

June 1948

Chapter 18

LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION

At Camp Parsons they told the story of the government mapmaker who between surveying voyages around Puget Sound used to visit his sweetheart's home in Seattle. ^{the young and little village of} On summer evenings after supper he and she, her parents and sister and two brothers, would sit on the front porch watching the sun sink into the jagged-black Olympic skyline. ~~Nobody had yet penetrated the massive barrier to the mysterious interior of the range.~~ No names had yet been given the peaks. The mapmaker took care of that. The southernmost prominent point of the skyline he officially designated Ellinor, the twin summits to the north The Brothers, and north of them and the tallest of all, rising nearly 8000 feet from tidewater, Constance.

I never could keep straight whether the ^{demure} ~~modest~~ Ellinor or the regal Constance was his sweetheart. Mine was Constance, ~~adorable and fearsome~~ ^{gorgeous and formidable} I grew up gazing across the Sound to the ^{high} climax of the western horizon. From Home Lake on the west, in 1938 and again in 1946 I admired crags of the West Peak, ~~and~~ from Home Peak on the east, in 1947 ^{I was humbled by the fall} ~~the humbling~~ wall of the East Peak, the highest. From Dead Man's Canyon, a deep cleft between the two peaks, in 1942 I bent my neck backward staring up and up the cliffs.

I yearned for Constance. But hell, I also hankered after Joan Fontaine. In both cases, a dog howling at the Moon. Well, so long as the goddess was equally unattainable ^{to} ~~by~~ all mortals -- or all I personally knew, anyway -- I pined hopelessly but not in pain. However, that the Climbing Course should schedule my Constance for the first Experience Climb of the year, that all those damn athlete ^{curs} ~~hounds~~ should ravish my sweetheart, was a kick in the ribs. Yet such is the way of lovers ~~★~~ I realized it wouldn't hurt so much if I participated in the gang-bang.

Thus I strayed from wise anarchism. Monday I reveled in post-Lundin release. Tuesday I reflected I had, after all, survived ~~★~~ unharmed and with Betty only slightly damaged. Wednesday the buried ^{adoration} ~~worship~~ of a decade ^{erupted in} stirred sighs of longing.

But lordy! After Lundin, how could the Mountaineers have the gall to ^{assault large} ~~tackle~~ so ~~big~~, so fierce a peak? With such a rabble? Not from Home Peak, not from Dead Man's Canyon, had I seen any sane ^{hope of penetrating} ~~route to attack~~ the defenses.

Monie shrugged. Constance, she said, was no big deal. From Dead Man's Canyon a Luddin-Chute-like gully sliced through the precipices to the ridge. A ~~simple~~ traverse across snowfields of the east face led to a short scramble up the final rocks. Cunning Mountaineers -- cousins of the greasy-haired wise guys at Lincoln who knew how to make girls. ~~Bestard~~ ~~Mountaineers~~ ~~was a sandy bunch of smart-ass Errol Flynnes.~~ Excitement at the prospect of satisfying lust was mixed with grief that Constance could not be eternally virgin, ^{was already much-soiled.} as Joan-Fontaine had been in The Constant Nymph:

Monie also said there was no danger, ~~in the mass attack~~. Forget the Lundin fiasco. The first Experience Climb of the year was a traditional

alumni reunion, all the Old Faithfuls would turn out, there'd be a veteran hero to lead every rope. And ~~my~~ Betty-beginners stupid enough to sign up would be scratched from the list, told to await easier Experience Climbs to come.

No anarchist is wise beyond temptation. The beautiful Constance made a fool of me. Thursday I signed up.

To no purpose. Friday night, as I was packing for the morning departure, I got the phone call. Not scratching me -- scratching everybody. Chairman Cam ^{frustrated again.} ~~had lost another round.~~ Hard to believe with Seattle blooming so richly green but ~~all week~~ ^{continued} snow had ~~been~~ dumping on the highlands and now the storm had turned rainy-warm and those billions of white tons were thundering into the valleys. The trip was canceled.

So I lost my beloved Constance. Well, there was still Betty. I'd stay in the garret and help her lick her wounds. We'd devise some appropriate celebration of our first anniversary of legal cohabitation.

