

MISTER PIPPA PASSES

Harvey Manning

ONE

yesterday scepters and crowns
fried oysters and velvet gowns
and today i herd with bums
but wotthehell wotthehell

Not herding with nobody, not today. In morning I'd walked from the 200-meter hut down Cougar Mountain, caught three buses, one at a time, to near the Puyallup River, and followed it to the Whulge.

Alone.

Except for hundreds of thousands of citizens of Puget Sound City. One would have expected the Kelty, loaded as if for bear or whatever in the North Cascades, would have been stared at, chuckled at, gasped at, mocked at, and glowered at. Nope.

But mind's ear heard voices at hundreds of thousands of supper tables:

"I was standing at Fourth and Pike, waiting for the light to turn, felt a little nudge, and darned if it wasn't a Kelty!"

"Gracious! Did you holler for a cop?"

"Not on your tintype! They catch you whispering or giving a dirty look and they pull a rusty knife and the sidewalk runs red. What you gotta do is not see 'em."

Last night I saw upon the stair
A Kelty man who wasn't there.
He wasn't there again today.
Oh how I wish he would go away.

All day I faced the barren waste without the taste of water, cool clear water. Spring sun's summerlike heat rebounded from pavement to nose and mouth and throat and vital organs. At Dash Point was the shore of a reservoir that knew no bounds this side of Asia. Not for the sálvation of an ancient mariner.

A little picnic park had a drinking fountain.

Dry.

Water, water everywhere,
Nor any drop to drink.

Keep a-movin' Dan, he's a devil not a man and he's spread the burning sand with faucets that will be dry until picnic season.

An inhabited building. A traveler's refuge? There should be St. Bernards . Ask the monks.

Is that Mozart by candlelight? The scent is not of velvet gowns but little black dresses. The oysters are not friend but on the half-shell, a squeeze of lemon. On the gleaming white tablecloth are white wine, red wine, madeira m'dear, martinis, margaritas, crystal goblets clinking ice cubes.

Masses of eyes raise gazes to the door.

"Fear me not, gallants and consorts! Though appearing before you as an apparition from the North Cascades, in real life I have nibbled canapes with Wall Streeters at the Union League Club in New York, and in Seattle have deployed my expense account to feed professors the steaks and cheesecake and famous dollar-apiece baked potatoes of Canlis, where the elite meet to eat high

above the Grandma's Cookies sign and the flames leaping from the Lake Union Gas Plant."

by cripes i have danced the shimmy
in rooms as warm as a dream
and gone to sleep on a cushion
with a bellyful of cream

But it was a falsetto whimper that begged for "a can of Pepsi, 7-Up, or root beer. I'll take it out quietly and never ever pull my Swiss Army knife."

The elegant maitre dee apologized that their license forbade the sale of take-out. No need for him to explain that the ambience forbade Kelties.

A sweet confection of a serving girl chirped, "We can fill your water bottle."

You'd never take her, shapely legs and back net stockings, for a person who knew that Keltys have water bottles. The liter of cool clear water she brought was a-clink-clink with ice cubes.

So, Northward Ho to Camp 1.

i know that i am bound
for a journey down the sound
in the midst of a refuse mound

(scrath that last line mehitabel)

i should worry i should fret
death and i will coquette
there s a dance in the old dame yet
toujours gai toujours gai

The elegant maitre dee had said, as I was leaving, "Driving to work, I saw you on the road." He was too sensitive to mysteries to bluntly ask what it was all about. My appearance at Dash Point had given him a clue to the what. He likely figured out the nature of the why as well. He had the look of a person who could (and would) give thought to what a Kelty was doing in the middle of Puget Sound City.

Browning's verse drama, Pippa Passes, centers on a child who sings along Italian streets, passing Ottima, Sebald, Gottlieb, Schramm, Jules, Phene, Bluphocks, Luigi and his mother, foreign students, Austrian police, poor girls, and Monsignor and his attendants. They hear her song, for better or verse,

"God's in his heaven --
All's right with the world!"

