

"things get dark," I said, "and we awaken with a worse hangover than ever before."

"I gotta begin eating in," he said.

THE YELLOW PENCIL

I am sitting in the stands with a two-night, two-day hangover; the last night was the worst: white wine, red wine and tequila.

I am out there because I have evolved an astonishing new theory on how to beat the races.

the money is secondary: it's only used as a guideline to see if I am on the given path.

I picked up \$302 the day before and I am \$265 ahead going into the sixth.

I can barely function but the new theory (formula K) enacts itself continually:

M plus S plus C plus O (each brought down to relative powers of 1/4 each): the horse with the lowest total is the winner.

it is like being inside one of the very secrets of life itself. when your figures tell you that a 2nd, 3rd or 4th favorite can beat the favorite and when your figures only select one horse,

it is a very curious and
magic feeling, of course,
and you learn to apply
the same simplicities to
other areas of existence
but in a spiritual
rather than the mathematical
manner.

I have my figures ready for the
6th race
then I look up
and see, well,
there in the stands ahead of
me
a fellow sits upright.
his face is smooth and
bland.
the physiognomy is set at
exact zero.

he has a yellow pencil.
he flips it over
once
into the air and
catches it with
one hand.

he does it
again.

and again
with the same
timing.

what is he
doing?

he just sits there
and continues to
repeat the
maneuver.

I begin to
count:
one two three
four five six ...

23, 24, 25, 26,
27 ...

his movements are
dull and graceless,
he reminds me of a
factory machine.

this man is my
enemy.

45, 46, 47, 48 ...

his face has the
taut dead skin
of a mounted
ape

and I am sitting
with my two-day
two-night
hangover
watching ...

53, 54, 55 ...

this will be my
life in hell: watching
men like that
sitting forever
tossing and
catching pencils
with one
hand
in that same
non-innovational
rhythm ...

I am in vertigo.
I feel a pressing
at the temples
as if I were going
mad.

I can't watch
any longer.

I get up and walk
away from the
seating section
as I think,

it will never
let go
with the women
you live with

or wherever you
go
supermarkets,
bazaars, hang-glider
meets. it will
find you, maul you,
piss over you, let
you know
about it
again.
and there will be
nobody
you can talk to
about it.

I find the bar.
the barkeep
seems a nice enough
fellow: little bright
blue eyes
and a crisp white
shirt.

"double vodka 7,"
I tell him.
he nods and moves
off.

a high-yellow in a
see-through
throws her
head back and
laughs about
something ...

she's about three
feet
to the left
so that's far
enough.

the barkeep comes
back with
my drink
asks me:
"how's it going?"

I wink and
slide
the money
toward
him.