

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 ^{inspiring} ~~exhilarating~~, indeed gave sharp anal pains. From Detroit and Hollywood, Washington and New York, Seattle and Olympia gushed a flood^s of unmitigated nonsense, and not 1920s-naive glorious nonsense. Even Thurber had stopped ^{pretending to} 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 ^{leap} ~~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 ~~good~~ 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 ^{arrogant} 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 ^{surge} ~~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 ^{gulped the whole of him, chewed him up, and spit him out.} ~~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 ^{scan} ~~survey~~ the scene, lad. Where on the horizon is the new Roosevelt not a ~~capitalism~~ capitalism-rescuring ^{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. ^{As} Congress had ^a ~~its~~ House Un-American Activities Committee, ^{so did} and our state legislature ^{have a} ~~its~~ jerkwater parody, the Canwell Committee, ^{goon squad} ~~instrument~~ of ~~the~~ Eastern Washington bumpkins and Seattle's Downtown Gang, terrorizing the gutless University and badgering some of ^{its} ~~the~~ finest teachers, including my hiking partner of 1945, ^{Professor} ~~Dr.~~ Phillips.

Politics is hell. Well, ^{that hadn't changed since} ~~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 Pollyanaⁿ. 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, ~~they~~ ^{residual twinges of} 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 ^{are} ~~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 ^{refresh} ~~take their~~ minds ^{dulled by} ~~off~~ the manufacture of wood pulp and detergent. Crazy Art, whose ~~gorge~~ Hell-black eyes and ~~stare~~ chaos-scary 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 ⁱⁿ 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 ^{required} ~~needed~~ to do Graywolf Rambles forever -- minus the ~~trembling~~ ^{shuddering} 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-~~ ^{tolerated my babbling recollections} ~~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 ^{do} 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~~ ^{striven} ~~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~~ ^{transformed} 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 I had~~ would I pay the price of befouling my ~~own~~ independence in a maledoreous mob of ²⁰⁰⁰ ~~1500~~ freaks, [✓] 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 -- ^{the weapon being} ~~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~~ ^{Twitching} 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 ^{as} 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 ^{barely} ~~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 ~~and~~ 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 ^{set in a} ~~permanently~~ ^{from facing a hundred} squinting ~~into~~ [^] 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 ^{dashing} 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. 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 ^{duly noted} (my wristwatch ^{was} 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 ^{onto a mist-dim snowfield} ~~from growing and bleached snags of an~~
~~old-growth forest~~ I was startled by a cheery "Hello there!" Out of scudding fog
^{came descended} ~~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 ^{being} ~~being~~ alive, his innocent unawareness of the ^{brutal} ~~brutal~~ competition, ^{were} ~~were~~ depressing. Evidently I'd climbed most of the mountain because ^{steep} ~~steep~~ scarp ^{was yielding} ~~had yielded~~ to rounded ridge, flattening ~~out~~ toward the summit, and ^{continuous forest had broken into} ~~trees to~~ ~~small~~ clumps ^{of dwarf trees} 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 ^{it} ~~he~~ had. Winter-soft body couldn't gain 3000-plus feet in less than an hour. ^{Five hours was more like.} ~~Three hours.~~

The amiable old fool ~~to whom time meant nothing~~ resumed his descent, peeling another orange. I resumed my ^{upward} ~~shortly~~ rush and ^{quickly} ~~walked~~ entered a ^{plateau-} ~~small~~ snowy little basin enclosed by ^{small} ~~dozen-foot-tall~~ knolls. Presumably one was the Haystack, the ^{summit} ~~absolute-top~~ of Si.

Or was there something more? Why was the ^{grayness denser} ~~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 ^{hideous} ~~horrid~~ twin of Cruiser.

That was the Haystack? That was the Haystack. ~~I was stunned.~~
^{Damn Marie!} ~~Why hadn't Marie~~ ^{she} 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, ^{dominating} ~~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 ^{attempts} ~~gets up the steep to try~~ a mountain, Si is it. For years Scouts ^{had} ~~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 ^{was a regular} ~~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~~ ^{icicle-dripping} 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 ^{years} ~~days~~ had ~~learned~~ ^{hikers could} ~~would someday~~ die, and to prevent that sad ^{event} ~~happening~~ ^{abrupt} this day I must quit where I was -- as had the ancient, ~~as~~ shown by the termination of his tracks ⁱⁿ ~~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 ^{crushed} ~~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 ^{distaste} ~~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 ~~sure~~^{wise} to retreat. The gully was vertical and the snow loose and I ice-ax-less and alone. The Climbing Code, ^{the established rules of safe and sane behavior,} 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.~~

^{end thus.}
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 ^{omnipotent to} ~~all-powerful over~~ idiots who ^{dare} ~~venture into~~ its domain.

^{A coward's worthless, burdensome life.}
What have I got to lose but ~~my~~ ^{unique} life? Once more to the gully. Study the shape of my ^{unique} death. Look down. A ~~slip~~ ^{branches} slip, and ~~the~~ ^{I'll} 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 ^{ignominiously} bouncing from tree to tree, battered to ~~ruddy~~ carrion. Look up. The white wall dissolved ^{swift} 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 ^{leaned} into the slope, my weight broke out the weak outer edge of the bucket. If I stood upright I wouldn't break out buckets. [¶] 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 ^{I'm} 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? ^{Very far!} 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 ^{merriment} laughter, awaiting my fall to trigger the triumphant explosion of ~~merriment~~ ^{laughter.} But if I get up they won't laugh. They'll laugh at my death on the ^{slapstick} ~~way-down~~ ^{descent} 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, ^{ignorant} ~~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 ^{flailing} ~~smashing~~ at the cornice, ^{smashing} ~~beating~~ a gap in
 the frothy curl of the ^{frozen wave of} snow ~~wave~~. Squirm up to straddle the airy ^{white} 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 ^{appear} ~~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 ^{quakes. Grip Earth with ass.} ~~shudders, under me,~~ Don't
 Don't let the spinning start.
 panic. /Keep tight control. ~~Rock~~ Pull cigarette from shirt pocket. It
~~falls~~ ^{slips} 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. ^{stabilizes.} Rock ~~steadies.~~ I'm okay.

Where am I? On a tiny rock throne in the sky. One way a snow cornice
^{overhanging the white wall deeply trenched by my kicking-punching ascent.}
~~curling over the ridge crest.~~ The other way ~~a dozen yards of~~ ice-slick slabs
^{leading a dozen yards}
~~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 ^{never ever flinched! What, never? Well, hardly ever.} ~~didn't flinch! Well, not much.~~ See where I
am! In swirling clouds high in ^{bleak} ~~cold-white~~ winter, airplane-lofty above
 springtime green ~~of~~ valley. Through holes in ~~about~~ billows I see, ^{far} west over
 rolling ridges, skyscrapers of downtown Seattle, and ^{far} 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 ^{was} ~~would be worried~~ ^{doubtless worrying.}

I scrambled-wallowed-swam down the ~~gully~~ ^{white wall,} ran down the trail, drove to North Bend. ^{Sight of the restaurant set my stomach howling.} ~~Suddenly~~ I realized I'd not eaten ~~since~~ all day and stopped for a hamburger and milk shake.

How late was it? The ^{restaurant} clock said -- ~~no, look again~~ ^{it said an impossibility.} ~~it would be~~

~~Two~~ Two o'clock? ~~Two~~ The ancient's watch had been right! Soft body had gained more than 3000 feet in less than an hour, a pace ^{that would} ~~be~~ awe ~~even~~ Chairman Cam and the ^{supercilious} ~~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 ^{3½} ~~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.