

SHUT OUT

they were putting them in the gate and I was trying to get my bet down and there were two men ahead of me at the window -- the first, a well-dressed fellow seemed to be leaning against the window ...

"JESUS CHRIST," I yelled, "SLEEP AT HOME!"

"LOOK AT HIM," I yelled to the man in front of me, "HE'S PICKING UP HIS TICKETS WITH ONE HAND!"

"yes, he's very slow," said the man in front of me.

"I'VE SEEN SOME JERK-OFFS IN MY DAY!" I screamed, "BUT THIS BABY BEATS THEM ALL!"

the man at the window picked up his tickets, spun about, screamed at me: "JESUS CHRIST, I'VE ONLY GOT ONE ARM!"

"sorry, sir," I said, then had a second thought and as he passed I told him, "listen, if you've only got one arm you ought to get in line earlier...."

he walked off and then the bell rang sending them out of the gate and I walked toward the bar.

RESULT

the room was small but neat and when I visited him he was just on that bed like a grounded seal and it was embarrassing, I mean, coming across with the conversation; I really didn't know him that well except for his writing, and they kept him drugged -- had to, they kept operating, chopping bits of him away but being a true writer he talked about his next novel.

blind, and cut away, again and again, he had already dictated one novel from that bed a good work, it had been published and now he talked to me about another but I knew he wouldn't make it

and the nurses knew
everybody knew
but he just went on talking to me
about his next novel.
he had an unusual plot idea
and I told him it sounded
great,
and after a visit or two more
his wife phoned me one afternoon
and told me that
it was over ...

it's all right, John, nobody has ever
written the last one,
some only think they have.

you were really tough on those nurses, though,
and that pleased me, the way you got them
running in there in their crinkled whites,
you proved me more than right
in my assertion
that your power of command
with a simple language was
one of the most magnificent things of
our century.

MY FRIEND

I loved bar room fights in bar room
alleys.
I fought the biggest meanest men
I could find.
the patrons thought I was
brave.

but it was something else, something
that walked and slept and sat with
me, and it ate with me when I ate,
and it drank with me, and I drank.
and I saw it everywhere: inside loaves
of bread, along the back of a mouse
running up a wall, I saw it through
the rips of a window shade, I saw it
inside the bodies of beautiful women;
I never saw it in the sun but I saw it
in the rain and I noted it in the in-
sects; and I saw it riding in busses
and trolley cars filled with human
heads;
I saw it in a dresser drawer when I
pulled it open,