

SOFT AND FAT LIKE SUMMER ROSES  
— by Charles Bukowski

Rex was a two-fisted man  
Who drank like a fish  
And looked like a purple gargoyle.  
He married three  
Before he found one.  
And they hollered over cheap gin,  
Were friendless  
And satisfied.  
and frightened the landlord.  
She hollered plenty  
And he would listen dully,  
Then leap up red with choice words.  
And then she began again.  
It was a good life,  
Soft and fat like summer roses.  
Good bod mates  
Until he got hurt at work.  
Fetally, it seemed.

And stayed in bod  
Smiling it off  
While she got a job as waitress  
In a cheap cafe  
Whore the lads were rather rough.  
Somotimes drunk, slapping her rear.  
He drank gin in bod  
And she walked about, saying nothing,  
Thinking about a Greek who came in  
mornings,  
Touched her hand, quietly said "eggs."  
"Eggs again. . . ."

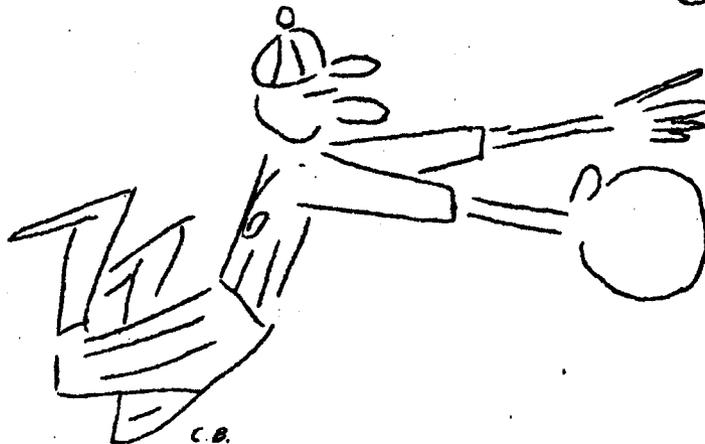
He drank the gin in bod  
And one night she didn't come back.  
Nor next. Nor next.  
And with a lurch, he got out of bed  
And walked holding to walls.  
Around and around and around.  
And fell, clutching the carpet,  
Saying, "O, Christ! O, Christ! O, Christ!"  
The Greek was very different,  
Said he believed in God;  
Loved diffidently, like a butterfly  
And had a now refrigerator. . . .

He was sitting in bed with the gin  
When she returned, saying nothing looking.  
"Bitch. Cheap — bitch," he said.  
She climbed on the bed, fully dressed.  
Later he stood upright on the floor,  
smiling.  
Said, "I'm going to work tomorrow  
morning."  
And you — stay out of that goddamn safe."

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THE REASON BEHIND REASON

BY CHARLES BUKOWSKI



CHOLASKI, OF, .285 (AB - 246 H - 70)  
felt a little. . . felt a little. . .  
different out there. There are days  
when you feel a little different. Things  
don't set right. Like now, even the  
sun looked a little sick, the green of  
the fancies too green, the sky much too  
high and the leather of his glove too  
much like. . . leather.

He took a few steps forward and beat  
his fist into his glove, trying to shake  
everything. Did he have a headache or  
what? He felt potential, as if he were  
about to scream or to leap up or to do  
something that shouldn't be done.

Cholaski was a bit frightened and  
looked over at Donovan, LF, .296 (AB -  
230 H - 68) but Donovan looked very  
comfortable. He studied Donovan care-  
fully, trying to draw strength from him.  
His face was very brown, and Cholaski  
had never noticed the pot belly before.  
Such an ugly bulge, so unself-conscious.  
Even Donovan's legs seemed thick, tree-  
like, and Cholaski stared straight ahead  
again, feeling worse.

What was wrong?

The batter connected and it was an  
outfield fly. . . to Donovan. Donovan  
moved forward a few steps, moved his  
arms leisurely and caught the ball.  
Cholaski had watched the ball in its  
long, slow arc through sun and sky. It  
had seemed pleasant enough, but somehow  
unrelated, unattached to anything.

The next man hit an infield single that  
he didn't have to handle. One out. One  
on. What was the inning? He turned to  
look at the scoreboard and saw the crowd.  
His eyes didn't focus on them. They  
were just bits of movement, cloth and  
sound.

What did they want done?

It ran through his mind again: What  
did they want done?

Suddenly he was terrified and didn't  
know the reason. His breath came hard  
and the saliva ran in his mouth; he felt  
dizzy, airy.

There was Donovan. . . standing. He  
looked again at the crowd and saw every-  
one, everything, all together and sep-  
arately. Glasses, neckties; women wear-  
ing skirts, men wearing pants; there was  
lipstick. . . and fire on things stick-  
ing in mouths. . . cigarettes. And they  
all hung together in a strange under-  
standing.

And then it came. . . an outfield fly  
. . . to him. An easy one. He was wor-  
ried. He studied the ball fiercely and  
it almost seemed to stop its movement  
in air. It just hung there and the  
crowd shouted and the sun shone and the  
sky was blue. And Donovan's eyes were  
watching him, and Donovan's eyes were  
watching. Was Donovan against him? What  
did Donovan really want?

