

THE MAKING OF A MOUNTAIN BUM

by Harvey Manning

## THE MAKING OF A MOUNTAIN BUM

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PART ONE: FAIR SEED TIME AND FOUL

1938

Chapter 1

SOMETHING LOST BEHIND THE RANGES

The big black words were burned into a cedar plank way up on the wall of the mess hall.

Something hidden. Go and find it.  
Go and look behind the Ranges --  
Something lost behind the Ranges.  
Lost and waiting for you. Go!

After supper the first night the camp director, Mr. Walsh, stood under the plank and told how we could spend the main part of the week.

We could go on the Cruise and row Navy cutters along Hood Canal, exploring bays, camping on beaches, fishing and swimming.

Or we could take the Three Rivers Hike. The first day was up the Big Quilcene River and the Poopout Drag (the guys on the camp staff groaned) to Camp Mystery (a long time ago somebody disappeared there and never was found). The second day was over Marmot Pass and through headwaters of the Dungeness River to Home Lake (swimming was great if you didn't mind icebergs). The third day was up to Constance Pass and the top of Del Monte Ridge (some Scouts marked the trail there once with empty Del Monte vegetable cans) and then down Sunnybrook (the staff guys moaned, nobody ever has been able to count all the switchbacks, there are just too many) to the Dosewallips River and out to the road at Constance Creek.

It's sort of funny I didn't pick the Cruise. My plan was to get into Sea Scouts when I was old enough and someday sail my own boat around the world.

Camp Parsons was terrific if you loved the water. There were two swimming periods a day and a free time in afternoon when you could sign out a rowboat and go off by yourself. I joined the Royal Order of the Raw Oyster, which only a dozen of us had the nerve for. Initiation was on the beach at low tide. You found an oyster in the rocks, opened it with your Scout knife, and swallowed the slippery gray mess. The other guys laughed at the agony on your face. If you didn't keep it down they let you try again. Some kids had to swallow their oysters five or six times. If you finally made it stay down you could paint your name on the shell and nail it to a rafter of the boathouse. After that everybody who came to Parsons would see it.

The problem was, Parsons also was right at the foot of the Olympic Mountains. You couldn't ever forget it. The Mariners lived in a shack on the pier and the Rangers had a lodge up on the hill. (You had to be 14 and have been at Parsons twice before to get in those.) Except for that, though, the troops were all named for places in the Olympics. Mt. Constance was on a bluff above the Swimming Cove. Mt. Olympus was on Campfire Point, where everybody got together at night to sing songs. Skokomish was down in the maple trees near the boathouse. My troop, Copper City, was close to the parade ground. Each troop had a fancy cabin for the staff and four plain ones with four double-decker bunks apiece for the patrols. The patrol cabins were open on the sides so you actually were

sleeping out-of-doors. All night you smelled the saltwater. But you smelled the mountains too. I was really torn.

The Navy cutters were exciting as heck. I had saltwater in my blood and was crazy about boats. Dad had been in the Navy on the battleship New Mexico and before that on the ~~Constitution~~ Constitution. Just swabbing decks there, of course, to keep it clean for the tourists. His grandfather was captain of a Nova Scotia fishing schooner and traded salt cod in the West Indies for rum. Dad and Mother met at a bonfire on Puget Sound while the Mex was laid up in the yards at Bremerton. Mother sailed from Seattle to Los Angeles on the H.F. Alexander to be with Dad while he was waiting for his enlistment to be up. I couldn't really count that as my first ocean trip because I wasn't born yet and wasn't until they got back to Seattle. When I was little we lived on Bainbridge Island and were always riding the ferry to Seattle and going out in rowboats. I'd even been on a lumber schooner that used to carry lumber to Europe and ~~now~~ was moored at Port Blakely. A couple years ago I'd spent a night with Dad on the Standard Service while it was docked in Seattle before the next trip to Alaska. I read books by John Masefield and Josiah Slocum and Herman Melville and lots of others and could name every spar and sail on a clipper ship and a brig. My main hobby was ~~building~~ making model ships. I spent a lot of time drawing pictures of the flatty I was going to build, or maybe a catboat, for learning how to sail on Puget Sound, and also the ketch for my voyage around the world.

But ever since I could remember we'd been going in the mountains, too. My folks loved to fish and we went camping on the Olympic Peninsula and

up the Snoqualmie and Stillaguamish Rivers in the Cascades. Mt. Rainier was our favorite. Thanksgiving of 1930, after turkey dinner at Longmire Inn, we hiked way above Paradise. When I started school next year I wrote a story telling how we climbed Mt. Rainier. Teacher said we probably didn't go clear to the top. I was sore. My folks said we did. Later on I realized she was right, my folks were kidding me.

We hadn't gone camping much since the Depression. Dad finally had a steady job but he needed our car to get to work in Seattle and couldn't afford to wear it out on camping trips. That was one reason I'd joined the Scouts last fall. But nobody else wanted to use their car either and our troop only went to the mountains three times, and then just to Cascades foothills.

I'd learned a lot about woodcraft, though, even if our hikes mostly were through the woods to beaches near home. To make Tenderfoot I'd learned to tie nine knots and also memorized the Scout Oath and Law and the History of the Flag. In February I'd made Second Class. There were 12 tests. You had to be a Tenderfoot for a month, earn a dollar and put it in a bank, and get your folks and the scoutmaster to say you'd been living by the Scout Oath and Law. That was easy and so were tracking, safety, using a knife, and boxing the compass. It took ~~study~~ practice to learn first aid, the semaphore code with signal flags, and Scout's Pace, which was 50 steps running and 50 steps walking, doing a mile in 12 minutes. You flunked on 15 minutes or 10 minutes, it had to be 12.

Firebuilding was tough. I'd built plenty of fires but always with newspapers and cedar kindling in our fireplace and kitchen stove. For the

they only let you have  
 test ~~you only had~~ two matches. Before you lit them you had to find dry  
 tinder, like slivers from the bottom of a big log, and shave it small, and  
 then look for seasoned wood. Squaw wood, <sup>which is</sup> the dead branches on standing  
 trees, was best. If the day was windy or rainy you'd flunk sure as heck.  
 Cooking was sort of fun. You couldn't use any pots or pans. The idea was  
 to stab a green stick through chunks of meat and potatoes and roast them  
 until the examiner believed you when you said they were done. The worst  
 part was he made you eat the kabob, which always was charcoal on the outside  
 and raw on the inside.

Just before camp I'd gone to the Court of Honor and got my First Class  
 badge. For this you had to have 2 months in as Second Class, still be  
 obeying the Oath and Law, bank some more money, learn some more first aid,  
 swim 50 yards, chop down a tree, and send and receive messages in semaphore.  
 Judging heights and distances and weights, and also reading maps, took  
 practice. For nature study you had to describe ten trees or plants, six  
 birds or animals, and find the North Star and three constellations. For  
 cooking I made hunter's stew, which was potatoes and carrots and onions  
 and meat. I also made twist, which was dough wrapped around a stick and  
 baked over coals. The big problem was finding two forked sticks and jamming  
 them in the ground so they'd ~~hold up~~ hold up the twist stick and the  
 crossbar you hung the stew pot on. The ~~stew~~ stew was great but the twist was  
 almost as bad as the kabob. I guess there could be disasters ~~was~~ where  
 you'd have to live on that kind of garbage, so they were good to know.

The 14-mile hike held me up a while. Nobody in our troop had taken  
 one for a couple years, which was why it was that long since anybody made



First Class. I think they were scared. The trip had to be overnight with only one buddy. Well, I'd camped so much with my folks I was used to sleeping on the ground and had seen wild animals and wasn't afraid of them, or the dark either if somebody was around. But I had a heck of a time lining up a buddy. The best I could do was Filthy, who never took a bath and smelled horrible. He wasn't scared, though. The hike was easy and a lot of fun. We hiked back roads 7 miles ~~through the woods~~ to a beach a couple miles north of the Edmonds ferry dock. There was no creek handy but a nice farmer let us use his pump. Building a fire with driftwood is simple, especially if you cheat a little by bringing newspapers so you don't have to fool around whittling tinder. For supper I boiled a stew of noodles and hamburger and tomato sauce in a coffee can, which was Mother's recipe and way better than any in the Boy Scout Handbook. The tide came in so far we had to sleep next to the railroad tracks. Every couple hours I'd have a terrible nightmare and wake up with a freight train thundering by my head. For breakfast I fried bacon and eggs, which would have been fine except Filthy brought the eggs. They were fertile and not fresh and hadn't been kept cool and there were little tiny chicken heads on the yolks. I was too polite to say anything but darn near threw up.

I guess I'm lying a little. Even before I got to camp and listened to Mr. Walsh I was pretty sure I'd take the Mike. Nobody from Troop 324 had been to Parsons so all I knew about the place was the bulletins Seattle Headquarters sent out. They said Parsons was 330 acres of forest and beach and you could do more Scouting there in a week than in a year anywhere else.

That was why I had to go. The thing was, they mentioned the Cruise but always played up the Hike.

At first I did think mostly about the Cruise. Those Navy cutters inspired me all winter and spring while I was buying a 25¢ Parsons stamp every week at troop meeting and pasting it in my Parsons savings book.

I needed some inspiration. Buying those stamps was no cinch. I made 50¢ every Saturday, mowing Dr. Brown's lawn, weeding Mrs. Brown's flowers, raking leaves and trimming shrubs and doing anything else they wanted until I'd put in 4 or 5 hours. That wasn't bad. Mother worked like a fool all day Saturday cleaning up their house and got a dollar. The Browns were the only people in the neighborhood with any money and they didn't throw it around.

My Shopping News route paid better, 75¢ a delivery, Wednesdays after school and Saturdays before starting at the Browns. The paper was free so I had to deliver to every house 3 miles along Aurora Highway and a ~~half-mile~~ quarter-mile into the woods on both sides, as far as anybody lived. My route covered 175 houses and was 12 miles long and with the load of papers took 2½ hours of hard pedalling. When the bottom went out of the roads during a thaw I had to walk my bike a lot of the way and it ~~■~~ took 5 hours, a real nightmare on a winter night with the rain pouring down and 175 dogs chewing on my legs.

I earned quite a bit, around \$9 every month and a lot more in summer, when I picked wild blackberries and sold them and dug ditches and did other odd jobs. Mother was my problem. Just let me build up a ~~good~~ <sup>healthy</sup> bank balance

and she'd decide I had to have new overalls for school or get my shoes soled. If it wasn't her it was my darn bike, wearing out a tire or the chain busting. One time I was complaining to Dad how it seemed you never could get ahead of the game. He said I wasn't the first guy to notice that. I ~~was~~ <sup>was</sup> ashamed for sounding like a crybaby. I remembered how sad he was when he had to buy the two-by-fours and shiplap and roofing paper to build our privy. He looked discouraged for weeks when our 1929 Plymouth broke down for good and he had to borrow money to buy the '33.

Saving up \$8 for a week at camp was bad enough but that was only part of the Parsons expenses. I already had my uniform, of course. I didn't buy the official hat and shoes and whistle and other fancy stuff that wasn't required. Even so the regulation khaki socks and shorts and belt and shirt and the red-and-blue neckerchief (those were the North Shore District colors) and the emblems wiped out \$5.

Headquarters wouldn't let you go to camp with blankets, they said you'd freeze in the mountains, so I had to buy a wool sleeping bag (kapok was cheaper but they said it was no good) and that was \$6 at one shot. Like everybody who lived in the country I ~~had~~ <sup>owned</sup> boots but Headquarters said the soles had to be nailed or you'd fall off the mountains. Dad took my boots to a shoemaker he knew who worked mostly on loggers' boots but also was an expert on hiking. He put in slivers, ~~which~~ which were square chunks of iron, and hobs, which were rounded, and rosebuds, which were like hobs only squashed on top for better traction, and <sup>sharp</sup> caulks in the instep for good grip on logs. The ~~my~~ boots were beautiful, nobody in ~~the~~ 324 ever had

seen anything like them, and he did it all for a dollar.

My packboard was an even bigger bargain. Dad borrowed Uncle Bill's Trapper Nelson which he took deer hunting and used it as a pattern to make one for me. He worked on it after supper for weeks, steaming oak slats for the horizontal pieces and putting them in a press to get the right curve to fit my back, screwing the slats to the two fir verticals, rigging the canvas that rides against your back, and riveting on the shoulder straps. Everything came to about a dollar. In a store it would've cost \$5.

In July I finally pasted in the 32nd stamp and checked off everything on the Parsons equipment list. The week before I left was a mad scramble. I had to train Filthy to substitute<sup>+</sup> on my paper route. I had to do the Browns' yard early and pick the ripe blackberries in my secret patches and the raspberries in our garden or they'd go to seed. I had to mow our own lawn, and split enough wood for the kitchen stove for a week, and clean out the chicken house and get everything organized so Mother would just have to feed my chickens twice a day and collect the eggs, and give the corn and peas and potatoes and onions and beans and carrots and radishes a good weeding and hoeing so all Mother would have to do was let the hose run in my irrigation ditches an hour every night.

In the morning my folks drove me the 10 miles south on Aurora Highway to town and down the Elliott Bay waterfront to the dock. The place was jumping, 50 or so Scouts from all over King County. They were all strangers to me but I knew they were the cream of the crop. ~~Everybody~~ Everybody in the Seattle Area Council knew Parsons Scouts were the first team.

We boarded the Tyee Scout, and that was a thrill. It was one of those little passenger and freight boats that before roads were built everywhere, and even when we lived on Bainbridge Island, made up what they called the mosquito fleet. We pulled out from the dock, yelling and waving, and steamed out around Magnolia Bluff, north along Puget Sound past Richmond Beach and Edmonds, west through Admiralty Inlet, which is between the Kitsap Peninsula and Whidbey Island, then went around Foulweather Bluff at the tip of the peninsula and headed south on Hood Canal to Dabob Bay. Late in the afternoon we pulled into Jackson Cove and tied up at the Parsons pier. This was the greatest boat trip of my whole life and the week was only starting.

The third morning the 25 of us who'd picked the Hike piled into the Big Red Truck and drove north on the Olympic Highway, yelling and laughing. We were the best of the best, we hadn't been chicken and gone on the Cruise. At the ~~Quilcene~~ Quilcene Fish Hatchery the truck turned off on a narrow and twisty dirt road and started grinding up steep hills through the forest.

I had a good idea what to expect. We'd hike a trail to the highway at Marmot Pass, then another trail to the highway at Constance Pass. The assistant leader asked if we'd brought money for candy and pop at Marmot Pass. Some of the kids believed him but I knew he was joking. A long time ago I'd been to Snoqualmie Pass in the Cascades and there was no store there or anything else, just the highway crossing the mountains.

The road ended at Bark Shanty ~~Shanty~~ Shelter, which was 1500 feet above sealevel. Until the CCC built the road a couple years ago it was

quite a hike from Hood Canal. We hoisted packs and fell in line behind the leader. In a half-hour he called the first halt. I whipped out my notebook and pencil and wrote down the exact time we rested and how long. To be a Silver Marmot you had to name the major peaks and rivers of the Olympics, go on a Parsons Hike, get a rating of Satisfactory, and keep a hike log. Back at camp you wore your clothes backwards one whole day and every time you met a Silver Marmot you fell down and rubbed your nose in the dirt and yelled, "Hail to thee, o mighty Silver Marmot!" That night at Retreat Mr. Walsh called you out in front of formation and pinned the silver insignia to your uniform and from then on you were respected all over the Seattle Area Council. Only three of us were trying for it.

I also made nature study notes. The trail climbed through a dark old forest of big firs and hemlocks and cedars. It wasn't like the second growth around our house, it reminded me of Rainier. You couldn't take a step off the trail because of the sticker bushes and ferns and devils club and all sorts of green junk, a real jungle.

At Old Trail Shelter we stopped for lunch. What a feed! We each got a circle of Sailor Boy pilot bread, a chunk of cheese, a slab of chocolate, and a handful of raisins. Better than a party. I washed it all down with a cup of cold mountain water that really hit the spot.

Then disaster struck. At the first rest after lunch I realized I'd forgot my cup. I told the leader and he looked at me like I was a Tenderfoot and said that was too bad but he wasn't going to hold up the party. I dropped my pack and ran down the trail to the shelter, found my cup, and ran up the trail to my pack. Everybody was long gone. I had to

completely unpack to put the cup away. The pack bag that went with the Trapper Nelson was too expensive for me to buy and too complicated for Dad to make so I carried my gear by rolling it in my sleeping bag and lashing the bag to the board. While I was unlashng the bag and unrolling it and rolling it up and lashing it on again the gang was hiking. Maybe I'd never catch up. I was sure they all were faster than me. I'd just turned 13 but was ~~xxxx~~ sort of short for my age. Everybody was taller. Most of the guys were 14 or 15 and some were even 16. The leader and assistant leader were grown men, in college.

I hiked like crazy and couldn't get my breath and had a stitch in my side. I was about to almost die when suddenly there was the assistant leader! He was resting with a couple kids. I thanked him for waiting and he laughed and said, "Waiting is my job. I'm the rearguard." After a good rest we started out together. I happened to be ~~xxx~~ in front and set as stiff a pace as I could. After a while I looked back and nobody was there. Where did they go? I was worrying that I'd somehow got on the wrong trail. Then I saw a kid resting by himself. He just watched me go by. Then there was another kid, and then two more. The gang had broken up and everybody was going at their own pace. The great news was that my pace wasn't the slowest. I might have a real chance to make Silver Marmot.

Some big guys were soaking their feet in the river at the Shelter Rock lean-to. There was a huge boulder there that had fallen off the mountain and had an overhang people used to camp under before the lean-to was built. I flopped on my stomach in the soft moss and stuck my face in the river. I could've gulped down a gallon, it was so cold and delicious, but you weren't supposed to drink too much.

Shelter Rock was wonderful. Cool and peaceful. Six miles from Bark Shanty and only 2 miles from Camp Mystery. It was 3600 feet up so the trees were a lot smaller now and so was the river. I was very happy. Too happy, I guess, because when the big guys were leaving one of them said, "Enjoy yourself, son. All you have left is the Poopout Drag!" That wiped the smile off my face.

I lifted the Trapper Nelson. Funny, it was heavier than before. I tried to keep up with the big guys but couldn't. Funny, even my feet felt heavy.

The trail went straight up a ~~patch~~ patch of brush, a kind of slot in the forest. At the top I climbed out of woods onto a rockslide. The sun hit me like a club. My mouth was dry as dust. There were no creeks and I had no canteen. In camp that morning the leader made us spread our gear on the ground and went around kicking out all our extra clothes and other stuff. "We go light at Parsons," he said. "That's how we make miles." When he got through you had practically nothing left but your sleeping bag and cup and spoon. Then he handed out shares of food to carry. If you were lucky he said "You have just been elected to the Camp Parsons Marching Band" and gave you a Number Ten Can. You tied it outside your pack and when you walked it rattled and clanked.

My Ten Can was making darn slow music. The sun was blazing and sweat was pouring in my eyes and the air had a smell of hot brush that made me sick. My breathing was noisy and sounded like "poop out, poop out, poop out."

I came to three kids resting in a terrible pile of hot rocks with no shade, worse than a furnace. I was amazed anybody would stop there. Then



I noticed they had nothing on their packboards. The big guys had taken their loads. They'd pooped out. Poor kids. They couldn't even look me in the eye.

I kept struggling up the brush patches and rockslides. There were scary brown cliffs above the trail. Across the valley was a line of peaks as sharp as knives. The mountainside was so steep that if you fell off the trail you might never stop rolling until you hit the river. The ~~big~~ river was a heck of a way down. The water wasn't roaring, just sort of whispering. A little while ago I'd been drinking that water and wished I was now. The handbook said if you sucked a stone you wouldn't be thirsty. That's a lot of baloney.

I was ~~barely~~ <sup>hardly</sup> moving but still was passing ~~the~~ kids, some with empty packboards. I didn't know how much longer I could go on. The worst part was wondering how far it was to camp. The Poopout Drag went on and on forever. You couldn't see any end to it. I quit writing in my log. I was going to poop out anyhow and along with forgetting my cup that would get ~~me~~ <sup>me</sup> an Unsatisfactory rating and I'd never make Silver Marmot.

Suddenly I smelled smoke and heard laughing. I put everything I had left into chugging up the rockslide ~~to~~ to the trees. It was Camp Mystery! I hadn't pooped out on the Poopout Drag!

The leader and the big guys had a half-dozen Ten Cans hanging over the fire on a wire strung between two poles held up with piles of rocks. After I dropped my pack and washed the glue down my throat I went to the fire, acting like I wasn't at all pooped. The leader handed me a stirring stick and said, "Congratulations! You've just been elected to the Camp Mystery Kitchen Crew!"

Cooking rice at 5400 feet takes forever. You stir and stir so it won't boil over the top or stick to the bottom. You gulp smoke and cry your eyes out for hours. I didn't care. I felt sorry for the poopouts dragging in with their empty packboards.

Finally the assistant leader showed up. He had a mountain of sleeping bags on his back and sang, "Hail, hail, the gang's all here!" The leader said, "We better eat this beast of a supper before it gets up on its hind legs and eats us." He opened cans of salmon and dumped them in the Ten Cans. Everybody lined up with cups and got one slop apiece. The assistant leader took a spoonful and pretended to puke and then yelled, "But good! But good!" The rice was black on the outside and hard on the inside. It was like eating burned sand. The chunks of salmon were delicious, though.

One of the Ten Cans was full of chocolate pudding and we got a dab of that, also burned and full of black lumps. Then a cup of tea tasting of salmon and chocolate and charcoal and that was supper.

I was still hungry. But also a little sick. Mr. Walsh had warned about this. We were a mile above sealevel and the air was thin, which was why it took so long to cook rice. Also it gave you mountain sickness, which wouldn't kill you here, the way it might 2 or 3 miles above sealevel, like on Mt. Rainier, but could make you poop out.

I was hungry and sick and tired. Cold, too. The sun had dropped below the ridge and the campfire was out because Mystery is a regular stop on Parsons hikes and we couldn't waste wood. I was wearing all the clothes they'd let me bring and was practically naked. Boots and two pairs of wool socks kept my feet warm. Cotton shorts did nothing for my legs and the

sleeveless cotton shirt and light cotton windbreaker and wool watch cap not much for the rest of me. Mother wanted me to take wool underwear and long pants and a sweater but everybody would've laughed and the leader wouldn't have let me anyway. Well, it wasn't all fun discovering the North Pole, either.

It was only 7 o'clock, ~~and it was dark. The poor~~ <sup>but the</sup> poor puppouts already had crawled in their bags and were shivering. Off where they couldn't hear him the leader said, "There's no way you can stay warm in a wool bag up here. The best bet is making the nights short. Keep moving until it's too dark to see and get up at first light and hit the trail."

He and the big guys ran out of camp to climb Iron Mountain. That was way more than I could handle, the 8 miles and 4000 feet of elevation to Mystery had wrecked me, but I couldn't stand ~~and~~ around shivering. I walked up the trail through scrubby forest, going just fast enough to keep warm and stopping a lot to look at the view. The peaks were still sunny. The valley was all shadows. I wondered what happened to that man who disappeared here. They were still looking for his bones.

Suddenly I walked out of the forest on a big green lawn with a million flowers all over, red and white and yellow and blue, and little Christmas trees scattered around on knolls. I wasn't tired anymore!

Ever since I was 9 I'd been mowing Dr. Brown's darn lawn and weeding Mrs. Brown's darn flowers and trimming their darn shrubs. I hated grass and flowers and shrubs. But this wasn't a garden grown-ups invented to torture boys. You'd never have to mow these lawns or trim these shrubs. Up here even the weeds were flowers.

Everything was strange. But everything looked familiar, too. I'd seen this <sup>place</sup> a thousand times. I don't mean because of our trips to Mt. Rainier. I used to think the rangers did the gardening there. I knew now that wasn't so but somehow Paradise wasn't at all like this. Where I saw these meadows before was in storybooks. They were the kind princes ride through on the way to save princesses from goblins.

I left the trail and followed the creek uphill. Way below in the valley it turned into a river. Here I could stand with one foot on ~~top~~ each side and look down at water splashing over rocks and making little breezes that kept the flowers waving.

I came to a boulder. Above the boulder there wasn't any creek. I'd found the source of the Big Quilcene River! I wouldn't get famous, like I'd found the source of the Nile, but it was a thrill anyway. This was the first river I ever knew from one end to the other.

What a day! Beach in the morning, then big old trees at lunch, spindly trees in the afternoon, and now alpine meadows. I put my face where the water jumped out from under the boulder and for a second caught the whole Quilcene River in my mouth!

Meadows stretched up toward Marmot Pass. Behind the pass the sky was pink. I felt soft and relaxed, the way you do after spending all day bucking logs into stove lengths or digging a ditch in hardpan. I was too tired to move a muscle but it didn't take any strength to walk. I sort of floated through the flowers.

I'd hiked right into my favorite old book of fairy ~~tales~~ tales, which I didn't read anymore but still ~~had on my bookshelf.~~ <sup>had on my bookshelf.</sup> Nothing was messy or boring. Everything was neat and perfect. You could believe in fairies, almost.

I couldn't help thinking about God. Actually He was always on my mind nowadays.

When I was little I mostly thought about the Devil. In the first grade I wet my pants and the teacher found the puddle and asked who did it and I kept my mouth shut and another kid got the blame. Once a guy made me so mad I called him a red-assed baboon. When big kids told dirty stories about grown-ups I didn't run away like I should. Once I tried to kiss a girl I was in love with. ~~But~~ Because of all those things and a lot more I had awful nightmares about the Devil coming out of the furnace in a house we used to live in and chasing me around the basement. ~~I woke up one night~~

~~and I was standing right by my bed and didn't go away until my folks~~  
~~came in and turned the lights~~

Well, even if I dreamed about him I didn't really believe in the Devil anymore. That didn't mean there wasn't some kind of Hell, though. And I was really sinning now. Sometimes I talked back to Dad and once I shouted at him and ran off in the woods and didn't come ~~back~~ home until dark. I couldn't help letting Mother know sore I was at her for spending my money on clothes I didn't need. I pretended to be like everybody else but on the inside I was stuck-up about being the smartest kid at Ronald Grade School and Captain of the Schoolboy Patrol. The worst thing was that ~~the~~ girl in

7th 8th  
 the ~~seventh~~ grade. I was in ~~ninth~~ and didn't even know her but all year I'd been having dreams about her. I just hoped that now I'd be going to Lincoln High School in Seattle and not seeing her ~~at Lincoln High School~~ the dreams would stop.

I did my best not to sin. I read the Bible and tried not to break Commandments. I never used swear words. I said the Lord's Prayer every night and confessed about the girl and everything. I went to Sunday School at the Ronald Methodist Church and that sure was proof how hard I was trying. I hated dressing up. I hated wasting half of the best day of the week, the only day that wasn't all school and chores and earning money. My folks didn't go and I didn't think that was fair but they said they'd gone when they were kids. You sat on a hard bench with a bunch of stiff old people. The ~~hymn~~ hymn books had a rotten smell and the hymns were stupid and an ugly old woman banged on a piano and nobody could sing right. I always put a dime in the collection plate and that was more than I spent on candy in a couple weeks. The minister put us to sleep and then I went upstairs to a room in the attic with a bunch of kids I didn't know or want to and a poor old lady with terrible grammar talked about the Holy Land. Church was a pain in the neck. It didn't seem to me the sort of place God would ever be but I couldn't afford to take chances.

Actually ~~wasn't~~ most of the time I felt I was doing a pretty good job and wasn't ~~so~~ <sup>too much</sup> worried about Hell. The problem was, sometimes at night I'd look up into billions and billions of stars and break out in a sweat, thinking about infinity. In bed I'd start thinking about eternity and couldn't go to sleep. What would Heaven be like? After you'd done

everything there was to do and done it a billion trillion decillion times? Think of the biggest number you can and that's just the start of eternity. How could you stand it? If an angel got bored could he go to sleep for a billion years? That wouldn't help. When you woke up there'd be just as much eternity as before.

I wasn't just praying to God, I was talking to Him, asking Him to tell me Heaven was nothing to be scared of. I didn't need a big sermon, just a sign. It would only take <sup>Him</sup> a second.

There weren't any more Christmas trees or lawns, just rockslides with patches of short grass and bunches of little flowers. The ~~sky~~ sky got bigger and bigger, ~~and finally was everywhere~~. A signpost held up with rocks said "Marmot Pass, 6000 feet."

Rocks and flowers and grass dropped off steep on the other side to shadows and then to trees that were just a blur. ~~They were everywhere~~ The Dungeness River was way below, so far off you could barely hear the roar. Down there it ~~was~~ was already night. That was amazing, night and day at the same time, so close together.

I felt weird being so high above the valley. It was like standing on a beach where the ocean was full of air instead of water. Off west were a bunch of peaks called Mt. Mystery, Mt. Deception, and The Needles. The sun had set and they were pure black. ~~against~~ <sup>out there</sup> The sky was purple and red and orange and yellow and blue and green. I never knew the sky could be green.

It was like a painting except if you watched <sup>close</sup> it kept changing.

There wasn't any highway at Marmot Pass. This was the second pass I'd been to and it was sure different from Snoqualmie. Suddenly I realized there wasn't a road anywhere out there. This was what they meant by wilderness. I'd thought all the wilderness was in Africa and South America and places ~~like~~ like that. I didn't know there was any just 30 miles from our house.

I looked ~~along~~ <sup>at</sup> the trail we'd be hiking tomorrow. It crossed a snowfield! In the morning we'd walk on snow! In the middle of summer! The trail went toward Mt. Constance, which was a huge mess of cliffs and snowfields with a sunset color. Somewhere under those cliffs was Home Lake, where we'd camp tomorrow night. Above it was Del Monte Ridge, practically a mountain, and day after tomorrow we'd climb clear to the top. On the other side were all those Sunnybrook switchbacks down to the Dosewallips River, but they'd be a cinch after the Poopout Drag. Then it wasn't far to Constance Creek, where the Big Red Truck would take us back to Parsons. Gosh, those were going to be terrific days!

I was all by myself. There wasn't any sound at all except for the river. No wind either. The flowers looked ~~funny~~ <sup>funny</sup>. So did the rocks and grass. Everything was colored by the sky. The night was coming up from the valley. The colors got brighter, everything was on fire.

~~I'd never seen wilderness before~~ I'd never really looked at a sunset before. I felt like somebody else, some character in a fairy tale, under some kind of spell.



PART TWO: BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

1940

Chapter 2

THE WIND SHE BLEW A LIVING GALE

I decided not to sail a ketch around the world. Instead I'd make the first ascent of Mt. Everest. Actually I hoped Mallory had got to the top and I'd find the proof up there. But if he hadn't it might as well be me.

Lincoln High was exciting, a genuine city school with <sup>2500</sup> ~~more than 2000~~ students, <sup>25</sup> ~~20~~ times the size of hayseed Ronald. I began making good friends. It was sort of a shock discovering I wasn't the smartest kid that ever lived but having guys like Bill and Bob and Hal and Al to horse around with was worth it. Also, riding the school bus 7 miles in from the sticks every morning, and home at night, kids I'd never really known at Ronald became friends, especially Arild.

Seattle was exciting, too. Once a week I didn't go home on the school bus but took a streetcar 3 miles to the middle of the city and wandered around all afternoon. Dad picked me up on his way home from work. I'd never been downtown without my folks and had a great time. I explored buildings and learned if you prowled top floors trying unmarked doors there almost always was a stairway to the roof. I climbed a lot of the highest buildings in Seattle and looked down at tiny people on the street and west across Elliott Bay to the Olympics and south to Mt. Rainier.

I always stopped at Scout Headquarters to pick up Troop 324 mail.

That really was just an excuse. Usually some of the Parsons leaders were hanging around the office and we'd talk about camp.

At the Seattle Public Library I'd check out a week's worth of books. I traveled all over Tibet with Sven Hedin and the Arctic with Vilhjalmur Stefansson. Odell made me feel I was with him watching Mallory and Irvine disappear forever in the cloud on the Northeast Ridge that day in 1924.

I read every book in the library on mountains. I wanted to go to McKinley and the Andes and Tierra del Fuego and the Alps and the Mountains of the Moon and the Himalaya and the South Pole.

Until I was old enough for that, Parsons was the place to live. Summer was too far away so I signed up for Winter Camp, which only cost \$3, an unbelievable bargain. The reason was we did the dishwashing and other work. After Christmas about 30 of us from everywhere in the Seattle Area Council rode the Tyee Scout through a wonderful ~~xxx~~ storm, the water so rough we had a heck of a time tying up at the Pier. There was plenty of fun, like climbing Mt. Walker, actually just a foothill but with a great view of Hood Canal, and running down to the Swimming Cove on a dare and tearing off your clothes and jumping in the breakers and turning blue. Mainly, though, Winter Camp was for leadership training. I took the Patrol Leader Course and the Song Leader Course.

Headquarters issued my Patrol Leader Warrant in January and the scoutmaster appointed me Leader of the Flying Eagle Patrol. I recruited new members and in no time they were Second Class. Kids who'd been Second Class for a couple years got in the ~~#~~ spirit and made First. I earned my

fifth merit badge (I had First Aid, Personal Health, Public Health, Civics, and Stamp Collecting) and at the April Court of Honor was promoted to Star Scout. Us Flying Eagles took day hikes, sometimes 2 miles <sup>along back roads and then a</sup> through the <sup>mile</sup> woods to Richmond Beach, where we went skiing down the gravel pit on barrel staves, and once, on bikes, 10 miles ~~along back roads~~ to Brown's Bay. The troop began going out more, still only to beaches or ~~to~~ the Tolt River, in the foothills of the Cascades, but better than nothing.

In July I was off to Parsons again, this time to climb Mt. Anderson, 7312 feet high and with one of the biggest <sup>mess</sup> ~~patches~~ of glaciers in the <sup>Olympics</sup> ~~range~~. I'd never been on a glacier. The first day we hiked 12 miles from the road-end at Constance Creek up the West Fork Dosewallips River to Camp Siberia, at Anderson Pass. After supper we went in the woods and found strong poles for alpenstocks, which we'd need on the mountain. Next morning we ~~started~~ <sup>foggy</sup> ~~in the dark and~~ switchbacked out of trees into alpine meadows. The sun <sup>broke through</sup> ~~came up~~ as we reached the Anderson Glacier. We put on dark glasses and rolled down our pajama pants. That's one of the famous Parsons tricks, wearing pajamas under your shorts to keep your legs from getting horribly sunburned on snow.

Walking onto a glacier was a tremendous thrill. Everywhere you looked, white white white! And gray-brown cliffs shooting up to peaks as sharp as saw teeth. We headed for Flypaper Pass, a narrow <sup>notch</sup> ~~gap~~ between two peaks. On the other side was the Eel Glacier which we'd climb to the summit of Anderson. The leader showed us how to kick steps by swinging our boots into the snow hard and how to use our alpenstocks to stand up straight, not leaning into the slope, which made you slip out of your steps.

The snow got steeper and steeper, way steeper than any hill I'd ever sledded. That's why they call it Flypaper Pass, because <sup>you feel</sup> ~~Scouts~~ look like a <sup>fly</sup> ~~flies~~ on a dangling strip of flypaper. Kids were slipping. Some were scared half to death. I was a little nervous myself. The leader decided we'd better switch to the rock. That sounded like a good idea. Only it was steeper than it looked and you had to hang on with both hands. This was the first time I'd done real rock climbing. Kids began throwing away their alpenstocks and finally I did too.

Suddenly there was yelling up above and I heard rocks smashing down the cliff and a kid next to me screamed. He'd got conked in the head. You never saw so much blood! Some guys almost puked. We stood on ledges ~~waiting~~ while the leader wiped off the blood and bandaged him up. ~~Everybody~~ ~~knows~~ ~~was~~ ~~shaking~~ ~~and~~ ~~nobody~~ ~~was~~ ~~talking~~. The leader decided it was too dangerous to go on. Well, I was just as glad.

We turned around to go down and my heart jumped up in my throat. Holy cow! All this time I'd been looking up to Flypaper Pass. Now I was looking down. Gosh-a-mighty! The glacier was miles below!

The leader said it's always harder to climb down rock than up, we'd have to go back to the snow. He said, "Watch me and do what I do." He kicked steps out on the snow, which was practically vertical. He sat down. He was off like <sup>he was shot out of a cannon.</sup> ~~a rocket~~. You couldn't even see him. There was just this white cloud going like crazy. Finally it stopped and there he was on the glacier, so far away he looked like an ant. You could barely hear him yell, "Come on! It's safe!"

Oh yeah? This wasn't his first glissade, which is what they call sliding down steep snow on your bottom. Also he still had his alpenstock to dig in the slope and slow himself down. What about us?

I'd done some pretty good sledding but this was a hundred times longer than any run I'd made. <sup>And no sled!</sup> If there'd been a chance to think I'd have been paralyzed. There wasn't. Before I knew it I was going <sup>like 60</sup> ~~a mile a minute~~, wind <sup>rearing</sup> ~~blasting~~ by my ears, a cloud of snow flying in my face. It took an hour to climb up there. It took a second to slide down. When I realized I hadn't been killed I stood up and hollered and laughed. Kids were shooting down and some had their feet in front, the right way, and some were sliding headfirst and some were doing somersaults. It was a miracle nobody was killed.

So we didn't make Mt. Adderson. Mt. LaCrosse, either. The next day was a scorcher and up on the bone-dry ridge I thought I was going to faint. Kids were dropping like flies and we had to quit.

But it was a great hike anyway and when I got home from camp, terrific news! Troop 324 had held a raffle to raise money and the prize for the Scout who sold the most tickets was a week at Parsons. Dad had sold so many of my tickets where he worked that I won! What luck! Two Olympic hikes in one summer!

I signed up for Royal Basin. Mr. Walsh said it was one of the most beautiful spots in the Olympics, right under Mt. Deception and Mt. Mystery and The Needles, which I'd seen from Marmot Pass last year. Also there was no trail and only Scouts knew about it.

The first day we hiked 10 miles up the East Fork Dosewallips River to Camp Marion. Next morning we left our packs in camp and followed a creek up forests into meadows way above the valley. It was pure cross-country, the second time I'd been off a trail. Finally we scrambled over boulders through a ravine where the creek was one loud waterfall. A couple feet

to our left the cliffs of Mt. Deception, 7772 feet, second-highest peak in the range, shot straight up, and a couple feet to our right started the cliffs of Mt. Mystery. The creek leveled out and got less noisy and suddenly we ~~were in~~ <sup>walked out of the ravine into</sup> Deception Basin.

Wow! It was a huge circle, a half-mile across, brown rockslides and cliffs all around, and the floor a tremendous flat meadow with the creek babbling through grass and flowers. The Mystery Glacier came clear down into the basin. The upper end was clean white snow but the bottom end was dirty ice chopped up with crevasses, which is what they call cracks in a glacier. The ice pushed out into a lake full of icebergs. The water was gray because it was loaded with rock milk, which is rocks ground up by ice. There was a big hill of boulders and gravel pushed up by the glacier. This is called a moraine and I climbed to the top. At the head of the basin I saw a knoll decorated with little alpine trees. A couple years ago I'd have dreamed about building my castle there. <sup>It was a perfect spot for a castle.</sup> The ravine at the basin outlet was the kind of place where a few guys could stand off an army.

We didn't have time to climb over the ridge to Royal Basin, which the leader said was even better. Next day we left our packs at Marion again and followed the valley trail 5 miles to Dose Meadows and 3 miles more to Hayden Pass. On every boulder was a marmot, a furry brown and black animal the size of a small dog. When you tried to get close they whistled like mad and dove in holes dug in the meadows. <sup>There was so much whistling the valley was one big orchestra.</sup>

Back at Marion we had dinner and then hoisted packs and hiked 7 miles out to Dose Forks. That made a 23-mile day and the last 2 hours were in

the dark. We had no flashlights and walked by feeling the trail with our boots. Twice I went to sleep on my feet but woke up before I fell off the trail and crashed in the brush, the way some kids did.

It was a terrific summer. I even had an interesting trip with 324. One of the assistant scoutmasters invited five of us older guys to explore the upper Tolt River. The troop often had hiked the 2 miles to the forks, a pretty place with the stream running through giant firs and cedars. The map showed a trail going miles past there to Red Mountain, which we planned to climb. But when we forded the North Fork and scrambled up the bank we busted out of trees into an old logging show.

What a mess! The country was clearcut as far as you could see. Not a tree left, just snags and brush. No trail, either. We hiked for hours along the bed of the old logging railroad, the sun beating down, no shade, all the creeks dried up.

It <sup>was</sup> ~~began~~ getting dark. We had to find water or die and climbed a hill to look around. Water! Right below us at the bottom of a <sup>Canyon</sup> ~~cliff~~ was the South Fork! We lowered ourselves down the cliff on bushes and camped on a gravel bar just big enough for four sleeping bags. Two guys slept on a ledge in the cliff. Next morning we said the heck with the loggers and followed the <sup>Canyon</sup> ~~river~~ down to the forks, partly on gravel bars and partly wading. ~~It wasn't~~ <sup>The Cascades weren't</sup> like the Olympics, where they don't log in the mountains. Seeing what had happened to the forest made me sick. But the trip was sort of fun anyway.

I went to Winter Camp for the Senior Patrol Leader Course, which Mr. Walsh taught himself. I also took the Mountaineering Course from Grant,



a regular member of the Parsons staff. He'd done quite a bit of climbing and ~~actually~~ had been almost to the top of Mt. Rainier <sup>before</sup> ~~when~~ a storm made the party turn back. The leader was Ome Daiber, the most famous climber in Seattle. He'd climbed Rainier dozens of times and once had been to the Arctic. Grant was planning to try Rainier again. (He called it The Mountain.) That sort of stuff was way past us Scouts and Grant didn't go much into genuine climbing. He did teach us plenty, though, about hiking off the trail on snow and steep rock. He showed us his boots, which had tricounis instead of slivers. A tricouni is an iron gadget consisting of a plate that nails to the sole and a big blade with three teeth to grip ice and rock. Tricounis obviously were a lot better than slivers, which <sup>keep</sup> ~~kept~~ falling out. After every Parsons hike I had to soak my boot soles in water until they were soft and ~~then~~ pound in more slivers. ~~My~~ My soles were so full of holes they leaked like a sieve.

In January the scoutmaster promoted me to Senior Patrol Leader, which meant I was in charge of all the patrols and practically ran the troop. Old ~~324~~ 324 began getting hotter than a firecracker. We didn't just play baseball at troop meetings anymore, we worked. One of my two Flying Eagle assistant leaders took over the patrol and the other got the Beaver Patrol and they both drove their kids as hard as I had. The troop had so many new members we organized the Bear Patrol, and also the Explorer Patrol for the guys 15 years old who'd graduated from the regular patrols.

<sup>It</sup> ~~Used~~ used to be I was the only 324 Scout who ~~even~~ went to Courts of Honor. Now at the North Shore Courts we always won the blue pannot for the most kids making rank and merit badges. At the ~~Annual~~ <sup>Annual</sup> Seattle Area Council Boy Scout Circus <sup>in the University of Washington Pavilion</sup> we used to be just ushers but this winter we

were assigned a stunt. One of the most spectacular, too, making fire by friction. In the old days when we went to the Spring Camporall of the North Shore District our patrol camps were a ~~mess~~ <sup>mess</sup> ~~diagnose~~ and the Judges gave us hardly any points. But this spring our Flying Eagles won the pennant for first place and our Beavers came in second and our Explorers took first in the senior division. We were the top troop in the ~~North~~ ~~Shore~~ District.

Times weren't as tough as they'd been and Dad could afford to take our car in the mountains now. So could other fathers. Lining up enough cars to ~~haul~~ <sup>a</sup> haul the whole troop wasn't ~~the~~ big problem anymore. We couldn't get to the Olympics, the ferry fare made them too expensive. But there were high mountains in the Cascades, too, and I began agitating to go someplace besides the darned old Tolt. Came summer and by golly we did, three times. On one trip we climbed Mt. Pilchuck, which is a mile high and all <sup>barre</sup> granite on top. It has a fire lookout and a trail but even so was a big event, the first mountain 324 ever climbed. Me too if you didn't count Del Monte Ridge and Mt. Walker.

This summer I'd saved \$16 for a full 2-week period at Parsons. Money ~~was~~ was getting easier to come by. Partly that was because more people had some cash to spare. I had three lawns now and each paid 50¢. Partly it was because I was getting my growth and could work faster. When I started my Shopping News route it took me 2½ hours ~~even~~ on a good day, <sup>with</sup> ~~the~~ and the washboard not built up, the way it does when the grades ~~are~~ the roads ~~were~~ hard and dry. Gradually I got ~~it~~ <sup>(my time)</sup> down to 2 hours, then 1½, and finally 1¼. My record was 1 hour and 5 minutes. Boy, I was really flying! That's fast pedalling for 12 miles even without throwing out a

haven't been around  
for a couple  
months.

storm of 175 papers. When I went that fast I was making almost 75¢ an hour, a lot more than Dad made at work. If I could've gotten a couple more routes I'd have been rich.

The one bad thing about going for a 2-week period instead of two <sup>1-weekers</sup> single weeks was it meant only one hike, because the first week was spent in camp. Well, I was crazy about mountains but I'd never got my fill of camp, there were lots of things I wanted to do there.

I had the age and rank and experience to be a Ranger, which was ~~especially~~ specially great because Grant was the Ranger Scoutmaster. He was in college but never treated you like a boy, the way some leaders <sup>did.</sup> ~~do.~~ He made you feel we were all men.

We'd gotten to know each other at Winter Camp and at Headquarters. The first afternoon, after we'd carried our packs up the hill through the fir trees and rhododendrons to the Ranger Lodge, Grant called assembly and read off our assignments. He appointed me Third Assistant Scoutmaster!

I was sitting on top of the world. But then he said, "Everybody who doesn't have Swimming and Lifesaving Merit Badges hold up your hands."

Along with some other guys I held up my hand. He wrote down our names and <sup>laughed</sup> ~~said~~, "You'll get them now. You're signed up for the Course!"

I just about melted into the floor.

Last October I'd got my 10th merit badge. To the five I had already I'd added Cooking, Reading, Scholarship, Safety, and Pioneering. Pioneering was hard work. I'd been weeks cutting down trees and splitting cedar shakes

I'd bought for 50¢ and  
a bunch of cornflakes  
box tops.

from ~~the~~ fence posts of an old farm to build a lean-to in the woods near our house. Anyway, with the 10 I'd made Life Scout. Since then I'd got Pathfinding, Camping, Physical Development, Poultry Keeping, and Hiking. Hiking was exciting because my examiner was Ome Daiber. It was a thrill just being in the same room with such a famous guy. I was planning to get Forestry this week at camp. Next fall I'd do Interpreting and Gardening, which would be a cinch because I'd taken Spanish at Lincoln and had been raising vegetables <sup>5</sup> ~~for~~ years. I was well on my way to Bird Study. For months I'd been going out with <sup>a bird book from the library and</sup> fieldglasses ~~and a bird book~~ ~~from the library~~. I had 32 birds and was sure to get my 50 by winter.

With all those merit badges I'd only need Swimming and Lifesaving to make Eagle. But right from the start I'd faced up to the fact Life <sup>Scout</sup> was as high as I was ever going. When I was little I had a mastoid and the <sup>gosh</sup> darn ear never had completely cleared up. The doctor made me wear an ear plug for swimming and told me not to get my head under water. So I wasn't much of a swimmer.

The Lifesaving Course at Parsons was famous for being really rough. You ~~was~~ hardly ever got your head above water. They did everything but actually drown you. But how could I tell Grant I couldn't take the Course? Everybody would think I was chicken. How would that look for the Third Assistant Scoutmaster?

Boy, what a grim week! Oh, there was fun, too. We didn't go down to Campfire Point at night to sing songs with the young kids. We'd build our own fire in the Lodge fireplace and sit around roasting oysters and listening to Grant tell stories about Olympic hikes. We always stayed up

an hour or ~~two~~<sup>50'</sup> after Taps. One night Grant decided we needed a midnight snack and appointed me leader of the raiding party. Well, <sup>actually</sup> the cooks knew we were coming and ~~had~~<sup>unlocked</sup> left the kitchen window ~~open~~ and put out some cookies and a bucket of cherry Kool Ade. Anyway we were heroes when we brought the loot back to the Lodge.

But twice a day I had to go down to the Swimming Cove. Twice a day for the whole week I nearly drowned. The tests for Swimming were bad enough. In one you had to jump off the north point of the cove with your clothes on, take them off while treading water and throw them up on the rocks, swim 50 ~~yards~~<sup>yards</sup> to the south point, and without resting swim 50 ~~yards~~<sup>yards</sup> back. I'd never swum more than 50 ~~yards~~<sup>yards</sup> in my life. It took me so long to do 100 the tide came in and floated my clothes away.

Then we had to swim 250 yards, from the north point out around the south point and clear across the bay to the Pier. That was impossible. I'd have to go back to the Lodge and admit I was a poopout. But of course I had to try. Maybe I'd drown and wouldn't have to face the Rangers.

Before I got to the south point ~~everybody was~~<sup>all the others were</sup> out of sight on the far side. When I got around it into the bay some guys were already at the Pier. When I was halfway across the bay nobody but me was still in the water. Everybody else had either made it or been pulled into a rowboat by the ~~the~~ lifeguards. Finally only one ~~was~~ rowboat was left. The guards kept trying to pull me in. I was too tired to talk but kept pushing the boat away. They were so disgusted they rowed along ~~behind~~<sup>beside</sup> me making wisecracks. When I pulled myself <sup>to</sup> on the float at the Pier they rowed off to the Boathouse without even waiting to see if I could stand up. I just barely could. Every muscle in my body ached.

Those tests were for Swimming. Lifesaving was worse. We were paired off for the week and took turns being the drowner and the rescuer. The first time my buddy was the drowner he grabbed me in a bearhug, the way a drowner does, and we went down like a rock. After that he splashed water to fool the instructor for a good show but kept his hands off me. When I was the drowner he approached me from the rear just <sup>perfect</sup> ~~right~~ and cupped his hand under my chin and towed me around the cove a mile a minute. When I was doing the chin carry on him I'd be thrashing with my free arm and would look back and his head would be under water. I'd lift his face out and he'd open his eyes and go "AW-AW-AWP!" gulping in air. He'd only get one gulp because by then my head was under water. All week I halfway drowned him every morning and every afternoon but he never griped. He was a heck of a nice guy. One word from him and ~~xxx~~ I'd have been out.

I thought the instructor would wash me out anyway. I was amazed at the end of the week when he signed my M Book for both merit badges. I couldn't believe it! My folks came to camp on Visitors Day and I told them I was going to be an Eagle Scout!

So it turned out to be my best week ever at Parsons. And now ~~it~~ came the hike! Not one of the regular ~~hikes~~ hikes, either, but the 5-day Ranger Hike. Nights by the fireplace Grant described the trip he'd planned. We'd hike 15 miles to Dose Meadows, climb a steep mile to Lost Pass and ~~another one~~ <sup>then</sup> to the top of Lost Ridge. There we'd leave the trail and run the ridge crest to the Lillian Glacier, 7 miles from Lost Pass. We'd glissade down the glacier and climb Lillian Ridge and run the crest 8 miles to Obstruction ~~Peak~~ <sup>Point.</sup>

We'd sleep there one afternoon and that night run Grand Ridge by moonlight 8 miles to Deer Park, where the Big Red Truck would pick us up. We'd climb four or five mountains <sup>on the way.</sup> Since we'd be camping above timberline a couple nights, to get ready we made fire bombs. To do this you roll up newspapers very tight, ~~wrap~~ wrap the rolls with wire, ~~we~~ saw them into 4-inch lengths, and soak the bombs overnight in melted paraffine.

The first day was a breeze. We were all 14 or older (I was just a week short of 15) and had been on ~~us~~ at least two Parsons hikes. No poopouts in this bunch. We practically flew to Dose Meadows, 4500 feet, and had so much poop left we ran around the meadows after supper chasing a tame deer we named Cynthia. Two guys said they were going to ride her like a bucking bronco but of course they never caught her.

I went birdwatching. During the week at camp I'd <sup>got</sup> ~~seen~~ a bush tit, russet-backed thrush, Oregon chickadee, chestnut-backed chickadee, Northwest blue heron, Pacific nighthawk, and western tanager, which brought me up to 39. On the trail I'd seen a winter wren and a pine grosbeak. Now, down by the river, I got number 42, the water ouzel. It was a funny bird, flying along an inch from the water and when it stop<sup>ped</sup> on a rock always ~~stopped~~ dipping up and down at the knees, which is why it's also called the ~~water~~ dipper.

The second morning we switchbacked up to Lost Pass, 5500 feet, and swung through headwaters of the Lost River to meadows under Lost Peak. We rested at Three Sons Camp, in a clump of alpine trees. Grant said the creek there was our last sure water until the end of the day but we weren't thirsty enough to drink much.

A hen grouse (number 43) kept cluck-cluck-clucking around, trying to decoy us away from her chicks hidden in the grass. We were laughing at the grouse and at how the chicks wouldn't stay hidden but kept dashing out, practically giving her a heart attack, <sup>Then</sup> ~~when~~ a guy yelled "Hey! Look!" He was pointing up on the side of Lost Ridge at a herd of elk! We counted about 70. There was another yell and above the elk we saw a bear! Another yell and clear on top of the ridge we saw two wolves! Or maybe coyotes. We couldn't tell for sure. This was really wilderness. Sitting in one place I saw more wild animals than in my whole life.

We climbed ~~meadows and~~ rockslides to the top of Lost Ridge, 6500 feet up, way above any trees and with only a few flowers growing in the bare shale. There hadn't been any trail to speak of since Lost Pass. Hardly anybody ever hiked here. Finally a sign pointed off the ridge down into headwaters of Cameron Creek and from then on there was no trail at all. We were on our own.

Grant was wrong, a pool melted from a snowbank gave us a good drink. We stopped for lunch. What a spot! ~~We were on top of the ridge and~~ In every direction ~~was~~ nothing but mountains, mountains, mountains! Off west was Mt. Olympus, 7954 feet, highest peak in the Olympics and so white with glaciers it looked like pictures of Alaska. Some clouds were keeping it in shadows and we laughed at how our First Assistant Scoutmaster must be freezing. He hadn't come with us, he'd gone on the Olympus Climb, the greatest adventure there is at Parsons. The guys were given ice axes and had to tie into a rope to make the summit. It was only scheduled once a



summer and you had to be 15 to sign up and have plenty of experience. Next year that was the trip for me.

In the middle of the afternoon we came to where the Lillian Glacier drops off the ridge. Grant showed us the famous Parsons technique of Trapper Nelson glissading. You take off your pack and ride it ~~headfirst~~ like a sled, <sup>headfirst, steering by dragging your feet.</sup> If you get going too fast you dig in the Trapper horns for brakes. Some guys hit bumps and lost their packs and went flying through the air, which gave us a laugh. In nothing flat we were in the meadows.

This was my best camp ever. We were 23 miles and two passes and a glacier from the road and 5 miles from any trail. We hadn't seen another soul except a couple fishermen on the lower Dose. We were at 5800 feet, down in shadows, but it didn't seem cold because the sun was still on the peaks. Little icewater creeks <sup>splashed</sup> ~~bubbled~~ out from under the glacier, meandered around the green meadows, and ran together to make the start of the Lillian River, which fell off below us into forests. On one side of the basin was McCartney Peak. We'd climb that first thing in the morning. On the other side was Lillian Ridge. We'd climb that afterwards <sup>x</sup> and run it to <sup>Obstruction Point.</sup>

At dark I crawled in my sleeping bag <sup>on</sup> ~~in~~ a patch of soft grass and looked up at the stars and realized this was the happiest day of my life. We'd made a lot of hard miles so I dropped right off to sleep and slept so deep I never even shivered.

~~XXXXXX~~

~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~

"Pit!"

What was that?

"Pat!"

Some noise on my bag.

"Pitterpat!"

I poked my head out. No stars. The blackest night I ever saw. A raindrop went "splat!" in my face.

I pulled my head in and tried to sleep. It never rains on Parsons hikes. ~~Not hard, anyway.~~ <sup>everybody said the Olympics are</sup> It was July 10 and ~~the weather was supposed to~~ <sup>sunny in July.</sup>

Naturally we had no tents. Tents are no good. Troop 324 had spent a winter making tents, following the instruction sheets from Headquarters. They looked spiffy at Camporalls but in the mountains did nothing but break raindrops into a spray. You didn't get soaked quite as fast but you still got soaked. <sup>and they don't,</sup> Anyway, even if tents worked they weigh a ton. At Parsons we traveled light.

I couldn't sleep. The rain was too loud, a regular rattle, and I felt cold water on my skin. I poked my head out and it was dawn. The worst darn dawn I ever saw. The whole world was dark gray. I could barely see the glacier a couple hundred yards away.

Everybody was getting up. I crawled out and put on my boots and stuffed my <sup>soaked</sup> sleeping bag in my packbag, which I'd bought for the Trapper last winter.

~~Smoke was drifting from~~ <sup>was smoky,</sup> A clump of alpine firs at the edge of the meadow. Grant had a smoldering fire going. It didn't keep us warm, there were 20 of us, too many to get close, but the smoke was sort of cheerful. Compared to everything else, anyway.

We stood under branches trying to dodge drips. I kept thinking the rain was bound to stop pretty soon. Every once in a while somebody would say, "It's getting brighter!" But it wasn't. <sup>Smoke just makes fog look bright.</sup> Finally Grant said, "Well guys, I guess those clouds over Olympus yesterday weren't kidding. This looks like an honest-to-gosh 3-day blow. ~~We're in for it.~~"

It was no morning to ~~stand by a fire~~ <sup>mess around</sup> stirring oatmeal, or even boiling cocoa. Grant dumped out the prunes he'd been soaking overnight in a Ten Can. Then he had us get all the food from our packs and pile it on the ground. He picked out enough stuff for one lunch and one supper and one breakfast and said, "Dig in, guys! Eat anything you want for breakfast and as much as you want. What ~~you~~ <sup>we</sup> don't eat the squirrels and bears will."

That was when I knew we were in real trouble. We must be if he'd throw away a fortune in food to lighten our packs. Boy, I wished I had it all at home. Oatmeal and farina and cocoa and sugar and powdered milk and dried apricots. Rice and macaroni and pudding and tea and salt and cans of salmon and tuna. Even pilot bread and cheese and chocolate and raisins. We were always starving to death on Parsons hikes and any other time would have had a feast. Not this morning. Nobody was hungry.

We hoisted packs and left the trees. It was like walking ~~out~~ into a showerbath. The meadows sure weren't pretty now. Grant decided the glacier would be too grim so we headed up rockslides we could hardly see in the fog. The slope got steeper and steeper until we were doing real rock climbing. Suddenly we were on top of something. It turned out to be McCartney Peak, ~~at~~ 6722 feet. ~~Wow~~ We'd climbed it just like we planned. Well, not exactly like we planned. Actually only Grant went to the very top. He disappeared

in the fog and when he came back he yelled, "We're hung up! Can't get off the peak onto the ridge!"

We had to drop clear back to the basin we'd left an hour ago and climb the ~~glac~~ glacier after all. What a slog! I had my windbreaker zipped up and my watch cap pulled over my ears and even had my pajama pants rolled down. I was soaked to the skin and my feet were sloshing in my boots, so cold I couldn't feel my toes.

I could see dim rocks up above. I said to myself, "The worst is over. No more glacier freezing my feet. No more climbing, just ridge-running."

Hah! So I thought the glacier was bad? There the rain was falling straight down. On top of the ridge it was partly <sup>Snow</sup> ~~sleet~~ and was blasting sideways a mile a minute. You could hardly stand up in the gale and couldn't hear yourself think.

Nobody stopped even a second. You had to keep moving or die. But you couldn't walk fast enough to get warm. I was shivering so hard I thought I'd fly <sup>into pieces.</sup> ~~apart~~. My teeth were chattering so bad I was afraid they'd ~~bust.~~ ~~bust.~~

Yesterday we'd seen mountains everywhere ~~from this ridge~~. Now there was nothing but clouds racing <sup>over the ridge</sup> ~~by~~ so fast they made you dizzy. I couldn't even see the guys at the front end of the line or the back end.

We plugged along with nobody saying a word, just staring at the ground. I'd never seen such unhappy faces. Everybody had their pajama pants rolled down, soaking wet and sticking to their legs. The bright colors and fancy designs looked weird.

Finally I <sup>decided</sup> ~~realized~~ I was as miserable as a person can get. And I hadn't died from it. The pajamas began striking me funny. I couldn't help it, I started singing at the top of my voice.

I want to wake up in the mountains,  
Where the mountain breezes blow,  
Smell the flapjacks fryin' and the socks a'dryin'  
'Round the campfire's ruddy glow.

The guy ahead yelled, "Shut up, Manning!"

I laughed like mad. "Remember the Ninth Law, 'A Scout is cheerful!'"

A guy behind me laughed and I started another song and he joined in.

I'm forever climbing mountains,  
Shaggy mountains one by one,  
They go so high, almost touch the sky,  
I'll always climb them 'til I die.

Oh, mountain lakes and ridges  
All appeal to me,  
And so I'm going back to Parsons,  
More Olympics I must see.

Lots of guys were cussing and calling us names and I yelled, "The Fourth Law is 'A Scout is friendly!' The Fifth Law is 'A Scout is courteous!'"

The madder they got the funnier it was. A third guy saw the joke and the three of us fell to the rear of the line and hiked together, thinking up ways to make everybody sore.

There's a Parsons chant-type song where the leader recites verses of a story about a terrible storm at sea and all sorts of disasters. He finishes each verse with a line <sup>that</sup> ~~which~~ cues the audience to come in with the <sup>response</sup> ~~chorus~~. Whenever a specially <sup>terrible</sup> ~~brutal~~ gust hit the ridge one of the three of us would yell out the leader's cue line:

"And the wind she blew a LIVING GALE!"

And all three of us would yell the <sup>response</sup> chorus, "WOO-OO-OO-OO!"

We must've done our "WOO-OO!" a hundred or a thousand times. Hours went by and the ridge seemed like it would never end. The three of us were so pooped <sup>from singing</sup> we ~~could~~ <sup>had breath to</sup> hardly walk but the glummer everybody else looked the louder we sang.

Then up spoke the captain of our gallant ship,  
And a right good captain was he,  
"I left me a wife in Boston town  
And tonight a widow she'll be."

Oh the ocean waves they roll,  
And the stormy winds they blow,  
And the three jolly sailors go tripping to the top  
While the landlubbers lie down below, below, below,  
While the landlubbers lie down below.

At Lost Pass we dropped out of the wind and clouds and stopped for our first rest of the day. <sup>Us</sup> ~~The~~ three jolly Rangers quit singing. There was no way we could make the gang mad now. Dose Meadows was minutes below and in 6 miles <sup>of easy downhill trail</sup> we'd be building bonfires in the woods at Camp Marion. Tomorrow night, Parsons and the famous hike-end <sup>turkey</sup> ~~big chicken~~ dinner <sup>with</sup> and pie for dessert.

It's funny, but sitting there at Lost Pass, my mouth shut for the first time in hours, suddenly I felt a lot like I had at Marmot Pass. I realized the storm had been as beautiful as that sunset. Oh, not the same way. Marmot Pass, Deception Basin, places like that are so <sup>heat</sup> pretty and <sup>heat</sup> nice you almost feel like crying. The storm wasn't pretty or <sup>heat</sup> nice, you didn't want to cry, you wanted to blubber, it was mean and cruel and nasty, <sup>a real bully.</sup> But they were both part of the same thing. I wouldn't have missed the storm for a million dollars.

and trying  
to out-yell  
the wind

Actually, even Marmot Pass had been no tea party. It was the sweating on the Poopout Drag that made the sunset colors <sup>so pretty.</sup> ~~brilliantly beautiful.~~ And it was being deathly scared on Flypaper Pass that made it so much fun to have a snowball war on the Anderson Glacier afterwards. But nothing could touch the 3-day blow on Lost Ridge. That was real suffering, real adventuring, the <sup>kind</sup> ~~sort of thing~~ that separates the men from the boys.

All the Rangers were great guys, really tough guys, and I liked them all a lot. But only three of us had been laughing. Actually you could say we were part of what made the 17 others miserable, we were <sup>part of</sup> ~~as bad as~~ the storm, ~~and part of it!~~

It wasn't so ridiculous to think about Rainier and the Mountains of the Moon and Everest.

1942

Chapter 3

BLACK SOUND

No mountains for a year.

That's what the doctor said. Live a perfectly normal life but don't go hiking for a year. Normal life, hah! You might as well tell a guy to do anything he wants except breathe.

It started on the way out from Marion. I'd sat too hard on a rock, I thought. Bruised my hip. But it didn't go away. Not that summer. Not that fall. Some days were worse than others. I never let anybody, even my folks, catch me limping. Ever since I could remember life had been one darn thing after another. I was sick of being sick.

A sore hip sure wasn't going to change my plans. That winter a kid at Lincoln I knew from Parsons managed to join the Mountaineers, the club all the climbers in Seattle belong to. Come spring he was going to take their Climbing Course, where they teach how to use the ice ax and rope, how to get up cliffs and glaciers. In July they actually take you to the top of Mt. Rainier.

He said he had pull and could get me in the club -- you have to be sponsored by two members over 21. I kept asking if he had my sponsors lined up yet. He kept putting me off. Finally I realized he wasn't about to



share the glory. He was going to be a hot shot and lord it over us plain hikers. The heck with him. The heck with that bunch of snobs. I'd learn climbing without them. Somehow, someday.

Meanwhile there was plenty of hiking to keep me busy. Grant said I was a cinch to make the Parsons staff. A whole summer at camp, doing ~~eight~~<sup>five</sup> or ~~six~~<sup>six</sup> hikes! But there was a catch. The first year you wash dishes or do other flunky work and get only room and board, no pay. I couldn't afford it. Anyhow I'd go for a 2-week period and climb Mt. Olympus. And probably also a 1-weeker for a second hike.

There'd be trips from home, too. I'd heard a lot about Lake Dorothy, in the Cascades. Every Scout I'd met at Lincoln had been there. I was interested in seeing why. So, to start off 1941 with a bang, one Saturday morning in early April the scoutmaster, Dad, the leader of the Bear Patrol, and I hiked 7 miles up the Miller River to the lake and 2 miles through snow patches along the shore to the old log cabin. The lake was at 3000 feet. In the afternoon, while the others tried to catch fish, I plowed a trench 2 miles to the top of the ridge above the lake. The altitude there was 4000 feet, the trees practically alpine, and the snow was 4 feet deep, like winter.

A tremendous day. A terrible night. My hip caught fire and in the morning they had to help me out of the bunk. They took my pack and found me a staff for a cane. How many steps in 9 miles? Maybe 25,000? Every one was a red-hot dagger.

In a couple days the pain was down to normal and I told my folks it was all gone. Of course, they didn't know there'd been pain before.

At school I began talking up a big June hike with no <sup>scoutmasters</sup> ~~Scout leaders~~, no fathers, just us guys. From Lake Dorothy we'd strike off cross-country up the inlet stream to the headwaters, climb Big Snow Mountain, and drop into headwaters of the Foss River. We'd explore all the alpine lakes -- Chetwoot, Angeline, Big Heart, Little Heart, Copper, and Malachite. At the end we'd hike out the Foss trail to the road.

Well, Hal and Bob and Sully took that hike. Not me. For no reason at all the pain exploded -- and in the other hip! And then in a thigh. And then the other thigh. Not all at once. It moved around. But was always one place or ~~another~~. Some days I couldn't go to school. The cat was out of the bag. No way now to fool my folks, avoid the doctor.

Nothing serious, he said. Just growing pains. They'll go away. Get an electric heating pad. Eat aspirin. Wait. Stay out of the mountains a year.

My whole life was changed.

No Parsons, no mountains. Without them the Scouts were pointless. I'd made Eagle and been promoted to Junior Assistant Scoutmaster, really only an honorary post because the new Senior Patrol Leader ran the show. I drifted out of the troop. I couldn't get into my uniform anymore anyway. I was growing. And it hurt.

I quit my Shopping News route. I was tired of seeing those 175 stumprancher shacks twice a week, fighting off those 175 mutts. <sup>I could make enough money mowing lawns</sup> For quite a while I'd been taking every excuse to skip Sunday School. Now a couple Sundays in a row I couldn't walk the half-mile. When I could, I didn't, ever again. My folks didn't object. The church was so crummy I was positive God didn't either.

I dreaded the end of spring semester. All my best friends except Arild lived in the city and I wouldn't see them until fall. There was also I girl I wouldn't see. Not that she cared, or even knew I cared. But seeing her was something to look forward to. A summer without her. Without the gang. Without mountains.

I didn't want school to end. But after being a brain 7 years in grade school and 3 years in high school, suddenly I didn't feel like studying. There was too much on my mind. I kept up with ~~English~~ Lit and History because I liked them. The Physics teacher put me to sleep. I detested the Solid Geometry teacher. When he thought nobody was watching he stared at girls' behinds with his tongue practically hanging out. To make it even, he didn't like me. His classroom had tables and chairs instead of desks. I was always leaning my chair back on two legs and every few days would go too far and crash to the floor. He <sup>accused me of doing</sup> ~~thought I did~~ it on purpose.

When spring grades came out the gang showed report cards around as usual. Hal looked at mine and went white in the face. "B in Physics!" he cried. "And C in Solid Geometry!" The other guys acted embarrassed. Nobody in our bunch got anything but A's. Only Bill, who had the best brain of ~~us~~ all, saw it as a joke, which it was. I couldn't have cared less. What the heck do grades matter? Mountains are important. And friendship. And, of course, your folks and God and things like that. Grades are nonsense.

Pain is important too. Healthy people are so gosh darn proud of being healthy. If you're sick you're a freak. I wasn't proud of the pain, it made me feel like a stranger. But because of it I saw things about life

my friends didn't. The stupidity of grades, to start with.

There was a lot of stupidity in school. Teachers who were boring or sex fiends. And the Boys' Advisor, he took the cake! I went to him for help in lining up a fulltime summer job. What a so and so! His big inspiration was for me to join the CCC. The darn fool. I was only 15.

The champion blithering idiot was our new busdriver. He wore what looked like a deputy sheriff's hat -- actually, that was his ambition, to be a ~~deputy sheriff~~ <sup>county clown.</sup> He certainly was dumb enough for it. When he took over ~~at the start of the year~~ <sup>in the fall</sup> he made a speech telling us he was going to run a tight ship.

Well, the Ronald bus always had been the tamest of the three country busses. We were dead quiet alongside the Haller Lake kids. We were saints compared to the Maple Leaf hoodlums. They broke windows and tore stuffing out of the seats and built fires in the aisle.

Our driver just plain asked for it. And got it. He was terrible at shifting gears. He'd double-clutch and shove the stick with all his might and there'd be a grind-grind-grind. He'd try again -- grind-grind-grind. We'd shout encouragement and when he finally made it, the third or fourth try, would clap and cheer. His eyes would flick up to the rear-view mirror to spot the troublemakers. We'd freeze. Every few days he'd get so sore and frustrated he'd stop the bus and make a speech, saying if we didn't shape up he was going to start expelling guys, ~~from the bus~~.

I don't know why he finally picked on me. Whenever he looked in the mirror I had a big grin on my face, but so did everybody else. I guess my grin was the biggest, which is what comes of having a huge mouth and horse teeth.

One spring night as I was getting off at my stop he said, ~~"Manning, you are off the bus!"~~  
 "Manning, you are off the bus!"

I couldn't believe he meant it. That particular night I'd been feeling gloomy and was reading a book all the way out from Lincoln. So in the morning I walked to the stop on Aurora Highway as usual and followed the other kids up the steps. And he came charging out of his seat and threw me down the steps! Boy, he was a deputy sheriff type, ~~all right!~~ <sup>okay</sup> As I was falling my hand just happened to fly out and grab his hat. )

→ He let out a bellow like a wounded buffalo and ran down the steps, ~~after~~  
~~then~~ I sailed his fancy hat off in the brush. He dove in and found it. But when he got back to the bus, Arild had shut the door and locked it! The idiot pounded on the door, roaring and screaming. I was yelling what I thought of him. The guys inside were cheering. Finally some <sup>drippy</sup> ~~creepy~~ girl let him on. I hitchhiked to Lincoln.

To get back on the bus I had to have a trial by the Ronald School Board and say I was sorry. I sure as heck wasn't. From then on I was a rummy. But the driver decided he didn't care to mess with me again. Even when I was the ringleader he expelled somebody else. One time or other practically all the guys were kicked off.

Came the last day of school. This was the day the Maple Leaf kids would wreck their bus, like they did every year. Our driver must've figured we had a revolution planned. Heck. I was too depressed to start anything.

As we boarded the bus the dumb driver told Arild to sit in the front seat, where he could keep an eye on him. Arild, of all people! He was a

typical square-jawed Norwegian, so quiet that in grade school I never heard him say a word. He'd loosened up a lot at Lincoln but still was no loudmouth. It was being my friend that made him a suspicious character.

I wouldn't let Arild sit in the front seat. I was behind him and pushed him up the aisle. We sat in the third seat. The busdriver hollered. Arild tried to move -- even if he did have red hair he didn't want to lead a revolution. Me and the other guys stuck our legs in the aisle and wouldn't let him by.

The driver said, "This bus doesn't go anyplace until he's in the front seat!" We cheered and clapped. He sat in the driver's seat glaring straight ahead, arms folded, ears red hot. The Haller Lake bus pulled away and then the Maple Leaf bus, what was left of it. The hoodlums leaned out their broken windows, cheering us on.

After an hour the girls got off in a bunch, making <sup>snippy</sup> ~~snobby~~ remarks, and started walking home. Girls! None of the guys budged. The busdriver got off and disappeared. Was he walking home? What a laugh!

No. He came back. With a policeman. Not a deputy sheriff. A city cop, which is almost the same thing as a human being.

The cop stuck his thumbs in his gun belt and gave us a once over and asked, "What's the trouble here?"

Dummy busdriver pointed at Arild and said, "He won't sit in the front seat."

The cop almost busted out laughing. He said to Arild, "Well, son, the front seat looks pretty comfortable to me. You wouldn't mind riding there, would you?"

"No sir," said Arild, moving up front. We headed for the country, stopping on the way to pick up the girls. The busdriver was so rattled he set a new record for clashing gears. We clapped until our hands hurt and cheered until our voices cracked. Everybody except Arild, who sat quiet as a mouse. A grinning Norwegian mouse.

So, the <sup>long, long</sup> ~~endless~~ summer. The lowlands summer.

To <sup>help</sup> get my mind off my problems Mother taught me to drive. In July I turned 16 and Dad took me downtown to State Patrol headquarters for the test. It was a heck of a place for a test, cars and trucks whizzing by on Westlake Avenue. I'd learned to drive on country roads where you never saw another car.

For some reason the examiner didn't ride with me like he was supposed to but stayed on the sidewalk with Dad. He told me to go a block up the street, make a U turn, come back and make another U turn. Well, I knew the hand signal for a right turn and a left turn but not for a U turn. So I didn't signal. The first turn went okay. I was just finishing the second ~~one~~ when a motorcycle razzed out of nowhere and smashed into my bumper.

I stopped the car and sat there sweating. My first solo and I've killed somebody! But the guy picked himself off the pavement and ~~started~~ started checking his motorcycle and yelling at me. Now I thought I was going to get killed. ~~But~~ Dad came dashing into the street cussing a blue streak. He scared the guy so bad he got on his wheel and razzed away. Well, I'd flunked. But when I parked in front of headquarters the examiner

wasn't there! He'd been called inside for a phone call. He came out and asked Dad, "How did it go?" Dad said, "Just fine!"

I got my license. Then I got a car! It was mainly my folks' idea. They found a 1930 Model A Ford coupe in terrific shape -- solid body, great motor, and with the small-diameter Ford V-8 wheels instead of the high old wagon wheels that come with the A. The price was steep -- \$75. Model A's in running condition were going for as little as \$25. Arild had bought one last winter for \$5. Not running, of course, but he was a sharp mechanic and after a few months of tinkering and about \$10 in parts from the wrecking yards had it humming.

My A paid for itself in a hurry. I quit mowing poor peoples' lawns at 50¢ ~~per~~ a crack and went into business with my cousin, the same age as me. He'd also ~~just~~ bought a Model A and we knocked on doors of fancy estates in Blue Ridge, on Puget Sound halfway between his home in the city and mine in the country, and lined up a job with a rich family. We ~~wasn't there~~ ~~days~~ told the guy we were experienced gardeners and our rate was 40¢ an hour each and he didn't <sup>bat</sup> ~~blink~~ an eye. We worked there 3 days a week, really coining the dough.

Of course, I needed more money than before. I had to pay Dad back the \$40 I'd borrowed to buy the car. And gas wasn't free. Dad was right. He was always grouching about being a blank blank slave to a blank blank car. The day I got the A he told me, "Well my boy, welcome to the club. From now on you'll never have to worry about where to put your spare cash. It'll all go into that tank."

The A was important because next summer it would open up the mountains. Not this summer. On hot days Mother would pack a picnic supper and when



Dad got home from work we'd drive to Richmond Beach, take a quick dip in the <sup>icy</sup> ~~ice-cold~~ water, eat, and lay on the beach until the evening cool. It drove me out of my mind looking across the water to the Olympics. Only 30 miles off. Might as well be a million.

Actually, I'd been restless all year, wanting to go exploring, and since fall had been taking long walks Sundays it didn't hurt too much. I'd prowled the woods around our house since <sup>we moved there, when</sup> I was 8, and knew them like the back of my hand. No chance of new adventures there. So I began wandering in Garbage Dump Valley, which had a sort of fascination because it was off-limits to us kids when we were little. Our folks said degenerates from the city lurked in the bushes. Well, I never saw a degenerate but did discover a lot of grown-over roads wind<sup>g</sup>ing through the woods. The valley and the ridge above were interesting. Depressing, though. The county road was solid garbage on both sides. And the woods roads were lovers lanes. I tried to ignore the beer bottles and safeties and ladies' underwear but it made me sick to think of ~~what~~ what went on Saturday nights.

Because of my paper route I knew the country for miles and by spring had explored everyplace in walking distance of our house, ~~that was worth~~ ~~exploring~~. Except one. For years I'd heard about Hidden Lake. I'd never been thrilled because I figured it was just one more boring lowland lake, like all the mudholes and peat bogs north of Seattle. Kids said it was great for trout -- if you didn't get shot by the caretaker -- but I'd never caught my folks' fever for fishing. However, when I ran completely out of unknown territory I asked Arild, one of the regular poachers, where the lake was. He showed me. From then on I never went explor<sup>y</sup>ing anywhere else.

<sup>that long</sup>  
 All ~~the endless~~ summer without mountains Hidden Lake was my escape.  
 And all fall, too, when school got so complicated I couldn't stand it.

Senior year. The last year. Afterwards ~~x~~ college, jobs, golly knows what. The world was ending. Some guys acted more serious. Some laughed it up more. I was serious at Hidden Lake. Not in school.

Every day was a constant uproar. The Ronald bus only ran once in the morning, reaching Lincoln at 7:30, so us country kids were in the 7:45 Period. I had a study hall and always signed into our ~~class of 1942~~ advisor's room, since she had no class that period. My city friends, who started school at 8:45 with First Period, drifted in at ~~8~~ 8 or so and we <sup>played hangman and generally</sup> horsed around.