Saturday night, another phone call. Desperate to salvage something from ~~the ruins~~ ruins of his school, Cam had patched together a last-minute-substitute Experience Climb. Nothing fancy. Next morning, Memorial Day, the mob would return to Snoqualmie Pass. Lots of luck, ant-swarm! I'd deal with Chair Peak in my own ^{sweet} ~~my~~ private superhiker time.

Still another phone call. Monie. Storm clouds dissolving in a gigantic mass of hot dry air rolling in from the Pacific, the so-long winter abruptly ending, she was eager to walk. Strangely, not to the Big Reunion

on Chair. (Sinking ship? Rat?) The driver and the four passengers of the car to which she'd been assigned, in the club's usual ride-sharing routine, had accepted her suggested alternate goal. Would the Mannings care to come along?

Said Betty, ^{"Elizabethan gesture to you!"} ~~"Out of your mind!"~~ Said Harvey, "Sure!" Not one but two peaks of my new Snoqualmie Pass home Monie promised. What fitter celebration of the anniversary of Silvertip?

And a grand romp it proved. From the entrance to Commonwealth Basin we climbed the east shoulder of Guye. Reverting to kindly teacher ~~of~~ old and honoring my Lundin feat, Monie let me lead the whole way, a series of short rock pitches, easy-as-pie and unexposed Monitors. From the 5100-foot summit we crept over a gendarme, then unroped and waded soggy snow along the ridge to the top of Snoqualmie, at 6270 feet the highest peak in the immediate vicinity of Snoqualmie Pass.

Two peaks in a day! Five Pin Peaks in my bag! ~~Surrounded~~ Surrounded by past (and future) conquests, ~~only~~ I surveyed the ~~brilliant~~ Cascade panorama. Huge to the south was Rainier and imposing to the east were ^{the spike of} Chimney Rock and the ^{distant pyramid} ~~far-off bulk~~ of 9470-foot Stuart, highest non-volcanic peak in the state. Northward along the hundred miles to Canada sprawled a maze of mountains, few familiar to me by face or name but among them certainly many a summit open to superhiker boots and ax. The ~~two~~ two volcanoes, Glacier and Baker, thrust ~~high and lonesome~~ above the jostling multitude. Seeing Baker I had to laugh. Kermit the Hermit had invited me to join him there this weekend. Me, climbing a volcano! ~~Preposterous,~~ ~~utterance of~~ ~~course.~~ Yet flattering.

Not laughing did I look west to the Olympics. Yes, ~~there were~~ many superhiker conquests awaiting ^{ed} there, too. But Constance the queen was forever lost. A triumphant exit that would've made.

Long we lingered on the hot granite rockpile atop Snoqualmie. I found my new companions likable; if more Mountaineers were so decent I might not be quitting the club. We ~~commented~~ remarked on the spectacularly sudden demise of winter, ~~the~~ furnace sun shrinking the snowpack before our eyes. To cool blistered brains we piled crowns of snow on our heads, giggling as meltwater dribbled down backs. When we'd no cans of fruit juice left to quench thirsts and had eaten a ^{gross} ~~ton~~ of snowballs each we descended to Commonwealth Basin in slushy, swooping glissades. We paused to peer into the snow canyon of Commonwealth Creek, swollen enormously beyond the meager flow of last Sunday. At home, ^{from} ~~listening to~~ the radio, I learned the Yakima River (fed by ~~Commonwealth Creek~~ many a creek like Commonwealth) had torn out the highway a few miles east of our day's ramble and the rampaging Columbia River (fed by many a ^{tributary} ~~river~~ like the Yakima) had destroyed the city of Vanport, Oregon. Every stream in the Northwest had gone wild. The flood of the century ~~x~~ they were ~~is~~ calling it, and we'd been up in the sky where it began.

