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I put on my new flannel shirt and new socks and underwear and my jeans and packed the rucksack tight and slung it on and went to San Francisco that night just to get the feel of walking around the city night with it on my back. I walked down Mission Street singing merrily. I went to Skid Row Third Street to enjoy my favorite fresh doughnuts and coffee and the bums in there were all fascinated and wanted to know if I was going uranium hunting. I didn't want to start making speeches about what I was going to hunt for was infinitely more valuable to mankind in the long run than ore, but let them tell me: "Boy, all you gotta do is go to that Colorady country and take off with your pack there and a nice little Geiger counter and you'll be a millionaire." Everybody in Skid Row wants to be a millionaire.

"Okay boys," I said, "mebbe I'll do that."

"Lotsa uranium up in the Yukon country too."

"And down in Chihuahua," said an old man. "Bet any dough thar's uranium in Chihuahua."

I went out of there and walked around San Francisco with my huge pack, happy. I went over to Rosie's place to see Cody and Rosie. I was amazed to see her, she'd changed so suddenly, she was suddenly skinny and a skeleton and her eyes were huge with terror and popping out of her face. "What's the matter?"

Cody drew me into the other room and didn't want me to talk to her. "She's got like this in the last forty-eight hours," he whispered.

"What's the matter with her?"

"She says she wrote out a list of all our names and all our sins, she says, and then tried to flush them down the toilet where she works, and the long list of paper stuck in the toilet and they had to send for some sanitation character to clean up the mess and she claims he wore a uniform and was a cop and took it with him to the police station and we're all going to be arrested. She's just nuts, that's all." Cody was my old buddy who'd let me live in his attic in San Francisco years ago, an old trusted friend. "And did you see the marks on her arms?"

"Yes." I had seen her arms, which were all cut up.

"She tried to slash her wrists with some old knife that doesn't cut right. I'm worried about her. Will you watch her while I go to work tonight?"

"Oh man—"

"Oh you, oh man, don't be like that. You know what it says in the Bible, 'even unto the least of these . . .'"

"All right but I was planning on having fun tonight."

"Fun isn't everything. You've got some responsibilities sometimes, you know."

I didn't have a chance to show off my new pack in The Place. He drove me to the cafeteria on Van Ness where I got Rosie a bunch of sandwiches with his money and I went back alone and tried to make her eat. She sat in the kitchen staring at me.

"But you don't realize what this means!" she kept saying. "Now they know *everything* about you."

"Who?"

"You."

"Me?"

"You, and Alvah, and Cody, and that Japhy Ryder, all of you, and me. Everybody that hangs around The Place. We're all going to be arrested tomorrow if not sooner." She looked at the door in sheer terror.

"Why'd you try to cut your arms like that? Isn't that a mean thing to do to yourself?"

"Because I don't want to live. I'm telling you there's going to be a big new revolution of police now."

"No, there's going to be a rucksack revolution," I said laughing, not realizing how serious the situation was; in fact Cody and I had no sense, we should have known from her arms how far she wanted to go. "Listen to me," I began, but she wouldn't listen.

"Don't you *realize* what's happening?" she yelled staring at me with big wide sincere eyes trying by crazy telepathy to make me believe that what she was saying was absolutely *true*. She stood there in the kitchen of the little apartment with her skeletal hands held out in supplicatory explanation, her legs braced,

her red hair all frizzly, trembling and shuddering and grabbing her face from time to time.

"It's nothing but bullshit!" I yelled and suddenly I had the feeling I always got when I tried to explain the Dharma to people, Alvah, my mother, my relatives, girl friends, everybody, they never listened, they always wanted me to listen to them, *they* knew, I didn't know anything, I was just a dumb young kid and impractical fool who didn't understand the serious significance of this very important, very real world.

"The police are going to swoop down and arrest us all and not only that but we're all going to be questioned for weeks and weeks and maybe even years till they find out *all* the crimes and sins that have been committed, it's a network, it runs in every direction, finally they'll arrest everybody in North Beach and even everybody in Greenwich Village and then Paris and then finally they'll have *everybody* in jail, you don't know, it's only the beginning." She kept jumping at sounds in the hall, thinking the cops were coming.

