

"I SAW HIM, MAN! I SAW HIM PLAY!"
"YEAH? WELL, I SAW JIM THORPE!"
"YEAH? YOU SAW JIM THORPE JUST LIKE YOU
GOT LAID LAST NIGHT!"
"YEAH, I NOTICE YOU CAN HARDLY SIT DOWN!"
"I'LL TEAR YOUR GOD DAMNED HEAD OFF!"

the combat never evolves and that's well
and good, for they are fine fellows, we
need them like we need the Sierra Madres
slinking through the smog, like we need
Willie Shoemaker legging it up on just
one more mount, we need to forget the
women that didn't work and the ways that
didn't work, all the bad bets ...
what counts is continuance, what counts
is not noticing that the whole west side
of America is going to keel underwater,
and there was never any sense in having
gardens and in sending people to
Radcliffe.

I like to watch those fellows, they are
like a Broadway musical, only it's not
GUYS AND DOLLS it's GUYS AND GUYS, they
are fine fellows, the wavering line of
them, the most beautiful women in the
world mean nothing to them
because they know that only certain things
work for certain people, and there's
just no use wondering how it got that
way.

I get the best Broadway musical
every day from the best seat in the
house and I am the critic and the
audience and sometimes I'm on stage
too.

I don't know where they come from
and I don't know where they go.

the vet's ward, probably.

DEAD DOG

Bartowski completes a 58-yard touchdown pass
to beat the Rams in the final minutes.
I hear it on the radio
it's Sunday and I'm on the way to the track
I should make the third race.

the Falcons hold on to win and that's good.
I switch off the radio.

then where the Harbor Freeway branches onto
the Pasadena

I see a dead dog up on the ramp
he's a big one and he's stiff
his head is crushed.

people who carry dogs in their cars
and let them hang out --
when those dogs fall out
they just keep driving ...

I know how to make the tunnel
you take the far right lane
the other lanes back up to the left
I glide on through

when I come out of the tunnel
I slide back into the fast lane.

those sons of bitches and their dead
dogs.

I get to the track at 1:20 p.m.
take preferred parking
find a vacant spot at F-5
lock it

and as I'm walking between cars
I see two men

they have broken into a car
they are taking out the radio,
the stereo and the speakers.
they see me and I see them.

"don't say nothin', man!
if you do, remember we'll see you
again some day!"

I get inside the track
it's four minutes to post
third race coming up
the crowd has bet Shameen
with Delahousseye
down from 4 to 2 to one.

Song for Two has a line of 2
and reads 3.

I rate the horses even
bet ten win on Song for Two.

Song for Two wins the photo
the Shoe can still ride
and I'm \$31 ahead.

those sons of bitches and their dead
dogs.

I lose the 4th, 5th and 6th races.
in the 7th they bet Back'n Time down

to 3 to 5 off a 99 speed rating
6 furlongs down at Del Mar
but the colt is 3 years old
going against older
and has never gone a mile.
I can see it turning into the stretch
with a four length lead and getting beat
at the wire
by something.
but who will do it?
there are 6 other horses.

I put 50 place on Back'n Time
and watch the race.
the colt has four lengths coming into
the stretch
then Don F.
the longest shot on the board
begins to close down
and it's tight at the wire.

they hang the photo
we wait
then they put up Don F.
at 19 to one.

I get \$2.80 place
so I make \$20
lose the 8th
then I'm only \$18 up.

in the 9th
I bet ten win on Fleet Ruler
and two win on Forecast
then leave the track
stand out in the parking lot
listen to the announcer
who is hollering
"Forecast is in front
and here comes Fleet Ruler
it's Fleet Ruler and Forecast
at the wire!"

it's evidently a photo
I walk to my car to get out of there
before the crowd.

I have the radio
on the race result station.
I'm still on the Pasadena Freeway
when I hear the result:
it's Forecast
and Forecast paid \$90.70
so
the day wasn't quite wasted.

but later
when I pull into the driveway
there's the Manx cat
with his rudimentary tail and
his tongue hanging out.
he refuses to move for the car
I get out
pick him up and
throw him in the front seat.
we drive into the garage
together.

we get out
the other two cats are waiting
(lovers of fishheads, dreamers of
birds)
I open the door
and all the cats enter
with me

they run into the kitchen
I notice where Dallas and San Diego are
playing ... Danny White is at quarter for
Dallas.
I always liked Danny White,
he's a gambler

I might watch a few quarters
Sunday's a day of rest
all important things should be forgotten .

I decide to not even feed the cats
for a while
Tuesday or Wednesday I'll begin
on that childhood novel
again.

TALKING TO THE BARKEEP

"correctly so," I told him,
"I would have them
robbing banks and selling
drugs ...
I'll have another vodka-
7"

"correctly so," said the
barkeep mixing the
drink, "I'd have them
collecting garbage
or running for congress
or teaching
biology"