TWO

The legal sleeping at Dash Point State Park was in the woods. To sleep in the woods I had only to step outside the 200-meter hut. The point of this expedition was to sleep on the beach. To hear the lap-lap-lap of wavelets. To inhale into dreams the tang of salt and stink of seaweed.

The past several years I'd recapitulated a lifetime of memories, walking a bookful of Whulge beaches. Days and days and days. Adding up, however, to less than half the Whulge. Nights were needed to tie the isolated pieces into a whole ^{greater} than the sum of the parts.

The spring of 1938, aspiring ~~(fingers crossed)~~ to the ~~augustan~~ ^{immediate} and faraway Eagle, my ~~close~~ view was of First Class. Most of my fellow Scouts in Troop 324 were stalled at Second Class by the requirement of the Fourteen Mile Hike. Overnight. A single companion. No troop for social security, no Scoutmaster in loco parentis.

The two of us shouldered Trapper Nelsons where we lived, in the stumprancher country north of civitas, and set out on deserted gravel roads, past scattered chicken ranches and one goat farm. At 5 miles we came to the meager civitas of Edmonds, where ferries set out for voyages across the Whulge and where the morning milk train rendezvoused with dairy farmers.

To finish half ~~of~~ the required 14 miles we switched from automobile roads to railroad, the tracks laid down in 1892 by the Empire Builder, Jim Hill, for his Great Northern. When Hill arrived on

the North Dakota prairies, Grampa Hawthorne was raising a family on his and Gramma's share of the Homestead Act. They kept on scrabbling to the turn of the century, then bundled the kids, the youngest the infant who became Mother, and on these tracks fled west.

The ceaseless gnawing of Whulge ~~waves~~ had left no room for rails. Blocks of granite had been railroaded from the Cascades for a seawall to expel waves from just enough beach along the base of the bluff. We had just enough beach at the base of the seawall for a driftwood fire to fry hamburgers and onions and bake potatoes in the coals. Our sleeping bags butted heads against the wall. We kept our feet a wary distance from wavelets. The night's high tide, lacking the push of wind, fell inches short of too high.

My family's (sort of) stumpranch was an hour's walk through forest to the Whulge. Swimming. Skipping rocks. Sitting on floating logs and paddling, ~~etc.~~ "simply messing about." The locomotives, "big wheel running by steam, the little wheel by the grace of God," ~~they~~ were the center ring. The engineer poked his head out one side of the cab, hand on the whistle cord to set skinnydippers to cheering. On the other side of the cab, the second-greatest personage in our world, the fireman, ^{gave} a wave and a grin.

By day the black giants were as exciting as the Western Front. By night they were nightmares. To sleep between the dragons

inches from our heads and the Whulge inches from our feet was a long leap from childhood. There would be First Class, Star, Life, the 21 merit badges for Eagle -- and all grown up.

And now grown old.

The ranger came trucking down the valley to lock the restrooms and warn late picnickers the gates were being closed. Nobody was left to warn. The Kelty hid in the bushes.

Twilight dimmed to night. The Whulge was an enormous black emptiness, the uncreated. Sounds of civitas north and south and west were lost in the vastness of the vacancy, to the east were blocked out by the stuff of the Pleistocene ice, sculpted by Holocene waves into steeps that banned "real" estate.

The valley that had been made a park was also unbuildable. At its mouth were parking lot, restrooms, picnic tables, lawns, and a beach burned naked by bonfires.

But to the south the park ended in a jumble of driftlogs below a jungle of bluff. I concealed my sleeping bag behind a log well-removed from the kempt park, as secure as could be from urban murderers and police.

Sleep was perfect peace until a monstrous silhouette reared up against the sky. In a futile last gasp I howled, "PEOPLE ARE TRYING TO SLEEP HERE!"

The silhouette vanished. From the far side of the log rose a groan. Then an apparent head. In a quavering whimper, "Man, you lak to skeer me half to death."

There proving to be no People to finish him off, he friendly-like extended an invitation (politely declined) to join him and his pals at the illicit bonfire on the park beach to smoke a toque.