"Why don't you listen to me?" I kept pleading, but each time I said that, she hypnotized me with her staring eyes and almost had me for a while believing in what she believed from the sheer weight of her complete dedication to the discriminations her mind was making. "But you're getting these silly convictions and conceptions out of nowhere, don't you realize all this life is just a dream? Why don't you just relax and enjoy God? God is *you*, you fool!"

"Oh, they're going to destroy you, Ray, I can see it, they're going to fetch all the religious squares too and fix them good. It's only begun. It's all tied in with Russia though they won't say it . . . and there's something I heard about the sun's rays and something about what happens while we're all asleep. Oh Ray the world will never be the same!"

"What world? What difference does it make? Please stop, you're scaring me. By God in fact you're not scaring me and I won't listen to another word." I went out, angry, bought some wine and ran into Cowboy and some other musicians and ran back with the gang to watch her. "Have some wine, put some wisdom in your head."

"No, I'm laying off the lush, all that wine you drink is rotgut, it burns your stomach out, it makes your brain dull. I can tell there's something wrong with you, you're not sensitive, you don't *realize* what's going on!"

"Oh come on."

"This is my last night on earth," she added.

The musicians and I drank up all the wine and talked, till about midnight, and Rosie seemed to be all right now, lying on the couch, talking, even laughing a bit, eating her sandwiches and drinking some tea I'd brewed her. The musicians left and I slept on the kitchen floor in my new sleeping bag. But when Cody came home that night and I was gone she went up on the roof while he was asleep and broke the skylight to get jagged bits of glass to cut her wrists, and was sitting there bleeding at dawn when a neighbor saw her and sent for the cops and when the cops ran out on the roof to help her that was it: she saw the great cops who were going to arrest us all and made a run for the roof edge. The young Irish cop made a flying tackle and just got a hold of her bathrobe but she fell out of it and fell naked to the sidewalk six flights below. The musicians, who lived downstairs in a basement pad, and had been up all night talking and playing records, heard the thud. They looked out the basement window and saw that horrible sight. "Man it broke us up, we couldn't make the gig that night." They drew the shades and trembled. Cody was asleep. . . . When I heard about it the next day, when I saw the picture in the paper showing an X on the sidewalk where she had landed, one of my thoughts was: "And if she had only listened to me . . . Was I talking so dumb after all? Are my ideas about what to do so silly and stupid and childlike? Isn't this the time now to start following what I know to be true?"

And that had done it. The following week I packed up and decided to hit the road and get out of that city of ignorance which is the modern city. I said goodbye to Japhy and the others and hopped my freight back down the Coast to L.A. Poor Rosie—she had been absolutely *certain* that the world was real and fear was real and now what was real? "At least," I thought, "she's in Heaven now, and she knows."

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And that's what I said to myself, "I am now on the road to Heaven." Suddenly it became clear to me that there was a lot of teaching for me to do in my lifetime. As I say, I saw Japhy before I left, we wandered sadly to the Chinatown park, had a dinner in Nam Yuen's, came out, sat in the Sunday morning grass and suddenly here was this group of Negro preachers standing in the grass preaching to desultory groups of uninterested Chinese families letting their kiddies romp in the grass and to bums who cared just a little bit more. A big fat woman like Ma Rainey was standing there with her legs outspread howling out a tremendous sermon in a booming voice that kept breaking from speech to blues-singing music, beautiful, and the reason why this woman, who was such a great preacher, was not preaching in a church was because every now and then she just simply had to go *splooosh* and spit as hard as she could off to the side in the grass, "And I'm tellin you, the Lawd will take care of you if you re-cognize that you have a *new field* . . . *Yes!*"—and splooosh, she turns and spits about ten feet away a great splooosh of spit. "See," I told Japhy, "she couldn't do that in a church, that's her flaw as a preacher as far as the churches are concerned but boy have you ever heard a greater preacher?"

"Yeah," says Japhy. "But I don't like all that Jesus stuff she's talking about."

"What's wrong with Jesus? Didn't Jesus speak of Heaven? Isn't Heaven Buddha's nirvana?"

"According to your own interpretation, Smith."

"Japhy, there were things I wanted to tell Rosie and I felt suppressed by this schism we have about separating Buddhism from Christianity, East from West, what the hell difference does it make? We're all in Heaven now, ain't we?"

