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control me, so far. I leave notes under her door, and she laughs at me. She says, "You fool, you're a retarded child. You're an imbecile." I love that. I like difficult things to overcome—difficult, beautiful, intelligent things, to overcome. I don't want it too easy. Here's a woman. She looks great, and she's not even interested in me. To make her interested brings out your personality, brings out something in you, makes you do things you otherwise wouldn't do.

HUSTLER: But a lot of your relationships with women, at least as they are expressed through your writing, seem to be mind games, a way to get her, a way to make her respond.

BUKOWSKI: Yes, that's true. I'm not totally OK. All my women say to me, "You love arguments; you love all this battle." It's just drama. Conquer, screaming. Open windows. Passion. It's good. I want action. And the way to get action is to battle something.

HUSTLER: Is it true that women don't respect men that they conquer?

BUKOWSKI: Definitely. They don't want toadies. They don't want ass kissers. They want someone tough that they can bring down and make weep in the middle of the night. Women are the same as men.

HUSTLER: What do you hate most about yourself?

BUKOWSKI: That I'm feeling better all the time, and I can't understand it or accept it.

HUSTLER: You mean that success has changed you?

BUKOWSKI: Yes, it has. It's given me a fatter head. One of my girlfriends said, "Your head can't get any fatter because you had a fat head to start with." Which is true, too. The thing I hate most about myself is that I feel more comfortable, and that may put a dent in my writing because you have to be frantic and half mad to create. This is why I get involved with young women. They're always going to tear my guts out, and that's going to help me keep going on. In other words, I almost look for trouble in order not to be comfortable.

HUSTLER: Was it your suffering that made you the writer you are?

BUKOWSKI: Suffering? I don't know about that word.

HUSTLER: Well, it seems to come across in your writings—from my point of view.

BUKOWSKI: Well, the difference between me and the average writer, I think, is I live differently. And that's all. Most writers make it early, and then they keep writing. They have nothing to write about except being writers, you see. There's no meat there. So I

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was lucky because I lived like everybody else and am able to, I think, relate that living back onto the paper.

HUSTLER: Then would you say your life has been good?

BUKOWSKI: Shit, no. It's been bad.

HUSTLER: Why are there so few really good erotic writers in the United States?

BUKOWSKI: Why are there so few writers of any kind in the United States?

HUSTLER: There are hundreds of writers turning out words for everything from TV Guide to the great American novel.

BUKOWSKI: You call that writing? It's words on paper.

HUSTLER: I won't digress and get into the position of rating contemporary writers.

BUKOWSKI: Oh, I can get into that position. I can't read any of them. I think they all stink.

HUSTLER: Is there any writer that you admire?

BUKOWSKI: Not a living one.

HUSTLER: What writer, living or dead, can you read?

BUKOWSKI: Well, (Celine). Do you know *Journey to the End of the Night*? I laughed all the way through *Journey*. I said, "Here's a son of a bitch who can really write better than I can." I read that whole book through in bed, laughing—real good laughter, you know. It was great. And, of course, Dos-
toevski, he was a tough boy. But there aren't many like him; they just don't show up now.

HUSTLER: What do you think of Harold Norse as an erotic writer, a contemporary of yours who has written for **HUSTLER**?

BUKOWSKI: I haven't read much of his prose. He's a good poet at times, but basically he's too poetic. He's not raw enough. He's too educated, and he's too careful. He hurts inside, but he doesn't get it down right. He's a Poet, capital P. When he takes a shit, he says, "I'm a Poet." When he walks down the street he says, "I'm a Poet." When he drinks a cup of coffee, "I'm a Poet." What a writer has to do is forget that he's a writer, if he can. That's the problem with most of these bastards: They never forget. You must forget and things happen. Then you remember what happened, and you become a writer when you have to. That's a hell of a holy thing to say, but I can't

help it. It's just the way I feel about it.

HUSTLER: Would you characterize yourself as being an alcoholic?

BUKOWSKI: Hell, yes.

HUSTLER: Why do you drink so much?

BUKOWSKI: Basically, I'm a very bashful person—I've got a lot of self-doubt—but at the same time I have a tremendous ego. Something about alcohol erases the self-doubt and allows the ego to come out. I've had a lot of experiences and, I think, one thing about drinking is, it leads you to avenues you would never find if you didn't drink. You take chances, you take gambles. One time I was coming from the racetrack. I had had a fight with my girlfriend, and when I fight with a woman I get very upset. I had won about \$180 that night, and I was drunker than shit. So I'm driving along, and when I stopped for a moment at a stop sign, four black guys in a car behind me hit my bumper and pushed me a little. When a guy's had a fight with a woman you don't want to mess with him, you know. He's a killer. So I let them go around me. They went up to the next stop sign, and I went up and pushed their bumper—hard. At the next stop sign, I pushed their bumper harder, and all of a sudden they started trying to get away—four black guys, big—and I'm following them. We're turning corners, we're screeching. Here's one white old man chasing four black young cats in a car. "Ah, I'll kill you," I yelled. We're skidding, just like a movie, and I feel like I can do it, you know. When you feel like you can do it, who knows? We're screeching, and suddenly they pull up to a curb and I park behind them. Finally I'm going to get to beat the shit out of all four of these guys. They could have been white; they just happened to be black, you know. I'm anti-black, true. I'm anti-yellow, anti-anything. Anyway, I opened my car door and got out. I'm in a big pea coat that makes me look bigger than I am. I came stalking up, and I'm ready to grab them... and the minute I start moving toward their car, vroom, they took off. I jumped back in my car, but I lost them.

