"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.