"Who said so?"

"Is this nirvana we're in now or ain't it?"

"It's both nirvana and samsara we're in now."

"Words, words, what's in a word? Nirvana by any other name. Besides don't you hear that big old gal calling you and

falling you you've got a *new field*, a new Buddha-field boy?" Japhy was so pleased he wrinkled his eyes and smiled. "Whole Buddha-fields in every direction for each one of us, and Rosie was a flower we let wither."

"Never spoke more truly, Ray."

The big old gal came up to us, too, noticing us, especially me. She called me darling, in fact. "I kin see from your eyes that you understand ever word I'm sayin, darling. I want you to know that I want you to go to Heaven and be happy. I want you to understand ever word I'm sayin."

"I hear and understand."

Across the street was the new Buddhist temple some young Chamber of Commerce Chinatown Chinese were trying to build, by themselves, one night I'd come by there and, drunk, pitched in with them with a wheelbarrow hauling sand from outside in, they were young Sinclair Lewis idealistic forward-looking kids who lived in nice homes but put on jeans to come down and work on the church, like you might expect in some Midwest town some Midwest kids with a bright-faced Richard Nixon leader, the prairie all around. Here in the heart of the tremendously sophisticated little city called San Francisco Chinatown they were doing the same thing but their church was the church of Buddha. Strangely Japhy wasn't interested in the Buddhism of San Francisco Chinatown because it was traditional Buddhism, not the Zen intellectual artistic Buddhism he loved—but I was trying to make him see that everything was the same. In the restaurant we'd eaten with chopsticks and enjoyed it. Now he was saying goodbye to me and I didn't know when I'd see him again.

Behind the colored woman was a man preacher who kept rocking with his eyes closed saying "That's right." She said to us "Bless both you boys for listenin to what I have to say. Remember that we know that all things woik together for good to them that loves *God*, to them who *are* the called accordin to *His* purpose. Romans eight eighteen, younguns. And there's a *new field* a-waitin for ya, and be sure you live up to every one of your obligations. Hear now?"

"Yes, ma'am, be seein ya." I said goodbye to Japhy.

I spent a few days with Cody's family in the hills. He was tremendously sad about Rosie's suicide and kept saying he had to pray for her night and day at this particular crucial moment when because she was a suicide her soul was still flitting around the surface of the earth ready for either purgatory or hell. "We got to get her in purgatory, man." So I helped him pray when I slept on his lawn at night in my new sleeping bag. During the days I took down the little poems his children recited to me, in my little breastpocket notebooks. Yoo hoo . . . yoo hoo . . . I come to you . . . Boo hoo . . . boo hoo . . . I love you . . . Bloo bloo . . . the sky is blue . . . I'm higher than you . . . boo hoo . . . boo hoo. Meanwhile Cody was saying "Don't drink so much of that old wine."

Late Monday afternoon I was at the San Jose yards and waited for the afternoon Zipper due in at four-thirty. It was its day off so I had to wait for the Midnight Ghost due in at seven-thirty. Meanwhile as soon as it got dark I cooked my can of macaroni on a little Indian fire of twigs among the deep dense weeds by the track, and ate. The Ghost was coming in. A friendly switchman told me I'd better not try to get on it as there was a yard bull at the crossing with a big flashlight who would see if anybody was riding away on it and would phone ahead of Watsonville to have them thrown off. "Now that it's winter the boys have been breaking into the sealed trucks and breaking windows and leaving bottles on the floor, wreckin that train."

I sneaked down to the East end of the yard with heavy pack slung on, and caught the Ghost as she was coming out, beyond the bull's crossing, and opened the sleeping bag and took my shoes off, put them under my wrapped-up balled-up coat and slipped in and slept beautiful joyous sleep all the way to Watsonville where I hid by the weeds till highball, got on again, and slept then all night long flying down the unbelievable coast and O Buddha thy moonlight O Christ thy starling on the sea, the sea, Surf, Tangair, Gaviota, the train going eighty miles an hour and me warm as toast in my sleeping bag flying down and going home for Christmas. In fact I only woke up at about seven o'clock in the morning when the train was slowing down into the L.A. yards and the first thing I saw, as I was putting my

shoes on and getting my stuff ready to jump off, was a yard worker waving at me and yelling "Welcome to L.A.!"