The ball came into his glove. It en-  
tered his glove and he felt the strong

pressure and pleasant push of the catch. He threw the ball to second, holding the runner on first. It was a good throw and Chelaski was amazed; it had seemed as if the ball had gone there because it was supposed to. His terror left a little; he was getting away with it.

The next man was out, short to first, and Chelaski began the long trot to the dugout. It was good to be running. He passed several opposing players but they didn't look at him. It bothered him a little, and the bother hung there in a little knob as he followed Donovan's set neck into the dugout. When Chelaski got down there, he felt somehow naked, or spotted, or something, and in an effort to act as if he were all right, he walked up to Hull and grinned down on him.

"Do you want me to kiss you? I could make you forget," he said to Hull.

Hull was hitting .189 and had been benched for Jamison, the college kid. Hull looked up at Chelaski. It was a look of absolute unrecognition. Hull didn't even answer; he got up and walked to the water cooler. Chelaski quickly moved up to the railing, with his back to the bench.

Corpenson singled. Donovan hit into a double play and trotted back down the first base line, lifting his legs high; his stockings showing, somehow all full of color.

Chelaski walked to the plate. There was the umpire, the catcher, the pitcher, the fielders, the audience. Everything waiting, everything waiting. Outside, perhaps, a man was holding up a bank; or, a streetcar full of people sitting, was turning a corner; but here it was different: it was settled, expected. . . not like that, outside the streetcar, the holdup. Here it was. . . different, caught up, demanded.

He swung and missed the first pitch and people shouted. The catcher yelled something and tossed the ball back. A bird skipped through the air, up and down, going somewhere, very fast. Chelaski spit and stared at the birthmark on the ground. The ground was very dry. Ball one.

The next one came on the outside, where he liked them. He swung the bat

swiftly, automatically, and the crowd screamed. It was a long drive, deep over the center fielder's head. Chelaski watched it bounce against the wall by the flagpole. The crowd screamed louder than ever; it screamed louder than Chelaski had heard it all season. Then Jamison, who was on deck, began yelling at him.

"Run! Run! Run!" he shouted.

Chelaski turned and looked at Jamison. His eyes were extremely wide and burned like two flashes, cups of hot, driven things. His face was contorted, the lips turned out, and Chelaski noticed especially the thick veins in the red neck.

"Run! Run! Run!" Jamison shouted.

A cushion came out of the stands. Then another one. The crowd was so loud he could no longer hear Jamison. What was probably the same bird came flying back, hopping up and down, only a little faster. The center fielder had fielded the ball. The noise was almost unbearable. Chelaski was hit by a cushion and he turned to look at the crowd. When he did, many of them leaped up and down, waving their arms. Cushions, hats, bottles, everything came down. For a moment Chelaski's eye caught sight of a girl in a green skirt. He couldn't make out her face, or her blouse or her coat. He saw a green skirt, and a pleat in a green skirt, shadow-like, and leaping. Then he was hit by another cushion. It stung, out, felt warm. For a moment he was angry.

The throw came into the second baseman, who relayed it to first for the out. The noise was volcanic, stifling, maddening. Jamison had Chelaski by the arm, pulling him from the batter's box. He noticed Jamison's face, streaked with shots of red and white, looking thick, as if several layers of skin had been added.

Chelaski walked to the dugout as the noise continued. The team was taking to the field, Hull replacing him in the outfield.

It was cold in the dugout, dark in the dugout. He saw the waterbucket with the towel over its side. He walked down in there, saw somebody's hands slide nervously on the bench, somebody's

legs cross.

Then Chelaski was standing in front of the manager, Hastings. He didn't look at Hastings; just looked at his shirt below the V of the neck.

Then he looked up. He saw that Hastings was trying to speak but couldn't get it out.

Chelaski turned quickly and ran down the runway that led to the locker room. When he got there, he stood a moment looking at all the green lockers.

Outside, the crowd was still shouting and some of the reporters were making their way down to Chelaski to ask him what was wrong.

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FOOTHILL -- by William Allen Ward

At sunset  
The foothill on the  
Desert is an Indian warrior  
Of old who wraps a red blanket about his  
Nude shoulders and broods in melancholy  
Silence.

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OLD MAN WITH A HORN  
-- by Frank Brookhouser

Joe Timm  
blew hot  
blew true  
blew slick  
blew blue,  
trembled emotion  
tumbled passion  
teased to notion  
tantalized to motion,  
played brassy  
played muted  
played drossy  
arrangement rooted,  
played all the time  
for them, and then for him;  
couldn't play  
for them and him both --

the late Joe Timm.

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HELLO! -- by

See the big wo  
truck

See the two ho  
yellow pair

Now liston, li  
on asphalt

Sky: cold; tim  
Here it comes!

O, big nigger  
O, fine bone m  
eyes wild in

seeing you: sh

O, big nigger  
riding loose

lousy wood ar  
haulod hard!

O, big nigger  
maybe you bo

maybe you hav  
maybe you ear

But

O, big nigger  
riding your h

I see a chari  
dance

blood in hors  
sounding!

O, big nigger  
O, big nigger

something tou  
grin

then sliding  
and wood -  
and gone, and

O, big nigger  
they speak of

maybe you fee  
they speak of

O, big nigger  
a thousand po

dying in the!

O, big nigger  
O, big nigger

the top of the

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