At dawn, a "splat splat" on my bag. Not enough to rig a tarp. I carried ~~my~~ gear to the park. The shingling of a bigleaf maple ~~were~~^{was} roof a-plenty. I spread sleeping ~~bag~~^{pad} on the lawn, lay down, and pulled the bag over me as a blanket.

CLATTER CLATTER CLATTER.

A park ranger was beating his billyclub on a picnic table.

"No comp on bitch."

"Not camping, señor. Napping while the tide, la aguar, goes out."

I drew back my bag, revealing that I was fully clothed and booted.

What's to say to a passing Pippa?

"No comp on bitch."

He went off to unlock the restrooms.

THREE

Pilings driven in the beach supported a row of shacks hugging the cliff. A skinny trail was hacked in the wall. Rowboats were moored at the doors. Assuming water was piped from somewhere, did they flush toilets? Or depend on gravity and high tide?

The pilings had been much eaten by shipworms. When the ramshackles began to rock and roll in storms, did the hippy telegraph signal ~~for~~ guests to come skipping and chortling along the path, bearing jugs of California wine and baggies of controlled substances? The outpost ramshackle flaunted a huge Old Glory. Witty.

Eleven dogs ran out to share the Tyranny and Terrour in Warre of the Scourge of ~~War~~^{God}, to scout my way and infuriate the home dogs who barked from the blufftop, the cowards. Kelty Khan and his mongrel horde threatennd the gates of Vienna, the palace of the Doge of Venice, the dome of St. Peter.

Somebody might call the cops. At my command to disperse, they whined and wagged tails piteously, chagrined at being denied their share of mayhem, plunder, and rape.

The Whulge that floats ships and sinks them may also beach them. The Biltgood (home port, Tacoma) was a barge settling in the sands at a jut of bluff marking the south end of Poverty Bay, called by some maps Dumas Bay. A baymouth bar cut off a lagoon marsh of cattails and reeds and frogs and a nation of redwing blackbirds screaming at crows and gulls and other potential nest-raiders, including Keltys.

In the lowering tide the bay outside the bar was a grand muckery, a cornucopia of tasty bites. Mergansers and surf scoters paddled the shallows in company of assorted "tippy ass" species that plunged bills into the soup, wagging tail feathers in the air. German imperial eagles posed on rocks, wings outspread (for drying, ^{cormorants, actually,} actually). Crowds of black brant, mallards, and goldeneyes attended an outsize white-fronted goose, a solitary majesty. Great blue herons pretended to be driftwood. Kingfishers rocketed up and down the three creeks that issued from the forest and marsh. Killdeer and peep skittered here, there, everywhere. A blinding-white sheet covered much of the bay. A puppydog came yapping down one of the creeks and plus or minus a thousand terns rose in a blinding-white cloud.

The bay shore curved out to a point where the glacier had tastefully arranged a group of large granite erratics. Northward of there it hadn't ^{deposited} ~~left~~ enough material for bluff-making. Elbow to elbow, cheek by jowl, picture windows and patios and petunias were all in a row behind the anti-wave armor of a concrete bulkhead. Ramps were provided through the wall for launching stinkpots, hulls identifying their home port as "Lakota."

Far ahead, perched by his trolls and pansies, was the first person I'd seen since Ranger No Comp. Eyes were fixed on me. When I neared, he was going to brandish a stick and howl, "Git off'n my propitty!" My practiced response would be a polite, "Which way should I git, sir? Up, down, or sideways?"

But he was overflowing with smiles. He had driven past me on the road to Dash Point and since then had wondered what I was about. This!

"My deed says I own this beach. But that's okay. You're welcome to walk across it."

Almost I responded, "You're welcome to breath my air on my planet." But not quite.

"I walk the beach a lot," he said. "Nobody else around here does. They hardly ever get closer than their barbecues. Never see them walking, just to be walking. But you can understand why they don't bother with the beach. Take a dozen steps on your beach and you're on somebody else's beach. Hardly seems worth it."