We were together again Second Period, in Mathana~~lysis~~lysis. The other guys worked hard on ~~the~~ trig and calculus because we were all planning to be engineers. However, the teacher was the ~~same~~ sex fiend I'd had for Solid Geometry. I ~~still~~ tilted my chair back and ~~crashed~~ crashed to the floor about twice a week.

Lunch was a riot. We ate at the same table every day and pulled stunts with milk straws and salt shakers and hard-boiled eggs <sup>and paper sacks</sup> that would've gotten anybody else booted out of the lunchroom. The monitor let us alone because we were the Brains. Hal and Al and Bill were straight A and Bob and I not much below. More than half the Top Twenty seniors were at our table. Also we were in Lynx Club, wearing our fancy red-and-black sweaters which meant <sup>Forty</sup> we were among the Big ~~Fifty~~ of the 700 or so ~~in~~ junior-senior boys.

## Boys' Health

Fourth Period the gang was in ~~Personal Hygiene~~, snickering at the Boys' Advisor, that fool, <sup>as he</sup> told us to take baths and brush our teeth and be careful with girls. Fifth Period we were all in Chemistry. Arild and I were lab partners and managed about one explosion a week.

Ever since I was a freshman I'd stayed over for Sixth Period, <sup>(though</sup> because of the 7:45 class I didn't have to) ~~Sixth Period was~~ <sup>to take</sup> Debate. Bob and Bill and I were on the first team now, <sup>but</sup> though actually none of us could debate worth a hoot. Our main problem was that when one of us was at the podium telling the audience "How to Obtain Human Happiness," or "The Best Form of City Government for Seattle," or whatever the city-wide topic was that semester, the other two would be sitting in the front row making faces and silently breaking up at every dramatic climax.

Once Golden Throat, the team star, came down with laryngitis and at the last minute I had to substitute as the finishing speaker. I'd never been in the wind-up spot before, and was shaking like a leaf. ~~My mouth was sticky day.~~ The debate was away from home, at Garfield, and they had a regular stage and speakers' table, <sup>also</sup> a new experience for me. Sitting at the table waiting my turn, <sup>my mouth was sticky,</sup> ~~feeling exposed,~~ I had to have water or die. I picked up the ~~water~~ pitcher, filled a glass, and drank it. ~~That's all.~~ The audience busted out in hysterical laughter. The kid at the podium went red in the face and stopped dead. He thought everybody was laughing at him. So did I. Until the second speaker was on and I took another drink and again the audience was fractured. Suddenly I realized no eyes were on speakers at the podium, every eye was on me at the table. Just move a hand toward the pitcher and all heck broke loose. What's so darn funny about a drink of

water? ~~If I could~~ <sup>and</sup> Figure that out, I'd be right up there with Jack Benny and Bob Hope and Red Skelton. The real shock was that even our coach was laughing so hard he was crying. It makes you wonder about yourself.

Anyway, somehow I had the reputation of being a clown, maybe because chubby people are supposed to be jolly, and was appointed to the Pep Committee, which staged Pep Assemblies before First Period the Friday mornings of football games. For the final game of the season, with Ballard, the committee chairman put me in charge. Bob and Bill and I wrote a melodrama and recruited buddies as actors.

The play opened with violinists from the Lincoln Orchestra <sup>doing</sup> ~~playing~~ "Hearts and Flowers" and Bill, the narrator, explaining that the villainous Olaf Ballardson (Ballard was home port for <sup>Commercial</sup> ~~the~~ fishermen, mostly Scandinavians) was foreclosing on the mortgage.

The curtain rose on me, in a fright wig and one of Mother's old dresses, <sup>my cords rolled up to my knees underneath</sup> ~~I~~ <sup>I</sup> ~~was~~ <sup>was</sup> cowering under the sneers of Olaf (George), who was twisting his mustaches and saying, "Pay off the mortgage or you are mine, my pretty!" The Lincoln Yell Team ran out from the wings and led the audience, better than a thousand students and teachers, in a cheer, "Ballard! Ballard! BOO!" Olaf exited and my old Grandmother (Frank, in a shawl, sitting in a rocking chair) yelled in a cracked voice, "If only Abe Lincoln was here!"

Ed, who is way over 6 feet, entered on the run. In <sup>my</sup> falsetto I cried, "Bless you for hearing our prayers, Mr. Lincoln!" In his booming voice he said, "Oh ma'am, I'm not Abe Lincoln. I'm his press agent. But here comes Abe Lincoln now!" He pointed at the wings. According to the script, Bob, who is <sup>quite a bit</sup> ~~is~~ under 6 feet, was supposed to charge out in his Lynx Club sweater.

noticed  
 Well, while waiting for his cue Bob ~~discovered~~ a rope hanging from <sup>a</sup> the rafter. He also found a stepladder.  
~~beam five above the stage backstage area and a parkingxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~

~~xxxxxx~~ So we were expecting him to walk on but he came swinging through the air like Tarzan! The audience was stunned, ~~with surprise~~. So were us actors. So was Bob when he let go of the rope and crashed to the stage. Ed had to pick him up and steady his legs until he recovered. Fortunately Abe Lincoln had no speaking lines, ~~his~~ Press Agent did all the talking. The Yell Team ran out and led a cheer, "Lincoln! Lincoln! Rah! Rah! Rah!"

Things went on from there. At the end Olaf Ballardson was sawing me in half and I was screaming and Grandmother was rocking like mad and whimpering. The Press Agent ran out and chased Olaf around the stage while Abe Lincoln shadow-boxed and the Yell Team led a cheer, "Give 'em the ax, the ax, the ax!" Olaf slunk off snarling, "Curses! Foiled again!" I jumped up in the Press Agent's arms and Abe Lincoln took bows and the Yell Team led the Lincoln fight song.

It was the smash hit of the football season. Better than the game, which we lost. But during First Period the principal called the whole Pep Committee out of class into his office and <sup>said</sup> ~~told us~~ we should be ashamed of being disrespectful to our martyred president, ~~it~~ <sup>what we'd done</sup> was practically sacrileg~~ious~~.

You could almost turn superstitious. Somehow there weren't ~~as~~ many big ~~big~~ laughs after that. I can't remember such a dark and gloomy winter. Life got grimmer and grimmer.

Not because of the war, especially. It was a shock that Sunday afternoon when I was returning from a long walk and Mother ran out of the house yelling, "The Japs are ~~bombing~~ <sup>attacking</sup> Pearl Harbor!" War was weird, okay, with radio stations going off the air at sunset and making the house so quiet, and with the blackout, and the air raid drills at school, and convoys of Army trucks roaring up and down Aurora Highway, and anti-aircraft guns and barrage balloons in city parks and golf courses. War seemed to make everybody stupid and hysterical. Sure, Jap submarines had shelled the coast. But never in a million years could their fleet steam into Puget Sound. War was sort of interesting but thousands of miles away and none of my business. I wouldn't be 18 for a couple years and even then they'd draft the women and children before me.

I was never going to be healthy. Just as I thought the pain was gone for good my darn ~~ankle~~ <sup>heel</sup> suddenly swelled up like a huge blister. I had to wear a sponge-rubber contraption that wouldn't fit in my regular ~~shoes~~ <sup>oxfords</sup>. I bought new ones three sizes too big and looked like I belonged in a circus.

If I wasn't going to be healthy I didn't want to be an engineer. Yeah, Dad was always reminding me that even ~~in~~ in the worst of the Depression, when he was lucky to get a pick-and-shovel job, the engineers never were out of work and always made good money. What appealed to me, though, was building bridges and highways in South America, which was why I'd taken Spanish. But there'd be no fun hobbling around the Andes and ~~the~~ Tierra del Fuego on crutches. I didn't want to build bridges anywhere else. That sex fiend had permanently soured me on math.

How could I afford college anyway? Sure, times were easier. We had an inside toilet and an oil range in the kitchen and Dad had traded up

to a '37 Plymouth. But my folks needed all their money. I'd have to earn my way, and the \$3 I made Saturdays at the Blue Ridge estate paid for gas and other expenses but I could hardly save a nickel. Next year I'd need \$100 for tuition and another \$100 for textbooks and a slide rule and drawing set and so on. A fortune.

Yeah, and girls. None of our bunch went out with girls ~~or~~ or paid them any attention. But everywhere you looked, there they were. And maybe it was my imagination but two or three acted like I wasn't a fat and ugly loudmouth. There was a little dark-haired girl in Comp. Everywhere I went in the halls I ran into her. She'd begun saying "Hi!" So I was saying "Hi!" Nothing else. What if I said more and she busted out laughing? Sometime I was going to have to take a chance. She was driving me crazy.

Problems, problems, problems. School was a mess.

One morning near the end of February the sun came up. I mean, it came up. You get so used to rain and clouds you don't notice how <sup>dark and</sup> gray the world is. But when you see the sun for the first time in weeks you notice. The sky was clean blue. I'd forgotten the sky could be blue. Teachers opened classroom windows and balmy, ~~spring-like~~ breezes seeped in, ~~smelling of green things growing~~.

Well, what actually made up my mind was passing the girl in the hall after Fifth Period and for a change being first to say "Hi!" And she didn't answer. Maybe she was busy talking to that other girl and didn't

see me. But maybe I was wrong about how she felt. I wouldn't have a chance to try another "Hi!" until tomorrow. I couldn't stick around the rest of the day. I skipped Sixth Period and took the 2:10 bus.

I was home by 3 o'clock and stopped off just long enough to change clothes and tell Mother I might be late for dinner and ask her to feed the chickens if I was.

I walked out our driveway to 165th Street and followed it west to Fremont Avenue, then down our neighborhood sledding hill. A few pussy willows were putting out their first little balls of gray fur. At the bottom of the hill I turned north on the valley road. A half-mile from home was the secret place. I dropped off the road into the gully, careful to leave no tracks that could show a snoopy stranger this was where the route started. Up in the trees on the far slope the poachers' path began, climbing the hillside, detouring around blowdowns and a mucky spot where skunk cabbage leaves were sprouting.

A half-mile from the road the path leveled out and intersected the Pipeline Trail running from the Highlands on the south to Hidden Creek on the north. Here I kept my eyes peeled. The Highlands is where the Seattle millionaires live, fat and sassy behind their Cyclone Fence patrolled by armed guards. Rich kids ride horses on the trail and if you run into those snots you'd better duck ~~in~~ in the brush and be invisible because their idea of sport is to sic the deputy sheriffs on you.

<sup>Today,</sup>  
As always, I was amazed by the trail. All the country north of Seattle was logged off years ago. The ~~new~~ second-growth around our house was getting sizeable -- some of the Douglas firs were 30 or <sup>40</sup>~~50~~ feet high --



but it wasn't virgin forest. This was. The Douglas firs were tall and huge and old, just like in the Olympics. The sala~~s~~ wasn't up to your knees, it was over your head. And the forest smelled different. I've never figured out how, exactly, but if you led me into a forest blindfolded I could tell by my nose whether it was virgin or second-growth.

I'd never gotten over the shock, that first time with Arild, of discovering virgin forest here, 10 miles from downtown Seattle. For 8 years I'd lived a half-hour away and never suspected it was here. I'd thought the Highlands was in these trees. After all, even the valley road seemed to belong to the millionaires. Once I'd been stopped ~~there~~ by a ~~man~~ county clown in a prowler car and grilled. He ~~was~~ was a mean so-and-so and ~~just~~ <sup>nearly</sup> ~~just~~ ~~about~~ ran me in on suspicion of burglary, or stealing golf balls from the Highlands golf course, <sup>(that was one of Arild's stunts!)</sup> or maybe just for walking the valley road in Crummy ~~ragged~~ clothes.

Why was a virgin forest here? It seems that before Boeing made airplanes he was a logger and whacked down the trees all along Puget Sound, including the area that became Blue Ridge and the Highlands, but saved one spot for his private picnic ground. What a picnic ground!

In a half-mile the trail switchbacked (Yes, switchbacked! ~~Just~~ like in the mountains!) down into a ravine choked with giant sword ferns and thimbleberry and salmonberry bushes and even genuine devils club. At the bottom a creek rippled over smooth bright stones, a 5-foot-wide ~~lane~~ corridor through the jungle. As always, I felt that by some sort of magic I'd walked right into the middle of Olympic National Park.

~~In~~ <sup>Last</sup> summer I usually followed the creek down to the lake. I loved the clean yellow ~~sand~~ sand of the inlet delta and often took off my ~~shoes~~ <sup>boots</sup> and

squished it in my toes. But now, after months of steady rain, the creek path was ankle-deep black muck. Also the brush was still ~~soaking~~<sup>shining</sup> wet from yesterday's rain. So I took the Danger Way, warily climbing the trail on the far side of the ravine. A little upstream was a big brick cistern, intake for the pipeline carrying water south to the Highlands. Nearby was the caretaker's house and if he spotted a kid he came running and hollering with his shotgun. But he never stirred far from the house or cistern so the danger area was only a few hundred feet.

The trail ~~joined~~<sup>hit</sup> a grown-over single-lane road that cars hadn't driven since before the Depression, when Boeing went broke and lost his airplane company and didn't feel like picnicking anymore. A half-mile down the road a trail turned off, leading ~~to~~ a couple hundred feet south to the outlet of Hidden Lake.

Here I was again! At ~~my~~ lake. Not a huge lake, about 10 acres, ringed with shrubby vine maple and tall Douglas firs, mossy logs sticking out from the shore into the quiet water. Not a natural lake. Boeing dammed up a marshy place to make a private fishing hole -- which he finally abandoned to the poachers.

I sprawled by the outlet in a soft bed of almost-dry/<sup>fir</sup>needles. The mallard ducks that live year-round on the lake weren't scared of me but to play it safe quacked a few quacks and swam to the other end. The sun had stirred up the birds and the forest was full of music. I'd never had much luck identifying songs but knew robins and sparrows and wrens were part of the chorus.

In trail shadows the air had been chilly, still winter. Here in the sun it was warm as true spring. I listeded to the waterfall <sup>over</sup> ~~from~~ the little concrete dam, 6 feet high, and smelled the plants that were sprouting leaves and soon would be blooming. Not long ~~was~~ until the yellow violets were out. And white ~~was~~ trillium. Sometime ~~had~~ <sup>had</sup> to get a library book and learn more about flowers, find out where all the smells ~~was~~ <sup>were</sup> coming from.

The smells had been even richer last summer, when I made my major explorations, <sup>investigating</sup> ~~probing~~ practically every square foot of my wilderness. First the lake. I'd circled the shore on the poachers' path and poled a poachers' raft all over, except where mushy masses of water weeds were growing nearly to the surface. Actually ~~x~~ the lake was on the way to becoming a peat bog. But that would take years and years.

North of the lake I'd found a <sup>brushy old</sup> ~~brush-tangled~~ trail climbing the hillside to a high plateau and the end of virgin forest. From here it was ~~logged off~~ <sup>vines and bracken fern</sup> ~~was~~ pure alder and willow and blackberry ~~country~~ <sup>all the way north to</sup> Richmond Beach. Our Scout trail to the beach descended <sup>from the county road</sup> through there.

<sup>On</sup> ~~Atop~~ the plateau in an open grove of maples and madronas I'd been surprised to discover an old picnic shelter with a falling-down roof and rotting tables and benches. It was spooky to think of people picnicking <sup>there</sup>, children racketing around in the ~~the~~ woods, now so quiet. Those children would be grown up now. Probably living in the Highlands. Snotty millionaires.

Near the end of summer there was only one chunk of territory I didn't know -- the area between Hidden Lake on the north, the Pipeline Trail on the east, the Highlands on the south, and Puget Sound on the west. One day I'd decided to fill in the White Space on my map and set out from the Pipeline ~~the~~ Trail heading due west for the beach, which I guessed was about a ~~3~~ miles away.

leathery evergreen leaves  
and tough wiry branches of

The going was rougher than ~~xxx~~ heck. I crashed through salal, climbed over and crawled under logs, slithered down into black-mucky ravines, fought ripping-slashing thorns and devils club. It was as mean a mess as any in Olympic National Park.

A funny thing about Olympic National Park. Until recently I'd thought it was always there, like Mt. Rainier National Park, which was created back in the 1800s. Then I learned that when I crossed the boundary in 1938, on the trail from Marmot Pass to Home Lake, the park was just a month old! Now, of course, it was going on 4 years. And I hadn't been there for 1½ years, almost half its life. Well, I'd return someday. Meanwhile I had Manning National Park.

Never as during that day in the White Space had I been so excited by my wilderness. I had a fantasy of stumbling into a secret basin, a miniature Deception Basin, with a little tiny glacier. That was scientifically impossible. ~~absurd.~~ There hadn't been glaciers here since the Ice Age. But struggling and sweating through the White Space I could imagine that just out of sight the meadows began, that I was at the foot of peaks I couldn't quite see.

Hours and hours I battled up hills and down ravines. My wilderness was bigger than I'd dreamed. I kept thinking I smelled salt air but always there was another hill to climb over.

Suddenly I broke out onto a wide trail! My gosh, what new world of wonders ~~right~~ <sup>did</sup> it lead to? I had new respect for Manning National Park. Then I had a queer feeling the trail looked familiar. Yes. The Pipeline Trail -- and a dozen feet from where I'd left it 4 hours earlier!

Well, the salt air had<sup>↑</sup> been ~~for weeks~~ <sup>my imagination.</sup> While making the giant circle (or maybe a series of figure eights) I had got near the Sound. So even if I was lost all afternoon I filled in the White Space. And there was a good chance I was the first human being who ever did.

Lying by the lake this wonderful false-spring day, half-asleep in the sun, I remembered every minute of my explorations of my jungle, in the middle of which was a hole to let in the sky, and at the bottom of the hole a little piece of calm water. An hour from home. <sup>Incredible.</sup> Less than 2 hours from all my problems at Lincoln. ~~Incredible.~~ They didn't exist here. Lincoln didn't exist. The whole world was wilderness. And I was the only person in it.

Wilderness wasn't all I explored last summer. I spent days trying to contact God. Oh, not by talking anymore. My idea of Him had grown. I realized the Bible was junk, really an insult to Him. You couldn't put God into a human body, or into a church, or into words. All that <sup>stuff</sup> was as bad as the mumbo jumbo of African savages. No, you could never see God with your eyes or talk to Him with your mind. You had to feel Him. With your soul.

My feelings were sharp enough for it now. On those bad spring days I'd sit in a chair not reading, not listening to the radio, not thinking, just feeling pain. I tried to use willpower to push it out of my mind, the way Hindus do walking on red-hot coals. No chance. Pain hurts. So I'd dive right into the fire, pretending I liked it. I'd join in the pulse of the pain and get my soul swinging in the rhythm, burning in the flames. It still hurt.

Then, just like that, it would ~~stop~~<sup>quit.</sup> I'd be sweaty and ~~exhausted~~<sup>pooped</sup> but would ~~have~~<sup>feel</sup> this tremendous ~~sense of~~ peace, ~~and joy.~~ I'd look out the window and holy cow how green the trees were! I'd go out in the yard and how ~~sweet~~<sup>delicious</sup> Mother's ~~pansies~~<sup>sweet peas</sup> smelled!

By summer the fires were burnt out. But now <sup>that</sup> I wasn't feeling pain intensely I ~~felt~~<sup>felt</sup> everything intensely, as if the flames had burned the skin away from my nerves.

I'd lay on my back by the outlet ~~waterfall~~ of Hidden Lake and look up to sunlight on green crowns of the firs and white clouds in the blue sky. I'd smell fir needles and leaf mold. I'd hear <sup>the fall</sup> water and bird songs. I'd block all thoughts from my mind and just feel. God was here, He was in all this. I'd lay <sup>perfectly</sup> still and strain my soul. Sometimes I felt I was leaving my body, was entering Him. That's what Heaven is.

Well, I never quite made it.

But I knew He was there. He had to be. If He wasn't, if there was a nothing that was eternal and infinite -- too horrible, too horrible! It would be Hell.

That was another of my big problems this winter.

I'd been sleepy but the remembering woke me up. I decided I had to see the Sound, the Olympics, which I hadn't for weeks. It was 5 o'clock, awful late to go clear to the beach, I'd have to hustle, but with War Time it wouldn't be dark until 7.

A bit ~~below~~<sup>downstream from</sup> the lake, at the little hatchery where Boeing used to raise his trout, the road turned into trail. The way was steep now, making the

final drop to sealevel -- 500 feet below the elevation of our house. The creek ~~had carved a gorge in blue glacial clay and~~ splashed over mossy logs in a series of ~~water~~falls.

The trail crossed the creek on an 8-foot-high timber-and-dirt dam. Inside a shack a toy turbine was buzzing away, generating a dab of electricity for some fool in the Highlands. The beach was only a couple hundred feet off. A guy could follow the creek down if he didn't mind a fright of logs and brush and treacherous clay banks. I did. The only time I tried it I was nearly killed.

Anyhow there was an easier way. But not exactly a cinch. Across the dam was that darn Cyclone Fence that completely circles the Highlands. However, next to the ~~Ranger~~ fence was a power pole fitted with foot irons. You climbed the irons, stepped down on the three strands of barbed wire, and jumped to the ground. A few feet away was the road that runs from the Highlands to the beach.

The hard part was coming back. Climbing the Cyclone Fence from the Highlands side was tricky. A single false move and you were bleeding. Once I decided to <sup>avoid it by taking</sup> ~~take~~ the civilized way home, <sup>I walked</sup> ~~and followed~~ the dirt road up the steep bluff to the top, where it became blacktop and entered what looked like a city park except for the enormous houses, practically palaces. Guys in the shrubbery -- gardeners, butlers, chauffeurs, golly knows what -- glared at me. I realized I'd made a terrible mistake, ~~and turned back.~~ A car came wheeling around a corner and screeched to a stop. I was under arrest! No, it was the guy with the paper route. He recognized a fellow outsider when he saw one. He ~~laughed~~ laughed and said, "Better ride with me, ~~kid~~ kid."

I understood why when we reached the gate and I saw the guards with their ugly pistols and faces. No sir, you can sneak in the back door of the Highlands but to ~~get~~ <sup>sneak</sup> out the front door you'd need a tank. ~~No~~ <sup>No</sup> time today to worry about ~~getting~~ <sup>return climb of the</sup> the fence. Because a minute after jumping down from the barbed wire I was across the railroad tracks and on the beach! Home!

I walked by the water practically laughing out loud, hearing the waves slapping the sand, looking at the clean-washed pebbles. I love the ~~confusion~~ <sup>chaos</sup> of a virgin forest, ~~the secrecy of hidden nooks,~~ <sup>with secret</sup> ~~the~~ hundreds of shades of green and brown and black, ~~the~~ smells of trees and muck. But also I love the neatness of the beach, <sup>with</sup> the simple gray of sand and blue of water and white of breakers, the tang of ~~the~~ salt breezes, the wideness of the horizon and the sky. Forests give you privacy, beaches give you freedom.

Almost I could have been at Parsons. From the beach the railroad <sup>and blue clay</sup> was invisible. The bluff of glacial gravel and till <sup>was</sup> so high, so thick with alders and maples, the Highlands didn't exist. For miles south the bluff kept houses far back from the shore. I could hardly tell Seattle was there. ~~The shore to the north was even wilder - the whole~~ <sup>The shore</sup> ~~the 2 miles to Richmond Beach~~ there weren't any houses or roads for a mile or so inland.

I walked out on the Highlands dock, still in fair shape even though steamers of the ~~mosquito~~ mosquito fleet probably made their last calls here a dozen years ago. Of course, what they used to call the Puget Sound water road was busy as ever. Several freighters were out there now. Also a fighting ship, maybe a heavy cruiser, headed south to the Bremerton Navy Yards. It looked pretty ~~shot~~ shot up. Two tugs were lashed alongside.



I sat on the end of the dock, legs dangling over deep water where drifting jellyfish were ~~floating~~ and bullheads darting. Time to enjoy the main show.

The Olympic skyline was crispy white, <sup>the peaks slabs of ice above blue-green</sup> Smack in the center was the <sup>7735-foot</sup> forests. rugged summit of the third-highest peak in the range, Mt. Constance, which I'd walked most of the way around on the Three Rivers Hike. North were rounded ridges of Marmot Pass country. South was the wide valley of the Dosewallips, one fork leading to Mt. Anderson, the other to Deception Basin, to the hundreds of marmots hibernating under the snow below Hayden Pass -- and to Lost Pass. South of the valley rose Mt. Jupiter, then the Brothers, which I'd seen that morning we climbed from ~~dark gray~~ fog at Home Lake to sunshine on Del Monte Ridge and gazed out to rocky brown islands floating in a sea of shining white clouds. I wanted to reach out and hug it all.

Suddenly the sun dipped into wispy clouds I hadn't even noticed. Our weather comes from the Olympics. Rain tomorrow, ~~and for weeks to come.~~ Better make the most of today.

The clouds turned pink, the sky behind them ~~to~~ milky blue. Valleys were darkening, snowfields dimming.

The colors got wilder. I didn't know their ~~names~~ names. You say the clouds are rose and orange and scarlet and crimson and purple, the sky is yellow and gold and green, but those aren't ~~the~~ right ~~names~~. I don't think there are words for these colors. They stretched from one end of the jagged skyline to the other, fierce as the sun. There couldn't be colors this violent without noise. There should be earthquakes, volcanoes popping off like firecrackers on the Fourth of July. But the only sounds were little waves splashing, cold breezes whispering.

This was the place. This was the ~~time~~ moment.

So what happened? Nothing. The band of color narrowed and faded and was gone, ~~only~~ only a strip of pale blue outlining the black peaks. Twilight on the water. I was shivering.

I stood up and faced the forest. Good gosh! While I was watching the end of day in the west, night had snuck up on me from the east. ~~There was~~  
~~nothing~~

I was in for it. With no flashlight I hadn't a ghost of a chance of walking the trail. The Highlands route led straight to jail. Only one way home -- 2 miles along the railroad tracks to Richmond Beach, then 3 miles of roads.

Night swallowed the Olympics, and then the Sound except for starlight on the waves.

Something was weird. I'd often walked the beach after dark but this night was different. What was wrong? <sup>up and down</sup> I looked ~~over~~ the Sound and it hit me. No lights anywhere -- not a single light. Cities and towns were out there -- or were before the sun went down. All gone now. The whole world was black. Blacked out. The Sound probably hadn't been this dark since the white man came a hundred years ago. Or longer, because for thousands of years the Indians built fires on these shores. Maybe this was the blackest the Sound had been in 10,000 years. Spooky. Maybe I was the only person left in the world.

I was passing the gravel pit where we used to ski on barrel staves when suddenly I was blinded. A flashlight flicked on, flicked off.

But there was time to glimpse uniforms and rifles. The soldiers asked me all sorts of questions before they decided I wasn't a Jap come to sabotage the gravel pit.

On the main street of Richmond Beach I couldn't see my hand in front of my face. Suddenly <sup>invisible</sup> bodies were pushing and shoving me. I thought I was going to be murdered for a Jap. No. It was just town kids who mistook me for one of the gang. I explained I wasn't. They apologized. I got home at 9:30.

I was <sup>weeks</sup> ~~a long time~~ figuring out ~~the meaning of~~ all the things that happened that afternoon and night, and ~~the~~ the thing that didn't ~~happen~~.

1943

Chapter 4

LONELY AS A CLOUD

Deckhands cast off hawsers, bells rang and whistle blasted and engine labored, shuddering deck set my legs a-dancing. Screws churned cloud-gray waves to a turmoil of lime-green water and white ~~foam~~<sup>bubbles</sup>, pushing the dock away, away, away. The oil-smooth lane between lines of lingering foam marked the path from land, land, land over the sea, the sea, the sea.

Leaning on the upper-deck railing I looked down to the boiling water stew (plunge basin of a mountain waterfall) and out the lengthening wake. Ferry slip grew smaller. Goodbye, little village of Edmonds. And goodbye, too, big city of Seattle.

Where will I unroll my sleeping bag tonight? Who cares? Not I. The day is as plan-free as my life, what's left of it. This moment I know, the coming 2 hours to Port Ludlow I can predict from memory. Tonight is a mystery, tomorrow a formless void, next week does not exist. Better so. Distant goals lead a roamer astray. Keep moving. Better not to know where.

Three hours ago I'd no notion how or where I'd spend the empty week between Spring Quarter finals and the start of Summer Quarter. In my basement room I listened to 80 feet pounding the other side of my ceiling, girls carrying luggage to taxis and parents' cars. By evening the ceiling would be silent, my below-ground cave still as a tomb.

Tomorrow, if I walked under the boughs of Greek Row horse-chestnut trees the half-block from Kappa Delta down 17th Avenue to 45th Street and crossed to the campus, I'd see no lovely lasses in the grasses. Squirrels and robins. And if I walked the two blocks down 45th to University Way, I'd see no Avenue sidewalks crowded with gorgeous girls, no restaurant-booth coveys of lemon-coke sippers. Elderly shoppers.

Abruptly I was in the Model A headed home. My folks' home, that is. You can't go home again, not with time and the river flowing. The world was my home now. Here and there I paused to camp. As at Kappa Delta.

And as, last fall, in the Geology Department. Dad accepted it after I convinced him geologists also had been fat and happy during the Depression, running transits with the engineers. He was content and I was reasonably so; if I had to make a living, rocks and glaciers were more congenial than Erector Sets. However, in dark and fearful Winter Quarter I envisioned the coming years (if any) with eye screwed to microscope and knew my love for raw wildland could not submerge my loathing for fossil worms.

Vincent Sheehan steered me on a new course, to my folks' chagrin. I decided to be a foreign correspondent, traveling remote mountains between affairs with exotic Eurasian beauties. But my Spring Quarter camp in the Journalism Department was brief. The advisor wore a bow tie. The Daily Shack girls were alien but not exotic. I found no glamor, only flash.

The University says everybody has got to be someplace. I moved to General Studies, where the advisor was as satisfied as I to look no farther than Summer Quarter. No need to follow the balanced diet of a prescribed curriculum. No need to grimly chew what's good for you. I could pick

and choose from the smorgasbord at my whim. In spring I'd tasted English Comp, Poli Sci, and Psych. In summer I'd sample Econ, Soc, and 17th-18th Century English Lit. Fall? If I lived so long, maybe 19th Century English Lit, ~~MUSIC APPRECIATION~~ Philosophy. Perhaps I'd take piano lessons.

Yes, I was free of the chains of life plans (and nearly of life). Good. Planning shrinks dreams. Planless dreams are infinite -- if not eternal. It's the difference between hiking a beaten trail and wandering cross-country, half-lost, as on my expeditions in Manning National Park.

A half-hour from Kappa Delta I turned off Aurora Highway on 165th Street, to home. Former home. Melancholy familiar, the 10 years vivid. Yet after 3 months of Sunday dinners only, strange-remote as childhood.

I stopped just long enough to pick up mountain gear. No explanations required. Nobody home. Mother was in Seattle repairing electric shavers, womanning the home front while GI Joe was away, earning so much that she and Dad had given up hamburger for black-market steaks (well, gray market) and would pay off the house in a year rather than squeezing out monthly instalments to unimaginably distant 1958. Dad was safe from the draft unless the Japs landed in Elliott Bay. Because of that, though in peacetime the Disston policy demanded a college degree as the ticket out of the proletariat, he'd escaped the shipping room and truck, was wearing the white collar he'd lost in the Depression -- and was selling ten times more saws and knives to lumber mills than the drafted college boy he replaced.

My folks were rolling in dough, easily could pay my way through the U if I wanted. I didn't. They thought me stupid to abandon free room and board in a cozy country home to live in a mildew-dismal basement and

waste 2 hours a day waiting table and washing dishes for 40 fancy females.

Yes, they thought me stupid. But yes, they understood. Dad was my age when, after graduating from Lowell High at 15 and spending a year in commercial school, he'd one day walked away from his desk at the bank and razzed off on his motorcycle to Boston to join the Navy and see the world. And Mother was my age when, after graduating from Lincoln and being assigned by elder brother to serve as youngest-daughter housekeeper to their aged widowed mother, she met the wise-guy gob with the funny accent and ~~and~~ <sup>accepted</sup> his offer of freedom. ~~she understood with him~~

I didn't have to explain. Dad and Mother understood how it was for me nights in the quiet country, sitting at the same desk as in grade school, gazing out my bedroom window south to the distant sky-glow. They understood city days were tantalizing, that I yearned for city nights, for the Big Party.

Edmonds shrank to a smidgen in blue-green distance of mainland forests. I walked the open deck <sup>to</sup> ~~of~~ the ferry front (no true stern or stem on these double-engers) and looked down to the blunt prow cleaving the waves. Traveling the water road at a steady-throbbing 10 knots, we were leaving Puget Sound, entering Admiralty Inlet. To starboard lay Whidbey Island, the wave-cut cliffs of glacial till rising vertically from beach to green forest. To larboard lay the Kitsap Peninsula, the lighthouse-marked sand spit of Point No Point jutting from green forest. Ahead was Foulweather Bluff, concealing the openings to Hood Canal and Port Ludlow. The Olympics were cloud-smothered. No matter. Clouds are temporary, even as I.

Below on the vehicle deck was the jaunty royal-blue Model A, the sole car, not counting several routine trucks whose routine drivers were in the restaurant routinely coffeeing up. Where, this minute, were those thousands of jiggly-fleshed coeds? If they were smart they'd be here with me. But I was the solitary adventurer.

Always the water road had been the route to adventure. Ever since the <sup>mosquito-fleet</sup> Tyee Scout and Carlyle II and Virginia V carried me to Parsons. And long before that, when the Saturday-night ferry from Bainbridge Island to Seattle meant feasts in restaurants (two desserts if I wanted) and the Arabian Nights palaces where we saw America's top vaudeville acts and Hollywood's <sup>latest</sup> ~~newest~~ movies, including the new talkies.

Yet never was a voyage so exciting as this. Partly because I was, for the first time in my life, alone. Partly because I neither knew nor cared where I was going. Partly because when I awoke in the basement cave 6 hours ago I hadn't dreamed I'd now be sniffing cold salt wind, watching gulls <sup>restaurant</sup> gobble ~~squabble over~~ garbage tossed overboard, spotting a seal poke its dog-like face <sup>from</sup> ~~out of~~ the water to marvel at the huge noisy sea beast.

I was as excited as on the Tuesday morning a year ago March when my term of lowland exile ~~was~~ ended and Arild and I <sup>threw</sup> ~~packed~~ gear in his Model A and headed for a name on the map, Monte Cristo, reputed to be a ghost town in the heart of the Cascades. We fell short, blocked by snow on the new-built road following the bed of the old mining railroad. So what? We camped beside the South Fork Stillaguamish River, then climbed 2 steep miles to Heather Lake, 3800 feet above sealevel, 10 feet deep in snow, a mile deep in <sup>clouds,</sup> ~~fog~~. Romping in white snow and white fog, all the universe white but Arild and me, I glanced at my watch and realized our buddies were now in



Chemistry, doubtless baffled by the unexplained absence of the two rummy bombers. (No mystery, really. We worked weekends, ~~for money~~. To take a mountain trip we had to skip school.)

We laughed like maniacs, hearing invisible avalanches thunder down invisible cliffs, thinking of our friends drowning in a warm classroom while we held a snowball fight that ended in a wrestling match, rolling over and over down a slope of soft avalanche snow. Part of my laugh, the bitter part, was for the little dark-haired girl.

The afternoon of a winter day I'd just happened to drive my Model A to Lincoln she just happened to miss the Maple Leaf bus and it ~~summed~~ somehow came to pass that I gave her a ride home. And a night soon thereafter we were in the darkness of a theater and as I sat paralyzed by her nearness she sighed and dropped her head on my shoulder and I gasped at the close smell of female hair. But on our date last Friday night, when I told her I loved her, she flinched and wouldn't let me put my arm around her.

I'd considered pulling a Mallory -- not on Everest, on Mt. Rainier. In the winter of 1936 a youth seeking to build enough of a reputation to earn an invitation on the next American expedition to the Himalaya climbed alone to the summit of The Mountain. On the descent he slipped and died and for days was all over the front pages. Recalling his example, I wrote suicide notes that wrung my heart. But where was the pleasure in killing myself if I couldn't be around afterward to enjoy her remorse? More fun to skip with Arild, let her wonder for 2 days where I was.

Arild and I spent many a spring evening together. He'd drop by the house in his A and we'd drive to the beach, gather beer bottles from passion

to hear the satisfying  
smash of breaking glass.

pits, toss them in the waves, and throw rocks ~~until they were busted.~~  
When ~~we ran out of~~ <sup>all</sup> bottles <sup>were busted</sup> we'd walk ~~along~~ by the water looking  
across to the Olympics and I'd tell of places we could hike come summer.

As weeks passed and I lost faith in God and capitalism and the little  
dark-haired bitch, who wouldn't even go out with me anymore, we flew the  
coop again, again aiming for Monte Cristo but by a different route. We  
drove the North Fork Skykomish River road, where loggers were ripping into  
the forest, and turned up Silver Creek, where virgin forest was unmolested.  
A washout stopped the A and we hauled packs 3 miles to Mineral City, 2000  
feet. Some city! A cabin and two ~~storage~~ sheds. We camped in the cabin  
Tuesday night and ~~ventured~~ <sup>crept</sup> far into the spooky mine. Wednesday we plowed  
<sup>4</sup> snow <sup>^</sup> miles up Silver Creek, exploring more abandoned log cabins, more old  
mines. At 3500 feet, sinking in snow to our knees and the slope steepening  
for the final rise to 4500-foot Silver Lake, beyond which lay the fabulous  
Monte Cristo, we quit. Another failure? No, another victory. During the  
Tuesday-~~Wednesday~~ ~~of~~ wilderness I forgot the doom hanging over Thursday-  
Friday. *Lincoln.*

On our third flight to sanity we were joined by Al, whose folks'  
summer ~~home~~ <sup>cabin</sup> on the Miller River provided snug quarters. Next day we hiked  
7 miles to the outlet of Lake Dorothy. Why Dorothy again? Not for the  
beauty. Because it had put the hex on me and had to be confronted. The  
whole 7 miles out, free of cane and pain, I laughed. No longer haunted,  
in a few weeks I'd return in triumph to the high hills. I'd show Arild,  
who'd never been in the mountains at all before Heather Lake, some high  
times.

I didn't. A week after graduation he asked me to drive him downtown to the train station. Why? He'd enlisted in the damn Navy! Without a word of warning. I'd supposed his springtime glooms and frenzies were purely sympathetic. Engrossed in my own ordeal it hadn't occurred to me that he, a year and some months older than I, was draft bait the moment the principal handed him ~~his~~<sup>a</sup> diploma. There was a worse shock. He'd not just joined the Navy, he'd volunteered ~~to~~ as gunner on a torpedo plane. God! The nation was still mourning Torpedo Squadron 8, wiped out at Midway. He'd gone mad. When he boarded the train the war was no longer ~~a joke~~<sup>for adults only.</sup> I knew I'd never again see the square-jawed, red-headed Norwegian fool.

Port Ludlow, decades ago a noisy, smoky sawmill town, harbor jammed with lumber schooners, whorehouses and saloons roaring with sin, now was a cluster of rain-bleached, moss-grown frame buildings decaying into the silence of second-growth forest. Only a falling-down coffee shop-tavern retained a glimmer of life. The Model A rattled over ferry-slip planks ~~to~~ onto the dock, the land -- not Seattle-land, Olympic-land, a short seagull flight from the city yet well-defended from casual approach by the infrequency and slowness of ferries and <sup>the</sup> exorbitant fares charged by the pirates who owned the Black Ball Line.

I stopped at a gas station and bought 4 gallons, an A stamp's worth, a week's ration. The grease monkey took my 80¢ but -- unused to the rules after 6 months -- forgot to collect a stamp. Four free gallons, 80 free miles! Omens were good.

The junction with the peninsular<sup>ly</sup>-circling Olympic Highway. A decision: right or left? A purely random twist of the wheel turned me right, toward the Strait of Juan de Fuca and the north slope of the <sup>range.</sup> ~~mountains.~~

The Model A settled into the comfortable long-distance pace of 28 miles per hour. At 35, a fun speed on city streets, the nimble-quick steering demanded close attention. At 45, good sport on country washboard, the stiff-sprung beast bucked and pitched like a rodeo bronco. At 55, to which I'd once floorboarded it in the mandatory ritual of "seeing what she'll do," I was more in the air than on the seat, only by a tight grip of the wheel kept from flying out the cloth-and-tar roof. At 28 the A drove itself. I could relax and simply ride. And think.

Why had reflexes turned me right? Because right was unknown. Left was down Hood Canal, past familiar side-roads to the Quilcene, Parsons, the Dose. My want today was for something other than a sentimental return.

I'd made the return last year. Dad and I drove the Dose road to the end at Constance Creek, scrambled up rock cliffs and tree-root ladderways the vertical 2 miles, gaining 4000 feet, to Lake Constance. Camped by the shore in alpine firs were two other hikers. Well, not hikers -- Mountain Troopers, all in khaki, with odd packs and queer boots, carrying ropes and ice axes. They were taking a "holiday" from training on Mt. Rainier for campaigns against Nazis in Norway and the Alps, conceivably the Japs in Alaska.

Sunday we climbed from the little cirque lake up a talus of limestones <sup>by heat</sup> metamorphosed into pastel pinks and greens, then through portals of

Dead Man Canyon. Two miles we <sup>ascended the glacial</sup> ~~followed this trough of an ancient glacier~~ between serrate summit ridges of Constance's east and west peaks, ~~stumbling~~ over moraines and rockslides, <sup>by</sup> ~~passing~~ walls of pillow lava, bizarre formations resulting from hot basalt erupting under the sea. At the canyon head we ate lunch by a rock-strewn scrap of bare ice, a 3-acre remnant of the glacier that once flowed all the way into the <sup>ancient</sup> Dome Glacier.

Dad was my lone companion of the summer. Arild was gone. Hal and Al were brushing trails and fighting fires for the Skykomish Ranger District of the Forest Service. Bob was putting in 6 and 7 days a week at the shipyards. Bill, never a hiker anyway, had moved to Kansas with his family.

The Olympic return was superb. Little less so were two investigations of the Cascades, mountains closer to home but for me mostly a White Space on the map, my knowledge of them mainly derived from trail descriptions in Dad's copy of the Ben Paris Fishing Guide.

One weekend we attained (a year late) some of the Foss Lakes -- Malachite, Copper, Little Heart, Big Heart, and Angeline -- filling tiny and enormous cirques scooped by Ice Age glaciers. Did I like the Cascades? I reserved my verdict. The country was grandly alpine yet not quite "home." Rather than Olympic shales and slates spiced with basalts, the rock was monotonous granite. Rather than rising brown and naked from scree, the cliffs were gray and patched by hanging jungles of scrubby trees. Rather than grass, the meadows were heather.

Another weekend we hiked up Surprise Creek, a tributary of the Skykomish River (as were the Miller, the Foss), to Surprise and Glacier Lakes. Then we followed the trail through granite barrens to the

heather-covered summit of Surprise Mountain, 6500 feet. Across the deep valley of Deception Creek stood a dead ringer for Mt. Olympus -- snow-gleaming Mt. Daniel, 7986 feet, highest peak in King County. Far south, dim in summer haze, was 14,408-foot Mt. Rainier. Far north was 10,700-foot Mt. Baker. And to my amazement, northeast was a third ice-white volcano I hadn't known existed, 10,500-foot Glacier Peak. *One might very well learn to like the Cascades.*

The Summer of the Return was a fulfilment. Yet without the anchor of those three weekends -- the days themselves and the remembering -- I wonder where I might <sup>have</sup> drifted those <sup>often disgusting</sup> ~~nightmare~~ months.

The day after graduation I walked into the warehouse of Washington Egg and Poultry ~~Co~~ Cooperative, on Elliott Bay, hit the foreman up for a job, and just like that was pushing a handtruck. What was the pay? He said 71¢ an hour. Did I hear him right? Yes. Not so incredible, actually. Bob was making 95¢ at the shipyards. And every Montana sheepherder had abandoned the woollies, and every Okie the Dust Bowl, and every Arkie the Ozark stills, and they all were at Boeing getting 60¢ ~~as beginner mechanics~~ building Flying Fortresses. It wasn't real money, of course. It was wartime counterfeit, ~~our own~~ American ersatz. By summer's end I was up to 89¢ and with overtime often took home \$40 ~~per~~ a week. In less than a month I saved enough for a University year and by September had stuffed my bank account embarrassingly full. I couldn't think how to spend such wealth. War was a good deal if you didn't have to fight.

The flood of money was obscene. So was the making of it. From a distance I worshipped the proletariat, heroes and heroines of WPA postoffice murals, and dreamed of leading the masses to the barricades. But face to

face in the warehouse, my nose recoiling from the reek of rum and Coca Cola, I had serious doubts they'd ever be sober enough to overthrow the government. Certainly exhorting them to revolt would be tough, ~~what with~~ <sup>as it was</sup> their vocabulary limited to profanity and obscenity and blasphemy. To be sure, I no longer winced to hear the name of the Lord taken in vain. And I realized man was an animal and "fuck" a synonym for "love." Still, much of the warehouse language -- words I'd never heard ~~before~~ or even seen on toilet walls, words whose meanings I didn't at first grasp -- upset my stomach.

If they weren't drinking and swearing they were screwing, and though I supported free expression of animal instincts and yearned to express my own, proletarian sex was repulsive. One morning a raw-boned broad-arsed Wyoming cowgal detoured through the warehouse on the way to her job in the cannery. She winked at me and my ~~stomach turned~~ <sup>gorge rose.</sup> I wasn't so innocent I didn't understand the meaning of that jerk of the thumb. An answering wink ~~from~~ and -- at 6:30 in the morning, for God's sake! -- she'd run behind the stacked cases of Lynden Twistee Noodle Dinner and flop on her back. Offered the chance to get rid of my virginity, I almost threw up. not an exact synonym for love.

Manual labor was not ennobling. Yet there were worse degradations, as in fall I learned/at J.C. Penny, ~~in fall~~ clerking Saturdays and Monday evenings with other students, boys and girls. Every month the department manager fired and replaced three-quarters of his staff of several dozen clerks. I was puzzled to survive every purge, and puzzled too by how the manager knew so precisely which of the kids were stealing, which in his absence

were hiding from customers, being too busy trying to make out. Revelation came in January when he offered me a dime more an hour to be an informer. I was shocked by this flagrant example of capitalistic treachery, shocked to find many of my fellow clerks ~~were~~ had sold out to the bosses, and shocked most of all I should seem a worthy candidate for ~~firm~~ <sup>stoolie.</sup> I quit.

Sunset on Sequim Bay. Can of pork and beans heated on the fire and eaten with bread and margarine and a cup of milk. Sleeping bag spread under the firs. ~~Now~~ I sat on the dock end, legs dangling over pilings <sup>2</sup>-slapping waves, the atmosphere suffused with pink.

I'd never been here before, had no intention of being here until I saw the sign marking the turnoff for Sequim Bay State Park, had no idea where I'd be tomorrow.

All was new. The highway (the A virtually ~~alone~~ the sole user) had climbed over rolling hills of second growth, wound along creek valleys by cows grazing bottomland pastures, descended to saltwater again at Port Discovery, <sup>close under outermost</sup> ~~at the foot of the first high~~ ridge of the Olympics, climbed another hill, the road bordered by white-and-pink blossoms of wild rhododendron, and dropped to Sequim Bay.

All was new. But old, familiar. Marmot Pass, Highlands dock, Richmond Beach -- in these past 5 years <sup>(5 summers with the length of 5 long winters)</sup> I'd seen (and felt) many an Olympic sunset. The Olympics are the Sunset Mountains. If they now were hidden behind me, if the view was out to the Strait of Juan de Fuca and faraway Vancouver Island, still it was another Olympic sunset.



Yet nothing was old, familiar. Because:

"Nobody knows where I am!"

At Heather Lake and Mineral City, Arild knew where I was. Even on explorations of Hidden Lake wilderness my folks knew approximately where I was. Should I be wanted now (except for my folks, by whom might that be?) there'd be no clue where to look.

Alone in Sequim Bay State Park. Alone in the world. For the first time in my life, truly alone. Not that it was entirely my choice.

I hadn't abandoned God. He abandoned me. He lost his right to exist by failing to acknowledge that I existed. Ah, with what cold, fierce glee, a year ago spring, I raced through the closing pages of Mark Twain's The Mysterious Stranger! With what exaltation I said aloud, "THERE IS NO GOD!" Christ it was thrilling. To be sure, I called myself a freethinker, shrinking from that word, that terrible scary lightning-inviting word, until the warehouse summer and H.L. Mencken's Treatise on the Gods. Then I at last unloaded excess baggage, embraced the cosmic loneliness, with dreadful pride accepted the name of atheist.

I hadn't abandoned Americanism. Americanism abandoned me. Mother's family had always been Republican because her father remembered a day in his early childhood when a rider galloped down the Pennsylvania road yelling, "They've murdered Lincoln!" Grandfather ran in the house and hid under the bed, knowing that now the Democrats had got Lincoln they'd be coming after him. Dad's family had always been Republican because in Massachusetts only Catholics are Democrats. I'd been for Hoover in 1932 (and a little Lowell Mick damn near killed me for saying so), had worn the Landon sunflower in

'36, ~~with~~ the Win With Willkie button in '40. But a year ago spring I'd begun to understand the meaning of our family history, starting on Bainbridge Island, my earliest remembered home, through the uprooting move to Seattle, the desperate week-long drive across the continent to Lowell, where Dad's father was tight with the bosses and able to get him a job, the bloody year-long battle of strikers and strikebreakers, and the despairing retreat across the continent to a shack in the country among the stumpranchers. When everyone I knew was poor, the only visible wealth in movies, my patriotism was staunch. But when I mowed lawns of the Blue Ridge estate and saw the Highlands mansions behind the Cyclone Fence I was enraged. A shift from Republican to Democrat would not suffice. All Roosevelt had done was preserve capitalism from the necessary revolution. I read Bertrand Russell's Proposed Roads to Freedom and renounced Americanism altogether.

I hadn't abandoned the Revolution. The Revolution abandoned me. Sheehan's Personal History of the Chinese Revolution converted me to Communism, a faith confirmed by Edgar Snow's Red Star Over China. Louis Fischer's Men and Politics modified my convictions to anti-Stalinism. Last spring I had high hopes for the Trotskyites and eagerly attended meetings of the Socialist Workers Party. (It is quite possible to despise the proletariat but ~~still~~ work for liquidation of the capitalists; they have it coming.) However, during discussion periods my every question was answered by a patronizing, "To get into that subject you must first study the dialectic." Finally I pinned down the star agitator and asked, "What the hell is dialectic?" He sold me a stack of pamphlets explaining the Lenin-Trotsky

line. I tried to swallow it. And decided if Marxism isn't bullshit there's no way to tell the difference with your eyes closed. I pretended an interest a while longer for the sake of three ravishing Trotskyite girls, confident that as revolutionary comrades we would practice free love. When I found the witches were married to ~~these~~ agitators in the Merchant Marine and had no free love for me I became a philosophical anarchist.

I hadn't abandoned my friends. They abandoned me. First, they stayed ~~unhindered~~ healthy. Second, they remained on Lower Campus, pursuing their Tinker Toy engineering, rather than following me to Upper Campus for a genuine education. I couldn't blame them too much. They lived in fear, were feeding their brains into a meat-grinder to obtain security. No security for me. The next Depression wasn't my worry, anymore than the war. The world is dangerous and there is no security. Last winter, briefly, the pain again. The cheerful campus doctor listened to my heart and gave me sulfa pills and told me always to wear a hat in the hot sun and go slow up steps. I staggered ~~zombie-like and~~ wobbly-kneed from the Health Center into the ~~blackest~~ bleakest ~~night~~ night since Creation, knowing I'd soon learn the truth about eternity the hard way. I sat by Frosh Pond staring at raindrop-dancing water, staring into the face of Death.

Sun warming the bag. Awake! Savor salt breezes off the bay. What ~~flavors~~ <sup>aromas</sup> will there be in the winds of tonight?

moccasins.

Crawl out. Pull on ~~moccasins~~ Stand up. What is that "crunch"?

Must've got a twig in the ~~moccasin~~ moccasin. Take it off, look for twig --

and see the ruins of my glasses, placed there last night for safekeeping.  
Hell!

Blindness was no hindrance walking to the Model A. But the highway was a blur. Yes, I could safely follow the fuzzy yellow line, but only in rainbows do yellow lines lead to pots of gold. Whatever my day's destination might be, the route there certainly would be on narrow, twisty, dirt roads I'd damn well better be able to see.

Thirty cautious miles I followed the yellow line over the Sequim Prairie, through the <sup>dairy-ranchers'</sup> hamlet of Sequim, onward to Port Angeles, a mere <sup>lumber-mill</sup> village but even so the metropolis of the Peninsula. The dime store clerk was fascinated by a <sup>downy-faced boy</sup> ~~scruffy bearded~~ groping through the stock of glasses -- only poor old farm ladies buy dime store glasses. Apparently because poor old farm ladies go blind in a different manner from boys. I tried every pair in the store. None brought the world in focus. Very well. Not only do I not know my goal, when I get there I ~~won't~~ won't see it. There's adventure for you, Thomas Wolfe, there's bravery for you, Mr. Hemingway.

I studied the map. Within a highway hour or so were side-roads up valleys -- Dungeness, Elwha, Soleduck. Valleys obviously were the sane choice for June 12, the peaks ~~still~~ deep in winter. Yet there were two tempting roads (the only two in the entire range) climbing to high country. One led from the Elwha to Hurricane Ridge and Obstruction Point (a day's hard hike from the Lillian Glacier had not the 3-day blow blown in). That was well west of Port Angeles. The second, closer, led to Deer Park (where we'd have met the Big Red Truck). For the hell of it, why not try? Retreat to a valley was always open. I had a week.

The gravel road ran south from the highway over the flatland of Sequim Prairie, in a couple miles passing the last farm, promptly narrowing and roughening, and entering a small valley winding through second-growth-covered foothills. In another mile, <sup>at</sup> a lonesome stumpranch, a shack and a decrepit barn and 2 acres of creek-bottom pasture, my speedometer telling me Deer Park was 12 ~~miles~~ miles away, the up-and-down track tilted upward for good. I shifted down to second gear and blindly crept around blind corners, squinting to make sure the road wasn't washed out or windfall-blocked and that I was turning the A the same way as the road. Three creeping miles from the stumpranch was a sign, "Olympic National Park. Dangerous road. Proceed at own risk."

Wisps of steam curled ~~out~~ from the radiator. Stop. Listen to water boil. Once quiet, resume the grind. Again stop. Wait. Narrower the road, now on a sidehill, spindly trees to the right barely masking the plunge to blurry depths of Maiden Creek valley. My own risk! Steadily steeper the road; 10 miles of constant second <sup>gear</sup> from the stumpranch, 2 miles from the map-marked road-end, double-clutch down to low.

Stop again, this time by a waterfall. ~~Water~~ Water is just what I need. ~~Adjust hand throttle to racing~~  
~~Leave the motor running,~~ wrap a hand in a rag and spin off the radiator cap, stand back from the geyser. Slowly add cold mountain water to the brim, idle the motor a while before shutting it off. Mustn't crack the block.

The road was scarcely wider than the A. Fir trees on the rocky <sup>above</sup> precipice <sup>^</sup> to the left were skinny and short and scattered. No trees guarded the brink on the right. There would've been a view if I could've seen it. Vaguely amid clouds to the west I made out Grand Ridge, north-side gullies full of snow. I took pictures so later I could see what I was looking at.

What lay ahead, above? According to the speedometer, a final mile. I'd not expected to come this near. But up in ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> gray-white cloud, was that a pure white? Grind upward in low -- and yes, it was snow, a solid bank sloping from the cliff on the left out over the road, and in a hundred yards pushing to the brink. End of the line. Damn! I'd have been amazed to reach Deer Park on June 12, yet it was a shame to come so close and miss.

So I'd retreat to valley adventures. First, though, I might as well see (that is, point eyes and camera at) our <sup>Ranger</sup> goal of of 3 summers ago. I walked the road a quarter-mile up to a shoulder. On the far side would be the arctic landscape of the Olympics in winter.

Have I gone totally blind? So blind that snow looks green? No! On the far side of the shoulder, a vast meadow. Fog-dimmed and cloud-darkened ~~X~~ but green! On June 12!

Stupid of me not to suspect. I knew the boast of Sequim <sup>farmers</sup> ~~fact~~ that ~~the~~ <sup>(they are forced to irrigate</sup> because <sup>^</sup> annual precipitation on their prairie is a meager 17 inches, contrasted to 30 inches in Seattle and ~~200~~ a deluge of 200 inches on windward slopes of the Olympics 35 miles west. But I'd thought the rainshadow a lowland phenomenon, was unaware so little snow falls on the northeast Olympics that summer begins a month earlier than on Olympus.

Well, to call the scene "summer" was an exaggeration. ~~the~~ Instead say early spring. Conceivably I could make a tolerable camp in those snow-flecked, fog-swept meadows. However, that would require hoisting pack, leaving the A, and without that faithful friend (if man, a machine, <sup>can be said to have</sup> ~~was~~ a soul, so does the A) <sup>lacking any</sup> ~~having no~~ ally against the lurking menace of this cold wilderness 12 miles from the nearest other human being. I descended, glad to at least have glimpsed the land of faery, even if it presently

was too spooky for aught but goblins.

A curious thing I'd not seen before, all fuzzy-eyed. A shovel in the snowbank. Left by whom? For what? When? ~~But it was a curious thing~~ Curious. Even weird. I studied the shovel. Studied the 20 feet of snow-blocked road. Hell, I could try. I had a week.

In an hour I shoveled a lane nearly as wide as the Model A. But, of course, the farther inward I dug the deeper the snow. By the end of the second hour the distance between brink and snow equalled the width of the A plus a foot. I'd prefer 2 feet. But that would take until nightfall. Hell, take a chance. No need for the A in the approaching oblivion.

Start her up, go slow, slow, snubbing the left front tire against the snow wall, praying (to what?) the meltwater-mushy brink wouldn't collapse under the right tires, wondering if I'd have time to leap clear.

Past! And over the shoulder into meadows! Three years late the Lone Ranger has arrived!

Trembling with fear and joy I spotted a cabin on a spur road. Curiouser and curiouser. Well, no shivering meadow camp for me, exposed to evil spirits of night and fog. I parked the A, opened the door of the closed-in porch, noted with satisfaction the pile of dry firewood.

The cabin door opened. My hair stood on end. A creature leaned out, picked up a chunk of wood, and shut the door. Christ! So close I could hear her breathe and she didn't even see me. Am I invisible? Without noticing, did I die? Am I a ghost? Or is she?

I fled to the A. Footsteps followed. Hair again on end. I turned -- and was greeted by an indisputable human being, male, and eager to talk to a stranger after a snow-trapped winter with his wife. They were

skywatchers. Jap bombers from a task force off the coast would have to cross the Olympics. The watchers would radio a <sup>half-hour's</sup> ~~few minutes' warning~~ warning to Boeing and the shipyards and the remnants of the Pacific Fleet being repaired at Bremerton.

The shovel was explained. He'd taken it down to the snowbank yesterday to dig a way through for his car (which I'd not seen in the closed ~~garage~~ garage) but decided ~~that after all these months~~ he wasn't in that much of a hurry to get to Port Angeles. He'd left the shovel, though. He laughed, "I sort of thought somebody like you might show up."

Alone in the night. Burrowed deep in clouds. Behind me, the interior of the ~~lean-to~~ lean-to -- a trail shelter until the ~~road was~~ <sup>CCC</sup> pushed <sup>the road</sup> up here some 8 years ago. Beyond the campfire, flickering-lit by flames, the edge of grassy meadows greening up for summer, Christmas tree alpine firs, white snowpatch, drifting fog.

I was not completely alone. ~~3000~~ Outside the shelter was the A. Other friends around me. On my body the garments of many trails, wool watch cap and shirt and pants (no cotton by God and no shorts -- I'd learned my lesson on Lost Ridge). Trapper Nelson and wool sleeping bag. Coffee can in which I'd heated (for old times' sake) a jar of Lynden Chicken Raviola. Tin cup and spoon. On the fire the Ten Can holding coffee boiled black as a woman's heart. (Yes, I'd yielded to the evils of coffee. I'd drink beer and wine and whiskey and rum, too, if ever I could get my hands on any. I was smoking a cigarette from the pack impulsively bought in Edmonds. What had it got me, being a clean-living boy? In my time remaining I'd have to rush



to sample <sup>every</sup> ~~all the~~ adult vices.)

Best friends of all, my boots, the Bone Drys. Extending high enough above the ankles to slosh through puddles and creeks and muck all day and never dampen my wool socks. I fondled the spike-studded soles. When I bought the boots last July I'd wanted tricounis. All gone to war. No slivers to be found either. Damned if I'd mess with caulks; Dad had the sharp little daggers in his soles and on trails had to stop every few minutes to pull off impaled leaves and bits of wood. But as I told the guy in the sporting goods shop, I couldn't climb the vertical trail to Lake Constance on smooth leather. He agreed (he had a German accent and seemed mountain-wise) and suggested golfers' spikes. A mountain climber would sneer, <sup>Well,</sup> ~~but~~ if I had to be careful climbing steps I sure as hell wouldn't be climbing mountains. For a hiker the spikes worked fine.

Not quite alone. Some old friends along. Where were the others? Arild was c/o Fleet Post Office, San Francisco -- but not, thank God, riding shotgun on a suicide plane. The malocclusion of that square Norwegian jaw saved him from his idiocy. He'd written, "Dammit, I didn't enlist to bite the Japs!" But the Navy said if you couldn't crack walnuts between your teeth you couldn't fly and had made him a floating weatherman. Bob was in an Army camp, yanked out of the University last spring. Bill, in Kansas, was awaiting "Greetings!" from President Roosevelt. Hal and Al were still in school, sweating out quarter-by-quarter engineers' deferments. Until Spring Quarter we gathered for lunch in Bagley Hall on Lower Campus. Now at noon I waited table and washed dishes. The last vestige of our cozy Lincoln society, 4 years ~~in~~ in the building, had been destroyed. Childhood had ended.

Yet does childhood ever end? Does one ever escape the phantoms?

Alone in silence of night. No river roar this high in meadows, no babble from the meltwater trickle of my water supply, no wind whisper in slow-drifting fog. Alone in darkness of night more deepened than dispelled by flames. I'd never been alone ~~before~~ in a mountain night.

Try to avoid memories of the Old Man of the Mountains, that Sax Rohmer Saturday Evening Post monster beside whom the unspeakable Dr. Fu Manchu was Santa Claus. Caught by night on a country road, I'd hear the patter of tiny feet behind me and know it was Them -- the hashish fiends, crazed dwarfs <sup>bodies</sup> drugged since birth by the Old Man, ~~stunted~~ stunted, minds enslaved ~~by~~ to know only dope and murder. I'd break into a run and so would they and I'd hear their nasty hoarse panting and the swishing of their little scimitars and I'd scream "MOTHER! MOTHER!" and in the nick of time she'd open the front door.

Hark! What is that "thump!" in blackness beyond firelight? Muscles tense. Scalp prickles. Heart pounds. Eyes Straining ~~into night~~ see only shifting shadows concealing hashish fiends.

Dear Lord! Two balls of hellish green fire burning in blackness!  
The Old Man himself! ~~He is gone~~

Demon eyes float closer. I stand up to die on my feet. And the deer bounds off in night and fog, thumping, thumping, thumping.

Slowly, obeying the doctor, I climbed from the mile-high shelf of Deer Park toward the cloud-lost summit of 6000-foot Blue Mountain. Boots crushed new-sprouting grass sparkling with fog-drops, avoided white

blossoms, yellow blossoms, whose faces I knew if not the names. Meadows swelled in mounds, dipped to swales, the lush curving flesh of a great green woman.

How does one make love to a mountain?

For that matter, how does one make love to a girl? Last fall the YMCA-YWCA offered a Preparation for Marriage course and I'd heard guys in class sniggering about the Ten Basic Positions. Ten! What ~~gymnastics~~ gymnastics do Christian lovers perform ~~in bed~~? I could visualize three or four -- certain of the less obviously deranged drawings on toilet walls seemed plausible. But ten! Were there still others for atheists?

Not that knowledge of mechanics would have done me any good. An arm around the shoulder had been my farthest advance with the three Lincoln girls I'd dated and now one had left town, one had pledged a sorority and was forbidden to go out with white-jacketed houseboys, and the third was the little dark-haired girl, may she <sup>roast</sup> ~~burn~~ in Hell. Of the thousands of soft bodies in the District, 40 under the same roof as I, none was mine.

For a moment I thought they all were mine. As I was walking down the Avenue my first night at the Big Party, a girl walking up the Avenue smiled. Someone I knew from Lincoln, surely. I smiled, trying through myopia to make out her face. But when she came in focus I saw she was a total stranger. Cold-white with shock, ~~white~~ red-hot with shame, I stalked by with eyes straight forward. And as we passed she ramm'd an elbow in my ribs. Proper punishment for a masher. When the truth hit me and I turned she was a dozen feet away and not looking back. Should I run after, tap her on the shoulder? What then? What are the words?

I hadn't thought about the words so she got away. No matter. If this happened my very first night in the District it was going to be one hell of a Party. I didn't expect love, of course, not with a stranger. A doomed 17-year-old atheist Red would settle for a screw. You bet. Night after night, week after week, I walked the Avenue rehearsing the words and that was the only elbow, the only smile, ever.

Crap on girls. I'd love a mountain.

Meadows crested on the top of Blue Mountain, my first Olympic summit since Lost Ridge, and this <sup>magic</sup> ~~thrilling~~ morning lying in the front lines of the <sup>battle</sup> ~~war~~ between sun and storm. Below to the north, Sequim Prairie and Sequim Bay and Dungeness Spit were warm-bright, and Port Angeles and Ediz Hook, and the Strait of Juan de Fuca and Vancouver Island. Below to south and west, fog filled valleys of the Graywolf River and tributaries. Above the dark sea, skeleton-white peaks dodged in and out of black-<sup>souled</sup> ~~hearted~~ clouds. I ~~took~~ <sup>snapped</sup> photos in which I might later see The Needles and Mt. Deception south, Grand Ridge and Obstruction Point and Lillian Ridge west. Though all the <sup>mountain</sup> world was a blurred twilight gloom, I could feel if not see how beautiful it was.

A cold ghost of cloud swirled me off in gray void. No Green Woman now, no forests and peaks, no saltwater and campus, no <sup>girls</sup> ~~women~~ and war, no past and future, no life and death. The universe was destroyed or not yet created and I was alone in a cloud.

TO  
GODS  
+  
DEVILS

June 1946

Chapter 5

AGAIN THE LAND OF LOST

Constance Creek a snowmelt storm, its glacier-icy wind sweeping the road. The Model A the sole machine this dark June Monday morning. Monday? No. Tuesday. Seems Monday because not since Sunday have I entered bed. That bed! Shudder. Must walk. Escape. Before other cars come. Before they come.

Hoist Trapper Nelson. Crushing heavy. Full of cans pulled in blind haste from shelves of the Quilcene Market. Did I buy anything but pork and beans? Nervous from the wary-watching storekeeper. Suspicion in her sleep-heavy eyes. Reluctant she was to unlock the door. Is the mark of Cain on my forehead? Why did nighthawks dive from darkness into headlights of the A? Reason says a hatch of flying bugs along the road. Why then the hatred of harpy eyes inches from my face, only the thin windshield protecting from rending-tearing claws?

Trapper a sisyphian stone. Legs leaden with rancid beer, with walking-walking-walking night-empty city streets, ambushful streets. No safety from pursuit in haunted streets. The ferry left them behind. But there are other ferries. I may have just a 2-hour start. Must walk-walk-walk.

Booming cataracts of Dose Falls. In 1938 a road climbed from Constance Creek to the top. Now the scree of pastel limestone and pillow

the  
part of  
symbol

lava has narrowed the way to trail again. This much have these temporary mountains crumbled in 8 years. And this much I.

Entropy, Entropy, and Entropy!

'Thinketh He dwelleth i' the cold o' the moon.

1945 was the year of man's ultimate crime, and mine. Always now he will be pursued, and I. Evil is here at Dose Falls because I am here. No more is the wilderness innocent for I am not. Vengeance is mine, sayeth Entropy.

Chill sullen alder grove of Camp Muscott. Gray flood of the Dose, somber with rock milk, ground bones of mountains. No bootprints in gray silt of trail. Pockmarks of raindrops only. No <sup>prior</sup> boots this year, ~~before~~ ~~mine~~. No ambushes ahead, then.

Trail climbs from swollen river through aged firs. Trapper buckles knees. Must rest. Sit in rain-soaked duff, feel the cold of hostile Earth seep into ass.

'Tis bitter bold,  
And I am sick at heart.

Tomb-dark forest. Yet I did not, after all, die young, and am now so soon old. Two summers ago, in wotthehell desperation climbing trails from the Carbon River to Burroughs Mountain (Rainier <sup>dazzling</sup> ~~stunning~~ in sun), to Spray Park (fog-dim), and to Mystic Lake (rain-snow slashing meadows) I proved the doctor wrong. I may survive to a doddering 30. Had I known in 1943, would I have <sup>gagged down</sup> ~~endured~~ the fossil worms? I might now be mapping mountains of Alaska for the U.S. Geological Survey, safe as Galahad.

I have lived long enough. My way of life  
Is fallen into the sear, the yellow leaf.

~~Corner-of-eye-seen~~

Motion! I am not alone. There -- a tiny white flower. Wild-dancing in a wind.

To me the meanest flower that blows can give  
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

And too deep for screams of terror -- for there is no wind! My fingers by the flower feel not the softest breeze. Yet the flower feels. I am surrounded by the cosmic storm. It is leaking through unseen walls. It may burst out and blow me as it blows the flower. Walk on, walk on.

Fresh tracks! Be still my heart. Not boots in the black muck. No boots here since fall.

There! Dipping snouts in ooze of the Mineral Spring. Stop! Six elk. *Two tons of muscle, two dozen heavy hooves.* Huge cows. <sup>^</sup> If they stampeded... They amble uptrail, around the corner.

Walk through the spring, under the rock wall. Eyes! There -- standing guard atop the wall -- the bull! If I reached out I could touch his horrid nose. If he reached out... Enormous brown eyes glare. Don't look him in the eye. Humbly lower head, walk on. Listen. Does he pursue? No.

Resume breathing.

The wilderness is not empty. It is inhabited. By creatures which do not want me among them. The bull lets me pass because I'm a mosquito not worth <sup>the</sup> slapping. But I am hated. To be hated is to feel pain. To hate is to cause pain. I have hated, thus am hated.

The old blowdown. I remember this opening in the forest on a balmy summer day, perfumed by orange blossoms on tree-creeping vines. No perfume in sodden jackstraw now. The cold stench of winter's rot.

Dose Forks junction. The West Fork trail drops to the river. That way to the Anderson Glacier -- to July of 1939. I stay high for the East Fork -- for August of 1939, July of 1940.

Legs lighter. Beer flushed out. Yet head full of feathers. How long since I've slept? Dared not nap at Edmonds lest a car roar onto the dock. Nor on the ferry lest a speedboat race from shore.

Junction with the Sunnybrook trail. Down those switchbacks we came running rubber-legged in 1938, exalted by the above-the-cloudsea morning of Del Monte Ridge. No top to clouds today. The very Sun has been extinguished.

Across the Dose, the tributary valley of Silt Creek. Fed by the Eel Glacier. Which I didn't see because we failed to reach Flypaper Pass.

Deep ravine of Deception Creek, a torrent of ~~foam~~ foam, a torrent of wind from the Mystery Glacier. I am haunted by the glad boy.

Climb from violent ravine to still forest. Walk from gloom into gray day of bleached logs and snags, silver skeletons of trees burned a half-century ago. A new forest sprouting, little firs naked to the low ceiling of clouds.

I have been -- and not been -- here before. The burn is not as I remember. The summer trail crossed dry gravel of an alluvial fan. Now winter is barely yielding to rough spring and meltwater in a dozen random channels floods the young forest. <sup>A dozen rivers to ford.</sup> I'm too early. The elk told me. The flood I was not supposed to see tells me. I'm not wanted.

No safety in the city. No safety either in raw unfinished wilderness.

I heard among the solitary hills  
Low breathings coming after me, and sounds  
Of undistinguishable motion, steps  
Almost as silent as the turf they trod.

Through the burn into premature twilight of tall, ancient trees, air chilled by patches of needle-littered snow. Nine miles from Constance Creek,



~~xxxx~~ 1000 feet above the sea from which we slimy-slid these millions of years past, I have ~~erupt~~ <sup>crawled</sup> 2500 feet closer to the unseen sky.

Camp Marion. Where we Rangers crowded around bonfires drying (or at least warming) wool sleeping bags soaked by the 3-day blow. Another return. But nothing is the same. Nor ever will be again. Not twice can ~~you~~ <sup>one</sup> drink from the same river. Entropy, Entropy, and Entropy.

Reason says they will not pursue. Reason says there is no "they." Even so ~~there is~~ no escape. No escape from myself. No escape from the horror of self.

Camp Marion. My home 2 nights in 1939, one night in 1940. What other mountain homes since Deer Park in 1943?

Al's cabin on the Miller River, a half-dozen weekends. Piling into Model A's with Al and Hal and Jim and miscellaneous engineers, and Bob when home on furlough. Away from campus to shadows of forest and rhythms of river, to fireplace blaze and evening-long poker games, three chips for a penny, the climax pots a staggering 15¢. Candlelight explorations of the ghostie-~~hidden~~ <sup>creeping</sup> depths of the Silver Dollar Mine.

Lean-to shelter at the confluence of Cataract Creek and the Carbon River, 3 nights with Al. Days in sunlight and storm of Rainier highlands. Each night the mice staged footraces up Al's sleeping bag, the first to scamper over his ~~face~~ <sup>hips</sup> rewarded by a flurry of curses and flailing arms.

A nameless pond in heather meadows somewhere north of Stevens Pass, alone, when I missed the trail to Lake Valhalla and wandered half-lost until nightfall.

Cozy trapper's  
~~sun~~/cabin at Barclay Lake, with Al and Jim, under the mile-high north  
 face of Mt. Baring, a precipice grim enough <sup>as seen</sup> next day from the cloud-washed  
 summit of Mt. Townsend to send Byron into a rhyming fit.

Grand Valley, 3 nights with Dr. Phillips. From Deer Park we hiked high  
 tundra of Grand Ridge to Obstruction Point (at last!), then Lillian Ridge  
 (ditto!), and down to lake-sparkling parkland. One day we scrambled up a  
 no-name 6700-foot peak at the valley head, ate lunch on lichen-covered rocks  
 swarming with a million ladybugs, and looked out to Lost Ridge, to Mt. Olympus.

And a soggy patch of bare ground between a snowbank and Lena Creek, a  
 month ago with Bob, <sup>back</sup> ~~returned~~ from the Army for good. We trudged in snow to  
 Upper Lena Lake and a winter storm, then descended to bright springtime in  
 the Hamma Hamma valley.

Too few mountain homes for 3 years. Almost I forgot. Only now, in the  
 worst trouble of my life, guilty of crimes one dares not name, did I  
 remember.

How could I forget? How could mountains so dwindle in my dreams? Not  
 for lack of companions, since no law bars solitary roamings. Not because of  
 gas rationing, the end of which last fall meely eliminated the small  
 inconvenience of bumming ~~the~~ black-market stamps from friends. No. Because  
 in the excitement of city adventures I had little need or leisure for  
 mountains.

Adventures in a thousand poems and novels and plays, symphonies and  
 quartets, paintings and watercolors, a realm of truth and beauty so various,  
 so beautiful, so new, <sup>so</sup> ever-inviting to a scholar-gypsy following the Gleam.

Adventures supported by the counterfeit wartime currency easily earned from jobs washing dishes, jobs stacking junk lumber at Sand Point Naval Air Station and sorting mail at the Post Office Terminal Annex, jobs in the English Department and Philosophy Department grading bluebooks and in the Art Department as custodian of Henry Art Gallery, the job at Burke's Millwork feeding planks through a planer, plywood sheets through a shaper.

Adventures from a basecamp moved by gypsy whim from the basement of Kappa Delta to the basement of Alpha Chi Omega to the dilapidated shack on Pasadena Place shared by Jim and Jack, formerly of the basement of Alpha Epsilon Phi. We furnished our three-room \$20-a-month Houseboys' Retreat with bunks and blankets, desks and chairs, lamps and rugs, kitchenware and canned goods stolen from sororities during our unannounced midnight departures. We fired the kitchen range with midnight-stolen ~~fuel~~ fuel-yard coal. We supplemented home cooking (~~made such~~ <sup>my apple pies so</sup> delicious ~~apple pies that~~ Jim wanted to marry me) with meals stolen from Avenue restaurants where cashiers were too careless to make sure checks were paid.

Adventures with new friends. Don, out of the Army on a psycho discharge (scarcely any young males on campus except psychos like Don and 4-F's like me and deferred engineers and Navy V-12's marching to class in cadence count). ~~and at 21~~ <sup>Being 21 he was</sup> able to teach me (what I could not learn ~~by myself,~~ <sup>on my own,</sup> ~~being~~ blonde and pale and at 18 too unshaped by vice to convince any bartender I was more than 15) the great truth that

Malt does more than Milton can  
To justify God's ways to man.

Also the grape. We'd met when recruited by a professor for bit parts as preachers in The Bishop's Bed, a trifling farce playing at the Tryout

Theater on the Avenue. One night Don brought to our dressing room a fifth of Burgundy. Costumes and makeup on, we pulled the cork.

O for a draught of vintage! that hath been  
Cooled a long age in the deep-delvèd earth,  
Tasting of Flora and the country green,  
Dance, and Provencal song, and sunburnt mirth!

Tart swallow of blude-reid wine, fire ignited in belly, sudden sharpness of insight, profundity of philosophy, hilarity of wit. To think I wasted 18 years ~~for~~ sober! Never did we perform our Act One scene so brilliantly. But returned to the dressing room to await our next entrance, in Act Three, we found the bottle empty. A lad can't fly on one wing.

I say -- the future is a serious matter --  
And so -- for God's sake -- hock and soda-water!

Or at least more wine. But the University campus is protected from corruption by a half-mile dry zone. No sweat, we've all of Act Two for an expedition across the desert to an oasis. ~~At mid-day~~ <sup>Sprint</sup> in June twilight up the Avenue to the Model A, parked on Greek Row. Why are Avenue strollers staring, jaws agape? Have they never seen two young preachers in clerics' collars and suits of godly black? ~~Why~~ <sup>Perhaps</sup> that -- but not gaudy with lipstick and mascara and powder and rouge. Two young painted preachers running. And then two self-aware young painted preachers running and giggling. How was church attendance the next Sunday?

Our Act Three scene concluded in a blackout. The entire cast was crowded on the tiny stage and when the lights went out all (but one) commenced the well-rehearsed orderly procession to the wings. When the lights went out I toppled, and no logger around to yell "Timber!" ~~to~~ ~~total~~ ~~darkness~~ ~~I~~ ~~crept~~ ~~about~~ ~~on~~ ~~hands~~ ~~and~~ ~~knees~~ ~~Hands~~ ~~discovered~~ ~~ankles~~ ~~How~~ ~~did~~ ~~this~~ ~~wall~~ ~~come~~ ~~so~~ ~~near~~ ~~my~~ ~~nose~~? No wall -- the floor! In total darkness I crept about on hands and knees. Hands discovered ankles.