But I was bound to get out of there fast. The smog was heavy, my eyes were weeping from it, the sun was hot, the air stank, a regular hell is L.A. And I had caught a cold from Cody's kids and had that old California virus and felt miserable now. With the water dripping out of reefer refrigerators I gathered up palmfuls and splashed it in my face and washed and washed my teeth and combed my hair and walked into L.A. to wait until seven-thirty in the evening when I planned to catch the Zipper firstclass freight to Yuma Arizona. It was a horrible day waiting. I drank coffee in Skid Row coffee houses, South Main Street, coffee-and, seventeen cents.

At nightfall I was lurking around waiting for my train. A bum was sitting in a doorway watching me with peculiar interest. I went over to talk to him. He said he was an ex-Marine from Paterson New Jersey and after a while he whipped out a little slip of paper he read sometimes on freight trains. I looked at it. It was a quotation from the Digha Nikaya, the words of Buddha. I smiled; I didn't say anything. He was a great voluble bum, and a bum who didn't drink, he was an idealistic hobo and said "That's all there is to it, that's what I like to do, I'd rather hop freights around the country and cook my food out of tin cans over wood fires, than be rich and have a home or work. I'm satisfied. I used to have arthritis, you know, I was in the hospital for years. I found out a way to cure it and then I hit the road and I been on it ever since."

"How'd you cure your arthritis? I got thrombophlebitis myself."

"You do? Well this'll work for you too. Just stand on your head three minutes a day, or mebbe five minutes. Every morning when I get up whether it's in a riverbottom or right on a train that's rollin along, I put a little mat on the floor and I stand on my head and count to five hundred, that's about three minutes isn't it?" He was very concerned about whether counting up to five hundred made it three minutes. That was strange. I figured he was worried about his arithmetic record in school.

"Yeah, about that."

"Just do that every day and your phlebitis will go away like my arthritis did. I'm forty, you know. Also, before you go to bed at night, have hot milk and honey, I always have a little jar of honey" (he fished one out from his pack) "and I put the milk in a can and the honey, and heat it over the fire, and drink it. Just those two things."

"Okay." I vowed to take his advice because he was Buddha. The result was that in about three months my phlebitis disappeared completely, and didn't show up ever again, which is amazing. In fact since that time I've tried to tell doctors about this but they seem to think I'm crazy. Dharma Bum, Dharma Bum. I'll never forget that intelligent Jewish ex-Marine bum from Paterson New Jersey, whoever he was, with *his* little slip of paper to read in the raw gon night by dripping reefer platforms in the nowhere industrial formations of an America that is still magic America.

At seven-thirty my Zipper came in and was being made up by the switchmen and I hid in the weeds to catch it, hiding partly behind a telephone pole. It pulled out, surprisingly fast I thought, and with my heavy fifty-pound rucksack I ran out and trotted along till I saw an agreeable drawbar and took a hold of it and hauled on and climbed straight to the top of the box to have a good look at the whole train and see where my flatcar'd be. Holy smokes goddamn and all ye falling candles of heaven smash, but as the train picked up tremendous momentum and tore out of that yard I saw it was a bloody no-good eighteen-car sealed sonofabitch and at almost twenty miles an hour it was do or die, get off or hang on to my life at eighty miles per (impossible on a boxcar top) so I had to scramble down the rungs again but first I had to untangle my strap clip from where it had got caught in the catwalk on top so by the time I was hanging from the lowest rung and ready to drop off we were going too fast now. Slings the rucksack and holding it hard in one hand calmly and madly I stepped off hoping for the best and turned everything away and only staggered a few feet and I was safe on ground.

But now I was three miles into the industrial jungle of L.A. in mad sick sniffing smog night and had to sleep all that night by

a wire fence in a ditch by the tracks being waked up all night by rackets of Southern Pacific and Santa Fe switchers bellyaching around, till fog and clear of midnight when I breathed better (thinking and praying in my sack) but then more fog and smog again and horrible damp white cloud of dawn and my bag too hot to sleep in and outside too raw to stand, nothing but horror all night long, except at dawn a little bird blessed me.

