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# LIZARD'S EYELID

WINTER ISSUE



# LIZARD'S EYE INTERVIEW with

## Charles Bukowski

**STERLING: YOU ARE A HIGHLY ACCOMPLISHED WRITER. WHAT DO YOU HOLD RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR SUCCESS?**

**Bukowski:** A brutal childhood, alcohol, half a dozen rotten jobs, a dozen rotten women, plus an overpowering fear of almost everything, plus a strange arrival of luck and bravery in sub-zero situations.

**STERLING: WHICH OF YOUR WORKS ARE YOU MOST PROUD?**

**Bukowski:** I'm not proud of anything. What I always like best is the last thing I've written. At the moment it is the answer to question.

**STERLING: WAS THE CHARACTER CHINASKI BASED ON ANYONE YOU KNOW, YOURSELF?**

**Bukowski:** I am Chinaski. By changing my name I was able to step back and slap myself around a bit more. Maybe a half-laugh here and there. Mostly there. The "Chin" part, if you must know, was thrown in because of my chin- I was one of those guys able to absorb a terrific punch. I was not a very good fighter but taking me out was a great problem. I won a few by simply out-enduring the stupid son of a bitch trying to do me in.

**STERLING: WHAT DO YOU FEEL IS THE GREATEST TRAGEDY OF OUR TIME?**

**Bukowski:** The 8 hour job. You die on it and you die without it.

**STERLING: WHAT ARE YOUR HOBBIES, OTHER THAN WRITING?**

**Bukowski:** Playing the bourses and knowing it is stupid but going on and playing them anyhow. I don't know what draws me to this. A half-dream of death.

A reminder? I don't know. There are so many things that I don't know.

**STERLING: YOU SEEM TO HAVE A FASCINATION WITH SEX AND ALCOHOLISM. WHAT IS THIS FASCINATION?**

**Bukowski:** Sex? Well I was drawn to it because I missed so much of it from basically the age of 13 to 34. I just didn't want to pay the price, do the tricks, work at it. Then I don't know, about at the age of 35 I decided I'd better get with it, and

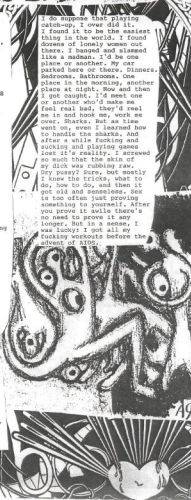
I do suppose that playing catch-up, I over did it. I found it to be the easiest thing in the world. I found dozens of lonely women out there. I banged and slammed like a madman. I'd be one place or another. My car parked here or there. Dinners. Bedrooms. Bathrooms. One place in the morning, another place at night. Now and then I got caught. I'd meet one or another who'd make me feel real bad, they'd reel me in any hook me, work me over. Sharks. But as time went on, even I learned how to handle the sharks. And after a while fucking and sucking and playing games lost it's reality. I screwed so much that the skin of my dick was rubbing raw. Dry pussy? Sure, but mostly I knew the tricks, what to do, how to do, and then it got old and senseless. Sex is too often just proving something to yourself. After you prove it awile there's no need to prove it any longer. But in a sense, I was lucky: I got all my fucking workouts before the advent of AIDS.

Alcohol is another matter. I've always needed it. It needs me. I've had any number of beers and a bottle of wine tonight within a couple of hours. Great. The singing of the blood. I don't think I could have endured any of the shitty jobs I had in so many cities in this country without knowing I could come back to my room and drink it off and smooth it out, let the walls slant in, the face of the subnormal foreman vanish, always knowing that they were buying my time, my body, me, for a few pennies while they prospered. Then to, I could have never lived the same of those women unless they were transferred by drink into half-dreams which wavered before me. Under drink, their legs always looked better, their conversations more than the singing of lions, their betrayals not self-affront. Drugs I had no luck with. They took away my guts, my laughter. They dulled my mind. They lapsed my dick. They took everything from me. The writing, the smile, tiny flick of hope. Booze rose me up to the sky, slammed me the next morning, but I could climb out of it, get going again. Drugs sucked me. Threw me on the mattress. A big thing. If there is an out for the disposed, it's alcohol. Most can't handle it. But for me, it's one of the secrets of existence. You asked.

