need to get some B-roll.

EXT. L.A. BOOKSTORE - FACADE - NIGHT

1993. (B&W) NOW. POETRY READING.

Facade of the L.A. bookstore where Charles Bukowski's 1993 poetry reading is taking place.

Big "SOLD OUT" sign has been slapped over the marquee.

O.S. CHARLES BUKOWSKI READS a final poem for the night.

AUDIENCE (O.S.)
(raucous cheers)

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73 (O.S.)
Alright. Settle down. One more and
then we can collect our tribute and
get the hell outta here. (begins
reading) This is called, "*The Last
Days of the Suicide Kid.*"

AUDIENCE (O.S.)
(cheers wildly)

CHARLES BUKOWSKI 73
I can see myself now, after all these
suicide days and nights, being
wheeled out of one of those sterile
rest homes. Of course, this is only
if I get famous and lucky.

Charles looks up and smiles at the audience.

FADE TO BLACK

THE END