HUSTLER: Did you say you're anti-black?

BUKOWSKI: Yeah. I'm anti-black, also anti-yellow.

HUSTLER: Are you anti-white?

BUKOWSKI: Yes, I am.

HUSTLER: What is it about blacks that you dislike?

BUKOWSKI: They drive four in a car. And they hit my bumper. Anyway, drinking leads you into avenues where courage can't take you.

HUSTLER: Or wisdom refuses to.

BUKOWSKI: Things happen. Drinking makes things happen.

HUSTLER: Have you ever been put in jail

for trying to get away with that kind of shit?"

BUKOWSKI: I've been in prison.

HUSTLER: What for?

BUKOWSKI: Draft dodging.

HUSTLER: Well, that's very noble. When was that?

BUKOWSKI: World War II. That was a big war.

HUSTLER: That was before it was fashionable to dodge.

BUKOWSKI: Yeah, I did it before it became a good thing. I can't differentiate between a good war and a bad war. I figure you get killed in both—somebody will get murdered.

HUSTLER: Were you simply afraid of getting killed? Is that it?

BUKOWSKI: I wasn't afraid of getting killed. What bothered me was being wakened up in the barracks at 5:30 A.M. by some asshole with a bugle or some sergeant running in. Also what worried me was being a buddy with all these good-humor creatures.

HUSTLER: They probably would have shot you when you weren't looking.

BUKOWSKI: On Saturday night, you know, "Hey, let's all go to town and get fucked!" That would tear me to pieces.

HUSTLER: What about the patriotism that was displayed in those days?

BUKOWSKI: I passed on all that shit. Because once you remove an enemy, a

new enemy appears. Once you remove an enemy, you take his place. You take up some of the things that you wanted to eradicate. There is no war to cure war. But I wasn't really a draft dodger. I just forgot to leave a change of address, so they picked me up and took me to the psychiatrist, and he asked me three questions: "Do you believe in the war?" I said, "No." He said, "Are you willing to go to the war?" I said, "Yes." I had some grand idea of jumping out of a transport, grabbing a machine gun and getting the hell out of there. I couldn't do it. I'd be too scared, but that was my idea. Then he said, "You know, you're an intelligent person. We're having a party at my house. I like you. Will you come to my party?" I said, "No." He said, "OK you can go." He said, "You don't have to go to the war. You didn't think I would understand, did you?" I said, "No."

HUSTLER: They didn't put you in jail for not serving?

BUKOWSKI: They put me in jail and held me until the interview.

HUSTLER: But you never did any hard time?

BUKOWSKI: Never any hard time. Seventeen days for drunk and disorderly. You know, chickenshit.

HUSTLER: You seem to be a pretty nasty guy.

BUKOWSKI: I'm one of the kindest dogs in the universe. I'm full of kindness and goodness. I'm a Christmas tree.

HUSTLER: Why do you want to project this nasty image?

BUKOWSKI: When I started this poetry game, I said, "You're going to have to get an audience's attention. How are you going to get it? By acting up as an asshole." I once beat the shit out of a china closet. I did all kinds of ridiculous things because I wanted people to say, "Wow, Bukowski is a madman." It was a planned attack. I thought if I gave them shock, maybe they'd read what I really wanted to say.

HUSTLER: Do you feel any connection with your audience?

BUKOWSKI: Not really. I think that most of them are a bunch of damn fools.

HUSTLER: I noticed that. You seem to have a certain amount of contempt for people who are impressed by your work. I think that indicates a certain self-hatred.

BUKOWSKI: No, it's not that. I get lots of phone calls from idiots in the middle of the night, and I say, "Are these my readers?"

HUSTLER: They think they recognize a kindred spirit.

BUKOWSKI: Thank you.

HUSTLER: Do you think that your writing will immortalize you?

BUKOWSKI: Yeah, I think so.

HUSTLER: Does that matter to you?

BUKOWSKI: No, I'm not interested in being immortal.

HUSTLER: Not at all?

BUKOWSKI: Not really. I don't care. When I was younger, I thought it would be great to be immortal, like Shakespeare, but now it really doesn't matter. All I want to do is be buried near the racetrack.

HUSTLER: What about death? Are you afraid of death?

BUKOWSKI: No, I'm not afraid of death. All I'm afraid of is a long sickness where you have to sit on the bedpan and a nurse comes and pinches your ass. That long, slow trip toward it is what's hairy. Death itself is OK, but that long, slow trip; I want to avoid that.

HUSTLER: One final question. How do you feel the '70s will be for writers like you and magazines like HUSTLER?

BUKOWSKI: I think it is definitely opening up. But I think now we're turning the clock back. We're going to go backward for about five years. I think there is going to be a reaction.

HUSTLER: What makes you say that?

BUKOWSKI: Ronald Reagan. People show up to lead us backwards. If you guys can make anything out of this, congratulations. I ought to fly on out to L.A. and rape an eight-year-old girl. First one I see.