**STERLING: WHO WERE YOUR INSPIRED BY?**

**Bukowski:** Originally, Hemingway but he faded. No sense of humor. A craftsman, got down the beautiful and uncluttered line, which I believe he got more from Sherwood Anderson than from Gertrude Stein. Sure I liked Woody, Fitzgerald, Dosztoevsky, then came Hammett (see HUNGER) but I really got blasted away when I read Celine's JOURNEY... I read it in one reading, laughing out, thinking, now, here is a writer who finally writes better than I do. But only in JOURNEY...

Most overrated writers: Shakespeare, Mailer, Isaac Singer, Chekhov, Tolstoy.



# INTERVIEW

CONTINUED

**STERLING:** WHO DO YOU CONSIDER THE FINEST WRITERS OF OUR TIME?

**Rukowski:** There aren't any. Or they haven't been published.

**STERLING:** NOW DOES OLD AGE AGREE WITH YOU, I CAN'T IMAGINE YOU EVER GROWING "OLD?"

**Rukowski:** Old age agrees with me greatly. I hammer the lime in with greater luck than ever. I drink beer and wine and sore of it. Things that bother most people don't bother me. One thing I can't get over or adjust to is Humanity. It's not moving, it's glued to it's own shit. I love animals. Their eyes, their grace. Me, I'm 71 now but I feel 47. But I always felt 47 even when I was 17. But I know death is at my elbow. But I don't mind. I never such cared for the game. And when it comes to take me out, I won't be sad. I've had a good strong run. Each line that I write down now is just more laughter against the impossible.

**STERLING:** DO YOU PREFER TO BE KNOWN AS A WRITER OR A POET BY CONVENTIONAL CLASSIFICATION?

**Rukowski:** I don't care how they "classify" me. I've never searched for a place among the immortals, they haven't impressed me that much. I'm just like the plumber or the dope dealer or the jock on the 5 horse, I'm just trying to get from today and into tomorrow, somehow, trying to feel as good as possible, trying to avoid the hell-traps.

**STERLING:** WHAT IS YOUR MOST RECENT PROJECT?

**Rukowski:** Right now, I'm working on a novel, PULP, "dedicated to bad writing", a detective novel, and I'm having a right good time playing around and I might finish it, if it carries me without push.

**STERLING:** YOUR WORKS, PUBLISHED AS MANY AS 34 YEARS AGO, ARE STILL INCREASINGLY POPULAR TODAY. DOES THAT SURPRISE YOU?

**Rukowski:** No, it doesn't surprise me. I always knew that I had a way of slaming the lime down that was bright and crazy, which carried its own gamble. As I've said elsewhere, it's not that I'm so good, it's that they are so bad. There have been centuries of graceless drivel, we've been fed pap and crap. I can hardly believe all of it. It's like a dirty trick against everybody.

**STERLING:** WHAT IS YOUR OPINION OF RELIGION AND POLITICS?

**Rukowski:** Religion is what a person builds through endurance against the forces of life. It's what finds out is true for himself. Within and against those

forces. That's all there is.

Politics is a blind horse leading a horse's ass into darkness. Politics draws the greatest fakes towards it. A true leader is either propagandized out of essence or murdered. The masses always prefer a political leader within their own likeness. In other words, an idiot.

**STERLING:** WHAT IS YOUR MESSAGE TO THE WORLD?

**Rukowski:** I have no message to the world. I am not wise enough to lead, yet I am wise enough not to follow.



*face of a political candidate on a street billboard*

there he is:

not too many hangers  
not too many fights with women  
not too many flat tires  
never a thought of suicide

not more than three toothaches  
never missed a meal  
never in jail  
never in love

7 pairs of shoes

a son in college

a car one year old

insurance policies

a very green lawn

garbage cans with tight lids

he'll be elected.