Hero cursed. Heroine shrieked. Orderly procession disintegrated ~~in~~ <sup>to</sup> blindly-milling mob. More ankles, even a calf or two. More cursing shrieking. *Guessing the joke it couldn't see, screamed and howled.* ~~Though unable to see the joke, the audience could guess and broke up.~~ So the ~~untimely~~ end of my theatrical career.

When Don disappeared from campus, Houseboy Jim (met through <sup>his</sup> fellow-engineer Al) supplied California grapefruit juice and Mexican gin.

i wake the world from sleep  
 as i caper ~~and~~ and sing and leap  
 when i sing my wild free tune  
 wotthehell wotthehell  
 under the blear eyed moon  
 i am pelted with cast off shoon  
 but wotthehell wotthehell

One midnight I led him on an ascent of the roof of Parrington Hall, my favorite vantage for views of city lights. I'd not done the climb before ~~in~~ in rain. The topmost slope of steep wet shingles was more thrilling than ever. Tragically so. Jim lost footing and slid to his death. Except just short of the final plunge his fall was stopped by a ~~flat~~ flat part-roof. Body all aching and racked with pain, he moaned, "More gin!" And more there was.

Then I saw the morning sky --  
 Heigho, the tale was all a lie;  
 The world, it was the old world yet,  
 I was I, my things were wet.

Once bitten, though, no remedy like the hair of the dog. When Jim graduated and went off to California to seek his fortune, I sought to solo. Thrown out of the Rainbow. Thrown out of the Blue Moon. Sporadic nervous successes at the Red Robin. Finally the security of the Eastlake Gardens, each of the two bartenders ~~somehow~~ somehow convinced the other had checked my driver's license.

My thirst to staunch, I fill my paunch  
With jolly good ale and old.

Adventures with beauty and truth and booze. And the wartime ratio on  
Upper Campus being 30 females for every male, no need to be handsome and  
athletic. So those adventures too. Toward the consummation devoutly to  
be wished. Toward the sin for which there is no absolution.

Long is the twilight of June. Yet inevitable is night. In the day  
one forgets.

Dank dripping winter-saturated forest. Wet wood resists entropy. Blow  
sick ~~sacks~~ coals to healthy flame, and blow blow blow again. Lay soggy  
branches on the pile to steam, to smoke, perchance to burn. <sup>Enormous</sup> Night rings my  
tiny island of light. Fire lowers and blackness presses in. Blow blow  
blow and high-leaping flames repulse the enemy. Back and forth surge  
battle lines.

Two hks  
Night is not empty. At the edge of my circle of light Something waits.  
No companion to guard my rear from attack. Ceaselessly look around, around,  
and over shoulder.

Listen! Hear its voice in the river. A Sergeant bellows, "HUP hoo  
hee hor, HUP hoo hee hor." What Legions in the river? As They march They  
whisper. "Manning..." I can't make out the rest. Discussions of my crimes?  
"Manning..." Why that horrid chuckle?

Pile on more wood, blow blow blow pale flames to bright loud-crackling  
eruptions, drown the voices. Yet dancing flames bring the Vanguard close,  
shadows dancing, whispering, cackling. I dare not speak aloud lest

Something answer. And in the river the Sergeant counts cadence for the  
 approaching Legions.

What labors occupied God before He made Heaven and Earth?  
 He was preparing Hell for those who pry into mysteries.  
 Thus sayeth St. Augustine.

Four years ago ~~the One~~ God died and the cosmos was simplified to a  
 machine, each wheel and lever material and palpable. What I once called  
 God was merely the sum of the unknown, which steadily retreats from the  
 advance of science. Yet 2½ years ago I too retreated from Science, abandoned  
 this second blind faith. During my Introduction to Philosophy by Dr.  
 Phillips I pondered the Forms of Plato, the Malignant Deceiver of Descartes,  
 the Billiard Balls of Hume, Russell's Oilcan on the Other Side of the Moon.  
 My rejection of the two-level reality of supernaturalism was confirmed. But  
 now I also rejected naive materialism and mechanism. Where is the materiality  
 of a Shakespeare play? Where the mechanism of a Beethoven quartet? I became  
 a naturalist. With visions that cannot be weighed and measured, with  
 --somehow -- a soul, mortal yet real. Living in a cosmos that contains -- in  
 nature, not apart -- entities invisible except to the soul.

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,  
 Than are dreamt of in our philosophy.

Especially in the night. The nighthawks warned me, the storm-blown  
 flower warned me, the bull elk warned me, the random-flooding meltwater in  
 the burn warned me.

When I killed ~~the One~~ God and wrecked the Machine I ~~turned loose in~~  
~~the cosmos the spirits of blizzards and hurricanes and earthquakes, the Old Ones,~~  
~~who show themselves loud and terrible by day, silent and dreadful by night.~~

*unchained*

I am not wanted here. In the electric city <sup>glow</sup> ~~glow~~ I forgot the ~~message~~  
~~the~~ country roads at night, the fear that drove Neanderthal man into caves.  
 Now I have entered alone a forbidden land and the Old Ones have come to  
 demand the penalty.

No sleep will be safe until dawn dissolves shadows, stills voices.

I did sleep, briefly. Exhausted by the last tears (which must be the  
 last for I can withstand no more) and bear and city streets and over-water  
 flight and 9 miles of trail, I heaped wood on the fire and crawled in the  
 bag.

And awoke to thudding feet and a Pursuer by the blazing fire! And  
 instantly awoke again to absolute silent blackness!

Shaking with terror blow ash-<sup>smothered</sup>~~choked~~ coals to a glow, add fire-dried  
 twigs, blow to a flame, drive back the night. No more sleep.

To sleep, perchance to dream.

The first awakening was just a dream. Just a dream! The second  
 awakening was real. Or will there be a third?

Voices mock. They have the whole night to claim me, can enjoy Their  
 sport at leisure. In whispers and cackles They repeat the memories of  
 lovely girls, of flirting in corridors of Parrington Hall, of lemon cokes  
 in Avenue restaurants, of movies and concerts and hockey games, of romping  
 on campus lawns and Puget Sound beaches. All the gorgeous girls and I a  
 larking lad in love with all. And at last a girl who was not a girl.



Be very wary  
 Of the fairy --  
 Her eyes  
 Are lies.

Not a girl, a woman, and after my <sup>repetition</sup> ~~repetition~~ of the <sup>Un</sup> Original ~~Incense~~  
~~original~~ Sing demanding I be no more a boy. But I'm not ready to be a man!  
 I flee and she pursues and catches. I flee again, and again, and am caught,  
 am caught.

My last run. And in the Dream she caught me.

Yes, a third awakening, but in full morning. Yes, in desolate gray  
 dawn I did at last sleep. Now new-built fire boils water in Ten Can. Throw  
 in a ~~hand~~ handful of coffee. Boil the shit out of it. A dash of cold water  
 to settle the grounds. Pour a steaming cup. Scald mouth, horrify throat,  
 jolt guts. I live! Toast a slice of bread on a stick, spread it with  
 peanut butter. Yes, in my Quilcene daze I did buy something other than  
 cans of beans. Another cup of coffee. Caffeine surges through muscles,  
 joy through soul. The Old Ones are dead. City and woman lie far beyond the  
 gulf of ~~last night~~ yesterday. I am truly alone and snug-safe in  
 wilderness and the ~~clouds~~ clouds are brightening.

Leave Trapper and bag and food in camp. <sup>complete winter</sup> Snowpatches here mean ~~solid~~  
~~no possible home there,~~  
~~can~~ not far up the trail, <sup>slung</sup> Stuff in pockets a couple candybars (no longer  
 gone to war with Lucky Strike Green), ~~slung~~ camera over shoulder, and up  
 up and away!

Out of old forest into new meadow. Fresh green stalks and leaves  
 thrusting from the brown mat of last year's fall-killed, winter-crushed

growth. Yellow lilies at snowfield <sup>edge.</sup> A myriad tiny snowflake blossoms.

In the meadow a weather-beaten, scarcely-legible sign, "Graywolf Pass."  
No side-trail into greenery. Just a sign pointing toward a brown-rocky,  
white-snowy ridge near the base of the clouds. What lies beyond the pass?  
Remote Graywolf Ridge, the mysterious Needles, and beyond them legendary  
Royal Basin, and beyond another ridge my old 1938 home of Home Lake below  
Del Monte Ridge, under cliffs of Mt. Constance. Good dreams for the soon-  
coming summer!

Views across the valley to slopes of Wellesley Peak, rising 3000 steep  
feet from the Dose to the 6750-foot summit. On our climb to Deception Basin  
and waterfalls  
those cliffs/seemed the definition of inaccessibility. And do now.

Views down the valley to Mt. Mystery and the gateway to Deception Basin.  
One might still build a castle there. One might still, with a band of  
comrades, stand off the world. Even one might still save a princess from  
ogres -- for despite all I still believe in <sup>a nut-brown maid,</sup> a damsel with a dulcimer, ~~in~~ a  
Deidre ~~scarcely~~ in a Land of Youth. As I believe I might still be  
self-forgiven and become a prince again if I go on pilgrimage

The hooly blisful martir for to seke,  
That hem hath holpen whan that they were seeke.

Sun breaking through clouds. Green plants <sup>steaming</sup> ~~radiant~~, flowers shining.

If there are night and evil in the universe there also are sun and flowers.  
and the One that remains while the Many change and pass. <sup>there are also</sup> And the battle beat  
of Beowulf, the lullaby of Spenser, the reverberations of Shakespeare.

One morning in Parrington Library <sup>, during the time I expected to die young,</sup> I read the elegy for Keats who died  
young, written by Shelley who died young. ~~read by me who expected to die young.~~

I weep for Adonais -- he is dead!  
 Oh, weep for Adonais! though our tears  
 Thaw not the frost which binds so dear a head!

Librarian and other students vanished. My eyes dampened. I wept for  
 Adonais and for me.

Peace, peace! he is not dead, he doth not sleep --  
 He hath awakened from the dream of life --  
 'Tis we, who lost in stormy visions, keep  
 With phantoms an unprofitable strife.

Above walls of books, small high windows of the library framed cumulus  
 billows of purest Platonic Whiteness rushing through sky of fresh-washed  
 Blueness.

He is made one with Nature: there is heard  
 His voice in all her music, from the moan  
 Of thunder, to the song of night's sweet bird.

The ~~clean~~ clean wind of spring <sup>blowing</sup> ~~driving~~ away the winter storm ripped me  
 from library, from Earth, flung me high into billows of Whiteness, toward  
 Blueness.

My spirit's bark is driven  
 Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng  
 Whose sails were never to the tempest given;  
 The massy earth and spherèd skies are riven!  
 I am borne darkly, fearfully, afar;  
 Whilst, burning through the inmost veil of Heaven,  
 The soul of Adonais, like a star,  
 Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are.

I left the library and walked ~~the~~ <sup>lawn</sup> campus within wind and clouds and  
 sky, and they within me, remembering the twilight of the Highlands dock and  
 the 3-day blow of Lost Ridge and the sunset of Marmot Pass.

Along the gently-climbing trail I stride, cloud-dodging sun dispelling  
 from bones the last damp chill of night, flooding the wilderness with joy.

The world has been too much with me, late and soon;  
 Drinking and screwing I've laid waste my powers.

I should have come to the wilderness more often these past 3 years, to  
 be purified, to refresh my vision of the Grail. But there is still time for  
 a boy to be purged of sin, to be a boy again.

Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up  
 Fostered alike by beauty and by fear.

A flurry of tiny wings. A brood of chicks commanded ~~to~~ by momma grouse  
 to dive in the grass and freeze. She fluffs <sup>out feathers,</sup> ~~up~~ ~~to~~ mimic a partridge eager  
 to be roasted on a spit, and cluck-cluck-clucks a slow decoy route up the  
 path, away from the chicks. Just as at Three Sons Camp, 6 years ago, when  
 we also saw elk and bear and wolf/coyote.

Fear me not, little mother. Even as you, I am a child of wildlands.  
 No need for the decoy game. I'll detour far around your hiding babies.

Nature never did betray  
 The heart that loved her.

I leave the trail for a wide swing through the meadow. Jesus Christ!  
 An explosion of wings! She climbs up my body, clawing and scratching, and  
 wings pummel my face!

What did I do? Inadvertently detour precisely into the hiding place?  
 Mea culpa! Forgive!

No forgiveness. Beady little eyes inches from mine are ~~filled~~ <sup>hot with</sup> hate.  
 I fight her off and run. Yes run!

Be the hate <sup>from</sup> ~~in~~ a creature ever so puny its ~~presence~~ is lethal to joy.  
 I've seen that hatred before. In the eyes of the bull elk. In the eyes of  
 the nighthawks. I'd thought all the hatred was behind me in yesterday, ~~and~~

I'd thought to find love today. Clouds catch sun and swallow it up. Sudden icy wind chills the fear sweat on my forehead. Shiver.

No more sun. No more snowpatched meadows. Solid snow from one valley wall to the other. Yet the trail continues. A deep trench is beaten in the snow. Beaten by whom?

Eyes! There -- in a clump of bushes a hundred yards upslope from the trench. A massive mound of black. A bear. Staring. Don't anger by staring back. Be humbly polite. Walk on, walk on.

Eyes again. Another hillside bear. Staring. Walk on, walk on.

Stop! Appearing from <sup>forest,</sup> ~~a grove of~~ ~~firs,~~ another bear. Christ, are the ~~the~~ bastards holding a convention? Too damn many bears to be coincidence. Dear God! This one is in the trench!

Toward me shambles the great black beast, head hanging down <sup>and</sup> flopping loose, eyes on paws. Two hundred feet away, a hundred. I stand paralyzed. It's his <sup>(their)</sup> trench. I'll happily yield the right of way. But it's his <sup>(their)</sup> valley, too. No use to leave the trench, flounder out in trackless snow. I'd be a trespasser there as well.

A dozen yards. He hears my pounding heart. Stops. Looks up. Stares me in the eye. I wilt under the intensity of his hate, of all the hate in this unforgiving wilderness.

One long minute he glowers. And with a shrug of contempt turns and slowly retraces steps up the trench into trees. Not from fear does he shun a meeting. My stink disgusts his nose, he ~~he~~ disdains to bloody his claws on me.

Or -- is he off to prepare ~~an~~ <sup>a forest</sup> ambush? Or going for more bears? God knows how many are in the valley. And retreat is hopeless. The first two have cut off my ~~escape~~ escape. Walk on, walk on.

No ~~more~~ visible bears <sup>in the forest</sup>. But after the three, after the grouse, I feel spooky, alien. Clouds darkening. The sun <sup>forever</sup> lost.

The trench enters Dose Meadows, ~~the wide & bleak~~ <sup>dreary</sup> Whiteness broken only by huddling alpine firs, a few bits of bare ground with no new grass yet poking from brown earth, no flowers blooming.

And no birds sing.

Five miles from Camp Marion, 4500 feet above the sea, I sit on a rock outcrop above the river frothing between ~~snow~~ snow walls. Eat a candybar. See a flash of gray wings. The dipper again. Conceivably the same one as 6 years ago, old Number 42 in my Bird Study logbook?

In that long-ago July the Green Woman lived here. No hint of her existence in this arctic June. Sterile white valley leads to the base of 6828-foot Mt. Claywood <sup>and</sup> around the corner to <sup>hidden</sup> Hayden Pass. There I won't go.

Turn back? Sudden shudder. <sup>Too late</sup> I remember. It's too late in the day to run the 15 miles to the Model A. There'll be another night at Marion.

Try to forget. Walk on, walk on. The steep trail to Lost Pass ascends a partly-bare south-facing slope. Climb on, climb on.

Stop. A date carved in a tree. The numbers obscure, the wound nearly closed by healing bark. 1925. Who was the carver? What was that year to him? Where is he now?

1925. Year of my birth. Too much of a coincidence. A <sup>cruel</sup> ~~stragant~~ taunt by the Old Ones. ~~at Camp Marion~~ They want me to ask myself,

even here, "Well Manning, what have you done with your almost 21 years?"

Gypsied through the University until last summer, when the powers reminded me the rules of the game demand a goal. Counted wide-scattered credits and saw it had to be English Literature. So last October received my B.A., magna cum laude, ~~Phi~~ Phi Beta Kappa, God's in his Heaven, dinner's at seven. Where next? Where but the Ph.D.? Spring Quarter I took a leave from Graduate School to see where I was, worked in the maelstrom of the lumber mill. Enough of that crap. Professors never get blisters on their hands, aches in their backs, ringing deafness in their ears. And professors, even English professors, always had jobs in the Depression.

Trail flattens, emerges from forest and disappears in snow untrenched by bears. Plunge and wallow in over-the-knees ~~muck~~ white muck to the top, 5500 feet. To Lost Pass again.

Crawl out of snow onto a gray buttress smoothed and plucked by Pleistocene ice. Sit. Eat a candybar. Wash it down with a mouthful of fluffy snow. Shiver. Pull watch cap over ears.

On one side of the pass rises Mt. Claywood, on the other Lost Peak. Below is the dark valley of the Lost River. Night-black clouds are lowering onto cold moonscape of Lost Ridge, as grim-lovely today as in the 3-day blow. Despite entropy wilderness endures.

As the man-molested world does not. Here, in Olympic National Park, one would never know the Boeing family recouped its fortune by clearcutting Manning National Park. Newspapers chortled over the anachronism of

19th century  
~~olden-day~~ logging next door to the city, a virgin forest shoved down the  
 skidroad to saltwater, rafted to ~~nearby~~ nearby mills. I went back once --  
 once only -- and ~~seeing, to me, any other place had been,~~ saw Hidden Lake was,  
 in the sun-blasted slashes  
~~after~~ merely a mudhole. No, you can't go home again -- except in a  
 genuine, not make-believe, National Park. And even in a Park there is no  
 forgetting that other horror of 1945 -- the breath-stopping August headline  
 announcing man had created Hell on Earth.

Lost Pass again. During the sleepless city night I didn't know I'd  
 return, thought no farther than the ferry. At Port Ludlow I thought no  
 farther than the Dose. At Constance Creek no farther than Dose Forks. At  
 Dose Forks no farther than Camp Marion. At Marion no farther than Dose  
 Meadows. The story of my life. The reason I'm not now a geologist <sup>exploring</sup> ~~proving~~  
~~around~~ Alaska.

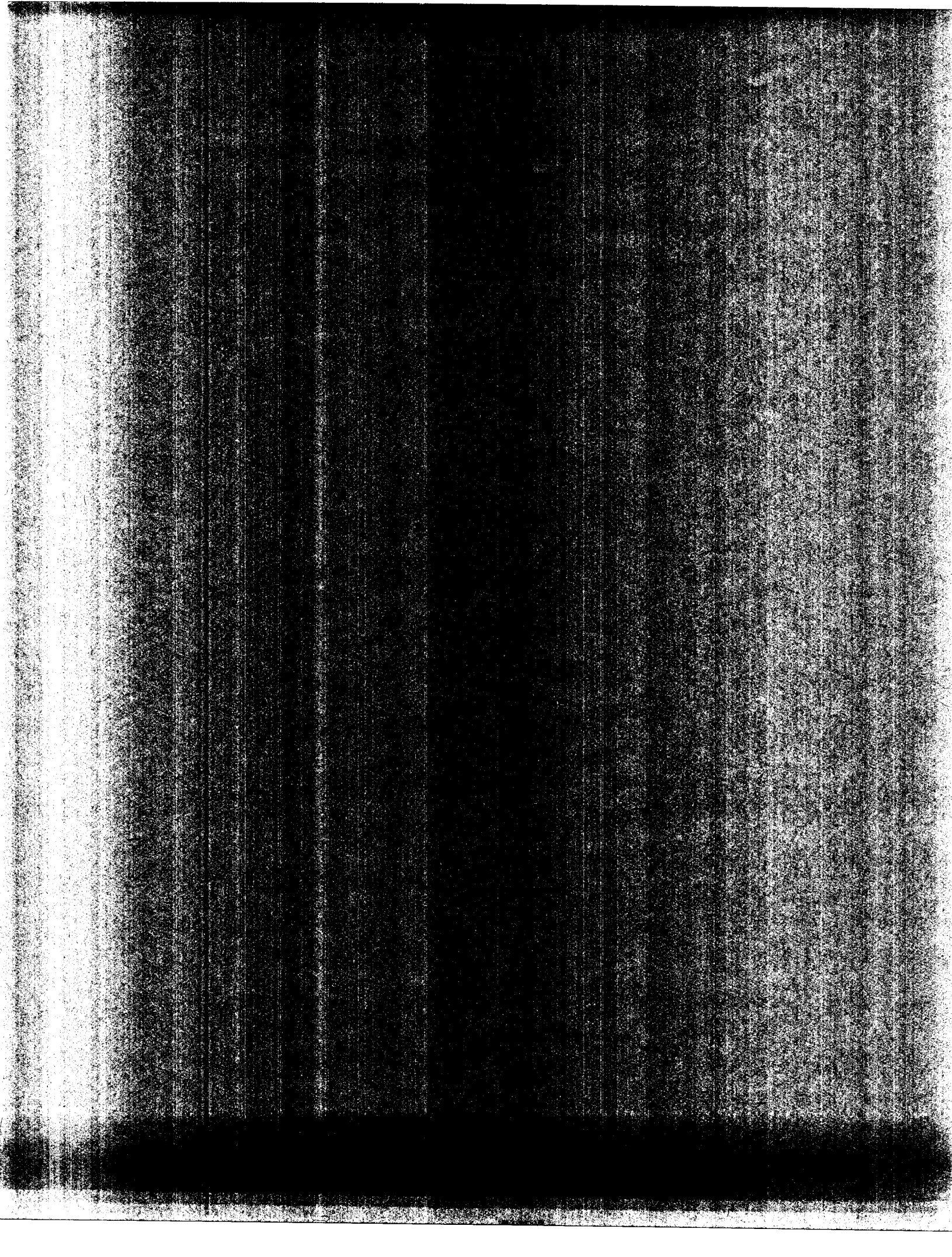
Here I was a boy in pajama pants singing in the storm, unaware of the  
 coming pain, fear, confusion, sin. Had I known, would ever I have left  
 camp below  
 the/Lillian Glacier?

But the route down from Lost Pass in 1940 was not inevitable, not the  
 whole of it. There were forks. A far different, far better journey it  
 would have been had I loved mountains more and <sup>girls</sup> ~~women~~ less.

Lost Pass again. Can I, this time, find a way home? Can I ever again  
 be worthy of the Green Woman?

~~Cloud-enraps me~~ Snowflakes <sup>fly in my face.</sup> ~~melt on my cheeks~~





July 1946

Chapter 6

DARK WINGS OVER THE GRAYWOLF

(Ten fingers clawing and two heels gouging and ass muscles trying to grip snow in the crease...)

Three weeks had passed, 23 days with the strength of 23 blazing suns, and the sudden summer had driven from Camp Marion every memory of the long mountain winter and brief mountain spring. Powder-dry wood exploded at the touch of a match, quickly boiling our hoosh of noodles and tomato sauce and hamburger -- the hamburger being (not counting a couple onions) our last fresh food ~~for~~ for a week. A week! My longest wilderness exploration ever. Deep-needled duff under tall firs made a snugly mattress for sleeping. Mild night air carried no voices but those of man.

Of many men. On all my Parsons hikes together I saw only a half-dozen non-Scouts. Now the trail was solid fishermen the whole 9 miles from Constance Creek and three other campfires clouded the Marion forest with smoke. Expelled from the Dose turnpike by swarming humanity were the hostile ~~eyes~~ eyes of June, the wicked murmurs. Gas rationing was over, 6-day defense-plant<sup>work</sup> weeks were over, and Johnny had come marching home.

And Arild, too -- still looking at trees as if he'd never seen one before, a part of him still sailing the Pacific on the Missouri, monotony

relieved by an occasional typhoon or kamikaze, by eating ice cream, by reading V-mail (including the running saga of a 4-F at the University) and eventually by surrender ceremonies in Tokyo Bay.

(Roaring of wind in ears and hissing-scraping-thudding of hurtling flesh...)

There'd been no question about the destination. The sign I'd seen 3 weeks ago was, for me, the finger of fate, and whatever the mountain man said was okay by the sailor. Not since 1942 had he left sealevel -- except when looking at snapshots I'd sent, reading tales of my alpine exploits.

The sign pointed into pathless meadows sloping steeply up from the Dose valley. I couldn't make out the exact location on the skyline of Graywolf Pass but the Mt. Constance quadrangle said it was 3000 feet ~~ms~~ above. Sky was spotless, sun brilliant, meadow hip-deep in blue lupen, pink Indian paintbrush, white daisy, orange tiger lily, red-yellow columbine, and a dozen flowers <sup>of unknown</sup> ~~whose~~ names, ~~I didn't know~~. On this Tuesday morning of July 23 in the first summer of peace I led Arild up up up to adventure.

(Bouncing high in air and slamming down on concrete snow...)

It was the sun that done me wrong -- the sun and the 50-pound stone. The one got hotter and the other heavier and they emptied my head of aught but the thought of paying the price of freedom, the 3000 feet, all in a rush. The map didn't show the trail but I knew if we climbed straight up the treeless mountainside we'd intersect or see tread once above lush low-valley greenery. A gully gave a welcome drink from a snowpatch trickle so looking neither left nor right I stuck with it in hopes of another.

The gully ran into a cliff. Now I took out the map and now I looked left and right and now I realized the damn trail didn't go straight up but apparently made a long zag downvalley before switchbacking to Graywolf Pass. We were a halfmile too far west. Shit! Between us and pass were cliffs forbidding a traverse. We'd have to give up a hard-won thousand feet, waste a gallon of sweat.

"Crap on that," said Mountain Man. The ridge crest was close and the gully sliced enticingly upward through the cliff.

Not a word said Sailor, barely getting land legs after years of decks.  
(Snow and sky and peaks flashing by eyes in a merry-go-round whirl...)

The gully seemed a simple staircase. But each step ~~■~~ proved longer than the last, more treacherously littered with loose rock. I decided we'd better waste that gallon of sweat. And turned to go down and beneath boots saw the tiny thread of the Dosewallips River.

Vertigo spun head. Gully blurred. Handholds crumbled. Fumbling feet kicked off boulders in a crashing-smashing cannonade.

(This glissade isn't what I planned but I'd gladly keep it up all day considering what's going to happen at the end of snow...)

On top! When heart stopped pounding, chest heaving, eyes swimming, we saw we were on the 7000-foot summit of Graywolf Pup. Gloryosky!

Look west: over headwaters of Cameron Creek to Lost Ridge of 1940, Lillian Ridge of 1945, and peak upon peak to blue-icy Olympus. Look south: giddily down down down to the Dose, across the broad valley gulf to Wellesley Peak whose summit seemed unattainably high 3 weeks ago and now

was not so high as we, to Anderson of 1939, to The Brothers. Look east: over Graywolf Pass, 500 feet below, to craggy lava masses of The Needles and Deception, Mystery, Constance. Look north: 1500 feet down to the headwater basin of the Graywolf River, sun-guarded by Graywolf Pup and thus winter-snowy, and out to brown round ridges, among them Blue Mountain of 1943, standing above the Strait of Juan de Fuca.

There'd been no recriminations from Arild in the gully. Not once had ~~he~~ he unclenched grim-set square jaw. It was typically thoughtful and nice of him, now, to anticipate my apology by ~~saying~~ saying, "This is a lot better view than we'd have got from the pass. We'd have walked up here anyway."

While filling our eyes we filled a Ten Can with snow from a cornice remnant and soon could drain off cupsful of icewater to accompany a traditional Parsons lunch of cheese and chocolate and raisins. No Sailor Boy pilot bread for the sailor, however; the Navy had it all packed away in liferaft rations. We made do with rye tack, good fare for a redheaded Norwegian~~x~~ and a blond mongrel.

"What do you make of the weather, weatherman?" I asked.

Arild studied the blue-forever sky and said, "No typhoon today."

Plenty of time for leisurely inspection of the wilderness panorama. The descent to the basin, to a little green obvious-campsite oasis of alpine trees amid the white glare, would be a half-hour stroll.

Eagerly I surveyed the beginnings of the route of the coming week, the proud line I'd drawn on the map. For Arild's homecoming I'd planned not only his but my most ~~ambitious~~ ambitious exploration, even surpassing the Ranger

Hike to the Lillian Glacier, our way entirely cross-country until next Sunday, navigation solely by map and compass and Silver Marmot canniness. There, 2 crow miles away, was our pass through The Needles to Royal Basin. From that land of enchantment, unseen now, we'd cross a ridge to Deception Basin (1939), another ridge to Heather Basin, and climb to Del Monte Ridge (1938), only there joining trail for the return to the Dose.

(A dozen heartbeats more and bones will be snapping and flesh crunching and blood spattering an acre of mountainside...)

The call of the basin -- of soaking heads in cold creek and lolling in soft grass -- grew loud. A final eye-swing of horizons and we shouldered packs and boulder-hopped the ridge crest eastward toward Graywolf Pass.

Stop. The brink of a hundred-foot cliff. Arild was wrong. From the pass we never in hell could've climbed the Pup.

Screw the pass, then. We dropped directly toward the basin, slithering down loose-rock gullies and rubble-covered slabs.

Stop. Brink of a cliff with no bottom but the basin floor.

Jittering brain summed up: Cliffs barred us from the basin. Cliffs barred us from the pass. Blurred gully on the Dose side of the ridge barred retreat. Trapped!

(I know how it'll feel -- like the winter night I was cornered in the schoolyard and put up my fists and was hit between the eyes by a runaway truck, like the time in Lowell when I was 7 years old and the masked men and women armed with knives strapped me to a table and gassed me...)

Fight back panic. Avoid accusation in glum-jawed Sailor's eyes: the Japs didn't kill him but his old buddy would.

Not so! A boulevard of cedar shrubs allowed an ape-swinging traverse a hundred yards east to a finger of snow poking high in the cliffs, the white lane leading pretty as you please <sup>down</sup> to the basin.

Arild didn't share my joy. From the boulevard end he looked at the snow, unclamped jaw for the first time since ~~leaving~~ the summit, and spoke: "Long damn way down. Awful damn steep."

"Oh hell," said I, "On Parsons hikes we glissaded slopes like this all the time. Nothing to it. Just do everything I do."

I explained the Silver Marmot pack-sled-brake technique. To be sure, we weren't carrying Trapper Nelsons, but rather ~~the~~ steel-frame, conveniently many-pocketed Mountain Trooper Bergan<sup>s</sup>, a \$25 value selling in surplus stores for a ~~not~~ ridiculous 50¢. However, I was confident Bergans would serve the purpose beautifully.

Between cedar thicket and snow was a deep moat, awkward to climb down in and out again. I'd take the more elegant alternative -- leap the moat, then unsling Bergan and assume sledding position.

(Death is here,  
Death is there,  
Death is busy everywhere.)

I land on my feet as neat as a cat. And realize I've made a terrible mistake. In afternoon shadows the noon-slushy snow has frozen hard and slick. Boots skate up in the air and just-like-that I'm whizzing toward the basin on my rear.

Embarrassing! Arild's teeth must be fusing together. I'll calm his fears by demonstrating the Silver Marmot recovery. Dig in heels and sharp

metal of tricouni nails bites the slope. Glad I am that trikes returned to the civilian market in time to install them on the new Bone Drys I bought last week.

Boots slow. But! No nails in my ass! Its speed does not decrease and therefore it swings into the lead. The first law of mountaineering is never lead with your ass. Lift heels, scramble to get boots downhill. With brakes off I accelerate. Never fear. Most Parsons glissades were thrilling but snow always flattens eventually, sooner or later stopping is automatic. At this pace I'll be at the green oasis in a minute, raving from exhilaration of my best run since Flypaper Pass.

But! What's that between me and oasis? Something non-white. Something sinister gray. Lord! Boots are aimed at a patch of scree melted from the snow!

Dig in heels -- boots slow and ass pivots forward. Lift heels and kick and grab to reverse the pivot -- speed increases. Dig in fingers -- they begin eroding off toward elbows. Faster, faster. Bouncing Bergan batters skull.

What I saw in Frosh Pond that dark night of January 1943, what I'd forgotten in following years of mountain wanders and city romps...

Here come the rocks.

Dear God, I didn't know I could die in the mountains.

Keep boots in front.

Mind abandons body, observes the turmoil from an outer calm. Clinically I observe, sentimentally I treasure, these final microseconds on Earth.

Boots meet rocks. Goodbye.



The Bomb explodes. I am within the mushroom cloud.

Gracefully I rise ~~flashes~~ into headfirst flight, arms spread wide, and soar through soft silent air, flapping wings. Out of dust cloud I fly into clean clear air. What a marvelous afternoon for learning how to fly.

Another Bomb, another cloud.

I somersault. I cartwheel. Amazing. As a clumsy kid I never could do these stunts. Now I'm agile as an acrobat.

I've stopped. No more loud noise~~s~~. No more-violent motion.

I've died and it didn't hurt a bit.

No, not quite dead. See the dome of Blueness arching over the picket fence of peaks which for 8 years have guarded the heart of my dreams. Hear heavenly water music. Savor snow-pure air. Merge into the One that remains while the Many change and pass.

A voice. Far far away, on the Other Side. Poor Arild. I'm Crossing Over, am safe. He must still endure. From high in cliffs he's watching me <sup>go.</sup> ~~die~~. Wish I could tell him it's okay, he'll like it.

The machine is a wreck and the matter shortly will be feeding beetles and flowers. ~~One final moment~~ <sup>Briefly</sup> the Me lingers in this perfect moment, the last of life for which the first was made. Then spin<sup>s</sup> into sleep.

How do you like your blue-eyed boy, Mister Death?

Awake. Still here? Yes -- and the moment is lost. Damn! I can't die happy until I take a piss.

That requires, for openers, use of the right hand. Give the order. The message races from brain. Fingers wiggle. Send other messages. Wrist flexes, and elbow, and shoulder. The left assembly? It too obeys. Legs?

That ankle checks out, and the connected knee and hip. Also the other set. Surely the neck is broken? No, the head wobbles. The spine? I can sit up. I can stand up! Careful, sit back down. Almost spun out again.

An ugly scene. Scratches and gashes and abrasions. Doubtless concealed bruises and contusions and internal injuries.

There was blood on the rocks and blood on the snow,  
The body was bloody from head to toe,  
Oh pity this hiker all covered with gore,  
He'll never go roaming the wildlands no more.

But I will! The machine works!

From this hour forward each breath of life is gravy.

Again a voice from far above. Arild. I forgot Arild. I didn't kill myself but I've killed Arild. Well, nothing I can do but await his fall, inspect the broken body, and carry back to the city the tragic news.

A dozen yards away in the scree is my pack, unwounded. Not surprising -- the Army designed these Bergans to withstand the shock of battle while roosting Hitler from his Alpine Redoubt.

Down to green oasis and at 5500 feet above sealevel collapse in flowers, lift eyes to see the sailor boy die.

Arild, however, was not cut out to be a star. I watched him disappear in moat and reappear on snow. That took a half-hour. Then he slowly kicked steps across the snowfinger to gentler slopes, kicked steps downward. That took an hour. I'd come down in less than a minute.

As he approached I yelled angrily, "I told you to do everything I did!"

"Bugger you!" he said.

He saw crusted blood on my hands and face and was alarmed. I assured him it was all in a day's work for a Silver Marmot.

"I thought so at first," he said. "You looked damn good on the snow. I was mad as hell -- the showoff son-of-a-bitch expects me to do that?"

It was the best camp of my life, even surpassing the meadow below the Lillian Glacier. From our snow-ringed island of Christmas trees and heather clumps and spring flowers we admired the massive menace of Graywolf Pup, close above us but behind us, and jeered the small-balls pussyfooting ~~along~~ the Dose turnpike. We'd crossed the divide to brighter blossoms, wetter water. Ashes on the knoll, flattened and leached by snows of many winters, told us nobody had camped here since before the war. We owned a whole valley. How rich can two guys get? Wounds began to ache -- I exulted in the pulse of pain, of life.

So recently nearly an angel, I rejoiced in the return to bestiality. Arild had brought home from the Navy an enriched vocabulary, particularly distinguished by a repertoire of belches that by variation of volume and pitch and timbre expressed ~~appropriate~~ opinions on everything from beauty of the scenery to filthiness of my jokes. Bowels being greatly gassy from a high-carbohydrate mountain diet, I answered belches with equally eloquent farts. Was this the first conversation of Neanderthals? Pleasures of the wilderness animal are largely alimentary, and so too his language. I remembered wise words on the headstone of an 18th-century grave in a Lowell cemetery:

Wherever you are let your wind blow free  
 For holding it in was the death of me.

We set to work building our kitchen, delighting in exercise of brutish ingenuity. Arild scavenged the oasis knoll for silver-bleached sticks and logs, filled Ten Cans from the <sup>short stretch</sup> ~~far~~ of creek running out from snow and under again. I restored the rock fire ~~ring~~ ring, chose a sturdy pole for the dinglestick and balanced the fulcrum on a boulder and with another boulder anchored the outside end. From its over-fire end I suspended one Ten Can for boiling up a thick soup of dried split peas and a fresh onion (to flavor the soup and fuel the evening conversation) and Spam, and ~~in~~ a second can for ~~a~~ constantly-stirred chocolate pudding.

Supper over, Ten Cans and cups and spoons scrubbed clean with sand, we sprawled in grass by our tiny inferno of entropy burning bright and hot within icebox chill of black wilderness. How clever of us to invent fire! Ten Can of coffee on dinglestick boiled steadily blacker bitterer better.

What was the year? 1946? Nonsense. 1942, of course. There'd never been a 1943 or 1944 or 1945. It was just last year we bedeviled the idiot busdriver, only a month ago we tied balloons to Chemistry classroom air jets and when they began exploding ran out in the hall yelling "The Japs are here!"

Belches and farts lagged. Eyelids sagged. We crawled in bags spread on soft turf. I was happier even than when I lay me down below the Lillian Glacier. And much warmer, snuggled in a down mummy bag, formerly the garment of nabobs, now \$5 at any surplus store and bringing ~~a~~ coziness within the grasp of every pauper.

No dreams broke my peace. Except... Once I awoke in a convulsion of arms and legs, saw stars, and before sinking back to sleep remembered the numbing shock of boots hitting rock.

In joyous sunshine of Wednesday morning, breakfasting on cocoa, stewed prunes, and oatmeal with brown sugar and canned milk, we'd no reason to suspect the coming night would be less carefree than the nights of Tuesday, Monday. We hoisted Bergans, now lighter by 2 days' food, and set out from the oasis to follow my map-line. The plan was to plug steps up gentle snow from our branch of the Graywolf to a 6000-foot saddle, drop to the branch heading at 7772-foot Deception, ascend to the foot of The Needles, and traverse under them to the 7000-foot pass through the crags to Royal Basin, our next home.

How could I have guessed the savagery of the gorge beneath The Needles? That the way down into it was a convex snowfield, the bottom unseeable? At the 6000-foot saddle my balls shrank. I drew a new line on the map. We'd take the long way around, detouring down "oasis creek" to <sup>reach</sup> ~~its junction~~ ~~with~~ the creek heading at the pass to Royal Basin.

Why didn't I have sense enough to retreat all the way to the oasis? Why did I try a shortcut? Another white brink. And a chill in the center of my soul -- because now at last I remembered.

I remembered how it really was on Flypaper Pass, the Lillian Glacier -- not exhilarating but terrifying. I remembered the pack-sled-brake never had worked, there wasn't any Parsons glissading technique, all my slides

had been jump-off-and-pray. Never having been killed convinced me I was an expert. Until yesterday.

In reality the shortcut snowfield was neither very steep nor very long, and actually the slide down was short and safe. But it didn't feel safe. I knew I'd never feel safe on snow again, would always see the sinister gray scree rushing to meet my boots, the broad-daylight embodiment of the nightmare from which I so often as a child woke up screaming.

We descended below snowline to forest trail. Trail. We weren't supposed to be on trail until Sunday. No boots had been here in years, yet boots had been here, and boots could pussyfoot along the umbilical cord from the city. The integrity of the wildness was ~~was~~ blemished. I was sad -- but glad -- and ashamed. At the 4500-foot junction of "oasis creek" and "Needles creek" we stopped for a somber lunch; afterward we must leave loathed-loved trail and I couldn't help thinking that if we <sup>didn't, if we</sup> followed the trail downvalley, we could entirely shirk adventure.

No shirking, not yet. An easy forest ascent led to "Royal Basin pass creek," which by luck we intersected exactly at a 5200-foot lakelet, a mere wide spot in the creek but with a spacious inlet delta ideal for camping. We were supposed to camp in Royal Basin. But I'd had enough for today. I needed time for my balls to grow back to size. Thursday thoughts were put out of mind by the routine of gathering wood, rigging dinglestick, and boiling Kraft Dinner, the new miracle macaroni (with cheese) that at this elevation didn't cook in the advertised 9 minutes but was edible in a half-hour, a sufficient triumph for technology.

Dark night. Dark tomorrow to come. Atop Blue Mountain twinkled the light of the fire-lookout cabin. Seven crow miles away someone was secure.

Not us. Tomorrow we must ascend the creek. We couldn't see the 7000-foot pass but above trees loomed black precipices of The Needles; impossible to believe they'd let us through. I studied the map and saw, as I hadn't in the city, that contour lines ran together at the pass in a ghastly smear of brown ink. No campfire conversation. Early to bed, Arild in the trees, I on the delta.

Graywolf. Synonym for fear. The Olympic wolf was said to be 10 or 20 years extinct. But were those wolves I saw on Lost Ridge 6 years ago? Were wolves here now?

Bits of charcoal on the delta said somebody had camped here long, long ago. Did they escape?

I lay in my bag looking into and beyond piercing-bright stars. I remembered my childhood horror of the night sky, my dread of infinity and eternity. The child was not extinct.

A Blackness obliterated a million stars. I lept to my feet -- or tried. Bag-trapped body managed only a fit. I shouted -- or tried. Fear-tight throat let out only a whimper. Arild silent. Did It get Arild? Am I now alone, as at Camp Marion 3 weeks ago?

Reason said it was an owl. Yeah, an owl as huge as a million stars...

Boots hit rock and I awoke.

Blue sky walled off the outer wilderness of stars never to be solved. Yet the Thursday sun was no Savior. We remained within a wilderness that could swallow us as irrevocably as on the beach at Parsons I gulped the raw oyster. How long did the slime live before drowning in stomach juices? Was the Graywolf to me as I was to the oyster?

That was no owl.

We must escape. But not via the doomful 7000-foot pass. How, then? Dear Lord, how? The map showed a pass at the end of The Needles, a mile or so distant. It also showed, however, dense brown ink between us and pass.

Silently spoon farina and sip cocoa, silently shoulder Bergans, and silently climb steep forest -- and shout! Laugh as we'd not since the oasis! Because there was a way through the brown ink on a ~~wood~~ shelf of shale ~~spindles~~ sprinkled with tiny flowers, oh such gorgeous flowers. Back there was the 7000-foot pass, a place of death but not ours. Back there too, receding in memory, was Graywolf Pup and the white wall and boots hitting rock. We were free of all that! Free to lope around the end of brutal basalt Needles to gentle humps of sedimentary Graywolf Ridge, to hop-jump-run down to a small cirque lake, half-frozen, and scramble to 6400-foot "safety pass."

Fill Ten Can with snow, eat ryetack-cheese-chocolate-raisins, belch and fart and enjoy Thoughtloose Thursday <sup>4</sup>views of Woebegone Wednesday, Terrible Tuesday, the bad Graywolf days now gone forever. At the bottom of a simple 2500 feet of scree and meadows ran bright waters of Royal Creek. Down there was a trail. We were ready for a trail. We yearned for a trail. Wilderness contaminated by a thread of civilization was nice enough and would suffice.

Bergans on backs we left and skidded down a scree-filled gully, Royal Creek louder by the leap.

Stop. Again a brink. Oh God! Hear the Old Ones of the Graywolf cackle! They'd reached over the divide and just at the point we were safe had set another trap. Between us and meadows was a 40-foot cliff.



Reason said to return up the gully, find a better route. Panic said not to take a single step back toward clutches of the Pursuers, to somehow, anyhow, force a passage of the cliff, by sheer force of hope gain peace and safety of Royal Creek.

Was there a way? A dozen yards across the slab which formed the brink of the cliff was a tributary gully, an obvious staircase down.

"That looks good," I said. "Why don't you give it a try?"

Surprise in ~~the~~ Sailer's eyes, then embarrassment to see Mountain Man <sup>as to yield the post of honor and duty.</sup> brought so low <sup>^</sup> In a sitting position he crab-squirmed sideways over the slab and scrambled down the staircase. Delighted to be alive he began to laugh -- a laugh cut short.

Halfway over the slab my buttocks lost grip and I slid to the brink. With the clinical detachment of Tuesday I studied the boulder, 40 feet below, on which my head would shatter like a ripe watermelon.

To the brink. Not quite over. Friction of hands and ass held me to Earth. But at every sideways move the Bergan pushed me a half-inch closer. I warned Arild the pack and I were separating. The Norwegian fool who volunteered for a glory ride on a suicide plane thrust out maloccluded jaw at the 50-pound bomb, made a beautiful midair catch -- and the two of them tumbled down the gully.

Both survived. So did I. Really? No. On every Parsons hike we had a scare or two, that was part of the fun. Arild and I had faced three deaths in 48 hours, two by rock and one by snow. The joke had gone too far, wasn't funny anymore.

When ~~my~~ boots touched the Royal Creek trail my gleeful giggles barely covered tears. When boots took us in 2 fast upvalley miles to 5100-foot Royal Lake, <sup>amid</sup> ~~ringed~~ by subalpine trees and fields of flowers, I <sup>felt</sup> ~~felt expressed~~ no joy at being a half-hour stroll from the Royal Basin of Parsons legend.

Twilight was a bedlam of mosquitoes, our first bugs of the trip. Back and forth, this way and that, around and around, I half-ran through ~~the~~ meadows ~~pastland~~, seeking and not finding escape. There is no escape from the malice, <sup>Wilderness is</sup> ~~of wilderness~~. ~~It was~~ not intended for man, it abhors man, and ~~it~~ says so sometimes with the ~~open brutality~~ of storm or precipice, sometimes with the ~~diabolical harassment~~ of mosquitoes. They wanted my blood, they wanted my sanity, they wanted my surrender. They got them. In their maddening whine I heard the Old Ones, felt the hatred I'd seen in eyes of the bull elk and the grouse and the bear, the ultimatum of the rocks awaiting my fragile flesh.

This was to have been my finest exploration. With such a partner as Arild there were no limits to horizons of the Silver Marmot. Shit! I'd not even been able to find Graywolf Pass, much less brave a passage of The Needles. Since leaving the Dese trail my progress through the wilderness had been one damn stumbling blunder after another. The Graywulf did me in. Dead, finally dead, was the glad boy who on Lost Ridge joined his voice with ~~that of~~ the 3-day blow. My city-drawn map-line crossed the ridge (steep snow, steep rock) from Royal Basin to Deception Basin, crossed the ridge (steep snow, steep rock) to Heather Basin, traversed God knew what to Del Monte Ridge. I hated it. Hated wilderness.

There once was a hiker with no balls at all,  
 No balls at all, no balls at all,  
 A very short pecker and no balls at all,  
 NO balls AT ALL.

The Silver Marmot spoke not in Friday morning sunshine and mosquitoes.  
 Nor did the Sailor. We gulped ~~our~~ <sup>harassed</sup> bug-infested oatmeal and cocoa and  
 slunk down the valley, away from long-dreamed-of Royal Basin, left unseen.  
 I didn't want to see the fairyland. It would taunt me with memories of  
 Deception Basin. We descended 8 safe miles of trail to Royal Creek's  
 2700-foot junction with the Dungeness River, then ascended the river trail  
 9 safe miles to 5000-foot Boulder Shelter.

The day gave small pleasures. (Small pleasures for small balls.)  
 We'd last been in a low valley Tuesday morning and I'd forgotten trees  
 could be so tall, brush so lush, rivers so roaring. And when we again  
 climbed from deep woods to parkland I saw new colors in alpine blossoms, a  
 new wideness of highland sky. And pounding 17 miles to the clanking of the  
 Ten Can Band proved that chickens on snow and rock could be tigers on trail.  
 And for me, 21 plus a week, there was poignance in recalling the lad of  
 barely 13 who came here still radiant from the Marmot Pass sunset.

Heroism meekly forsaken, there should have been serenity in the night.  
 But once the knife is in the vitals it must be twisted. In twilight we  
 jerked alert, hearing a moan in shadows of small firs. A moan -- a ~~shrike~~  
 choked scream -- a hoarse growl. It was here -- now there -- circling the  
 fire. Naive Arild probably thought it was nothing worse than a grumpy bear,  
 a crazed elk, a rabid cougar. We slept, or tried, in the shelter,

open on one side to the night and thus no real protection.

A deer with a bad cough. In Saturday morning sun we saw the wrecker of our sleep and laughed. Oh yes, in the day you can laugh. But laugh not too merrily, for night will fall. Yes, in the day believe if you can that what we heard was a sick deer, what I saw Wednesday night was an owl, that there is no wilderness-wide, cosmos-wide, infinite and eternal conspiracy. But remember, no matter how bright the day, night will fall.

In 2 groggy trail hours we dropped Bergans at 5400-foot Home Lake. Dull eyes dismissed splendors, wanted only to close. We crept under alpine firs to escape the heavy sun -- and I to escape consciousness. Brave I'd been atop Graywolf Pup despite the frightening gully, and brave still at the oasis despite boots hitting rock, and not quite an utter coward at Safety No-Safety Pass. Royal Lake? Renouncing Royal Basin? I'd left the Dose a rambunctious ridge-runner, would return tomorrow a craven trail-tramper.

<sup>Violent</sup>  
~~An explosive~~ cursing woke me. Arild was sitting up, wide awake and jaw hanging open. Not he cursing. Who? Me! Cursing Arild! Or so he thought. My mouth shut tight. Then, seeing his wide-eyed stunned mortification, I laughed hysterically. Until he also laughed, understanding it wasn't him I hated.

He slipped back to sleep. As did I, after a while. This time to peaceful sleep. Peaceful? Yes, for the dream was an echo of the Camp Marion dream, was not of the Graywolf but of the city. Yet after the Graywolf ordeal what was there in the city to fear, to hate? Each man

hates the thing he hurts but now that hate was going, would soon be gone.  
 with recurring memory of the moment  
 Gone, with much else, / when boots hit rocks.

A second awakening. Praise the Lord! Just see where we are! Beside Home Lake, a sparkling droplet of snowmelt beneath up-up-up-thrusting towers of mighty Constance, high above tranquil forests of the Dungeness.

Sun a-blazing and snowfields ~~and~~ a-shining and lake a-rippling. We tore off boots and socks, <sup>blue jeans and</sup> wool shirts ~~and~~ and cotton skivvies, dashed through flowers to the ~~at~~ shore, jumped in, screamed and howled, flailed to a rock island at the absolute limit of ~~strength of~~ icewater-paralyzed legs and arms. We baked until limbs regained mobility and swam to shore to bake again. Then again to the island. To the shore. And again. For variety, sit bare-ass in a snowbank and glissade to a splashing start.

The sun fell behind the ridge and swimming ended, firebuilding began, bodies all-over tingling and trembling. Let simpering saints be satisfied with pleasures of the spirit. We wild animals find our best pleasures in ~~our~~ our bodies -- gobbling a Ten Can hoosh, gulping foam from a creek, blowing nose with finger on nostril, <sup>and letting</sup> snot fly ~~off~~ off in the wind, taking a healthy crap, belching and farting. In wilderness the whole man lives, the whole man speaks.

As I cooked Krap Dinner I demonstrated to Arild the gestures and jigging with which I led songs at troop meetings. The tunes had changed.

One night while in O'Reilly's Bar,  
 Listening to tales of blood and slaughter,  
 Came a thought into my mind --  
 Why not shag O'Reilly's daughter?

Diddly-aye-ee, diddly-aye-o,  
 Diddly-aye-ee for the One Ball Reilly,  
 Rig-a-jig-jig, BALLS AND ALL!  
 Rub-a-dub-dub shag on!

No rest for us on the Seventh Day. With feather-light Bergans on backs we swiftly climbed gaudy meadows to Constance Pass, ran the naked crest to the 6500-foot summit of Del Monte Ridge.

No cloudsea this morning, as in that dawn when I canceled plans to sail a ketch around the world, no clouds marred hard-blue sky. Rough north wind had flushed summer haze from deep-green valleys and from horizons near and far, sharpening to crystal clarity views west to the Olympic wilderness we'd finally escaped, north to the Strait of Juan de Fuca and snow-flecked mountains of Vancouver Island, east over Puget Sound to the line of ice-cream-cone volcanoes from Baker to Rainier to Adams and St. Helens.

Look west to Mystery and Deception, hiding the valley of dark wings. Howl defiance: ~~Nya~~ Nya-a, nya-a, you didn't catch me! Only half of Time is night. For every wildland terror there's a wildland ecstasy.

A hollering hour we scampered over wind-loud <sup>shale</sup> plateau, ~~of shale splinters~~ ~~and boulders~~, then shouldered packs, faced Sunnybrook Meadows and far-below Dose, and commenced the plunge. Down we thundered through hundred-perfumed gardens, down through resin-reeking forest, down down down. We'd labored to gain this elevation but didn't need it anymore, were ready for slothful lowlands, for eating at tables and crapping on toilets and sleeping in beds. Yet we'd be animals still, would bring to city the crudeness of wilderness.

When we hit (with a thump) the Dese trail our knees were rag-doll floppy and mouths desert-dusty yet we ran by creeks loaded with delicious water taking nary a sip.

We tore off sweat-stinking clothes and dove in Constance Creek, shouting as foam shocked legs and froze balls, boiled over belly and backside, flooded nose and eyes and ears. But we did not drink, were careful to preserve the great thirst. Then, clean-dressed, we sprawled by the torrent and withdrew from waterfall the bottles that had awaited us these 7 days and flipped off caps.

Bubbles tickle <sup>in</sup> nose and explode in parched throat, cold hop juice stuns ~~empty~~ empty stomach, alcohol shoots through dehydrated blood and churns ~~the~~ brain.

Seven days wild, twice nearly killed, nerves shot to hell. Sniveling cowards? Of course, but alive, and better than that, drunk!

I'd walked ~~the road~~ 7 days in sun and wind, flowers and trees, I'd slept 6 nights on duff and grass and gravel, with hard work I'd sweated poisons from mind, with danger I'd purged bile from soul, with fear I'd paid for sins, I'd been tortured and cleansed and would return to the city as pure as the boy who ran down Sunnybrook in 1938.

Built by Henry Ford in 1930, bought by me in 1941, the Model A was -- like Arild and me -- only entering its prime. Down the Dese road we bounced and jounced, trailing a storm of dust, swinging corners with rear wheels skidding ~~sideways~~, honking horn crazily, chasing picnic-bound Sunday drivers toward the ditch, maybe into the ditch -- who kept score?

I drove in the style of my famous Graywolf glissade, of the kamikazes who attacked Arild in the Pacific.

Rattling over planks of the ferry slip at Port Ludlow for the ~~long~~ voyage across the waters to a future both smaller and larger than a week ago, I annoyed tourists and embarrassed Arild singing:

I have been to Ludlow Fair  
And left my necktie God knows where  
And carried halfway home, or near,  
Pints and quarts of Ludlow beer.  
Then the world seemed none so bad,  
And I, myself, a sterling lad.



August 1946

Chapter 7

TOUJOURS GAI, TOUJOURS GAI

Acceptance of limits, that's wisdom. Contentment with the possible,  
that's happiness. No more would I beard the Old Ones. I'd stay home

And as my wealth increaseth, so inclose  
Infinite riches in a little room.

Little? Home was large, home was virtually the whole wild world. Only  
were excluded (lesson of Camp Marion in June) the night alone and (lesson  
of the Graywolf) steep rock and snow.

Therefore am I still  
A lover of the meadows and the woods,  
And mountains; and of all that we behold  
From this green Earth.

The Green Woman welcomed me home from the wars -- and at Deer Park  
where I'd first consciously known her. Actually, I went this time not for  
my own therapy but that of a girl I'd ~~been~~ been in love with -- until recently --  
to a degree varying between a half and a tenth. A summer ago such a night  
on Blue Mountain amid the heaven of stars must inevitably have led to  
complications; now, however, we'd both been inoculated against passion  
by soured affairs. I saw, not felt, the lushness of her tits. Introducing  
a city-bound soul to highlands was a brotherly kindness, repayment for  
sisterly lowland suppers.

Though my purpose was to show another the way to peace, I refound it  
for myself. I saw headwaters of the Graywolf and shuddered. And saw

dips and swells of Grand Ridge and Lillian Ridge walked last summer and smiled. No terror there. Unmixed bliss.

Emerald meadows of the High Divide, in the western Olympics where I'd never been before, re-proved that variations on old themes could be as stirring as new ones. Why suffer the cacophony of ~~the~~ Schoenberg when there were quartets of Mozart and symphonies of Mahler not yet heard? Why endure the scribbles of Picasso when Renoir and Van Gogh were as yet ~~the~~ merely skimmed?

Dad and Bob and I climbed the trail to the top of Bogachiel Peak and looked down down down to the Hoh River, flowing through the rain forest at an elevation of 1000 feet, and across the broad emptiness of the valley up up up the 7000-foot rise of green mountainside to sprawling glaciers of Olympus. Well, I never would put boots on that Alaska-cold mass but from a safe trail could admire the remnant of the Ice Age it nourished. We looked westward over 35 miles of wooded foothills to the ocean. Well, I'd never sail a ketch on the sea but from a safe beach could view the far edge of infinity, feel the rhythm of eternity.

Home was expanding. Last winter I'd first seen the Pacific Ocean and now recurrently itched to hear its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar. In July demon-pursued Don <sup>the other preacher,</sup> reappeared ~~constantly~~ in the District and he with the gas money and I with the car drove the Oregon coast halfway to California. Each noon we'd find an empty beach, strip off clothes, and tumble about in the breakers -- thundering operas after Puget Sound songs. Each night we'd carry ~~sleeping~~ bags into sand dunes, ghostly moonlight white, and ~~the~~ ~~sleep~~ sleep with surf in our dreams.

Sophocles long ago  
 Heard it on the Aegean, and it brought  
 Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow  
 Of human misery; we  
 Find also in the sound a thought,  
 Hearing it by this distant northern sea.

Columbus was an idiot, damfool lucky not to fall off the edge of the world, not to be caught at night by the myriad lurking Its and Whats -- which, however, would not come ashore so long as the full moon shone.

Someday home might even encompass the Cascades. Since seeing the ~~white~~ <sup>faraway</sup> white mound from Surprise Mountain in 1942 I'd been curious about "the volcano nobody knows," Glacier Peak. Now, on a trip with my folks, I made a close approach. From our camp by the Suiattle River Dad and I switchbacked and sweated up the Sulphur Mountain trail. After lunch in a very Cascade-like nook of ~~granite~~ granite blocks slowly being <sup>encroached on by</sup> ~~converted to~~ <sup>and converted to green</sup> heather knolls, we climbed to the 6000-foot ridge crest for scenery -- mainly clouds. Enough of Glacier could be seen, though, to prove it a fit companion for Baker and Rainier and Adams and St. Helens. I knew the Cascade Crest Trail, the famous path extending from Canada to the Columbia River, traversed the slopes of the volcano. Something to be kept in mind.

More exciting because unexpected was the view across the Sulphur Creek valley. The Glacier Peak ~~quadrangle~~ quadrangle, surveyed in 1897-99, showed no trails there and only two named peaks, Spire and Dome, 8220 and 8860 feet -- devoutly to be avoided if the glacier <sup>snouts</sup> ~~bars~~ and cliff footings were faithful evidence of what was hidden by clouds. But also partly visible and safely removed from fearsome ice and precipice was Green Mountain, a sweep of meadows not the least Cascade-like, <sup>instead</sup> ~~but~~ exceedingly Olympic-like, the very

embodiment of the Green Woman. Keep that, too, in mind because ~~down~~<sup>on</sup> the Suiattle road we'd passed a ~~sign~~<sup>sign</sup>, "Green Mountain Trail."

If ever in a long life of ridge-running I exhausted the Olympics, there was an entire second mountain range awaiting.

Never was a summer so perfectly footloose. I was free of school for the first time in 4 years, free of work for the first time since I was old enough to split wood and hoe corn and feed chickens, free of foreign entanglements for the first time in months beyond remembering and, better than that, free of the urgent ~~long~~ longing for the first time since the onset of puberty. Nothing to do and the whole summer to do it.

'Tis better to have loafed and lost  
Than never to have loafed at all.

I was free to gorge myself on mountains. How could I have been so dull, as recently as last summer, to think I'd be like a child given free run of a candy store, soon glutted and sick? The more I hiked the more ravenous my appetite, the healthier my body and mind.

Still, I found it desirable to separate highland rambles with short spaces of lowland days. The city was merely a place to wash socks and grease boots and patch pants and reload Trapper Nelson with food and draw lines on maps and recruit partners. However, wilderness gave all the more sustenance ~~for intervals of~~<sup>if one took time out for</sup> digestion, for ~~moments~~<sup>intervals</sup> of close-up study of civilization.

During the Perseid Meteor Shower I sat on the roof of Parrington Hall ~~gazing~~<sup>sheering</sup> at electric glare of vacant-eyed Seattle -- how unaware and trivial

and impotent it was under the bombardment from outer space. ~~I watched~~  
 While mankind slept in sealevel night, I watched dawn pinken summit snows  
 of 14,408-foot Rainier, 65 miles southeast, and then the nuclear fireball  
 explode from the Cascades, the Sunrise Mountains, 35 miles east -- how  
 incredible, with freedom <sup>close</sup> at hand, that all these people ~~had~~ should tamely  
 submit to life imprisonment in the city, that they should not arise ~~in~~  
~~in~~ morning and escape.

My basecamp was on Northlake Avenue. Last winter, driven from the  
 University District by the first wave ~~of the exodus~~ of vets, G.I.-Bill  
 wealthy and bidding the rents of basements and attics and garages and  
 houseboats beyond reach of the sub-proletariat, I'd migrated down the hill  
 and over the railroad tracks to the shore of Lake Union and a pocket slum  
 as sordid as any in Seattle outside the Skidroad.

A year earlier during our ~~House~~ Houseboys' Exodus we'd scouted  
 Northlake and before finding the shack on Pasadena Place, a couple blocks  
 uphill from the railroad tracks in a <sup>rundown</sup> ~~shabby~~ but respectable working-class  
 neighborhood, innocently had tried (amid amused consternation of kimono-clad  
 women) to rent rooms in what we belatedly realized was a ~~stark~~ whorehouse.  
 (Some months later the establishment gained newspaper attention by burning  
 down and very nearly inflicting heavy casualties on our Armed Forces.)

Alone now I returned and surveyed the wretched scene. East along the  
 lakeshore, toward the University, were marinas and boat-repair yards. West  
 were a concrete plant, furnace-oil depot, and the city gasworks. In a

several-block gap between workaday world of 1946 east and west rotted a dead but unburied scrap of the 19th century. On the shore were ruins of a lumber mill, faced across Northlake Avenue by a false-front <sup>commercial</sup> row bearing faded signs of businesses decades gone. One lingered, the foul and filthy Northlake Tavern, reeking with piss of drooling Social-Security winos. In the half-block between lake and railroad embankment <sup>the jumble of</sup> ~~the~~ one-time shops and warehouses, ~~the~~ decrepit shanties, all the garbage buildings, were squalid dens of garbage people, several dozen aged, shabby men and a scattering of women tottering about ~~the~~ avenue and side-streets sodden drunk or on the trembling <sup>edge</sup> ~~edge~~ <sup>brink</sup> of delirium.

Lacking comrades I quailed, I fled. But at the edge of the dungheap, paused. In a tumbledown three-story frame building was a ground-floor shop, windows hung with cedar birdhouses and feeding trays, announced by letters neatly burned in a cedar plank over the door as the headquarters of "Tinker Tim."

The birdhouses were palaces compared to those I'd made for my merit badge. I admired the craftsmanship, wondered where the hell I could put a birdhouse. A wrinkled-old but brightly-alive relic looked up from his workbench and waved a greeting.

Here was one human being recognizably human. With a last burst of courage I entered the shop and asked if there happened to be a room for rent. ~~Tinker Tim~~ <sup>doubtless</sup> ~~was~~ dumfounded, ~~he~~ was too polite to show it. He ~~continued~~ continued nailing together a birdhouse, explaining he had a big order to get out for the Audubon ladies. After a half-hour of seemingly idle conversation about birds he apparently was satisfied, allowed as how nobody was using Old Red's room.

Tim led the way up creaking, ~~dingy~~<sup>grimy</sup> staircases to the top floor. The bathroom was shared with the one other top-floor occupant, Cousin Johnny. That was his firewood stacked in the hall. Old Red's room was barely large enough for the bed (where they found Old Red a while back), table and chair, cardboard wardrobe in a corner, and ~~a~~<sup>ting</sup> wood-coal stove; ~~was~~<sup>space</sup> enough ~~room~~ was left to squeeze in my recordplayer and albums and some orange-crate bookcases. The view from the single window was <sup>southward</sup> over Lake Union to downtown Seattle.

Had it not been for Tim I couldn't have stomached a move to Northlake, where I was the only resident younger -- at a guess -- than 70 ~~years~~. But he was ~~so~~ sprightly as <sup>a</sup> ~~the~~ bird <sup>while he worked</sup> and I often sat on a cedar butt in his shop and listened to stories of his youth, ~~which as he talked was not far in~~  
~~the past from the present.~~

He'd come from Cornwall as a boy and grown up in this building, erected by his father as a combination of family home, shops, and rooms to let. <sup>Tim</sup> ~~was~~ kept a sailboat a halfmile east on Lake Washington and on after-school and Sunday voyages explored the lake from <sup>end to</sup> ~~one~~ end. ~~to~~ Out of school he'd become a gypsy mechanic roving the ~~Northwest~~ Northwest, working at one lumber mill until he'd seen enough of that part of the country, then moving to another. Eventually he'd settled into a job repairing machinery for the city street department, married, built a house, raised a family. Ten years ago, ~~retired~~ pensioned off, children grown, wife newly dead, he'd sold the house and returned to his childhood home and become a birdhouse carpenter. But a decade had been enough. Northlake was a place of death. Tim wasn't ready. He was in the midst of plans to buy a pickup truck, build a

workshop-cabin on the back, and resume his gypsying where he'd left off 40-odd years ago.

My second friend was Cousin Johnny, a chipmunk-spry gnome several inches under 5 feet and like Tim ever-sober, ever-cheerful, ever-busy. ~~He~~ to visit his cousins He'd come over in the '90s/and never gone home. But also like Tim he wasn't long for Northlake. When legal loose ends of his recent inheritance were tied up he'd be returning to his native village <sup>as</sup> ~~to become~~ a man of substance, ~~the proprietor~~ proprietor of three houses and a grocery shop, <sup>Moreover,</sup> ~~once home he'd marry his~~ ~~widowed childhood sweetheart,~~ after 70 bachelor years, ~~not seen in all these years,~~ <sup>the match arranged by mail.</sup> I'd miss his tales of Cornwall, told on our joint excursions to the railroad tracks to gather coal jounced from gondolas. But I was glad ~~to see~~ Johnny was leaving. He belonged in Cornwall with the other elves.

The fourth occupant of the building, Tim's ~~brother~~ brother, I ~~had~~ <sup>never adventured,</sup> ~~never~~ shunned. Cobbler Fred had never roamed, <sup>as eldest son had learned his</sup> father's trade here and never left. <sup>Yet in long-past years</sup> ~~Once, though,~~ <sup>an indispensable and</sup> ~~part of~~ <sup>respected citizen of the forest</sup> ~~making~~ <sup>logger world, building</sup> and repairing and caulking loggers' boots; Now his ancient machines stood idle except when he was ~~in~~ half-soling wornout Northlake shoes. Crippled from 60 years of standing all day on a concrete floor, he rarely stirred from the rocking chair by the pot-bellied stove, rarely emerged from ~~his~~ boozy torpor. I avoided his shop, next to Tim's, stopping in only to pay rent and pick up mail.

One winter morning I woke to see snowflakes drifting by my window, to hear horn-honking of stalled traffic high above Lake Union on the University Bridge. I must go wandering! Must exult in this revenge of wilderness <sup>slut</sup> on civilization, this sudden white purity of ~~the~~ metropolis. But as



I was passing Fred's shop he beckoned me in. The Northlake Tavern hadn't opened, the bartender presumably <sup>was</sup> stuck someplace, and poor old Fred was in shaking distress, out of booze. He gave me money and I hiked through deepening snow up the hill and across the bridge to the Eastlake Gardens, the only tavern to which I had entry, and fetched a case of stubbies. I then <sup>sought</sup> ~~wanted only~~ to escape; so pitiable was his gratitude, however, I couldn't refuse the beer he insisted I drink as payment. And thus that morning, the storm cleansing even Northlake, the beer softening my dread, I met the Others I'd <sup>also</sup> ~~met~~ <sup>and</sup> ~~feared~~ ~~loathed~~ ~~conquered~~ ~~loved~~.

Singly they drifted in and clustered around the stove, until were assembled all the half-dozen cronies I'd often seen there. A few beers or snorts of wine steadied hands, brightened eyes, loosened tongues. Surely, though, it was less the alcohol than the <sup>holiday of storm</sup> ~~snow~~ that revived embers of life in ~~these~~ numb old heads. They were put in mind of the Big Snow (no year given, all but me knew it), when every streetcar in the city was dead on the tracks and the drifts were up to your mackinaw and relief parties were sent out to <sup>pack</sup> ~~carry~~ food to remote neighborhoods, and of the Big Freeze (again no year), when Lake Union froze solid and one <sup>star-bright</sup> ~~moonlight~~ night the entire population of Northlake spontaneously took off in a hooting-hollering <sup>mob</sup> ~~rush~~ to skate over to Seattle.

Probably my open fascination stimulated the story-telling competition, the ~~can-you-top-this~~ can-you-top-this anecdotes of hair-raising <sup>perils</sup> ~~adventures~~ ~~escapes~~ in mills and logging camps from Bellingham to Hoquiam, of escapades on ~~every~~ timber-country skidroad<sup>s</sup> -- ~~and especially~~ especially on the nation's most notorious-glorious, the Seattle Skidroad, where a man could get anything he'd <sup>the</sup> belly for, and a bellyful if he didn't keep his wits.

An hour they were ~~gone~~ again a bunch of the boys a-whooping it up. Then, the stamina for roaring benders of youth ~~gone~~<sup>decades</sup> gone, tongues thickened, eyes glazed, and I left. Frequently thereafter, though, when I saw the group was in the brief moment of animation between morning horrors and ~~the~~ afternoon stupor, I joined the circle to hear the history of old Puget Sound.

One spring ~~one~~ morning I noticed in my comings and goings there was no gathering by the stove, saw an unusual back-and-forth shuffling on streets. Even Tim ~~was~~<sup>was</sup> unsmiling and untalkative; ~~and~~ Johnny scurried around with the look of a scared mouse. That evening I stopped in Fred's shop ~~to~~ for my mail. Now the group was assembled, silent. I didn't dare ask what was wrong, merely paused to say hello. Fred ~~looked up~~ struggled to bring me in focus, ~~and~~ said they'd found Meg.

For some days I'd not seen the gay old crone with the red-dyed hair, the sole female of the stove circle but a full member, having known as well as the men -- in what capacity I never ~~asked~~<sup>learned</sup> ~~every Puget Sound~~ the skidroad<sup>s</sup>. I'd not wondered at her absence; Northlake folk were given to periodic alcoholic hibernations. ~~secretly~~ Only when they weren't on the street for a week did friends invade privacy. As with Old Red last fall, as this morning with Meg.

Averted eyes said "The Student," my Northlake moniker, wasn't wanted by the stove. I was welcome to share their youth, not their death. I walked to the ruined mill, out to the end of the collapsing dock, and sat in twilight looking over Lake Union, an industrial sewer ~~but~~ once ~~fresh~~ as ~~fresh~~<sup>fresh</sup> and lovely amid forested hills as Hidden Lake.

Meg. Old Red. Cobbler Fred. Tinker Tim. Cousin Johnny. The ~~members~~  
~~of the~~ stove circle. The dozens of other Northlakers I knew only to nod to  
 in passing.

~~This is the way the world ends  
 Not with a bang but a whimper.~~

They came when Indians still lived in cedar longhouses <sup>amid virgin forests by</sup> ~~along~~ the beaches.  
 They rode the mosquito fleet ~~up and down~~ up and down the water road to and  
 from the new towns, ~~being built~~. They cut the Douglas fir and red cedar and  
 hemlock <sup>next to</sup> ~~above~~ the beaches, skidded logs ~~down~~ to tidewater for rafting to  
 mills. They followed the bull teams and logging railways inland ~~from~~  
~~suburbs~~ over the lowlands. They worked in the <sup>dozen</sup> mills ringing Lake Union  
 and in the hundred other mills around the Sound that loaded lumber schooners  
 waiting to carry the ~~virgin~~ forests to far cities, far continents.

The summer of 1889, the year Washington entered the Union, they read  
 the Governor's speech calling the Olympic Mountains, 35 miles away on the  
 sunset horizon, America's last unknown wilderness. The spring of 1890 they  
 read in the Seattle Press the journals of the Press Expedition of the <sup>previous</sup> winter,  
 the first party to cross the Olympics. Before the "ton of gold" ship docked  
 in Elliott Bay in 1897, ~~and~~ alert entrepreneurs advertised Seattle as the  
 gateway to the Yukon, and the rush to the North emptied local mining camps,  
 they read extravagant (and false) reports of the wealth of Monte Cristo,  
 deep in the Cascades.

There'd been wilderness <sup>extending</sup> then, wilderness from town outskirts to  
<sup>SCARPS</sup> mountains west and east, a vast wilderness of which I'd known a tiny  
 remnant at Hidden Lake -- now also raped tame.

It was all so long, long ago, the 19th century, when the Northlakers were young.

If I lived to their age, what memories would I have of 1946? Looking back from the 21st century, what transformations would I see <sup>in</sup> ~~of~~ city? and <sup>in</sup> the wilderness, now pushed <sup>far up mountain valleys?</sup> ~~back into the mountains?~~

This is the way the world ends  
Not with a bang but a whimper

I was in but not of Northlake and the ends of those around me, sad as they were, strengthened gladness that (given luck and no more Graywolves) <sup>own</sup> my <sup>end</sup> was so distant.  
<sup>Between hikes</sup>  
I awoke each summer morning utterly free of responsibility or goal or plan and set out aimlessly wandering, wondering what surprises the day might bring.

All's well in the ~~the~~ whirl  
For a fast-footed squirrel.

I'd walk up the hill to the Avenue and browse in bookstores or hole up in a music-shop listening booth with a stack of records, or maybe run into school friends and drink a gallon of coffee in whichever newly-opened restaurant hadn't yet learned giving students unlimited free refills was a ~~fast~~ quick road to bankruptcy.

I had enough bucks left in the sock from my springtime job at the mill to hold out (with the aid of an occasional unrequested but appreciated fin slipped me by my folks) until I returned to the University payroll, and meanwhile made myself rich by making my wants small. Rent was \$6 a month

and stove coal free. I ate on four bits a day, with an unvarying menu of a bowl of bread and milk for breakfast, no lunch, and two ham sandwiches and a pint of milk for supper.

Aside from mountains my biggest expense was beer. Arild would blast down Northlake Avenue in his brilliant yellow De Soto, ordered when he joined the Navy and thus one of the earliest off the postwar assembly line, and we'd tavern-hop through the countryside of our childhood, accumulating a carful of old Ronaldites. Inevitably our rounds included the Highlands Golf Course, where as a kid Arild had caddied ~~for~~ for the rich bastards, and where now the crooked Norwegian would climb the treacherous damn Cyclone Fence like it had an invisible stile and steal the flag from the 13th hole.

Once or twice a week Bob and I took in several pitchers at the Eastlake Gardens. We'd

Sit bousing at the nappy,  
An' getting fou and unco happy,

until the 1 o'clock closing, then storm up to the Avenue for hamburgers at the Robin Hood Grill; honoring the name, we ~~invariably~~ walked out without paying the check. For further adventure we <sup>ravaged</sup> ~~raided~~ the city night like a barbarian horde, climbing graveyard monuments and tipping over headstones, stealing warning lanterns from streets under repair, or prowling the dark campus breaking into buildings, not for plunder and pillage but simply because they were there.

One afternoon, walking down the Avenue to meet Bob for an experiment in new sensations -- drinking at a different tavern, the Red Robin, and getting swacked in broad daylight -- I ran into Betty. Or better say she ran into (literally) me.

A couple years before, when we were introduced in Parrington, I'd briefly fallen a quarter or half in love with her, attracted by a loose eye that gave an intriguing air of elusiveness -- I never was sure she was looking at me, over my shoulder at a passerby, or both at once. To divert attention from the ~~wandering~~ eye she kept her mouth going a mile a minute; even while I was talking her lips were twitching.

A second engaging ~~attractive~~ quality was clumsiness. Due to the errant eye she lacked depth perception and stumbled on staircases and fell off sidewalks and bumped into things; even when not stumbling she had the look of being about to, or being afraid she might.

Mentally she was as blundering as physically. Having just transferred from Reed College in Portland, with typical Reedy snobbishness she made it clear nothing but poverty could have driven her from the "Harvard of the Northwest" to mingle with the rabble of a public school. However, it was a false front, and crumbled at our first encounter. It being well-known among Reedies that state-university slob<sup>s</sup> never read Great Books, she thought to put me down with a glib reference to Lucretius. ~~Lucretius was a poet.~~  
By happenstance I was studying Lucretius, as she learned when I quoted:

The birds in the sky  
And the waves in the ocean  
And you, love, and I  
Are ~~all~~ matter in motion.

mere

A few deft probes revealed she hadn't read Lucretius, knew nothing of him except what she'd heard in ~~the course of~~ a lecture covering Stoics and Cynics and Epicureans in one swift hour. ~~Beginning with this~~ *She began our acquaintance with a* pratfall ~~and~~ *and* she never regained balance, not with me shoving her around.

Much as I enjoyed our occasional fencing matches (ludicrous mismatches), matters had not progressed, mainly because with ~~another girl~~ <sup>the girl - no girl</sup> I took up ~~the sport~~ wrestling. Only now, staggered into by Betty on the Avenue, did I realize I hadn't seen her ~~in~~ <sup>for</sup> months. The explanation? She'd been home in Portland recuperating from the operation that anchored her eye. That was what was bothering me. The eye was all wrong. She was too proud of "being like everybody else" for me to say so, but the operation was a mistake, <sup>1</sup>/<sub>M</sub> not improving her vision, as it turned out, and destroying a good part of her ~~charm~~ charm.

