

These Words: Poems by Bukowski
Adapted by Melissa Albertario Peck

Henry Chinaski (Bukowski's alter-ego) sleeps at his desk, passed out from drink and surrounded by trash, scraps of rejected writing, beer bottles and general filth. Suddenly, some of his UNFINISHED POEMS come to life and circle his snoring carcass like buzzards. They are the living personifications of his words: FAR MORE TERRIBLE and KISS AND FONDLE. They confront the audience.

FMT: The illusion is that you are simply reading a poem.

KAF: The reality is that this is more than a poem.

FMT: This is a beggar's knife.

KAF: This is a tulip.

FMT: This is you on your death bed. This is NOT a god-damned poem!

KAF: This is a horse asleep. A butterfly in your brain.

FMT: This is the devil's circus.

KAF: You are not reading this on a page.

FMT: The page is reading you.

KAF: Feel it?

The Poems stand side by side. They take turns holding up cardboard signs printed with courier 12-style font and letting them drop to the floor.

Both: (no signs) "Poetry".

FMT: It.

KAF: Takes.

FMT: A.

KAF: Lot.

FMT: Of.

They have run out of boards. Puzzled, they look at each other and then back at Chinaski.

Both: *(In unison, speeding up, taunting him as a menacing typewriter)* Tick. Tick. Tick. Tick-tick-tick-tick-tick-tick-tick. Tickticktickticktickticktickticktickticktick. DING!

Chinaski awakens with a start. Disoriented for a moment, he wipes the drool off his cheek and rubs his eyes. He is still quite drunk. He addresses the audience abruptly.

CHIN: I have just spent one-hour-and-a-half handicapping tomorrow's card. When am I going to get to the poems? Well, they'll just have to wait. They'll have to wait. They'll have to warm their feet in the anteroom where they'll sit gossiping about me.

FMT: This Chinaski, doesn't he realize that without us he would have long ago gone mad? Been dead?

KAF: He knows but he thinks he can keep us at his beck and call!

FMT: He's an ingrate!

KAF: Let's give him writer's block!

FMT: Yeah!

KAF: Yeah!

FMT: Yeah!

CHIN: *(watching them in horror)* The little Poems kick up their heels and laugh. Then the bigger one gets up and walks to the door. Hey! *(he shouts at FAR MORE TERRIBLE)* Where are you going?

FMT: Somewhere where I am appreciated.

CHIN: Then, they all vanish.

FAR MORE TERRIBLE disappears behind a wall. KISS AND FONDLE glances at Chinaski and disappears as well. Alone, Chinaski rummages through some of his discarded scraps for a shred of inspiration. He finds the sign that says, "OF." Puzzled, he drops it again. He returns to his desk and mimes loading paper into a typewriter. He looks like he is about to type, but stops quickly, distressed.