Speaking of disasters, what about the ant-swarm? Only late in the afternoon, when leaving the summit of Snoqualmie, did we ^{spot} ~~make out~~ a procession of ^{insects} ~~little black spots~~ ascending snowfields from Source Creek to ~~the~~ cliffs of Chair. At the highway we met a worried female Mountaineer waiting for her husband. She said he and the Hundred had set out from the cars at dawn, hours before us smarties even left town. Next day Monie called, cackling,

to tell me the party had been slowed by ^{deep-trenched} creek ^{with all snowbridges collapsed,} ~~canyons~~ ~~trenched~~ ~~deep~~ ~~in~~
~~canon~~, by detours around potential avalanche slopes, by bottlenecks on the
 rock, by exhaustion, sunstroke, terror, and chaos, and had straggled to
 the highway at midnight. Revenge is sweet.

Little Si, Lundin, Chair -- how many lessons does a person need? Why
 did I ^{go on} ~~sign up for~~ the second Experience Climb? For good reasons. One, at
 Monie ^{is urging} ~~arranged for~~ the Climbing Committee ^{agreed} to count Guye-Snoqualmie as a
 regular Experience Climb; a second would let me earn the damn diploma and
 wrap up tidily, no loose ends dangling, this whole loony ~~is~~ episode.
 Two, so many others had learned their lesson only a dozen were ^{signed up.} ~~going~~
~~Three~~ Three, ~~the clincher~~, the objective was Sluiskin. Not famous and
 according to Monie ~~a walk-up~~ barely worth dignifying as an "Experience"
 Climb. But in 1944, hiking with Lincoln-buddy Al to the ^{7015-foot} mountain's ^{base} ~~foot~~,
 I'd wished I had the nerve to dare the heights. I didn't, then.

Now I did. Sluiskin Chief, highest of the summits, was a simple
 rock scramble, ropes unnecessary. Sluiskin Squaw was a snow plod. The
 satisfaction of settling a score with 1944 was immense. The price paid ~~x~~ in
~~the~~ aggravation ~~by the mob~~ was minor -- if half the party was idiots, in
 small non-menacing numbers idiots are rather entertaining. (Not so long
 ago tours of insane asylums were a popular diversion of gentlefolk, and
 what's a circus without the sideshow gallery of freaks?) Watching
 avalanches tumble a vertical mile from the summit icecap of Rainier down
 Willis Wall to the Carbon Glacier, knowing those white clouds were titanic

jumbles of ~~large~~ blocks of ice but seeing them as slow-flowing mists, impressed upon me as never before the monstrous scale of The Mountain. Finally, though Betty pooped out at Windy Gap she at least came for the hike, relieving my fears she might hide in the garret forever.

Said Monie, "Oh gosh, you don't want to miss Nisqually. That's always our very best practice."

Sluskin had been no sweat. One more weekend couldn't hurt. By attending the final Intermediate practice I'd show I could take everything the Course ~~had to~~ ^{could} dish out -- up to a point, anyhow. And it was a trip Betty could handle.

The one-two punch of Lundin-Chair had knocked right out of their ambitions the bulk of the March-April-May-dazed beginners. For my 40-odd fellow survivors I felt an almost-camaraderie. (Ah, what suffering we'd shared!) Even the Boy Scouts I viewed with tolerant amusement -- heck, I was young once myself. As for the 20-odd leaders and instructors, they were, if freaks, not uniformly absolute bungling fools; some began to ^{vaguely} resemble the heroes of Monie's advertisements. Chairman Cam had mellowed in the 3 weeks since I'd last seen him, was not the Fiend of Lundin but the next thing to genial. One could imagine him actually having friends among real human beings.

The trip itself, on a third consecutive Sunday of bright sun, was a ^{plowed-out} glory. From the/parking lot at Paradise we hiked snowfields high above the wooded knoll of Alta Vista, uppermost limit of alpine trees, practiced