However, ~~the~~ the surgeon hadn't cured the quivering lip or accident-on-the-way-awkwardness for the fun of it to-happen ~~efficiency~~ and I invited her along to the Robin. A single ~~the first~~ beer disintegrated what passed for her mind and she began erupting words so fast half were lost. Bob and I couldn't drink for laughing. She was delighted to be the star of the show but after a while ran out of routines and asked for a cigarette -- a transparent ploy to occupy her mouth and thus get ~~momentarily~~ offstage. Unfortunately, when I offered a lighted match she misjudged the distance and scorched her eyebrows.

Bob and I began taking her boozing regularly, which we could easily afford because ~~she~~ she was a really cheap drunk. Aside from the comedy what I <sup>liked</sup> ~~enjoyed~~ about her was the total absence of threat. The coltish clown lacked the slightest ~~head~~ <sup>grown up with</sup> whiff of sexiness. ~~Having~~ <sup>two/older brothers</sup> ~~expected from~~ <sup>kid</sup> ~~she~~ treated <sup>in</sup> her as a little girl, she ~~was~~ every male more of the same. She was precisely what I wanted in a female -- an amusing <sup>monkish</sup> <sup>even</sup> sister.

I'd taken my <sup>monkish</sup> <sup>even</sup> vows in June and couldn't now be tempted <sup>by</sup> Lana Turner, in sweater or out. Content in ~~my~~ celibacy, henceforth I'd screw

around solely in the mountains, with the Green Woman, and nevermore in  
bed, risking the trap of premature adulthood.

do you think that i would change  
my present freedom to range  
for a castle or moated grange  
wotthehell wotthehell  
cage me and i d go frantic  
my life is so romantic  
capricious and corybantic  
and i m toujours gai toujours gai



September 1946

Chapter 8

ALIENS ON THE TRAIL

We talked about -- what else? -- mountains. Not the beauties and exaltations, too sacred ~~to~~ for jukebox-raucous tavern. The miseries and terrors, made hilarious by beer. From Boy Scout days, my rambles of the war years, our hikes together of spring and summer, Bob and I had no end of harrowing memories. Even Betty made a small offering. She'd once gone to Campfire Girl camp -- and been sent home as hopeless. Last fall, encouraged by a sadistic Mountaineer friend, she and another incompetent hiked a couple miles into storm-drenched forest, were caught in the middle of nowhere by darkness, failed in attempts to build a fire, huddled under a tree all night soaking up rain and nibbling raw potatoes, and at dawn barely escaped to the highway.

That was the sum total of the addlebrain's wilderness experience. Yet she managed to ruin the subject. Was she as artless as ~~she~~ she seemed? I'd swear there was revengeful triumph in her giggle the night she brought that same sadistic Mountaineer to the Red Robin and introduced her by saying, "Monie climbs mountains!"

Shit. I didn't want to hear about it. But Betty egged on the wiry little bitch, who though only in her mid-20s had stood atop Constance and

The Brothers and every other peak I knew, scores more I'd never heard of, and worst of all had climbed Rainier -- often.

For Bob the highlands were merely a playground, his ego wasn't threatened. He would insist, on stimulating Monie with his ~~open-faced~~ <sup>wide-eyed</sup> fascination, to tale after tale of blood and slaughter -- and on showing his naivete by repeatedly asking why people climb mountains. Ask a silly question and get a silly answer. She'd toss off Mallory's flip "because it is there." Or taunt us with the lines of some nameless alpine poetaster:

Men can go where the clouds can go  
But they must be sturdy men!

Men, yes. I'd long known why men (better say boys) climbed. The symbolism was embarrassingly manifest to any sophisticated male -- one climbs a peak to make it an extension of the body, a gargantuan tool for screwing the sky. Only pubescents not yet initiated into shame ~~were~~ <sup>could be</sup> unaware the sport was the equivalent of walking a public street with naked prick on high.

What mystified me was why a female climbed. Fouled-up hormones? Penis envy? Anyhow, that Monie was a climber, and that Betty should intrude her into our cheerful beering, was a damn outrage.

No rudeness of mine could drive her away. Invite Betty drinking and the ~~tag-along~~ tag-along was inevitable. What did she want from me and Bob? Not sex -- in her weird way she was as sisterly as Betty. Not beer -- she'd nurse a single glass all evening and when urged to chug-a-lug would bleat, "Oh, I'm high enough on animal spirits!"

Something sinister lurked in those ~~staring~~ <sup>magnified by</sup> merry eyes ~~behind~~ glasses thick as coke bottles, in the constant convulsions of cackling. It came

out in the open when she suggested the four of us climb a peak called The Tooth.

"Just a staircase, really -- but good for laughs!" Cackle.

Whose laughs? Not ours. What was her game? Castration. Aroint thee, witch!

Surprisingly, she <sup>appeared</sup> ~~was~~ not the least disappointed by the foiling of her plot, became virtually human, began speaking less of peaks she'd climbed with ~~The~~ Mountaineers and more of trails she'd hiked with her folks.

Grudgingly I had to admit her knowledge of mountains far surpassed mine.

~~But~~ <sup>And</sup> she wasn't arrogant in her superiority, once off her damn cliffs and glaciers was a sincere and humble lover of the meadows and the woods -- "one of us," even if female.

That's why I agreed to her second suggestion -- that we go hiking. Whatever doubts remained about her motives, I saw no <sup>possible</sup> physical or psychic danger <sup>in</sup> ~~the~~ the 5-day trail tramp she proposed through my beloved northeast Olympics. And there was the promise of infinite amusement in observing the wilderness progress of tanglefoot Betty.

Wednesday morning, September 4, under now-and-then showering clouds, we four ferried across the waters and drove to the end of the Quilcene River road.

Bark Shanty. Eight years since my last visit. Nothing had changed. The moss-grown shelter. Tall old trees. Almost I could see the Big Red Truck, the yipping Scouts. But something certainly had changed. Now,

no beer for excuse, what the hell was I doing, going hiking with girls?  
Camp Parsons phantoms jeered, "Sissy! Sissy!"

However, phantoms took the river trail; our way, new to me, lay up a tributary, Townsend Creek.

The laughs came on schedule. Betty placed each boot, at each step, as if navigating a nest of rattlesnakes. I helped by warning of pebbles she might trip over, puddles she might drown in.

Hours passed. Miles didn't. The joke wore out. Bob and I settled into a pattern of strolling leisurely 5 minutes and waiting 20 for the females; Monie, impelled by masochism or loyalty, stuck with the stumbling clown. But whenever Betty -- back bent under Trapper Nelson, brows furrowed, eyes glazed, lips twitching -- saw us sprawled on the ground she ~~knelt~~ collapsed in a heap; we began resting until we heard whimpers around the bend, then ~~escaping~~ <sup>stealing away</sup> before she came in sight.

Twilight. The forest too brush-choked and soggy and dripping to camp. Time to ~~build~~ <sup>make</sup> a lightning bug. With a large nail Bob and I punched holes in both ends of one side of a ~~tin~~ Ten Can, inserted a length of wire for a handle, and punched a larger hole in the middle of the opposite side to hold a candle.

Now, of course, we had to travel in a bunch, Betty in front setting the inchworm pace, Bob or I at the rear with the bug, its diffused glow far better for hiking than a flashlight. At 9 o'clock we reached Sink Lake ~~Shelter~~ Shelter. Seven miles hiked, 1500 feet of elevation gained. In 8 hours! Impossible to believe, seeing the speed of the idiot's lips in a tavern, her legs could go so slow.

A sandwich <sup>g</sup>supper having been eaten on the trail, the females immediately crawled into sleeping bags and conked out. Bob and I built a fire and brewed a bucket of coffee. After several cups we decided to visit our original goal for the night, a cabin said by Monie to be just 5 minutes distant <sup>but</sup> --/4 minutes ~~away~~ beyond Betty's ability to move except in a stretcher.

Before setting out we should've asked directions. An hour we searched the forest. No cabin. And by now very little candle. Best make haste back to camp by the obvious shortcut -- following Townsend Creek to Sink Lake, then the shore to the shelter.

Before setting out we also should've looked at the map. The creek left forest, entered a boggy subalpine meadow, divided and redivided into a maze of meandering ~~distasteful~~ channels. Expecting ~~to~~ momentarily to find the lake and thus camp, we hurried through knee-high grass and over-the-head willows. No lake. As the map would've told us, once upon a geological time there <sup>had been</sup> ~~was~~ a lake. Now there was a marsh.

Not enough candle to retrace steps to forest. Surrounded in moonless starless drizzling night by infinite marsh. And by innumerable silent sloughs -- each of us in turn, while the other was in the rear with the bug, plunged into ~~many~~ pits of black water.

Soaked to the skin up to the neck. No wood or even dry grass for a fire. Shouts ~~answered~~ unanswered by ~~the~~ sleeping bitches. A hop and a jump from camp, if we knew where to hop and jump, and facing the most miserable night of our lives.

Candle guttered out. Marooned in blackness. The ~~time~~ shivering began.

A firecracker! There! In 50 stumbles we were scrambling up the bank from marsh to forest and in 20 steps ~~we~~ more were at the shelter -- saved by explosion of a gas pocket in the dying fire. Long after midnight we were squeezing and steaming water from shirts and pants.

In wilderness the rule of law~~s~~ is absolute. But no commandments are posted at ~~the~~ trailheads, they must be learned the hard way through the punishments that inevitably follow transgressions.

Parsons phantoms chortled, "That's what you get for going out with girls." Yes, Bob and I had contributed to the delinquency of females, had contaminated the purity of a male preserve. Wilderness would show no mercy. The 8 hours to Sink Lake were just the beginning of the penalty. And the purgatory of the marsh, though it didn't strike me as exactly fitting the crime, was a warning, ~~there could be more~~. Four more days we'd pay, and pay, and pay.

Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow  
Betty creeps in this petty pace...

Mark Thursday. The 3 miles and 2200 feet of elevation to 5200-foot Windy Lakes, in headwater meadows of Townsend Creek, were properly a 2-hour job. Betty labored up the switchbacks from early morning to late afternoon. It was necessary to stare intently at her several minutes to be sure she was moving at all -- ~~not~~ and half the time she wasn't.

Mark Friday. A steep mile up to the tundra ridge of 6270-foot Mt. Townsend, 4 ~~steep~~ <sup>abruptly</sup> miles <sup>^</sup> down to big trees of Copper Creek at 3300 feet, <sup>gentle</sup> 3 miles upstream to Copper City, 4300 feet, in subalpine forest. An <sup>^</sup>

easy half-day. However, though <sup>at Windy Lakes</sup> we shouted her out of the sack at dawn to start the climb while we slept to mid-morning, the three of us (Monie's loyalty exhausted) were hours exploring ~~the~~ collapsing shacks and caved-in tunnels of the old mining camp before Betty staggered in at nightfall.

Mark Saturday. Ascend rolling meadows 2 miles to 6000-foot Buckhorn Pass, traverse wide-sky slopes of Mt. Buckhorn  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles to Marmot Pass, descend a mile to Camp Mystery. Call it a before-luncheon saunter. Or, for Betty, a day-long grind. But then, how fast can a person travel when every other step she falls on her face and lies so corpse-stiff <sup>that</sup> companions <sup>^</sup> ~~must~~ prod her with boots to make sure she isn't truly dead?

Strange days. I was used to a kaleidoscope wilderness, scenes passing in swift succession, and was disoriented by the other-worldly changelessness. This wasn't hiking, it was homesteading. But short of carrying the oafish lump piggyback, there was naught to be done. ~~But~~ Exasperation yielded <sup>d</sup> <sup>^</sup> to resignation, impatience to ~~some~~ languor.

Eerie days. In the land of the stopped clock are mysteries.

The trail was spread with a faery banquet -- ~~orange~~ orange-yellow salmonberries in wet ravines, dusty-blue and wine-purple blueberries in forests and meadows, tiny red strawberries on rock outcrops. Enjoying the feast, I felt the presence of a Host, wouldn't have been surprised at ~~the~~ materialization of a benign Smile.

From afar came wild music, melodies of Pan. Scanning meadows, atop a boulder outlined against the sky <sup>I'd</sup> ~~spot~~ spot a gnome in outsize boots and baggy pants and sloppy wool shirt and red bandana. The weirdest sister, Monie, blowing a flute.

4 Surely this was a dream. Eventually I'd awake and hike. Meanwhile, though, it was rather pleasant to float effortlessly through wildlands. The trip had the quality of an idyll. ¶ Until Saturday.

On the way from Buckhorn Pass to Marmot Pass we took a side-trip stroll to the 6985-foot summit of Mt. Buckhorn. Lazy Thursday-Friday clouds had been cleaned from the ~~grounded~~ sky by a brisk north wind. All around were familiar Olympic panoramas. I looked across the ~~low~~ broad gulf of the Dungeness valley to Graywolf Ridge and Safety-No Safety Pass where I nearly died a month and a half ago, to The Needles that haunted me those days and nights. No more. A fig for you, hard fangs. Elsewhere lies my future -- here in the soft and fearfree country.

Berry banquet and pagan pipings, forest and tundra and waterfalls and tarns, campfire evenings singing old folk songs (and old Camp Parsons songs by me and old Girl Scout songs by Monie) -- with sharing of these we'd become comrades. If Monie was weird she was entertaining. If Betty was a blundering fool she was a good sport. Hiking with sisters wasn't all bad.

Until the summit of Buckhorn. There Betty shattered the unity, ~~wrecked~~ ~~stirring~~. Stirring from her usual rest-stop ~~comatose~~ coma, she gaily asked Monie to demonstrate climbing techniques. Curious Bob stupidly seconded the request. The witch cackled and complied. One side of the summit block was a 20-foot wall lacking the slightest protuberance for hands and feet, ~~to grip~~. But she flowed up the glass-smooth rock as if on a



ladder. Supernatural. Hateful.

Worse. Urged by Monie, Bob tried the wall and damned if he too didn't clamber quickly to the top. Traitor.

Monie's challenge that I ~~give a go~~ <sup>have a go</sup> was rejected with a brusque "Goddam monkeys!" But from beyond the Dungeness valley The Needles rubbed ~~it~~ it in. Cowardice is sanity but cowardice still.

Later, at Marmot Pass, I stood again ~~at the spot~~ where 8 years ago I'd first seen a sunset. Then walked again down meadows where I first felt the beauty of a flower. And drank again from the Source of the Big Quilcene River. Past-in-present. <sup>Nostalgia.</sup> Melancholy. Shame. Disgust. Never would that promise of long ago ~~be~~ be fulfilled. All my trails had led to this.

The jolliness of the Camp Mystery evening was not for me. These laughing <sup>my</sup> hyenas were not <sup>^</sup> friends, were aliens.

Monie rattled and ~~she~~ cackled on, telling funny stories. Such as the time she and her sister were practicing rappelling at home, leaping out their second-story bedroom window, sliding <sup>^</sup> down the rope howling and screeching, then running upstairs to do it again -- until neighbors panicked and the party was broken up by siren-wailing police cars and fire truck.

Presumably our food for the trip, planned ~~by~~ and bought by the great Mountaineer, also was a climber's jest. Her notion of breakfast was a pot of ~~stewed~~ dried apricots stewed with much water but no sugar. Nothing else. Just acid apricots. At lunchtime she passed around a cloth bag containing a mixture of chocolate chips, raisins, and peanuts. Nothing ~~else~~ else. Just "squirrel food." For supper she'd brought from the

Co-op, a place climbers buy ropes and axes and other fancy gear, a large sack of miscellaneous <sup>unidentifiable</sup> dehydrated vegetables. After boiling several handfuls into a mess less appetizing than what I'd seen barfed <sup>on sidewalks by Northlake</sup> ~~by~~ winos she'd add chipped beef or slices of salami and call us to table, crying "Delish! Nutrish! Alacazam!"

I detested her cuisine and detested her jokes. Bob's campfire laughter was his second betrayal of the day. He should've taken my side, not theirs. The problem, of course, was that having been 3 years <sup>Army-claistered</sup> ~~in~~ ~~the~~ he was in ~~many~~ many ways as innocent as we'd both been in 1943. Even now, after Red Robin nights and trail days, he treated the females with a politeness dangerously near gallantry.

He was openly shocked when in the midst of Betty's inane chattering I interrupted to declare ~~with a flourish that~~ I wished to hell she had as much ~~muscle~~ muscles in her legs as in her jaws.

Not what I said did the damage. I'd been far more vicious before, ~~and she'd laughed~~. It was how I said it. In mid-babble her mouth stopped. I'd not meant to bludgeon so savagely. After all, what was her crime? Being a girl.

Too late to <sup>make it a</sup> ~~blatant~~ joke. Fury flushed her face. Unspoken ~~but~~ curses twitched her lips. Monie sought to revive normal conversation. Bob joined in. Not Betty. Not me.

Thank God we'd only ~~in~~ a single day remaining, a quick 8 miles down the Poopout Drag to Bark Shanty. I didn't want to be here, of all places, with them. Any of them. I wanted to be alone.

October 1946

Chapter 9

WHAT STRANGE UTTERANCE OF THE LOUD DRY WIND

No better retreat for a stylite than ~~ascetics~~ the top floor of a doddering Northlake rooming house. Neighbors rigidly respected privacy, wouldn't so much as knock on the door until you'd been dead a week. Outsiders were intimidated by the stink of mortality, descended from the University and crossed the railroad tracks reluctantly and never uninvited. Solitude was absolute if one wanted, and I did. Solitude for inner explorations.

Among the freedoms of spring and summer had been the release from a prescribed English-literature curriculum, the leisure to sample turmoils of foreign souls and compare them to my 1946-America own. Particularly I was ~~drawn~~ enthralled by the pre-Revolution Russians. What superlative purgations! Surely none since the Elizabethans have so deeply felt the ecstasy of gloom. Who could imagine Tom Jones, Huck Finn, Leopold Bloom, or Jay Gatsby suffering the sort of spiritual catastrophes everyday-routine for the heroes of Dostoevski?

Raskalnikov, now -- there was the guy to teach you the exaltation of degradation. You can't <sup>base</sup> ~~build~~ a three-dimensional morality <sup>on</sup> ~~with~~ good alone, you must know evil -- by being evil. Well, I wasn't up to skulling old ladies but did steal cans of Vienna sausage from supermarkets.

Prince Myshkin -- there was your quintessential holy Idiot, blessed and damned. Would that I could share his terrifying plunges into the "moment of eternal harmony." Would that there were ~~such a thing as~~ a voluntary, temporary epilepsy.

For where, in the end, does all our conventional sanity lead? Full of years and learning, the illustrious Whitehead eventually settled for trying to prove ~~that~~ 1 plus 1 equals 2. Not ~~for~~ me. I was going to become a scholar because it was ~~a~~ clean <sup>work</sup> living, not because I expected to gain from books ~~separately or collectively~~, more than a few clues to the ~~eternal~~ puzzle, a few direction signs. The Truth, which some dress up as God, cannot be known, must be felt. There's no long road, patiently cramming ideas in your head until they achieve critical mass, methodically stripping layers from the onion of reality. If any road exists it's a shortcut similar to an epileptic seizure, an instantaneous stabbing to the core. (Hoping ~~that the epileptic seizure is inappropriate, that~~ Truth neither blows up your brain nor makes you cry.)

that  
where  
prayer  
and poetry  
had  
failed  
alcohol  
would  
surely  
succeed.

Two years ago I'd thought ~~alcohol was the sure-fire way~~. And Truth indeed was often in the wine, and gin, and beer. The pity was ~~in the~~ <sup>next</sup> morning I never could remember what it was. I took to writing down revelations on the spot -- and ~~next~~ <sup>in following</sup> days would pull from ~~my~~ pockets crumpled slips of paper proclaiming the likes of: "I am HERE in the (illegible) BEER-EER-EER!!!!!!!" Danged if I knew what that meant. Crystalline  
~~The~~ Truth of boozy moonlight melts in the sun.

Gas had seemed a possibility. Once while having a wisdom tooth pulled (irony!) I'd died and gone to Platonic Heaven and approached the

very throne of the Form of Forms. I'd awakened in a fit <sup>of ecstasy,</sup> wrestling with the dentist and two nurses and receptionist, <sup>imploring them to give me</sup> ~~accusing~~ "More gas! More ~~gas~~ gas!"  
 No more gas. And I didn't have any more impacted wisdom teeth.

I'd been <sup>enchanted</sup> intrigued by an anthropology professor's description of the ceremonies of the Peyote Cult, during which the Great Spirit appears to the Indians and tells them to cheer up, the white man soon will get back in his ships and sail away over the sea and everything will be dandy again. I'd wanted to try peyote, which according to campus rumor was distributed from tribe to tribe all over the West, but couldn't find an Indian.

Indians. By golly, they had another way. The puberty rite. Fasting. No special supplies needed for that. Mountains were the proper scene, of course, roaming wilderness until a raven or salmon or coyote struck up a conversation. Northlake, though, would do for a test run.

The first day I walked the shores of Lake Union wondering how long it would take to so enfeeble flesh and brain that Truth would come blasting through. Would it be a seagull, mudhen, sparrow, or rat that gave me the Word? The second day I was too faint to leave my room and lay on the bed impatiently waiting for veils to fall from ~~my~~ eyes, trying to ignore sullen accusations of stomach. That night, dizzy and fuzzy, I decided I was too far past puberty. Screw the Truth. I dug into my supermarket loot and gobbled a can of Vienna sausage.

Fasting made me lonesome. Unable to remember why I'd been mad at Bob anyway, I emerged from my casbah and once more we went a-beering.

But with a difference. Now the calendar nagged. Freedom ~~time~~ was ending. I wasn't quite ready to re-enter Graduate School, would delay to January the compulsory ordeal by boredom, studying in fine detail minor poets of the 17th and 18th centuries. Bob, however, after 3½ years in the Army time capsule, would resume the University grind in October.

Not twice can one drink from the same ~~river~~<sup>bottle.</sup> Never would there be another such summer. A fitting denouement was demanded, some notable coup, an ending with no whimper but a hell of a bang. Inspiration came from several pitchers of beer, yet survived -- nay thrived -- in sober daylight. We'd stuff sleeping bags and a loaf of bread and jar of peanut butter in Trapper Nelsons, stand by a highway, and in our final 3 weeks of joint freedom see how far we could travel on our thumbs. And if 3 weeks weren't enough -- well, Bob didn't <sup>really</sup> have to start school in October, nor I in January. We might spend fall and winter roving California and the Southwest, maybe Mexico, drift north in spring to Canada, maybe up the wartime-built Alcan Highway to Alaska.

We were all set to go when who should blow into town but Bill, bosom buddy of Lincoln days, since then imprisoned in Army camps and friend by mail ~~alone~~<sup>only</sup>, partner now in swilling pitcher after pitcher of Red Robin beer. When he departed bleary-eyed for California to enter Cal Tech the moment was lost. Bob decided he'd better, after all, get into the University <sup>r</sup>atrace, join the mob of vets running to catch up with life.

Far horizons lost, all the more essential were berserker city nights. The Brothers Raskalnikov left taverns at barmaids' urgings, feasted on

stolen hamburgers and french fries, and stalked the campus seeking sport. Fire extinguishers were amusing. And <sup>scrawling</sup> ~~wild~~ words <sup>of obscene wisdom</sup> ~~scrawled~~ on blackboards.

The Anatomy Shack proved a treasure trove. One room held dozens of caged, howling, wailing cats. Certainly these Mehitabels deserved a reprieve from students' scalpels, a chance to again sing their wild free tunes, wotthehell wotthehell. We emptied Death Row and then, between 3 and 5 a.m., arranged new homes for several pretty pussies, giving them to girls of our acquaintance who lived in <sup>mildewy</sup> ~~musty~~ basements <sup>where</sup> ~~apartments and left~~ windows <sup>had to be left</sup> open for ventilation.

Another night we stumbled upon the big bonanza -- the cadavers. What's to be done with a corpse? Ingenious schemes collapsed under the weight of too too solid flesh. Unwilling to utterly abandon <sup>our prize</sup> ~~our prize~~, we hacked off an arm with a pocketknife and delivered it through the window of a girl's basement, ~~apartment~~. Her dog had hysterics and she lept from bed and delivered the arm right back. Not to <sup>completely</sup> ~~totally~~ waste labors, next day <sup>at Cal Tech,</sup> we chopped off the hand and mailed it to Bill. His anguished postcard was most <sup>gratifying.</sup> ~~satisfying~~. So were subsequent letters, ~~reporting the journey through Cal Tech of the cadaver to hand~~ Bill's <sup>rummy</sup> ~~alcoholic~~ roomy, waking with the morning horrors, found under his pillow the Beast With Five Fingers and climbed the wall. A gaggle of Nobel Laureates basking in adulation at a formal banquet were <sup>observed</sup> ~~seen to~~ squint, quizzically at the bizarre table decoration.

Bill appreciated our gift -- as had not the first recipient, Betty. She forgave us, though, just as she'd forgiven me for comparing her legs unfavorably to her lips. And I'd forgiven her for being a girl. The ~~band of~~ trail days and nights, during which she'd become no longer

a total tenderfoot, had <sup>given her</sup> earned status as something of a wildland comrade, were <sup>a bond</sup> stronger than could be broken by the Camp Mystery tempest. ~~which in fact spoiled the relationship.~~ True, sisters never could be brothers, one must be ever alert to the dread potential, yet the tension added <sup>spice.</sup> ~~interest.~~ Brothers are more comfortable, sisters more intriguing. Bob and I never would've thrown a cat and an arm through each others' windows. Betty's, yes.

Monie would've gotten a cat, and maybe the arm, if she'd lived in a basement ~~apartment.~~ Though now working at Boeing as a mathematician, helping ~~the~~ imported Nazis make an American version of the V-1 buzz bomb, on weekends she contributed to our revels. Amazingly, I was beginning to enjoy her kinks. Such as: Walking by a stucco building she'd close her eyes, put fingers on the wall, and bust out cackling. The stucco, she said, contained messages in Braille (which she'd learned during several years of childhood ~~of~~ blindness, before an operation and Coke-bottle glasses restored ~~her~~ sight). Messages from whom? From the Infinite. What did the Infinite have to say? "Oh gosh, I couldn't repeat it. The Infinite is a dirty old man." Cackle.

She was perpetually hysterical at Betty's stupidity in having once joined American Youth For Democracy, possibly the sole person on campus unaware it was Uncle Joe Stalin's funny-face popular-front disguise for the old Young Communist League. Monie delighted in singing taunting Trotskyite songs:



A Y D, A Y D,  
 See how they run, see how they run,  
 They all run after the bourgeoisie  
 To make the world safe for democracy --  
 Did you ever see such hypocrisy  
 As the A Y D?

After which Betty and I (politically-ignorant Bob ~~was~~<sup>gaping</sup>) would join her in startling the tavern throng with selections from the Wobbly Song Book ("I Dreamt I Saw Joe Hill Last Night," "There'll Be Pie in the Sky Bye and Bye") or heart-~~wringing~~<sup>rending</sup> picket-line ballads of the '30s:

I don't want your millions, mister,  
 I don't want your diamond rings,  
 All I want is food for my baby,  
 Give me back my job again.

Monie was fun. Also an ~~infinite~~ rich lode of alpine lore, ~~to be~~  
~~consciously mined~~. One Sunday, to answer some of my questions about the mysterious Cascades, she led us up Red Mountain, a 5900-foot ~~mountain~~<sup>peak</sup> just north of Snoqualmie Pass and a short and simple scramble from the Cascade Crest Trail. The summit view was a revelation. I saw the Cascades are two distinct and very different ranges, Snoqualmie Pass the dividing line. Look south: Wave upon wave of green-forested ridges rolled 35 miles to the great ice cream cone in the sky, ~~the enormous bulk of~~ Rainier lording it over humble hills -- and over its neighbor volcanoes, Adams and St. Helens, as well. Rainier I knew of old. But look north! There, hidden from Seattle by front ridges, unsuspected even from the highway, was a vast maze of peaks savagely sculpted by Pleistocene ice, a rough wilderness stretching a hundred miles to the distant white mass of Mt.

as the map told me,  
Baker, and in all that distance crossed by ~~only~~ a single road. The Sunrise Mountains were full of surprises.

Red was a romp. But I was soon to rue the day. On that ~~pleasant~~ relaxed hike I came to trust Monie, wasn't wisely wary the beer-befuddled night she suggested the four of us try something "a bit ~~more~~ more interesting."

"Cruiser is a cheap thrill," she said. "Good for laughs." Cackle.

Saturday morning, October 12. We honked the horn At Monie's house  
and she ~~appeared on the sidewalk~~ <sup>emerged</sup> carrying ~~her~~ gear. Holy shit! What was the ice ax for? And the rope?

I remembered. She'd said Cruiser was no <sup>harder to climb</sup> ~~tougher~~ than Red -- but ~~that~~ ~~it~~ had some "exposure." That's not what opens your eyes at the burlesque house. That's the climbers' euphemism for "one false step and you go screaming through space and splatter your brains on a rockslide." Exposure, for Chrissake, is air under your feet. Exposure is for the birds. And that skinny string of manila rope was supposed to make us safe? Bullpussy.

I remembered Monie pointing out, on the drive to Snoqualmie Pass, the shocking fang called The Tooth, and cackling as she recalled her month-ago attempt to lure us there. How merry in victory was the weird sister now, en route to the horror of Cruiser Peak.

<sup>The instant</sup>  
As soon as I saw the rope I should've commanded: "Back in the basement with that garbage, Monie. We're going hiking."

Why didn't I? Because <sup>it was</sup> ~~it~~ October. Summer was gone, the summer of 30-odd wilderness days and nights, more than <sup>my</sup> ~~the~~ total of the preceding

3 years. Soon the high country would be mucked up by snow, fit only for skiing, I'd be drudging in seminar room and library and might not for years be truly free again. The epic summer was gone, and without the final bang required for a masterpiece. Many had been the luscious-soft meadows since the Graywolf, so many they'd become nearly humdrum. Almost I was lonesome for the Old Ones, for the Pan Terror, the one sure way I'd found to stab the onion.

So I didn't <sup>gripe</sup> ~~blather~~ about the rope. Who could <sup>tell</sup> ~~say~~? I might like walking on air -- <sup>it</sup> ~~it~~ might <sup>give me</sup> ~~get~~ the Big Bang. And if nerve failed, there was plenty of time before tomorrow ~~was~~ <sup>an</sup> for ~~the~~ Artful Dodger to elude the witch.

Saturday was reassuring. We crossed Puget Sound on the Seattle-Bremerton ferry, not the <sup>good old</sup> Edmonds-Port Ludlow ferry ~~but~~ <sup>preferred</sup> but still part of the Black Ball Line, cabin walls ~~decorated~~ decorated with familiar photos demonstrating use of a life jacket, the ~~favorite~~ model being the black-haired pirate we assumed ~~was~~ was Mr. Black Ball himself. We drove south and then north around the tip of Hood Canal, turning off the Olympic Highway up the Skokomish River. A different river, different forests, different peaks, but still the familiar Olympics, though the southernmost portion where I'd never hiked.

The trail was comfortable, ascending 4 forest miles to the cozy basin of Flapjack Lakes, 3900 feet. Familiar too, if not so comfortable, <sup>was the row of peaks</sup> ~~were the Sawtooths~~ <sup>the Sawtooths,</sup> standing above the basin, a miniature version of <sup>But they were tomorrow's worry.</sup> The Needles, ~~and built of the same basalt.~~ We camped on the isthmus between <sup>huddled around the</sup> the two lakes and ~~built a~~ <sup>huddled around the</sup> fire; ~~in~~ the early darkness, the frost

forming on gear, reminded that winter was days -- or hours -- off. The full moon rose behind night-black crags; one was a perfect mouse <sup>in profile,</sup> ears laid back, snout thrust up to sniff the brilliant ball of green cheese.

<sup>An</sup> Sunday, ~~would've been~~ idyll ~~to~~ had we ended our hike at 5000-foot Gladys Pass, or turned left and continued to the rounded summit of little Gladys Peak. Two miles we followed the trail, climbing from forest into ~~peaks~~ fields of straw-yellow grass and wine-red huckleberry leaves incandescent with ~~the~~ backlighting of ~~the~~ low October sun. In Puget Sound lowlands the seasons are blurred, often one awakes in a gray-drizzling day and must struggle to recall if it's July or January. There's no drama in the autumn, no mournful glory in the <sup>funeral</sup> pageant of death; alders and willows ~~monely~~ turn leprous and the yellowing of maples and cottonwoods is vivid only by contrast with ~~the~~ ~~dispirited~~ somber ~~and~~ evergreen firs. Not since the fall of 1932, when before my child's eyes all New England abruptly burst into flame, had I been so overwhelmed by color. I'd have been content to call this the Big Bang.

But we didn't end our hike at the pass or atop Gladys Peak. We turned not left but right, toward Sawtooth precipices of the same greenish pillow lava constituting much of Mt. Constance and ~~all~~ of the fearsome Needles. One of those lurching splinters <sup>neck bendingly high</sup> way above ~~is~~ was Cruiser Peak -- not even Monie could tell which ~~was~~, (so chaotic was the jumble of crags)

The instant she started up the rockslide I should've declared: "Go and you go alone, Monie. This is horse shit!"

Why didn't I? ~~But~~ Because the Artful Dodger was too chicken to chicken out. Or rather, to ~~do~~ do so first. I looked at Bob and he looked at me but said nothing. Betty was ~~still~~ gasping for breath, ~~she~~ didn't know where she was or what ~~the hell~~ was happening. She ~~damn well~~ should <sup>have</sup> ~~sure~~ had sense enough to quit. But she didn't. So how could I?

The rockslide was a stroll for a person with depth perception; Betty teetered and tottered as if every boulder ~~was~~ were a <sup>steeple.</sup> ~~skyscraper.~~ The way ~~narrowed into~~ <sup>entered</sup> a vertical-walled gully and ~~steepened~~; Betty got down on hands and knees. I wanted to yell, "Give ~~it~~ up, <sup>moron</sup> ~~you idiot!~~" But didn't. And she didn't. So I couldn't.

When Betty began ~~squirming~~ squirming on her belly, Monie uncoiled the rope and tied us in. I was roped up. And bless me, it didn't hurt a bit. Why had I ~~been~~ been so scared? Despite the forbidding appearance from below, the gully was no tougher a scramble than many in my past, wasn't the least dangerous. I exulted in the feel of rope around waist, pretended I was Whimper scaling the Matterhorn.

Near the top the gully was full of hard-frozen snow. Between snowfield and gully wall, however, was a deep and commodious "moat," <sup>e</sup> its bottom a staircase of 6-foot steps and broad ledges. Each step took Bob and me a few seconds, Betty many minutes. While Monie was soothing and cajoling ~~and holding~~ the whimpering spastic ~~on the rope~~, I borrowed her ice ax and hacked at the snow, pretending I was Mallory on Everest.

So this was climbing! A snap. Here I was, tied to a rope, <sup>swinging</sup> ~~carrying~~ an ax, <sup>using my hands to clamber up</sup> ~~ascending~~ a thousand-foot "couloir" to a 6000-foot "col," and no sweat. Too bad I didn't get into the sport years ago.

At the col I stopped chuckling. Through the notch roared a gale from the North Pole, fiercely cold, alarmingly loud. We retreated to a protected nook for lunch. Monie chomped. I nibbled. Betty didn't even pretend, crouched against the rock and stared ~~was~~ into space, brows knitting, lips quivering, eyes <sup>brimming.</sup> ~~brimming.~~

Not merely howling wind menaced. From the col the ridge crest rose in a steep slab a precarious dozen feet wide, cliff to the left and cliff to the right. And it was up that slab, into the torrent of roaring air, we must go. Monie entertained us with anecdotes of her <sup>four</sup> ~~two~~ previous ascents of Cruiser. She got no laughs.

Sudden salvation! Full of squirrel food, Monie announced the summit was beyond our grasp, that four people ~~on one rope~~ would take forever on the peak and we'd been too long in the gully. Betty was good for something after all.

<sup>Equally</sup> ~~Just as~~ sudden damnation. Said Monie, "Might as well run up to the false summit and at least see Cruiser." And she coiled the rope, slung it over her shoulder, and scampered up the slab, out of sight.

And <sup>deserving to</sup> ~~we~~ <sup>it,</sup> ~~be~~ struck dead for ~~the~~ <sup>it,</sup> ~~betrayal,~~ Bob followed.

Betty and I remained. No summit for her, true or false. She gazed down the couloir to safe meadows, doubtless wondering if she'd get back there alive. I wondered how so miserable an incompetent had allowed

herself to be dragged so high. No denying it, she had <sup>a lot of</sup> guts. Or more likely no brains, ~~which is~~ the same thing. The idiot should've quit at the pass. Nobody blames girls for being cowards.

They blame boys, though. It wasn't Monie who forced ~~me~~ me to risk death -- she was a freak, irrelevant. Bob was the villain. The traitor had followed her and thus I had no choice. I'd not sunk so low as to be a male Betty.

From our snug nook I poked my head into the gale -- and was stunned. Man couldn't withstand such a bludgeoning. Yet one had, and also a scrawny woman. I crawled onto the slab -- a roof, the roof of the world, naked to the sky.

Alone. Two above, one below, none in sight, none to help. The knobby basalt was easier than the slick shingles of Parrington Hall I'd climbed many a campus night. But this roof was high, way high, above gardens of Gladys Pass to the left and forests of the Hamma Hamma River to the right and below me everywhere was air and I'd no gin in my blood.

Wind <sup>wailed</sup> ~~roared~~ by ears, deafening, unsettling. I needed one ~~hand~~ hand to hang onto my hat, the other to hang onto my glasses. No hands for hanging onto Earth. The next gust ~~surely~~ would hurl me into the void.

Voices! Not Bob and Monie <sup>above.</sup> Not Betty ~~below.~~ Right here.

While on the perilous ridge I hung alone,  
With what strange utterance did the loud dry wind  
Blow through my ear!

Nobody will see me go. Monie and Bob will return to Betty and ask, "Where's Harvey?" And she'll answer, "Isn't he with you?" And I'll be

~~an autumn leaf already blown~~ halfway to California, toy of the Old Ones to be eternally kicked around the sky.

Crap on the false summit. I retreated. Betty smiled eagerly, glad not to be alone. I smiled eagerly, glad not to be alone. Hansel and Gretel, ~~were~~ glad to have escaped the wicked witch, shared a cowards' intimacy.

The two returned from above, Monie cackling, Bob solemn, ~~remotes~~ <sup>my feeling</sup> The natural pairing was restored, despite that moment of <sup>being</sup> closer to the sister than the brother. He and I quickly descended to the pass and sprawled in sunset-dazzling ~~yellowed~~ meadows to wait. And wait, and wait.

We sat in silence, I from shame, Bob for another reason. At last he spoke.

"You ever seen a picture of Cruiser? Know what it looks like?"

"No."

"It looks like hell. How long you known Monie?"

"No ~~longer~~ longer than you."

"Well, there's something wrong with her. I mean really wrong. I know <sup>her idea of</sup> it was a joke, ~~for~~ getting us up there. But that kind of joke isn't funny. The bitch actually <sup>tried to talk me into climbing</sup> ~~suggested she and I had time to climb~~ the fucking thing!"

The girls arrived, we hiked to Flapjack Lakes and the road and drove to Bremerton, to the ferry home. On the surface we were a jolly group returning from a happy hike. Betty's mouth was breaking the sound barrier. Monie was cackling about the time half a Mountaineer party, on reaching the false summit and seeing Cruiser, quit cold. Bob and I exchanged glances. This was a dangerous female. Really dangerous.



April 1947

Chapter 10

AT SIXES AND SEVENS

A funny thing happened. Emerging from my Long-Vacation cocoon, I found the world turned upside down. Peace, they called it.

Well, ~~grand~~ <sup>Having</sup> old friends home was wonderful. Sox too~~x~~ was buying all the gas I wanted without skulking around the black market, all the cigarettes I wanted without scurrying hither and yon to stores reported by Avenue telegraph to be putting weekly allotments on sale, all the beer I wanted <sup>letter say</sup> (~~or rather~~ could afford) without gulping it down lest the tavern run dry before closing time.

Yet I missed the war. Newspapers were dull. No more excitement of watching chessmen march across Russia to the Caucasus and back again, hop island by island southward from Japan and then northward from New Guinea.

But was not the peace to be even <sup>more thrilling</sup> ~~better, what with~~ our energies released <sup>from ~~the~~ war games</sup> to build a New Jerusalem in this green and pleasant land? Surely, having stomped the Nazis and Japs we'd ~~now~~ pick up 1930s cudgels and ~~stomach~~ give what for to native fascists, the hate-mongering racists and the capitalists who spawned depressions and wars and profited from both.

The hell you say. Read the fucking papers. America had blown its idealism wad, wanted only to wallow in butter and steaks and fat-assed

Detroit automobiles. There wasn't going to be any damn revolution. Come the next presidential election and the Democrats would wail and beat their breasts but in the end offer us the Missouri hack who took his bourbon straight and his New Deal watered down to a Fair Deal. The bubblehead ~~bubblehead~~ <sup>dupes</sup> of Uncle Joe might attempt a feat of gallantry, a la Don Quixote. None of ~~that~~ that mattered because the Republicans were ~~sure~~ <sup>certain</sup> to ~~serve up~~ <sup>trot out</sup> the Little Man on the Wedding Cake and win in a breeze. <sup>Serve Americans right.</sup> A pox on 'em all. Given a prayer of achieving international amity, economic rationality, and social justice, I'd join the rabble, exercise my ~~new~~ brandnew franchise. As it was I'd cast the blank ballot of the anarchist. Crap on America.

Fie on't! oh fie, fie! 'Tis an unweeded garden,  
That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature  
Possess it merely.

The one unmixed blessing of the peace, the gathering in of friends, was gone in a flash. The ~~reunion~~ reunion, then the scattering.

1942 sat on a wall,  
1942 ~~took~~ <sup>had</sup> a great fall,  
All the king's horses, all the king's men,  
Couldn't put 1942 together again.

A few beers in Seattle and Bill was off to Cal Tech. Hal and Al ~~earned~~ <sup>received</sup> engineering degrees and the accompanying "Greetings!" Ironically, after years of sweating out quarter-by-quarter student deferments, Al was tagged 4-F; Hal was drafted to fight the peace. We'd taken our last hikes together. They'd put away boots and Trapper Nelsons, Al for transit and drawing board, Hal for Navy blues.

#5-a-pair

I didn't dream in ~~December~~<sup>November</sup>, when Bob and I bought Army beavertails <sup>^</sup>  
~~for \$5-a-pair~~ at a surplus store and snowshoed high on the side of Mt.  
 Rainier, that would be our last hike. It was. Army-dormant so long, in  
 the University he grew like a hothouse weed, in mere weeks grew away from  
 me toward his own kind, that exotic new species of 22-year-old freshmen.

Nor did I dream when Arild and I trenched snowdrifts to the summit of  
 Home Peak, close under the ~~massive~~ avalanche-swept east face of Mt.  
 Constance, that would be our last hike. It was. The College of Forestry  
 swallowed him up.

sentimental

Symbolism. Returning from Home Peak we took a side-trip to ~~visit~~  
 Camp Parsons. <sup>^</sup> Still on the boathouse rafter was the shell I nailed there  
 in 1938, my insignia of membership in the Royal Order of the Oyster.

"You are old, Father William," the young man said,  
 "And your hair has become very white,  
 And yet you incessantly stand on your head --  
 Do you think, at your age, it is right?"

It takes two to say goodbye. Friends drifted from me. I ran away and  
 hid from them. Too busy with Another.

Damned if I saw it coming. What was Betty to me, or me to Betty?  
 Little sister with the flapping lips. Big brother who kicked her around.  
 Until a December afternoon. ~~Suddenly, and as to~~ <sup>All unnoticed,</sup> some mysterious fermentation <sup>had occurred.</sup>  
<sup>Suddenly</sup> <sup>^</sup> we couldn't be brother-sister anymore, must become strangers or lovers.  
 If I'd been clever enough to suspect the clown had a warm body fit to ~~wreck~~  
 a monk, would I have fled into strangerhood? In view of <sup>the</sup> my recent  
 disaster, very likely.

But I wasn't and didn't and once past the shock of committing incest was in love. Love at <sup>first clutch.</sup> ~~the second night.~~

A last <sup>fling</sup> ~~gasp~~ of freedom -- a Christmas walk on ocean beaches -- and we returned to the University, Betty to finish her senior year (English lit, what else?) <sup>and</sup> I to resume the plod to the doctorate.

I damn well knew what I was in for. That's why, having attended school continuously from October 1942 to February 1946, I'd taken the Long Vacation. <sup>To</sup> steel my resolve.

For openers, to earn a survival \$42 a month rather than a starving \$21, I'd applied for and been granted a double readership, which meant grading a double load of brain-fuddling bluebooks.

That was just to make me ~~awfully~~ punchy. <sup>crusher was that</sup> ~~That~~ The ~~only formidable~~ <sup>was</sup> characteristic of Graduate School ~~by its very being~~ specifically designed to prevent an oversupply of professors. Grim enough that after undergraduate years communing with major poets one must submerge in drivel of minor poets unread for centuries -- except by aspiring scholars. ~~was~~ The ultimate <sup>obstacle</sup> ~~barrier to the Union Code~~ was that graduate courses were taught by the most senile members of the faculty, reputations <sup>earned</sup> ~~built~~ in 1910, now hardly able to stay awake through a 2-hour seminar, much less <sup>emit</sup> ~~utter~~ two ~~consecutive~~ consecutive intelligible sentences.

Not that my fellow grad students minded. A <sup>sturdy</sup> ~~tough~~ bunch they were, <sup>for all their pasty faces and vacant eyes.</sup> indeed, <sup>^</sup> Most were in their 30s or 40s, had been plugging away 5 to 25 years, doggedly enduring the same seminars over and over again. ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~

Only in Graduate School did men have periods. I'd been wrong about him, and therefore solemnly

~~Even~~ Even those in their 20s were old, burned out in ~~the~~ kindergarten and thus with ~~an infinite~~ <sup>corpse-like</sup> capacity to withstand boredom. I once was discussing ~~academic life~~ <sup>academic life</sup> with a newcomer to the University, a guy my own age and striking me as ~~not a total loser~~ <sup>an utter fool.</sup>

moderately promising

"What's your period?" he asked. ~~My only~~ <sup>three</sup> ~~period~~ <sup>chief</sup> interest was America's distinctive art forms -- the movies and the automobile and the funny papers. Not being in the School of Drama or the College of Architecture, the third of these necessarily was my game. <sup>As a "new critic"</sup> ~~that~~ I was going to ~~do~~ <sup>apply</sup> "new criticism" ~~to the~~ <sup>the</sup> explication of ~~the~~ Li'l Abner.

He nodded sagely and said his thesis would be on kissing. Or that's what he seemed to say, to my delight. <sup>I'd been right about him after all. Eagerly</sup> I asked if he planned to focus on garden-variety kissing or explore French kissing, ass kissing, and the like. Did he think there'd been any really significant advances in <sup>the perversity of literary</sup> ~~perverse~~ kissing since Chaucer? ~~Especially looking into anthropological aspects, such as,~~ ~~say, the comparative study of kissing in the various modes of human behavior.~~

With a ~~quarrel~~ <sup>punished</sup> frown he corrected me. "Not kissing, gissing." Pray, what ~~sort of~~ <sup>debauchery</sup> is "gissing"? Not a debauchery, a novelist, a Gissing. Dead and unread long enough to be ~~the~~ <sup>suitable</sup> carrion <sup>for</sup> dissection. ~~by~~

Prior to the Long Vacation I could dissect with the best, patiently ~~pondering out whether~~ <sup>analyzing</sup> Macbeth <sup>to decide if it</sup> was a tragedy of character or circumstance <sup>1</sup>/<sub>M</sub>

His heroes <sup>never</sup> were fatally flawed, <sup>were</sup> and ~~what~~ done in by getting run over by ~~a~~ trucks.

a question to be answered, of course, by determining his precise relationship with the weird sisters, and whether or not Banquo's ~~is~~ ghost was real. ~~■~~ I could swing a cutlass, too, and ~~once~~ severely wounded a professor of the Lost Generation by ~~arguing~~ <sup>arguing tough-guy</sup> Poppa Hemingway was ~~about~~ as <sup>weepy</sup> ~~tough~~ as Mary Pickford, ~~■~~ He didn't write tragedies, he told sad stories. ✓

But after so many months out of the rut, what the hell did any of it matter?

My heart's in the highlands,  
My heart is not here,  
My heart's in the highlands,  
A-chasing the deer.

✱ I knew wilderness summer well, wilderness spring a little, at Gladys Pass had tasted wilderness autumn. Wilderness winter? <sup>I'd owned my first skis in 1932.</sup> Sporadically over the years ~~had~~ <sup>had</sup> yo-yoed up and down tow hills at Snoqualmie Pass and Stevens Pass, But that wasn't wilderness. Now I yearned to <sup>round out</sup> ~~complete~~ my knowledge of the cycle, ~~of seasons,~~ to finish what I'd begun with the spring of Kena Lakes and Lost Pass, the summer of Sulphur Mountain and ~~the Gray~~ Graywolf and Deer Park and High Divide and Mt. Townsend and Red Mountain, the fall of <sup>Flapjack Lakes,</sup> ~~Gladys Pass.~~

✱ I went snowshoeing with Bob on Rainier. And snow-plowing with Arild up Home Peak. And snowshoeing with Betty to Chinook Pass. Then, Winter Quarter bitter-ended, she and I ~~strapped~~ <sup>lashed</sup> snowshoes atop <sup>Bergans</sup> ~~Trepper Nelsons~~ and set out for the Olympics, hiked 10 miles up the Graywolf River. The trail was a succession of blowdowns <sup>and washouts</sup> to be crawled over and ~~washouts to~~ ~~be~~ detoured around; we didn't get near ~~the~~ snowline, attained a top elevation of merely 2200 feet. Rarely did the rain quit, never did the

dank and dripping forest brighten to more than twilight. But we traversed  
 very the base of Graywolf Ridge, came within ~~a day's~~ <sup>an afternoon's</sup> distance ~~of~~ of Graywolf  
 Basin, of Deer Park. Far far from mankind, deep deep in winter wildland,  
~~soft~~ soft soft was the moss bed at Three Forks Shelter.

and The ivory tower imposes its <sup>bloodless Apollonian</sup> order on your mind, ~~but once you step outside~~  
 seminar room and library; once hear trumpets of the real world, <sup>Dionysiac though,</sup> and the walls  
 come tumbling down.

<sup>winter</sup> The Graywolf was my final ruination. I heard the trumpets loud. Spring  
 Quarter was pure ~~an~~ epilogue. <sup>¶</sup> Whatever energies I might have mustered to  
 cope with Cowper and Crabbe were exhausted by the ~~unending~~ torrent of  
 bluebooks <sup>vomited</sup> ~~spewed~~ by the horde of vets.

→ Scarcely necessary was the coup de grace, <sup>delivered by a</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>revision of</sup> ~~Department~~ <sup>English</sup> policy.

long-rumored and now-confirmed Suppose I stayed awake through the eternity  
 of seminars, escaped drowning in the ocean of bluebooks, what would it get  
 me? The ~~price~~ <sup>Union Card.</sup> Plus a one-way ticket out of Seattle. Formerly an entire  
 academic career, from B.A. to Ph.D. to lectureship to full professorship,  
 could be spent at the University of Washington. No more. The English  
 Department, too <sup>much</sup> ~~thoroughly imbued with the views of~~ <sup>haunted by</sup> the late great and ~~obsolete~~  
 J. Vernon Parrington, Pulitzer Prizewinner of the 1930s, henceforth  
 would recruit new faculty not from its inbred own but from the Outside.

There I was, the horns of the ~~old~~ dilemma rammed right up my ~~side~~ <sup>rectum.</sup>  
 To stay home for the Ph.D. was to be, <sup>one fine Commencement Day</sup> ~~at the end of the line,~~ permanently  
 banished. To gain eventual academic lodgment at home, the sole place

I ever wanted to teach, I must accept a several-years exile to some Godforsaken spot like California or Michigan.

Impossible. ~~Out of the question~~ Other people apparently could survive ~~elsewhere~~ <sup>in lands beyond the Cascades.</sup> In fact, I'd met students from big-sky country who got claustrophobia in mountain-walled Puget Sound, and ~~PR~~ professors from the East who felt oppressed by ~~the~~ <sup>barbaric masses of</sup> the trees on campus, by the absence of civilized skyscraper horizons.

As for me, I'd ~~lived~~ <sup>lived an interminable</sup> year in New England and ~~driven~~ <sup>driven twice</sup> ~~across~~ <sup>the width of</sup> America, <sup>had seen the cities and the plains.</sup> Nice places to visit, ~~but~~ <sup>But</sup> ~~without~~ <sup>without</sup> ~~support~~ <sup>east west,</sup> ~~the~~ Sunrise Mountains and Sunset Mountains I'd lean ~~the way~~ or ~~west~~, ~~and~~ find nothing to hold me up, and fall down ~~in~~ raving mad~~ness~~.

One afternoon I couldn't face the seminar, couldn't face the bluebooks, couldn't face the future. Betty and I drove in the Model A along winding roads through <sup>Cascade foothills</sup> ~~hills of the old coal mining district~~ southeast of Seattle. At Green River Gorge we stopped, descended the ~~cliff~~ <sup>into</sup> trail ~~deep within the~~ canyon ~~in~~ <sup>crept</sup> gloom, ~~climbed~~ <sup>climbed</sup> over mossy boulders under fern-draped cliffs ~~wade~~, sat by the snowmelt-boiling stream.

Ah, love, let us be true  
To one another! for the world, which seems  
To lie before us like a land of dreams,  
So various, so beautiful, so new,  
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,  
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;  
And we are here as on a darkling plain  
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,  
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

Green River Gorge did it. We drove back to the District, straight to the Red Robin, and this time Truth was in the beer.



Confront the bugaboo. Demand its worst. Loss of security? Is that all? Shit, man, security is for Depression-castrated engineers, Graduate School sissies, <sup>(double-rubler men)</sup> souls so timid they begin thinking of retirement the day they are denied mamma's nipple. For me it's adventure -- which means risks. Good Gods ~~if~~ if a guy is too spooked to take chances at 21, when will he ever? Never.

Oh, 'tis jesting, dancing, drinking  
 Spins the heavy world around.  
 If young hearts were not so clever,  
 Oh, they would be young forever.  
 Think no more; 'tis only thinking  
 Lays lads underground.

Fact was, all this ~~was~~ pomp and circumstance about becoming a scholar-professor was a fraud. I lacked the self-discipline, could no more gag down fossil poets than fossil worms. I was no intellectual, I was a dilettante. I was no Apollonian, I was a Dionysiac. Face it, lad!

Of all the sixes born in Heaven  
 Never one shall equal seven.

June 1947

Chapter 11

MENAGE A WILDLAND TROIS

I've wandered this wide world over,  
And I'll tell you if man ever found  
A place to be peaceful and quiet,  
It's here on Puget Sound.

No longer a slave of ambition,  
I laugh at the world and its shams,  
As I think of my happy condition  
Surrounded by acres of clams.

Eden is ever in the past, never the present. When hard times hit frontier villages the Old Settler of the ballad went down to the beaches and dug away alongside the Indians. In 1947 Seattle, though, man could not live by clams alone. There was gas to buy, there was beer, there was rent. And what ~~was~~ <sup>little</sup> cash Betty and I had, savings and parental handouts, was shot to hell by the ~~postwar~~ shriveling of the dollar.

All winter we'd ameliorated poverty <sup>by</sup> stealing books, restaurant suppers, and such pocketable supermarket items as cubes of butter and cans of tuna fish. With the loss of my monthly \$42<sub>x</sub> we became big-time Raskalnikovs. Briefly, ~~very~~ briefly. Occasional raids add spice to life. ~~Everyday~~ <sup>Daily</sup> check-beating and shoplifting give ~~me~~ stomach ulcers. Especially with a confederate who in case of pursuit would be sure to stumble and be captured and dragged off to prison. (They caught Rodion Ramanovitch, didn't they?)

I worried about Betty. I worried about me, too, the day I was almost trapped in the A&P with a pocketful of sardines. The criminal life was too bloody hectic. The world owed me a living but I was ready to get it honestly.

That raised an interesting question: What does an English major do if he doesn't professorize? What does he know? Words. Who in Seattle buys words?

At only one radio station was I let past the reception desk. A sympathetic ~~man~~ executive explained I was a couple years too late. The unions had moved in and forbidden the <sup>traditional</sup> ~~ancient~~ practice of hiring trainees at skimpy apprentice wages.

One of the three daily newspapers didn't chase me out the door. At the Seattle Star, a starveling sheet left alone by the Newspaper Guild because paying union scale would force its closure, the city editor offered me a trial as a copyboy-cub reporter. When could I start? "Oh, come in tomorrow morning." But by one of those coincidences that makes one believe there really is a Malignancy in the Sky, tomorrow never came for the Star, bought overnight by the other afternoon newspaper, the Times, and summarily <sup>extinguished.</sup> ~~put to~~ ~~death.~~

Okay, America, you had a chance to buy my brain and told me to screw off. ~~Same to you, buddy.~~ Henceforth all you can have is my body.

Throughout the war I'd peddled my flesh and never lacked eager bidders. Those were the good old days. Now defense plants had been dismantled, leaving Seattle with the population of a city and the industry of a town. The mobs of laid-off Boeing workers refused to go home to Montana and Oklahoma where

they belonged. More and more vets were quitting the "52-20 Club," having run out the string on their 52 weeks of \$20 unemployment checks. Competition was fierce.

The lumber mill didn't want me back. Or the cannery. Or the Post Office. Or any other place I'd ever worked. I even returned to the railroad ~~freight~~ freight shads, during the war the reeking hangout of Skidroad winos desperate enough to put in a day's labor to buy a week's oblivion, but always a cinch for ~~a day's work~~ <sup>6 bucks</sup> if you could tolerate <sup>8 hours of</sup> wading in sour barf. To be sure of making the gang of two or three dozen required to load and unload the day's boxcars, I got there an hour before the 8 o'clock shape-up -- and a hundred guys, dead sober, were already in line.

I roamed the industrial district hitting up foremen -- scornful laughter. I visited union hiring halls -- no vacancies in the proletariat. I studied want ads -- nothing but selling real estate and insurance, and I'd vowed to give up crime. I filled out forms at employment agencies -- we'll call if we get anything.

Then, luck. By paying the required bribe (the money borrowed from my folks) to a hole-in-the-wall agency (run, as I later learned, by the mother of one of the company's big bosses and serving no client but the company) I was hired by Ernst Hardware to push a handtruck in a warehouse. Ernst was a scab outfit, doubtless allowed by the Teamsters' Union to remain such through some corrupt deal between company bosses and union bosses. The pay was a scabby \$35 a week. Who was complaining? ~~To us that was riches.~~

One thing more we needed for perfect happiness. My Northlake room was a splendid cell for an anchorite, a crummy love nest. Betty's basement

cave was restricted to single females; ~~The~~ landlady slept with ear to floor and at any suspicious sound, such as a male voice after 10 p.m., tip-toed downstairs ~~and~~ and busted in.

She was not unique. One would ~~imagine~~ <sup>expect</sup> freedom ~~would~~ <sup>to</sup> flourish in ~~the~~ environs of the University, but the District was tyrannized by salacious old crones forever sniffing the wind for heterosexual sin (innocently oblivious to homosexual sport!), ~~slinging to their~~ miserable existences in hopes of catching boy-girl in the Act. There seemed no choice but to pay the man the \$2, or whatever a marriage license cost.

However, though a legal document would ~~make~~ <sup>open</sup> the door, first the door must be found, and that was no easier than finding a job. The damn vets crudding up my tranquil campus and robbing me of ~~gainful work~~ all my ~~old~~ jobs also were polluting my District, jamming <sup>every inhabitable cranny.</sup> ~~every basement, attic, garage, and~~ ~~houseboat.~~ While I pushed the handtruck, ~~between~~ between classes Betty prowled the streets watching for people carrying belongings out of houses onto sidewalks. But whenever people were carrying out, others were carrying in.

Then, luck. Tipped off by a classmate that due to a family emergency an acquaintance was abruptly leaving town, Betty took off from campus on the run and won the race. Three blocks west of the Avenue, in the garret of a decrepit three-story house minutely subdivided into a student warren, was our home, a minimally-furnished bedroom plus a closet <sup>crammed</sup> ~~equipped~~ with gas plates, sink, and ~~a~~ tiny kitchen table, ~~and~~ ~~etc.~~ In the hall were the refrigerator and bathroom shared with two other garret "apartments." Rent was a ~~staggering~~ <sup>staggering</sup> \$35 a month; we accepted the gouge unmurmuring.

Betty moved in. Not I. Never-sleeping landlady kept perpetual vigil at the bottom of the ladder-like, infernally-squeaky staircase. Therefore, the evening of Wednesday, May 28, Betty and I giggled through a 5-minute session in a preacher's study and he signed the document demanded by the landlady.

Friday morning, Memorial Day, the three of us left on our honeymoon.

Three?

Who was the third? Not the landlady. Monie.

Monie?

Let them titter. Let her fracture Mountaineer freaks. ("What you climbing Memorial Day, Monie?" <sup>they ask.</sup> Cackles she, "Oh, I'll be too busy to climb. The Mannings and I are going on our honeymoon!") It was a perfectly square affair, she had no designs on either of our bodies, was (except for climbing) a straight. Despite learning at her father's knee that femalehood was a disaster to be overcome by willpower, despite adolescent Christmases blighted by boots and ~~perks~~ <sup>wool shirts</sup> when young heart yearned for a frilly party dress, her sexuality hadn't been distorted (except for the climbing). Her marriage had fallen apart last year. Within the realm of the normal. She hadn't yet hooked up with another man. Also normal. She found Betty and me amusing. Nothing perverse in that, surely.

Though ~~in our self-absorption~~ <sup>had mostly been too busy for</sup> Betty and I ~~lost touch with most~~ friends, we weren't always grabbing at each other; Monie had continued to be a frequent tavern companion. Never on weekends, though, because she then was off with the freaks, instructing at Climbing Course rock practices and snow practices.

But she gave up trying to ~~convince~~<sup>lure</sup> us into that lunacy, and, if still ever-bubbling with tales of acrophilia, ~~seemed almost to enjoy hearing~~<sup>listened with interest to</sup> stories of our modest Olympic adventures -- the Graywolf forest walk of March, an April snow-plow up the Soleduck River nearly to the High Divide. The witch wasn't really dangerous, not if you were alert for pranks.

What brought us together for our first joint hike since Cruiser was economics. Forget the honeymoon ~~vacation~~ crap. For me, ~~warehouse~~ warehouse-pent, Memorial Day would be one of only three long weekends the whole summer and was not to be frittered away in bed, ~~must yield a bounty of highland memories to keep my back straight under the burden of lowlands.~~ But our family treasury hadn't recovered from bribing the employment agency, we were too broke to pay tribute to Mr. Black Ball, couldn't afford the Olympics. What food for the soul was available in the cheap substitute, the Cascades? Monie knew. And she volunteered to be our guide. Never mind that she preferred to call it being our "chaperone."

"Any particular place you'd like to go?" she asked.

My knowledge of the range was next to nil. One spot, though, had nagged me since 1942, when Arild and I twice tried to reach it and twice bogged down in soft spring snow. Had Monie ever been to Monte Cristo?

"Oh, lots of times."

Any good hiking ~~there~~?

"Oh, plenty. We could take the trail to Silver Lake and fool around. Nice little peak <sup>there</sup> ~~above it~~ -- we could climb Silvertip in a couple hours."

Hold it.

"Well gosh, it's actually just a slog. Some steep snow but nothing worse than you did last month in the Soleduck. A little bit of exposed rock at the top but if you don't like it we don't have to do it. Heck, if you want to we can camp at the lake and stay in my tent the whole 3 days!" Cackle.

She swore on our concession to God, the Government, and the ~~XXXXX~~ landlady her innocence of another Cruiser-like plot. After all, it was our honeymoon. Cackle.

She seemed sincere. What if she weren't? Settling the score with Monte Cristo was worth a risk. And oddly, I sort of hankered to feel once more, just once, ~~the~~ rope around waist, ax in hand. Who could predict? I might settle other old scores, might arrive at the "little bit of exposed rock" and become suddenly brave. If not, my escape hatch was open. The groom's place was with the bride. Betty could be trusted to chicken out for us both.

Through darkening forest, under thickening clouds, we drove beside the South Fork Stillaguamish River to Big Four Inn, empty, paint-flaking, two-story relic of a scheme to build a Cascades rival to Canada's Banff, and Arild's and my far point on the first of our 1942 attempts. Here rough road narrowed to a track recently bulldozed along the bed of the old railway that carried its last ore from the mines early in the century and its last sightseers to the ghost town in the ~~2~~30s. The Model A rattle-banged, bounced-and-jounced over Barlow Pass and up the South Fork Sauk River to the road-end.



Switch off. ~~This is it.~~ At an elevation of 3000 feet in a dank hole ringed by cloud-lost peaks were rickety shacks and rusty machinery ~~and~~ ~~more gnawed buildings~~ half-swallowed by a jungle of alder and second-growth fir. Monte Cristo at last. Ghostly indeed in drizzling gloom. The trip was already a success, Memorial Day ~~stayed~~ memorable.

Packs on backs we trudged up the trail, meeting a parade of descending fishermen complaining there wasn't a drop of water showing in Silver Lake. No whining fishermen we. Atop my Trapper Nelson <sup>rode</sup> ~~perched~~ the coil of manila rope. In my hand was an ice ax, rented for the weekend from the Co-op -- but how could trail strangers guess that? I struck poses, accepted their awe -- marred, to be sure, by <sup>its</sup> being indiscriminately extended to Betty and her ax.

Switchbacks vanished in snow, forest faded in fog. The hillside rounded over to Poodledog Pass, dropped a bit to the 4200-foot basin of the lake. What lake? A plain of snow beneath white cirque cliffs leaping into white cloud. On a knoll-top patch of soggy, snow-surrounded duff under dripping hemlocks we heaped up boughs for a mattress and Monie pitched her pup-like tent. ~~my~~ Squaw wood flamed bright, melting snow in Ten Cans for cooking supper. But there was no campfire evening; ~~we'd no reason to~~ ~~take~~ a deluge of rain drove us to the tent and a 12-hour sleep.

In ~~the~~ morning the rattling of rain on tent slackened to the splatting of tree-drips. Out into mists we crawled, impelled not by ambition but <sup>bursting</sup> ~~fast~~ bladders. Too sluggish to build a fire we ate a ~~cooked~~ breakfast of canned ~~fruit~~ peaches and candybars, Monie quoting the climbers' maxim, "Though the food is cold, the inner man is hot!" Lewd cackle.

We stared morosely over snow into fog. In Puget Sound lowlands the year consists of two seasons --/cold rain and/cool rain. The highlands have four true seasons; three, however, are compressed into the <sup>dozen weeks</sup> ~~3-months~~ from late June to early October. All the rest is winter, and we were in it, shivering.

"Well," said cheerful Monie, "What is your pleasure, Mr. and Mrs. Manning? Back to the sack or take a walk?"

Who but a climber would leave <sup>an icebox</sup> ~~a frozen~~ camp smothered in clouds to go <sup>thinking of ~~some~~ cozy garet,</sup> ~~up?~~ But Monie was our leader and as yet had done us no harm. Glumly, we <sup>^</sup> plodded after her across the frozen lake, up a wooded ridge.

The snow steepened to an angle I'd never attempted except in a state of hysteria. The ridge skinned to an airy cleaver. The forest dwindled to scattered clumps of stubby alpine trees, leaving us exposed to the oppressive <sup>all around.</sup> infinity of cloud<sup>x</sup>. But I wasn't scared. I felt amazingly comfortable, solidly connected to slippery whiteness by ice ax stabbed deep into ~~the~~ ~~skin~~ guts of the mountain. Far different would've been the Graywolf Ramble had Arild and I possessed axes! ~~^~~ We'd have dared the pass through The Needles to Royal Basin, sauntered over ridges to Deception Basin, Heather Basin. Nothing mysterious about the tool. Monie said climbers use it now and then for chopping ~~spooky~~ ladderways up ice cliffs, occasionally for a variety of arcane techniques, but mainly as a simple cane, a third leg.

Betty needed more legs than that, ideally as many as a spider. As we paused on a bench for rest and squirrel food, she, with fear-dry mouth, heard meltwater trickling and went for a drink -- and stumbled, flopped on stomach, and ever so slowly began sliding.

Monie and I watched incredulous. Gravity wasn't to blame. The snow was flat. Betty was sliding by sheer force of virtuoso incompetence.

Plaintively she wailed, "Help me! Help me!"

I didn't laugh. Now she was mine I was less amused by her clumsiness. Monie didn't cackle. Who cackles at my wife cackles at me. I tried to ignore the shameful scene but there was no denying that if she maintained the pace -- and I wouldn't put it past her -- in a half-hour she'd slide over the cliff a dozen feet distant. I gave her a hand, saved her life, ~~and~~ warned her to be more careful when the honeymoon was over.

Higher and higher we climbed, and I ~~began~~<sup>started</sup> taking turns step-kicking -- one of the fundamental climbing techniques, Monie said. Nothing to it, not with an ax to keep feet from getting nervous and breaking out steps. Our ridge merged into the summit ridge and we clambered up a frost-riven jumble of rocks to the 6000-foot crest.

My God! We were perched on a flagpole amid a bewilderment of gray walls and white snows slipping in and out of black clouds, spotlighted now and then by come-and-go shafts of startling sun. We were in Whympers world, Mallory's world. No mere hiker ever sees so grimly lovely a wilderness.

But wild on high alone. Below was Silver Creek, the route of Arild's and my second attempt to reach Monte Cristo. We'd hiked through virgin forest beside a shadowed stream. Just 5 years ago. Now I looked down horrified to a desolation of raw brown clearcuts, to a naked creek choked with logging slash. Hidden Lake had been vandalized. Now Silver Creek.

We were in a National Forest. I'd thought National Forests were the same as National Parks, the sole differences that guns were allowed and rangers didn't wear fancy hats. Not so. National Forests are National

Tree Farms where 500-year-old patriarchs are reaped like wheat. In a National Forest you can't be sure of <sup>ever</sup> ~~the chance to go~~ <sup>going</sup> home again. Home is safe only in National Parks. And above timberline. A hiker must envy a climber, whose logger-free home is so much vaster.

The summit of Silvertip lay several hundred yards away and a hundred feet higher. "Easy half-hour," said Monie. But confronted by the "little bit of exposed rock" floating in a sea of <sup>clouds</sup> ~~air~~ I was no Whymper, no Mallory. As for Betty, she'd progressed from tears to catatonia; when time came to descend, Monie had to rope us up ~~so~~ <sup>the invalid</sup> so we could drag ~~my bride~~ off the rocks.

Down the sparkling crest. Monie showed us the "plunge step." Do not lean timidly <sup>toward the</sup> ~~backward toward~~ Earth. Face the sky and boldly step right out into the middle of it. When boot ~~hits~~ strikes snow the stiff leg pushes <sup>the hie</sup> ~~me~~ into a skid that compacts a solid platform, take-off for the next plunge. Afraid of a toboggan ride? Never fear. Hold ax in both hands across chest and if a platform <sup>fails</sup> ~~breaks away~~ just stab the snow, regain balance, and plunge on, plunge on.

Down down down we plunged through boiling clouds and sunshine flares. Betty began to smile. I paused often to take pictures featuring rope and axes, photo-album proof I'd been, if only for a few hours, <sup>almost</sup> a climber. The ridge broadened and <sup>the slope gentled and</sup> we glissaded on our rumps, ax ever available <sup>for</sup> ~~to~~ quickly ~~put on~~ brakes. This was a whole other sport from <sup>the</sup> glissading I'd known, this was pure exhilaration unblemished by terror. Betty began to laugh.

We ~~stopped~~<sup>paused</sup> while Monie ~~called out the~~<sup>identified</sup> peaks dodging in and out of clouds -- Gothic, Del Campo, Vesper, Big Four, Foggy, Cadet, Monte Cristo, Wilmon Spires, Columbia -- wonderful names, wonderful to be <sup>high</sup> among them, almost their equal.

Glissade-crazed Betty grew impatient. She jumped. One moment Monie and I were enraptured by scenery. The next ~~moment~~<sup>we were</sup> flying through the air, ~~and a moment later~~<sup>we were</sup> ~~Monie~~ Betty had forgotten we were roped.

Well, thought I, tumbling head over heels, hearing squeals of delight below, at least my idiot bride is getting some fun from the honeymoon.

August 1947

Chapter 12

TERROR OF AIR ON THE AWFUL TOOTH

The Model A skipped nimbly down the street, around the corner, out of my life. So gleeful was the boy hippety-hopping off to frolic in the past. So mournful was I left stranded in the present. Nevermore from haughty heights of square-cut anachronism would I, secure in childhood, snicker at heavy-haunched adult frogs infesting postwar highways. Descended to the pit behind the steering wheel of a squat unlovely 1935 Ford V-8 coupe I was on their level, low and old and glum.

Dad and Mother were right, of course. Youthful-agile though it appeared, the A in fact was elderly-spry, eaten to the marrow by 17 years of rust and corrosion; since I refused to become a mechanic and couldn't afford to hire one, in a year or less I'd be afoot. Better sell the machine (that's all it was, don't sentimentalize) while this spoiled brat of war-wealthy parents was willing to pay a preposterous \$200 for a decrepit toy. Add the money to my folks' wedding-present \$100 and buy the V-8, meticulously maintained by the legendary little old lady, good for thousands of miles of cheap transportation. Think how much closer the mountains are with a cruising speed of 42 miles an hour.

Keep pace with America. ~~Germany~~ The A day was over and neither by age nor economic circumstance was I of the toy-owning class.

Grow old along with me!  
The best is yet to be,  
The last of life, for which the first was made.

Fie on it. Loss of childhood doesn't compel acceptance of adulthood.  
Putting away toys doesn't mean an end of games.

We played house in the garret, wickedly giggling at the landlady's foolish trust in a scrap of paper, her gullible faith we weren't sinning under her roof.

Betty conspired against her mother, self-absorbed mistress of domestic arts too ~~prideful~~ prideful in their practice to bother teaching them to a clumsy daughter. To the liberated little girl, mock housewife, the kitchen was as excitingly illicit as bed. She bungled ~~hysterically~~ about, ever in haste lest Momma catch her dirtying the ~~good~~ dishes with mud pies. Charred potatoes taught her that boiling water evaporates, and stomach cramps that not every green leaf in campus gardens is suitable for a green salad, and nearly-broken teeth that the first step in making a cherry pie is to pit the cherries.

I conspired against Ernst Hardware. The warehouse was a one-man show, a transfer point between large trucks unloading kitchen appliances and garden supplies and small trucks hauling them to retail stores. My bosses were a mile away in downtown offices, smoking big cigars and feeling mighty slick to have a stupid kid busting his gut for a lousy \$35 a week. They'd

have ruptured their fat heads to learn that by performing warehouse chores not in the normal proletarian sulk but in berserker frenzies of puffing and sweating I stole half of every day for a self-taught course in the history of English drama from interludes and mystery plays to the Closing of the Theatres.

Thus the weekday play. Weekends we sampled the foreign Cascades, camping on meadow shores of cirque lakes near Snoqualmie Pass, or returned home to the Olympics to roam ~~beloved~~ tundra ridges. If Betty was slow as ever on the trail, never mind, there's more to mountains than hiking. Rolls in the heather with the nut-brown maid gave the ultimate union with the Green Woman.

A summer idyll. Yet something was missing, something other than the lamented A. Not until an August Sunday did I know exactly what. That afternoon as we were finishing breakfast came a knock on the door. Odd. Nobody ever invaded our garret.

Monie.

Busy with games we'd scarcely noticed her post-honeymoon disappearance. ~~She'd burst into~~ Now she burst <sup>into</sup> our sensual languor vibrant and cackling, newly returned from 2 weeks in Wyoming, "climbing a Teton a day."

We compared summers. She'd dodged a lightning storm on the summit of the Grand Teton. We'd sniffed flowers at Snow Lake. She'd rappelled by flashlight down cliffs of Mt. "Moron." We'd swum limpid waters of Swan Lake.



She'd climbed Rainier again and Shuksan again and a dozen other peaks. We'd strolled Deer Park again and the High Divide again and several other meadows. Suddenly I was discontent.

Summer is short. Hardly have old snows melted when new snows fly. Here it was, August 17, winter a few weeks <sup>off</sup> ~~away~~, and what was the sum of my 1947? Measured against 1945, a lot. Against 1946, nothing. Momentum of that splendid summer and fall had carried through winter into spring, then with job and marriage <sup>stumbled</sup> ~~stuttered~~ nearly to full stop. The shame of it -- a bright August Sunday created for hill-rambling and I was lazying around the garret.

Not by my desire. Given an eager companion, or no companion, I'd have fled the city every weekend, sunshine or storm. But Betty returned from the easiest walk so exhausted or so blistered or so mosquito-poisoned or so footlog-terrified she required long recuperation before ~~was~~ another ordeal. Ordeal! Not once had I broken a good sweat, stretched legs or nerves. For me the summer was purely Green Woman, never a glimpse of the Old Ones.

I felt ~~pragmatic~~ a fleeting disloyalty verging on a regret: was Betty, seeming a girl, in reality a woman? In hitching myself to her had I accidentally grown up? Certainly, as I realized ~~on~~ that Sunday, except for books and bed the summer of 1947 had been dull as middle age. Monie made it so, Monie with her goddam<sup>g</sup> tales of the Tetons, her unwitting reminders of what -- with a different turn or two in the maze of past years -- I might have been. Monie was the serpent in our garret garden.

Monie recognized my symptoms, saw my guard drop -- and struck. How jubilant she was in victory. How baffled I was by my lack of resistance.

Day by day as the next Sunday approached I pondered ~~more and more deeply~~ why I'd committed us, and to what.

Said Monie, to a staircase of buckets and doorknobs. Exposed, sure, but exposure only hurts if you fall. She wouldn't permit it. Every pitch was protected by a bombproof belay -- if we died of fright she could hold us on the rope to Judgment Day. But we wouldn't be that frightened. Heck, she'd led people up the staircase who'd never ~~before~~ been near a mountain. Heck, we'd been to the false summit of Cruiser (nearly) and the top of Silvertip (nearly). We'd waltz up.

I wasn't fooled. Vividly I recalled her first mention of the staircase a year ago, during the Red Robin plotting that eventually led to Cruiser. I saw the mask slip, heard the quickly-swallowed beginnings of the witchy cackle. She was up to her old tricks. No, she didn't plan to kill us. Yes, she bloody well intended to scare the hell out of us.

Why did I tamely submit? Had I forgotten my trembling retreat from the false summit <sup>of</sup> Cruiser, my panicked flight from the Graywolf? <sup>No.</sup> A coward never forgets. I remembered too well. A slate needed cleaning.

But a mystery ~~is~~ deeper. Some <sup>strange</sup> ~~man~~ itch wanted scratching. Is it possible to enjoy fear? To desire terror? Madness, madness, strictly for the freaks. For me the Green Woman, the Green Woman-nut-brown maid, the sane ecstasy.

Suppose, though, that for a day a person deliberately went mad. A single day. Several unnatural hours would provide a strenuous purgation of dormant emotions, give a zip to this slothful summer of my discontent.

Shit, nowadays I didn't even go beering o' nights.