It really wasn't. The armoring kept high winds on a spring tide from sending surf galumphing through the petunias and toppling the gnomes but also it prevented the waves from ^{chewing}~~eating~~ at the bluff to feed the beach. The longshore currents were starved, forced to use up their potential energy by sweeping the beach clean of portable sand and shingle, lower it several feet or more to clay or till -- and ankle-twisting cobbles.

These Lakotans didn't settle here for the beach. The picture windows, there was the game. Dinner guests could sip their costly wine in comfort and oo and ah at the prestigious sunsets.

Bluff leapt up. Unbuildable, valueless. Thus a bandit could stick a pistol in the public ribs and extort a ransom for the

kidnapped wildland. Lakota Beach Park. So steep there was naught but a skiddy path down from civitas. A lonesome, natural beach, undefended, littered as was intended by God.

Bluff lessened enough for a public street to deadend at the driftwood. Space for just two cars at the "NO PARKING" sign. Fenced left and right by Cyclone ^{barbed wire} ~~fence~~ to keep vandals from molesting the trolls. Public ownership prevented keeping the public from the beach. Few publics, however, would dare open car doors. A giant sign warned, "BEWARE OF KILLER DOGS."

FOUR

While I was being born, a few miles to the north in Ballard, summer revels were swinging high at Redondo Beach. On Sundays the mosquito fleet would steam south from Seattle, north from Tacoma, from ports of call up and down the Whulge, bringing as many as 5000 merrymakers. Two dance halls, a bowling alley, merry-go-round and ferris wheel, games of skill and chance, cotton candy and hot dogs and ice-cream sodas. All of it gone by the time I was ready for so much fun. The freedom of the wheel had extended our reach far beyond ~~those of~~ the mosquitoes and street cars. Mount Rainier National Park was our lodestar. We'd have gone on to Yellowstone, to Yosemite -- had it not been for The Crash. (Brother, can you spare a dime?) Our pre-Depression Plymouth carried us across the continent and back again, but not for fun.

All there was, now, of Redondo Waterfront Park was a parking lot. And Salty's Seafood Bar, its exhaust fan spewing maddening aromas. Hot grease. I bellied up to the bar for fish and chips.

"PRIVATE PROPERTY NEXT 5 MILES," the sign said. There is no such thing as a private beach or a private sky. What the Lord has put together She wants no man to put asunder. But he does, he does, and that's why there has to be ⁱⁿ Hell. To pay back for
^

my Hell today. Pale sun burning through clouds ~~to~~ ^{ing} dehydrate my blood, I hobbled and wobbled the privatized cobbles to Saltwater State Park. A multitude clamored around a portable box. I elbowed through for an ice-cold root beer, alacazam. Then a giant double Pepsi. Slip leftover cracked ice inside ~~the~~ socks onto ~~the~~ ankles, oh woe is them today.

North from the park the bluff was an exceptionally vertical 150 feet of hard sandstones-shales interlayered with black peat, verging on coal. Alders slid down from the blufftop ^{and} continued to grow, narrowing the beach. Of people there were none, of herons many. ("Gark! Gark!")

The bluff subsided. From an outpost house that had the look of having been cast up by a storm came a cheerful "Hi-yah!" ^{The} A woman ~~who~~ might have been cast up by the same storm, ~~the first human~~ ^{were the first to be} eyes aware of my existence since the root beer and Pepsi and ice cubes.

I should have detoured up to visit. She was a believer. I could claim that distinction because the first home I remember was above a beach on Bainbridge Island. We used to walk down to the Winslow dock on Saturday nights to catch the White Collar steamer (the Winslow) across the Whulge to Seattle for fish and chips at the Alley Kat Cafe and then ~~to~~ an Oriental palace to see Harold Lloyd and Buster Keaton. Belongers do not commit ~~the impiety~~ of bulkheads. They heed the Voice ~~that commands~~, "If you can't stand My waves, get off My beach!"

