

You Win, You Lose

by Phillip W. Weiss

It took a long time for it to happen, but it finally happened, we're champs. The fans were pulling for us and we weren't about to disappoint them, not this time. Everything fell into place, no snafus like in the past, no near misses, no hopes dashed, no last second defeats, no last second mistakes, no leaving the stadium dejected and depressed while others celebrated at our expense. This time it would us doing the celebrating, the gloating, the high-fiving, strutting before the television cameras, being interviewed by hot shot reporters who used to treat us like dirt, as if we did not exist, like the cellophane man in that movie who lamented over being unnoticed. Now we've reached the top, grabbed the prize, and milking it for all it's worth. We must do that because we know it won't last. We know that winning it all doesn't mean the story is over. For Fake News the story is never over. No one tells Fake News what to write or how to write it. Fake News needs us as much as we need them. But it's not a love affair between two partners. It's more like a symbiotic relationship between two parasites, each fighting over who can feed off the other the most. For decades we epitomized the word futility. We were depicted as deadbeats, charlatans, imposters, and losers who tried hard but could never succeed. But then Fake News would urge the fans not to lose hope, recalling other one-time wonders who emerged from the depths

of despair to take it all, reach the top, surprise the world. Fake News pushed that narrative using us as their patsy. Success is just around the corner, just another season away, just an acquisition here or a trade there to tip the scale in our favor. Of course, it never happened, but it could have. Miracles did happen to other teams but never to us because we were marked as losers. For us, defeat and losing was normal, a tradition that shaped our destiny. Then the miracle started happening, slowly at first, almost imperceptibly, but then gained momentum with each win, injecting us with confidence that this time we would reach the promised land. And it happened. We made it to the top! The trophy was ours! The world was delirious with joy over our success. The congratulations poured in, the champagne flowed and the world was our oyster. They gave us a parade, gave us gifts, showered us with accolades, used us as an excuse to party all night and the following day. It was all so marvelous. It was a dream come true. It was what all of us had waited for and had dreamed about and had wanted for years and decades. But then came the catch. The naysayers from Fake News started planting stories that maybe our success was a fluke, maybe we had defeated a bunch of pushovers, maybe our good fortune was just plain luck, that winning the championship this one time proved nothing. Then Fake News started spinning our success as being nothing special, that it's been done before, that even losers can have one good season, that even the worst teams can have their moment of glory before they fade back into the woodwork never to be heard from again. Now Fake News is demanding that we win again, that once wasn't enough and that if

we fail, then that will show that we were just pretenders, long shots who showerd up this one time and then become a statistic that is filed and then forgotten.

Even my own family got into the act. My eight-year-old daughter asked me if I would win again. My fourteen-year-old kid brother told me that he and his friends were expecting a repeat. So, our success came at the price of heightened expectations by the fans who don't want the party to end and neither do I.

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