After all, the danger wasn't real, as in the Graywolf. Death and dismemberment were completely out of the picture. Monie would keep us safe, Monie and the rope. And this was no slippery, wind-horrified Cruiser roof, <sup>this was a staircase.</sup> And there weren't thousands of feet to endure, just hundreds. Like climbing the garret steps a dozen times.

By week's end I'd fashioned <sup>from</sup> ~~from~~ Monie's descriptions and my brief highway views ~~in~~ a peril-free peak, ~~constantly offering~~ a pleasant tingle, <sup>of adventure.</sup> Like jumping in an icewater tarn, like riding a rollercoaster.

Sunday morning, August 24, we drove east in the V-8 almost to Snoqualmie Pass, hiked the trail to headwaters of Denny Creek, left the path and <sup>ascended subalpine</sup> ~~climbed~~ forest and huckleberries to a ~~little~~ heather nook. Above loomed a ~~great~~ precipice -- no cause for alarm.

"That's the West Face," said Monie. "None of our business."

We scrambled up a rocky gully to a notch in Gum Ridge. On one side rose modest fangs of the False Teeth. But on the other!

"Behold!" cackled Monie. "The terrific and famous South Face of The Tooth!"

~~She~~ I went into shock.

Monie went into a paroxysm, ~~she~~. She'd got me, she'd finally got me. Far away, barely audible through the roar in my ears, came her voice. Telling funny stories.

The supreme jest among the freaks, she ~~was~~ revealed, was beguiling hikers onto the South Face. Some behaved very badly -- crying, praying aloud, going limp, wetting their pants. Others were crazed by anger and vowed revenge. There was the case of Limber Jim, one of the chief pranksters, who during the ~~war~~ war encountered an old victim, then training as a fighter pilot. Bygones were bygones in merriment of the far-from-home reunion and Jim innocently accepted the offer of a joy ride. At 10,000 feet Old Victim chuckled over the intercom, "Hey Jim! Remember the South Face? Well, HANG ON!" That night Jim had to sleep on the floor because he kept falling out of the bunk.

Monie cackled. I did not smile. Monie chomped squirrel food. I did not eat, silently smoked a cigarette, sat in the warm sun shivering. Monie rejoiced to be back from the Tetons in her home hills. I did not gaze at scenery, kept eyes fixed on my tennis shoes.

Don't look at the giddy cliff rocketing upward, upward into spinning blue. Don't give <sup>substance</sup> ~~reality~~ to the nightmare. Wake up! This can't be happening! Impossible I'd let it happen. Every instinct from 10 mountain years screams, "People don't go places like that!"

Monie had put away the squirrel food, was ~~uncoiling~~ uncoiling the 120 feet of 7/16-inch manila. She was tying a bowline around my waist. For God's sake do something! Anything! Run! Swoon! Wail! Laugh! Beg on bended knee! Punch her in the mouth!

Nightmare paralyzed will. Catatonic I watched her walk from the notch right out onto the flawless cliff, right out into the middle of the sky.

Walking on air, nothing beneath her tennis shoes but air, she traversed across the cliff, angling upward to a corner, and vanished. The rope, a living snake, followed its mistress. To where? Her head materialized in the gray jumble above.

"Hello again, folks!" she cackled. "Like the man said after he fell down the elevator shaft, watch out for the first step, it's a long one!" Her head dematerialized. She yelled, "Belay on!"

Untie the fucking bowline, that's the ticket. Fingers too feeble. No escape from the rope.

Betty. I'd forgotten she was here. If I'm petrified, what about her? She'll break down, she'll save us both. No. She's staring intently at something in or beyond the sky, seems neither to know nor care where she is, what's happening to her -- or more importantly, to me.

Rope tugs impatiently at waist. "Climb!" commands Monie. She won't allow me to choose dishonor. It's got to be done. Why? To get it over with. So I can go home and crawl in bed and pull the covers over my head.

Breathe deep. Not that deep -- too much oxygen -- dizzy. Don't breathe, let head ~~settle down~~ <sup>stabilize.</sup> Dizzy again -- breathe. Christ, the damn carburetor is haywire, the <sup>whole</sup> machine is out of whack.

Wipe slimy palms on blue jeans. Stiffen limp knees. Whose body is this I'm trapped in? Some robot. Some mindless helpless robot. The poor bastard. He's got to get it over with. So he can go to the garage and get the carburetor fixed. Order a foot forward, order hands to clutch rock.

That wasn't, after all, thin air under Monie's tennis shoes. A ledge. With ~~For~~ solid knees each step would be sidewalk-easy. But knees aren't solid

because at each step away from the notch the cliff below lengthens.

The corner. End of ledge, boundary of sky. Stop. Freeze. Try to re-engage brain, <sup>Somehow get out of this.</sup> No time, the rope tugs. Peek around the corner. A platform wide as a tennis shoe.

Gulp ~~down~~ dry terror and step around. Both tennis shoes on platform, <sup>nose</sup> both hands plus ~~thumb~~ on cliff. Morbidly curious, look down between legs, down to shrubs in the valley of Source Creek. Don't do that again!   
I've hiked through those shrubs, <sup>dear God,</sup> they're trees a hundred feet tall!

Knees jitter. Sweat-greasy fingers slip and slide. Eyes <sup>mist.</sup> ~~blur~~. Look up to formless gray. This will be no agony of hours, we'll be here all week. ~~No~~ No, not a week, not even hours. In seconds I'll die. Alone in the void my heart will simply quit.

Not utterly alone. A motherly face above, a gentle voice, "Take your time. Relax. We've got all day. You couldn't pull me off the mountain if you tried. You couldn't go anyplace if you fainted."

How did she know I was planning to faint? Yes, faint into foetal curl. But my first womb is 22 years in the past and fainting wouldn't deliver me into my second and final womb. <sup>I'd not have the satisfaction of dying.</sup> I'd hang like a sack of potatoes and when I revived the shuddering gray cliff would still be here. Monie is kind but cruel, won't give me enough slack to retreat to the notch. A year she's plotted, this witch-mother, she'll not relent ~~now~~. Only by trusting the umbilical cord can I escape.

Energy of despair. Hands fumble -- and grip doorknobs. Feet stutter -- into buckets. The gray blur comes into focus as a staircase. I join Monie, belaying on a broad shelf, and instantly sit down so she won't notice my knees won't hold me up.

"You've got it whipped," she said. "Nothing above is worse than that."

"Really?" I giggled. "That wasn't so bad!" Liar.

Monie showed me how to belay, sitting with legs braced against ~~knobs~~<sup>rock</sup> knobs, the rope from below passing around the left side of my ~~waist~~<sup>and</sup> waist ~~held~~ held in my right hand. Instructions: as the climber comes up, use both hands to pull in slack, keep the line taut but not too taut; in case of a fall wrap the rope around the front of the waist and ~~hang~~ hang on tight. To make sure, Monie sat in a second belay ~~above~~, anchoring me.

"Belay on!" I yelled.

My own danger over for the moment, I chuckled at the moans and whines marking Betty's progress ~~from the ledge~~ along the ledge, the whimper-shriek at the corner. Pitiabile face appeared a dozen feet beneath my feet, chin quivering, tears rolling down cheeks.

"What do I do now?" she sobbed.

"Follow the rope," said I cheerily. "Walk up the steps. You can't fall. This belay has a moneyback guarantee." Glib climber talk.

Now we were alone on the shelf. I tried to comfort my love -- but again the call from above, and who was to comfort me? Again knees jittered, eyes ~~blurred~~<sup>misted</sup>.

However, the second pitch was not exposed to the ~~precipitous~~ valley but only to the ~~hazard~~ shelf, and though it led to a narrow ledge, a stout tree growing there masked out the sky, offered a hundred handles.

Monie petted the branches. "A sweetheart, isn't it? We call it the Thank God Tree. First time I met it I proposed but it said a thousand other Mountaineers had already asked."

There were more beautiful trees and more broad shelves, snug harbor-homes in the ocean-sky. There were more gray walls, too, but now eyes, hands, and feet were ~~coordinating in~~ <sup>coordinating in</sup> a smooth rhythm. As I kid I'd ~~climbed~~ climbed ~~a~~ <sup>the</sup> Douglas fir<sup>s</sup> near our house, and apple trees, and cherry trees, and maples. Climbing cliffs was ~~little~~ <sup>not much</sup> different, the <sup>basic</sup> principles were the same. The old skills came back ~~to me~~.

One difference ~~was~~ was the air, the enormity of air. But though I was inside the alien sky I was on the friendly <sup>Earth. And</sup> ~~rock~~ <sup>rock</sup>. The rope that had seemed a skinny string ~~now~~ was a ~~housen~~ <sup>housen</sup>. And Monie who had seemed a scrawny witch ~~now~~ was a sturdy Amazon. The rope and Monie were security against flying off, off, and forever away in the sky above, the sky below, the sky all around. An inch from death (call it 7/16 of an inch) yet gloriously, victoriously alive! I ~~snapped~~ <sup>bite</sup> my ~~finger~~ <sup>thumb</sup> at you, Old Ones!

One last gray wall ~~led to~~ <sup>crested in</sup> unmixed blue. Since we'd be descending the easy North Ridge<sup>x</sup> the South ~~A~~ Face was nearly over -- over forever. These thrills I'd never have to repeat.

A cozy chimney split the final wall. To obtain photographic documentation of our once-in-a-lifetime madness I had Betty go first, she being unable to hold a camera to take the preferable picture of me. She wiped away tears, stared blankly at the chimney.

"Where do I go?"

"UP, idiot!"

Idiot erupted. Idiot, I'd learned in recent months, didn't always enjoy being an idiot. The little girl with the wobbly eye had adopted



clowning as a defense, hoping at least some ~~of her~~ clumsiness would be thought <sup>conscious comedy.</sup> ~~of her~~ But she was a big girl now and occasionally rebelled at ~~against~~ indignities; periodically, for reasons ~~that~~ that had nothing to do with the moon or constipation, <sup>she flung off</sup> ~~retreated from me~~ into a 3-Day Mad. She was in no ~~damn~~ mood <sup>on The Tooth / called</sup> ~~to be~~ to be an idiot. Not <sup>bewailing her predicament but cursing me</sup> ~~weeping but cursing~~ she scrambled up the chimney.

I followed, dreading yet another spell of no love and <sup>damn</sup> ~~damn~~ little conversation. But it was only a 3-Minute Mad, she'd collapsed into her characteristic alpine pose, a face-down coma.

No collapse for me. I had Monie take a picture of me ~~on the topmost~~ ~~peak~~ wearing the rope. What a trophy for the photo album! I scampered about the wide, flat summit raving at the views, especially those down the South Face. I gobbled squirrel food. I ~~laughed~~ laughed at everything and nothing.

I'd thrown such a fit on Del Monte Ridge to celebrate the Graywolf week. Now I was equally delirious from <sup>mere</sup> ~~a~~ couple hours on The Tooth -- hours of more fear, more exhilaration, than a whole summer of trail-pounding and ridge-gunning.

September 1947

Chapter 13

LA BOHN THE BLACK-HEARTED

Fog and felsenmeer.

Gray wraiths raced over the peak, a once-solid granite monolith wedged by eons of ice crystals into a jumble of granite blocks, droplets in a wave of a stormy rock sea. Needles of gale-driven cloud stung my face. Rough gusts buffeted my body.

A minute was enough. I'd had to make the 6600-foot summit, had to reach as high as possible in the savage wilderness unseen but felt all around. Now the time had come to think home thoughts, to begin the 22-mile retreat.

I started down. And stopped. A mountain has a single top, many bottoms. Only one way down led to Betty, camp, escape. Every way down looked the same -- fog and felsenmeer.

Lost. Be still my heart. In blue-sky yesterday I'd admired the enormity, the <sup>ruthless</sup> ~~powerful~~ crudity of this wilderness. Now I ~~was~~ dreaded. A false step and I'd be lost forever. And therefore also Betty, huddled somewhere down in ~~that~~ gray void, trembling like an unwanted kitten abandoned on a country road.

Lost, by God! The trip had mounted from climax to climax, become the best adventure of the summer, the best since the Graywolf, and now the

Graywolfian denouement. Wonderful! And the more splendidly frightening because a week ago I dully expected to be nowhere this September 15th but in the warehouse.

Lost? Sheer self-dramatization. Hell, you could lose a tenderfoot here, not a canny ~~and~~ Silver Marmot. No panic, no desperate downward plunging, no hysterics of a cornered beast. Cautiously probe, recoil from cliff brinks, watch for distinctively contorted alpine shrubs remembered from the ascent. Artfully dodge the Old Ones.

Felsenmeer gentled to granite <sup>shelves</sup> ~~buttresses~~. Dimly in mist I saw a living creature.

"Cathy!" I yelled.

Through loud wind pierced her cry, "Heathcliff!"

Tuesday, September 9, 4:30 p.m. Telephoned orders from retail stores were written up in triplicate, the requested refrigerators and stoves and water heaters uncrated, bales of peatmoss and sacks of fertilizer and bundles of garden tools parceled out. All was ready for the morning parade of delivery trucks. The day's work was done and sweat was cooling and I was sitting in my cubbyhole office reading.

A man <sup>was standing over</sup> ~~materialized beside~~ me, a purple-faced old man in a fancy suit and nifty hat. Without a sound he'd come. He must've been wearing crepe-soled shoes. Without a word he was abruptly gone.

I'd just witnessed <sup>one of the notorious</sup> a surprise slumming tour<sup>s</sup> of the lower depths by the president. Excellent. He couldn't help noting the tidiness of the

warehouse, couldn't help learning from retail-store managers and traffic manager that I ran a model operation. Good things would ~~come~~<sup>issue</sup> from this visit.

Wednesday, 9 a.m. The phone rang. The personnel manager told me to hand over the warehouse to my soon-arriving replacement and report downtown to the Main Store. About time. I'd been hired not as a warehouseman but as a management trainee and was overdue for promotion. At the Main Store I was ~~led~~<sup>ushered</sup> to the basement, thence to the sub-basement, lower still to a windowless dungeon. I was shown a row of 55-gallon drums of linseed oil and turpentine, crates of empty 5-gallon jugs, told to fill the jugs from the drums.

Some fucking promotion. I climbed from ~~fume-filled~~ dungeon to high-and-mighty top-floor executive suite and requested an explanation. Said prissy personnel manager, yesterday's episode had demonstrated I was too immature to have responsibility for a warehouse, needed ~~training under~~<sup>fume-filled</sup> close supervision. In a <sup>^</sup>dungeon. Some fucking management training. Swindlers. I told him to shove it up his ass.

Thursday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. The help-wanted ads were more barren than in spring, employment agencies more supercilious, foremen more scornful. Rebuffed and spat upon, I remembered the look so common on Dad's face a dozen years ago.

He who sells his body is granted all the dignity and security of a whore. I preferred the physical life to the intellectual, warehouse to ivory tower, truckdrivers to professors. But now I understood my ready acceptance into the camaraderie of the proletariat derived only partly from shared labor of wrestling refrigerators and bales of peatmoss, largely from shared degradation and fear. Our stink of honest sweat was

not honored or rewarded, we were slaves of crepe-soled old men who didn't sweat, despised pawns of a clique of Business Administration majors, the white-collared ruling class ~~tightly composed~~ of fathers and sons, uncles and nephews, cousins and fraternity brothers. I could be proud, could tell the bastards to shove it up their ass. And then could go forth in the postwar Depression and starve.

Dad had been right, I should've become an engineer, at least a geologist. But I hadn't realized prosperity was an aberration of war, that Depression was the normal state. As Dad often said, too soon old, too late ~~to~~ smart.

Friday morning. I'd thought to survive in the jungle red in tooth and claw by pluck and luck. No chance, not amid lions and tigers and hyenas wearing frat rings and crepe-soled shoes. I must flee. There was a refuge. Those who can't do, teach. Had I stuck it out in Parrington Hall I'd now be professing Freshman English to the vat-swarm. The University option was lost. Surely, though, I could teach high school. A couple quarters endured in the infamous College of Education, sustained perhaps by washing dishes in Avenue restaurants, and I'd be ~~introducing adolescents to~~ <sup>boring pubescents with</sup> Idylls of the King and Silas Marner, <sup>my</sup> ~~with every~~ summer<sup>s</sup> totally free for mountains.

The College of Education was insulted ~~by my audacity~~. The College of Education sneered at my baccalaureate, a scrap of paper. Not a couple quarters did it demand but 2 solid dreary years of "methods" courses, the nadir of the University where those who can't teach, teach teachers. Two years! If I'd had that kind of numb-brained fortitude I'd have gotten the Ph.D.

Friday afternoon. Already on campus, I might as well check off the Placement Office, not from hope, simply to satisfy myself the sole remaining alternative was a life of crime.

So it's up the rope I go, up I go,  
 So it's up the rope I go, up I go,  
 And the bastards down below,  
 They'll say, "Sam, we told you so!  
 Yes, Sam, we told you so."  
 God damn their eyes.

The spic-and-span youth inspected my grade transcript and nodded, flipped through the file of job openings and shook his head.

"Do you have any -- uh -- career in mind? I mean, an English major... I mean, do you care what you do?"

Shit, man, my heart's in the highlands, my heart is not here. I don't want your millions, mister, I don't want your ~~millions~~ <sup>damn</sup> careers, all I want is a flow of your paychecks. I'll sweep your chimneys. I'll dung your stables. I'll kiss your ass. If it weren't too late, I'd fill gallon jugs with linseed oil.

He pondered. "I see you've had Chemistry -- got an A, too. Hmm... There is a sort of job. I mean, if you don't care... Right here on campus, actually."

At Bagley Hall a wan civil servant conducted me ~~around~~ <sup>through</sup> the basement stockroom. There the students ~~lined up~~ lined up in the corridor ~~outside~~, here the stockroom boy ~~showed~~ <sup>handed</sup> beakers and test tubes and chemicals ~~in~~ out the window. Did I want to be the boy in the window?

The Depression was over. Ironically, I was back on the University payroll -- and with a ~~big~~ handsome raise to a pocket-bulging \$190 a month,

increasing in a year to a thumping \$210. And next summer I'd have a vacation, could again, as in 1946, take off for 50-mile highland wanders.

I'd not have to wait that long! The job didn't start until Autumn Quarter. At the end of a summer from which I expected nothing better than a 3-day weekend, I was ~~loose~~ <sup>loose</sup> for a ~~whole~~ week!

The Sunset Mountains, chunks of summer rock and snow, slabs of winter ice~~x~~ rising a vertical  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles from saltwater beaches, were my home. The Sunrise Mountains, ~~as seen from~~ <sup>to the view</sup> Seattle <sup>^</sup> mainly rounded wooded ridges merely a mile or less above lowland valleys, interested me ~~little more than~~ <sup>about as much as</sup> the Himalaya.

But from Red Mountain last year, The Tooth and Snow Lake and Swan Lake <sup>an</sup> this year, I'd stared into ~~unexplored~~ unsuspected wilderness. A dozen air miles northeast of Snoqualmie Pass stood a row of giant crags dominating a maze of ~~scarcely less~~ dramatic peaks.

The contour maps ~~in~~ intrigued, showing alpine lakes by the hundreds, great smears of brown ink, and also washes of blue ink -- the closest glaciers to Seattle. The names tantalized. In 1897-1902, when the Snoqualmie and Skykomish Quadrangles were <sup>mapped</sup> ~~surveyed~~ by the U.S. Geological Survey, somebody had found a land of romance. <sup>Among</sup> ~~such~~ such memories of miners as Dutch Miller and Iron Cap, Malachite and Copper, <sup>was</sup> ~~was~~ a whole storybook -- Robin, Tuck, Rebecca, Rowena, Ivanhoe, and La Bohn. What the relevance was of the <sup>reign</sup> ~~days~~ of Richard the Lion-Hearted I'd no idea. But I yearned to find out. La Bohn! There was a name to conjure with.

How to get there? I rejected the approach from Snoqualmie Pass, following the Cascade Crest Trail, because it dropped thousands of feet to the Middle Fork Snoqualmie River, which meant a strenuous climb on the return, ~~then a steep climb back up~~. I rejected the approach from the west, up the Middle Fork from the lowlands, because (Monie had told me) even to reach the Cascade Crest Trail one first must walk 12 depressing miles through second-growth forest harassed by louts in war-surplus jeeps and command cars, parody pioneers using their four-wheel-drive toys to <sup>build</sup> ~~make~~ a road along the <sup>abandoned</sup> bed of the 1920s logging railroad. I rejected the approach from the north, from the Skykomish River, because the trail up the Foss River dead-ended in Necklace Valley at the foot of a cliff. The approach from the east was quickest and best.

I'd not be spurning an old friend, the Olympics. I'd be testing an acquaintanceship to decide if I wished to make a new friend of the Cascades.

Early Saturday morning, September 13, we threw packs in the V-8 and set out, driving the now-familiar highway to Snoqualmie Pass, descending the east side. Three times in my life, three times only, had I crossed "over the hump" to Eastern Washington. A foreign country it was, the rainshadow of the Cascades. Amazing that in minutes one drove from a yearly rainfall of a hundred inches to a dozen, from cloud-sheltered forests to sun-seared sagebrush wastes. Interesting. But so was Death Valley. A weird, alien race inhabited the semi-desert, fruit ranchers with their orchards and irrigation ditches, wheat ranchers with their ~~enormous~~ rolling fields of



waving grain, cowboys riding herd on their cattle, and since ~~the~~ the Manhattan Project, the mad bombers who blew up Nagasaki. ~~It~~ Strange <sup>people</sup> to find in my home state. I'd always been slightly startled to hear them speak English.

This day we didn't continue to sagebrush, drove east only as far as the open pine forests and layered lava-flow ridges surrounding the village of Cle Elum, then turned off the highway on the Cle Elum River road and negotiated washboard and chuckholes 25 miles northwesterly to the Waptus River trail. At 9:30 in sun-bright morning, elevation 2400 feet, I hoisted Trapper Nelson, Betty <sup>a</sup> ~~was surplus~~ Bergan. The long trail and Betty's petty pace in mind, I'd kept our loads to the minimum, <sup>eliminating</sup> ~~leaving home~~ every nonessential and fully exploiting the new lightweight, fast-cooking miracle foods -- Krap Dinner, Minute Rice, dehydrated potatoes, Lipton's dry soup mixes.

Driving through rainshadow terrain was odd. Hiking through it was spooky. The trees were queer, especially the Ponderosa pine whose gaudy cinnamon bark made me think of rattlesnakes. <sup>Dear Lords</sup> ~~They~~ snakes! The west side of the Cascades is poison-free as Ireland but the east side is <sup>a squirming writhing</sup> ~~one huge~~ den of serpents. Though they stayed hidden the trail ran a gantlet of fangs, of ~~morning~~ rattlings in ~~the~~ bushes. At every lizard I lept.

Hiking through the rainshadow summer was a misery. The trail lay ~~under~~ ankle-deep in powdery dust (partly dehydrated horse shit -- obviously on this cowboy side of the mountains nobody ever walked) stirred by boots into a nostril-stinging cloud. Blistering sun baked from sickly <sup>brush</sup> ~~brush~~ pungent

aromas which mingled with dust and shitsmell in a throat-tightening reek. We gasped furnace air, soaked heads in too-infrequent creeks, looked up despairingly to never-changing vistas ~~of ridges~~ of ~~these~~ scorched rock *ridges* sparsely sprinkled with spindly trees. We should've gone home to the Olympics.

Or so I was convinced until <sup>early evening</sup> ~~late afternoon~~ and a sudden stunning ~~sweet~~ ~~chilling~~ vision. I knew beforehand from the contour map the glacial trough of the Waptus had been "ground down at the heel" by Pleistocene ice and the excavation, 9 miles from the road, filled with waters of Waptus Lake, 2 miles long and a half-mile wide. But I was not prepared ~~for~~ <sup>to</sup> the scene at the head of the broad, flat valley. Seeming to leap from shores of the 2900-foot lake was the most enormous mountain I'd ever seen, huger than Rainier, not a mountain of Earth but of ~~a~~ deranged imagination. An impossible mountain. Evidently there was some trick of lighting -- ~~the~~ sunset rays flooding the summit while valley and we were already in shadow. Never had I witnessed such a spectacle -- except in paintings by the first artists crossing the Great Plains to a boggling confrontation with the Rockies.

In twilight we slowly neared the surrealist fantasy, watching it gradually dim<sup>ly</sup>, finally darken to a looming black. The evening air was pleasant, no longer hot <sup>but</sup> ~~yet~~ not cold. <sup>Yet</sup> ~~but~~ we felt the presence of ~~nearby~~ snows in hidden cirques as we crossed a series of ~~rustling~~ torrents culminating in loud rough Shovel Creek. Even at the big footlog over the Waptus Betty had quailed, earned her first "Idiot!" of the trip. Now, big-tree forest left behind, she refused to follow my teetering dash over a limber alder half the width of a boot. She waded, up to the knees, lips twitching and chin quivering, ignoring my volley of insults.

Abrupt end of flat valley, beginning of steep headwall. Up and up and up, slowly slowly slowly, we climbed switchbacks by the light of benignly-blazing stars. A porcupine waddled past us. Had there been turtles they'd have ~~passed~~<sup>sped</sup> by. But hell, in ~~such~~<sup>enchanted</sup> night who could curse?

At 9:30, 12 hours and 15 miles from the road, the trail leveled into a cirque, to star-twinkling Lake Ivanhoe, 4800 feet. A quick supper of rice and canned tuna. To bed, to sleep, in soft duff.

Wake! For the Sun, who scattered into flight  
 The Stars before him from the Field of Night,  
 Drives Night along with them from Heav'n and strikes  
 The Sultán's Turret with a Shaft of Light.

From smooth blue water and chill morning shadows the eye climbed granite slabs and heather cushions, white talus and dark-green ~~subalpine~~<sup>clumps of</sup> fir and ~~mountain~~ hemlock, to ~~the foot of~~ the great cliff, then up walls and gullies, ribs and pinnacles, up and up, neck bending back and back, to the dawn-golden summit of last evening's vision, Bears Breast. The eye climbed, not ~~the~~ boots. According to Monie, the 7400-foot ~~top~~ top hadn't been reached until just before the war and since then only about twice. It wasn't for me and never would be. However, I had a feeling for it ~~that would have been~~ impossible 3 weeks ago, ~~before the South Face~~. Formerly every precipice was an impenetrable mystery. Now, having known one cliff intimately with hands and feet, I knew something of all cliffs. The peaks had a new dimension.

Fry leisurely bacon-and-pancake breakfast, hoist packs, walk along granite lakeshore and up through alpine trees and heather knolls. Once

beyond the lake, magnet for horseriding <sup>garbage-dumping</sup> fishermen, the trail narrowed, bushes encroaching on tread, ~~nearly to the middle~~. Obviously hooves were rare here, and also boots.

Dutch Miller Gap, 5000 feet. The Cascade Crest. Nine years ago in the Sunset Mountains I'd learned that though scarcely a vertical half-mile apart the lush-forested valleys and moonscape ridges are two worlds, Low and High. Last summer on Red I'd learned the Sunrise Mountains are two distinct ranges, South Cascades and North. Now I saw the range is further divided into East Cascades and West. From the gap ~~where we stood~~ the Waptus River drained to the Cle Elum, the Cle Elum to the Yakima, the Yakima to the Columbia, from alpine garden to parched pine forests to dessicated desert. From the gap the Middle Fork Snoqualmie River drained to Puget Sound, from garden to drenched fir-hemlock-cedar forests to misty-green lowlands. In the house of my Father are many ~~xxx~~ rooms.

We descended the west side, the home side, dropping 500 feet to a meadow blue-dotted with huckleberries awaiting our greedy harvest. Of the six cabins clustered here when the map was surveyed 50 years ago naught remained but foundation squares of rotten logs, snow-flattened ~~xxx~~ heaps of cedar shakes, litters of rusty tools and tin cans and broken bottles.

No sign, only instinct, telling us where, we turned off the meager Cascade Crest Trail and found remnants of the old miners' path shown on the map. Tread was intermittent, mostly <sup>reclaimed by</sup> ~~grown over with~~ heather, and vanished altogether in a talus of giant granite blocks. But the way was open and clear. A last gully <sup>of</sup> ~~filled with~~ autumn-hard snow and we stood on the lip of a little barren-beautiful basin.

~~"U-frabjous day! Calloon! Callay!"~~  
~~He chortled in his joy.~~

In a heather nook crying out to be a camp we threw off packs and set out a-wandering a myriad delights crying out to be explored. Demanding first attention were eight sun-sparkling lakelets set in granite bowls, some white-rimmed by snow, some green-edged by moss and grass. Then, separating lakelets, were glacier-polished-and-striated granite buttresses with pockets of quartz crystals and shiny black hornblende. Then the streak of yellow-red, weathered iron pyrite and chalcopyrite running across the basin, and the miners' trash hauled here a half-century ago, and the mine, a shaft plunging ~~unabashedly, deep~~ to darkness.

Then slowly, savoring each step, we climbed the short way to 6000-foot La Bohn Gap and more tarns, more snowfields, more granite floors polished so slick we wished for roller skates. From one side of the wide gap rose the nameless  
 ^ 6600-foot pile of frost-wedged granite I marked for tomorrow's conquest, from the other talus and walls of snow-cleaned white and lichen-cruste black, odd colors to an eye accustomed to gray-brown Olympics but becoming fondly familiar.

Look north, down a thousand-foot waterfall to the chain of jewel lakes in emerald-green Necklace Valley, and out to the Skykomish River valley and far away to the white volcano of Mt. Baker. Look south to ~~dramatic~~ Bears Breast and Summit Chief on either side of Dutch Miller Gap, and beyond to the ~~horrific~~ spike of 7727-foot Chimney Rock -- ascended only three times, said Monie, despite <sup>constantly</sup> challenging Mountaineers since ~~first~~ they ~~became~~ <sup>began</sup> climbing ~~climbers~~ Snequalmie Pass summit 30-odd years ago.

Except for The Needles and Mt. Constance<sup>x</sup> never had I ~~walked~~<sup>entered</sup> so violent a country. Yet there was gentleness for a hiker, lakes and meadows, basins and ridges, even peaks. And there was wilderness. We were 6 miles from Lake Ivanhoe, 21 from the V-8, <sup>God knew how far from any other humans,</sup> and as alone as ever I'd been in my life.

"Cathy!"

"Heathcliff!"

A hug and a kiss for doomed lovers on fog-swept moor, then flight. If wise we'd have begun the run ~~away~~, the instant I awoke in heather nook and looked up to a low, swift ceiling of gray.

I'd not been completely surprised. In the city one goes for days with never more than a passing glance at the sky, smugly sure it is powerless to breach defenses of roof and walls. In the mountains, defenseless and vulnerable, one always keeps an eye on the sky.

The ~~colorful~~<sup>gorgeous</sup> sunset, the glory of clouds crimson and gold and orange and pink, had given me mixed pleasure. I'd yearned for close-by trees, amid granite and scattered shrubs felt naked to the clouds. But they'd burnt off in the fury of the dying sun and ~~had looked up to~~<sup>we'd slept under</sup> pulsing stars. ~~and what~~

~~which to the, embosomed along, Betty,~~

Then I saw the morning sky --  
Heigho, the tale was all a lie.

But I couldn't be wise. We must return to the gap, roam mist-dim tarns and grandly-bleak ~~granite~~ granite -- fit lair indeed for ~~the~~ cruel La Bohn. And I must have my summit.

Now we must belatedly be wise, ~~hastily, run down~~ run down from wind-roaring gap to relative calm of heather nook, home for one night only but home forever.

Gray ceiling had darkened to black, lowered to envelop the basin. Mist was drizzling. This was no feeble surge of summer clouds, probably thinning to fog tomorrow and sunshine next day. This was the first storm of winter, a full-scale 3-day blow, and ~~so far~~ we'd heard merely the overture.

Down the miniature mountain range of the talus, weaving through granite towers, gingerly stepping over gaping chasms, carefully placing tricouni nails in niches and cracks of slippery slabs. Down to heather. Now we could run.

Where's Betty? Absorbed in boulder-hopping, I'd forgotten her. There she was, high in talus and cloud. I yelled. A faint whimper on the wind. I ~~surged~~ <sup>howled.</sup> A distant explosion of sobs and curses."

The drizzle became a rain. My "waterproof" oilskin was soaked through, and my wool shirt and blue jeans. Water sloshed in boots. Rain poured off brim of black hat, a waterfall now in my face, now down the back of my neck. I bellowed comments on my bride's spastic legs and retarded brain.

"Help!" She'd quit cursing ~~but~~, was pleading. I dropped pack and ~~skidded~~ <sup>ran</sup> up the rockslide, slipping and skidding and falling and bashing knees. ↙

What is it? What is it?

The goddam clown had got a goddam boot stuck in a goddam crack. But I could ~~have~~ <sup>have</sup> no more. Almost (not quite) I laughed. Resigned, I herded her down sodden talus to sodden meadows to sodden trail, up to sodden Dutch Miller Gap. Blacker the ~~sky~~ clouds. Harder the rain. <sup>Colder the wind.</sup> Slower her pace. Not in day-long twilight of storm but in twilight of day's end we descended to Lake Ivanhoe. She sank to sodden ground and lay helpless in pounding rain.

Dear God, let it be merely a little hurt — here, today, even a sprained ankle could be fatal.

Trapped. Alone or with a companion like Bob or Arild I'd have made a dash-and-stagger the 15 miles to the V-8 and slept snug in a dry bed tonight. With Betty even the ramshackle leanto 6 miles away at Waptus Lake was beyond reach.

I found a tight-limbed tree-umbrella<sup>g</sup> guarding a patch of dry ground. Betty crawled in her bag, ~~stirred~~<sup>revived</sup> briefly to eat a spoonful of Krap Dinner, set the cup aside and burrowed ~~deep~~ in the bag. I was stubbornly determined to enjoy my supper, my campfire, but rain fell steadily faster, the drops larger, and the circle of dry ground ~~steadily~~ shrank. Into the bag, snuggle up to Betty snuggling up to the tree.

When the first drops penetrated the umbrella and splatted on bag I flinched. But soon the splats were continuous. When the first trickle chilled my spine I shivered. But soon it was trickle here, trickle there, trickle trickle everywhere. I wished to hell I had a tent or tarp. Unable with Betty to run 20 miles in a day, liable to be trapped by any and every storm, I'd have to consider buying one.

No more trickles. ~~An overall flow~~<sup>A general submergence.</sup> Sky and Earth in close embrace and damned be they caught inbetween. Down and feathers of bags collapsed. The only warmth ~~in the wilderness~~<sup>in the wilderness</sup> was of two bodies shaking as one.

Shiver and drowse, drowse and shiver. Long are ~~the~~ watches of the night. Then homogeneous blackness coagulated in dark ~~lumps~~<sup>curds</sup> amid a grey whey. Trees became distinguishable from clouds, trail from bushes.

~~We crept from saturated bags~~ <sup>In</sup> saturated clothes, pulled on saturated boots and shouldered saturated packs, first jettisoning



saturated food. At Shovel Creek no more than Betty did I bother with the limber alder but waded, up to the knees. Also Spade Creek and Spinola Creek and a dozen ~~more~~ creeks that hadn't existed Saturday. At the Waptus crossing I walked the footlog but didn't ridicule Betty for wading the river, up to the ~~waist~~ waist.

No ankle-deep dust now, ankle-deep mud. No reek of hot brush now, the tang of cold rain -- very cold -- rifts in clouds disclosed fresh snow on *slopes* ~~ridges~~ <sup>close</sup> to the valley <sup>floor.</sup> Some rainshadow.

The V-8! A dry cave with ~~warm~~ dry clothes, dry matches to light dry cigarettes. Only now, driving the mucky road, detouring around mud puddles that might be bottomless, did we reflect we'd not eaten a bite since the Krap Dinner.

In the Cle Elum restaurant the waitress brought with the menus a plate of bread and butter; when she returned to take our orders the plate was bare. With the soup she brought more bread and butter; when she returned with chicken-fried steaks and mashed potatoes and string beans the plate was bare. With coffee she brought more bread and butter, smiling; when she returned with apple pie the plate was bare. With the check she brought more bread and butter, ~~she~~ laughing -- and the cook and dishwasher and all the customers laughing, and us too. Cle Elum is the best place in the world for bread and butter.

September 1947

Chapter 14

A TRICK TO CATCH THE OLD ONE

I was running, pursued. I didn't dare look over my shoulder to see what it was. The house was close. The door. I stumbled on the steps and fell. I screamed. There wouldn't be time for them to open the door.

Mother was shaking me. I couldn't hear what she was saying. It was out there in the night, pressing against the window. Mother turned on all the lights and we sat in the living room. She got the cards and dealt. I picked up my hand and tried to focus. Ocean-heavy blackness was crushing roof and walls, threatening to extinguish our little flicker of electricity. We played casino an hour. Gradually it ebbed. <sup>the shuddering ceased and</sup> Finally I could go back to bed.

The first time I was 11½. That morning I'd had my tonsils out. The nurse and doctor weren't the sort of alien-cruel men and women in masks who strapped me down and slapped the metal cone on my face when I was 7. They were kind and I trusted them and lay on my back, eyes closed, breathing the gas.

I was in a cylinder with smoke-fuzzy walls. The walls began spinning. Faster. At the far end of the cylinder it was moving toward me. The

faster the walls spun the faster it came. I struggled to escape. I was held. I fought loose and broke through the spinning gray walls -- into another spinning cylinder -- not gray -- flaming red and yellow -- a cauldron of color boiling my brain. I died. I trusted them and they killed me, just like when I was 7.

I thought the dream was an echo of the cylinders caused by blood-lingering residues of gas. But weeks later it came again. And months later again. I woke screaming at 12, at 13, at 14 and 15 and 16. All through high school Mother and I played middle-of-blackness casino. Less and less often, ~~however~~. Nights were safe for months, then a whole year.

I was screaming. Not night pressed against windows but day. I was nearly 18 and now not even day was safe. I threw on clothes and ran out in the spring dawn along campus paths. It was in the trees, the flowers, the air, everywhere. People appeared on paths. They stared at the running boy and laughed. They didn't know it was there, didn't feel it permeating the entire world and them too.

That was 4½ years ago and the dream hadn't returned. Any night it might. Any day.

What was it? Infinity-eternity (death)? Devil-God (sin)? Why was it? Probably a phenomenon of puberty-adolescence, symptom of a simple chemical imbalance or a normal dread of developing sexuality. Probably I'd grown out

of it. Yet before this dream there'd been the other -- the Red Devil jumping from the furnace and chasing me up the basement stairs. That dream began the first time they killed me, when I was 7.

However, they'd killed me again when I was 19 and no dream followed. In fact I'd enjoyed dying. I heard the clock ticking off the final seconds and my mind raced, seeking before the end to solve every philosophical problem ~~was~~ baffling me and mankind. The clock ran out, I died -- and I saw the Solution and approached the very foot of the Throne. I woke screaming for the dentist to give me more gas.

Why no dream from that death? Perhaps because at 19 I was -- or thought I was -- cleansed of childhood sins by wisdom and reborn innocent. I wasn't sure anymore. I doubted there was wisdom or innocence in anyone, anywhere. Though I'd not had the dream since the spring of 1943, wide awake I'd often felt it close.

As on the August day of 1945, walking the Avenue, seeing the newspaper headline: "ATOM BOMB." Everybody in Seattle knew about the secret factory in Eastern Washington making explosives. I hadn't suspected it was a dreadful new explosive powerful enough to blow up the building blocks of the universe.

The Sunday after our flight from La Bohn Gap the 3-day blow had blown itself out, sun had dispelled premature winter, and Betty and I went tourist-<sup>savttering</sup>strolling with Arild and his girl friend on Rainier paths <sup>blinding</sup>dazzling near the brilliant Emmons Glacier, largest in the United States. A soft day, fit close to a soft summer.

Summer was ending. Now the shortening days, the darkening days. Soon the glooming of November and December.

Something had been left undone.

Whatever it was I'd never do it with Betty. With her I could know the Green Woman exceeding well. Not the other. To know that a hiker must be permitted by circumstances to run 20 or 25 miles in a day, to blithely skip across a footlog, to hop a rockslide without somebody getting their damn boot stuck.

Summer was ending. Yet the sense of incompleteness would've passed, I'd have stoically subsided into winter, hoping that since she couldn't possibly go slower maybe next year Betty would hike a bit faster. Except for Monie.

She dropped in the garret almost nightly, flitting restlessly in and out or staying for hours, talking listlessly, falling into silences. This wasn't the cackling freak of the Tetons and The Tooth. Summer was ending.

Wednesday evening, September 25. Three in the garret, oppressed by winter thoughts. But summer was hanging on and promised to remain through the weekend. Action was demanded. Strenuous, desperate action. Not another tourist <sup>saunter.</sup> ~~stroll~~. Not a whimper but a bang.

Said I, "Sort of wish we were heading for the South Face again."

Suddenly lively (fondly recalling old plots?), Monie cackled, "There's always Cruiser!"

"Sure!" I laughed. "And ~~hallelujah~~ damnation and hellfire too."

"Those are also good peaks," cackled she, "But I haven't climbed them. The Bruiser is guaranteed thrills."

"I've got a better idea. Let's get crocked and play Russian roulette."

Cackle cackle. Laugh laugh.

Thursday Monie was back. No cackling this evening. No laughing.

"Well, why don't we climb Cruiser?" she asked.

"Why not?"

Who said that?

"You got to understand it's no South Face."

Betty, goggle-eyed, lip-jittering, looked from Monie to me, me to Monie. I was equally astounded, stared at myself from a distant place. From that place came Monie's voice.

The South Face had been a joke. Holds were big and plentiful, pitches short, exposure brief.

Cruiser was no joke. The final pitch was a hundred feet on small holds over <sup>chilling</sup> ~~awesome~~ exposure. No jutting rocks to wrap the rope around, no cracks to pound pitons in. And no ledges to break a fall. If the leader slipped, wave goodbye. Further, though Monie had climbed Cruiser four times she'd never led that pitch, always had had a belay from above.

Christ, this conversation is getting morbid. Let's settle for a blueberry meadow.

She continued as if I'd not interrupted. On her most recent ascent, 2 years ago, the party had left a fixed rope on the bad pitch to safeguard the last man down. If the rope was still there she wouldn't be stark naked.

I was insane.

Cruiser was not a Rainier or Constance, not a great and famous peak I'd long humbly admired. I'd never heard of it -- except from Monie. I'd

never seen it -- except as some indistinguishable portion of the Sawtooth jumble above Gladys Pass. I'd never even seen a photo of it. All I knew about it was that the roof below the false summit had scared me shitless, that the sight of the true summit had petrified Bob, that now she was seriously proposing climbing it. Monie was not cackling, not ~~smiling~~ <sup>grinning</sup>.

Insane.

The South Face was a once-in-a-lifetime stunt. On the summit of The Tooth I'd raved because I'd never have to do that again. Yet in the exalted delirium was something else.

I'd read poetry and philosophy, thinking to mingle with the universal soul -- and merely come to the last lines of the texts. I'd listened to orchestras, thinking to swing in rhythms of the stars -- and concluded by merely clapping. I'd drunk gin, thinking the next ~~cut~~ <sup>wallop</sup> would justify God's ways to man -- and merely passed out. I'd clasped woman, thinking to penetrate the secret of life -- and merely ejaculated.

I still loved poetry and philosophy, loved music, loved getting swacked, loved my bride. But last year I'd found beauty and truth insufficient, this summer had found nut-brown maid-Green Woman insufficient.

Folk of ancient times, close to the Old Ones, knew. The Eleusinian Mysteries, the Egyptian, commenced not in beauty but terror, the Pan Terror, and moved from terror to ecstasy, the ecstasy in and of terror, the ecstasy of the illumination impossible in beauty, impossible in truth, impossible in reason, impossible in sanity.

Yes, insane. Insane on the South Face, insane now.

I'd been wrong about climbing. It's not a more intense expression of the desire to embrace the Green Woman, has nothing to do with the ecstasy of love. It's terror for the sake of a greater ecstasy.

Helplessly insane.

Betty saved me. She refused to climb Cruiser, refused to scramble to the false summit, refused to hike to Gladys Pass.

"Well, that's it then," said Monie. "We can't go without three in the party."

She mumbled about the "climbing code" of the Mountaineers. A two-man party isn't acceptable. You need a third person so if one gets hurt there's one to stay with the victim and one to go for rescuers.

"Or the undertaker?" I laughed. I'd ~~been~~ been willing. I'd faced Cruiser. Not my fault Betty was yellow.

Monie left. Winter could be endured. The phone rang. Monie calling from home. Her brother Al had agreed to come -- not to climb, ~~rather~~ to fish in Flapjack Lakes and ~~ask~~ sack out in the meadows. But he'd make our venture legal. We were going.

Friday morning. Friday afternoon. Friday evening. I listened to the clock tick off the final seconds.

Saturday morning, September 28. I drove Betty to the train station. She didn't want to be alone in Seattle, wanted to be with her folks in Portland.



We held each other ~~tight~~, kissed long. To risk losing this? Insane.

"Take care of yourself," she said, eyes tear-bright.

"You too."

She boarded the train.

I picked up Monie and Al and we caught the ferry to Bremerton. Off the ferry, grinding up a hill, the V-8 ~~stuttered~~ stuttered, stopped. I wasn't surprised. Everybody said trailing a cloud of landscape-obliterating blue smoke was normal and healthy for a V-8, that you simply bought oil by the 5-gallon can and paused every hour to fill the crankcase, but from the start I'd suspected a terminal disease. Where Betty had failed the junker had succeeded.

No. Al was ~~an~~ expert <sup>at</sup> fixing V-8 gas pumps with chewing gum. Onward around Hood Canal to the Olympic Peninsula, up the Skokomish River road, climber and misplaced hiker quiet, fisherman Al gabbling.

"I don't get you, Harvey," he said. "You seem pretty straight, except for this. And don't say a fisherman doesn't know what it's all about. I've got two sick sisters and a sick brother, I'm the only one who didn't catch the family plague, I've seen it in every stage from first rash to tertiary degeneration. It doesn't matter about our family, we're all crazy anyway. What bugs me is how the hell did you get it?"

"Damned if I know. Anyhow, I'm not making a career of it. This one last time and I'm through."

"Yeah, that's what they all say. They start with ~~the Tooth~~ The Tooth, then decide they'll do a volcano or two, then they just have to have Rainier. Before they know it they're as bad off as Monie."

"There are worse things," jeered Monie. "You can go around molesting fish and turn into a degenerate."

"Now sister, leave my private life out of this. At least I don't pretend to be something I'm not. Harvey, I suppose you've gone the standard route -- reading about Mallory on Everest and Whymper on the Matterhorn and swallowing all those English public-schoolboy cover-ups for ~~what~~ what they were really doing. You should watch a gang of Monie's friends fondling their pitons and snapping their carabiners -- it's enough to make ~~even~~ a dirty old man blush."

"Anyway we're open about it," said Monie. "We don't hide in closets."

"That's right," said Al. "A bunch of children who haven't learned to be ashamed of their games. Ashamed, hell! You flaunt it! You rig it out with baubles and gewgaws and call it a 'blood sport' -- as if that was an excuse! You people are emotional cripples -- as far gone as those fancy-dressing spicks with a fetish about the horns of the bull, or the greasy Neanderthals who razz the bricks at Indianapolis. Hell, you're ~~worse~~ <sup>dumber</sup> -- you don't get paid for it."

The trailhead. Familiar routine of lacing boots. Familiar <sup>soothing</sup> exercise of hauling pack 4 miles up ~~the hill~~ <sup>familiar forest</sup> to Flapjack Lakes. Placid waters. The Mouse, upthrusting basalt nose anticipating the soon-to-come full moon. All normal, all as it was a year ago. Only then Bob and I had just abandoned the plan to hitchhike America. Only then Betty was ~~was~~ the idiot kid sister.

Al stopped to fish. Monie and I continued the 2 miles to Gladys Pass, made camp in a tiny grass-and-moss flat amid tumbled boulders, water supplied by a cold trickle from a remnant of snow.

Atop a block of pillow lava was a litter of decayed logs and shingles, rusty pots and pans. Some 30 or 50 years ago a prospector busted his butt hereabouts summer after summer, swinging pick at pockets of reddish rock, low-grade manganese ore, scattered through gray-green basalt. He probably never lifted eyes to ~~the maze of~~ Sawtooth pinnacles. Nor did climbers until shortly before the war, when the first party reached the summit of Cruiser. Since then, said Monie, perhaps a half-dozen or so ascents had been ~~made~~ made.

Monie rigged her tarp, a 7- by 11-foot war-surplus liferaft sail, orange on one side ~~(for evaporating sea water)~~ and blue on the other, weighing barely 3 pounds and the nylon coated to be absolutely waterproof. This was what we'd needed at La Bohn Gap. I asked if I could get one at the Co-op. Not a chance, she said, at \$2 apiece they'd all been snatched up, Mountaineer camps had blossomed in gaudy ~~orange~~ orange and blue enlivening the general khaki monotony of ~~other~~ war gear. However, I could try the surplus stores, somebody might still have a few in stock.

"I'm just putting it up now to keep out the stars," said Monie.

"Stars are cold."

Yes, there'd be stars tonight and sun tomorrow. High pressure blanketed the entire eastern Pacific, the nearest clouds were over Okinawa. No more than Betty, no more than the V-8, would the weather intervene.

In dusk Al arrived, fishless and soaking wet, having been stranded on an island when his raft drifted away. He didn't <sup>mind</sup> ~~care~~. The summer-mild twilight was perfect for a swim, the blaze of decades-seasoned, white-bleached wood quickly dried his clothes.

They'd brought the food and for supper I glumly expected one of Monie's revolting messes of dehydrated swill. Al, however, had planned the menu -- tossed green salad, steak, and fried potatoes.

Said he, "The condemned man deserves a decent last meal."

We sprawled by the fire eating cookies and drinking tea. Al was happy. Tomorrow would be as <sup>blithe</sup> ~~carefree~~ as today. So it could be for me.

"I wonder what went wrong in your childhood, Harvey. I know what went wrong in our childhoods and don't blame Monie for being a neurotic because I am too. I just keep trying to convince her there are better therapies than climbing."

Monie cackled, "Let's not go into your therapy, brother! Not in mixed company. Think of Harvey's tender <sup>years</sup> ~~age~~ and delicate feelings!"

"Well, okay, I'll take the boy in hand after he's learned his lesson tomorrow. It's just that he looks so damn normal I keep wishing I could save him from you."

So did I.

"Time for the sack," said Monie. "Got to get hoofing early."

"That's another damn thing about climbers," said Al. "A pretty meadow, a starry night, a cozy fire, and just when the conversation is rolling they go to bed. Then in the middle of the night ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> when/sleep is best they get up. They've got everything turned around."

Hardly had I sunk into soft grass and closed my eyes than it was 6:30. I'd slept too deep to savor what delicious sleep it was, felt cheated. I'd been too far away to maintain the steely core of resolve, was a bowl of jello inside.

Al grumbled, "Hikers don't get up at dawn, hikers know enough to stay in the sack until the sun bakes them out." However, <sup>not to miss the fun he</sup> ~~he was having too much~~ <sup>sleep in</sup> ~~fun to~~ and accompanied us the few yards to the pass.

"Last chance, Harvey," he said. "Now I ask you -- look at Mt. Gladys there, all those dandy meadows, and look at those bloody cliffs my demented sister is nuts about -- I ask you, which is the path of reason?"

"You pamper your neurosis your way," said Monie. "I'll pamper mine my way."

Al sat down for a smoke. He was in no hurry. His summit was a loitering hour above and he had <sup>all</sup> ~~the whole~~ day. Monie and I started up the talus toward the gully.

"I'll tell you, Harvey," Al called after us, "You're in for a big disappointment. You're <sup>looking</sup> ~~hoping~~ for the <sup>ultimate</sup> ~~great~~ orgasm but you'll be lucky if you don't come back impotent."

Concentrate on the step-in-progress, repel thoughts of steps to come -- steps which don't have to come. Betty, V#8, weather, Al failed. Yet saving possibilities remain. Appendicitis. (Is that a twinge?) Earthquake. (Is that a tremor? A year ago spring a jolt from a fault someplace near here <sup>gave</sup> ~~rattled~~ the Olympics and Seattle <sup>its best shaking in history.</sup> ~~too~~.)

The notch. So soon? Without Betty the gully was a no-rope walk. Betty. Now I think of it, here at the notch we fell in love. Where is she now? Eating breakfast at her folks' house. Maybe they'll drive to Cannon Beach this afternoon and watch the breakers explode and the foam whiten the sand. Wish I were there, or she here. I miss the sobbing incompetence that makes

me seem brave and skillful -- or in time of dire need, permits honorable  
 escapes. Any crying today will have to be done by me.

But we don't have to go to the top. If it was too much for agile-daring  
 Bob my defeat will have no sting. I don't pretend to be a freak. See Al,  
~~hardly about the pass and~~ sitting down again. Wherever he is, there's where  
 he wants to be. Al is my kind, not Monie.

The dreaded roof, the scene of shame, that must be done. Wipe the  
 blot from the slate. Then quit. *Clutch teeth, breathe deep.*

*↪* Surprise! The roof is a no-hands stroll. I pass my last-year  
 chicken-out point laughing. No wind today, that's one reason. The South  
 Face is the other. The false summit is a cinch. Therefore the true summit  
 will be sufferable. Naturally Bob was <sup>stunned</sup> petrified to see it. He'd not  
 climbed the South Face.

A final step to the false summit.

I see Cruiser. I recognize it.

A year ago Bob's haunted eyes, horror-hushed words. Now Monie not so  
 much as looking at it, proceeding without a pause along the crest of the  
 ridge. *Her fifth time here, her recurring nightmare.*

Now I realized that under Al's bantering had been a <sup>genuine</sup> ~~deep~~ brotherly  
 concern. Now I remembered Betty had hinted she was worried about her old  
 friend, doubted the approach of winter was the ~~whole~~ problem. Now I  
 understood that in the garret Monie herself had all but <sup>confessed.</sup> ~~said it outright.~~  
 She was going to confront it. Not caring what happened. Dammit, I cared.

A yell from lower space. Al calling attention to a mountain goat on the cliffs. One more fine day in the hills for Al, for the goat. It could be for me. Just say the word. Why did the "NO!" stick in my throat?

I wasn't a hero. I'd been a cowardly football player because I hated the collision of body ~~with~~ <sup>and</sup> body, I'd been cowardly in the Graywolf because I hated the collision of body ~~with~~ <sup>and</sup> rock.

Why was it still standing? Flagpole-tall, reed-thin, tenuously rooted in Earth -- the wind should blow it over. Why hadn't it toppled at first touch of a climber's foot?

Closer, closer, larger, larger, ~~overwhelming~~. Soon I'd scream. But there'd be no Mother to play casino. There'd be naught to awake to but the long silence.

Numbly I followed Monie along the ridge, scrambling up and down the crest. Closer, larger. To bypass a ~~tower~~ <sup>erog "gendarme"</sup> we traversed a narrow ledge, frightfully exposed, airier than the step around the corner on the South Face. But Monie didn't suggest we rope and my voice was gone.

Another ledge traverse into a wide chimney filled by an enormous chockstone, huge as a house, actually a false summit split from the crest, blown off by the wind. We climbed beneath, entering the mountain interior, dank and chill as a tomb, then crawled from gloom to daylight and the base of the summit tower.

An urgent yell from the far-below meadow. What did he say? ~~Scowled~~ ~~He~~, "WAKE UP!" I couldn't. A stranger had got control of my body, was throwing it away, ~~like~~ a piece of garbage.

Thus far nothing ~~had~~ we'd done was beyond the South Face in difficulty. The next step would be beyond. I couldn't see the ~~front~~ wall, mercifully hidden around the corner. But I had seen it.

I gulped air -- what a pleasure to breathe, we do it so often we grow oblivious to the sweet flavor of Earth's atmosphere. My heart beat hard and fast -- what a delight to feel blood pumping through arteries. Sweat poured from forehead and palms and armpits -- God it's fun to sweat.

No! No! But no "NO!"

10 o'clock. Tick, tick, tick.

Monie showed me where to sit and where to plant my feet, tied a bowline around my waist. On The Tooth I hadn't belayed <sup>the</sup> a leader, only follower Betty; Monie now explained a crucial difference in technique -- leave a bit of slack in the line, ~~for God's sake~~ <sup>ever</sup> never pull on the rope/dangling from above.

"You're bombproof here," she said. Pity in her voice? Did I look as <sup>dazed</sup> terrified as I was? "Nothing could drag you off."

Nothing? "What if you fall?"

"Don't worry about it!" she cackled.

Dear Lord, why not? Why was the cackle so forlorn?

Rapidly she climbed the dozen vertical feet above my stance, swung a leg over the corner, ~~and~~ vanished. I was alone. Utterly ~~alone~~, forever alone.

The rope payed out, slowly.

The rope stopped. I gripped it tight. Heart pounded. Ears roared. Sweat spouted.

Faint voice. "Fixed rope off route -- on ridge -- can't reach."

Would she, when overwhelmed, scream? Then, the rope suddenly leaping like a crazy snake, would I scream? Or just <sup>faint into death</sup> ~~pass out cold~~?

The rope did not move.



For 15 minutes by the clock the rope did not move. No <sup>word of</sup> explanation.  
 No voice. It just did not move, <sup>was dead.</sup> With free hand I fumbled cigarette and  
 matches from shirt pocket. <sup>Last</sup> ~~was~~ request before the sword falls.

"Trying traverse to rope -- bad spot -- hang on."

My rope trembled alive. I payed out slack. Smelled a sickening odor.  
 Saw cigarette burning flesh of arm. Felt no pain.

"GOT IT!"

That was loud and clear.

"TIED IN!"

That was a ~~genuine~~ merry cackle. The rope flowed out steadily, smoothly.

"Belay on! Climb!"

I stand, blink flashing stars from eyes. I yell, "Up rope!" The  
 slack is pulled up, the rope draws tight around ~~my~~ waist. "Climbing!"  
 The hell I am. Legs rubbery, arms limp, hands awkward as boxing gloves.

The stranger won't let me cry out, "NO!" The stranger has accepted  
 the judgment, the sentence. Up the rope I go, up I go.

I saw Molly in the crowd, in the crowd,  
 I saw Molly in the crowd, in the crowd,  
 And I hollered right out loud,  
 "Oh Molly, ain't you proud,  
 Yes Molly, ain't you proud."

Robot stranger clambers to the corner. Pokes my head over edge. I  
 spin away in vertigo. A glass-smooth slab rising so sheer I can't see the  
 top without falling over backward, dropping so swooningly the valley is a  
 green blur. Worse, far worse, unimaginably worse than the corner on the

South Face. No staircase of buckets and doorknobs here. A roller rink tilted vertical.

Shut eyes. Try to stop the spin.

A yodel from a faraway scarcely-remembered world. Damn you Al for agreeing to come along. Damn you for not warning me your damn sister doesn't care if she lives or dies.

"You're okay! I've got you!" yells unseen Monie. Yes you damn witch you've finally got me. You didn't die but you'll be the death of me.

I should've stayed home with Betty, should've stayed in the meadows with Al, should've quit at the false summit. Now I've no choice. If I retreat to Al, sane Al, to Betty, beloved Betty, I'll nevermore know peace. This is how they do it in wars, this is how they get guys to jump out of ~~the~~ trenches and charge machine guns.

~~Throw~~<sup>Tremble</sup> a leg over the edge -- tennis shoes find nothing, ~~slip~~<sup>skid</sup> off in thin air. Press ~~against~~<sup>jello</sup> guts against the edge, extend a palsied arm -- fingers slip off round greasy bumps.

Hanging from the rope, slither onto the face. Don't look down! I know well enough what's there -- birds flying under me, tiny shrubs that actually are forest giants. Knees quiver, and wrists, and ~~(Betty-~~was~~)~~ lower lip.

Not toes and fingers but merely this slender thread of vegetable fiber next to mine eyes holds me to the slab, to life. I wiggle up evil green pillows of slick lava. Am I climbing or being reeled in like a fish?

Abruptly the rock turns reddish and feet find buckets and fingers doorknobs and the rope droops because Monie can't ~~take~~<sup>haul</sup> in slack fast enough. I pull myself over the knife-edge of the summit ridge and fall onto her belay ledge, babbling about admirable Red Rock, hateful Green Rock.

A yell from below. Al crapped out on his 5600-foot meadow summit. Insolent Al, pitiful Al. How languid and relaxed is the hiker. How ignorant, how insulated, how dead. We climbers are naked to reality, we live.

We ~~went~~<sup>teetered</sup> up the blade of the knife to our 6104-foot ~~rock~~ summit. Barely space for two. This way, that way, cliffs plummeted. <sup>Don't look down.</sup> Nothing to lean against but sky. To lean was to fly. Sit erect, rigid.

I recalled ~~from last year~~ Monie's cackling tale of ~~one of her~~<sup>an</sup> ascent with a party of nine in three teams. The first team up had to go beyond the summit to make room for the others, then spend <sup>3</sup> hours straddling the ridge awaiting their turn to descend. When the route was clear one girl/had to be lowered like a cadaver, said not a word on hike out or drive home,

~~she~~<sup>again</sup> never was seen on a mountain.

Three <sup>of flagpole-sitting</sup> hours! Poor girl. Ten minutes were plenty for me. Nerves were not recuperating, were deteriorating. This reality was too real, I wanted insulation.

Monie saw the symptoms. "Better get off this."

The descent! Eyes are near the top of the body, ideally positioned for climbing up. To climb down one must face outward to see where to place blind feet, one must <sup>stand as if poised on the high platform for a dive into the valley.</sup> ~~confront empty sky.~~ But the rope was tight on my waist and quickly I was down, safe.

Now began Monie's ordeal, guarded only by the fixed rope weathered by winter ice and wind and summer sun and rain, frayed and bleached, <sup>as stout as your father's mustache.</sup> And on

the treacherous Green Rock at the bottom she lacked even that meager consolation, <sup>Through the slow and hesitating rope I shared her fear.</sup> ~~In my belay, stoned I felt her slowness, her hesitation, again~~

~~I gripped the rope tight.~~ Yet soon she too was around the corner, down, safe.

was guarded only by my belay from below, which at best would limit her fall to 50 feet—assuming I wasn't yanked from my stance to join her swandive.

Giggling, hysterical, I wanted to hug and kiss the cackling witch. But that would've been anticlimactic. Linked solely by ~~a~~ rope we'd been closer than lovers.

Noon. Merely 2 hours since Monie ~~was~~<sup>disappeared</sup> over the edge. ~~She had~~  
All my nightmares, the Red Devil and the Pursuer together, probably didn't add up to that many ticks of the clock. By the holy, whatever else happened in my life~~x~~ for 2 solid hours I'd looked over my shoulder.

PART THREE: FAUST THE FELLAH BUM

March 1948

Chapter 15

JABBERWOCKY

I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;  
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;  
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways  
Of my own mind.

His book I refused to read but his idea pursued. Always part of me was busy ~~scribbling~~ fending off the mutt. He said, did this sour old kraut, that the West was Declining. Wrong, said I. The direction was up. Granted, Germany in particular and Europe in general were done for and England was over the hill. However, fresh-from-the-cradle America armed with the Bomb (an ill-favored thing but our own) had a firm clutch on the future -- and never mind the frightened jealousy of Stalin, scowling and snarling behind his Iron Curtain.

To be sure, a glance around the nation scarcely was <sup>inspiring</sup> ~~exhilarating~~, indeed gave sharp anal pains. From Detroit and Hollywood, Washington and New York, Seattle and Olympia gushed a flood<sup>s</sup> of unmitigated nonsense, and not 1920s-naive glorious nonsense. Even Thurber had stopped <sup>pretending to</sup> laughing.

But most of history is nonsense, most assemblages of homo sapiens are as inconsequential and unremembered as a hill of ants, a field of weeds, a pile of pebbles. What makes it worth all the trouble is that here and there, now and then, a group emerges from the clutter and speaks. The utterance,

though often seemingly issuing from merely one or several men, in fact is of and by the entire group and expresses and symbolizes the <sup>leap</sup> ~~rise~~ of every member of the group from humdrum grubbing existence to thrilling life. Shakespeare spoke and thus we recognize the greatness of Elizabeth and Drake -- and also of the nut-cracking groundlings at the Globe and the raunchy wenches at the Mermaid.

As the defeat of the Spanish Armada was to England, so would V-E Day and V-J Day be to America. We were pregnant with our golden age, a time when every groundling was a ~~gold~~ golden boy and every wench a golden girl.

Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,  
But to be young was very heaven!

Spengler wanted to take it away from me. He claimed the show was over before I bought my ticket. A pox on him. The West couldn't Decline, not yet. It wouldn't be fair.

Newly strong from Cruiser I turned to confront the bastard, to read his damn book and stomp his ~~fucking~~ Nazi bones.

Germans should stick to music and mathematics. The awful muddle of their language forbids English-straight thinking. Nevertheless, certain of the cloud castles puffed up by Oswald's ~~interminable~~ interminable blasts of hot air were picturesque. I liked his concept of history as the creation of organic entities with allotted life spans, his separation of Mankind into Peoples, each of whom (those, that is, giving birth to "myths of the grand style") shapes from its pre-history Primitive soul a distinctive Culture, which evolves into a Civilization, which eventually dies away into its post-history. I approved his view there had been an Egyptian Culture,

an Indian Culture, a Chinese Culture, a Classical or Appolinian Culture, a Magian ~~and~~ Culture, all these and others long dead, and finally the Western or Faustian Culture.

But I was chagrined by his telling me I was born a thousand years past the shining spiritual Spring of the West and was living a hundred years into its dreary Winter of Materialism. I was irritated by his saying Shakespeare was a failure, stunted by a slavish imitation of the alien Appolinians, that our Culture ended with Beethoven, that "the last of the Faustian arts died in Tristan." I was angered by his <sup>arrogant</sup> solipsist declaration that "It is Germany that is destined, as the last nation of the West, to crown the mighty edifice of Civilization," outraged by his pompous pronouncement that the imperium of Megalopolitan America would usher in the Faustian post-history, flabbergasted by his prediction that the next <sup>surge</sup> ~~phase~~ of life belonged to Russia and its a-borning Culture of the Plain.

Rubbish. Halfway through the thousand dense pages I flung the book aside and sought to dispel the ~~strangling~~ miasma of German bullshit by breathing clean English air. But fumes lingered, my head would never clear until I'd <sup>gulped the whole of him, chewed him up, and spit him out.</sup> ~~buried him at the crossroads.~~ Fingers on nose I returned to the volume, ~~grimly determined to wade it out.~~

"At the last, only the primitive blood remains, alive, but robbed of its strongest and most promising elements. This residue is the fellah type."

Insufferable! Where did he get off, calling me a "fellah"?

And yet, and yet. Moodily <sup>scan</sup> ~~survey~~ the scene, lad. Where on the horizon is the new Roosevelt not a ~~capitalism~~ capitalism-rescuring <sup>g</sup> sham, the new New Deal genuinely shuffling the cards? Nowhere. Instead there's the starched-ass



Republican Congress smugly awaiting the ~~new~~ coronation of starched-head Dewey. There's the collapse of the Democratic coalition, the Confederates lusting to get back to lynching nigras, the machine hacks scooping up boodle, the bubbleheads crawling in bed with Uncle Joe, the union proletarians gorging and bugging, and the chicken liberals running for cover to save their skins from the Red Hunt. There was the most inglorious nonsense of all -- the Palmer Raids all over again. <sup>As</sup> Congress had <sup>a</sup> its House Un-American Activities Committee, <sup>so did</sup> and our state legislature <sup>have a</sup> its jerkwater parody, the Canwell Committee, <sup>goon squad</sup> ~~instrument~~ of ~~the~~ Eastern Washington bumpkins and Seattle's Downtown Gang, terrorizing the gutless University and badgering some of <sup>its</sup> the finest teachers, including my hiking partner of 1945, <sup>Professor</sup> ~~Dr.~~ Phillips.

Politics is hell. Well, <sup>that hadn't changed since</sup> ~~so it was in~~ Tudor times ~~too~~. More depressing to ask by far, where is the stirring that promises a new Shakespeare? Or even a new Marlowe or Jenson? Nowhere. My graduate-school joke was no joke -- America already had made its maximum utterance in Alley Oop, Moon Mullins, Pogo, Li'l Abner.

"Life as experienced by primitive and fellaheen peoples is just the zoological up-and-down, a planless happening without goal or cadenced march in time, wherein occurrences are many, but, in the last analysis, devoid of meaning."

Devoid? Devoid. Look into the unclean cages of our zoo nation. See ~~The jig was up, I looked all about and what did I see?~~ Fella here, fella there, fella fella everywhere.

Better gloomy-wise than cheerful-stupid. There's no happiness in Pollyana<sup>n</sup>. And no grief in Götterdämmerung.

i have had ~~my~~ my ups and downs  
but wotthehell wotthehell

Relax, self-knowing fellah. Lounge on the sidelines and smirk at the mindless meaningless milling of the history-ignorant falsely-hoping fellaheen. In an age of post-historic nonsense, ~~casual~~ <sup>residual twinges of</sup> shrug off the ~~pur~~ Puritan work-compulsion and go hiking.

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves  
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;  
All mimsy were the borogoves,  
And the mome raths outgrabe.

The new face in the window piqued the curiosity of students. Unlike the wrinkled eccentrics in stockrooms on the first, second, and third floors of Bagley Hall, this eccentric in the basement was their own age -- they being mainly GI-Bill seniors and graduate students. Moreover, the book that occupied him between customers was not a detective novel but a ponderous volume of arcane historical theory. Polite inquiry revealed he was that outlandish creature, an English major, mysteriously transported across interstellar space from Upper Campus to Lower. They were astonished but rather pleased. I gave their stinking headquarters a touch of class.

I liked the people. If the students were mostly engineers, I knew the type of old, they were more to be pitied than censured. If the other stockroom staffers were timeservers, so <sup>are</sup> ~~were~~ all the best fellaheen. It's not degrading to be a fellah if one doesn't become a cheating peddler or crafty thief rassing around in the Horatio Alger snakepit. It's no tragedy to live in post-history if one abjures dreams of being a Culture

Here. Do your harmless job, draw your modest pay, grow roses or go fishing.

I liked the place. My housekeeping instincts were gratified by efficiently reorganizing flasks and beakers in bins and chemicals on shelves to provide swift service, saving customer's time and mine, leaving the bulk of my days for history -- and unlike the warehouse, this center of higher learning institutionally condoned reading. Though I returned as proletarian rather than bourgeoisie-aspiring graduate student, the campus felt ~~overgrown~~ homey.

When my head was momentarily stuffed too full of Appolinians and Magians and Faustians I played the games devised by engineers to <sup>refresh</sup> ~~take their~~ minds ~~off~~ <sup>dulled by</sup> the manufacture of wood pulp and detergent. Crazy Art, whose ~~gorge~~ Hell-black eyes and ~~stare~~ <sup>chaos-scary</sup> chuckle thinly masked genuine stark staring madness, introduced me to the glass-bead cannon, a length of glass tubing connected by rubber tubing to a compressed-air outlet; flip open the air valve and a little glass bead hissed out with a muzzle velocity approaching that of a .22 slug. I kept my cannon trained on the outside door, directly across the corridor from the service window. Art and cronies quickly ~~took~~ became wary of exposing their rears but many a tight-skirted girl exiting the building flinched, threw protective hand to bitten bottom, whirled ~~in anger~~ to slap an engineer -- and found herself alone in the corridor except for the stockroom boy in the distant window, engrossed in Spengler.

We settled comfortably into winter. Betty got her degree and was rewarded by a part-time job as file clerk at the University Bookstore.

With her \$80 a month and my \$190 we were rolling <sup>in</sup> dough, blithely paying for books and records we'd once have concealed under raincoats, buying New York Cut steaks at the A&P where we used to filch sardines. Not next summer would we be denied the Olympics for lack of ferry fare, nor on a return from Snoqualmie Pass discover ourselves a nickel short of the two-bit toll for the Lake Washington Floating Bridge and have to drive clear around the lake to get home.

My plan for wealthy, footloose 1948 was elegant, combining the best of 1946 and 1947, surpassing both. In spring Monie would lead Betty and me on a couple snow climbs like Silvertip, a couple rock climbs of a lower order than The Tooth (no more of that, wailed Betty). By summer we'd know everything about rope and ax <sup>required</sup> ~~needed~~ to do Graywolf Rambles forever -- minus the ~~trembling~~ <sup>shuddering</sup> and bleeding.

If Betty was unlikely ever to manage a 20-mile day, I'd found that an otherwise yawn of a hike could be jazzed up by a dash (a very small dash) of Tooth-like spice. And when atrophy threatened legs and lungs I always could take a solo run; Betty, no clinging vine, accepted with equanimity the prospect of an occasional weekend alone in the garret.

Monie enthusiastically endorsed ~~the~~ the Manning Plan and eagerly outlined the lessons she'd teach in wildland classrooms. In October she did, that is.

In November she began saying, "Well, let's wait and see what kind of winter it is. Can't tell where we can go until the weather gods speak."

In December she began turning my queries aside by mumbling, "I'm not sure where I'll be in spring. Let's talk about it later."

One black January night she quit stalling and in a brutal blurring ~~words~~ destroyed 1948. "I don't think you folks ought to put all your eggs in my basket. I don't think I want the responsibility."

~~Creating~~ What had happened to the witch? Was it Cruiser? Or rather, the aftermath -- the constant reminiscing by me, her own winter ponderings of the implications?

In October and November she'd ~~listened tolerantly to my delayed shock-~~ <sup>tolerated my babbling recollections</sup> ~~impressions~~ of eternity's ~~edge~~ brink. But in December she'd burst out, "You weren't really there ~~at all!~~ You had nothing to worry about! What <sup>do</sup> you think a 7/16-inch rope is -- a steel cable? If I'd peeled off the slab the rock you had your boots braced against would've cut that manila like a piece of spaghetti. Your only problem would've been going for the Mountaineers and showing them where I splattered."

Cheerfully she confirmed suspicions. As winter neared and another summer seemed impossibly distant beyond the gulf of dark months, the old question had overwhelmed her. Betty had guessed -- and fled to Portland. Al had known -- and ~~had~~ come along for brotherly farewells.

"I left it up to Cruiser. It told me to live. I'm not going to ask again. That was it for me. I'm through with the Bruiser."

Swell, said I. Let's forget the Cruisers and talk about the Silvertips. She refused. ~~Maxx~~ No more than I could she forget Cruiser. She wouldn't have gone ~~there~~ that fifth and final ~~and near-fatal~~ time had it not been

for me. "Responsibility" hell! It wasn't the Mannings she was worried about. I had been the instrument of compelling her to face her fear. Al had ~~come~~ <sup>striven</sup> ~~striven~~ ~~not~~ to save me from Monie but Monie from me.

Did I scare her? Did she look upon me ~~now~~ as Frankenstein did his monster?

Shit, I was no monster. I wanted no more Cruisers, or even Teeth. My humble desire was to be a plain, ordinary superhiker.

The witch was adamant. If I wanted more Silvertips, said the damn hypocrite, the cackling terrorist ~~converted~~ <sup>transformed</sup> to mealy-mouthed evangelist preaching the gospel of "safety," I'd have to join the Mountaineers and take the Climbing Course.

Stabbed in the back. Betrayed by presumed friend to certain foe.

Years ago I'd learned all I needed to know about the Mountaineers. Since its founding in 1906 the club had been the main show, practically the whole show, of Northwest climbing. In 1934 it commenced the annual Climbing Course that enrolled hikers right off the trails and in 4 months had them running up cliffs and glaciers. Every Silver Marmot dreamed of taking the Course and climbing Rainier and maybe, someday, Everest. But when in 1940 I sought to join the club the snobs told me, "Get away, kid, you bother us." After Lake Dorothy I didn't care. Merely to hike again would suffice.

~~Snow of climbing.~~

That remained my position, unchanged by Tooth and Cruiser stunts. And even had I wanted to be a climber, never ~~if~~ would I pay the price of befouling my ~~own~~ independence in a maledoreous mob of <sup>2000</sup> ~~1500~~ freaks, <sup>↓</sup> In the fullness of anarchist maturity I'd realized the hills are meant to be

that being the club membership

*a crime against nature, strictly*

lonesome, that ~~mark~~ marching in regiments is for children and soldiers.

Monie took offense. These freaks were her friends. I should feel lucky, she said, to have the Course available -- there wasn't another such school in America. Cheap, too. Because the faculty consisted of unpaid volunteer alumni serving on the "each one teach one" principle, tuition was only a dollar. Add in the \$7 for a year's husband-wife club dues and it still was a sensational bargain. And heck, if I couldn't stand it, well, it wasn't the Army, I could just walk away any old time.

She left no choice. To become a superhiker I must endure a rotten spring. Or part of one. In April, after we'd mastered rope and ax, we'd drop out of Course and club, kiss off the sick multitude and never look back. Summer would be lonesome and free and lovely, and all future summers.

So be it. Pay the price.

On a February evening Betty and I morosely ascended the stairway from Pike Street, Seattle's "uptown skidroad," lined with jukebox-jumping taverns and thronged by reeling sailors on leave and Shore Patrol pairs of billyclub-twirling Navy cops, to the clubrooms of the Mountaineers. I ~~xxxx~~ remembered the shabby building from 1943, when it housed the Socialist Workers Party. Behind the speaker's platform hung a large portrait of the ~~sanctified~~ martyr, Leon Trotsky, assassinated in 1940 in his Mexican hideout -- <sup>the weapon being</sup> ~~with~~ an ice ax. As Monie told with cackling glee, in 1945 the Mountaineers moved in next door and the paranoid Trotskyites moved out.

At the top of the ~~the~~ stairs our progress was halted by a crush of humanity. The Climbing Course had begun, for all the good it did outsiders jamming the corridor. Singly and in bunches prospective climbers gave up, disgusted, and eventually we were near enough the door to catch scattered words from inside.

That was enough for me. But Monie cajoled us into trying again. The second week we came early and were among the hundred to get seats. Others squatted on the floor at the lecturer's feet and stood belly-to-back in the rear of the hall. The cloakroom was a solid mass of students who could hear but not see -- except those who clambered onto the ~~back~~ hat shelf and peered over the top of the half-wall.

The temperature shot to 90° and the humidity to 100 percent. The 200-odd sweating bodies and their coughing and wheezing and foot-shuffling and chair-rattling drowned out the lecturer. He raised his voice. Windows were opened to prevent an epidemic of ~~feverish~~ fainting. Horn honks from the street and ~~jukebox~~ jukebox blare and brawlings of sailors and barfings of winos ~~submerged~~ submerged his ~~shouts~~ shouts.

So this was the legendary Climbing Course. The Trotskyites put on a better performance. If the Mountaineers couldn't stage a proper lecture, how could they conquer peaks?

But they did, routinely, no doubt about that. They'd perfected some mysterious formula. A dark suspicion: were these city hardships deliberately plotted as a preliminary test of fortitude?

I sized up my classmates, the enemies. ~~There were obvious~~ <sup>Twitching</sup> teenagers fresh from rat-racing trails with the Scouts. And youths in their 20s



bulging with football muscles. And sinewy sprinters in their 30s and burly, grizzled bush-apes in their 40s and 50s.