Another reason for a visit was that her house was on a public road that could have taken me into the sole incorporated civitas on my route, the one and only beach-obliterator. The Port of Des Moines was jetties and docks, a mile of them, and protuding not only beyond the high-tide line but the low.

~~I didn't know, until...~~

Onward from the driftwood woman, one of Us, were Them. Houses so closely abutted as to be a continuous wall, such as would encircle a mediæval town to keep out the Huns. I watched for an alley up which I might dodge, but the artful dodges of hoodlum boys carrying cases of beer were well known. Dogs snarled, ~~and~~ minutes away were police, armed and dangerous.

The Des Moines Yacht Club, semi-public, seemed a fair chance. I forded a stinking sewer creek, clambered ^{slippery} ~~a wall of~~ riprap, and turned inland to a gate.

Locked. A wizened son-of-a-bitch cackled and capered. He had watched me blunder in ^{to} his trap. "Gotcha!"

It was a long long way back to the driftwood woman. I was weary of myself and sick of asking what I was and where I ought to be. I asked no mercy, they were my ankles, and what's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba?

Did ^{he} see in me ^{an aged} ~~a forlorn~~ Pippa? He opened the gate ~~for me~~, mumbling about raucous lads and cases of beer.

Two boys goggled at the Kelty.

"Are you from the mountains, mister?"

"You betcha. Cougar Mountain."

"Wow-ee! Cougars!"

"Yeseree... Bears, too."

"Boy oh boy! Bears!"

"Coyotes and deer and elk and porcupines and raccoons."

"A regular zoo! Where you going?"

"Seattle."

"Gee whiz! When you gonna get there?"

"Day after tomorrow."

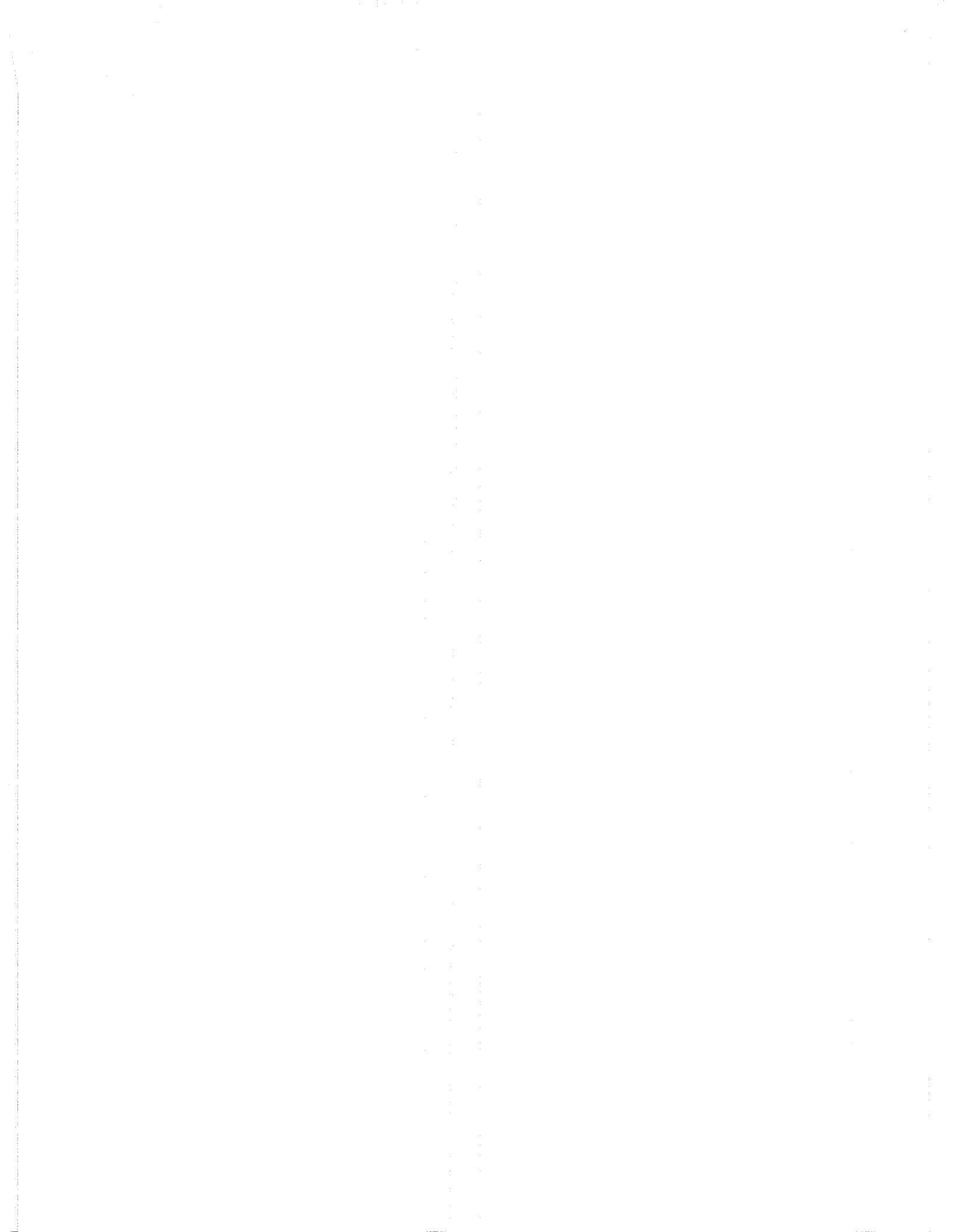
"How long you been gone?"

