

of the world and never begged a dime, and the trouble with whores who have no taste for their work, they ought to get on as waitresses at Norm's.

I pull up outside my liquor store and go in for some decency.

THEY CAN RUIN YOUR DAY

I parked the BMW and went in to get some papers xeroxed.

I watched the white sheets of paper jump out of the machine in order.

it was a warm and an easy day.

I clipped the papers together

paid the clerk and walked out on the street again.

and here he came in seaman's cap

blue work shirt and pants rolled too high.

there were others but he walked right up to me

grabbed my hand and began shaking it:

"hey, buddy, urgworg buddy lapu ssot udorob

I am your brother sag llah worg"

"you're breaking my hand," I told

him.

I reached into my pocket and gave him a quarter.

"worgssarg buddy ssamnknat, you yremaerc"

I walked on but he shouted after me: "ecin

wolly yemtrid ereth"

I never liked such a situation because I felt like a fool if I gave them the money and I felt like a bastard if I didn't.

and no matter what I did or didn't do

it just didn't go away for a while.

I walked to my car

unlocked it

got in and sat there.

some girls were coming out of a cafe after lunch.

they were going back to work

a whole group of them chatting and walking along

and I stared hard at their breasts and their legs

and their behinds

but it didn't help:

the girls were all quite homely and sexless.

I started the car and drove down 6th to Pacific.

I crossed Pacific and went all the way to Gaffey

and it wasn't until I turned off of Gaffey and

on to 3rd and saw a boy on a lawn holding a dog while another boy strangled the dog with a rubber hose that I forgot about that bum at all.

HORSES DON'T BET ON PEOPLE AND NEITHER DO I ...

I try to get a seat alone but a couple of rows ahead of me sits a balding old man in a grey sweater.

he has a voice you can hear for 40 yards. the year is 1980, he is talking about some horse that won a stakes race in 1958.

he had him.

"HE WAS 13 TO ONE! THE HORSE HAD NEVER RUN MORE THAN SEVEN FURLONGS AND HERE THEY WERE ENTERING HIM IN A MILE AND ONE EIGHTH! WELL, SIR, HE JUMPED IN FRONT AND WENT ALL THE WAY, THEY NEVER GOT NEAR HIM! IT WAS SOME RACE!"

the man he is talking to turns his head away and pales, he's sick.

I get up and move my seat, I get a new seat, the closest person to me is three seats away and she doesn't even have a Racing Form, she's working on a crossword puzzle.

she looks up at me: "hey, what's a four letter for 'departed'?"

"dead?"

"no, that don't fit"

"gone?"

"ah ... yeah, that's it. say didn't I see you in some movie? aren't you a movie star?"

"no."

"yes, it was a horror movie, you played a man who fell out of a bell tower and crushed his skull"

I get up and I walk all the way down to the escalator and ride it down and I find a bench in the sun and I sit there, then I find I've lost my program so I go to one of the program sellers and buy a new program.

"buying another program, buddy?" he asks.

"yeah. you remember me, eh?"

"Oh yeah! I'd remember you anywhere!"

I walk back to the escalator.

as I ride the escalator up, the man next to me is carrying a portable radio and he has it turned as loud as it can go.

somebody is singing on that radio. it's Barry Manilow.