Everything I Inherited, but Would Like to Burn

He threw Bukowski at me
over Christmas dinner, said “this shits funny.”
I said, “I know; where have you been?”

He cannot understand what infests
the lines of *Ham on Rye*;
he is consumed by the coherence
of his signature on a check,
signing his weeks away
to plates with perishable commodities
while he forgets to
consider the disintegration of his significance
as a potential plot line.
He drags a heavy weight:
the barbell of dehumanization
that accompanies blue collar effort.

He wanted to be a writer.
(the next American great, he says.)
The only dialogue he currently owns
is the tragedy of text
sighed between him and wife
as she surrounds the collapse of their home
with a web of self-destruction.
Every quotation mark he marks
with the downturn of his lips
is his fragile attempt to salvage
writeable from reality.

He writes silent novels
against the wet of his eyes
in grocery store isles,
hoping his high school deformities
are classics in the waiting,
backed up heartfelt nostalgia
that could force a person other than himself
to cry for once. He speaks as if
he was born out of the
womb of a JD Salinger contraction,
like he is Jay Gatsby just not written down yet
and I wonder who the girl is that he loved so much
in high school that made him
need to write his past as pages.
He always throws books at me, saying “this shit’s good,”
“this shit’s classic,”
“you’ve gotta read this shit.”
I say, “I know, dad” and I read whatever he slides across the table,
and I talk words with him so he can pretend that it’s appropriate
for him to maintain homesick ambitions
while society denies place to
the tortured artist,
the American dreamer,
the middle class,
family supporting,
amounted to nothing
child of disillusionment.