And the Hippos Were Boiled in Their Tanks by Jack Kerouac

More than sixty years ago, William S. Burroughs and Jack Kerouac sat down in New York City to write a novel about the summer of 1944, when one of their friends killed another in a moment of brutal and tragic bloodshed. The two authors were then at the dawn of their careers, having yet to write anything of note. Alternating chapters and narrators, Burroughs and Kerouac pieced together a hard-boiled tale of bohemian New York during World War II, full of drugs and obsession, art and violence. The manuscript, called And the Hippos Were Boiled in Their Tanks after a line from a news story about a fire at a circus, was submitted to publishers but rejected and confined to a filing cabinet for decades. This legendary collaboration between two of the twentieth centuries most influential writers is set to be published for the first time in the fall of 2008. A remarkable, fascinating piece of American literary history, And the Hippos Were Boiled in Their Tanks is also an engrossing, atmospheric novel that brings to life a shocking murder at the dawn of the Beat Generation.

My Personal Review:
Presented for the first time, this legendary book chronicles the misadventures of the early founders of the Beat Generation nearly a decade before any of them acquired fame and notoriety. Here is Kerouac and Burroughs at their most raw and cockiest, characteristics that subsequently transmogrified to more gentle natures due to alcoholism, divorce, drug abuse, poverty, wanderlust, love, loss, failure, and success in the years to follow. There are many passages that illustrate this in the book, but here are a few that stand out:

Our eggs had now arrived, but Phillip's eggs were absolutely raw. He called the waitress over and said, "These eggs are raw." He illustrated the point by dipping his spoon into the eggs and pulling it out with a long streamer of raw white.

The waitress said, "You said soft-boiled eggs, didn't you?" We can't be taking things back for you."
Phillip [Lucien Carr] pushed the eggs across the counter. "Two four-minute eggs," he said. "Maybe that will simplify matters." Then he turned to me and started talking about the New Vision.
(p.16)

We had cigarettes but no matches. Phil called out to the waitress, "I say, have you a match, miss?"
The waitress said, "No."
Phillip said, "The get some," in his clear, calm tone.
(p. 18)

She [Edie Parker] said, "What are you going to do out at sea?" and I [Jack Kerouac] said, "Don't worry about the future."
(p.20)

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