the standing glissade (like skiing with very short skis -- the boots!)
 on the descent to the Nisqually Glacier, ~~and~~ wove through crevasse fields
 practicing the techniques of rope-handling amid gaping ^{figures} ~~pits~~ and of rescue
~~the chill blue depths~~ from ~~those pits~~ by the bilgeri method, ^{and then in} ~~in~~ an icefall ~~we~~ practiced stamping
 the dagger-sharp points of boot-gripping crampons (rented at the Co-op) ~~in~~
~~balance~~ and using axes to hack airy staircases up gleaming ~~white walls~~ ^{seracs}
~~Thrilling. The glacier was immense.~~
~~Enchanting. I'd several times walked small glaciers, little more~~
~~than snowfields: Now ^{for me} and thrilling was venturing far out on a glacier,~~
 surpassed in size in the 48 states only by a couple of its ^{Rainier companions.} ~~near neighbors.~~
~~I was entranced by serac towers, shining palaces designed by the Architect~~
~~of Fairy, by icebox depths of crevasses into which we were lowered and from~~
~~which we were rescued.~~ Forty feet down in the guts of the glacier was a
 still-cold spooky-quiet chamber of soft blue light. On the surface of the
 glacier was the blinding glare of ~~a vast~~ whiteness extending below, ~~and~~
 around, and up up up to the summit of Rainier, remote as Heaven, ~~and~~
~~And~~ ~~Costly but~~ The Mountain, ^{was huge!} At 7000 feet I was as high
 as I'd ever climbed above sealevel, and above ^{rose} ~~was~~ 7500 ~~feet~~ ^{more}
 mountain. ~~Stunning. Appalling. Quazy, stirring thoughts of infinity.~~
~~Magnificent.~~

~~I was glad I'd come. It was good ~~and~~ to feel the full~~
~~immensity of the biggest damn chunk of Earth in the Northwest. And~~
~~my superhiker realm was expanded beyond dreams. Rainier I'd never try~~
~~aspire to, but to my domaine had been added a ^{bright} whole new world.~~

Henceforth I ~~would~~ roam not ~~merely~~ forests and meadows, snows and rocks.
 Now ~~European~~ glaciers, too!

Bagley in June was one great ~~continuous~~ glow of sunburns, one loud chattering of climbers. Kermit, of course, with his grand scheme to do all the Majors on skis, was the star of the show. He'd knocked off St. Helens and Baker, had plots for Glacier over the Fourth of July and Rainier ("der meisterberg") in Mid-July and Olympus and Adams later on. ~~By the end of the year he'd permanently etch his name in alpine history.~~

I admired, not envied. I had my own plots, ~~to keep me quivering.~~
 Never had I felt so alive, ^{energy -} so bursting, ~~with unreasoning energy.~~ Often, lest I explode, I'd borrow Kermit's bicycle and pump uphill through the campus to 45th Street and then, disdaining brakes, fly down past Parrington Hall and Meany Hall and Architecture Hall, scattering students, ~~and~~ escaping ^{whistle-screaming} ~~screeches~~ of campus cops by dodging into Bagley and stockroom.

The war with Crazy Art intensified. Firecrackers were a brief fad -- very brief, since each blast brought a gaggle of humorless professors scurrying with fire extinguishers and first-aid kits. Other bombs retained popularity, though, and I sent Art and company diving for cover by tossing one in their lab; the victory was the more complete because it was merely a paper bag puffed full of cigarette smoke which curled out ominously. Retaliation was swift and savage. I heard running feet and maniac laughter

and Art hastily set a 2-liter beaker on the window counter and fled. The cauldron boiled violently and blurped bubbles and steam and I hit the floor. No explosion forthcoming, I warily approached the hellish device; an innocent bystander, patiently waiting to buy chemicals, explained it was a piece of dry ice in soapy water.

With the warm days of summer the favorite weapon became the washbottle, a glass jar into which air is pumped by squeezing a rubber bulb and from which a stream of water then issues through a glass nozzle. Depending on how lovingly the nozzle is fashioned by stretching out glass tubing half-melted in a gas flame and cutting the cooled constriction with a steel file, the range is anywhere up to 15 feet or so. Typically a sneaky marauder would make a surprise attack and thoroughly wet my face and I'd leap through the window for a shootout. But once as I chased Art, his washbottle empty, the soaking of the back of my head disclosed he'd lured me into an ambush; I turned to confront three enemies and another three burst from a lab behind me and I was so drenched by the pitiless crossfire I went home at lunch and changed clothes.