"Two days."

"Holy cow! Where do you sleep?"

"On the beach."

As baffled as the Sherpas were when the first sahibs came trekking over the la's, they said in parting, "Hope you make it." .



FIVE

Raindrops were splashing my face. The bluff jungle was so steep that getting off the beach was a job for a monkey. What then? Hang by my tail to morning? The night's flood of the spring tide would drown the sands and shingle deeply and totally.

Flush against the bluff lay a block of concrete. Barged in long ago by a developer intent on making something out of nothing. A boat house could be built, hitched by staircase or tramway to a picture window atop the bluff. Said God, "No you don't."

I clambered the concrete to a slim bit of perched beach. Rigged the tarp. The rain quit. "Pop!" went the can of jolly good ale and old. Life was good.

The bulge of bluff to my south obliterated sight and sound of Des Moines, to my north of whatever might prove to be there.

Across the Whulge, on Vashon Island, was the beach cabin where we waved at Will Rogers and Wiley Post, beginning their circumnavigation of the planet. When a movie of Will's was playing at the Princess in Edmonds, the manager had to borrow chairs from a furniture store to fill the aisles, and never mind the Fire Department. America wept for Will ^{when} ~~went~~ the report went out of the crash in Alaska. I also liked airplanes, then. Wore a Lindy helmet until it mysteriously disappeared.

The Whulge had become restless. Not lap-lap-lap ~~the beach~~ but slap-slap-slap, ~~steadily~~ nearing the concrete block. The night's high was scheduled for 12.0 . That's a lot.

Monstrous gray whales sprawled on the horizon, one south, the other northwest. Between them the cumulonimbus fluffed brilliantly high.

A longshore current was rusing^h by the shore, northward bound. Longshore currents are generated by waves that strike the shore obliquely. Waves and currents are made by wind. But there hadn't been a breath all day. There are mysteries not dreamt on in your philosophy, Horatio.

A tug labored by, shoving a barge. In silence. The ka-choop ka-choop of the slap-slap-slap smothered the diesels, and also the jets that materialized from a spaceport somewhere inland, rocketed straight up over the Whulge, then turned toward New York, London, and Alpha Centauri. This was how it was in the movie palaces before the Jazz Singer shattered the magic of the silver screen. Atop my block of concrete I could listen to the before.

GA-LOOF! A "sneaker" wave whacked the concrete. In the gloom I spotted the three-derrick freighter from the Oceane Sea that done the deed.

Two hours to the high, charted for 10:31. GA-LOOF GA-LOOF was now continuous, and not from ships. Yet still no winds. Somewhere there must be a wind.