The mingling of people from 15 to 60 in the same school was unnatural, disturbing. So was the incredible number of females, a quarter or third of the enrollment. Some, like Betty, obviously were victims of lovers' ambitions and <sup>as</sup> uncomfortable as if they'd wandered into the men's can. But many, Monie-weird, ~~we~~ were unescorted, apparently physical-education teachers or worse. Inspecting the crowd I saw naught but athletes, nary a one (except the handful of Betty-like basket cases) I could whip ~~in a fair fight~~.

And the leaders! The boss of bosses, Climbing Committee Chairman Cam, was close to 7 feet tall, lean and agile as a spider, and took the clubroom confusion in easy unsweating stride, as he surely had countless Teeth and Cruisers, though he appeared to be <sup>barely</sup> ~~only~~ 30, ~~or so~~. Among the faculty, attending either to lecture ~~\*~~ or to give moral support to alma mater or simply for sociability, were the stars of Monie's sagas, the men ~~whom~~ who during the previous dozen ~~year~~ years had lifted Northwest alpinism from provincial ~~brushwhacking~~ bushwhacking and snow-plodding and boulder-scrambling to international respectability.

In after-class over-a-beer conversation, Monie identified them for us. There was Wolf, Founder of the Course, who'd made the first ascent of Ptarmigan Ridge on Rainier and in whose German accent sounded horns of the Alps. And Lloyd of Howser Spire in the Bugaboos who counted the year lost he failed to bag 30 peaks and whose eyes were <sup>set in a</sup> ~~permanently squinting~~ <sup>from facing a hundred</sup> ~~into~~ <sup>^</sup> a blizzard. And One of the Yukon and Rainier's Liberty Ridge whose face was so ~~stern~~ weather-leathered he might be anywhere from

50 to 100. And Burge of Sir Donald who talked so fast he seemed always <sup>dashing</sup> sprinting for a summit but whose flashing wit suggested at least some climbers had minds. And Limber Jim of Forbidden, built like a monkey, grinning impishly, as if for a prank he might any moment scamper up the wall and across the ceiling. And George of the Grand Teton and Jack of Challenger and Bill of Inspiration and a dozen more. To be in the same room was to feel the chill of bleak glaciers and windy ~~crags~~ crags. I could no more keep pace with such supermen than follow Mallory into a cloud on Everest.

Of course, I had no such intention. However, the first practice trip was set for Sunday, March 21. Then, merely to continue in the school to ~~our~~ April ~~target for~~ escape, I must demonstrate other prowess than sitting in a chair without fainting. Among the athletes, naked to the cold gaze of demigods, I'd again suffer humiliations of childhood, when I'd been the slowest runner, lowest jumper, ball-droppingest outfielder and basket-missingest guard, I'd be revealed as the lousiest climber (but one) in the world.

No matter I didn't intend to be a climber. The path to the heights of superhikerdome led unavoidably through the vale of shame.

Sunday, March 14, I awoke early, restless. I couldn't lazy around ~~as~~ ~~was~~ over hotcakes and eggs and love sweet love. In 7 days I'd be facing the test. I had to go walking to settle my nerves. Not Betty. Humiliation was ~~her~~ her way of life, ~~the~~ next Sunday was no special occasion. Today she'd snuggle in the garret womb.

Alone I drove to North Bend, stopped for coffee, and looked out the restaurant window to Mount Si, the abrupt west edge of the Cascades, a

fault scarp leaping 3700 steep feet from the broad flat valley of the  
 cloud-lost  
 Snoqualmie River. The trail to the 4190-foot summit would stretch my muscles,  
 gone flabby in a winter of tow-hill yo-yo skiing.

At 9:15 by the clock on the wall <sup>duly noted</sup> (my wristwatch <sup>was</sup> busted) I left the  
 restaurant and drove to the base of the ~~the~~ peak. Where ~~the trail~~ was the trail?  
 I hadn't thought to ask Monie. An hour or more I probed rough and narrow  
 forest roads before finding what seemed to be a much-traveled footpath into  
 the woods.

In a few yards the track turned sharply up the scarp. Legs and lungs  
 settled into climbing rhythm -- too slow a rhythm, embarrassingly slow. Who  
 was to care? I was alone, wasn't I? No. With me were 200 loose-legged  
 athletes. I struggled to match their pace. Lungs burned, legs dragged,  
 heart pounded. They raced ahead, glancing over shoulders to mock the laggard.  
 I pushed soft flesh to outer limits and beyond, gasping for air, blinded by  
 rivers of sweat. They left me behind. Tread disappeared in snow. Staggering-  
 slipping I plugged steps, hurrying to catch up.

Emerging from spindly forest <sup>onto a mist-dim snowfield</sup> ~~from growing and bleached snags of an~~  
~~valley~~ I was startled by a cheery "Hello there!" Out of scudding fog  
<sup>came descended</sup> ~~appeared~~ a bony old man in short pants and tennis shoes, carrying an  
 alpenstock, ~~the very picture of~~ a 70-year-old Boy Scout. He stopped and  
 peeled an orange, shoving segments in ~~his~~ mouth and gobbling, juice dribbling  
 opening his rucksack to reveal a cornucopia of oranges.  
 down ~~his~~ chin. "Care for an orange?" he asked. "Got plenty," he said, /  
 "Quick energy! Nothing like ~~any~~ oranges to get you up Si." I declined  
 with thanks. I needed energy, no mistake, but every corpuscle of my blood  
 screamed for oxygen and lungs couldn't meet the demand. I couldn't eat and  
 gasp at the same time.

The ancient's simple joy in <sup>being</sup> ~~being~~ alive, his innocent unawareness of the <sup>brutal</sup> ~~brutal~~ competition, <sup>were</sup> ~~were~~ depressing. Evidently I'd climbed most of the mountain because <sup>steep</sup> ~~steep~~ scarp <sup>was yielding</sup> ~~had yielded~~ to rounded ridge, flattening ~~out~~ toward the summit, and <sup>continuous forest had broken into</sup> ~~trees to~~ ~~small~~ clumps <sup>of dwarf trees</sup> amid iced rocks. However, I'd been many hours getting this ~~high~~ high, the darkness of the fog said afternoon was far along. I was slow, too slow.

I asked the orange man if he had the time. He pulled out a turnip of a pocket watch and said, "11 o'clock on the dot." Impossible, I said. He held turnip to ear, said "It's running okay. Course, it could've taken a leetle vacation on me." Obviously <sup>it</sup> ~~he~~ had. Winter-soft body couldn't gain 3000-plus feet in less than an hour. <sup>Five hours was more like.</sup> ~~Three hours.~~

The amiable old fool ~~to whom time meant nothing~~ resumed his descent, peeling another orange. I resumed my <sup>upward</sup> ~~upward~~ rush and <sup>quickly</sup> ~~quickly~~ entered a snowy little <sup>plateau-</sup> ~~basin~~ basin enclosed by <sup>small</sup> ~~dozen-foot-tall~~ knolls. Presumably one was the Haystack, the <sup>summit</sup> ~~absolute-top~~ of Si.

Or was there something more? Why was the <sup>grayness denser</sup> ~~fog so much darker~~ in that direction? As I stared at the black spot, ~~wondering~~, the fog thinned and my hair stood on end. The black spot took shape as the <sup>hideous</sup> ~~horrid~~ twin of Cruiser.

That was the Haystack? That was the Haystack. ~~I was stunned.~~  
<sup>Damn Marie!</sup> ~~Why hadn't Marie~~ <sup>she</sup> warned me? I came for exercise, not challenge, for a hike, not a climb. I came, I saw, I was conquered, ~~humiliated.~~

Strikingly prominent at the edge of the Cascades, <sup>dominating</sup> ~~rising from~~ the main highway crossing of the range, Si is one of only two mountains (Rainier the other) known by name to the average Seattleite. ~~And when~~ When a Boy Scout troop <sup>attempts</sup> ~~gets up the steep to try~~ a mountain, Si is it. For years Scouts <sup>had</sup> ~~have~~ run up and down the peak. Except for/my troop, I'd never known a Scout

who'd not climbed Si. In summer, I'd heard, Si <sup>was a regular</sup> ~~looked like~~ Boy Scout Jamborees.

But it was too much, ~~for me~~. Sure, I'd done Cruiser -- with Monie to ~~show me how and~~ keep me safe. The twin, the Haystack, easy ~~enough~~ for ~~adult~~ children, was impossible for me.

I sat in the snow ~~staring~~ <sup>icicle-dripping</sup> averting eyes from the ~~gray~~ tower dodging in and out of mist. ~~the dull-gleaming icicles dripping down the precipices~~  
~~Figures~~ I'd have had the nerve to climb Si when I was a Scout certain of immortality. Not now. ~~The tower was out of my class~~. I was a hiker, and since Scout <sup>years</sup> ~~boys~~ had ~~learned~~ <sup>hikers could</sup> ~~would someday~~ die, and to prevent that sad <sup>event</sup> ~~happening~~ <sup>abrupt</sup> this day I must quit where I was -- as had the ancient, ~~as~~ shown by the termination of his tracks <sup>in</sup> ~~here~~, the overnight-fallen powder snow. ~~unmarked beyond where I sat~~

I was a hiker, and forget the prefix "super." I couldn't ~~even~~ keep up ~~with~~ with the Camp Parsons me, with the horde of children, much less the jeering athletes atop the Haystack.

The bastards. Sneering that Manning had been <sup>crushed</sup> ~~whipped~~ by the Boy Scout mountain. Cracking wise about what a fool I'd make of myself next Sunday. Haughty Chairman Cam said nothing, merely wrinkled his nose in <sup>distaste</sup> ~~disgust~~.

I had to try. Where to start? The front of the tower was a flawless precipice several hundred feet high. I plowed snow to the left (west) side -- the ~~own~~ fault scarp plunged into fog. I plowed snow to the right (east) side -- and looked up-up-up a white gully into fog and down-down-down the gully to the brink of a cliff.

15-17 ~~¶~~ But obviously that Code was a fraud, a public-relations smokescreen, an out for cowards. To speak of "climbing" and "safe and sane" in the same breath was absurd. If I obeyed the Code and ran away home

I was back in the basin sucking a snowball, quivering. I was ~~sane~~<sup>wise</sup> to retreat. The gully was vertical and the snow loose and I ice-ax-less and alone. The Climbing Code, <sup>the established rules of safe and sane behavior,</sup> specifically commanded me to quit. ~~(A part of the code the safe minimum. Never let judgment be swayed by desire.)~~

~~But I did not. I did not. I did not. I decided to run away home.~~  
~~And~~ never could I look Chairman Cam in the eye. He wouldn't know I'd flunked but I would. No point in attending the practice next Sunday, ~~even~~  
~~the next day.~~

<sup>end thus.</sup>  
Damn Monie! I knew it would ~~come to this~~. Only, the humiliation came a week early, ~~unexpected~~. And was the worse because not ~~the~~ Old Ones taunted from the Haystack but ~~the gang of~~ athletes. That's what happens to an anarchist who strays into the bog of society. ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~

~~Not~~ Not the Ones that remain were my problem but the Many that change and pass, the Many of the multitude that also represents the Sum of the Unknown, a false god yet <sup>omnipotent to</sup> ~~all-powerful over~~ idiots who <sup>dare</sup> ~~venture into~~ its domain.

<sup>A coward's worthless, burdensome life.</sup>  
What have I got to lose but ~~my~~ <sup>unique</sup> life? Once more to the gully. Study the shape of my <sup>death</sup>. Look down. A ~~slip~~ <sup>branches</sup> and ~~the~~ toboggan through a thin screen of ~~stunted trees~~ over a forested cliff. Not empty air and clean hard rocks awaited, no noble exposure of Tooth or Cruiser, but <sup>ignominiously</sup> bouncing from tree to tree, battered to ~~ruddy~~ carrion. Look up. The white wall dissolved <sup>swift</sup> into clouds -- clouds ~~moving by~~, giving away their giddy motion to the peak.

Shake head to steady the wall. Swing boot into the wall -- once, twice, thrice. Gingerly lift body weight to the bucket. Now the other boot -- swing, swing, swing -- lift -- and the bottom falls out of the bucket! ~~and~~ I'm sliding, sliding, sliding!

Earth-loving  
obeyed instincts rather  
than ~~the~~ textbook rule  
and

I'm back in the basin, smoking a cigarette, trembling, remembering the approaching trees, the last-minute stop, ~~at the brink.~~

Well, I did stop. And actually wasn't all that close to the brink. And never was really sliding fast. And the reason I slipped was I <sup>leaned</sup> into the slope, my weight broke out the weak outer edge of the bucket. If I stood upright I wouldn't break out buckets. <sup>¶</sup> Damn the athletes! Damn Cam! Damn

my weight would be supported by underlying rock,

Monie!

Once more to the gully. Kick boots deep, deep, deep, ~~into clean white snow.~~ Bury legs to the hips, until though <sup>I'm</sup> standing carefully vertical, belly and chest are pressed against snow. I'm not on the white wall but in it. Punch fists through fluff, thrust arms ~~to~~ to the elbow, the shoulder.

How far am I above the brink? <sup>Very far!</sup> Don't look down again! Slip now and I'll hurtle through the puny branches.

Steeper white. Body is precisely vertical but snow brushes ~~my~~ nose. How the hell will I ever get down? Worry about that if I ever get up. Chairman Cam watches, frowning. Athletes are ~~hosted~~ shaking with suppressed <sup>merriment</sup> laughter, awaiting my fall to trigger the triumphant explosion of ~~merriment~~ <sup>laughter.</sup> But if I get up they won't laugh. They'll laugh at my death on the <sup>slapstick</sup> ~~way-down~~ <sup>descent</sup> but I'll be past caring.

On Cruiser there was the rope from above, to swoon was not to die. Poor widow Betty in the garret, <sup>ignorant</sup> ~~unaware of impending widowhood.~~ Poor me.

White ~~that~~ wall terminates in white cloud. Once more, for England and St. George! Kick-kick-kick. Punch-punch-punch. Fist suddenly is unresisted. Some mysterious emptiness inside the snow. Pull out arm, peer into hole.

GOD! No mountain in the hole! A cloud! I'm not climbing Si, I'm climbing the sky!

Frenzied ~~to~~ two-fisted <sup>flailing</sup> ~~smashing~~ at the cornice, <sup>smashing</sup> ~~beating~~ a gap in  
 the frothy curl of the <sup>frozen wave of</sup> snow ~~wave~~. Squirm up to straddle the airy <sup>white</sup> crest, ~~of~~  
~~and~~ slither to a jutting pillar of rock. Crawl on. Breathe deep to ~~halt~~  
~~the~~ whirling of ~~my~~ brain. Don't move, sit rigid, lest Humpty Dumpty  
 have a great fall, Haystack and all.

A blast of wind rips away the cloud. Thousands of feet beneath my  
 feet <sup>appear</sup> ~~are~~ meanders and oxbow lakes of the Snoqualmie River, patchwork of  
 pastures and forests, curling smoke of lumber mills, ribbon of highway, and  
 the village of North Bend where I drank coffee a geological epoch ago.

Clouds buffet the Haystack. Hang on! Rock <sup>quakes. Grip Earth with ass.</sup> ~~shudders, under me,~~ Don't  
 Don't let the spinning start.  
 panic. /Keep tight control. ~~Rock~~ Pull cigarette from shirt pocket. It  
~~falls~~ <sup>slips</sup> from numb-clumsy fingers. Now I notice that in my fright I forgot  
 to don mittens. Now I feel the pain of blue-white hands thawing.

Pain fades. <sup>stabilizes.</sup> Rock ~~steadies~~. I'm okay.

Where am I? On a tiny rock throne in the sky. One way a snow cornice  
<sup>overhanging the white wall deeply trenched by my kicking-punching ascent.</sup>  
~~curling over the ridge crest.~~ The other way ~~a dozen yards of~~ ice-slick slabs  
<sup>leading a dozen yards</sup>  
~~leading~~ to a slightly higher rock, the absolute top. ~~Screw it.~~ Cam wouldn't  
 expect me to do that. I've done plenty.

Plenty! I set out to hike and climbed a bloody mountain! Seeking  
 mere exercise I met terror and <sup>never ever flinched! What, never? Well, hardly ever.</sup> ~~didn't flinch! Well, not much.~~ See where I  
am! In swirling clouds high in <sup>bleak</sup> ~~cold-white~~ winter, airplane-lofty above  
 springtime green ~~of~~ valley. Through holes in ~~about~~ billows I see, <sup>far</sup> west over  
 rolling ridges, skyscrapers of downtown Seattle, and <sup>far</sup> south over forested  
 ridges, the other Mountain, Rainier. The descent remains but today ~~I~~  
~~couldn't tell myself if I wanted.~~ I'm immortal as a Scout -- a super-Scout,  
 because though ~~little~~ children may climb the ~~to~~ Haystack in summer, they  
 surely never do in winter, as have I.



Mist thickened, afternoon darkened toward night. Betty <sup>was</sup> ~~would be worried~~ <sup>doubtless worrying.</sup>

I scrambled-wallowed-swam down the ~~gully~~ <sup>white wall,</sup> ran down the trail, drove to  
<sup>Sight of the restaurant set my stomach howling.</sup>  
 North Bend. ~~Suddenly~~ <sup>^</sup> I realized I'd not eaten ~~since~~ all day and  
 stopped for a hamburger and milk shake. <sup>restaurant</sup> it said an impossibility.

How late was it? The clock said -- ~~no, look again~~ <sup>^</sup> ~~it would be~~  
~~Two o'clock?~~ <sup>^</sup> ~~Two~~ The ancient's watch had been right! Soft body  
 had gained more than 3000 feet in less than an hour, a pace <sup>that would</sup> ~~be~~ awe ~~even~~  
 Chairman Cam and the <sup>supercilious</sup> ~~haughty~~ 200 -- if they knew, which they never would, but  
 I knew. And ax-less I'd climbed the white wall, more fearful than ~~any~~ snow  
 of ~~Graywolf~~ Graywolf or Silvertip, alone I'd climbed the white wall, no  
 Monie reeling me in like a trout.

All in <sup>3 1/2</sup> ~~less than~~ hours! Not even on Cruiser had I crammed so much  
 thrilling life into so brief a span, so vividly known the Real World.

"And hast thou slain the Jabberwock?  
 Come to my arms, my beamish boy!  
 O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!"  
 He chortled in his joy.

May 1948

Chapter 16

CRUEL SCHOOL

No rebirth of Earth was promised by this vernal equinox, no sun-stirring of seeds ~~set~~ by this Sunday. Sane Seattleites snuggled in sacks, shrinking from the gray gloom of gale-chased clouds and the rattle of rain bullets battering windows. Only abroad in the non-dawn were the flesh-punishing, the sin-expiating, the death-dreading. Cleanly-godly ~~in the finery of Pear,~~ <sup>were</sup> Christers scurried to churches. Shabby-crummy ~~in hairshirts,~~ <sup>were</sup> Old Believers congregated on bleak greensward of a city park.

Monitor Rock. Baffling as Stonehenge. A phallus of boulders and concrete erected by the inscrutable WPA in a decade when there weren't more than a couple hundred <sup>honest-to-gosh</sup> climbers in the whole Northwest.

Today nearly that many Mountaineers huddled at the base ~~of Monitor~~ in an amorphous clot of parkas buffeted by the sideways-blasting torrent. Atop the rock, 15 feet above wind-whipped grass, flapped several faceless parkas presumably containing instructors. Harrying edges of the student flock below was a tall, skinny parka snarling and barking. It broke off from the numb mass of drenched sheep to attack -- what, the Mannings? No, a short, burly parka standing <sup>paralyzed</sup> ~~inertly~~ beside us.

"Why the hell don't you get things going?" demanded the tall parka, Chairman Cam.

"We got practically no instructors," whined the burly parka, leader of the practice trip. "Almost everybody except the damn students had sense enough to stay home."

"Well, let's do what we can with what we've got."

"Can't teach these poor shits nothing today. Look at 'em! They hardly can stand up in this blow, their faces are blue, they can't move their fingers. Right in front of our eyes they're dying of exposure!"

"We can teach 'em not to be quitters. Gawdamit, that's what it's all about. If they can't take a little rain and wind, how the hell will they ever get up a peak?"

"For crysake!" wailed the trip leader. "It's the next thing to snowing! It's gusting 50 or 60! We're not supposed to kill ~~the~~ 'em in the city! There'll be plenty of time for that when we get 'em in the mountains!"

Not the compassionate general but cowardly captains resolved the debate. In convulsive unison the ~~quitting~~ handful of instructors fled to the parking lot, pursued by the student horde, ~~xxx~~ rearguarded by the tall parka ~~frantically~~ bellowing insults.

At the subsequent lecture Chairman Cam scornfully announced that though everyone who'd gone to Monitor would receive Course credit in ~~xxx~~ recognition of having the bravery to get out of bed, he personally

would lead a second trip next Sunday in case any of us were interested in learning to climb.

To go or not to go? That was the question. The Chairman's snake-icy eyes forced the decision, picking me out of the audience, accusing me specifically of ~~the general~~ betrayal.

Warm sun and soft spring breezes. Athletes as torpid last week as Bettys now pranced and gamboled, showing off. I shouldn't have come. I'd pushed my luck. Damn Cam! Particularly depressing were the Boy Scouts, jiggling gibbering children unaware bones can break, blood can spurt. My ~~my~~ Haystack heroics were no defense <sup>against</sup> ~~against~~ them -- they'd have scampered up and down the white wall unafraid, giggling at the trembling of the clumsy old man.

Hell, even when young I'd been clumsy, coordination so poor my bat rarely connected with softball, balance so precarious I was bruised and abraded for months while doggedly, ~~patiently~~ mastering the bicycle. Maybe that's what attracted me to Betty -- a lightning rod to draw the mockery,

~~and from me.~~

But luck held. My assigned instructor was a decrepit woman of at least 35 and her <sup>five</sup> ~~four~~ other pupils <sup>all were</sup> wives and ~~sweethearts~~ taking the Course purely to keep hooks in their men, ~~were~~ <sup>there.</sup> No competition. Quickly they succumbed to one <sup>female</sup> ~~female~~ complaint or another and slunk off to ~~go~~ guard their catches from predatory <sup>S:</sup> ~~Amosons.~~

Her attention undivided, Teacher reviewed my textbook-studied, home-practiced techniques of tying single bowline, butterfly, and bowline-on-a-bight, of setting up shoulder belay and standing and sitting hip belays, of

hauling in and paying out slack, of coiling and uncoiling the rope. Then she had me climb and descend and traverse walls and ledges and slabs using cling holds and ~~some~~ <sup>pressure holds and</sup> friction holds, observing the rules of "balance climbing": stay vertical (don't hug the mountain); always retain three-point suspension (two feet and a hand or two hands and a foot); test every hold before trusting; move smoothly and rhythmically; "climb with the eyes" (continuously inspect the route ~~ahead~~ and plan several moves ahead). Finally she tutored me in the gravity-defying "non-balance" techniques: the bearhug on a rib, pressing inward with arms and knees; the layback up a crack, tennis shoes pushing against one side, hands pulling on the other; the stemming of various-size chimneys by pushing various combinations of feet, hands, knees, and butt against opposite walls.

A plethora of words for very little matter. Most of the techniques I'd learned as a tree-climbing kid and the rest from Monie. And where was the terror? A fall of 15 feet onto soft grass can hurt but not kill, 15 feet isn't exposure, boulder-scrambling is no more a blood sport than ~~yo-yo~~ ~~skiing~~ skiing. Exposure is the forests of Source Creek or the Hamma Hamma River so far beneath feet the trees look like weeds. <sup>Lacking</sup> ~~without~~ exposure Monitor Rock was dull as a gymnasium.

Who was complaining? Not me. I'd had enough terror, my aim was negative -- the avoidance of humiliation -- and on two trips with the club I'd succeeded. Not Betty, of course. I was too busy all day to notice

how she was getting along and on the drive home she refused to talk about it.

Clubroom lectures had done no permanent damage to dignity, nor <sup>had</sup> city park in storm and sun. Now to be confronted was ~~some grim stuff~~ sterner stuff -- natural non-WPA rock, the materia of mountains.

Monie claimed Little Si proved God loved Mountaineers. Though making the Seattle vicinity a glacial garbage dump <sup>devoid of</sup> useless <sup>terrain</sup> for climbing and giving Olympic and Cascade highlands a 9-month winter of rock-swamping snow, He also provided, a half-hour drive from the city, this splendid pimple of a roche moutonnee rising a mere 1000 feet above sealevel and thus snowfree most of the year. Little it was, dwarfed by 4000-foot Big Si, but plucked steep (partly into a monstrous overhang) on the downstream side by ancient ice. Said Monie, obviously our Father which art in Heaven intended from the beginning there ultimately should be a Climbing Course.

To satisfy the Elementary Course requirement of camping overnight on at least one practice trip, the afternoon of Saturday, April 3, Betty and I carried packs the scant half-mile from trailhead to dark dank ~~xxx~~ rain-dripping alder grove.

Were newspapers still censored? Were we still being lied to by our generals? Had we lost the war? Surely this miserable rabble of a hundred-odd human wrecks was no encampment of victors, rather was a remnant of the ~~xxxx~~ routed, retreating Tenth Mountain Division. Blending into forest

floor of dead alder leaves and bones of last year's bracken fern was a dreary drabness of khaki wool pants and shirts, khaki cotton parkas, khaki rubberized ponchos, ~~the~~ khaki sleeping bags and tents and shelter-halves, ~~the~~ khaki knapsacks and Bergans, khaki canteens and mess kits. As usual in such <sup>5</sup> disasters, demoralized troopers were accompanied by scavenging, corpse-robbing, civilian refugees, partly in khaki and partly (as were Betty and I) in somber blacks and blues and greens of ski parkas and downhill ski pants and miscellaneous garments too threadbare for city wear. The sole gleams of cheer were the scattered orange-and-blue liferaft sails -- including ours, my months of prowling surplus stores having been rewarded.

I enjoyed the dismal dusk, smirking to see so many funereal faces, so few fires blazing like mine, no other Ten-Can-hung dinglesticks so <sup>expertly</sup> neatly engineered. Athletes ~~they~~ my fellow students might be on cliffs but in camp they were rank tenderfeet. I enjoyed the tarp-patter of night rain which last year would've been coldly bathing my skin. I even enjoyed the tarp-flapping-cracking in the windy-vicious Sunday dawn. Not until 7 a.m. did I stop enjoying the trip.

Into the silent camp burst a band of teachers, including the trip leader and Chairman Cam. They'd slept in the city but already were ~~half-soaked~~ half-soaked and totally resentful at having let duty drive them from ~~the~~ warm dry beds. Vindictively they shouted, they screamed, they harassed the soggy khaki mob out of tents and tarps onto <sup>black-mucky</sup> the trail, <sup>going through woods,</sup> ~~the~~ ~~deep~~ ~~in~~ ~~black-~~ ~~mucky~~ <sup>around</sup> ~~beside~~ a marsh, to a rockslide.

So Childe Harvey to the Dark Tower came. Little Si. Often viewed from highway and once from ~~the~~ heights of Big Si. Harmless-seeming then.

Now neither harmless nor little, baleful battlements dimming ~~out~~ far above in the blur of sheeting rain.

Bedraggled mob paused to be broken by the leader into ~~rows~~ teams, to uncoil ropes and tie in, ~~bristlingly~~ cursed by instructors for numb-fumbling knot incompetence. Then all teams regathered in a ~~unified~~ <sup>herd</sup> mass and stumbled up the rockslide, dividing to funnel into the two gullies breaching the cliffs. Excelsior. Not ours to reason why.

Once we were ~~we~~ trapped in the ~~g~~ gullies the Powers of the Tower attacked. Three hundred ~~feet~~ <sup>boots</sup> slipped and slid in the trash, dislodging ounces pounds tons of mud pebbles boulders. ~~Individual~~ <sup>Scores of</sup> voices blended in a continuous shrieking chorus: "ROCK! ROCK! ROCK!" Bullets whined, grapeshot rattled, cannonballs wailed, shrapnel exploded. Not on Iwo Jima, not on the Somme, did infantry face so scathing a barrage.

No prudent bugle sounded retreat. Victory or death! Casualties were bandaged, shell-shocked evacuated for brief r-and-r on the rockslide, then sent back into the lines. The walking wounded pressed upward, surged out of the gullies, rushed the second line of defense, a series of brush-tangled, moss-slippery, mud-filthy, water-streaming walls. Instructors reefed on ropes, dragging spastic students up the pitches. Now and then a student pulled off an instructor and the body ~~slithered~~ and bounced down brown-and-green ~~slabs~~ slabs and crashed in ~~the~~ trees. A final banzai dash up gentle slopes and the Tower was ours.

*Some veterans. A molehill with no glory. A school with no teaching.*  
The summit of Little Si. We'd not practiced any alpine arts whatsoever except rope-encumbered rock-dodging and garbage-crawling. Who



A. said the past-loving, present-hating Henry Wimbush, "If all these people were dead, this festivity would be extremely agreeable."

cared? Not me. I had survived, and with only minor flesh wounds. I was pleased to note, spotting her in the distance, that Betty~~x~~ took~~x~~ was alive and apparently as well as could be expected.

Teams unroped. The last semblance of discipline disintegrated. Individually we sought refuge from the hurricane in the lee of stunted firs, crawled into ~~tree-branch~~-thickets to rub bruises and wipe off mud and blood and replace soaked band-aids. I was content. In a battle offering no opportunity for heroism there was no chance of shame. ↙

From beyond a screen of branches came voices I recognized.

"How many you think we'll get back down the ~~hxxxx~~ gullies?" (Wry chuckle of Limber Jim.)

"Does it matter?" (Bitter laugh of Chairman Cam.) "Can you imagine what it'll be like when we get this crowd in the real mountains? Might as well finish 'em off here. At least it's <sup>just</sup> a short stretcher-carry to the ambulances. Maybe some of the damn instructors who promised to show up today will pry themselves out of bed to help with that."

"Want me to run out to North Bend and alert the Rescue Committee now? Looks like our dauntless leader is going the whole route -- setting up the good old traditional Little Si rappels."

"Rappel? Today? The bonehead! We better get over there. Wouldn't put it past him to send 'em down the damn overhang."

The voices were gone. And so was my ease. Learning naught about rock climbing had been no loss -- I already knew plenty for a superhiker. The important thing was that between me and garret lay nothing worse than

~~the strong possibility of~~ being killed by falling rock, that between me and release from the Course, from the club, lay only one more practice trip, on snow. Again I'd been spared humiliation. But no. Not spared.

Rappel!

Ropes were being tied to trees and loose ends thrown over cliffs. Athletes were dancing with excitement at the impending initiation into the fabled birdman stunt, Everyman's notion of what mountain-climbing is. I didn't need it, it was no technique for a superhiker. But except for the basket cases everyone was creeping out of storm refuges to join the queues. It had to be done.

I approached the longest of the lines and peered over the cliff edge. Hah! The rope dropped a simple dozen feet to a broad ledge. And Chairman Cam was there, loudly insisting on belays. Home free.

But. (Dammit, always a "but.") On the fringe of the crowd I heard two Boy Scouts haranguing a silent, blank-faced third: "Heck, you don't want to do the chicken rappel! All the other guys are trying the big one."

May Dan Beard roast in Hell. I now saw the long line was composed entirely of old men and <sup>covering</sup> ~~blinking~~ females. Some distance off a ~~very~~ short line contained all the Boy Scouts, all the athletes, including the phys-ed-teacher Amazons. I'd no choice.

Weary of myself, and sick of asking  
What I am, and what I ought to be...

Sick to my stomach I followed the three Scouts to the Big One. I didn't investigate the cliff edge, didn't want to know how big was Big. Very big judging from the long-continuing idiot whoops of the two brave buddies. Very very big said the white face and quivering jaw of Third Buddy

as he reluctantly refused the belay his pals had disdained and started down, then lost his nerve, let go of the rope, clutched the brink, and barely was saved from certain splattering death by quick-helping hands of an instructor. He slunk off in the trees, his life saved but ruined.

"Who's next?" That would be me. Blurt it out: "Guess I'll take a belay." Instructor nods, says "Sensible." (Synonym for "gutless.") Screw 'em. Screw 'em all. Like ~~my~~ Dad <sup>said</sup> ~~told me~~ when I was a little kid with a bursting bladder and he made me take my piss by the side of a <sup>crowded</sup> highway, "You'll never see any of these people ever again in your life.")

Belay rope bowline-tied to waist I turn my back on the gulf of gale-rushing cloud between Little Si and Big Si and stand a-straddle the rappel rope.

Now. Mechanically assume the dulfersitz position <sup>drilled into mind by</sup> remembered from textbook illustration and lecture demonstration: Reach behind me and lift rappel rope from ground, bring it from crotch up left buttock, across chest, over right shoulder, down back. Hold it at below-hip level with mittened right hand. Pussyfoot slowly backward to the brink. Look down.

OH GOD! OH SHIT! OH BIG! At least 50 feet to the landing ledge! Instructor in sitting-hip belay stance is watching my eyes widen, sweat dilute rain in my face. Is that a scarcely-concealed smile? Sadist bastard. I'll not give him the satisfaction. Death before dishonor. Kneel. Lower a boot to a narrow ledge below the brink. The other boot. Stand. Stiffen the goddam jittering knees.

Now. Do the unthinkable. Lean backward into space, lean against empty air! (Oh God, dear God. If I die before I wake I ~~am~~ <sup>the</sup> pray ~~my~~ Lord

my soul to take.) Flush that stuff from brain. Obey the Book, have faith in manila. Place tricouni-nailed boot soles against vertical rock wall. Keep left hand loosely on the rappel rope above chest for balance. Keep right hand tightly on the rappel rope below -- by friction of hand on rope and rope around body am I held to Earth.

Now. Do the unimaginable. Bend knees, straighten ~~knobs~~ <sup>then jerk them</sup> ~~knobs~~, kick the wall away and simultaneously loosen right-hand grip on rope. <sup>remove left hand from rope and</sup> JUMP! ~~FALL!~~ Rope slides through mitten, <sup>lets plummets into space</sup> ~~warms the work~~, rock wall rushes to meet boots, kick it away again. BY JESUS ~~EDGAR~~ I'M FLYING!

kick meat  
flesh away  
from ~~hand~~  
solid hand  
kick ~~foot~~  
out into  
soft  
sky.

Just-like-that boots hit bottom ledge. "Belay off!" I joyously-hysterically yell. (What was I yelling-howling as I fell, I flew?) Untie belay rope, traverse ledge to gully, scramble up, stride hero-cool past females and old men ~~swaying~~ trembling in the chicken queue.

No chicken I, sir! Well, only half, ma'am. I did not disdain a belay, <sup>in the moment of truth</sup> ~~so~~ it was a de-horned bull I faced. I didn't really win. But didn't lose either. <sup>damn corrida</sup> Crap on the ~~Mountaineers~~ --- a draw was good enough for a superhiker.

Had it not been for the Course, for the looming disgrace sure to haunt me years after I'd run far from every witness but myself (still blushing <sup>at</sup> ~~from~~ memory of that public piss <sup>some</sup> ~~20~~ years ago), the winter-spring would've ranked among the best times of my life. Love in the garret was no less sweet for gradually losing the aura of the illicit. After years of counting nickels and dimes there still was a kick in free-spending from a bottomless pocket ever-replenished by paychecks. And the first summer of superhiker romps was nearing, compensation for cruelties of the Mountaineers.

I'd always considered the 40-hour week the definition of peonage -- that was the appeal of the scholar-professor's priest-lazy sinecure. Bagley Hall, however, was the very promised land. Not while chained to degree curricula and badgered by bluebooks could I have luxuriated in leisurely explorations of history, ~~exercised~~ confirming my <sup>rabid</sup> ~~rapid~~ Spenglerianism (no fanatic like a new convert). Gibbon became the second chief deity in my pantheon, his ~~the~~ Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire the second core book of my scriptures. Bitterness of the disappointed patriot-revolutionary dissolved in chuckles and guffaws of the sardonic post-history philosopher, my chronic newspaper-triggered nausea was permanently cured by the parallel between antics of Appolinian-fellaheen Constantinop~~le~~ and Faustian-fellaheen America.

When a fellow fellah speculated on the fall elections, whether Democrats conceivably could escape obliteration by Republicans, I asked, "What does it matter? What's the difference between them?"

When he seriously settled into minute analysis of fine distinctions my mind drifted back to the <sup>reign</sup> time of Justinian, to the Hippodrome politics, to the races between the four chariots carrying the <sup>traditional</sup> four colors of the factions. Snorted I to fellah, "The Blues and the Greens!" Even more ludicrous were the posturings of the Reds (Students for Wallace) and Whites (Dixie Uber Alles), both entered in the <sup>circens</sup> ~~spectacle~~ purely for extra gaudiness.

Bagley provided other entertainment as well. One day Crazy Art brought to the stockroom window a ~~beaker~~ beaker of water, bought a bit of sodium metal, and dropped it in. The metal sliver sizzled ~~and~~ in a fury of bubbles until heat of the reaction permitted hydrogen bubbles and ambient oxygen to ~~combine~~ combine -- explosively.

Toad lost his heart to  
 As the motorcar captured Toad's heart, so ~~did~~ I <sup>lost</sup> mine to the  
<sup>sharp</sup>  
 little blue flame and/little "pop!" I went on a binge of "pops!" and,  
 advancing to larger chunks of sodium, to "poops!" and even small "bangs!"  
<sup>As</sup>  
~~When~~ other Bombers found New Mexico confining they sailed <sup>and</sup> into the <sup>over</sup>  
 Pacific to blow up Bikini, <sup>did</sup> so my ambition outgrew stockroom walls. I devoted  
<sup>^</sup>  
 an entire afternoon to filling a large glass jar with finely-diced sodium and  
 that evening carried it to the front of Bagley Hall and flung it in Frosh  
 Pond. No "bang!" Nor even a "boom!" A ~~star~~ horrifying "KA-POW!" A hundred  
 feet high in the night left a pillar of flame, down upon pathsfull of  
 students showered blobs of fire, off into darkness quacked the resident  
 mallards, throughout the University District wailed sirens of police cars, and  
 I plunged into shrubbery to escape prison and abandoned forever my career  
 as a mad bomber, leaving that sport to the alumni of Alamogordo.

When glass-bead cannon palled and sodium bombs scared, Art introduced  
 the pistolero  
 me to the cork pistol. To fashion this weapon ~~xxx~~ appropriates from lab  
 gear two cork-hole borers of sequential sizes -- say, a #7 and a #8. The  
 smaller of the two hollow brass cylinders fitting ~~xxx~~ snugly-loosely inside  
 the larger, when a cork is <sup>jammed</sup> ~~stuffed~~ in the mouth of the #8 and another in  
 the mouth of the #7, the #7 <sup>is</sup> inserted in the rear end of the #8, <sup>and</sup> handles of  
<sup>arc</sup> both cylinders <sup>are</sup> grasped in one hand and squeezed, the #7 thrusts/through  
<sup>compresses air which</sup>  
 the #8 and ~~compresses air~~ violently ejects the cork from the mouth of the  
 #8.

I'd be sitting on my stool absorbed in the campaigns of Belisarius  
 incomprehensible  
 or the/theological quarrels of the Magian Christians, Art's maniac grin

would materialize in the window, a "pop!" would startle me into the 20th century, and a cork would sting my cheek. He'd dash off toward his lab and I'd grab my pistol and vault out the window in hot pursuit; noncombatants learned to swing wide when passing the window ~~to~~ lest they be knocked flat by a hurtling stockroom boy.

On occasion, restless, I'd leave my post and go John-Wayne-walking the basement, pistol in belt, seeking Art or a member of his <sup>gang</sup> ~~mob~~ for a fast-draw contest. Eventually nobody was bothered by a cork in the face and one day when I caught ~~Art~~ Art weaponless and backed him in a corner he giggled defiantly -- until suddenly he was blinking and coughing, clown-white from chest to ~~face~~ <sup>nose</sup> to hair roots. In secrecy of stockroom-arsenal ~~weapons~~ r-and-d I'd escalated the arms race by inserting a charge of talcum powder behind the projectile cork.

With Art and his cronies I played war games. With a larger group I developed a relationship on another foundation. Not chemistry, which bored me. Not history or literature, which mystified them. Mountains.

After any sunny weekend (there were a few) of winter or spring Bagley glowed with puffy-blistered faces. In asking "Where did you get your sunburn?" I discovered the building was infested with climbers and soon was spending a good part of the workday swapping exploits -- diffidently describing my few modest ventures (Tooth, Cruiser, Big Si, plus mentions of Anderson, Graywolf Pup, Silvertip, and the like), listening chilled to their many impressive triumphs (everybody in Bagley but me seemed to have been up Rainier).

One engineer was especially conspicuous. I first became aware of his notoriety through the foot-high letters chalked by some fan on <sup>the brick wall of</sup> his thesis-lab: wall: "KERMIT THE HERMIT -- FRIEND OF THE LAND." Inquiry revealed the tribute had been earned the previous fall when he and a friend ~~(Crabby Dick,~~ (Crabby Dick, also a climber but so cantankerous I kept our dealings strictly to business) hitchhiked to Lake Crescent on the Olympic Peninsula to testify before a Congressional committee considering a tree-butchers' proposal to reduce the size of Olympic National Park. Miraculously<sup>x</sup> the plot was foiled, and ~~part~~ partly by the testimony of the two Bagleyites.

Amazing to hear the <sup>Northwest-owning</sup> ~~omnipotent~~ loggers had been thwarted, temporarily. Startling to meet in <sup>the</sup> ~~a~~ flesh a real-life conservationist, a species I'd thought as extinct as the dodo. I admired (and<sup>x</sup> of course<sup>x</sup> pitied) his quixotic fervor, his innocent dedication to a noble, ~~was~~ hopeless cause. It was good to know there was somebody willing to stand up to the bulldozers and let them run their tracks up and down his back. As for me, and every other <sup>realistic</sup> ~~same~~ child of the wilds, I recognized the invincibility of ~~was~~ Paul Bunyan, ~~and~~ and though mourning the loss of Hidden Lake, Silver Creek, and so much else of my past, had adopted the wise ~~was~~ <sup>not denying the rights of</sup> strategy of <sup>retreating</sup> deeper into the <sup>pristine, unmolested</sup> wilderness, <sup>out</sup> immense enough to last my life.

If Kermit's <sup>idealistic</sup> ~~naivete~~ <sup>naivete</sup> amused me, his juggernaut ~~peak-conquering~~ vitality dazzled me. Bagley was just a basecamp. The high hills were his home, never out of mind. Constantly "keeping in shape," in the midst of a conversation ~~and talking all the while~~ <sup>x</sup> he was likely at any moment to do deep knee bends or toe-touching. His voice always was turned to top volume, as if out-shouting a <sup>typhoon</sup> ~~typhoon~~. He incessantly and loudly played



Swiss yodeling records in his lab, giving an Alpine air to the entire Bagley basement, whether it wanted it or not. Enamored of everything Nordic except Nazis, he wore his blond Scandinavian hair Prussian-cut and in discussing mountains never used an English word when he knew a German, substituting "bergshteiger" for mountain-climber, "gletscher" for glacier, "gipfel" for peak, "schneefeld" for "snowfield." His favorite expletive was "scheiss!"

In the single climbing season of 1947 he'd climbed all six "major peaks" of Washington -- the five Cascade volcanoes plus Olympus. His goal for 1948 was a feat never before accomplished -- climbing all Six Majors on skis. (Rock bored him. If a mountain wasn't abundantly white he wasn't interested. When other Bagleyites told of piton-pounding on iceless granite spires he dismissed their foolery with a sneering, "Nein gletscher, nein gipfel.") His Faustian ambition filled me with awe, it was like personally knowing Whymper or Mallory. He even dared talk of someday "doing ~~McKinley~~ der meisterberg, ~~McKinley~~ McKinley," and boldly declared he almost wished he was an Englishman so he'd have a chance for a crack at Everest. Not since Camp Parsons had I known anyone who spoke of Everest as if it were on the same planet as mere Seattle mortals.

After Little Si the threat ~~taxxy~~ of the Course ~~to my ego~~ subsided. Indeed, the peril was nearly over. April 18, on McClellan Butte, a minor mountain between North Bend and Snoqualmie Pass, we'd master the ice ax and flee the Mountaineers, skipping the second snow practice, the final practice of the Elementary Course.

My resolve was not weakened by getting the top grade on the written exam concluding the Elementary Course and being personally congratulated by Chairman Cam. That the athletes were dummies was no surprise. I'd never been scared of their brains, if any, only their muscles and guts.

Not that the student body was as uniformly impressive as it seemed in February. Though their numbers diminished drastically after the Monitor Tempest and the Battle of Little Si, many Bettys besides mine were hanging on. Just as inexplicably, many a brawny football player and phys-ed-teacher Amazon had disappeared. There was no ~~guessing~~ <sup>guessing</sup> from clubroom appearance how a person would behave on a cliff, in a storm. I'd seen Greek gods pale with fright at Monitor and All-American Boys whimpering at Little Si. And flabby old men and mousey ~~males~~ <sup>females</sup> face gales unflinching and perform daring acrobatics with a grace unflawed by tremors.

The lesson was you couldn't tell the athletes from the Bettys by the way they sat ~~their~~ lecture-hall chairs. But there were true athletes in that motley mob and the smaller the mob, the fewer the Bettys, the harder for the Harveys to ~~conceal~~ conceal their clumsiness. Thus I was glad to be escaping while still unexposed.

But I was not escaping, not yet. At the April 14 lecture Cam glumly announced it was snowing ferociously in the high country, avalanches were thundering, and the McClellan Butte practice was postponed. And at the next week's lecture he grimly announced snow was piling deeper, slides running wilder, and the trip was canceled.

Damn! Three more weeks, until the second, now only, snow practice, we were prison-pent. Since we had to stick around anyway, Monie convinced us to sign up for the Intermediate Course, ~~which ~~was~~ followed the Elementary~~ <sup>Though</sup> ~~without a pause.~~ Designed for second-year students and largely devoted to advanced rock and ice technique and other matters of no conceivable interest to a superhiker, such subjects were treated as avalanche evasion and glacier travel. ("You go hiking in winter when the snow is unstable, don't you? You've tromped around on glaciers, haven't you? Wouldn't hurt to know stuff like ~~that~~ that.")

Few beginners agreed. Attendance at Intermediate lectures was a third that of our initial Elementary ordeals ~~and~~ and many of the students were new if not unfamiliar, <sup>1</sup> second-year climbers I'd seen serving as instructors on practices. As one of ~~the handful~~ <sup>only several dozen</sup> of surviving novices I felt a bit smug.

Sunday, May 2, encouraged by a brief surcease from incessant storms, we even attended a non-threatening Intermediate rope-handling practice at Duwamish Piers, a ~~pair~~ pair of abandoned concrete pillars of unknown original utility but now, conveniently located beside the Duwamish River just south of Seattle, <sup>gratefully exploited</sup> ~~highly-esteemed~~ by climbers.

We practiced rappelling, which I found <sup>tame sport</sup> ~~rather fun~~ on a ~~some~~ 20-foot <sup>concrete</sup> wall. Betty, ~~after~~ after a suitable amount of preliminary weeping, flew glee-squealing down the rope and pronounced it almost as <sup>much fun</sup> ~~good~~ as a sitting glissade. With us both knowing the stunt, the following week Monie, ~~from~~ <sup>long</sup> the ~~start~~ worried by our firetrap garret, brought us an old climbing rope to tie to the bedstead and coil by the window. Thereafter I half-way hoped the building would burn so that while other tenants fried, Betty and I could jump blithely out the window and to the cheers of the street crowd slide dramatically to safety.

The remainder of the Duwamish curriculum was <sup>mildly</sup> entertaining but useless. ~~Though~~ one of my schemes for summer was to settle 1939 accounts with Mt. Anderson, and that involved crossing two glaciers, <sup>but</sup> neither had a crevasse large enough to hold a human body accidentally or on purpose; the ingenious prusik ~~xxx~~ and bilgeri methods of rescuing a climber from a crevasse thus were purely of academic interest. So was the technique brought home from the war by Limber Jim and other Mountain Troopers, the "dynamic belay" for ~~stopping falls by a rope-leader's on our superbiker scrambler~~ ~~holding leader falls, as I saw it,~~ Betty never would be leading and I'd never be falling.

Duwamish was such a breeze I also intended to take in, as spectator if not participant, ~~the next~~ <sup>the next</sup> ~~Rock~~ Intermediate practice, devoted to small-hold and friction climbing ~~with some~~ on an exceptionally-large granite erratic/a couple miles northeast of the University District. However, the trip didn't happen. Belatedly Course leaders discovered that since the previous year Glacier Boulder, <sup>or Big Rock</sup> as it was called, ~~was~~ beloved of Mountaineers since 1934, had been surrounded by rows of the apple-crate houses ~~now~~ <sup>being</sup> ~~infesting~~ <sup>tacked together all through</sup> the outskirts of Seattle. The <sup>home-owner</sup> ~~guy~~ who inherited the legacy of the Puget Glacier, renamed Wedgewood Rock in honor of the crummy <sup>subdivision</sup> ~~instant-clim~~, landscaped the base and objected to hooligans trampling his petunias.

Glacier Boulder canceled. Duwamish Piers as vapid (to me if not new-rappeller Betty) as a Boy Scout knot-tying contest. McClellan Butte canceled. Little Si, except for the Big Rappel and the barrage ~~dodging~~, as challenging as any other mucky trudge in a cold storm. Monitor Rock a rehash of childhood tree-climbing.

As our sentence in the Course drew to an end, a single day in the snow posing the last threat, my dread evaporated. And my respect. This was the Harvard of Northwest mountaineering, the Silver Marmot's Valhalla? A fraud. Had it not been for Tooth and Cruiser I'd have suspected even Monie of being a charlatan. ~~As it was, over pitchers of beer,~~ <sup>In</sup> ~~revenge myself on her for her compelling us to join the Mountaineers, over a pitcher of beer I conscripting us by systematically dismantling her revered alma mater.~~

The lectures, I realized once the audience thinned sufficiently so we could hear what was being said, were mostly lousy, rarely evidencing any prior thought. Often a demigod who was supposed to enlighten us for an hour mumbled for 10 minutes and sat down. Cam would unsmilingly thank him and then "offer a few supplementary remarks" -- <sup>which is to say that</sup> ~~meaning~~ he, obviously disgruntled, would give the lecture the hero hadn't. Other times the speaker never arrived and after we sat shuffling feet a half-hour Cam would cover the subject off the cuff, so disgusted he barely could unclench ~~his~~ teeth. Still others, presuming us illiterate, simply <sup>recited</sup> ~~read about the relevant~~ chapters from The Climbers' Notebook. ~~Why attend the lectures? Why not stay home and read the textbook?~~

As for the practices, even when the sun shone each instructor had five or six students, and on rainy days up to nine or a dozen. With such a ratio the most brilliant and dedicated teacher had small <sup>chance</sup> opportunity to teach; on our sole venture in ~~the~~ mountainous terrain, Little Si, their efforts went entirely into striving to minimize casualties. What on earth would happen when ~~the~~ began the third and climactic stage of the Course, the "experience climbs," the ascents of genuine mountains? I'd been sort of ~~sort~~ considering going on two of these to satisfy requirements for Elementary Course graduation, to get (just for neatness) a diploma. Now I was having second thoughts.

As any fool could ~~see~~ plainly see, so was Chairman Cam. No more was he the serene unsweating Maximum Leader of February. ~~He~~ He ~~lost control of~~ <sup>visibly</sup> the school and was seething with ~~anger and~~ frustration, steadily less able to hide his contempt for unprepared lecturers and absent instructors and incompetent trip leaders.

Monie attempted a defense. The weather certainly wasn't the fault of the Mountaineers. Old-timers couldn't recall so crummy a spring, such <sup>+</sup> persistent heavy snowfalls; there was muttering <sup>that</sup> ~~about~~ maybe the Ice Age was returning.

Blame the faculty shortage on the war. Enrollment and thus production of new climbers -- which meant new faculty -- naturally had been low for 5 years. Understandly <sup>ab</sup> the "each one teach one" system had cracked under mounting postwar pressures, with the enrollment of 1948 double that of 1947, <sup>quadruple</sup> quintuple that of 1946. As a member of the Climbing ~~Review~~ Committee, meeting weekly to review the latest disaster, she knew better than I how bad things were, what desperate efforts by a ~~hand~~ handful of old-faithful faculty were required to hold the school tenuously together. What the heck, maybe I wanted my money back? What had we spent -- \$7 for club dues and \$4 for Course registration fees and maybe a total of \$3 for trip fees?

"Yeah, it's cheap. A bargain? Hah!"

"Well, like the telephone company says ~~when you gripe~~ -- if you're not satisfied with us, try the competition."

I granted the Course had once been great -- Monie herself was sufficient <sup>proof</sup> ~~evidence~~. However, here as everywhere the clock of the West was running down, Faust becoming a fellah. I'd been hanging around the outfit 2½ months

and what had I learned I really needed to know? Not much except to  
~~not~~ avoid mobs, avoid joining clubs -- and except for Monie, avoid climbers.

"Well, okay. It's been a mess so far. Give it one more chance.  
You'll enjoy Commonwealth Basin. We always have a terrific time at  
Commonwealth."

May 1948

Chapter 17

SHOOTING THE CHUTE

Few students, perhaps none except Betty and me, suspected the turmoil behind the faculty facade of Olympian sangfroid. Doubtless they were better off. Certainly our meager lingering confidence was shaken by learning many a Climbing Committee meeting of April and May was ~~as~~ stormy as the mountains. Monie tried to conceal the fact. I forced it out of her.

The Commonwealth Basin snow practice, scheduled for May 16, was postponed. ~~At the preceding lecture~~ Chairman Cam didn't make the announcement orally (not trusting his voice?); ~~but~~ without a word of explanation <sup>he</sup> scribbled it on the blackboard (breaking the chalk twice).

I confronted Monie. "What kind of show are you people on the Committee running? Why the hell do you schedule these trips if you're not going to hold them? Aren't we ever going to get ~~over~~ this damn Course over with?"

Uneasy ~~snicker~~ cackle. Overtones of anguish. ~~REMARKS~~ Painful for her, surely, to witness civil war amongst the gods. "You sound like Cam."

He had argued, she unwillingly revealed, that climbing skill is half toughness and smartness and half pure nerve, that the only product of a gutless school would be a bunch of pansies. His opponents, a cabal



of former Climbing Chairmen, argued that to take innocent, trusting beginners into avalanche-roaring mountains was premeditated mass murder. The ex-Maximum Leaders had the power, they were members of the club's ~~omnipotent~~ Board of Trustees, they won.

The first two rounds (McClellan Butte April 18 and 25) they won. And the third (Commonwealth Basin May 16). Not the fourth. Memorial Day and the first Experience Climb were close. What, asked Cam, did they have in mind? Dispatching beginners to a peak lacking any knowledge of snow technique? Or canceling the first Experience Climb? And then the second, the third? Why not the whole Course? At the next lecture he announced with a hard smile that come earthquake or hurricane, hell or high water, we were going to Commonwealth.

Cam puzzled me. Was he one of the Good Guys -- or the chief Bad Guy? In lecture hall and at Little Si he seemed our devoted tribune laboring to preserve us from ~~abuses~~ blundering fools. At First Monitor and now Commonwealth he seemed ready to kill us if necessary to maintain the orderly progression of the curriculum.

Monie disturbed me. I was planning, as was most of the student body and faculty, to camp overnight in Commonwealth Basin. Did she want a ride with us to Snoqualmie Pass?

"Oh gosh," she cackled, "The only reason for going camping in snow is to learn never to camp in snow if you can avoid it."

That was true enough. I changed my mind. So maybe she'd like a ride up Sunday morning?

"Oh gee, I don't know. Sloppy snow doesn't do a thing for my neurosis. I got a lot of stuff to do at home."

Yeah? What about the "terrific time we always have at Commonwealth"? And the instructor shortage?

"Oh heck, I've been on every practice this spring. <sup>Going</sup> ~~Setting~~ kind of stale. Guess I've done my share. You'll get along fine. We always do. Nothing can ruin Commonwealth."

I withheld remarks about sinking ships and rats.

An hour and a half from the garret, at 6:30 in the chill dull-overcast morning of May 23, Betty and I arrived at Snoqualmie Pass and looked for Mountaineers.

None to be seen. Nobody to be seen. The pass, <sup>3000</sup> feet above the warm-lush lowland spring, <sup>deep</sup> in dispiriting winter, ~~the~~ somber highland forests crowding the ~~road~~ two-lane highway weeks short of <sup>budding out</sup> ~~putting forth~~ the light-green branch-tips of new growth, was empty-silent, only an occasional passing car (on what mad errand at this desolate hour?) reminding that man inhabited Earth.

Whatever other city-sleepers there were among our comrades must've gotten an earlier start. But there was no trouble finding where everybody went. With the crummy little ski area buttoned up for the year and the trails not due to melt out until July, the sole available entertainments hereabouts were drinking coffee at the <sup>ramshackle</sup> ~~desert~~ Summit Inn, sustained by over-the-hump truckers, and taking a piss in the WPA-built Travelers' Rest. ~~WPA~~

Unless you were a Mountaineer. Some 30 cars were parked on the highway shoulder next to the 10-foot snow wall rising above the <sup>narrow</sup> rotary-plowed ditch. From them a boot-kicked ladderway led up the wall to the start of a 2-foot-deep trench in sparkling-clean snow, the surface layer so fluffy it couldn't have been more than a couple days old. The track stomped by 200-odd boots climbed a wooded ridge to <sup>abrupt cliffs</sup> ~~the foot~~ of Guye Peak, traversed the base ~~of cliffs~~ into Commonwealth Basin, and meandered through subalpine hemlock-fir forest. At 7:30, precisely the announced hour of assembly, we entered a city of tents and tarps.

A deserted city. Damn Mountaineers! The first time they get us in the real mountains and they run off and hide. Bastards. Almost I ~~turned around~~ ~~and~~ went home. But then, what of the 3 months? The waste of all that agony? No, a dozen hours and we'd be free.

If, that is, we could win the game of hide-and-seek. One trench led into the city. Scores led out. We followed a dozen to bowel movements more or less snowcovered before finding the unmistakable mob trench. Indignation at being abandoned by the Mountaineers pushed my pace. Fear of being abandoned by me pushed Betty's. Onward we rushed, at last emerging from trees in open snow and spotting, on the lowermost slopes of bleak-white Lundin Peak, the distant ant-swarm.

A running-staggering half-hour and we caught up with a handful of laggards, a group of playboys and playgirls tumbling about on steep slopes of a knoll. Watching the foolery, smiling ironically, was Limber Jim.

Respect for the best rock-climber in the club (said Monie) couldn't cork my rage. "What are you guys up to? If you mean 6:30, why do you say 7:30?"

Wry chuckle. "Makes the day more interesting to warm up with fox-and-hounds. Why are you sore? You outsmarted us. Think of the poor children still ~~was~~ wandering in the woods, or maybe falling through snowbridges and trying to crawl out of Commonwealth Creek."

*Always a core of gallows humor.*

Climbers' wit! "Well, that's Lloyd. Some people are always late. He's always early. ~~That's why he's probably the greatest climber in the history of the club.~~ <sup>sniffs</sup> He goes nuts when he smells a peak. Can't sleep. He figured most everybody would find us and those that didn't probably didn't want to anyway."

Some apology. I'd do better with Chairman Cam, standing a couple hundred feet above at the top of the knoll, ~~he watched us plug steps,~~ doubtless preparing to soothe his star examination writer.

"Hi!" I ~~huff~~ <sup>puff</sup> huff. Why is he glowering? Angry at Leader Lloyd? No! For unknown reasons, at us.

"All right!" he barks. "Do a sitting glissade and try a self-arrest."

I gasp for breath, mentally rehearsing the braking technique described in textbook and lecture. Grasp ice-ax head in right hand with adze toward body, pick away, hold ax shaft in left hand.

"There'll never be a better time to go than now."

Ready or not, ~~slide~~ <sup>here I go sliding</sup> When ~~going~~ faster than a speeding bullet, roll onto stomach, press chest against shaft to push pick into slope, dig in toes. Thus stop.

Puff-puff up the hill. The rough beast waits.

"Kousy! Don't let the pick ride away from your shoulder -- you can't shove it in without your body weight on it. Spread those legs and kick ~~at~~ those toes. <sup>in</sup> Do everything fast! Pretend there's a cliff 100 feet down and you either stop in 99 feet or die."

Once more down. Once more up. Snow forces into pantslegs and shirtsleeves, melts, soaks clothing and coldly bathes skin. Down. Up. Hear acid explanations of how stupid-awkward I am. See how haggard are the other trapped playboys and playgirls. See Betty, whose favorite means of ~~mountain~~ travel is the sitting glissade, finally get <sup>too much.</sup> ~~a bellyful.~~

"That's a little better. Now try a real arrest -- the kind you have to do in a real fall. Sit down. This time put your legs uphill. Lay flat on your back. Now slide."

Something in a person hates to lead with the head, ~~to slide toward an unseen death.~~ But rub your nose in it is the rule of the Tall Parka sans merci.

Prow-head churns snow which blinds, which chokes, which rams down <sup>flesh</sup> neck onto quailing ~~skin~~ <sup>shrinks</sup> of back and belly, ~~g. freezes tumbling~~ balls. That's plenty of speed! Roll onto stomach and jam pick in the slope. It doesn't grip. Not jamming in slope but in air. Where is the slope? Snow above, snow below, snow everywhere. Pick finds slope, grabs. Somersaulting! Tumbling, rolling. Somehow stop. Blink snow from eyes, shake snow from ears, spit snow from teeth, blow snow from nose. Climb the knoll.

"You never did get your boots downhill! <sup>!</sup> ~~m~~ Cock your body at the ~~wrist~~ waist and scramble with your feet! Don't paw the air with your pick -- ram it in! The only reason you stopped was you ran out of slope. Remember

the cliff that's going to kill you if you don't stop!"

Again cringingly down. Again wearily up.

"Great! Just great! You went over the brink going a mile a minute. You're now bouncing down a thousand feet of cliffs. The rescue party's going to have to bring rakes to pull you together. Try again."

How long would the hound of hell have tortured us? Perhaps eternally. But a latecomer, observing the carnage, attempted to bypass the knoll. Off in pursuit flapped Tall Parka. Betty and I stole away.

The main mob was lolling in pale sunlight eating second-breakfast-first lunch. But as we arrived Leader Lloyd began yelling orders. No rest or food for us.

Rope teams were formed. Instructors again scarce, each was assigned six or more students. Climbing Course policy being to preserve marriages by separating husbands and wives, Betty and I had different teachers. Her eyes pled with me not to leave her to face the Inquisitors alone.

Well shucks, it was policy, nothing I could do. ~~Even~~ Even if I wanted. And the fact was, I didn't. In uniting with a woman a man becomes no longer an integer but a fraction, incomplete and vulnerable. When ~~strangers~~ <sup>strangers</sup> laughed at my wife they laughed at me. ~~I was grateful to be for a few hours single again.~~ In the Unknown awaiting above I'd have enough problems evading my own humiliation, much less Betty's. I was grateful to be for a few hours single again.

I studied my instructor. A smiling, relaxed chap of 20 or less. Evidently no vicious Cam. He surveyed the mob scene, the other instructors commencing more self-arrest practice.

"Kind of crowded here," he commented. "Let's start off by practicing some rope-team travel."

We ~~climbed~~<sup>roped</sup> and in two teams climbed above the mob. And climbed. And climbed. Never stopping for instruction. No nitpicking nag was our teacher. He allowed as how we all seemed pretty good at stepkicking and also the "rest step," the technique of alternately unweighting the feet so that at each step one leg has a short complete rest.

"How you folks feel about the arrest?" he asked. "Think you got it down pretty well?"

We all nodded agreement that Cam had made us perfect masters. Of course, our knoll ordeal consisted solely of self-arrest, no team arrest. But what's a team arrest except the sum of three self-arrests? Doubtless there's a difference in a high-speed tumbling fall but superhikers don't go in for that sort of thing.

"Guess he covered the ice ax belay too, didn't he?"

He hadn't. Except for ~~not~~ textbook and lecture we were ignorant of how to jam ax shaft in snow, wrap rope around ~~shaft~~ shaft and body, and hold a fall. But none of us wanted to impose on our genial teacher.

"Seems to me we've touched all the bases. I'll tell you, us instructors get to climb the west ridge. I'd better head on down so they don't go off without me. You folks just mosey up the east ridge to the summit and wait. The route's easy. Just follow your nose."

He glissaded to the ant-mob far below, leaving six novices, six silences.

By chance I was tied to a rope-end and at the moment of his departure happened to be uphill from the other five. Forlornly I looked down to our

distance - diminishing  
~~distance~~ teacher -- and into five impassive faces looking up -- at me.  
 Waiting for me to take the initiative.

Orders were orders. I led up the final stretch of snow, a white peninsula jutting high amid cliffs of the peak. No more snow. Rocks. A hundred feet above and a hundred yards distant was the 6000-foot summit of Lundin.

I stop, stare. Starch goes out of knees. Knot forms in guts. They got me. My ticket out of the Course paid for and punched, the freedom train steaming at the station, and at the last minute they got me. Where's Monie now I need her? Where's anybody now I need somebody?

I look down the rope to my mates -- two impatient faces. And the second team -- three more. Undoubtedly five athletes, though we've together undertaken/no activity that would separate athletes from Bettys -- and Harveys. Athletes demanding action. If they feel that way, why don't they volunteer to lead? Because Teacher said the ridge is easy, a route to "mosey up." Not worth an athlete's thinking about, a cinch trip to be quickly and simply done.

Faces push. I guess this is how they get paratroopers to jump. Put hands on rock and scramble. Climb rhythmically, hell. Climb with the eyes, bullpussy. Climb like a cat with can tied to tail.

The ridge <sup>top</sup> ~~crest~~! That was nothing -- a 50-foot staircase. Bring up Number Two -- not on belay, unnecessary, just hauling in slack. He brings up Number Three, followed by the second team.

But now, Something Else. One of Monie's famous "cheap thrills" -- the Boiler Plate, a smooth, tilted, 50-foot-long slab forming the crest of the ridge. Wide, a dozen feet or so. Not steep. In tennis shoes on a dry summer day, a stroll. But we are wearing tricouni-nailed boots -- ice skates.



And a blob of snow from the storm of a couple days ago dribbles slab-slickening meltwater. And to the left is the substantial gulf of Commonwealth Basin and to the right is the ocean-huge gulf of the Middle Fork Snoqualmie River.

Athletes are restless. Number Two doesn't ~~even~~ even offer a belay. Social pressure drives me onto the ice rink.

I'll be damned! Appearing flawless, the Boiler Plate is pocked with niches beautifully designed for hooking with tricouni edge-nails. <sup>the slab is</sup> And/so wide I can't see or feel exposure.

Now I see it. At the far end rises a 15-foot wall hanging high in the air. I look down short cliffs to left, down down long long cliffs to right.

Odd. Knees aren't jittering, heart not pounding, brain not whirling. I see, not feel, the exposure. Why not? Because with absolute inner <sup>firm</sup> certainty I know I'm not going to fall down any cliffs! The ~~is~~ 15-foot wall is a system of ledges, one hardly needs bother with handholds, one walks. Walks through air, but walks. Over the winter the inoculations of Tooth and Cruiser have immunized me against exposure! Well, this piddling exposure anyhow.

Where's the rest of Lundin? There ain't no more. I'm on the summit. All by myself I've conquered a genuine mountain. I've led a climb!

Completing the triumph, a meek voice from below: "Could you give me a belay please?" Number Two. Begging literally on his knees. Some athlete. And Number Three! He's spreadeagled on the Boiler Plate, gripping Earth with shoulders, thighs, belly. And where is the second rope? Those ~~these~~ athletes have retreated to the snow!

A daring thought. Scary. Impossible. Yet examine the evidence. Very likely most of the February multitude of beginners could humiliate me in track meet or gymnasium. But where are they now? Of the 250 barely a third remain. And many are reluctant Bettys and many (five for sure) of those who seemed athletes are not even Harveys.

There's more to this sport than acrobatics. It's not enough to be able to climb rock, one must be a sufficient connoisseur of the subtleties of mountain architecture to know which rock to climb. And then have the nerve to do it. ~~Some~~ Strength and coordination are valuable. But also needed are brains and guts -- and perhaps an above-average ration of these can compensate for a below-average ration of the others. I always knew I had ~~plenty of~~ brains. Until now I didn't suspect I had -- comparatively speaking, at least -- guts.

A quiet hour we three sat on the summit eating lunch in still warm air, ~~and~~ savoring sun-rays flashing through gaps in boiling black clouds, chiseled-ice peaks floating on the gray sea of fog-filled valleys.

I belonged here. This country at and around headwaters of the South and Middle Forks Snoqualmie River could well become my second mountain home. A stone-throw <sup>as</sup> ~~westward~~ east was Red, scrambled up with Monie and Betty year before last. Off west was the legendary Tooth. Having earned citizenship by climbing three Snoqualmie Pass mountains, I was entitled to most if not all the other of the 20 "Snoqualmie Pin Peaks": Guye and Snoqualmie and <sup>which</sup> Kendall, with Lundin and Red enclosing Commonwealth Basin. On the same ridge <sup>as</sup> ~~with~~ The Tooth, Denny and Bryant and Chair, ~~and farther~~ and farther west, Granite and Kaleetan and Roosevelt. To the east, the

formidable towers of Thompson and Huckleberry, the milder-mannered Chikamin, Alta, and Rampart and rugged Hibox. South ~~of~~ beyond Snoqualmie Pass, Silver and Tinkham. I'd not be in the club to be awarded the pin but I'd have splendid superhiker (semi-climber!) sport here in years to come. I'd not aspire to the awesome spires of the Dutch Miller Gap area -- Bears Overcoat, and Breast, Summit Chief, ~~and~~ Chimney Rock -- yet I'd admire them from such close viewpoints as La Bohn Peak, today as fog-buried as ~~the day~~ <sup>when</sup> last September I climbed it alone.

Smugly I contemplated the non-whimper, the big bang, of my Mountaineer end, starting ~~the day~~ at the rear of the pack and against heavy odds forging through the mob to win the race to the top. Almost I regretted my first alpine ascent with the club was my last -- until I spotted the west-ridge party nearing the summit, led by Limber Jim kicking steps in a tiny snowpatch precariously stuck on the spookily-thin crest.

Beware of hubris, lad.

I didn't care at all for the looks of that./Just as well I was leaving. Rest ~~content~~ on laurels, count blessings. I owned my own ice ax, a classy bit of Swiss craftsmanship bought at the Co-op this week, had learned the self-arrest. I owned the tool and the technique that would've made the Graywolf Ramble a fearless romp. And I was escaping Course and club with ~~the~~ whole skin, whole pride.

A solitary leader, one of the great and respected Old Faithfuls, appeared on the Boiler Plate. I prepared a student's modest <sup>thanks for</sup> ~~response to~~ professor's praise. Head poked over the top of the final wall. Jaw ~~dropped~~, eyes goggled.

"WHAT IN THE NAME OF GOD ARE YOU DOING HERE?"

~~My smile froze.~~ I tried to explain. He wouldn't listen. I was a smart-alec show-off, a suicidal fool, a potential assassin of ~~my~~ ropemates. They, damn sheep, previously adoring me as their savior, now joined in the crucifixion.

Crap on 'em. Crap on ~~the~~ 'em all. They tell you to be at camp at 7:30 and you get there at 7:30 and ~~they~~ they've pulled a sneak. Bust your ass catching up and a sadist erects a roadblock. Obey your assigned instructor and get ~~the~~ chewed out for following orders. I didn't deign to suggest to the hero where he could shove his high and mighty Climbing Course. ~~Hangtivity~~ I retreated to a corner of the summit, returned utterly and forever to my pre-Mountaineer absolute uncontaminated anarchism. Silently I pronounced a terrible curse upon the Course and all its progenitors and all their generations. To my gratification, the curse took instant (nay, retroactive) effect.

The summit, a plateau some 20 feet square, seemed spacious occupied by three, tiny as a hundred bodies converged upon it. One would've supposed the situation would've been foreseen by our esteemed faculty. Not on your ~~the~~ tintype.

Already, with the addition to the summit population of Limber Jim's west-ridge contingent of 15 instructors, ribs were getting jabbed with elbows, rucksacks spread out for lunch squashed by boots. Now the student horde swarmed in the snow and on the ~~staircase~~ staircase.

Not immediately was it necessary to cram 100 sardines into a can built for 20. First the sardines must be got to the can. It seemed the <sup>Cramming</sup> ~~second~~ problem might never arise. I watched one Betty after another ~~(enough)~~ ~~collapse~~ collapse into catatonia on the Boiler Plate.

And as the result of the brilliant policy of letting instructors climb the west ridge, only in ~~the~~ position to help ~~the~~ ram ~~the~~ beginners through the east-ridge bottleneck were several senior leaders. They pointed out holds by hollering from a distance, then by crawling personally onto the slab, compounding the crowding. At first they sought to make each person do his own climbing~~x~~ but quickly said the hell with ~~teaching~~ <sup>good form</sup> ~~backward techniques~~ and began giving helping hands, pulling and pushing. Finally they rigged a fixed rope for a handline -- ~~the~~ ~~reversion~~ to an ancient discredited means of mob management. The fixed rope began tangling with climbing ropes, frequently bringing all progress to a halt, requiring ~~endless~~ unsnarling. I anticipated seeing someone, by giving just the proper yank, flip a student over the brink. The student would not go alone~~x~~ since in the ~~the~~ absence of belays he'd pull off ~~the~~ ropemates. And with the right concatenation of climbing~~x~~ ropes~~x~~ the first team might be followed by another, and another, in mass flight down to the Middle Fork valley.

Limber Jim, though his <sup>impish</sup> ~~stupid~~ smirk suggested mixed emotions, commented in a yell to ~~Boiler Plate-bound~~ Boiler Plate-bound Leader Lloyd that since the east ridge was unsuited to two-way traffic, at the present rate the party wouldn't be off the peak until along about 10 o'clock Wednesday morning. Moreover, unless a few folk were disposed of off the cliff ~~rocks~~ (a distinct possibility) there shortly would be no room left on the summit for new arrivals. Lloyd, wrestling a hysterical spastic bent on self-destruction, implored Jim to "Do something!" He did, rigging a rappel down a 20-foot chimney to a ledge bypassing the Boiler Plate. To keep climbing ropes from tangling with rappel rope, everyone <sup>untied</sup> ~~unroped~~ before starting down. Teams no longer existed. It was every man for himself and devil take the women and children. I saw an opening in the <sup>queue</sup> ~~line~~ and got my ass the hell out of there.

Safely in the snow my pleasure was undiluted. Students inched up the Boiler Plate, clinging to the fixed rope, and inched down the rappel. Females moaned and sobbed and even ~~some~~<sup>male</sup> athletes trembled, nerves wrecked not by mountain but mob. Big-shot hero-leaders cursed and wailed and yammered a welter of conflicting orders. Had Mack Sennett made a climbing movie, this is how it ~~would have~~<sup>d have</sup> appeared on the screen. ("Ambles in the Alps, starring Ben Turpin, Fatty Arbuckle, and the Keystone Kops.") Yet one couldn't help keeping in mind this low comedy was being performed on a very high stage, ~~rinned with genuine precipices~~. It was dangerous. But hilarious, especially when clouds darkened, a squall of rain and freezing slush swept the mountain, and students soaked to the skin by self-arrest practice showed symptoms of dying en masse from exposure.

"Let the jury consider their verdict," the King said.

"No, no!" said the Queen. "Sentence first -- verdict afterwards."

"Stuff and nonsense!" said Alice loudly.

"Off with her head!" the Queen shouted.

"Who cares for you?" said Alice (she had grown to her full size by this time). "You're nothing but a pack of cards!"

Reflecting that Alice-Harvey had recognized this pack of Mountaineer cards for what they were, was awaking from Wonderland<sub>x</sub> in the veritable nick, I crouched in the lee of a snow hump, out of the blasting wind, with a bunch of instructors.

"Jeez," chuckled and shivered one. "This is turning out better than the Perry Basin practice last year. That was wild, when the avalanche took everybody to the bottom of the practice slope, but <sup>what with the fog</sup> only a third of the party ever found the practice area in the first place so there wasn't all the good compact action there is here."

"Perry Basin!" chortled and teeth-chattered another. "This beats the Olympus climb last Fourth of July -- 80 people wandering all over the Blue Glacier in the storm looking for West Peak. Remember that farce? About a dozen guys finally found the summit tower and half ~~of them~~ got knocked silly by the rocks everybody was kicking off."

"Well, at least there's nothing to worry about. Like we always say, if you obey the Code the most dangerous part of a climb is the drive home on the highways. After all, nobody's ever been killed on a Mountaineer trip. How about that? Forty years of these <sup>high</sup> ~~high~~ jinks and not one death!"

"Yeah, fantastic. It's no lie, it's got to be true the good Lord loves us."

One of the merry men struck up an imaginary guitar and the bunch ~~it~~ joined him in raucous song:

"There was BLOOD on the axes,  
And BLOOD on the ropes,  
And great big blotches of BLOO-OO-OOO on the slopes,  
Oh pity these climbers,  
All covered with gore,  
They'll never go bagging ol' Lundin no more."

Altogether a masterpiece, a perfect revenge. But drawn out hours past happy laughter. Not until 5 o'clock in an afternoon darkening to premature night, clouds lowering to swallow us, was a ~~distant~~ bellow interpreted by the instructor bunch as announcing the removal of the last quivering body from the summit, ~~it~~ releasing us from standing by for rescue duty.

An instructor yelled, "Party time, boys and girls!"

Time for one of Monie's favorite cheap thrills. We'd ascended ~~an~~ an indistinct ridge, a series of rises and flats. To descend we'd fling ourselves into the Lundin Chute, a steep gully dropping 1200 vertical feet to the valley floor.

Instantly at the signal of release the jolly instructors leapt from the ~~storm~~<sup>wind</sup> refuge and with running jumps disappeared in fog, followed by a flock of babbling Boy Scouts and (omitting the running jumps) by ~~less~~ less exuberant students seeking not ~~pleasure~~<sup>thrills</sup> but ~~merely~~<sup>only</sup> the safety of the valley. I was experienced enough in the sitting glissade to be wily, to let over-eager pioneers establish a track. When dozens of butts had smoothed the bumps and ~~smoothed~~ gouged a groove I jumped.

Just-like-that I was rocketing through face-stinging fog, ear-roaring wind, yipping and whooping as loud as a Scout. No worry about too much speed. As I'd learned on Silvertip the ~~ax~~<sup>shaft-bottom</sup> and spike dragged in the slope is ever-ready for slowing. As I'd learned on Cam's Knoll the self-arrest is ever-ready for emergency stops. With slowing and stopping ~~easy~~<sup>easily done</sup> one can go fearlessly fast.

But something new. Never before had I glissaded in such loose snow. I was alarmed to find myself riding a ~~hissing~~<sup>and</sup> avalanche stirred up by legs and butt, ~~and~~ rolled out of the groove into self-arrest. The avalanche hissed on down into fog. I rolled back into the groove and resumed the run. Another avalanche, another roll-out -- not quite so soon, not quite so scared. The third time I delayed the roll-out still longer -- and didn't do it at all because the avalanche ~~it~~ grew so big and no bigger, was



perfectly harmless. Okay then, let 'er rip! <sup>Discover</sup> ~~Enjoy~~ the supreme method of mountain <sup>snow descent</sup> ~~travel~~ -- no scraping or bumping of body against slope, no jouncing or bouncing, no pain or strain. Smooth! Relax on your back and let the soft swift magic carpet carry you down!