I gained revenge by stealthily scaling the outside wall of Bagley to the window ledge of Art's lab and sniping at him and his gang. Busy with individual experiments they didn't spot me, hiding behind a column, and each, when hit, stared suspiciously at labmates. The overall mood of the group was rather ugly by the time my water was ~~exhausted~~ spent and I triumphantly revealed myself.

A couple days later I was a millenium away with Otto the ~~Great~~ Great, deep in the Cambridge Medieval History, when the herd came pounding down

the corridor, laughing hysterically, and Crazy Art shoved a fire hose
in my face! And howled to an unseen accomplice, "TURN IT ON!" I fell
off my stool ~~backwards~~ ^{rear back} and scuttled on hands and knees to the ~~back~~ of the
stockroom and cowered, awaiting the bruising blow of high-velocity water.
Art was really and truly crazy! He might damn well kill me! Only when no
blow came and I saw the ^{hysterical} face-mass crowding the window, ~~none wanting to~~
~~miss any detail of my craven posture~~ did I realize the hose wasn't
hooked up.

delaying the day of revealing Among (and because of) the ^{bergsteigers}
~~Partly because of~~ Bagley, I continued masquerading as a ^{Superman} ~~climber~~,
^{Clark Kent} concealing my true ~~superhiker~~ identity. ~~Among the engineer bergsteigers~~
~~were guys who'd be sure in the mountains and though it was plainly impossible~~
~~for me ever to be their alpine partners~~ I delayed the day when they'd see me
for what I was, ~~not Superman but a Clark Kent~~.

I wasn't entirely a fraud. What do you call a person who's done
Tooth (by the South Face) and Cruiser, plus Si (in winter alone) and Lundin
(as leader) and Guye (by the East Shoulder, leading the rope) and
Snoqualmie and Sluisin Chief and Squaw? "Superhiker" isn't quite
sufficient. How about super-superhiker? Temporary semi-climber?

To give ^{the devils} ~~them~~ their due, the Mountaineers hadn't been a total ^{waste} ~~loss~~.
^{actually} With them if not/from them I'd gained new confidence on steep terrain,
whether rock or snow. ~~Certainly~~ ^{introduced to} They'd ~~initiated~~ me ~~into~~ glaciers. ^{big glaciers}
~~Perhaps most significantly~~ ^{And} they'd nearly doubled the length of my mountain
^{frequently} year. As a hiker I ~~occasionally~~ floundered in spring snow, and as a
~~reluctant~~ skier in winter snow, yet considered it basically a nuisance,

*that is, very different from the little ones
I'd walked, and the glacier centers, very
different from the edges.*

~~to be endured.~~ The real mountain season started in early July when ~~the~~ high trails began melting free. But now April-May-June had become the virtual equal of July-August-September-October. If reds-yellows-blues of flowers were scarce, the austere crystalline brilliance compensated. If the highland summer was the ripe-fleshed Green Woman ^{in me} fondled by the ~~summit-passionate~~ romantic, the highland winter-spring was the virgin White Goddess worshipped by the ~~ascetic~~ classicist ^{in me}.

In my hiker's ignorance I'd supposed a tool, the ice ax, was ~~a~~ the weapon-scepter signifying an invader's dominion over a foreign land. I'd learned, however, that several simple techniques were as important, that a climber is distinguished not so much by uniform and armament as by his fluid motion through a land where he belongs.

"Heeling," nothing more complicated than stomping the boot heel decisively ~~into~~ the slope to compact firm platforms, permits one to ascend and traverse with the ~~grace of a dancer rather than the blundering of a bulldozer, and to descend by "plunge step" with the élan of a lancer ~~rather~~ rather than the doggedness of a sapper.~~

The "rest step," ^{apparently} ~~seemingly~~ a mere coordination of legs and lungs, in fact is a rhythm of the whole body, is a composure of mind and spirit. The trail-trained hiker, bored and depressed by ^{infinite} ~~endless~~ white monotony, attacks ^{the hated enemy} with banzai fury, slips and skids, gasps and sweats, and soon becomes ~~exhausted and~~ discouraged and quits. But when he patiently "tramp-walks" flat-footed on ~~the~~ levels and rest-steps up hills he moves

easily and steadily through the beautiful, the friendly snow.