The sunset orange faded from the sky and also its mirror, the Whulge. The black whales united to obliterate moon and stars. Black black black...

Except.

The cloud to the south glowed. Tacoma was there. To the northwest -- Bremerton. To the north -- Seattle. Between Bremerton and Seattle, a little glow that never was there when that was our home -- Winslow, on Bainbridge Island. From the wildness without, the Cascades and Olympics, all these glows seemed a unity, civitas uber alles. Yet the wildness within has interstices.

The Whulge was as empty and silent as it was before the windships from Europe. I was in the before.

Wave[^] had climbed the concrete wall nearly to my boots, dangling. I hadn't caught the TV news since ^{day before yesterday.} ~~forever~~. What if the Antarctic icecap had melted? I'd be among the early victims, in company with the driftwood lady and the doper I skeered half to death. Meanwhile, however, no police or murderers could disturb me without getting wet to the neck.

To make the world larger, go slower. To make it infinite, sit. So enormous was the night's Whulge that not all Queen Isabella's jewels could bankroll a voyage to Vashon Island, somewhere beyond (so rumor hath it) the black vacancy.

Far out in the Big Water was a tiny light. Was it on the water or in the Big Sky? No ^{visible} hull for support, nor wings. No sound. Moving so slowly on water or in air that it might be forever getting to -- where?

Water and sky were, as in Genesis, all one. As were, here, waking and sleeping. I followed the light with eyes open, then with eyes closed.

SIX

The morning waves had quieted. The beach, though, was insufficient for feet. So sit and muse.

We pound trails, battle brush, clamber cliffs to hasten our body through the wilderness. Then we sleep to let the soul catch up. The wholeness of mountains I had experienced. This night I came to ^{know}/_{my} first love.

A north breeze stirred ripples. They ran southward across and through the old waves, and these continued as before, running north. Had I paid attention, high school physics would have explained such mysteries, like how it's possible to sail against the wind.

I photographed the camp, recording it for the history books. Nobody ever had camped here before. A first, a palpable first. As was our bivouac in Luna Cirque, where we crawled from our bags in a July blizzard to escape across the Challenger Glacier.

At the nearing of noon I passed through the Three Little Vales, darling as a vale may be, or were. The first had a new road descending through the wildwoods, destroying, to a group of new houses, damn their souls. The next was a superb marsh behind a baymouth bar, ^{an innocent} ~~the~~ gray-weathered summer shack in the driftwood.

The last was in process of being devastated by a pleasure dome decreed by some Croesus in the waiting line for an eternity of redhot barbecue.

At Three Tree Point I sat on a log for lunch and my last look south to Dash Point, two days and a fraction and two nights in my past, and my first look north to Alki Point, a day and a fraction and a night in my future.

A person would be hard-pressed hereabouts to find the privacy to pick his nose. Thousands of telephones were being grabbed in panic, dialing 911. "Send the Tac Squad! There is a person on my beach!"

Yet several had smiled me on. A woman sweeping her patio put down her broom to wave. An elderly couple stood arm in arm at their picture window for half an hour, that being how long it took me to weave through the cobbles in view of their window. From a cottage high on the bluff, so tiny it appeared to be a kid's tree house, came a voice, through a Rudy Valle megaphone, "GOOD MORNING!"

Scattered amid cedar-and-glass boxes were anachronisms of clapboards and shingles, sleeping porches where fresh night air was a specific for the dreaded white plague, verandas where steamers could be cheered as they raced recklessly from Seattle to Tacoma for the glory and the glee. Summer evenings there would be community beachfires, ukuleles plinking by the light of the silvery moon. That was then. Now Lisa Minelli was singing

for the besotted enablers of Hitler, "Money money money makes the world go round, the world go round," shaking her stuff to clang the bells attached to her boobs.

Seahurst Park. Dogs romping after gulls amid clam geysers as the tide ebbed toward a 4:07 low of -1.0. Their arms linked for mutual support, a fragile couple politely wondered about the Kelty. As if watching a National Geographic special on the ascent of Mount Everest, their eyes widened.