The only thing to do was to get out of L.A. According to my friend's instructions I stood on my head, using the wire fence to prevent me from falling over. It made my cold feel a little better. Then I walked to the bus station (through tracks and side streets) and caught a cheap bus twenty-five miles to Riverside. Cops kept looking at me suspiciously with that big bag on my back. Everything was far away from the easy purity of being with Japhy Ryder in that high rock camp under peaceful singing stars.

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It took exactly the entire twenty-five miles to get out of the smog of Los Angeles; the sun was clear in Riverside. I exulted to see a beautiful dry riverbottom with white sand and just a trickle river in the middle as we rolled over the bridge into Riverside. I was looking for my first chance to camp out for the night and try out my new ideas. But at the hot bus station a Negro saw me with my pack and came over and said he was part Mohawk and when I told him I was going back up the road to sleep in that riverbottom he said "No sir, you can't do that, cops in this town are the toughest in the state. If they see you down there they'll pull you in. Boy," said he, "I'd like to sleep outdoor too tonight but's against the law."

"This ain't India, is it," I said, sore, and walked off anyway to try it. It was just like the cop in the San Jose yards, even though it was against the law and they were trying to catch you the only thing to do was do it anyway and keep hidden. I laughed thinking what would happen if I was Fuke the Chinese sage of the ninth century who wandered around China constantly ringing

his bell. The only alternative to sleeping out, hopping freights, and doing what I wanted, I saw in a vision would be to just sit with a hundred other patients in front of a nice television set in a madhouse, where we could be "supervised." I went into a supermarket and bought some concentrated orange juice and nutted cream cheese and whole wheat bread, which would make nice meals till tomorrow, when I'd hitchhike on through the other side of town. I saw many cop cruising cars and they were looking at me suspiciously: sleek, well-paid cops in brand-new cars with all that expensive radio equipment to see that no bhikku slept in his grove tonight.

At the highway woods I took one good look to make sure no cruisers were up or down the road and I dove right in the woods. It was a lot of dry thickets I had to crash through, I didn't want to bother finding the Boy Scout trail. I aimed straight for the golden sands of the riverbottom I could see up ahead. Over the thickets ran the highway bridge, no one could see me unless they stopped and got out to stare down. Like a criminal I crashed through bright brittle thickets and came out sweating and stomped ankle deep in streams and then when I found a nice opening in a kind of bamboo grove I hesitated to light a fire till dusk when no one'd see my small smoke, and make sure to keep it low embers. I spread my poncho and sleeping bag out on some dry rickety grove-bottom leaves and bamboo splitjoints. Yellow aspens filled the afternoon air with gold smoke and made my eyes quiver. It was a nice spot except for the roar of trucks on the river bridge. My head cold and sinus were bad and I stood on my head five minutes. I laughed. "What would people think if they saw me?" But it wasn't funny, I felt rather sad, in fact real sad, like the night before in that horrible fog wire-fence country in industrial L.A., when in fact I'd cried a little. After all a homeless man has reason to cry, everything in the world is pointed against him.

It got dark. I took my pot and went to get water but had to scramble through so much underbrush that when I got back to my camp most of the water had splashed out. I mixed it in my new plastic shaker with orange-juice concentrate and shook up an ice-cold orange, then I spread nutted cream cheese on the

whole wheat bread and ate content. "Tonight," I thought, "I sleep tight and long and pray under the stars for the Lord to bring me to Buddhahood after my Buddhawork is done, amen." And as it was Christmas, I added "Lord bless you all and merry tender Christmas on all your rooftops and I hope angels squat there the night of the big rich real Star, amen." And then I thought, later, lying on my bag smoking, "Everything is possible. I am God, I am Buddha, I am imperfect Ray Smith, all at the same time, I am empty space, I am all things. I have all the time in the world from life to life to do what is to do, to do what is done, to do the timeless doing, infinitely perfect within, why cry, why worry, perfect like mind essence and the minds of banana peels" I added laughing remembering my poetic Zen Lunatic Dharma Bum friends of San Francisco whom I was beginning to miss now. And I added a little prayer for Rosie.

"If she'd lived, and could have come here with me, maybe I could have told her something, made her feel different. Maybe I'd just make love to her and say nothing."

