

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 ~~wanted to charge~~ ~~days~~ ~~to~~ 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.

*that long*

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 *played hangman and generally* horsed around.

We were together again Second Period, in Mathana~~ly~~sis. 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 *and paper sacks* 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 *Forty* 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 ~~playing~~ <sup>doing</sup> "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~~ He also found a stepladder.  
~~beam five above the stage backstage area and a parkingxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~

~~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& 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 ~~are~~ <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~~ 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. <sup>No</sup> ~~is~~ 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, <sup>to</sup> 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~~  
~~something~~

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~~.