

Down at 410

# Down at 410

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## Summary:

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He often referred to himself as Johnny of West New York. The bravado of the nickname masked a paralyzing fear.

John Langsdorf was the best writer Iâ€™ve ever met. Early supporters included Allan Ginsberg and City Lights Books. John was also the most damaged writer, addicted to alcohol and Valium and cloistered away in a Hoboken railroad flat, walled in by agoraphobia.

â€•When life gets too much that one's breathing, after frantic hyperventilation, shuts down and a fella gladly takes his mitts and shits his final load. So Charlie stashed 3 bags of D and 20 Percocets and promised not to dabble. They'd be his ticket. He felt relieved and moved about more freely, like a geek in Harlem holding automatic pistols in each pocket. Shoot any badass down, get a bunch of 'em, then off some fucking cops, kill everybody and just before they break in take one real hot fix and blow off to the Lord's left hand.â€•

John Langsdorf, from a handwritten manuscript

Down at 410 is the story of our friendship, mixing my prose with Johnâ€™s writings and pre-dawn letters to me. These letters were never mailed; instead John would hand them over when Iâ€™d show up at his door with a six-pack of MeisterBrau. John should have had a brilliant career. It didnâ€™t happen.

I imagined us squaring off down by the railroad tracks. Paper cups a blowin' in the wind. Friends - some cruel, some afraid and disgusted - ringing 'round us. No sun. No cars. Standing on hard-packed earth that has thrown little pebbles to the surface. Ugly plants dot the ground, with prickly stems and five-starred leaves covered with little invisible needles like velvet. In the distance, as we raise our fists, are many wires of phone, train and telegraph lining the horizon; little ceramic insulators hang on the rubber wire. A PomPom box lies on the ground between us. John is frightened, sweating fear he can't hide. Myself - all my sadism is riding high. Iâ€™m thinking: He doesn't have a chance. I can hit him hard as I want. Hurt him. Serve him right.

I start hitting him. He covers up. I hit him in the trash heap. He's in pain. I smoke him.

Mark Rogers, from Down at 410

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