I flew by faces white as the snow and fog -- students who'd ovinely followed Judas-goat instructors and been too much thrilled, who'd arrested and crawled from the groove and were wondering how they ever would reach the bottom of the Chute this side of eternity. Laugh! What did they know, chicken athletes who'd never slid into the Graywolf without an ax?

Down, down, down, almost to the valley floor. Slope flattened, speed slackened. I now was passing not only halted students but halted instructors. Nobody below me. Nobody but me glissading. I <sup>was</sup> ~~was~~ leading the pack and that ~~was~~ good but best not get too far ahead. Stop.

I'd plummeted out of fog into clear air. ~~Most of the mob was still hidden.~~ <sup>containing the main mob.</sup> Shouts from the cloud. Then shouts below the cloud. Then a shout from my nearest neighbor, an instructor a couple hundred feet above.

"Are you Manning?"

Suspiciously I confessed.

"Your wife wants you."

Gone, gone, gone the exhilaration of the magic-carpet flight. Naturally Betty wanted me. As on Silvertip when she slowly slid toward the cliff, as on the retreat from La Bohn Gap when she got her damn boot stuck. I'd not seen her since morning and had reverted to the freedom of Camp Parsons boyhood and now she'd spitefully <sup>jerked the leash.</sup> ~~recalled me to marriage.~~ More, she'd shamed my name, which she'd possessed a week short of a year, before 100-odd idiots who in ~~xxx~~ years to come would snicker whenever they recalled Manning.

These long 3 months I'd dodged humiliation -- successfully. Today the Mountaineers had taken their last shot at me -- and missed. And then my foul-up wife snatched victory from my grasp.

Driven by ~~and~~ <sup>violent</sup> ~~strong~~ but unselected emotion (soon I'd be either furious or grief-stricken) I climbed back into the cloud, nearly to the base of Lundin's summit cliffs. Here was the mob, gathered in a tight circle, faces turned inward. Fury? Grief? I elbowed roughly through the drooling <sup>of necrophiliacs</sup> gawkers, the sort who cluster around burning houses and crashed automobiles, to the center of attention. Fury? Grief?

Fury. The greater for the potential grief.

Flat on her back in pink snow lay the damn clown, giggling and simpering, the life of the party. Limber Jim was bandaging her side. As was normal for her <sup>on any hike</sup> ~~in the mountains~~, she looked terrible.

"Where's your ax?" I demanded.

She apologized with a frightened grin, a little girl who was going to be spanked and knew she had it coming. Faces in the mob expressed an opinion of me. What the crap ~~is~~ did they know?

I climbed to the avalanche jumble from which she'd been excavated and fruitlessly kicked blocks of snow. No ax. Only a couple days ago I laid out a day-and-a-half's wages for that ax. Blood is cheap but axes cost \$12.

Bystanders told the story. Together with other incompetents <sup>appalled</sup> ~~terrified~~ by the Chute she'd chosen to go down the gentler route of <sup>the mess</sup> ~~our~~ ascent. She <sup>was</sup> ~~glissading~~ <sup>slowly and cautiously, peering into fog below. In fog above her a</sup> ~~by pits and starts, enjoying her little slides.~~ <sup>snuggled up for group</sup> ~~A~~ dozen incompetents ~~above her simultaneously~~ gathered courage and glissaded in a gang. Each set in motion a small avalanche, these ~~had~~ coalesced in a

large avalanche which achieved critical mass and tore loose the whole slope, and Betty was engulfed by a thundering hundred tons of snow containing a dozen tumbling dummies and a dozen loose axes, one of which stabbed her in the ribs. Nobody else was hurt. Only Betty. Just my luck.

The ax was hopelessly lost so I went down to see about salvaging the ~~slimy~~ wife.

Exclaimed a first-aid expert, "She's in shock!" (I refrained from informing them she'd been in shock since the day she was born.)

Declared a rescue expert, "She can't walk in this condition." (I didn't tell them she could barely walk in any condition.)

Never consulting me, the Betty expert, they tied her to a "human toboggan," a student volunteer whose body would absorb the bumps and protect the casualty, who was blooming like she'd been elected Queen of the May. (I didn't complain that they were spoiling her, that ~~was~~ <sup>henceforth</sup> she'd expect a free ride down every mountain.)

Ropes were tied to toboggan and at a fast trot he and casualty were dragged ~~down~~ to the valley floor <sup>and</sup> through the ~~was~~ woods to camp, where she was transferred to a stretcher fetched from the club's Snoqualmie Lodge by a team of super-swift instructors. At the highway she was loaded in Limber Jim's notoriously-hot Nash sedan with a back seat that notoriously folded to make a bed. Chairman Cam, who seemed delighted with the day's denouement, admired the ingenious bed arrangement, saying "Bet that comes in handy lots of times." Said Jim with ribald grin, "Yeah, a guy never knows when he might want a quick nap." The three of them hurtled off toward the nearest hospital, in Seattle.

Betty later told me they stopped twice. Once for ice cream cones in North Bend. Once when flagged down by a highway cop -- who snapped to attention at sight of my wounded wife and led the rest of the way, siren wailing, to the delirium of Jim and Cam, who rejoiced at their first opportunity ~~ever~~ ever to drive ~~at~~ (legally) ~~at~~ 70 miles an hour through Sunday traffic.

The smoking V-8 carried me more sedately to Harborview Hospital. At the desk I was directed to the emergency room, where Betty was being sewed up. In the waiting room I found Jim and Cam. They didn't notice my existence, were totally absorbed in reviewing the ~~day~~ day-long series of leadership blunders.

I was <sup>astounded</sup> ~~surprised~~ that Cam, an increasingly angry man these past weeks of the disintegrating Course, was so happy -- practically hysterical. Perhaps he was in shock. And Jim too. Why else would they, after each mention of a bungle, ~~burst into~~ <sup>explode</sup> ~~burst into~~ <sup>maniac</sup> laughter?

Cam said, "Another thing we forgot to do was count the party before we started down. How do we know we didn't leave somebody in the avalanche?"

"We don't," said Jim, "But if we did we'll probably hear about it. Sooner or later."

Tbey almost fell off their chairs.

God!

June 1948

Chapter 18

LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION

At Camp Parsons they told the story of the government mapmaker who between surveying voyages around Puget Sound used to visit his sweetheart's home in Seattle. <sup>the young and little village of</sup> On summer evenings after supper he and she, her parents and sister and two brothers, would sit on the front porch watching the sun sink into the jagged-black Olympic skyline. ~~Nobody had yet penetrated the massive barrier to the mysterious interior of the range.~~ No names had yet been given the peaks. The mapmaker took care of that. The southernmost prominent point of the skyline he officially designated Ellinor, the twin summits to the north The Brothers, and north of them and the tallest of all, rising nearly 8000 feet from tidewater, Constance.

I never could keep straight whether the <sup>demure</sup> ~~modest~~ Ellinor or the regal Constance was his sweetheart. Mine was Constance, ~~adorable and fearsome~~ <sup>gorgeous and formidable,</sup> I grew up gazing across the Sound to the <sup>high</sup> climax of the western horizon. From Home Lake on the west, in 1938 and again in 1946 I admired crags of the West Peak, ~~and~~ from Home Peak on the east, in 1947 <sup>I was humbled by the fall</sup> ~~the humbling~~ wall of the East Peak, the highest. From Dead Man's Canyon, a deep cleft between the two peaks, in 1942 I bent my neck backward staring up and up the cliffs.

I yearned for Constance. But hell, I also hankered after Joan Fontaine. In both cases, a dog howling at the Moon. Well, so long as the goddess was equally unattainable <sup>to</sup> ~~by~~ all mortals -- or all I personally knew, anyway -- I pined hopelessly but not in pain. However, that the Climbing Course should schedule my Constance for the first Experience Climb of the year, that all those damn athlete <sup>curs</sup> ~~hounds~~ should ravish my sweetheart, was a kick in the ribs. Yet such is the way of lovers ~~★~~ I realized it wouldn't hurt so much if I participated in the gang-bang.

Thus I strayed from wise anarchism. Monday I reveled in post-Lundin release. Tuesday I reflected I had, after all, survived ~~★~~ unharmed and with Betty only slightly damaged. Wednesday the buried <sup>adoration</sup> ~~worship~~ of a decade <sup>erupted in</sup> stirred sighs of longing.

But lordy! After Lundin, how could the Mountaineers have the gall to <sup>assault large</sup> ~~tackle~~ so ~~big~~, so fierce a peak? With such a rabble? Not from Home Peak, not from Dead Man's Canyon, had I seen any sane <sup>hope of penetrating</sup> ~~route to attack~~ the defenses.

Monie shrugged. Constance, she said, was no big deal. From Dead Man's Canyon a Luddin-Chute-like gully sliced through the precipices to the ridge. A ~~simple~~ traverse across snowfields of the east face led to a short scramble up the final rocks. Cunning Mountaineers -- cousins of the greasy-haired wise guys at Lincoln who knew how to make girls. ~~Bestard~~ ~~Mountaineers~~ ~~was a sandy bunch of smart-ass Errol Flynnes.~~ Excitement at the prospect of satisfying lust was mixed with grief that Constance could not be eternally virgin, <sup>was already much-soiled.</sup> as Joan-Fontaine had been in The Constant Nymph:

Monie also said there was no danger, ~~in the mass attack~~. Forget the Lundin fiasco. The first Experience Climb of the year was a traditional

alumni reunion, all the Old Faithfuls would turn out, there'd be a veteran hero to lead every rope. And ~~any~~ Betty-beginners stupid enough to sign up would be scratched from the list, told to await easier Experience Climbs to come.

No anarchist is wise beyond temptation. The beautiful Constance made a fool of me. Thursday I signed up.

To no purpose. Friday night, as I was packing for the morning departure, I got the phone call. Not scratching me -- scratching everybody. Chairman Cam <sup>frustrated again.</sup> ~~had lost another round.~~ Hard to believe with Seattle blooming so richly green but ~~all week~~ <sup>continued</sup> snow had ~~been~~ dumping on the highlands and now the storm had turned rainy-warm and those billions of white tons were thundering into the valleys. The trip was canceled.

So I lost my beloved Constance. Well, there was still Betty. I'd stay in the garret and help her lick her wounds. We'd devise some appropriate celebration of our first anniversary of legal cohabitation.

Saturday night, another phone call. Desperate to salvage something from ~~the ruins~~ ruins of his school, Cam had patched together a last-minute-substitute Experience Climb. Nothing fancy. Next morning, Memorial Day, the mob would return to Snoqualmie Pass. Lots of luck, ant-swarm! I'd deal with Chair Peak in my own <sup>sweet</sup> ~~my~~ private superhiker time.

Still another phone call. Monie. Storm clouds dissolving in a gigantic mass of hot dry air rolling in from the Pacific, the so-long winter abruptly ending, she was eager to walk. Strangely, not to the Big Reunion

on Chair. (Sinking ship? Rat?) The driver and the four passengers of the car to which she'd been assigned, in the club's usual ride-sharing routine, had accepted her suggested alternate goal. Would the Mannings care to come along?

Said Betty, <sup>"Elizabethan gesture to you!"</sup> ~~"Out of your mind!"~~ Said Harvey, "Sure!" Not one but two peaks of my new Snoqualmie Pass home Monie promised. What fitter celebration of the anniversary of Silvertip?

And a grand romp it proved. From the entrance to Commonwealth Basin we climbed the east shoulder of Guye. Reverting to kindly teacher ~~of~~ old and honoring my Lundin feat, Monie let me lead the whole way, a series of short rock pitches, easy-as-pie and unexposed Monitors. From the 5100-foot summit we crept over a gendarme, then unroped and waded soggy snow along the ridge to the top of Snoqualmie, at 6270 feet the highest peak in the immediate vicinity of Snoqualmie Pass.

Two peaks in a day! Five Pin Peaks in my bag! ~~Surrounded~~ Surrounded by past (and future) conquests, ~~only~~ I surveyed the ~~brilliant~~ Cascade panorama. Huge to the south was Rainier and imposing to the east were <sup>the spike of</sup> Chimney Rock and the <sup>distant pyramid</sup> ~~far-off bulk~~ of 9470-foot Stuart, highest non-volcanic peak in the state. Northward along the hundred miles to Canada sprawled a maze of mountains, few familiar to me by face or name but among them certainly many a summit open to superhiker boots and ax. The ~~two~~ two volcanoes, Glacier and Baker, thrust ~~high and lonesome~~ above the jostling multitude. Seeing Baker I had to laugh. Kermit the Hermit had invited me to join him there this weekend. Me, climbing a volcano! ~~Preposterous, ludicrous, of course.~~ <sup>Preposterous,</sup> Yet flattering.



Not laughing did I look west to the Olympics. Yes, ~~there were~~ many superhiker conquests awaiting <sup>ed</sup> there, too. But Constance the queen was forever lost. A triumphant exit that would've made.

Long we lingered on the hot granite rockpile atop Snoqualmie. I found my new companions likable; if more Mountaineers were so decent I might not be quitting the club. We ~~commented~~ remarked on the spectacularly sudden demise of winter, ~~the~~ furnace sun shrinking the snowpack before our eyes. To cool blistered brains we piled crowns of snow on our heads, giggling as meltwater dribbled down backs. When we'd no cans of fruit juice left to quench thirsts and had eaten a <sup>gross</sup> ~~ton~~ of snowballs each we descended to Commonwealth Basin in slushy, swooping glissades. We paused to peer into the snow canyon of Commonwealth Creek, swollen enormously beyond the meager flow of last Sunday. At home, <sup>from</sup> ~~listening to~~ the radio, I learned the Yakima River (fed by ~~Commonwealth Creek~~ many a creek like Commonwealth) had torn out the highway a few miles east of our day's ramble and the rampaging Columbia River (fed by many a <sup>tributary</sup> ~~river~~ like the Yakima) had destroyed the city of Vanport, Oregon. Every stream in the Northwest had gone wild. The flood of the century ~~x~~ they were ~~is~~ calling it, and we'd been up in the sky where it began.

Speaking of disasters, what about the ant-swarm? Only late in the afternoon, when leaving the summit of Snoqualmie, did we <sup>spot</sup> ~~make out~~ a procession of <sup>insects</sup> ~~little black spots~~ ascending snowfields from Source Creek to ~~the~~ cliffs of Chair. At the highway we met a worried female Mountaineer waiting for her husband. She said he and the Hundred had set out from the cars at dawn, hours before us smarties even left town. Next day Monie called, cackling,

to tell me the party had been slowed by <sup>deep-trenched</sup> creek <sup>with all snowbridges collapsed,</sup> ~~canyons~~ ~~trenched~~ ~~deep~~ ~~in~~  
~~canon~~, by detours around potential avalanche slopes, by bottlenecks on the  
 rock, by exhaustion, sunstroke, terror, and chaos, and had straggled to  
 the highway at midnight. Revenge is sweet.

Little Si, Lundin, Chair -- how many lessons does a person need? Why  
 did I <sup>go on</sup> ~~sign up for~~ the second Experience Climb? For good reasons. One, at  
 Monie <sup>is urging</sup> ~~arranged for~~ the Climbing Committee <sup>agreed</sup> to count Guye-Snoqualmie as a  
 regular Experience Climb; a second would let me earn the damn diploma and  
 wrap up tidily, no loose ends dangling, this whole loony ~~is~~ episode.  
 Two, so many others had learned their lesson only a dozen were <sup>signed up.</sup> ~~going~~  
~~Three~~ Three, ~~the clincher~~, the objective was Sluiskin. Not famous and  
 according to Monie ~~a walk-up~~ barely worth dignifying as an "Experience"  
 Climb. But in 1944, hiking with Lincoln-buddy Al to the <sup>7015-foot</sup> mountain's <sup>base</sup> ~~foot~~,  
 I'd wished I had the nerve to dare the heights. I didn't, then.

Now I did. Sluiskin Chief, highest of the summits, was a simple  
 rock scramble, ropes unnecessary. Sluiskin Squaw was a snow plod. The  
 satisfaction of settling a score with 1944 was immense. The price paid ~~x~~ in  
~~the~~ aggravation ~~by the mob~~ was minor -- if half the party was idiots, in  
 small non-menacing numbers idiots are rather entertaining. (Not so long  
 ago tours of insane asylums were a popular diversion of gentlefolk, and  
 what's a circus without the sideshow gallery of freaks?) Watching  
 avalanches tumble a vertical mile from the summit icecap of Rainier down  
 Willis Wall to the Carbon Glacier, knowing those white clouds were titanic

jumbles of ~~large~~ blocks of ice but seeing them as slow-flowing mists, impressed upon me as never before the monstrous scale of The Mountain. Finally, though Betty pooped out at Windy Gap she at least came for the hike, relieving my fears she might hide in the garret forever.

Said Monie, "Oh gosh, you don't want to miss Nisqually. That's always our very best practice."

Sluskin had been no sweat. One more weekend couldn't hurt. By attending the final Intermediate practice I'd show I could take everything the Course ~~had to~~ <sup>could</sup> dish out -- up to a point, anyhow. And it was a trip Betty could handle.

The one-two punch of Lundin-Chair had knocked right out of their ambitions the bulk of the March-April-May-dazed beginners. For my 40-odd fellow survivors I felt an almost-camaraderie. (Ah, what suffering we'd shared!) Even the Boy Scouts I viewed with tolerant amusement -- heck, I was young once myself. As for the 20-odd leaders and instructors, they were, if freaks, not uniformly absolute bungling fools; some began to <sup>vaguely</sup> resemble the heroes of Monie's advertisements. Chairman Cam had mellowed in the 3 weeks since I'd last seen him, was not the Fiend of Lundin but the next thing to genial. One could imagine him actually having friends among real human beings.

The trip itself, on a third consecutive Sunday of bright sun, was a <sup>plowed-out</sup> glory. From the/parking lot at Paradise we hiked snowfields high above the wooded knoll of Alta Vista, uppermost limit of alpine trees, practiced

the standing glissade (like skiing with very short skis -- the boots!)  
 on the descent to the Nisqually Glacier, ~~and~~ wove through crevasse fields  
 practicing the techniques of rope-handling amid gaping <sup>figures</sup> ~~pits~~ and of rescue  
~~the chill blue depths~~ ~~from those pits~~ by the bilgeri method, <sup>and then in</sup> ~~in~~ an icefall ~~we~~ practiced stamping  
 the dagger-sharp points of boot-gripping crampons (rented at the Co-op) ~~in~~  
~~balance~~ and using axes to hack airy staircases up gleaming ~~white walls~~ <sup>seracs</sup>  
~~Thrilling. The glacier was immense.~~  
~~Enchanting. I'd several times walked small glaciers, little more~~  
~~than snowfields: Now <sup>for me</sup> and thrilling was venturing far out on a glacier,~~  
 surpassed in size in the 48 states only by a couple of its <sup>Rainier companions.</sup> ~~near neighbors.~~  
~~I was entranced by serac towers, shining palaces designed by the Architect~~  
~~of Fairy, by icebox depths of crevasses into which we were lowered and from~~  
~~which we were rescued.~~ Forty feet down in the guts of the glacier was a  
 still-cold-spooky-quiet chamber of soft blue light. On the surface of the  
 glacier was the blinding glare of ~~a vast~~ whiteness extending below, ~~and~~  
 around, and up up up to the summit of Rainier, remote as Heaven, ~~and~~  
~~And~~ ~~Costly but~~ The Mountain, <sup>was huge!</sup> At 7000 feet I was as high  
 as I'd ever climbed above sealevel, and above <sup>rose</sup> ~~was~~ 7500 ~~feet~~ <sup>more</sup>  
 mountain. ~~Stunning. Appalling. Quazy, stirring thoughts of infinity.~~  
~~Magnificent.~~

~~I was glad I'd come. It was good ~~and~~ to feel the full~~  
~~immensity of the biggest damn chunk of Earth in the Northwest. And~~  
~~my superhiker realm was expanded beyond dreams. Rainier I'd never try~~  
~~aspire to, but to my domaine had been added a <sup>bright</sup> whole new world.~~

Henceforth I ~~would~~ roam not ~~merely~~ forests and meadows, snows and rocks.  
 Now ~~European~~ glaciers, too!

Bagley in June was one great ~~continuous~~ glow of sunburns, one loud chattering of climbers. Kermit, of course, with his grand scheme to do all the Majors on skis, was the star of the show. He'd knocked off St. Helens and Baker, had plots for Glacier over the Fourth of July and Rainier ("der meisterberg") in Mid-July and Olympus and Adams later on. ~~By the end of the year he'd permanently etch his name in alpine history.~~

I admired, not envied. I had my own plots, ~~to keep me quivering.~~  
 Never had I felt so alive, <sup>energy -</sup> so bursting, ~~with unreasoning energy.~~ Often, lest I explode, I'd borrow Kermit's bicycle and pump uphill through the campus to 45th Street and then, disdaining brakes, fly down past Parrington Hall and Meany Hall and Architecture Hall, scattering students, ~~and~~ escaping <sup>whistle-screaming</sup> ~~screeches~~ of campus cops by dodging into Bagley and stockroom.

The war with Crazy Art intensified. Firecrackers were a brief fad -- very brief, since each blast brought a gaggle of humorless professors scurrying with fire extinguishers and first-aid kits. Other bombs retained popularity, though, and I sent Art and company diving for cover by tossing one in their lab; the victory was the more complete because it was merely a paper bag puffed full of cigarette smoke which curled out ominously. Retaliation was swift and savage. I heard running feet and maniac laughter

and Art hastily set a 2-liter beaker on the window counter and fled. The cauldron boiled violently and blurped bubbles and steam and I hit the floor. No explosion forthcoming, I warily approached the hellish device; an innocent bystander, patiently waiting to buy chemicals, explained it was a piece of dry ice in soapy water.

With the warm days of summer the favorite weapon became the washbottle, a glass jar into which air is pumped by squeezing a rubber bulb and from which a stream of water then issues through a glass nozzle. Depending on how lovingly the nozzle is fashioned by stretching out glass tubing half-melted in a gas flame and cutting the cooled constriction with a steel file, the range is anywhere up to 15 feet or so. Typically a sneaky marauder would make a surprise attack and thoroughly wet my face and I'd leap through the window for a shootout. But once as I chased Art, his washbottle empty, the soaking of the back of my head disclosed he'd lured me into an ambush; I turned to confront three enemies and another three burst from a lab behind me and I was so drenched by the pitiless crossfire I went home at lunch and changed clothes.

I gained revenge by stealthily scaling the outside wall of Bagley to the window ledge of Art's lab and sniping at him and his gang. Busy with individual experiments they didn't spot me, hiding behind a column, and each, when hit, stared suspiciously at labmates. The overall mood of the group was rather ugly by the time my water was ~~exhausted~~ spent and I triumphantly revealed myself.

A couple days later I was a millenium away with Otto the ~~Great~~ Great, deep in the Cambridge Medieval History, when the herd came pounding down

the corridor, laughing hysterically, and Crazy Art shoved a fire hose  
in my face! And howled to an unseen accomplice, "TURN IT ON!" I fell  
off my stool ~~backwards~~ <sup>rear back</sup> and scuttled on hands and knees to the ~~back~~ of the  
stockroom and cowered, awaiting the bruising blow of high-velocity water.  
Art was really and truly crazy! He might damn well kill me! Only when no  
blow came and I saw the <sup>hysterical</sup> face-mass crowding the window, ~~none wanting to~~  
~~miss any detail of my craven posture~~ did I realize the hose wasn't  
hooked up.

*delaying the day of revealing* Among (and because of) the <sup>bergsteigers</sup>  
~~Partly because of~~ Bagley, I continued masquerading as a <sup>Superman</sup> ~~climber~~,  
<sup>Clark Kent</sup> concealing my true ~~superhiker~~ identity. ~~Among the engineer bergsteigers~~  
~~were guys who'd be sure in the mountains and though it was plainly impossible~~  
~~for me ever to be their alpine partners~~ I delayed the day when they'd see me  
for what I was, ~~not Superman but a Clark Kent~~.

I wasn't entirely a fraud. What do you call a person who's done  
Tooth (by the South Face) and Cruiser, plus Si (in winter alone) and Lundin  
(as leader) and Guye (by the East Shoulder, leading the rope) and  
Snoqualmie and Sluisin Chief and Squaw? "Superhiker" isn't quite  
sufficient. How about super-superhiker? Temporary semi-climber?

To give <sup>the devils</sup> ~~them~~ their due, the Mountaineers hadn't been a total <sup>waste</sup> ~~loss~~.  
<sup>actually</sup> With them if not/from them I'd gained new confidence on steep terrain,  
whether rock or snow. ~~Certainly~~ <sup>introduced to</sup> They'd ~~initiated~~ me ~~into~~ glaciers. <sup>big glaciers</sup>  
~~Perhaps most significantly~~ <sup>And</sup> they'd nearly doubled the length of my mountain  
<sup>frequently</sup> year. As a hiker I ~~occasionally~~ floundered in spring snow, and as a  
~~reluctant~~ skier in winter snow, yet considered it basically a nuisance,

*that is, very different from the little ones  
I'd walked, and the glacier centers, very  
different from the edges.*

~~to be endured.~~ The real mountain season started in early July when ~~the~~ high trails began melting free. But now April-May-June had become the virtual equal of July-August-September-October. If reds-yellows-blues of flowers were scarce, the austere crystalline brilliance compensated. If the highland summer was the ripe-fleshed Green Woman <sup>in me</sup> fondled by the ~~summit-passionate~~ romantic, the highland winter-spring was the virgin White Goddess worshipped by the ~~ascetic~~ classicist <sup>in me</sup>.

In my hiker's ignorance I'd supposed a tool, the ice ax, was ~~a~~ the weapon-scepter signifying an invader's dominion over a foreign land. I'd learned, however, that several simple techniques were as important, that a climber is distinguished not so much by uniform and armament as by his fluid motion through a land where he belongs.

"Heeling," nothing more complicated than stomping the boot heel decisively ~~into~~ the slope to compact firm platforms, permits one to ascend and traverse with the ~~grace of a dancer rather than the blundering of a bulldozer, and to descend by "plunge step" with the élan of a lancer ~~rather~~ rather than the doggedness of a sapper.~~

The "rest step," <sup>apparently</sup> ~~seemingly~~ a mere coordination of legs and lungs, in fact is a rhythm of the whole body, is a composure of mind and spirit. The trail-trained hiker, bored and depressed by <sup>infinite</sup> ~~endless~~ white monotony, attacks <sup>the hated enemy</sup> with banzai fury, slips and skids, gasps and sweats, and soon becomes ~~exhausted and~~ discouraged and quits. But when he patiently "tramp-walks" flat-footed on ~~the~~ levels and rest-steps up hills he moves



easily and steadily through the beautiful, the friendly snow.

The Mountaineers had given me the freedom of the snows and glaciers. They' also ~~had~~ given me new mountain homes -- Snoqualmie Pass, the <sup>retinue of</sup> Rainier, ~~hinterland.~~ You had to hand it to the <sup>freaks</sup> ~~bastards~~ -- they knew our <sup>hills</sup> mountains as did no other group. And virtually none of the lore accumulated over 40-odd years was written down, most was in their heads. The only way to share it was by going on their trips. Studying the summer's Experience Climb schedule, ~~pondering the names of the peaks~~ (Adams, Eldorado, Rainier, Shuksan, Gunn, Garfield, Buck, Hibox, Baker, Baring, Silvertip). I began toying with the notion of sticking around a while longer to mine some of this wisdom trove, high-grading <sup>the ore</sup> for the Snoqualmies and Sluiskins suitable for an independent anarchist superhiker.

For all the ~~anticipatory~~ dread, ~~in the event~~ I'd not been damaged by a 4-month stay in the club. (And Betty would recover.) The 3 weeks since my planned exit had been the most rewarding of all. What <sup>risk</sup> ~~xxxxxx~~ in a few more weeks?

<sup>risk</sup> What ~~xxxx~~ indeed. ~~Euphoria-blinded by three easy successes, I~~  
~~blundered into a trap.~~

The weekend of June 19-20 began pleasantly lulling. The drive to the southern reaches of the Washington Cascades, where I'd never been, was interesting, concluding in 40 miles of single-lane dirt road weaving through a forest empire beyond the <sup>farthest advance of the</sup> loggers' frontier. Above the rivers with

such exotic ~~new~~ names as Cowlitz and Cispus, above the ~~green sea~~ <sup>vastness</sup> of ~~green-treed~~ <sup>wooded</sup> ridges, ~~rose~~ <sup>stood</sup> the tall white volcanoes, St. Helens and Adams, and ~~the~~ eroded roots of still another volcano, the Goat Rocks.

The 6-mile hike was a ~~joy~~ <sup>picnic</sup>, starting at 4500 feet in sparse subalpine forest, ascending melting-out parklands (summer seemed to come earlier here than farther north) and fields of snowbank-crowding avalanche lilies to 7000-foot Mountaineer Camp. I wished I'd brought Betty along to sack out in the camp on the rounded crest of a lava-block ridge, beside a ~~white~~ torrent tumbling through ~~the~~ greening meadows, waterfalling down short cliffs, meandering ~~through~~ <sup>in</sup> moraine-ringed ~~basin of~~ lawns sprinkled with buttercups and little snowflake flowers. ~~Green Woman country, superb for romping with the nub-troop maid.~~ Another new home, ~~revealed:~~

~~But~~ I saw <sup>for future reference</sup> not felt <sup>in the present moment</sup> the beauty. For also here <sup>this weekend</sup> was fear. ~~Also here~~ <sup>above Green Woman country into hostile sky</sup> was ~~the sky~~. A vertical mile ~~into the upper atmosphere~~ shoved the brute ~~bulk of 12,202-foot~~ <sup>bulk</sup> Adams, in the Northwest second in ~~mass~~ and height only to The Mountain itself. Hubris had done me wrong.

Not the route scared. Our way ~~did not~~ <sup>didn't</sup> ascend <sup>strep</sup> icefalls of the Adams Glacier but the <sup>gentle</sup> ~~long~~ lava cleaver of the Northwest Ridge, obviously a boulder-hop, a trudge. Yes, a trudge -- to 12,202 feet.

Camp Mystery, 1938. Feeling (at 5000 feet) symptoms (false) of ~~solemnly warned against~~ the ~~mysterious~~ "mountain sickness." Subsequently laughing at my child's ~~hypochondria~~ <sup>being</sup> ~~alarm, hahaha~~ healthy and happy at 6000 feet, at 7000. Yet sometimes on a high ridge, wherefrom this lightheadedness? Probably weariness, ~~of the~~ ~~mountain~~, or the hot sun, or ~~the~~ high wind. The air's okay. Or is it? ~~And~~ what of 8000 feet, 10,000, 12,000? Lots of people breathe there.

Am I on the boundary?

Could I? Tales of barfing and ~~fainting~~<sup>staggering</sup>, staggering and ~~collapsing~~<sup>fainting</sup>.  
 Not everyone ~~could~~<sup>can</sup> breathe there.

Aftermath of the retreat from Lake Dorothy. First ~~feeling the Clock~~<sup>sound gradually fading under</sup>.  
 Hearing the "tick-tock, tick-tock." The ~~thudding of boots~~<sup>thudding of boots</sup>, ~~gradually~~<sup>gradually</sup>  
~~drowning out the sound~~. How long since I so much as speculated whether  
 I'd make 30? Yet ~~never~~<sup>deep within me</sup> unaware. As in the gas dream when the ~~impacted~~  
 wisdom tooth was yanked, always waiting for the ~~final~~ "tick" with no  
 answering "tock."

In the rich air of sealevel, of 5000 feet, of 7000, the Clock was  
 regular. In the Graywolf, on Tooth and Cruiser, all this spring, I'd  
 been wary of the Death from Outside, the smashing of the Clock. I'd  
 forgotten the Death from Inside, the slipping of ~~gear~~<sup>gear</sup> or breaking of  
~~axle~~ wheel, the momentary ~~giddy suspension~~ giddy suspension between  
 living tick and tockless swirl, ~~into oblivion~~. Now I remembered. ~~how~~  
~~I wondered~~. Here at Mountaineer Camp, at 7000 feet, the air sustained  
 the steady beat of 22 years. Up there on the ridge, on the lofty white  
 dome, in thin air of the sky, what derangement might there be of ~~oxygen~~  
~~starved blood~~, of the keeper-of-time?

Insanity to be here. ~~I wasn't thinking~~. Kermit's fault -- treating me  
 as if I were a ~~whole man~~<sup>barely-premature</sup>, unflawed, volcano-worthy. Scarlet-blazing  
 sunset clouds were my/elegy. Because there couldn't be any quitting. ↙

What sound in the night? Wind moaning through the streamlined clump  
 of dwarf pines in the lee of which I'd pitched my liferaft sail. Rain  
 rattling. Rescued from the brink!

Why not? Too late even  
 to ask.

No. Competing with loud moan the bellow of the Rough Beast:

"Two o'clock! Everybody up!"

A ropeleader who'd accepted the hospitality of my tarp obeyed. Off in blackness wavered his flashlight. And returned. ~~So~~ Drenched and shivering from cloudbursting gale he crawled <sup>back</sup> ~~bag~~ in ~~the~~ bag.

Cam howling here, shrieking there, ~~Cam conspiring with the storm.~~  
 Obscene) beamviolating tarp-cave.  
 Flashlight ~~brutally thrusting under tarp.~~ "Get out of there! Get up!  
 We're going! Now!"

Whined another guest, <sup>dismayed</sup> ~~appalled~~ beginner, "You don't climb in weather like this, do you?"

Roared Cam, "We try! We start! We at least get out of the sack! We don't cry until we're hurt!"

Beginner guest rebelled. And ropeleader guest. Not for me, surely, to be Loyalist to mad tyrant. ~~Up the Revolution!~~

What a lovely tempest. What a fine and funny night. Almost, ~~though~~ I pitied ~~the~~ Tall Parka flailing flashlight in blackness as if <sup>with the beam</sup> ~~without~~ he could <sup>flag</sup> ~~whip~~ ~~the~~ ~~wind~~ ~~into~~ ~~submission~~ ~~scourge~~ ~~this~~ slaves into submission. <sup>followerless</sup>  
 Maximum Leader was ~~alone~~ in the night. Nobody was getting up, not even the climb leader.

Or rather, <sup>nearly</sup> ~~just about~~ everybody was getting up -- but not to climb. Chuckled the ropeleader, "Not many guys picked spots as good as this. You should see it out there! Tents blowing down, tarps flying through the meadows." When we awoke in the bleak gray morning the mob of ~~200~~ 60-odd had diminished to an elite 20, the others <sup>having fled</sup> ~~fleeing~~ by flashlight to the cars. Only remaining were the few who'd taken shelter in the lee of the tree clumps -- and now <sup>I</sup> ~~one~~ clearly understood why the clumps were

streamlined, ~~why the tree-shaped thickets of tough pines pointed to the~~  
~~southwest.~~

Saved by the storm. A narrow escape. A damn good lesson. This,  
by God, was the end of the line.

It was definitely over. All over.

June 1948

Chapter 19

HUCKLEBERRY HERO

Delivered from evil. No longer a slave of ambition. Content with infinite riches in little room. Far from the madding crowd.

Look! In the sky! It's a bird! It's a plane! It's SUPERHIKER!

The last weekend of June would be the first of full and final freedom, the re-declaration of independence, the start of the harvest from seeds glumly planted in dark February and gloomily cultivated through the wintry spring.

Wherefrom to pick the commencement fruit? My old Olympic home? Too far across the water, better left for later-in-summer trips of several days or more. The ring of small delicacies around Rainier? Too soon to again approach so near such hugeness. The Monte Cristo mysteries viewed last year from Silvertip? Too misted as yet by ignorance. No, mouth-watering *it was* to study the menu of future feasts but this first luncheon inevitably must be in my new Snoqualmie Pass home.

Which of the untasted 15 Pin Peaks would it be? Not one of those adjoining the pass, easily devoured in a day. I wanted a weekend banquet with appetizers of wilderness forest and streams as prelude to the high entree.

"Huckleberry should be just right," said Monie. "It's 10 miles up Gold Creek to Joe Lake."

Huckleberry! I hungered for ~~a Snoqualmie, at most~~ a Lundin. That was more of a ~~stomach-turning~~ Cruiser.

"Oh heck, you've been looking at the wrong side. From the west it's a pinnacle but on the east there's a neat ridge. It's got a couple cheap thrills but anybody who can lead the Boiler Plate and the shoulder of Guye wouldn't blink an eye."

Okay, Huckleberry was the peak. The party was Betty and me. Not since La Bohn Gap had we taken a long twosome stroll. She'd be reassured by this affirmation of husbandly affection.

All I asked was that as a preliminary she fetch her ax from where she left it in May. Dutifully on Thursday she rode the bus to Snoqualmie Pass and hiked alone up Commonwealth Basin to the site of her avalanche. And returned that night empty-handed. The <sup>ice-ax</sup> mine had been gleaned clean by Mountaineer thieves. I'd have to shell out another 12 bucks.

I'd also have to get another partner because for some reason the damn female went into one of her 3-Day Mads and refused to go hiking on the weekend. Well, Professor Monie ~~Surely~~ would be pleased to attend the graduation exercises.

"Oh gee, Huckleberry isn't the kind of peak that pampers my neurosis. Anyway I got a lot of things to do in town."

Damn females altogether.

And damn revolutionaries. I knew what she had to do in ~~the~~ town. Do battle on the barridades. Up the Revolution. Or better say down the

Counter-revolution, the Repression, the Restoration.

Last summer the legislature's Canwell Committee preached the crusade. Now the Unholy Alliance of Seattle's Downtown Gang and the Eastern Washington appleknockers and manure-spreaders was besieging the University from without while from within their trusty hounds, the Board of Regents and the Administration, were treeing the Reds. My old hiking companion, Professor Phillips, was confident they were going to chew him up and spit him out. Why was he so cheerful at the ~~prospect~~ prospect of expulsion from the ivory tower? Because the eagle-screaming of the native American fascists <sup>entertained</sup> ~~entertained~~ a Marxist.

The fellaheen flapdoodle also amused a Spenglerian. I had to smile when the rabid mongrels went yapping and slathering after not merely Reds but Pinks -- and bust out laughing when they sniffed around the garret!

Who could keep a straight face at the Bourbons' fear that the clown with the clumsy feet and butterfly brain might topple their throne? Who could stifle hysterics at the spectacle of J. Edgar Gangbuster, nemesis of Dillinger, dispatching his Funny Bunch of Idiots to grill a naif who in adolescence hadn't realized AYD was an anagram of YCL? A pity Betty was so terror-stricken, that she lacked Professor Phillips' ability to chuckle all the way to the gibbet. Personally I felt belittled that no Fatheaded Bastard Inquisitors came flashing badges at me. Hell, if I took it in mind to overthrow the government I'd be a true menace. And I might just do it sometime, too. If I ever saw any point.

In this ring, ladies and gentlemen, the University witch hunt. And <sup>local</sup> in this, the purge of the/Democratic Party, whose enthusiasm for a genuine



New Deal occasioned Postmaster General Farley's description of the nation as "the 47 states and the Soviet of Washington." And here in the center ring, the pride of our circus, the greatest show on the Northwest Earth, the Boeing strike.

A strike? In 1948? Why any need? Seattle was a solid union town. Had been for years, thanks to the whiffs of grapeshot <sup>sprayed</sup> ~~loosed~~ by Napoleon Dave Beck, benevolently ruthless general of the Teamsters Union. Let a comrade union strike, let the First Consul crook his pinky to signal the Teamsters would honor the picket lines, and the strike was won.

But that was the 1930s. In the 1940s the Emperor forsook old company of sweaty <sup>proletariat</sup> ~~workers~~ and began hobnobbing with fellow monarchs. On new cronies he bestowed sweetheart contracts. (And let the rank-and-file beware of crying "Sellout!" As Dad knew well from his days of paying dues, heavy upon them would fall brass-knuckled hands of the Praetorian Guard of goons.) From ~~them~~ <sup>incongruous pals he received</sup>, as Byzantium bribed the barbarians, ~~he received~~ golden tribute and <sup>glittering</sup> ~~pretty~~ baubles, including elevation to that Olympus of Establishment Poo-Bahs, the Board of Regents of the University.

Flanks secured by Bought-Boss Beck, coffers overflowing from war profiteering, bitterness from a decade of New Deal contumely <sup>seething</sup> ~~boiling~~, the Downtown Gang set out to reconquer Seattle.

What Belisarius would lead them? None other than the flying-machine factory, which from a prewar local curiosity, a sort of hobby shop, had through production of armadas of Flying Fortresses and A-bomb-dropping Superforts swollen to immense size and enormous wealth, had become the gaudiest ornament of the ~~now~~ one-time sawmill-fishing-seaport village and now was prepared to <sup>take up arms as the</sup> ~~become chief~~ champion of oppressed capitalists.

During the war Boeing had sullenly endured the Aero Mechanics Union -- at the insistence of the meddling government which demanded that production lines roll on despite flagrant <sup>peasant</sup> violations of divine right. Now the war was over and the government in disarray. Now the villeins would learn who was master.

In winter the union sought a pay raise. Baloney, said Boeing. Let us discuss, said the union, let us bargain, let us -- in accordance with our contract -- arbitrate. Crap, said Boeing. Left no alternative, in April the workers hit the bricks. Bully, chortled Boeing, gleeful that the master plan was being so precisely implemented.

After letting the peons starve a while to teach humility, in early June Boeing dropped the Bomb. Out of the shadows came the Janizaries a-charging -- led by whom else but Sultan Beck! Forming a new sweetheart local of the Teamsters he began ~~xxxx~~ recruiting hunger-humbled strikers and importing gypsy scabs to reopen the plant.

All spring Monie's excitement had been growing, her time increasingly spent walking picket lines and attending rallies. It was the best entertainment since the Wobblies were raising hell in the woods of Western Washington and being lynched by <sup>the</sup> American Legion, ~~deputy sheriffs~~, since Seattle's General Strike of 1919 ~~which~~ was thought to be Lenin's first beachhead in the United States. Even the last best hope of the old-time union religion, Walter Routhar, had a team of observers in town; if Aero Mechanics lost heart the United Auto Workers stood poised to send in shock troops to <sup>tutor</sup> ~~show~~ Beck-Boeing thugs <sup>in</sup> ~~some~~ real big-league *free-style* head-busting.

There once was a union maid  
 Who never was afraid  
 Of spies and finks and company ginks  
 And deputy sheriffs who made the raid.

She always got her way  
 In the fight for higher pay,  
 She'd show her card  
 To the National Guard  
 And this is what she'd say:

"Oh you can't scare me,  
 I'm sticking to the Union,  
 I'm sticking to the Union..."

Dandy for Monie. Nice the Old Bolshevik was getting her kicks. So far as I was concerned it was just another boring chapter in the ending story. Full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. Reds and Whites, hell. It was the Blues and the Greens, the Blues and the Greens.

What burned me up about the Boeing shenanigans was they robbed me of a mountain partner.

Saturday, June 26. All dressed up and no place to go. That is, nobody to go with. Betty sulking. Monie striking. Trail buddies of old long since departed to other planets. The Bagley bunch on an alpine level unattainably more exalted than mine. No Mountaineer last resort <sup>available</sup> ~~possible~~ because no Climbing Course trip was scheduled.

What to do? Wander lonely as a cloud? Not to Huckleberry -- aside from the cheap thrills, too many collapsing snowbridges and melt-swollen streams for a sane solo. Go tamely valley-pounding then? Some fucking commencement that would be.

Newly free -- and stuck in the garret with stone-faced wife.

Halfway through the morning, day and weekend going, going, soon to be gone forever, never to be regained, a desperate inspiration. Except for Monie I knew beyond nodding acquaintance only one Mountaineer. Bill, a still-surviving beginner, had been assigned to the V-8 for the ride to the Nisqually practice. Who the hell was Bill? No blabbermouth. During the drive to and from Paradise I'd learned little. He was ~~about~~ <sup>roughly</sup> my age, hadn't been in Army or college -- but hinted bitterly at some other institution he didn't care to talk about, ~~nor I to ask~~. All I knew for sure was he had no car and, as a newcomer to Seattle, no friends. He too might be stranded ~~unaidedly~~ in town.

Hiking with a stranger. Like taking a mail-order bride. Which ~~was~~ wasn't necessarily a bad move if ~~one's~~ <sup>As</sup> demands were primitive. ~~like~~ <sup>were</sup> mine today. It wasn't hiking I needed him for. Hiking I could do alone. But I craved to play with a rope. That meant a body tied to the other end.

Dial the number, pop the question. Yes, <sup>he says,</sup> What've I got myself into? Picking ~~him~~ <sup>I gave him</sup> up ~~to give~~ the stranger a more intense <sup>scrutiny</sup> ~~look~~ than there'd been any call for on the Nisqually trip. Not much of a talker. No smiler. ~~at all~~. Rather a tough-looking monkey. What sort of institution had he been in? For what? A criminal maybe. An athlete certainly, with the medium-small wiry physique typical of the best rock-climbers. Huckleberry probably would bore the hell out of him. Well dammit, it was my car. If superhiker sport was beneath his dignity he could stay home. But when I diffidently mentioned the peak he shrugged. Fine by him.

Long past noon we turned off the highway east of Snoqualmie Pass -- right smack into the middle of a logging show. Looking quizzically at fresh-butchered forest, the stranger asked, "Where's your trail?"

My trip, my car, my trail. He spread himself a lunch of sandwiches and cookies and canned apple juice. I attacked the chaos, cussing athlete-stranger, damning the tree-killing, path-obliterating loggers. A sweating, gasping hour I floundered in jackstraw of logs and tangle of slash before finding tread. At 2 o'clock, ominously late for the planned day's hike of 10 miles, I returned to the V-8 and we hoisted packs.

First the logging jumble again. Next unmolested but equally disorder<sup>ed</sup> virgin forest -- brush to bull through, windfalls to crawl over <sup>and</sup> squirm under; obviously the Forest Service hadn't worked the trail since ~~before~~ the war. Then Gold Creek.

Bill looked at the roaring-foaming torrent. Was that a smile of scorn or frown of disgust? Silently the stranger sat on the bank and resumed lunch. My trail, my creek.

And my peak. Lost. Just 50 feet to the far bank. Just! Fifty feet of thunder. Toss in a stick and it ~~swirled~~ swirled downstream a mile a minute. Throw in a big rock and it went horridly bounding-thudding. So would a body. A drowned and battered body.

How will the athlete-stranger enliven Mountaineer campfires? "You should've seen this Manning character! Asks me to go climbing like he knows what he's doing and an hour from the car quits because he's afraid to get his footsies wet."

What was it Chairman Cam said in the night of the Adams storm? "Wo don't cry until we're hurt."

Doff boots and socks, pants and skivvy shorts, stow them in Trapper Nelson. Shoulder pack. <sup>Grasp</sup> ~~Grasp~~ ice ax. Poke shaft in white fury, jab spike

in unseen creek bed. Now dabble the left foot. Holy icewater! <sup>With</sup> ~~Push~~  
 tender bare toes <sup>grip</sup> ~~onto~~ cruel hard unseen boulders. Face upstream and <sup>immerse</sup>  
~~bring in~~ the right foot. Lift-spike-and-jam-down-again-QUICK a few inches  
 leftward, forward. Move left foot sideways. The right. And again  
 lift-and-jam the shaft. No feeling in feet. And now none in calves, and  
 now none in thighs, the flood boiling higher as I advance to the center.  
 Turmoil engulfs bare ass, bludgeoning noise stuns brain, hypnotizing ~~suff~~  
 close-to-eyes rush <sup>of water</sup> unsettles balance. Falter and I'm gone, bounding-thudding.  
 Water too foam-thin for swimming, plenty wet for drowning. As far now to  
 go back to safety as <sup>ahead</sup> ~~forward~~ to safety. Keep legs wide apart, dead feet  
 firmly <sup>amid</sup> ~~in~~ boulders, lean into relentless thrust, lean on the saving ax.  
 Legs numb, private parts burning, head spinning. ~~Don't think downstream~~  
~~thoughts. Don't think.~~ Flood is receding! I see my knees! My ankles!  
 I'm over and out! Bless the ax, the third leg that transforms hiker into/  
 superhiker!

Dancing and howling in the ~~agony of the~~ rebirth of ~~dead~~ nerves,  
 I didn't notice Bill's crossing. He only commented, pulling on pants and  
 boots, "You could get yourself castrated that way."

Again the trail -- briefly. Scattered snowpatches merged in solid  
 snowcover. Blazes led through forest gloom -- high morning overcast had  
 thickened, lowered onto peaks, was sinking ~~down~~ into valley.

In premature 6 o'clock twilight, no more blazes. Or rather too many  
 blazes. Blazes on every damn tree. ~~Pondering the matter,~~ I realized that  
 for the last hurrying hour I'd been guided by scars on trunks made not by  
 pathfinder's hatchet but by falling trees and tumbling rocks -- "lost man's  
 blazes." God knew where we were. I didn't.

My trip, my route. Stranger said nothing, sat in snow eating an orange and smoking a cigarette. I studied the Snoqualmie Quad. The sketchy old sheet, surveyed in 1903, showed Gold Creek -- which matched with the roar below in woods to the right. It showed Joe Lake -- which had to be somewhere up the steep hill to the left, a thousand feet above our ~~guessed~~ <sup>presumed</sup> elevation of about 3500 feet. It showed Joe Creek flowing from the lake down to Gold Creek. There was the rub. It showed one tributary to Gold Creek in our guessed vicinity. We'd waded a dozen already and heard more ahead. Which was not a springtime snowmelt stream, was the year-around Joe? That certainly was a smirk on the stranger's face. The jailbird was rehearsing the ~~family~~ <sup>ruffians.</sup> story he'd tell other Mountaineer athlete-thugs.

Desperately I nominated a torrent to be Joe and furiously kicked steps ~~steeply~~ upward along its course. Mocking Bill followed. As we detoured around waterfalls and cliffs in the dusk I reflected that if this weren't Joe we'd pretty soon be tying ourselves to trees for a non-sleeping 6 hours of night -- 360 minutes, ~~or~~ 21,600 seconds. The stranger wouldn't share my misery. He'd keep warm on thoughts of future merriment.

But he was not to have his laugh for I had mine. At 8 o'clock steep snow rounded ~~over~~ to flat snow and we entered the cirque basin of 4500-foot Joe Lake.

My lake. My victory. Not the athlete but I had found the logger-demolished trail, proved possible the frightful ford, solved the puzzle of blazes, identified Joe Creek from countless candidates -- I had defeated 10 miles of wilderness and beaten onrushing night -- and all in the 10 hours since I dialed the stranger's number. To give him his due, he bore the disappointment graciously, indeed seemed quite cheerful.

Clouds hid 6300-foot Huckleberry, our tomorrow scramble -- assuming the clouds didn't churn up a storm. If so the trip already was a superhiker triumph, the camp itself sufficient prize. A hole in the outlet of the frozen lake supplied water, obtained by tying a cord to the wire handle of a Ten Can and casting it in the blue-cold pool. A clump of hemlocks and firs provided a flat patch of snowfree ground for sleeping under my lifefaft sail. A snag gave ~~my~~ bark for a blaze that dried clothes and warmed bones and boiled a Ten Can of noodles and chipped beef and erupted a glory of light in ghost-gray night.

On soft bough bed I ~~quickerly~~ slipped off in happy sleep. Almost I could've been at Parsons again. This was how things were supposed to be. If Bill was a stranger he was a proper partner. It is, after all, sort of sissy to go out with girls.

At 8 o'clock serene deep sleep was broken by brightness, warmth. Wake! The Sun! Quickly from bags and tarp and trees, out in the plain of blinding snow to see -- to see (oh God!) the Sultan's Turret.

A peak named for a fruit ought to be soft. If this ~~xxxxxx~~ screeching splinter was a scramble I was George Leigh Mallory. Damn Monie!

Bill was slobbering down gruel, gobbling figbars, gulping cocoa. I didn't recall ever seeing him in action amid the springtime mobs. But the obscene <sup>lust</sup> ~~enthusiasm~~ for oatmeal -- here, now -- proved him a nerveless athlete. The enemy. The enemy I thought I'd escaped. The enemy who ~~could~~ <sup>would</sup> spread the news of my humiliation throughout the club. <sup>And</sup> Eventually word <sup>even</sup> would get to Bagley, so not by leaving the club could I avoid ~~the~~ pitying eyes.

~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~



How would he react to the announcement I was quitting? Perhaps from respect for incipient comradeship, now ended, he'd be embarrassed. More likely, ~~although~~ <sup>he outraged by</sup> he'd ~~get huffy about~~ <sup>he'd</sup> my wasting his time. Maybe ~~was~~ <sup>he'd</sup> bust a gut ~~out~~ laughing.

The words were in my throat but I could no more get them out than get oatmeal in. He routinely packed rucksack, and I mine. Coiled rope slung over shoulder, he began walking. I too.

We crossed the white lake and stepkicked, switchbacked a thousand feet and more up a snow gully to the crest of the ridge. In a patch of melted-out heather at the base of the first violent ~~the~~ leap of rock we rested. From rucksack he pulled a bunch of grapes and offered me a handful; only their juice lubricated passage through salivaless mouth into constricted gullet. Busy-jawed stranger swung eyes in a circle, over shining snows and warm-brown rocks of peaks, <sup>glowing</sup> ~~then~~ green forests of valleys. The cliff above -- why didn't he look at the cliff? Of course, I ~~wasn't~~ <sup>didn't</sup> either. But we had to talk about it. I had to tell him. <sup>Yet if.</sup> ~~if~~ I tried to speak now grapes would erupt from stomach and shoot out mouth like half-masticated bullets.

He flipped away ~~a~~ cigarette, donned ~~tanishxxxxxx~~ tennis shoes, ~~and~~ uncoiled ~~the~~ rope. Decisive action. Time was running out. He tossed me a rope-end and mechanically I started tying in with a bowline-an-a-bight.

"Say," he interrupted, "You ever seen the bowline-on-a-coil? My Nisqually instructor showed it to us. He was in the Mountain Troops and said it was all they used there."

He demonstrated the new knot. I was impressed -- and tranquilized. What the hell was I worrying about? I'd follow the athlete exactly

as I'd followed Monie on Tooth and Cruiser. He'd never guess the truth.

The Hero of ~~2~~ Huckleberry walked up heather to the cliff, ~~unuly~~ coolly inspected the terrain, and said, "I can belay you from here."

WHAT?

Busy settling into his stance he didn't notice my daze. How come? The rope had two ends. How come I was stuck with the leader end? Couldn't we at least discuss? Why not?

The twitch at the corner of his mouth told why. He knew. My refusal of the oatmeal, ~~awkwardness~~ <sup>gagging of</sup> with the grapes, gave me away. The rapist or murderer or whatever was not to be deprived of his sadistic sport.

"Belay on," he declared and I lept upward as if goosed, the 60-foot cliff as blurred as the wall of Cruiser. And not here, as there, a taut rope from above holding me securely to life, nor a witch-friend who was cruel but kind. Social pressure by a bunch of crummy athletes was pushing Monie-betrayed superhiker to a climber's grave.

No climbing with the eyes, no three-point suspension, no hold-testing, no balance, no rhythm. No memory of how I got up. Bill followed slowly and smoothly, with ill-concealed irony pretending to envy my hectic rush.

We clambered along sides ~~to~~ <sup>and</sup> over tops of a series of ridge-top gendarmes. Easy enough. Nerves steadied. We ~~passed~~ crossed the top of a staircase-gully leading ~~back~~ <sup>simply</sup> back down to the heather. The 60-foot blur would not have to be descended. My line of retreat was open. Hairbreadth Harvey saved again!

<sup>Because</sup> who says retreat? Close ahead was the final hands-in-pockets heap of frost-wedged boulders. I bite my thumb at you, athlete! You'll not

tattletale to Mountaineers and Bagleyites the truth about Manning's yellow streak! Where's your evidence -- a distaste for oatmeal, a lack of enthusiasm for grapes? Blithely I walked onto Huckleberry's summit.

Only it wasn't. Reeling I stared down to a <sup>knife-edge</sup> ~~narrow~~ notch and down down down the drainpipe-plummeting chimneys on ~~xx~~ either side, and up up up a hundred and more vertical feet to vintage of poison wine, the true and horrid Huckleberry.

Sardonic stranger pointed ~~down~~ to a <sup>shelf</sup> ~~block-of-rock~~ in the notch.  
 "I can belay you from there."

The nights at Camp Marion. The days in the Graywolf. The hours on Cruiser. The minutes on the Haystack. I'd confronted and escaped Them, was done with Them. Mountaineer accomplices had sought to lure me into Their ambushes but I'd dodged free. Three hours ago in the sack I was safe. And now <sup>was</sup> ~~am~~ caught.

The Wicked Witch, these 2 years patiently plotting -- was she, on her picket line, cackling? The Rough Beast of the Tall Parka -- was he dry-washing hands with evil glee?

Agent of Old Ones-Mountaineers recruited from prison, perpetrator of such crimes that my blood would pass unnoticed on his hands, mercilessly announced, "Belay on."

The cream of the jest was that of my own free (hah!) will I must go to my doom. By all my past I was commanded to attack the redoubt of the Old Ones.

Attack alone. For what's a belayer? If above, as on Tooth and Cruiser, guardian of life and limb. If below as on Guye or Lundin, a fall

impossible, a mere observer. If below as here, bearer of bad tidings to widow and parents, guide to lead rescue party to the carrion. Peril is not shared by Number Two. Alone is Number One.

As ~~I know~~ <sup>I've known</sup> from ~~childhood~~ <sup>childhood</sup> star-scared childhood it must happen one day, walk automaton-stiff to meet the Thing of the Nightmare, no longer chasing, now <sup>patiently</sup> waiting. Up from notch over blocks of rock onto broad ledge. Up ledge to wide smooth slab. In pitiable non-athlete crouch creep up slab. Head bumps something. Look up. The cliff.

Recall the funny story Monie told about the two Mountaineers who made the first ascent. On the summit, before attempting to descend this cliff, they wrote their wills on shirtcuffs. How she cackled at the poor duffers of olden times! In the 30 years since, Huckleberry has been progressively downgraded from "impossible" to "for experts only" to "an easy day for a lady."

But I'm no lady. Above hangs a flower-pot ladderway, goat hair <sup>clinging</sup> ~~climbing~~ to plants -- a garden path for mountain goats. But I'm no goat.

Convulsively fling upward into flowers -- and ~~the~~ rope tightens around waist. Totter backward toward emptiness.

"SLACK!"

Answers assassin from notch, "Sorry!" Yes, he's sorry -- sorry I'm so slow <sup>at</sup> ~~about~~ killing myself, so sorry he's trying to help me along.

Wiggle along goat path, palsied hands clutching flowers. Lean on Earth, beautiful Earth. Do not, as suggested by the decievers, lean out on <sup>awful</sup> ~~deadly~~ Sky.

A sudden plateau. Pull body over edge. Lie face down sniffing heather bells -- red bells, white bells, yellow bells. Ah to creep into these bells as are the merry bees, drink nectar of life, and buzz off in joy!

Impatient query from below. Belay up stranger-athlete-dirty-rotten-villain. He commences lunch. An interminable hour under heavy-glaring sun he pops grapes in mouth, crunches Rye Tack, chews cheese and chocolate, exclaiming at heat-shimmering horizons and the huge delicious ice cream cone of Rainier. I'm about to faint. From sunstroke? Or Old Ones ~~all~~ ~~around~~, waiting? Not Their hired gun do They menace. He, Number Two, will survive with a smile. It's Number One ~~who~~ who's going to get it. On the descent. Now.

Bill leaps up, eager for the denouement. Hah! He's forgotten the coward's trump! I'll outsmart him with a rappel. Search for solid anchor of rock or shrub. Naught but fragile flowers. I must climb down. And that I <sup>succeeded in climbing</sup> ~~climbed~~ up means nothing for ~~now~~ I must lead <sup>down</sup> with blind-clumsy feet, momentum of body reinforced by ever-pulling gravity. First, write will on cuff? My shirt is wool. Anyway nothing to leave widow but a couple hundred books and the V-8.

Athlete scampers down to notch. "Belay on!"

Sit on edge of flower plateau. Gorgeous blossoms. One last time sniff perfumes of Earth. Look up to Heaven -- no, I knew no rope would be dropped by angels. Look down to Hellfire void. This is the way the world ends. *Whimper.*

Lower legs over brink. Gingerly set feet in a flower pot. Vicious rope <sup>jerk</sup> ~~draw~~ taut! Spread wings to fly! Our Father, <sup>which art wherever,</sup> here I come, ready or not!

"SLACK!" ~~X~~ Wail it, sob it. "SLACK SLACK SLACK!"

"Sorry!" calls ~~hypocrite~~ hypocrite vulture.

But that was his last shot at me. Miraculously, once over the brink to the first flower pot I saw the goat path spreading highway-wide. In <sup>d</sup>seconds I was at the notch. In minutes we were sprawled in the heather swilling a jug of grapejuice left cooling in a snowbank. Only remaining now was to pull on boots, flash down the snow gully in standing glissade, riding boots like short skis, and break camp, hoist packs, and ramble loose-legged 10 miles down the valley, exulting in icy ford and smashing through loggers' jackstraw, and drive the V-8 to North Bend for hamburgers and milkshakes, and home to the garret. The same garret I left just 26 hours ago. But I was not the same. Nor ever would be again.

Relaxing in the heather, drinking grapejuice, I was baffled by the athlete-assassin. Tight-mouthed before, now he was giggling-gibbering. Rock-steady before, now he had trouble lighting <sup>a</sup>cigarette with shaking hands.

~~Revelation.~~ Review the weekend. Why did he wait at the V-8 while I found the trail? Because he'd no idea where to look. Why did he hang back at the ford? Because he didn't know how to cope with the flood. Why did he leave it up to me to follow blazes and decide which creek was Joe? Because he'd been lost all day. And why did he compel me to lead? Because he didn't dare. Shit, he didn't even know how to belay ~~properly~~. He was no athlete. He was practically a Betty. I could forgive <sup>Bill</sup>him for damn near killing me. Hell, I might even learn to like him.

"Curses!" I hear ~~the Old Ones~~ Them muttering. "Foiled again!"

Where did They go? Vanished when I set foot on the goat highway.  
<sup>on the descent</sup>  
^

Darned if I didn't ~~sort of~~ miss Them.

No, that's too much. What I missed was not Their enfolding me but the ecstasy of squirming loose. What I missed was not the terror but the release. Yet there couldn't have been the ejaculation without the foreplay.

They were gone from this peak, never again would we embrace here, only <sup>once</sup> ~~a single time~~ can one be a Huckleberry hero. Where were the Old Ones now? Across the valley, on Chimney Rock. Far south, on Rainier. All around the Cascades and Olympics on a thousand peaks.

What madness stirs? What dread lust?

July 1948

Chapter 20

TWO MILES TALL

March, April, May, and June. Total weekends, 17. Two unavoidably lost visiting parents, hers and mine. The other 15 spent snowshoeing, skiing, technique-practicing, climbing. Heft the bag: Big Si, Little Si, Lundin, Guye, Snoqualmie, Sluisin, Huckleberry. Plus a glacier on Rainier and a tempest on Adams.

Surge into July on the momentum of seven consecutive Monday mornings of coming to Bagley with face blistered by sun or bleached by rain, legs languid-loose from pounding trail (a little) and plowing snow (a lot), blood dehydrated by the Sunday sweating that builds a thirst that takes until Tuesday to ~~slack~~<sup>slake</sup> with delicious water and ambrosial beer, brain a kaleidoscope of glories, lips and ears a-flapping in the exchange of exploits.

This is the rhythm of the week: the Monday rapture-revery, the Tuesday cud-chewing contentment, the Wednesday ~~reinforcement~~<sup>enthrallment</sup> by ~~reinforcement~~<sup>blurred</sup> snapshots picked up from the drugstore, the Thursday anticipation of the next adventure, the Friday checking of gear and buying of food, the Saturday departure for the hills to do it all over again. This is the life -- the climber's life.



Yeah, climber. In my farewell to the <sup>summit pitch</sup> ~~Final Cliff~~ of Huckleberry I realized I could run up and down that goat highway no hands, no sweat, all day. On the descent I'd exulted in the void below, the ropelessness above. If I could be the lonesome hero-loader of Huckleberry I surely could follow bigtime heroes on Experience Climbs. Not every peak on the list. But except for the likes of Rainier, why not have a fling, play out the string? Our club dues were paid through the end of the year. A shame to waste the money. 1949 was soon enough to settle down as superhiker.

Coming up, on the first 3-day weekend of the summer, the Experience Climb of Eldorado. Never heard of it. Well, 2 years ago I'd never heard of Tooth or Cruiser or Huckleberry. A promising name. A large peak, said Monie, and rarely climbed, yet within the plodding ability of even a Betty. Everybody was going -- all the Old Faithfuls, all the Intermediate students who'd been our instructors and would be our ropeleaders, all the surviving Elementary students. I didn't mind. I sort of looked forward to mingling with the mob again. One can develop a taste for ~~visiting~~ zoos and insane asylums. And there were bound to be openings for a bit of discreet bragging about Huckleberry.

Friday afternoon, July 2. Stomping up to the stockroom window came Kermit the Hermit. Accompanied by an amazingly almost-genial Crabby Dick. Never before had I seen him smile. Nor had I ever smiled at him; as an undergraduate he'd played center on the University basketball team, no crime in itself but my policy was to distrust persons a foot taller than me.

"Hey!" shouted Kermit, standing barely a yard away but wanting to make sure he was heard. "What you bagging this weekend?"

Eldorado.

"Oh BAH! Good berg, terrible schwarm! You better come with us -- we're going after Gletschergipfel! On der skis! For der schuss!"

Amended Dick, "Skis bah! That's horseshit this time of year. He's busting his back hauling boards, the rest of us are walking."

Translation, translation. Even if I knew German the Kermit jargon would baffle. "Gletschergipfel." Glacier Peak!

"We're doing a new route! A possible first ascent, an erstaussteig! Everybody goes up the north or south side but we think we've spotted a way up the west side!"

Added Dick, "The last time ~~there~~ we sure as hell found all the ways not to go up the west side."

"You don't want to hold hands with der bobel of mouldy Mountaineer scheisskopfs!" cried Kermit. "You want to come with us!"

Bagleyite bullies bellowing and towering -- what choice did I have? Eldorado was obviously preposterous.

Hearing my change in plans, Betty pouted the least bit and then allowed as how she could tolerate my absence from her side a third weekend in a row, that it wouldn't bother her to try Eldorado on her own. While being rescued from Lundin she'd met a lot of nice people -- nicer than some people she'd gone hiking with.

A Major. 10,430 feet above saltwater, unsurpassed in Washington except by Rainier, Adams, and Baker. Too deep in the range to be commonly

viewed from lowlands. Never heard of by the average Puget Sounder, entirely overlooked by school geography books and Chambers of Commerce. A secret volcano known solely to initiates.

Not until 1942, atop Surprise, did I discover its existence. Just once had I approached close, on Sulphur in 1946, and then could merely guess the cloud-buried ~~hugeness~~ <sup>enormity,</sup> Subsequently I'd often seen the white cone shining on the far-north horizon, most recently from Huckleberry, and among gestating plans was a someday exploration there.

The meadow slopes and moraines I'd been planning to explore. Not the high ice. The volcano bulk was intimidating. Pile all my peaks together and they'd be a pimple beside the massive mound.

And the summit. 10,430 feet! More than 3000 feet higher than I'd ever climbed. A giant step. Could I so soon forget the danger-thrill ~~felt~~ on Adams?

Yet Adams demanded an upward vault of 5000 feet, Glacier only 3000. In suspect high air I'd be a quick run or stagger down to the proven security of 7000 feet. After all, Eldorado was 8875 feet and I'd resolved to test myself that far. Glacier was just a stretch farther. The Clock ~~would~~ <sup>feel</sup> would give warning. At first alarm I could sprain an ankle, ~~feel~~ a twinge of appendicitis, retreat without public dishonor.

Remember the Adams fear, yes. But remember too the Joe Lake fear. See how that day ended.

And what if -- just if -- I could breathe at 10,000 feet? Bagging a volcano! Who could've dreamed, last February? Not me. Newly Huckleberry strong I could, I did.

The dented rusty prewar sedan labored to the curb and stalled. Trapper Nelsons were lashed to front fenders. The open trunk lid

(secured by ropes) revealed more packs. I looked in the window to see more gear and not Kermit and Dick only but three more Bagleyites.

I reminded Kermit the V-8 was handy.

"Oh bah! Two cars would be a waste of gas! Plenty of room!"

Crushing into a corner of the back seat to make room for me, <sup>tucking</sup> ~~making~~ knees of too-long legs under ~~his~~ chin to make room for my pack, Crabby Dick <sup>thought</sup> ~~obviously-felt~~ otherwise. Quite hospitably, though, he grumped, "If you don't come with us we'll just have to cruise around looking for a hitchhiker willing to pay a penny a mile."

Said another Bagleyite, "He tried to get his mother to come along but she refused to pay the full Mountaineer rate."

Said another, "It won't be so bad after he fillets us and pours in the olive oil."

The honor of being invited to share the hero's adventure diminished. Also the pleasure.

Past Everett on Highway 99, as I was about to ask for an emergency stop at a hospital to have gangrenous legs amputated, a tire <sup>flattened</sup> ~~collapsed~~ under the overload. Putting on a spare (requiring emptying of trunk to get at it) permitted walking up and down the shoulder to restore circulation.

Sardine-packed again, it struck me we were staying too long in Puget Sound lowlands, were driving far north of the latitude of Glacier Peak. I now learned we were not heading directly for the mountains. Kermit was applying for a faculty position at the teachers' college in Bellingham. On Saturday?

"He could've got an appointment during the week," grouched Dick, "But that would've meant going up and back empty."

"You have to understand," explained another, "Kermy's in training for the Olympics. ~~He~~ He's clinched ~~a~~ a spot on the all-America cheapskate team but wants to beat out Jack Benny ~~and the Number One skater~~ for the gold medal."

"Oh bah!" yelled happy Kermit. "You guys seem to think I love you for your money! <sup>You're</sup> ~~That's~~ wrong! It's your stimulating company, your sparkling conversation! Your friendship is the most important thing in the world to me! I'm not even charging you for the extra mileage!"

"A free ride?" hollered Dick. "We're getting a free ride to Bellingham? You mean to say that right this minute I'm sitting in your car and it's not costing me money? I should be delirious with joy. Tell me, why am I not happy?"

"Because," said our back-seat companion, grimacing at ~~the~~ <sup>stabbing</sup> rib-thrusting ~~of the~~ horns of my Trapper Nelson, "You've got an ice ax up your ass."

In Bellingham Kermit stopped at a gas station -- avoiding the pumps. <sup>"He's trying to wear the poor bucket," explained Dick, "Careful, Kermy!"</sup> ~~"Careful, Kermy!" warned Dick.~~ "Get too close and ~~this poor bucket~~ <sup>it'll</sup> ~~might~~ see that other peoples' cars are fed something besides stove oil and ~~dirty~~ paint-remover."

Jovial Kermit ducked into the restroom and emerged in suit and tie, ready for his meeting with the college president. Waiting for him on the deserted campus we regained use of limbs. Pain alleviated, hunger pangs <sup>were</sup> ~~made themselves~~ felt. When professor-to-be returned and we retraced our way southward through the lowlands on 99, requests were made for a restaurant halt.

"It's late! Got to get to the trail!" declared suddenly-stern Kermit, for emphasis thumping foot ~~on floorboard~~ to floorboard the accelerator, as if that could increase the speed of the wheezing old beast above 40.

Said Dick, "Kermie hasn't seen the inside of a restaurant since the price of hamburgers rocketed to 15¢."

<sup>Cried</sup>  
~~Said~~ another, "Gawdammit, Kermie, I'll buy you a hamburger!"

Said Dick, "You're missing the point. It isn't just his own money he hates to spend. He hurts ~~xxx~~ in the wallet when he sees any money spent."

Death by starvation was prevented by <sup>death of a tire</sup> ~~digging~~ Digging from trunk of spare -- the second spare -- allowed digging from packs of trail food. We survived, but not gladly. Cheese and crackers are weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable consumed by a hamburger-stand-lined highway (except, of course, <sup>at the point</sup> where the tire collapsed) <sup>with</sup> ~~where~~ breezes waft <sup>ing</sup> maddening aromas of pickles, onions, and hot grease.

After we turned east off 99 opportunities frequently arose to recover from sardine paralysis. Entering the mountain front on ~~the~~ rough, much-cracked concrete of the narrow, twisty Stillaguamish valley highway, tires began popping like a string of firecrackers. With the third and <sup>last</sup> ~~final~~ spare deployed, Kermit whiled away the afternoon fiddling with tire irons and cold patches and pump.

Muttered Dick, "When other people make a passenger car into a truck they buy tires with tread. But Kermie knows a wrecking yard where you can buy baldies for two bits apiece, five for a buck."

By fits and starts we stuttered up the North Fork Stillaguamish River, passing through cow pastures and second-growth forests to Darrington.

From that mouldering, half-abandoned logging town we jounced along chuckholes and mudholes of the grandiloquently-called Mountain Loop "Highway" beside the Sauk River, then turned off on a rougher set of ruts up the Whitechuck River. From scattered white billows floating in the Puget Sound sky we'd journeyed under massy gray clouds slicing the summits from peaks, obliterating the sun; no stimulating views eased monotony and anguish, no ~~was~~ bright <sup>nest</sup> light ~~and~~ ~~emotional~~ ~~deepening~~ darkness of spirit. When we seemed doomed to eternity in the miser's clunker, at 4 o'clock the road ended. For a 3-hour trip we'd been underway 8 hours. 4 o'clock. A hell of an hour to begin a 9½-mile hike.

Hiking and climbing with Kermit since Boy Scout days sufficiently explained Dick's crabbiness. But he had other cause as well. Since leaving farmlands west of Darrington we'd been driving through fir-hardwood forests of steadily diminishing age and height, scrubby second-growth dating from railroad ~~logging~~ logging of 10 and 20 and 30 years ago. In the recently-vandalized Whitechuck valley the fireweed and alder and vine maple thinly masked piles of charred logs. (This is clearcut logging: whack down everything that grows, ~~and~~ haul to mill the trees you want, burn the shit out of the rest.) The final half-mile of road traversed death-brown desolation of a fresh clearcut. Bulldozers stood poised at the trailhead to continue the advance, after the holiday weekend, into <sup>living</sup> ~~xx~~ virgin timber.

"THE GAW DAMN BASTARDS!" exploded Dick. "This is all new since last summer! Jesus Christ! When I first came here with the Scouts in 1940 we started hiking right where the Whitechuck joins the Sauk. We'd been on the trail 9 miles, a good long day, before we got this far. Big trees the

whole way, almost like the rain forests in the Olympics. Dammit, 9 miles of valley put through the grinder in 8 years! At this rate we'll ~~be~~ be driving to the edge of the glaciers in 6 or 7 years."

Hidden Lake, Silver Creek, Gold Creek. Now the Whitechuck, half lost before I even knew it. In my dream vision the unknown North Cascades lay far beyond the logging frontier, free from pain, a monastery retreat secure for my lifetime. But if the barbarians were gutting the Whitechuck, where, outside Olympic National Park, could one run? Having helped last winter to protect Olympic Park, what was Conservationist Dick doing about this outrage?

"Grying a lot, mostly. If you don't like what's happening in a National Park you can gripe to somebody and they'll listen and once in a while ~~even~~ do something about it. Write letters bitching to a National Forest and they don't even answer. If you're not a logger they won't talk to you. I remember thinking as a kid the Forest Service was practically the same as the Park Service, they were both in the business of protecting the country. Well, it was pretty much true then but now all the Forest Service knows how to do is <sup>chop</sup> ~~chop~~ chop chop!"

Thrilling, the Friday prospect of adventuring with heroic Kermit in mysteries of the primeval North Cascades. Depressing, the Saturday reality. Faust was a grubby penny-pincher. The monastery-wilderness was the shithouse of dirty rotten loggers. On top of that, the weather was looking lousy.

No religious awe did I feel in cathedral miles of huge and ancient ~~Douglas~~ Douglas fir and hemlock and cedar, chorale hours of green-and-white



~~roaring~~ river. In mind's eye I saw clearcuts, heard turgid rumble of muddy, slash-choked sewer.

At 8 o'clock, arriving at Kennedy Hot Springs, another jolt. People! Hike 9½ miles and not escape people? I'd supposed the one other car at the trailhead belonged to some fisherman working near-road stretches of the river, never imagined we'd have to share the upper valley. Except in Rainier Park and at alpine lakes that attract the trashy crowd of ~~frout-strangl~~ ~~fishermen~~ <sup>hardly ever</sup> I'd ~~practically never~~ met another party on a trail. Well, the trespassers weren't total strangers. Four more Bagleyites. Nevertheless our elite band of Gletschergipfelsteigers now numbered 10. Elite! A panzer division. ~~Each~~ Fuhrer Kermit had a nerve scorning the Mountaineer schwarm.

Sunday, 5 a.m. Gray dawn. Why no bustle in the forest? Pulling on of boots, packing of rucksacks? Where is hero leader? A mist began to fall and still in bag I stood up and hopped from the mossy nook where I'd sought a measure of solitude into one of the two leanto shelters. My thump-thump-thump entrance woke Crabby Dick.

"Isn't it time to leave?" I brusquely asked.

"Leave!" he snarled. "It's pouring down rain!"

He sank back in crabby sleep. Nobody else stirred. By now the Mountaineers were high on Eldorado. Not to be cowed by a drizzle were they.

Eventually slugabeds crawled from bags to cook breakfast -- and cook and cook and cook. When breakfast was finished they commenced a leisurely lunch that obviously would continue to suppertime. All these months I'd done homage to dauntless Bagley bergsteigers. Shit. They were sackhounds. Gut-stuffers. Sunshine soldiers. Actually, ~~no~~ except for Kermit none of these guys were among the Bagleyites I'd thought of as potential -- or at least desirable -- mountain companions. <sup>Bagley</sup> ~~Bagley~~ might not be a lost cause. <sup>mangey mungy</sup> ~~mangey mungy~~ This ~~mangey mungy~~ gang of mooks was.

I should've gone to Eldorado. Betty was there. My Huckleberry partner. Scurvy brush-apes. Raw-boned female phys-ed teachers. Hyperthyroid Boy Scouts. Necrophiliac instructors. Rabble-rousing demigods. Tall Parka ~~was~~ wielding ~~cat-o'-nine-tails~~ cat-o'-nine-tails. The complete menagerie. Lots of laughs there today. And it would be just my luck for the jokers to bag the peak.

I walked the footlog over the river to the hot springs, where a half-dozen stupid-blissful engineers were immersed in the steaming well of diarrhetic water several yards from the cold-clean ~~at~~ stream. On the mucky cliff above them a couple dozen nonchalant mountain goats who should've been ashamed of themselves for not being up in the crags were slurping the yellow-red ooze. In Glacier Peak country even the goats were crapouts.

Debacle. At 3500 feet in dreary gray-lit valley-bottom forest. Mountaineers gird loins to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield. Bagleyites make peanut butter sandwiches.