The rule at Brace Point was "Thou shalt not git to or from street or beach through my propiety!" So I walked under the Fauntleroy ferry dock into Lincoln Park. Those who fail to mourn the ukuleles, the racing mosquitoes, the beachfires, the silvery moon ^{deserve} ~~can have~~ no future.

I sat on a log at the park's north boundary. A day of 11 miles, ~~not~~ not counting wobbles through the cobbles. I had hurt myself.

A dark-haired young woman tending two fair-haired children joined me on the log. A trace of accent. From ~~Peru~~ ^{there,} Peru. She had two children of her own /the ages of the fair-hairs. Money buys beaches and money buys slaves.

The sun was sinking behind Constance, highest peak on the ^{Olympic} ~~Seattle~~ horizon. But it wouldn't sink. Slid sideways, to Marmot Pass, 1938, my wilderness epiphany, on a Scout hike from Camp Parsons.

The Olympic skyline was solid black ~~etched~~ against an enormity of pale orange. The Whulge also was pale orange. Above in the blue the moon had waxed since Dash Point from a crescent nearly to a half.

The rattle of oarlocks, a rowboater homeward bound, a sound as much of the before as bare feet crunching sand, childhood on the islands.

The evening star! First star I see tonight, wish I may, wish I might...

In the wartime blackout I knew the Whulge of before. No skyglow except the Milky Way. Walking the shore between phosphorescence in the waves and whisperings in the forest of the bluff. But it was the U.S. Army that arrested me on suspicion of being Japanese.

A moment came to which I had given much thought. The shrubberies of Lincoln Park might conceal my sleeping body from the police. But others could be seeking out shrubberies, not the harmless dopers of Dash Point but red in tooth and claw. Where homes began at the north edge of the park was a small clutter of driftwood. At deep dusk I crept into a nook behind a large log. Police and murderers never would think to look for me there.

Secure, comfortable. Three sleeps deep in a wildness known to no other.

SEVEN

The "thumpa thumpa thumpa" of yuppy joggers on park paths woke me. For the historical archives I clicked a picture, the secret of the sands.

The tide was on the flood. Bulkheads forced me to wade knee-deep, crotch-deep, and if I didn't hurry, ^{chest}~~crotch~~-deep. Houses were squeezed together to leave no gaps for hoodlum boys and their cases of beer to sneak from Beach Drive to the beach. But I had a wild card up my sleeve. I knew the owner of the first house ever built on Beach Drive, materials barged in before there was a Beach Drive.

I climbed steps up the bulkhead from beach to lawn. Soaking in a hot tub, the first American to climb Mount Everest yelped, "What are you doing here?"

I replied, "What were you doing there?"

Everybody's got to be someplace. We agreed I was likely the first person to backpack the beach from Tacoma to Seattle. I surely was the first person to climb Cougar Mountain the long way around.

Diane brought the baby from the house to say good morning to Daddy Jim, and to serve me a cup of hot coffee (alacazam). She then guided me through the house to Beach Drive.

At noon I dropped the Kelty and sat on a curb. Guys in pickups and muscle vans cruised slowly up and down the street. Dolls in shorts and halters bumped and ground up and down the sidewalk. Maddening aromas of hot grease lured me to a breakfast of hotcakes and little pigs.

The 37 carried me to downtown Seattle, the 210 to Eastgate. I climbed to the 200-meter hut, closing the loop. Old Cailin sang me in. Young Myfy yapped. Buffalo wagged her rear end. Petrouchka barked a squirrel up a tree.

Hotcakes and little pigs wanted a nap. How strange to ~~look up~~^{be under} a roof! What was the sky up to? No sand in my hair, no slugs in my boots. No water I could hear. No water I could smell. Three nights I slept with water. The Whulge. The wildness within.

The little light moved in silence, slowly, over the face of night, between past and future, Genesis and Armageddon, "... like a star, beacons from the abode where the Eternal are."

I sleep, therefore I am.