

Wanna Bet?

by Bill Yarrow

I was always more comfortable with the ponies than you were
more comfortable with betting windows and two-dollar bills than you
were.

A racetrack is a dirty, degenerate place.

But Dickens wrote about them.

And Degas and Manet painted them.

There is an electricity at the track that I love
that I sought out
that scared you.

What is the heart most like?

For you, two moons.

For me, the thunder of a thousand hooves.

During high school, I spent every Sunday at Pimlico,
gambled what I could
but mostly just hung out
waiting for someone to hit the trifecta
but no one ever did.

What is heartbreak most like?

For you, a baby skunk.

For me, a photo finish.

You came with me once
complained about the sun, the wind, the noise, the litter
the people who leered at you
the people who in a hurry to place a bet
brushed by you, jostled you, bumped smack into you.
How uncomfortable the bleachers were, you said.
How boring the wait between races, you moaned.

I like you, but we're not the same.
You're porcelain, I'm acetylene.
Alone in a room, we can get along.
Out in the world, all bets are off.

