

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 ~~week~~ 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 ~~intrigued~~ 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 shit-smell 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>speed</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 <sup>entered</sup> ~~walked~~ 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 <sup>gorgeous</sup> ~~colorful~~ 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 <sup>we'd slept under</sup> ~~had looked up to~~ pulsing stars. ~~and what~~

~~which to the, embedded 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 ~~glittering~~ 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 cursed.~~ <sup>howled.</sup> A distant explosion of sobs and curses."

The drizzle became a rain. My "waterproof" oilskin was soaked <sup>g</sup> 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 ~~skipped~~ <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.