The Mountaineers had given me the freedom of the snows and glaciers. They' also ~~had~~ given me new mountain homes -- Snoqualmie Pass, the ^{retinue of} Rainier, ~~hinterland.~~ You had to hand it to the ^{freaks} ~~bastards~~ -- they knew our ^{hills} mountains as did no other group. And virtually none of the lore accumulated over 40-odd years was written down, most was in their heads. The only way to share it was by going on their trips. Studying the summer's Experience Climb schedule, ~~pondering the names of the peaks~~ (Adams, Eldorado, Rainier, Shuksan, Gunn, Garfield, Buck, Hibox, Baker, Baring, Silvertip). I began toying with the notion of sticking around a while longer to mine some of this wisdom trove, high-grading ^{the ore} for the Snoqualmies and Sluiskins suitable for an independent anarchist superhiker.

For all the ~~anticipatory~~ dread, ~~in the event~~ I'd not been damaged by a 4-month stay in the club. (And Betty would recover.) The 3 weeks since my planned exit had been the most rewarding of all. What ^{risk} ~~xxxxxx~~ in a few more weeks?

^{risk} What ~~xxxx~~ indeed. ~~Euphoria-blinded by three easy successes, I~~
~~blundered into a trap.~~

The weekend of June 19-20 began pleasantly lulling. The drive to the southern reaches of the Washington Cascades, where I'd never been, was interesting, concluding in 40 miles of single-lane dirt road weaving through a forest empire beyond the ^{farthest advance of the} loggers' frontier. Above the rivers with

such exotic ~~new~~ names as Cowlitz and Cispus, above the ^{vastness} ~~green sea~~ of ^{green-treed} ~~wooded~~ ridges, ^{stood} ~~rose~~ the tall white volcanoes, St. Helens and Adams, and ~~the~~ eroded roots of still another volcano, the Goat Rocks.

The 6-mile hike was a ^{picnic} ~~joy~~, starting at 4500 feet in sparse subalpine forest, ascending melting-out parklands (summer seemed to come earlier here than farther north) and fields of snowbank-crowding avalanche lilies to 7000-foot Mountaineer Camp. I wished I'd brought Betty along to sack out in the camp on the rounded crest of a lava-block ridge, beside a ~~white~~ torrent tumbling through ~~the~~ greening meadows, waterfalling down short cliffs, meandering ⁱⁿ ~~through~~ moraine-ringed ~~basin of~~ lawns sprinkled with buttercups and little snowflake flowers. ~~Green Woman country, superb for romping with the nub-troop maid.~~ Another new home, ~~revealed:~~

~~But~~ I saw ^{for future reference} not felt ^{in the present moment} the beauty. For also here was ^{this weekend} ~~also here~~ ~~was the sky.~~ A vertical mile ^{above Green Woman country into hostile sky} ~~into the upper atmosphere~~ shoved the brute ~~bulk of 12,202-foot~~ Adams, in the Northwest second in ^{bulk} ~~mass~~ and height only to The Mountain itself. Hubris had done me wrong.

Not the route scared. Our way ^{didn't} ~~did not~~ ascend ^{strep} icefalls of the Adams Glacier but the ^{gentle} ~~long~~ lava cleaver of the Northwest Ridge, obviously a boulder-hop, a trudge. Yes, a trudge -- to 12,202 feet.

Camp Mystery, 1938. Feeling (at 5000 feet) symptoms (false) of ^{solemnly warned against} the ~~mysterious~~ "mountain sickness." Subsequently laughing at my child's ^{hypochondria, being} ~~alarm, hahaha~~ healthy and happy at 6000 feet, at 7000. Yet sometimes on a high ridge, wherefrom this lightheadedness? Probably weariness, ~~of the~~ ~~mountain~~, or the hot sun, or ~~the~~ high wind. The air's okay. Or is it? ~~And~~ what of 8000 feet, 10,000, 12,000? Lots of people breathe there.

Am I on the boundary?