Some work of noble note may yet be done,  
Not unbecoming men that strove with gods.

I shouldered rucksack and grasped ax and struck off toward the trail to Lake Byrne, shown by the map to be in a 5700-foot cirque directly above us. The lake would be snowed in and fogged in but the hike would sweat out bilo, was better than standing around in dripping forest watching engineers and goats feed their faces.

As I sullenly passed Kermit's campfire he extracted sandwich from mouth and asked where I was headed. I told him.

"Bah! You should go with us!"

Where? What for?

<sup>Up on the gipfel!</sup>  
 "We're not positive there's a <sup>route</sup> ~~way up the gipfel~~ from here! We thought we spotted ~~a route~~ <sup>one</sup> last summer but couldn't be certain!"

Who cares?

"If there is a route and if the schmuck clears a little we'll ~~be~~ shteigen der berg tomorrow!"

Was I wrong about Kermit? Or rather, right in the first place? Who cares if Faust is a tightwad? It hadn't occurred to me it was possible to climb on the third day, which would be quite full just hiking out 9½ miles and driving (and tire-repairing) home. A bold notion for sure. The hell with Lake Byrne.

At 2 o'clock, drizzle having ceased, Kermit ~~snapped out of tempo and~~ dashed from camp. I followed, and several others, switchbacking briefly up the Whitechuck trail, then leaving tread and crashing into brush. Shortly we crossed the Cascade Crest Trail, which a little way upvalley and southward diverges from the Whitechuck trail to proceed northward in high country, and continued uphill in trackless forest. Trackless but not untrodden --

long-healed blazes said somebody once had been here. Bad ~~for~~ for hopes of der erstausteig. Good for hopes of a summit route.

The slope steepened sharply but Kermit's pace didn't slow. Pausing to gasp I saw I was his solo remaining follower. At about 6000 feet we thrashed through a thicket of alpine scrub onto an open snowfield. Below, cloudsea was breaking ~~into billows~~, giving glimpses ~~between~~ <sup>up</sup> of gloomy-dark valley forest and foaming ribbon of river. Above, whiteness-grayness ~~of~~ ~~the~~ revealed no hint of a mountain. We plugged steps in snow along sidehill shelves, then climbed to bare-rock ridgetop.

As we ~~w~~ walked the crest the gaseous whiteness ahead seemed to coagulate in a solid Presence. If real, not the chimera of foggy eyes, it was a monster. Suddenly, dark slashes seen in whiteness. Crevasses! A glacier -- Glacier!

At 7000 feet we stopped. The ridge merged in unmistakable mountain. Off left an icefall tumbled down from whiteness of cloud. But to our right smooth whiteness of snow extended across the west side of the peak and -- as jabbering Kermit in excited German gibberish explained and with croaking yodels celebrated -- led easily to the south slopes he'd climbed last year.

That evening, washing dishes in Kennedy Creek, I noted the dull-white cataract eerily glow as if with inner fire, had the nape-prickling feeling of being Watched, raised eyes from pots, and up the lane of the creek, far above green-black trees, saw a shimmer of sunset-pink snow.

Gletschergipfel!

My God it was beautiful. ~~My~~ Dear God it was high.

No deep sleep, a fitful doze, awaking often to see if stars remained bright in tree tops, to flick on flashlight to check watch. Precisely at the agreed rising hour of 2:30 I lept from bag. Shock of star-frigid night air. Chill of ecstasy-terror -- Der Tag had begun, the day I'd find out. Let loose a shivering howl of agony-joy. Burst into teeth-chattering song: "Oh what a beautiful morning! Oh what a wonderful day!"

"What you trying to do?" bellowed Crabby Dick from sack. "Wake up the birds? You have to be a nut to go 7000 feet up and down in a day and hike out 9½ miles and drive home! Shut up and let us sleep!"

Kermit's hero legs wouldn't function until he'd built a fire and boiled a bucket of Zoom to cram in hero gut. I forced a cupful down. Not until 3:20 did we set forth on the trail by flashlight. Four Bagleyites followed.

Night paled ~~was~~ <sup>as</sup> we climbed, stars and ~~glow~~ flashlights blinked out. But no rosy-fingered dawn touched high snows, morning brightened to half-day and no more. From timberline we saw a gray ceiling <sup>nearly</sup> brushing the summit of the peak and in the valley a sinuous gray snake squirming along the river toward the base, ~~of the peak.~~

The Course lecturer had said, "Clouds at two levels invariably mean rain, often in a matter of minutes."

Through the ~~thin~~ thinning stratum of clear atmosphere between high cloud and low wailed winter-bitter wind; we pulled on parkas. Starlight

had frozen the snow ice-hard; we strapped crampons to boots.

It begins. The race against the weather. No rests can be afforded, no comfortable rest-step. Piston-pumping legs stamp iron daggers in crunching snow, laboring lungs suck-in wheeze-out air, eyes <sup>numbly</sup> focus on Kermit's flying bootheels. Snowfields are unbroken by crevasses, probably aren't glaciers; whether or not, no time is wasted roping up.

Across west slopes of the volcano we angle upward to a cleaver of lava crags and there, in a gale-swept saddle, halt for the first time -- halt so Kermit can remove skis from back and cache them, abandoning the plan for a ski ~~ix~~ descent from the summit. High cloud is dropping, low cloud rising, we're in the squeeze.

Look north past the bulk of Glacier to bewildering array of cold snowy mountains dodging in and out of roiling clouds. Baker alone, volcano even taller than Glacier, stands forth between converging darknesses. Somewhere in the confusion is Eldorado. Betty and the mob must be finishing breakfast, preparing to hit the downtrail. Did they make their mountain yesterday?

Look south through shifting holes in cloud-muddle to glimpses of Rainier, Stuart -- and Chimney, close neighbor of my Huckleberry. How hot that day, how brilliant Glacier then.

Look over Whitechuck valley -- ~~and~~ look down -- to white tips of peaks submerging in swelling gray ~~and~~ -- and remember from map how high are these peaks!

Tremulously ask Kermit how high we are.

"Right about 9000!"

Faint! But no. Brain is dazed but not dim. Clock is tick-tocking fast but regular. Suspiciously savor air. Doesn't smell any different entering nose, feel any different inside.

Gaze down on summits higher than any I've ever climbed. Mountains so tall should be above me, to look down upon them is disrespectful, perhaps dangerously blasphemous.

No time for fear. Clouds are chasing, Kermit is charging. Follow. Don't lag. Don't be left behind. Not here. Onward around southwest slopes of the peak, upward. A steep gully. Follow Kermit's crampons up. He ~~stops~~ stops. We've run out of mountain! ~~Scramble up the last steps of the mountain~~ ~~grip ice with crampons~~ Grip ice with crampons lest one step off the top of the world and wander forever in hostile clouds. Brace against blasts of bruising wind, half-crouch not to be beheaded by ~~the~~ swift-rushing ceiling scraping summit plateau.

It's war. It's Armageddon. Battle to the end between Sky and Earth -- and Earth is losing -- we are losing. The high cloud is a steel hammer poised to crush. The low cloud, swallowing every peak but ours, is the anvil awaiting the blow. Suddenly a black-hearted hump, not a storm but a Thing, churns up from cloudsea and ~~Nightmare~~ attacks. The Nightmare. We're caught.

shriek  
Kermit's ~~screech~~ pierces screaming gale: "DOWN! DOWN! DOWN!"

At 10:20 in the last morning of Earth <sup>we</sup> plunge down -- run down -- flee down down down in victorious cloud.

But the blow does not fall. ~~Apparently~~ <sup>T</sup>The black squall, unseen, ~~was~~ has swerved and missed us. Thus at the lava-cleaver saddle ~~to~~ Kermit

yanks skis from snow and announces triumphantly, "Now the fun begins!" And indeed it does for us booters, watching the skier chatter across ice. His eyeballs are still rattling around in sockets when we catch him, returning boards to back and crampons to boots.

Laugh. Relax. In haste but not panic ~~we~~ continue the traversing descent through milder, less-malign fog toward our ridge. Where is the ridge? Stay too high and we'll cross over the top of it into an icefall. Drop too low and we'll hit it where the sides are cliffs and be forced to ~~descend~~ <sup>beat down</sup> through unknown tangles of moraine and brush. Pause often to strain eyes in whiteness.

Whiteness. Whiteness of cloud, whiteness of snow. Pure Platonic Whiteness. Some 5 hours we've lived in elegant austere Whiteness. Never have I been so long bathed in sublime soul-cleansing Whiteness, the color of deity.

The ridge.

What odd phenomenon here? What foreign but hauntingly-familiar hue? A tree! Incredible, eye-gladdening vegetable. Green! The soul is cleansed by simple white, the heart is warmed by complex green. Worship the White Goddess, love the Green Woman.

At 2 o'clock I sag to sweet Earth at Kennedy Hot Springs. And only now in low-valley Greenness feel and know how high in whiteness I've climbed. What hath Manning wrought? It all happened so fast -- 10½ hours from camp to summit to camp again. I never had a chance to notice if there was anything wrong with the air at 10,430 feet. Whether or not, I breathed and lived.

And grew.



No superhiker am I. In violent high Whiteness of Gletschergipfel  
I evolved beyond humanity into superman. Two miles tall am I.

July 1948

Chapter 21

IN THE EYE OF THE HURRICANE

Two miles tall I swaggered on Tuesday along Avenue and over campus, looking down in pity to sealevel dwarfs, and at Bagley bragging ~~of my volcano~~ as full equal of the bergsteiger bunch -- indeed briefly more than equal since only we returned to lowlands victorious, all the other heroes stormed or fogged out of the hills in bedraggled defeat.

Kermit enjoyed my <sup>glee</sup> ~~joke~~, shouting, "Now you're set for Der Meisterberg!"

A joke in poor taste. The Red Death <sup>mocking</sup> moking me at the masque. Two miles tall I was. Why ruin it by mentioning the third mile?

That evening Monie dropped by the garret, applauded the triumph of her protege, and asked, "You called the clubrooms yet to sign up?"

Sign up! I hadn't thought about it. I hadn't thought about The Mountain, not that way, ever. Or at least not since 1941.

"You graduated from the Elementary Course, that's one requirement. You went on Nisqually, that's another. You did a Major, and maybe you're the only Elementary student who has. The only other requirement is getting approval of the Climbing Committee and I'll be at the meeting to tell them what a peakbagger you are."

They were pushing. The way Grant did in 1940 at the Ranger Lodge, enrolling me in the Lifesaving Course because he demanded that I make Eagle Scout and never mind that I could hardly swim a lick and might damn well drown. Kermit and Bagleyites, Monio and Mountaineers, were forcing me to accept the logic of my life, my doom. Master of my fate, captain of my soul -- what a pile of crap! When the wise-guy sailor from Massachusetts met the sprightly lass on the Puget Sound beach, when barbarian Faust descended from the north to stomp the bones of fellah Apollo, when a fish flopped out on the shore of the soupy-warm sea and breathed air, when Earth materialized from ~~cosmic~~ chaos, all this was implicit. In the Beginning was the End.

Had the Climbing Committee known I was a sick man and abject coward they surely would've spared me, given a reprieve if not a full pardon. But the wicked witch called cackling from the clubrooms. Just concluded was the "ax session" to sort out certain losers from possible winners. She'd pled my cause -- and why not? Her last and best jest.

I couldn't blame Glacier. Because of the Adams fiasco the Committee had waived the requirement for a Major and a few other first-year students also were among ~~the Chosen~~ the Chosen. But no rapture remained in Glacier, that merely 2-mile-high volcano.

Yet it was too soon to gloom. Much could happen in the 10 days before the scheduled ascent, July 18. Earthquake. Typhoon. Pestilence. World War III. Yes, and don't forget the qualification, "scheduled." So too

were McClellan, Constance, Adams, and Eldorado. Against these <sup>grandiose</sup> failures stack the piddling successes of Lundin, Chair, and Sluiskin. Whether or not I could climb Rainier the odds certainly were against the snakebit 1948 Climbing Course doing so.

And before ~~then~~ Then was the weekend of the lovers' reunion. Aside from wanting to be together again in ~~back~~ the hills, as we'd not been for a month, we both could use a rest. Gregarious Betty had had a good garrulous Sunday with the mob on Eldorado, standing around shivering while the leaders wandered in fog trying to find the mountain, ~~which~~ and ~~fix~~ failing. As the star of Lundin she was a celebrity, a mascot; I'd no doubt everybody thought her <sup>machine-gun</sup> ~~mile-a-minute~~ chatter very cute. However, there'd been hard labor hiking to and from camp and considerable misery on steep heather swept by flurries of sleet and snow. As for me, at midnight Monday I'd really wondered if I'd make it up the steps to the garret and looked forward to a relaxed romp in the flowers with the nut-brown maid.

Saturday we'd loiter along the trail from the Snoqualmie Pass highway to Melakwa Lakes, lounge around the campfire, and Sunday stroll gardens and scramble rocks to the top of Kaleetan. With no Experience Climb scheduled ~~&~~ it wasn't as if I were giving up anything, letting fellow students get a jump on me. And a Pin Peak was a Pin Peak. I'd be better than a third through the ~~Twenty~~ 20.

But Saturday wheedling sweetie-face wife asked if we couldn't do the climb in a single day, leaving town next morning. Yes, if she wanted.

And  
^ Sunday she awoke in a 3-Day Mad. What the hell had I done? It wasn't what I'd done but what I intended to do -- pry her out of her cozy garret.

Goddamn females! If she'd pooped out Friday I could've hooked up with a Bagley party -- Kermit, ~~among others~~, had invited me. Too late now. Shit! I give up chances for a worthwhile climb to be husband-lover and the ungrateful bitch leaves me high and dry. Taking a solo hike would ~~be~~ be a flat zero. I was no damn hiker.

Eat breakfast. Read the funny papers. Look through window to sunlight dappling maple trees. Nerves scream at the inaction, at the thoughts of...

I stormed out of the garret, stalked the Avenue. No pleasure anymore in puniness of dwarfs. Blue sky scornfully asked, "Why are you in the city, little man?" Feet led me unthinking onto campus, up this path and down that. And without noticing, to the ~~xx~~ architectural ~~xxxx~~ axis of the campus, the wide airway between rows of buildings called Rainier Vista.

There it is. My God, there it is.

Days and weeks at a time, winter and summer, Seattle squats beneath low gray clouds, sees neither sun nor stars nor horizons. Natives go grayly about gray business, immigrants from California despondently inspect armpits for moss, those from the Great Plains develop acute claustrophobia. Then the north wind blows the sky clean and blue and The Mountain appears, the biggest damn thing in America.

Except for these moments of miracle, lowlanders ignore Rainier, treating it as a banality, no more awesome than the Sun. To hikers, though, who sweat and pant to a summit a mile above the sea and are dazzled by the stupendous white heap rising nearly 2 miles higher, the shining crest perfectly symbolized the unattainable. I'd long been used to the taunting mass, had gotten over being bothered. So it was there, so what? So was the Moon. If you can't hike it, screw it.

But now they tell me it is attainable. I've been roped to people who've been to the crest. They say I can go there. They say I must.

No, don't flinch, don't slink into sheltering campus woods. Face it.

Sit by Frosh Pond. The exact same spot I sat that winter night in 1943 after the doctor told me always to wear a hat in the hot sun and be careful to go slow up steps, that night I ~~looked~~ stared in ~~the~~ black water and saw grinning Death. Since that night I've never gone to a doctor except to get new glasses or have a tooth fixed. Doctors tell you things you don't want to hear.

How far away is it? About 60 miles. Impossible to feel from here how big it is. Willis Wall might be only a thousand feet tall. But a month ago on Sluiskin I saw slow-motion avalanches flow cloud-like down the vertical mile to the Carbon Glacier -- saw them flow silently and long moments later heard the rumble.

The satellite crag of Little Tahoma sticking up on the left flank, barely poking through the blue blanket of lowland haze. Looks to be maybe as high as Constance. But it's 11,117 feet. Climb it and you're higher than Glacier. And The Mountain is mounded above -- to 14,408 feet.

Horrible.

I know what to do. Call the clubrooms tomorrow and cancel. No, not tomorrow. Wait to the end of the week to make the story more credible. I got hold of a batch of bad oysters, I'm sick as a dog, scratch me from the list. They'll never know.

But remember Monie cackling about the uniquely virulent mountain sickness of The Mountain that strikes people before ever they leave sea level. Each year somebody gets hold of a batch of bad oysters. They'll know. Even if I fall down the garret steps or smash up the V-8 and bust my back and skull and both legs they'll suspect. Crap out and it's the end of me with the Mountaineers.

Why should an anarchist care? Good grief, leave philosophy out of it, why should a connoisseur of decently-proportioned <sup>human</sup> souls care? Needless to ~~say~~ say that mankind in the general stinks. But this bunch grossly offends in the particular.

To call them freaks is too bland. Stand by a trail and watch the circus parade: Equipment nuts hauling sacksful of toys and perpetually devising Rube Goldberg contraptions. Transvestite clowns competing to see who can wear the most darling hat and who with sunburn cream and lipstick can paint his face to most nearly resemble a 2-dollar whore. Food faddists gobbling wheat germ and yogurt and blackstrap molasses and swilling celery juice. Physical-culture fanatics running in place at rest stops and chinning on tree branches. Sun-worshipping exhibitionists stripping to

jockstraps at first bright beam. Lechers and nymphomaniacs creeping in and out of each others' tents. Communists ~~striking~~<sup>plotting</sup> to overthrow the government and Nazis ~~plotting~~<sup>awaiting</sup> the return of Hitler from his hideout in Argentina. Prophets of the New Faith in Outer Space who consider themselves to have a special divine mission due to the first observation anywhere in the world of flying saucers having been made last summer in the vicinity of Rainier. By ~~comparison~~<sup>comparison</sup> the cranky old brush-apes and the yelping Boy Scouts and the several reputed escaped inmates of mental hospitals seem normal.

Yet it was such freaks who made the first ascent of Olympus in 1907, pioneered the Snoqualmie Pass peaks in the 20 years following, and in the 1930s explored the North Cascades and forced new routes up volcano ice walls and raised their technique and ~~and~~ audacity to a level matching any in America. Reading old issues of The Mountaineer annual at the clubrooms I've shared astounding adventures with these ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ authentic heroes (and yes, heroines) -- these men and women who've been my teachers and politics in the Climbing Course. If economics/have prevented them from traveling to Alps and Himalaya, still they are fit to walk in the company of Whymper and Mallory.

I know virtually nothing about my companions except what I see in the hills, read in the annuals. If they're employed I don't know what at, if they're students I don't know what of. From and to a void they come and go -- fresh-created each weekend, living the mountain hours, and evaporating at trip's end.



That's not entirely true. Weekdays I see a few at the Co-op and clubrooms. Somehow I've begun finding it necessary to drop in the Co-op every week -- for <sup>One-Seal</sup> boot grease or <sup>Sailor Boy</sup> pilot bread, <sup>manila</sup> sling rope or <sup>6-12</sup> bug juice, or just to fondle the pitons and snap the carabiners and admire the new nylon rope that wealthy climbers are starting to use <sup>instead</sup> ~~in place~~ of manila. One can't help chumming with other customers, the establishment being a slightly-oversized closet with a capacity limited to three or four shoppers at a time. The quarters, though, are spacious enough; our membership card number is 1102, so allowing for members who've quit climbing since the Co-op was organized by Mountaineers in 1938 the active customers total maybe several hundred. No regular staff exists. The closet is in the office of Adam the Accountant and Notary Public. You pick out what you want, carry it to a counter and ring a bell to signal you're ready, and he or his secretary come and take your money.

After visiting the Co-op I go across the hall to the Mountaineer clubrooms to check out books from the library -- my stockroom reading is less and less history of the West and more and more ~~of~~ alpine tragedies and triumphs. I study the sign-up list to see ~~what's~~ who's going on the ~~next~~ next trip and chat with the part-time secretary, who knows all the climbers by first name and also many other of the 2000 club members, the non-climbing skiers and hikers and campers. Usually some acquaintance from practice or climb is there and we shoot the breeze.

When a Scout I invariably on my after-school jaunts downtown stopped in the Seattle Area Council headquarters, supposedly to pick up the Troop 324 mail but actually because it was the city hangout of Camp Parsons hands.

as in the Dark Ages the cenobites of Ireland fled to the Shetland Islands, the Orkneys, and Iceland, and those of the continent to the dark forests and steep mountains.

The Scouts then. The Mountaineers now. The first group I've belonged to since disintegration of the Lincoln High gang.

I didn't think I needed a group anymore. But we're inescapably apes after all, afraid to be alone. Anarchism has been necessary because I was expelled from America -- or vice versa, no matter which. I didn't know that ~~was~~ within the Empire that offers only pan et circens, that can no longer enlist our spirit and command our allegiance, in the a-borning medieval age there were fellaheen I could call brothers, with whom I ~~could~~ <sup>could</sup> ~~retreat~~ to a monastery to jointly confront the Old Ones, (And if the ~~barbarian~~ <sup>mercenaries</sup> ~~hordes~~ in service of corrupt Byzantium are violating our forest sanctuary, we are safe still on cliffs and glaciers where trees don't grow, in the City of God beyond avarice of Civitas Romanum.) Having discovered the group, I don't want to perch on a stylus like St. Simeon. I want to belong.

Yes, freaks. Peter Pans and Wendys playing ~~games~~ <sup>games</sup> with Captain Hook. Refusing to grow up, substituting peaks for "adult" goals, defying old age by flirting with sudden death. Superbly-childish, grandly-improvident mountain bums.

Freaks? These recent weeks, becoming myself freakier by the ~~week~~ Sunday, I've begun thinking the ~~was~~ real freaks are the non-climbers. The goggling gaping lowlanders who listen to your exploits and then ask why you climb mountains.

Why indeed? ~~Though new at it~~ I've already learned to amuse myself at their expense. In solemn whisper I reveal that for sheer self-torturing

ecstasy the sport surpasses anything tried by early Christian martyrs or fans of the Marquis de Sade. They're not surprised, they've always suspected Mallory was covering up some ghastly perversion with his cryptic "Because it is there."

The fact is, as an Old Faithful said in a Climbing Course lecture, "If you have to ask the question you wouldn't understand the answer."

Which is to say that after you've climbed a while you quit asking yourself the question. You realize that even if there were a simple answer it wouldn't explain anything. So the human body consists of 97% worth of chemicals -- does that explain King Lear? The Marriage of Figaro? The cathedral at Rheims? It doesn't even explain Mickey Mouse.

But be candid. I've not climbed long enough, <sup>I</sup> continue to ~~ask~~ ask myself the "why." Know thyself? I do and I don't.

I do know why I've hiked. Though other events of my 13th year have blurred in memory and whole months utterly faded out, I can remember as yesterday ~~walking into~~ the Marmot Pass sunset. I have total recall of the fairy-tale entry ~~into~~ Deception Basin, the whistling-marmot symphony of Hayden Pass, the attempt on Anderson, ~~xxxxxxx~~ the 3-Day Blow on Lost Ridge. Each hour of my mountain past has expanded to obliterate entire weeks of the surrounding city past. The hikes are islands of shining wilderness sanity amid oceans of muddled city nonsense.

It was the green sickness of youth that caused me, after 1942, to ~~foolishly~~ foolishly imagine I could be content with several highland days a summer. Here on campus today, amid college-Gothic towers of that ill era when I

was intoxicated by Truth and Beauty (and broads and booze) those years now seem a dream (and at the end a nightmare) from which I awoke at Lost Pass these 2 years and 2 weeks ago, awoke to see that time was flying and in the city I was dying, that only in the mountains did I live, that I must crack on full sail and hit the trail.

Lost Pass was a rebirth, the Second Coming of the vision of Marmot Pass, and the vision newly vivid for the shadowy existence before. My photo albums show the passion and the glory since. With the camera given by my folks for Christmas of 1938 I've snapped pictures helter skelter, the snapping stimulated not by cool artistry but hot emotion. From 1939 through 1945 I pasted in albums an average of some 30 mountain ~~shots~~ shots a year. Since Lost Pass I've added some 600, an average of 300 a year -- I've lived 10 times more intensely.

Or better say, from Lost Pass to last August I made each year into 10. And now? ~~The~~ Completely off the photo-album scale are Tooth, Cruiser, Haystack, Huckleberry, Glacier. Not from snapshots could one know that whereas hiking stretches out time, climbing shatters the temporal prison altogether. Climbing is nothing less than the secret of eternal life! Or it is until it kills you. As say up there in the sky 60 miles south of where I sit this moment...

Why?

First ask "when?"

For Western Man (and not Apollinian nor Magian nor Egyptian nor Chinese nor Indian nor any other Man has felt the urge) climbing commenced in earnest in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, when Culture was ripening toward the rot of Civilization. Climbing was and is the renunciation of Civilization, the last best impulse of the yearning-striving that in pure holy youth erected cathedrals and in sick ~~sick~~ decadence sticks up skyscrapers. Seek Faust nowadays not among towers of City but of Wilderness.

Was it coincidence that for me the desire arose simultaneously with the dummy? Perhaps <sup>the lust for</sup> ~~that blighted dream of~~ Everest was the sublimation of nascent manhood. And perhaps that first longing to climb, after being thwarted by a failure of my flesh, was submerged in the flesh of woman. The Green Woman-nut-brown maid.

Why the revival of the longing? Certainly not from an ending of our garret honeymoon, as idyllic now as a year ago. Perhaps because for me Earthly passion is not enough, I seek the Heavenly orgasm that cannot be achieved through Green Woman alone, I need also the White Goddess.

Yet perhaps I'm falling into the D.H. Lawrence-S. Freud fallacy, viewing life narrowly through the eye of the cock. Baffling though it is, woman also climbs. Perhaps because man and woman share common ground (morbid pun). Perhaps the "when" has more ~~to~~ to do with fear than love. Perhaps the ~~banana~~ banana peel-gallows humor of climbers is a deep symptom. Perhaps for each man/woman climbing begins with the frenzied determination to force a confrontation, to abjure defensive cowering, to take the offensive, risk the unnecessary death and thus triumph over Death.

Triumph? Of course not. But at least find a way of life in the presence of death. In the wilderness where They live make peace with the Old Ones. Bend to Them as Lords of the Realm and receive as benefice what a friend of Mallory's called "the freedom of the hills."

Why?

First ask "what?"

The technique of climbing, I've learned, is not much different from that of ridge-running and talus-hopping and ~~felsenmeer~~ felsenmeer-scrambling, is little more complicated than clambering about in trees. The basic tools are hands and feet. The ice ax essentially is a device for converting an arm (or both arms in coordination) into a third leg. The rope brings together a number of hands and feet for mutual support.

The critical added ingredient -- and what divides climbing from hiking -- is exposure. But I've found that tolerance for air grows quickly. In fact, once hands and feet are trusted to maintain secure attachment to Earth, exposure becomes exhilarating. The likes of Icarus, Leonardo, Wright Brothers, and Lucky Lindy may envy the birds and build noisy machines to war against gravity. Climbers don't require unnatural wings, they walk through the air, and quietly.

Also ~~is~~ separating climbing from hiking is relentless exploitation of the body. As a hiker I thought 8 hours on the hoof a respectable day and 10 hours strenuous. But for a climber 12 hours is light exercise and

14 routine. On Glacier we did in a day what as a hiker I'd have considered a proper 3-day ~~xxx~~ task -- and on the Tuesday sensed in depths of punished flesh a terrible new strength growing. As climbers test the nerve and thus build nerve, so they push the body to its limits and thus extend limits.

A related difference. As a hiker I stoically endured the crummy weather of my ocean-exposed home hills, frankly preferring sunshine and starlight, whenever feasible avoiding storms. But the rule of the climber is to leave town even if the world is ending, to set out from camp except during a simultaneous hurricane and earthquake, and never to retreat until the next step upward can only be into the grave. Chairman Cam was in the right on Adams, the rules required that we ascend ~~into~~ that gale to just short of the point of no return. ~~xxxxx~~ On Glacier we proved a lover of the sky can survive its harsh embrace.

What is climbing? It's pure brute drive.

What?

The larky Climbing Course lecturer scared Christer students when he wisecracked, "For climbers the mountains are a religion. That's why you'll always find us there on Sunday."

No ~~jest~~. Plain fact. I long ago learned I'm exceptionally, hopelessly religious. Thus as a child I couldn't swallow the cant of organized superstition nor as a youth the positivism of materialist-mechanists. Thus I sought in Truth and Beauty the union with the One. Hearing my first

live symphony concert, reading Adonais, I felt myself approaching the verge.

But close only counts in horseshoes. Not in music or poetry, science or history, nor any other confection of the intellect have I trembled on the verge. Solely in wilderness have those moments come. The Marmot Pass sunset. The glissade into the Graywolf. (For not all ecstasy is bliss.)

If among pagans I pretend to joke about it, the self-flagellation is vital to the rite. Toppling to the ground at the end of the Whitechuck trail, so exhausted by 14 galloping hours I was beyond weariness, there came not through sense organs of destroyed body but flowing directly into freed spirit the softness of forest duff, the coolness of river breeze, the greenness of ferns and moss, the roar of waterfall.

And if destruction of the body frees the spirit, when the spirit too nears destruction it prepares to mingle with the Many. On the South Face of The Tooth I was the valleyful of air, on Cruiser I was the sky-rending fang of basalt, on the Haystack I was the cloud-mingling wall of snow, on Huckleberry I was the red bells, white bells, yellow bells of heather, on Glacier I was the black-hearted squall. And the Many led to the One. The One that may be separated into a pantheon of various manifestations -- Nightmare, Old Ones, Green Woman, White Goddess. Or for convenience, despite the term's having been so mucked up by merchants of mumbo-jumbo, God.

In climbing I've penetrated God.

Or ~~xxxxx~~ almost.

What?

A comedy. A very low comedy.



That's why climbers are crudely ~~and~~ puerile, as in descending from the Nisqually practice we capered and leapt and hooted, openly mocking tourists whose only crime was gaping at the majesty of Rainier, as on the drive home from Glacier we barged into a restaurant and by revolting table manners ruined the ~~the~~ digestion of the lowlander customers.

We're like garlic fanatics, deliberately making ourselves obnoxious to all lacking a gutful of garlic.

We're as rude and rowdy as precipice and glacier, avalanche and blizzard, ~~as~~ we have the social grace of a lightning storm. But then, with the entire active climbing citizenry of Puget Sound numbering a mere several hundred, and with fewer than one in 10 of the ~~February~~ Climbing Course <sup>of February</sup> multitude surviving to July, we hardly can help being elitists, fascists. It's not our fault we're so damn superior, ~~that only we can see the joke.~~

Climbing is a comedy because life is a comedy, the cosmos is a comedy. Climbing is our laughter.

What?

Sanity, Flagrant sanity.

Lowlanders say we are mad, they are sane. Oh, sure. So sane they progress from World War I to Depression to World War II to preparations for World War III, so sane they build the City and then drop the Bomb on it.

It's not climbing that's crazy, it's all the not climbing ~~that~~ that's ~~maxxing~~ going on ~~the~~ in the world.

What?

Adventure.

Vilhjalmur Stefansson said, "An adventure is a sign of incompetence."  
 A competent man is ever prepared for any exigency, never must be a hero,  
 leads an uneventful, welfare-state-placid existence.

A pox on it. Incompetence is the meaning of living, ~~the essence of~~  
~~climbing.~~ Whether in lowlands or mountains, the odds are against us, in the  
 long run our luck will run out. We'd prefer it to happen in the mountains.  
 We remember (and honor <sup>and envy</sup>) that on the descent from the first climb of the  
 Matterhorn half of Whimper's companions fell to their deaths, that on  
 Everest Mallory disappeared in the cloud to be seen no more. Clean ends.

It's not the end we dread but drowning in a sewer of stinking nonsense.  
 Therefore we run from the City, we renounce the fellaheen drudging, the  
 imperialist strutting, the technocrat tinkering, the Green-and-~~the~~-Blue  
 politicking, all the petty frivolities of history's ~~a~~ conclusion, we  
 abandon perpetual questioning, "Does Man (or can Man, or should Man)  
 actually ~~a~~ exist on Earth?" We fly to the Wilderness to celebrate  
 incompetence, to partake in the supreme clean adventure. Climbing is  
 the trumpeting by the individual that "I BLUNDER THEREFORE I AM."

Because of Tooth and Cruiser, Haystack and Huckleberry and Glacier,  
 I exist. This Sunday I do.

Out beyond Frosh Pond and campus, beyond Seattle, beyond green-forested  
 foothills ~~lost in~~ <sup>blued by</sup> summer haze, The Mountain exists. The greatness of  
 Earth embodied, the vastness of the Unknown symbolized, the visible  
 White Goddess, the ever-reminding temple of the Old Ones.

Rainier and me. The showdown. The shootout.

Even if it's certain death, not to be shunned. For if I run, how can I live in Seattle? With eyes averted from sky the rest of my miserable <sup>days</sup> ~~life~~?

But if I ~~sp~~ <sup>attack</sup>, and if I live? Then I'll have won permanent membership in the Group, then I can be a climber forever.

Get past the obstacle of Rainier and ~~take a one-man barbarian horde~~ <sup>as a young Faust</sup> I can plunder the Cascades and Olympics. Two weeks from today the University Climbing Club, to which as an employee I technically belong, is headed for Constance; I might, after all, win the Girl of the Golden West. The <sup>next</sup> ~~weekend~~ <sup>after</sup> there's an Experience Climb of Shuksan, the 9127-foot neighbor of Baker, the most-photographed mountain in America, for years staring at me from calendars. On Labor Day there's an Experience Climb of Baker. Easy then would be the path to Adams and St. Helens and Olympus, completing the Six Majors. And there are the Snoqualmie Pin Peaks, the Monte Cristo summits around Silvertip, the ~~max~~ <sup>marveled at</sup> maze of the North Cascades ~~seen~~ from Glacier. Not to forget my first home, the Olympics, for which in addition to Constance I have solid plans. With climber's eyes I've seen in 1939 photos that Flypaper Pass, <sup>walkup</sup> is a ~~climb~~; during my vacation week in August I'll settle scores with Anderson, and LaCrosse too. To rub salt in the mountains' wounds, I'll take Betty to the tops! (Conscience does nag, I ~~do~~ have neglected her, I do want to walk green meadows with the nut-brown maid and re-pledge vows.)

But everything depends on Rainier. Fail <sup>there</sup> and shame will drive me from the Group, probably from ~~my job at~~ Bagley. And once the retreat

the crux  
of Anderson,

starts, where can it stop? I'll be lucky to salvage a skulking life as a superhiker, to have the nerve for Anderson. I might even be driven from the hills, or entirely out of Puget Sound to the White Spaces on the map not haunted by Sunrise Mountains east and Sunset Mountains west. To nullity.

There it is, waiting. My life. Possibly my death. Just 7 days off.

July 1948

Chapter 22

THE THIRD MILE

The mid-July in-a-row trinity of great and famous anniversaries: Bastille Day, St. Swithin's Day, my birthday. Feeling no more than a ~~Lincoln High 16, even a Camp Person 16~~ <sup>Marmot Pass 13</sup> just-like-that I'm 23. Over the hill and ~~toboggan-sliding~~ <sup>Graywolf-glissading</sup> down to 30. So recently young, now nearly middle-aged. And naught accomplished with my life, nor plans to accomplish aught, no goals but peaks -- and one peak blocking the way to freedom.

To make matters worse, my assigned passenger for the drive to Paradise was the absolute nadir of the Mountaineers, the most nerve-grating ~~ass-paining~~ ass-paining of the Boy Scouts, a chattering-giggling lout of a high-school idiot named Richard. Hours in the V-8 I suffered in nauseated silence his bubble-gum popping, his muscle-twitching, his incessant infantile comments on the passing scene, spewings of a minute, malformed brain. When we left Seattle the July 16 <sup>Friday</sup> afternoon (I having taken off early from the stockroom and the All-American Boy gladly sprung from padded cell by tormented mother) I was deep in the gloom of the a-year-older-than-Thursday syndrome; on the highway I was battered by ~~infantile~~ babbling into senility. Christ, I never was that young. Nobody ever was that young.

Compounding my ~~own~~ depression were the miles of skinned hills, clearcut from horizon to horizon, millions of bleached stumps where in my childhood were serene green seas of tall old firs. The bastards were going to scalp the whole bloody world.

Like diving into a snow-cold alpine tarn after staggering up a sun-scorched trail was entering forest shadows of Mount Rainier National Park. This, at least, was unchanged. This was precisely as it was on camping trips with my folks far back in misted beginnings of my consciousness. You can go home again in a National Park. But noplacel else.

We drove by Longmire Inn (remember the Thanksgiving dinner of 1931) and proceeded along the narrow, twisting road to the Nisqually River bridge (look up the canyon to the moraine-buried glacier snout), ~~and~~ steeply up the canyon wall to the ridge, and through subalpine forest to snowy, sun-bright parklands of Paradise, 5500 feet high. In the ranger station I told the man <sup>we'd come</sup> ~~we were there~~ to climb The Mountain. (Spine tingled to hear utter <sup>announcement</sup> myself ~~say~~ the preposterous ~~words~~!)

He was jovial but not stunned by my audacity. "Mountaineers, aren't you? Been expecting you guys. Your advance guard started up this morning." (That actually was a separate though allied party, Monie, Hucklebeery Bill, and three others recruited by Old Faithful Lloyd for an incredible adventure -- staying overnight in the crater!) "You're the first of the main bunch to show. Well, fill out these forms here, then dump your gear in the parking lot and I'll ~~come~~ give it the eye."

The official Summit Climber Registration form. Space for my alpine exploits -- ~~too much space~~, I wrote large not to leave an embarrassing

expanse of white. Phone number of next of kin. Next of kin! The landlady would yell up the stairwell, "Phone for Mannings!", and Betty would run down from the garret and hear some total stranger say...

Spread on asphalt by the V-8 the equipment double-checked last night ~~in the garret~~ against what's become my every-weekend lest-thee-forget list: Clothing -- fresh-greased Bone-Dry boots with full set of tricouni nails, two pairs of wool socks to wear and one pair in the pack, wool downhill ski pants, wool shirt, wool sweater, war-surplus <sup>canvas-stiff</sup> Navy foulweather parka, wool watch cap, wool mittens. The Seven Essentials required on Mountaineer climbs -- map, compass, flashlight and two extra batteries, surplus Army Air Corps "mook" goggles, Boy Scout knife, emergency matches in waterproof vial, first aid kit. Camping gear -- Trapper Nelson, surplus down-and-feather <sup>and eating</sup> mummy sleeping bag, surplus liferaft sail. Cooking/gear -- spoon, stainless-steel ~~and~~ Ome Daiber cup for both eating and cooking, surplus fuel rations for the simple <sup>food-heating</sup> ~~cooking~~ I planned, not yet having bought a Primus stove. Food -- mostly ~~crab~~ carbohydrates for easy digestion, largely candy bars and jars of ~~big~~ baby food, the rule being not to overburden the alimentary canal, which on high is in enough trouble as it is. Miscellaneous gear -- toilet paper, handkerchief, sunburn cream, chapstick, surplus canteen, camera and film, cigarettes and matches, junkbag containing spare flashlight bulb and repair kit of needle and thread and ~~string~~ cord and wire. Climbing gear -- Co-op cotton-canvas rucksack, Bhend ice ax (guide model), 10-point Eckenstein crampons, 120 feet of 7/16-inch manila (not mine, a Climbing Course rope, picked up at clubrooms as part of my driver's responsibility).

Chilling to be Government-Inspected for a climb, to require approval by a deputy of the President of the United States, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. I winced as the jolly ranger pounded the pavement with my 2-month-old \$12 ice ax, chuckling, "Last summer I busted three axes in one party. They should've thanked me -- better to ~~discover~~<sup>find</sup> dry rot here than on the mountain -- but somehow they didn't get around to it. Well heck, they didn't lose their climb, they rented axes at the Guide Hut."

As we repacked he rambled on. "Sure been a bitch of a season for climbing. God~~awful~~ weather up to now, but I guess you guys know that. Snow so soft up high all June you sank in to your belly-button. The first party to make the top was last Sunday, doing a ski ascent over on the Emmons." (That was Kermit the Hermit!) "Nobody's been up this side yet. Two of our staff are headed out this afternoon -- trying for a first ascent of the God~~awful~~ Nisqually Icefall, if you'll believe it! You'll be the first up the Kautz."

Idiot Richard giggle-asked if he was giving us a moneyback guarantee.

"Oh golly, you Mountaineers always bag it. Last year nearly 300 people of all kinds started out and only about half made it, but 50 or so of those were your Climbing Course outfit, and then there were some private parties from the club too, so better than half the successes were Mountaineers. Most of the rest were with the guides. This is the big weekend of the season for the hill. Unless the weather ~~is~~<sup>'s</sup> a lot better from now on, chances are that because of you there'll be as many people in the crater Sunday as ~~will~~<sup>||</sup> get there the whole rest of the summer. I've figured out a rule of thumb,



watching how things go over the years. If you're not a ranger or guide or Mountaineer, you've got about one chance in four of reaching the crater. If you're one of our folks or a Mountaineer, and you're on the Kautz or Emmons, and a storm doesn't blast your tail off, you're <sup>a shoo-in."</sup> practically a cinch."

A nice man. He'd noted from our registration forms we were new to Rainier and was offering reassurance. Some kindness! If the success rate of Mountaineers was virtually 100 percent, the more glaringly memorable my failure. ("Yeah, everybody made the top but some <sup>poor cut</sup> ~~guy~~ named Manning, <sup>H</sup>usband of the gal that got stabbed in the Lundin avalanche.")

The Idiot and I walked over to Paradise Inn to buy ice cream cones and wander through the interior; from the long ago I remembered the magnificent rustic structure, a giant chalet with beams and pillars of ~~huge~~ cedar logs. We went out on the porch and watched tourists click Brownies and stuff nickels in pay telescopes for close looks at glaciers; back home in the tall corn of Iowa they'd spend the winter boring friends and neighbors and church socials with photos and anecdotes of their Grand Tour of the National Parks of the West.

Whispered one awed old lady to another, "Do you suppose anybody has ever been all the way to the top?"

Grouched one old harridan to her husband, "There certainly isn't much to do in this Park. We've fed the bears and seen a glacier and bought all their postcards and decals. Well, I guess we should walk up to the summit before supper just so we can say we did it."

Dumb tourists. As dumb as I was in 1931, thinking that on our meadow hike we conquered Rainier. Now, 17 years later, I was here again, dumb ~~as~~ as ever. Déjà vu, déjà vu.

It looks infinitely huge, it looks ridiculously small. From Paradise one can't grasp the size ~~because~~ <sup>at</sup> there's nothing for comparison, no way to determine the scale. Even high on the slopes, as on the Nisqually last month, one only vaguely begins to sense the immensity because after a several-hour ascent the summit icecap appears as far away as ever. Or farther.

One must intellectualize. Realize that the several mountains viewed on the drive from Seattle to Paradise are a single mountain. The Mountain of the North, with the mile-high ice-and-lava precipice of Willis Wall in the center and on the northeast side the Emmons-Winthrop Glaciers, the largest ice mass in the 48 states. The Mountain of the West, dominated by the <sup>falling from 14,000 feet to 5000.</sup> 3-mile-wide frozen torrent of the Puyallup-Tahoma Glaciers. And finally the Mountain of the South, with the monstrous bluff of volcanic garbage called Gibraltar up to the right, the terrific Nisqually Icefall directly above, and the long lava ridge of Success Cleaver up to the left.

Realize that The Mountain feeds 30 glaciers with names and a dozen-odd without, that <sup>all by itself</sup> this ~~one~~ peak bears more ice than exists in the 47 states outside Washington.

Realize that if all The Mountain above 5500 feet, the elevation of Paradise, were sliced off there'd be a <sup>round plateau ringed by an</sup> ~~continent~~ <sup>of mesas, together</sup> and archipelago forming a circle with a diameter of 20 miles; that a slice at 8000 feet would leave a <sup>solitary plateau</sup> ~~island~~ with a diameter of 6 miles; at 10,000 feet, the elevation of Glacier,  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles; at 12,000 feet, the elevation of Adams, 2 miles;

and even at 14,000 feet <sup>a</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>mesa (the newest, or</sup> 1/2-mile-wide ~~island~~ <sup>culminating in</sup> Columbia Crest, ~~on the rim of the newest~~ <sup>+ two</sup> crater) plus ~~to~~ <sup>islet</sup> remnants of older craters, (Point Success and Liberty Cap).

Realize how crushingly high it is. But ~~there~~ the intellect fails, the body quails. How many steps to Columbia Crest? As many bucketfuls as to bail the oceans ~~are~~ dry.

Terrifyingly high. I breathed ~~easily~~ <sup>easy</sup> at 10,430 feet -- but perhaps because I was too scared by the black squall to notice illness. Anyway, none of Monie's grisly anecdotes are from 10,000 feet. Somewhere around 11,000 climbers <sup>grow listless and</sup> lose appetite, at 12,000 <sup>choke</sup> on vomit, at 13,000 <sup>drift</sup> ~~grow~~ <sup>into fugue</sup> ~~listless and dizzy~~, at 14,000 hear voices in the wind, see visions in the snow, fall asleep on their feet ~~and can't be woken~~.

In Colorado they run up trails and drive cars to 14,000 feet and aren't impressed. But they live at 5000 feet and we live at sea level, our blood ~~is~~ thin from breathing thick air. Even healthy Puget Sounders ascending on a weekend to Rainier's high air, no time to acclimatize, get violently sick. What of those who aren't healthy? Who've been told by doctors to go ~~take it~~ slow <sup>up</sup> on stairs?

How dare I presume?

True, I've climbed high on Earth. But Rainier is not of Earth, belongs to the Moon, the stars, the infinite sky...

We drove back down (retreated down) to Longmire Campground, where amid tourist campers were mingled Mountaineers. Idiot Richard spotted Boy Scout

buddies and ran off to giggle and chatter. I was alone, my only Mountaineer friends, Monie and Bill, already on high.

When was I first in this campground? Before I can really remember, ~~clearly~~, sometime in 1927-28. Rainier National Park then was but several years older than I am now. The road to Paradise had been open just a dozen years. Lord I'm ancient. Would I ~~could be~~ <sup>were</sup> a child again, letting that big slobbering bear eat a Hershey bar from my hand, then looking up (and my horrified folks too!) to see a ranger with a rifle trained on the bear's skull, lest I panic and try to pull my fingers away before they're licked clean.

On a gas burner in the kitchen hut I heated a can of beef stew. Until twilight I sat by the cold loud Nisqually River, brown with rock flour milled by ice, and thought of the ice rising 11,647 feet above. I crawled in bag and slept -- or tried, and failed.

Perhaps my last night. In our farewell this afternoon Betty knew. As before Cruiser. I told her not to worry, if things got too tough I'd quit. But of course I ~~xxx~~ won't, can't. She sleeps in our safe garret bed. Was that our last kiss?

July 17, 6 a.m. Up. Heat cocoa water on ~~z~~ gas burner, dry-masticate part of a butterhorn, throw away the rest. Again drive to Paradise, not hearing words in the buzz-buzz-buzz of the Idiot.

It begins.

Around Leader Ed, former Rainier summit guide and Mountain Trooper, and Chairman Cam, whom I've not seen since Adams and whose ~~visage is as~~ scowl ~~is~~ now as then, we gather, 39 in number. Ed explains that six others, ~~all~~ veterans all, left at dawn. We'll have their track to follow, as well as route markers left yesterday by ~~Ed~~ Lloyd -- "willow wands," so called because that's what climbers used for the purpose ~~was~~ before the adoption of green-dyed bamboo garden stakes with red flags tied on for added visibility.

We'll climb to high camp as individuals rather than teams, each at his own pace, unroped because though we cross two glaciers we do so in <sup>ARCAS</sup> ~~zones~~ never in human memory crevassed. If by chance they now are -- well, we've a dozen comrades ahead who'll ~~discover~~ discover that, in which case we'll <sup>become</sup> ~~turn into~~ a rescue party! Just be sure to stick to the established track, don't wander off.

I survey the crowd. Recognize a dozen faces from the beginner multitude of February. A dozen <sup>others</sup> ~~more~~ who were instructors, ~~this spring~~. The rest are strangers -- presumably the second-year <sup>or more</sup> climbers who didn't come out in the <sup>spring</sup> storms to do their "each one teach one" duty. Since the Climbing Course alternates between routes, one year climbing the Emmons Glacier, the next the Kautz, for ~~these~~ second-year students as for ~~the~~ beginners today's way ~~into~~ enters foreign country.

"Okay!" yells Leader Ed. "Whenever you're ready!"

7:15 in sunny morning. Hoist Trapper Nelson. Climb the white wall still bounding, though not so formidably as a month ago, the parking lot. Crunch night-frozen snow under <sup>trikes</sup> ~~trikes~~. Step carefully not to crush avalanche lilies in melting-out ~~to~~ islands of meadow.

It can't be done. Even this soon the legs wobble, this low the lungs heave. Impossible to attain 11,500-foot Camp Hazard, 6000 feet above Paradise, higher than all but two peaks in the state. <sup>Due to</sup> ~~Because of~~ a dip along the way the total elevation gain is 6500 feet. With a heavy pack. Into the zone of queer air. Monie said the traditional rule is that if you make Hazard on your feet, not your knees, the summit is a breeze. By no means everybody makes Hazard. It may not be tomorrow I die, but today. ~~Probably~~ ~~5 minutes from the U-8 the death is upon me.~~

How does it happen? Do you feel a sudden attack, go ~~down~~ down like a falling tree, and die on the spot? Or slowly weaken, then ~~abruptly~~ collapse, to be ~~stretcher-carried~~ stretcher-rescued like Betty from Lundin? Or warned by early symptoms do you quit, descend alone, unnoticed by companions? Certainly <sup>none</sup> ~~no~~ will notice me. My wife, my friends are elsewhere.

The mob has separated in twos and threes and fours of boisterous buddies; loudest, of course, are Idiot Richard and the Boy Scouts. Grim silent loner, I. The pack breaks into a half-mile string. The heck with trying to keep up with frontrunners, the athletes. This is not a day for competing but for surviving. When to finish is unlikely, to finish last would be a victory.

The knoll of Alta Vista, a clump of alpine trees amid snowcovered meadows. Nostalgia. I was here a month ago, I was here in 1931. Nearly 6000 feet. 7:35. Sweat beginning to flow, lungs finding a rhythm, tight legs loosening, sloppy guts hardening.

Upward to Glacier Vista, also familiar from a month ago. 6500 feet, 8 o'clock. Glissade and plunge-step to the edge of the Nisqually Glacier,

losing 500 vertical feet, precious altitude that must be gained all over again.

Now the new. Last month we turned right, <sup>ascending</sup> to crevasses and icefall for practice. Today we cross ~~the~~ smooth-snow glacier flat to the far bank.

Done. So far so good. 6000 feet, 8:45. An hour and a half on the hoof. I've not rested yet and won't rest here, nerves wouldn't tolerate a pause, must get on with it. See how high I can go. See how long I can live. Somberly rest-step, nibbling by inches at the 5500 feet to Hazard.

First plug steps up the Nisqually Snowfinger, a narrow gully breaching cliffs of volcanic rock and morainal till walling the side of the Nisqually Glacier. Exit from Snowfinger on steep snows of the Wilson Glacier, crevassed below to the right but unbroken here. Ascend straight up to trashy lava crest. 8000 feet, 10:15. I've not rested yet, ~~am going strong~~. Only the second time I've been this high, the first time hauling an overnight load, but legs are marching to the metronome. A thrill of tentative elation.

Continue plugging upward, sidehill-gouging the margin of Wilson snows just below the ridge crest -- which abruptly leaps up in crumbling towers of The Castle. I'm at 9500 feet! And it's only 11:30! And not once have I stopped and I feel swell! I've gained 4500 feet and only 2000 remain, I could gambol on at this pace and reach camp by 1 o'clock!

Why hurry? I've got the whole afternoon. I'm not going to die!

Enjoy!

Dump Trapper Nelson in lava ~~like~~ blocks under The Castle and sit ~~down~~ superbly content. Eat a peanut-butter-and-honey sandwich (very tasty) carried from home and drink a cup of icy water (delicious) from a dribble at snowfield edge.

See where I am! Less than a thousand feet lower than Glacier, high in Whiteness of glaciers, Brownness of volcano. The last Greenness was Alta Vista, hours ago.

On a broad, gentle ridge beyond the deep Nisqually Glacier trough, far down at the uppermost promontory of the Green world, Paradise. And beyond the cluster of minute buildings and the sunflashes from tourists' windshields, the Tatoosh Range, peaks 6000 and 7000 feet high, bold summits ~~to~~ as viewed from Paradise, exciting goals for a superhiker, but to a 9500-foot climber pitiful as Little Si.

Gaze around the high country, climber's ~~is~~ country, my country. Across dazzling glaciers east to the avalanche-thundering Nisqually Icefall and gargantuan ~~lava~~ buttress of Gibraltar. Across brilliant glaciers west to the long layered-lava ridge of Success Cleaver. Up to Blueness of sky decorated by pretty fluffs of amiable cumulus and here-and-there <sup>cathedrals</sup> ~~fantasies~~ of cumulonimbus billowing majestically high -- but not so high as The Mountain.

Yet from here it appears not impossibly high. Though the icecap is a vertical mile above me, I'm almost 2 vertical miles above the sea, above those ~~faraway~~ <sup>faraway</sup> Green valleys, those/lowland dwellings of the dwarfs. Small is the word for the Green world -- small trees, small people. Large is the word for the White-Brown-Blue world -- large glaciers, large lava cliffs, large clouds, large sky, large men.

Soft cool breezes and sun-warm rocks. I could sink in happy sleep. But I'll save my nap for camp. 12 o'clock noon. Complete the simple



task. "If you make Hazard you've got the summit." I've as much as made Hazard. Last February in the clubrooms, last Sunday by Fresh Pond, this morning at Paradise, who could've dreamed...

Hoist pack. Up and away. The Castle was the final thrust of lava. The ridge now is round-crested, bearing on its back the snowfield called The Turtle. Not steep, not flat, perfect for efficient but relaxed climbing.

Resume the machine-like rest step. Pause to ~~paus~~ puff. Pace is a bit too fast -- I'm over-eager is the problem, slow down, after all I've hauled this pack and this body 4500 feet up the hill and have a right to feel ~~a little~~ <sup>somewhat</sup> less than morning-fresh. Naturally the pack seems heavier than before lunch, <sup>is</sup> slicing shoulders and <sup>bowing</sup> ~~handing~~ spine, and cooled muscles ~~are~~ <sup>must</sup> struggling <sup>fully</sup> to loosen, and drowsiness isn't dispelled by exercise.

Dammit, pace is still too fast. It's the fucking lunch. I ate too much, rested <sup>too little</sup> ~~not-enough~~, didn't allow the peanut-butter-honey sandwich to digest. Must go slower. But first a rest. Not far from The Castle but hell, this is only my second rest of the day, I deserve it.

Okay, now onward. Shit! Still too fast. Shift into compound low. It's not going to be as quick and ~~simple~~ easy as it seemed at The Castle. The 2000 feet will require maybe 5000 steps and I can take only a dozen before complaining legs and wheezing lungs force a halt. The rest step isn't doing the job it's supposed to, any pace ~~at all~~ is too fast. That damn lump in my gut is the trouble -- those churning blobs of pesnut butter

and gluey-chewed bread and oily butter. Should've just carried a jar of honey and lived on that.

Not to worry. Climbers are far above but they're mostly of the advance group that set out at dawn. Far below, just emerging from the Snowfinger, are climbers who started with me -- doubtless nonchalant athletes ~~unconcerned~~ unconcerned by the day's chore and having a running picnic.

But not everyone is romping. Slow as I am, I'm not the slowest. I'm passing people. Some of these guys raced ahead to Alta Vista, Glacier Vista. Now I've caught them. Now they're standing humped over to relieve backs from burdens of Trapper Nelsons, they're studying their boots and apparently finding them very depressing.

Stop to wipe sweat from ~~inside of~~ mook goggles. Beside me a climber topples face down in the snow.

Splendid idea, that, stuffing face in snow. I keep smearing sunburn cream on face but it instantly ~~fries~~ fries off. Sun is blistering. The glaring Turtle is an oven. Strength is oozing from pores.

A hurricane blast! And a darkness! A towering cloud has <sup>swallowed</sup> ~~blocked off~~ the sun, the ~~skinning~~ blinding snows go dull-cold. The wailing wind from the poles congeals my blood. I was broiling on a spit and now drip icicles of quick-frozen sweat.

Wind quits and cloud floats off and sun sizzles away ice and thawed meat spoils.

Sweat, asphyxiated by furnace air. Shiver, frosted teeth chattering. Sweat. Shiver. Sweat. Shiver. Rest-step, rest-step, rest. No -- rest, rest, rest-step. Rest more than step. High under overhanging wall of the Ice Cliff of the Kautz Glacier above is the final heap of brown rock,

Camp Hazard -- as far away as when I sacked out at The Castle. No, farther. They're moving it, They're stretching the elastic mountain, making it ~~ix~~ taller.

I'm not moving, <sup>only</sup> ~~just~~ now and then shuffling a boot. Weirdly, though, I'm still passing people. Standing, staring at boots. Or sitting in snow gazing at the sky. Doleful faces. Pitiabile wrecks mourning the loss of dear friends -- themselves.

For God's sake, let us sit upon the ground  
And tell sad stories of the death of kings.

I cannot help them. Each must wend a solitary way through this melancholy world to high camp. Soon I too will mourn.

A slag jumble. But some of the slag is human. ~~and~~ Bodies of second-year students, instructors last spring. Topple among them. Here it ends. The esophagus is a two-way street. Blobs of peanut butter and bread and butter are boiling. Spread knees and hang head between. Don't go out messy, befouled by vomit.

A body is ~~is~~ groaning, "Why do we have to go there? Why can't we stop here? Some people call this Hazard."

A moaned answer, "Lower Hazard. We got to go to Upper Hazard."

"Don't see why. A camp at 11,000 would be plenty high."

The body said 11,000. What -- 11,000 what? Feet. Ah God, somewhere down there, never knowing, I overtopped Glacier, entered the Third Mile.

Third Mile, 11,000, Third Mile, 11,000...

Wake up! What was that? A ~~skipping~~ flapping of wings! Giant wings, and hanging below, talons!

A dream, I fell asleep. ~~Or did I?~~ Or did I? Am I awake now? Nor sleeping nor waking, floating in foggy inbetween. The ~~sharp~~ edges of Reality fuzzed. A Strangeness felt ~~here~~. Ghastly Presences sensed ~~there~~. Nightmares lurking in broad day.

It's happening. This is it. The Clock is steady but that's not where it strikes. It hits the gut, it hits the head. Peanut butter is seething, brain is clouding.

If I die nobody will notice. I won't return to the garret so Betty will call the survivors to ask where I am and they'll say they never heard of me.

Can't blame them. That's how it is up here. I've passed dying climbers and didn't care. What's Hecuba to me, or me to Hecuba?

No safety among these dying bodies, bones soon to be picked clean by talons and beaks. Must climb to that beetling rampart of ice, that tantalizing wall of White.

This morning in low valley I breathed rich air, this afternoon I'm ~~at~~ higher than Glacier, in the Third Mile, and the tenuous ~~atmosphere~~ <sup>stratosphere</sup> lacks oxygen to clean ~~the fuz~~ <sup>murk</sup> from brain and above are 3500 more feet of mountain with less sustenance at each step.

The top is lost, I don't want the top, want only to crawl to ~~hazard~~ <sup>Camp</sup> on my knees, to sleep, perchance to live...

The Ice Cliff! How did it get down here? Didn't. I got up. Yes, yes, ~~I think~~ I recall rising to my feet. Thought it was a dream. Maybe

it was. And still is. What difference up here between waking and sleeping, dreaming and hallucinating?

Watch says 3 o'clock. Of what day? Are there days up here? Or one unending trance?

Where are the people? If this is Camp Hazard there should be people. Inspect the rubble-heap ridge crest, the sloping half-acre of bare Brown between White of snows on ridge below, glaciers steeply <sup>under</sup> ~~below~~ left and right, and wall of ice rising hundreds of feet above.

Bodies littering the disorder of rocks, cold and silent <sup>cadavers</sup> ~~bodies~~ lying where ~~for~~ felled by the plague. Some haven't yet expired, are tottering in the gale, parka hoods riding ~~on~~ faces contorted <sup>by</sup> ~~in~~ the agony of contagion. Who are they? Perhaps not dying companions at all, maybe hooded Creatures that live in blue-dark depths of crevasses and when we mortals invade their domain creep out to eat our souls.

I fall down forever at 11,500 feet, farthest I've ever climbed from the <sup>fecund</sup> ~~fecund~~ sea that gave birth to life, to me, ~~the~~ closest I've ever approached the sterile sky that is the enemy of mankind, of me. Let them eat my soul.

Awake? Asleep? Both <sup>and</sup> neither in <sup>this terminal illness.</sup> ~~the fatal sickness.~~ Here in the realm more of Sky than Earth, looking down on clouds floating over peaks high to lowlanders but low to us, waking-sleeping are all one, dreams are reality and reality is a dream, all one, all one. We're poor players strutting and fretting an hour in some Imagination, ~~no more~~ <sup>as</sup> ~~substantial~~ <sup>materialize</sup> than the phantoms that creep from crevasses and ~~drift~~ <sup>clouds</sup> from ~~floods~~, we're tales told by an idiot.

The wind is real, fierce, I must get out of the ~~rock~~ unrelenting wind. There's a low rock wall erected by some previous sky-pioneer. His grave? No corpse. Spirited away by the Creatures. Or simply evaporated, become a Creature himself. Perhaps I <sup>too will</sup> soon be a Creature of the crevasses. Lie behind the wall on soft bed of pebbles and sand.

Look down <sup>white</sup> the ridge to sullen cloud wisps dimming <sup>Brown</sup> The Castle, and down down ~~ice and snow~~ to Green meadows and forests. Ah sweet Green! Ah horrid White and Brown! Look out to the Goat Rocks, roots of an ancient volcano, and to massy Adams and graceful St. Helens, and cloudsea covering Oregon and the Pacific Ocean, where the sun is sliding.

Other parkas behind other walls. Does a parka have a sex? In the parking lot this morning were many obvious males, several evident females. No satyrs or nymphs, monks or nuns here. Only distinguishing the parka-phantoms is that most of us go down one side of the ridge to piss (urine dark as concentrated orange juice) and a few go down the other side. How cursed the daughters of Eve! And the most cruel punishment for their Sin is not ~~the pain of~~ childbirth but ~~the agony of~~ dropping pants and hanging bare ass out in this chill gale. Certainly I'll not take a crap this side of Paradise.

In a nearby nook is a parka. Even lying down it's a Tall Parka. Eyes (not seen but guessed) within the hood stare over thousands of square miles of Earth diminished to a relief map.

From depths of Tall Parka a voice (speaking to me, to itself, to whatever gods may be?): "Why do I keep coming up here? Why can't I learn? I'm always sick on the way to high camp, sick at high camp, sick all the way to the top, sick all the way down, sick sick sick."

Weary of myself and sick of asking...

Another parka, no phantom, an indisputable healthy human being (How comes such an alien up here among us?) approaches, sits by Chairman Cam.

"Well," says robust, cheerful Leader Ed, "Guess we better arrange the rope teams. You know these people and I don't."

Cam groans, sits up.

Rope teams. Futile gesture. Some names on the <sup>wind-whipped</sup> slip of paper in Ed's hand are motionless specks far below, never will climb this high. Others are in death throes here, their violent retching piercing the loud wind. Anywhere else in our civilized nation such agony would bring the Red Cross scurrying, and the National Guard, <sup>marching</sup> and reporters and priests and the governor. At Hazard, though, everybody is sick, nobody is rushing anywhere. Saving only Leader Ed, when the phantoms stir at all they move <sup>as</sup> deliberately, <sup>as</sup> ~~like~~ aged folk with brittle bones, or corpses arisen from the grave after putrefying a month.

How could this legion of the damned climb 3000 more feet? The summit is a fantasy. For me, for everyone. But Ed insists. Though Cam in his torpor knows it's pointless. They draw up a list of three-man teams, agreeing to let ropeleaders worry in the morning, if morning ever comes, about who died alone on the ridge below and who died here in the bag.

Fourteen ropeleaders are selected. One more needed. The effort of thinking is making Cam sicker, he wants Ed to go away. Despairingly he casts eye around the rockpile, focuses on me. He says, "Oh hell, give Manning a team."

He's gone mad. To think I can crawl out of the bag tomorrow to follow, much less lead. Should I live I'll go only down. No matter. Doubtless

I'll die in the night. If I somehow don't, so many assuredly will that I can lie unnoticed among the corpses.

Yet it is an honor. ~~To be sure,~~ <sup>Yes</sup> awarded solely because Cam's ~~unusually~~ sick and I'm handy. Still, of ~~all~~ the hundreds who started the Course in February only a dozen are at high camp (or struggling toward it) and only one has been chosen to lead a rope. If I don't die I'll have beaten out all those haughty athletes.

Just in case, try to cram a supper down throat to fuel the tomorrow, if any. What malignant deceiver seduced me into believing baby food pampers a delicate ~~palate~~ <sup>cackling</sup> appetite? Who else? Monie, ~~wicked~~ <sup>wicked</sup> witch to the end, ~~cackling, at my certain misery.~~ Up there somewhere above the Ice Cliff, may vultures be gnawing her vitals. Open a jar of chopped beef -- the stench flips my stomach. A jar of strained peas -- God, have I already thrown up without noticing? Impossible to swallow that shit. But the chocolate custard is just barely possible, helped down by a can of pineapple juice.

Enough food. Peanut butter is riled by the new arrival.

Gaze out to everywhere sky -- who would've thought the old world had so much air in it? Forests and rivers are disconnected absolutely from my bed on the shore of outer space.

'Tis cold, 'tis cold, 'tis bitter cold,  
And I am sick at heart.

Crawl into bag and wrap up in ~~the~~ liferaft sail. Morbidly watch neighbor Cam, moaning, stuff as much long body in bag as will fit and wrap leftover shoulders and head in sweater and parka and tarp. Forgive him for Lundin, he's paying for his sins.



Tiny orange ball falls into red cloudsea lying blanketlike on the ocean. Summit flame of Adams snuffs out. Pink skyglow lingers above, reflecting brilliance of high snows -- Rainier always is the last of the Northwest to go dark. The close-looming, skull-white Ice Cliff leans out over camp. Faint lights of blissful Paradise sparkle in meadowland night.

Paradise is not for ~~the likes of~~ us. Our fate lies elsewhere. Skyglow fades. Stars race through ominous swift mist. Wind assaults foundations of the mountain. Camp Hazard hath neither joy, nor love, nor light, nor certitude, nor peace, nor help from pain.

Boom! I ~~snap~~<sup>SNAP</sup> awake as the flare fades. Flash-boom! Dear God, the Russians have ~~pounded~~<sup>pounced</sup> on Seattle, they also have the Bomb and the garret is gone and the last war has begun. FLASH-BOOM! Not the Bomb. Worse. Creep deeper in bag. Hailstones batter liferaft sail. Insane to venture to ~~the planet's~~<sup>penetration of ferocious</sup> ~~this farthestmost thrust of the planet into the ferocity of~~ space. Roaring wind soon will rip boulders from ridge and roll them around the sky like billiard balls, snatch dreamers ~~off~~ off Earth to fly ~~xxx~~ through lightning and thunder. Press cells of flesh into minerals of rock, grip Earth with toes and belly and nose, long to be in a silent cave-womb far underground, secure from sky.

A frightful noise! Snap awake in terror! Shriek of a lost soul staring into the pit of Hell! Flick flashlight on watch -- 3:30. That was the rising call.

Someone has blundered. Not mine to reason why, not mine to make reply. Loving peace, I never should've left the land of flowers, for storm

is not ~~a disturbance~~, <sup>an interlude, war</sup> is the normal condition of the sky. Lightning flashes in ~~and~~ roiling thunderheads, revealing doom-wild clouds swirling over Ice Cliff above. Almost down upon us is the cloudcap storm, which must by now have killed Monie and Bill and Lloyd, unless they've managed to escape ribbons of torn tents and crawl ~~down~~ into sheltering steam caves melted in the crater snowfield.

Still deep in bag open a can of fruit cocktail and shudder as an icy grape slithers down throat. It sticks halfway. Study a peach slice. With such reinforcement the grape surely will rise in rebellion. Abandon breakfast. Stretch watch cap farther over ears, shiver from bag and tarp, bones ~~rattling~~ <sup>clattering</sup> in frigid gale. Pull on stiff-as-a-board Navy parka and frozen boots. Lash crampons and don mittens and stand, bracing against brutal gusts.

Bully ropemates from sacks, tie up and report to Leader Ed. Other teams ~~are still~~ <sup>remain</sup> partly or entirely moribund, so ~~stand~~ <sup>stand</sup> shaking from cold and fear while Ed and Cam perform the miracle of raising from the dead climbers fit only for burial. Incredibly, all 45 are on their feet, including Boy Scout Tom, ~~slipping~~ <sup>slipping</sup> only less odious than Idiot Richard but forgiven at dusk yesterday as he reeled ~~and~~ barfing into Hazard and by unexpectedly-compassionate pals was helped into sleeping bag and tenderly nursed.

Mingling in bellow of gale are howls and curses and whines and moans and whimpers and retches. Ropes tangle, rocks rattle, flashlight beams aimlessly probe blackness.

4:30. Night thinning. Eastern horizon pinkening. Ed descends loose rubble to the snow gully under the Kautz Ice Cliff. Cam follows with his team and I with mine. We pause to breathe deep, then dash crampon-awkward

across the gully; when Monie climbed this route ~~2~~ 2 years ago the whole party missed by seconds being wiped out here by an avalanche of ice blocks as big as box cars.

From the gully we skirt the base of a lava cliff and enter the Kautz Chute, a narrow channel of the glacier plunging between enclosing ice walls. As we rhythmically punch ~~crampers~~ crampon spikes/<sup>upward</sup> in crisp snow toward the fearful cloud cap, suddenly it <sup>dissolves in</sup> ~~thins to rainbows, and vanishes~~. And the rising sun tames the gale, warms white mounds of Adams and St. Helens riding above swells of the lowland-concealing sea of gleaming clouds.

Oh what a beautiful morning, oh what a wonderful day!

The head of the Chute tilts too steeply for cramponing, requires stepcutting. Ed strikes up the right side into a jungle of ice towers, swinging ax with old guide's easy skill, each blow erupting a sun-glittering spray of ice chips. But slow is his progress, we'll be hours funneling through the bottleneck. Therefore Cam commences a second stepline up the smooth-steep center of the Chute, aiming for a closed crevasse offering an upward-angling ramp. On attaining the ramp he pauses, looks down to the 13 teams standing in line, waiting.

"Manning!" he barks. "Chop a route between me and Ed!"

Yesterday I was promoted prematurely from the ranks to ropeleader and this morning I'm promoted again, to routemaker! How the athletes must envy!

Where to go? Into the white jungle, up that obvious ice gully. Do as I practiced on Nisqually -- with ~~both~~ both hands grasp ax shaft at the bottom, swing just like chopping a tree. First several sideways <sup>blows</sup> ~~swings~~ of the pick to undercut the slope, then several downward strokes to chip out ice and complete a ~~cut~~ boot-size step. Stamp in 10 crampon daggers and repeat.

Cut a ladderway up the gully to its end under a serac, cut a traversing line across the serac face to another gully. But as I enter, ice rubble batters my head. Cam is crossing above me and every <sup>swing</sup> ~~stroke~~ of his ax looses a volley. Retreat. Wait until the gully is quiet, chop chop chop to the top, chop chop over another serac face to another gully -- and another assault by Cam's garbage. Retreat. Wait. Advance. Again. Again.

Emerge at last from gullies and seracs and volleys onto smooth upper ~~slopes~~ slopes of the Kautz Glacier. Dismay. Cam's route was so fast he was followed by most of the party, all but Ed's fans. From third rope, a position earned at Hazard by eager efficient <sup>o'clock</sup> ~~4~~ promptness, I've fallen near the rear. And after I expended so much energy and creativity crafting my lovely staircase, not a single other team <sup>has</sup> followed me. None to praise my art, none to give thanks for sacrificial labor. It's not fair, it makes me sick.

Sick.

I was so busy chopping I wasn't paying attention, but we're at 12,500 feet! Dear God, higher than Adams. I was so busy routefinding-routemaking I didn't notice <sup>that</sup> ~~but~~ all through the icefall I was getting sick.

<sup>The</sup> That grape is rising in my esophagus. And behind it the chocolate custard. And the peanut butter.

Slow the pace. Hear breathing close behind. Damn Number Two! Disrespectful Number Two! Walking faster than his Leader! Getting even with me for ~~my~~ being chosen Leader. He's been climbing for years, should've been the leader but was camped too far from sick Cam to be remembered. Yell at the old bastard (at least 30) <sup>we can't see any crevasses but</sup> to keep the rope stretched out -- don't you know there could be hidden crevasses? I've no breath ~~to spare~~ for yelling. It makes me sick.

I hate Number Two but loathe Number Three, who by sickening chance is none other than Idiot Richard, who among other crimes is a genuine athlete, with so much breath to spare he ~~carries on a~~ <sup>incessantly</sup> running exchange ~~of~~ adolescent inanities with Boy Scouts on other teams. Every giggle-shout makes me sicker. Call a halt.

This is it. Shortly I'm going to do as <sup>poor</sup> Boy Scout Tom is doing, and barf my giblets all over the glacier. Death up here doesn't come by the ~~stark~~ Clock stopping or the brain spinning off in madness but by the deranged body turning itself inside out.

Must force back down my gullet that goddam pushy grape. Dig from rucksack the bottle of grapejuice. Tentatively sip. Grape <sup>drops</sup> descends. Stomach doesn't convulse, indeed seems grateful for the thought. Spots clear from eyes. Grapejuice races through arteries, feeding sugar and oxygen to muscles.

Onward and upward. Now I find the proper rhythm, one deep breath for each deliberate step. Ignore insolent Number Two, ignore Idiot Richard, concentrate on breathing, stepping. We're barely moving but we are moving, and no teams are passing us and we're passing some.

Brisk wind is cool-delicious, sun is life and hope. The cloudsea is rising below us, submerging all but the highest Tatoosh peaks, islets poking through cloudwaves. The Goat Rocks stand higher, to 8000 feet, and to 9677 feet the symmetrical cone of St. Helens, often compared in beauty ~~to~~ to Fujiyama, and to 12,202 feet the ~~hulk~~ hulking Adams. Beyond the unseen <sup>2-mile-tall volcanoes,</sup> Columbia River ~~in Oregon~~ boldly rise Hood and Jefferson and, haze-dimmed 175 miles south, the Three ~~is~~ Sisters. With seven-league boots one could

giant-walk through the sky, down the stepping stones of fire-mountains-ice-mountains from Washington through Oregon to Shasta and Lassen in California.

Someone descending. Quitters! No -- Monie and Bill and Lloyd and the other three, refugees from the crater night, the cloudcap storm, plunging down with scarcely a hallo-<sup>in their haste to flee</sup> ~~to escape~~ the sky. Something of their suffering I can guess from the white pillars along our route -- the wands they placed on their ascent, during the night plastered thick with hoarfrost.

Near the top of the Kautz Glacier, under the dome of Point Success, we turn right to cross the uppermost rocks of Wapowety Cleaver. ~~There~~ We rest in boulders feathered with hoarfrost, fragile faery sculptures. Tatoosh and Goat Rocks have been drowned and St. Helens is engulfed as we watch. Only Adams and Hood are left.

We're at 13,000 feet! How could it ~~be~~ be? What's happening? Grapejuice is keeping stomach calm, brain free of fuzz. The Idiot opens a can of sardines and offers them around, smirking at the <sup>anguish</sup> ~~horror~~ on faces ~~confronted~~ confronted by stinking dead fish, but my gorge holds firm. <sup>↓</sup> I'm alive -- and well. A coward dies a thousand deaths, a hero but one.

Hero!

Excelsior!

<sup>the side of Point Success</sup>  
As we traverse <sup>^</sup> onto the Nisqually Glacier, above the gigantic icefall that ~~appals~~ appalls far-below Paradise, I at last see Columbia Crest, a sharp edge dividing brightest of White from truest of Blue, and ~~we~~ feel a sudden ~~un~~ unEarthly loftiness, as if The Mountain afloat on cloudsea has bobbed up on a wave toward the sky, has broken <sup>away</sup> ~~moorings~~ from <sup>rocks in</sup> hidden lowlands and is adrift in infinity.

I've not  
~~yet~~ barfed  
yet - and  
won't.

We detour around a frightening-huge bergschrund whose interior blue twilight deepens toward full black night of the unguessable bottom and slowly plod upward toward the saddle between Point Success, <sup>left</sup> and Columbia Crest. <sup>right</sup> Now I'm breathing not once for each step but twice. Lungs are weary of pumping worthless air in and out, in and out.

Alone I walk, ~~The~~ rope behind me perhaps is ~~still~~ connected to two other bodies but they are not with me, the solitary hero.

The saddle, 14,000 feet! One final White rise of glittering sugar-candy hoarfrost. The sky grows. Once it was above us, then below, now it's all around, we're walking through the sky.

Slower, slower. Three breaths for each step. The ~~White~~ Crest is, after all, unattainable. So near, so far.

But <sup>now</sup> no White above! Only Blue denser and cleaner than Plato dreamt of in his philosophy!

If I die this moment in the middle of the sky, leaning against the purifying cold gale sweeping the Crest, here in space where centrifugal force of Earth's rotation easily could fling a mote of humanity over the continents, what cause for complaint?

It is 10 o'clock in the grandest morning of the history of the world and legs are solid, heart steady, mind whirling not in fear but from the ~~joy~~ <sup>ecstasy</sup> of belonging to the wild sky.

From the <sup>circle of the</sup> snow-filled crater <sup>rimmed</sup> ~~ringed~~ by ~~brown~~ volcanic gravel the cloudsea reaches out to every horizon, the colors of Reality are White snow and White cloud and Blue sky and Brown lava, all Green utterly drowned. All Earth, all humankind, are gone. Rainier remains, and I.

Steam leaks from rocks of the crater rim -- the volcano lives.

And so do I!

A coward dies a thousand deaths, a hero lives forever!

I'm 14,408 feet (plus 5 feet 11 inches) above Puget Sound where I was born, that tall am I!

Death-fearing I left Paradise yesterday, but today I'll descend there immortal, for Faust never dies. Within me is the power of the volcano ~~who~~ whose hot guts might burst forth any moment in City-destroying eruption, and the power of glaciers whose coldness might soon sweep down to <sup>overwhelm</sup> ~~bulldoze~~ ~~down~~ the lowland Civilization, and the power of the most enormous sky anyone lower than ~~the~~ ~~angels~~ the angels ever will know. Henceforth when doubt-weakened ~~by~~ ~~instillations-of-mortality~~ I've only to look south from Seattle to see The Mountain, to see Me!

Beware, Seattle! For when I return it will be with the dreadful strength of Tamburlaine the Great, who, from a Scythian Shepheard, by his rare and woonderfull Conquefts, became a moft puiffant and mightye Monarque, And (for his tyranny, and terrour in Warre) was tearmed, THE SCOURGE OF GOD.