Could I? Tales of barfing and ~~fainting~~^{staggering}, staggering and ~~collapsing~~^{fainting}.
 Not everyone ~~could~~^{can} breathe there.

Aftermath of the retreat from Lake Dorothy. First ~~feeling the Clock-~~
 Hearing the "tick-tock, tick-tock." The ~~thudding of boots,~~^{sound gradually fading under} gradually
~~drowning out the sound,~~ How long since I so much as speculated whether
 I'd make 30? Yet ~~never~~^{deep within me} unaware. As in the gas dream when the impacted
 wisdom tooth was yanked, always waiting for the ~~final~~ "tick" with no
 answering "tock."

In the rich air of sealevel, of 5000 feet, of 7000, the Clock was
 regular. In the Graywolf, on Tooth and Cruiser, all this spring, I'd
 been wary of the Death from Outside, the smashing of the Clock. I'd
 forgotten the Death from Inside, the slipping of ~~gear~~^{gear} or breaking of
~~axle~~ wheel, the momentary ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ giddy suspension between
 living tick and tockless swirl, ~~into oblivion~~. Now I remembered. ~~how~~
~~I wondered~~. Here at Mountaineer Camp, at 7000 feet, the air sustained
 the steady beat of 22 years. Up there on the ridge, on the lofty white
 dome, in thin air of the sky, what derangement might there be of ~~oxygen-~~
~~starved blood,~~ of the keeper-of-time?

Insanity to be here. ~~I wasn't thinking~~. Kermit's fault -- treating me
 as if I were a ~~whole man~~^{barely-premature}, unflawed, volcano-worthy. Scarlet-blazing
 sunset clouds were my/elegy. Because there couldn't be any quitting. ↙

What sound in the night? Wind moaning through the streamlined clump
 of dwarf pines in the lee of which I'd pitched my liferaft sail. Rain
 rattling. Rescued from the brink!

Why not? Too late even
 to ask.

No. Competing with loud moan the bellow of the Rough Beast:

"Two o'clock! Everybody up!"

A ropeleader who'd accepted the hospitality of my tarp obeyed. Off in blackness wavered his flashlight. And returned. ~~So~~ Drenched and shivering from cloudbursting gale he crawled ^{back} ~~bag~~ in ~~the~~ bag.

Cam howling here, shrieking there, ~~Cam conspiring with the storm.~~
 Obscene) beamviolating tarp-cave.
 Flashlight ~~brutally thrusting under tarp.~~ "Get out of there! Get up!
 We're going! Now!"

Whined another guest, ^{dismayed} ~~appalled~~ beginner, "You don't climb in weather like this, do you?"

Roared Cam, "We try! We start! We at least get out of the sack! We don't cry until we're hurt!"

Beginner guest rebelled. And ropeleader guest. Not for me, surely, to be Loyalist to mad tyrant. ~~Up the Revolution!~~

What a lovely tempest. What a fine and funny night. Almost, ~~though~~ I pitied ~~the~~ Tall Parka flailing flashlight in blackness as if ^{with the beam} ~~without~~ he could ^{flag} ~~whip~~ ~~the~~ ~~wind~~ ~~into~~ ~~submission~~ ~~scourge~~ ~~this~~ slaves into submission. Maximum Leader was ^{followerless} ~~alone~~ in the night. Nobody was getting up, not even the climb leader.

Or rather, ^{nearly} ~~just about~~ everybody was getting up -- but not to climb. Chuckled the ropeleader, "Not many guys picked spots as good as this. You should see it out there! Tents blowing down, tarps flying through the meadows." When we awoke in the bleak gray morning the mob of ~~200~~ 60-odd had diminished to an elite 20, the others ^{having fled} ~~fleeing~~ by flashlight to the cars. Only remaining were the few who'd taken shelter in the lee of the tree clumps -- and now ^I ~~one~~ clearly understood why the clumps were

streamlined, ~~why the tree-shaped thickets of tough pines pointed to the~~
~~southwest.~~

Saved by the storm. A narrow escape. A damn good lesson. This,
by God, was the end of the line.

It was definitely over. All over.