I spent a long time meditating crosslegged, but the truck growl bothered me. Soon the stars came out and my little Indian fire sent up some smoke to them. I slipped in my bag at eleven and slept well, except for the bamboo joints under the leaves that caused me to turn over all night. "Better to sleep in an uncomfortable bed free, than sleep in a comfortable bed unfree." I was making up all kinds of sayings as I went along. I was started on my new life with my new equipment: a regular Don Quixote of tenderness. In the morning I felt exhilarated and meditated first thing and made up a little prayer: "I bless you, all living things, I bless you in the endless past, I bless you in the endless present, I bless you in the endless future, amen."

This little prayer made me feel good and fool good as I packed up my things and took off to the tumbling water that came down from a rock across the highway, delicious spring water to bathe my face in and wash my teeth in and drink. Then I was ready for the three-thousand-mile hitchhike to Rocky Mount North Carolina, where my mother was waiting, probably washing the dishes in her dear pitiful kitchen.

like otherworldly mammals on another planet with all that moonlight rock behind them.

Then would come wild lyrical drizzling rain, from the south, in the wind, and I'd say "The taste of rain, why kneel?" and I'd say "Time for hot coffee and a cigarette, boys," addressing my imaginary bhikkus. The moon became full and huge and with it came Aurora Borealis over Mount Hozomeen ("Look at the void and it is even stiller," Han Shan had said in Japhy's translation); and in fact I was so still all I had to do was shift my crossed legs in the alpine grass and I could hear the hoofs of deers running away somewhere. Standing on my head before bedtime on that rock roof of the moonlight I could indeed see that the earth was truly upsidedown and man a weird vain beetle full of strange ideas walking around upsidedown and boasting, and I could realize that man remembered why this dream of planets and plants and Plantagenets was built out of the primordial essence. Sometimes I'd get mad because things didn't work out well, I'd spoil a flapjack, or slip in the snowfield while getting water, or one time my shovel went sailing down into the gorge, and I'd be so mad I'd want to bite the mountaintops and would come in the shack and kick the cupboard and hurt my toe. But let the mind beware, that though the flesh be bugged, the circumstances of existence are pretty glorious.

All I had to do was keep an eye on all horizons for smoke and run the two-way radio and sweep the floor. The radio didn't bother me much; there were no fires close enough for me to report ahead of anybody else and I didn't participate in the look-out chats. They dropped me a couple of radio batteries by parachute but my own batteries were still in good shape.

One night in a meditation vision Avalokitesvara the Hearer and Answerer of Prayer said to me "You are empowered to remind people that they are utterly free" so I laid my hand on myself to remind myself first and then felt gay, yelled "Ta," opened my eyes, and a shooting star shot. The innumerable worlds in the Milky Way, *words*. I ate my soup in little doleful bowlfuls and it tasted much better than in some vast tureen . . . my Japhy pea-and-bacon soup. I took two-hour naps every afternoon, waking up and realizing "none of this ever happened" as I looked

around my mountaintop. The world was upsidedown hanging in an ocean of endless space and here were all these people sitting in theaters watching movies, down there in the world to which I would return. . . . Pacing in the yard at dusk, singing "Wee Small Hours," when I came to the lines "when the whole wide world is fast asleep" my eyes filled with tears. "Okay world," I said, "I'll love ya." In bed at night, warm and happy in my bag on the good hemp bunk, I'd see my table and my clothes in the moonlight and feel, "Poor Raymond boy, his day is so sorrowful and worried, his reasons are so ephemeral, it's such a haunted and pitiful thing to have to live" and on this I'd go to sleep like a lamb. Are we fallen angels who didn't want to believe that nothing *is* nothing and so were born to lose our loved ones and dear friends one by one and finally our own life, to see it proved? . . . But cold morning would return, with clouds billowing out of Lightning Gorge like giant smoke, the lake below still cerulean neutral, and empty space the same as ever. O gnashing teeth of earth, where would it all lead to but some sweet golden eternity, to prove that we've all been wrong, to prove that the proving itself was nil . . .

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August finally came in with a blast that shook my house and augured little augusticity. I made raspberry Jello the color of rubies in the setting sun. Mad raging sunsets poured in seafoams of cloud through unimaginable crags, with every rose tint of hope beyond, I felt just like it, brilliant and bleak beyond words. Everywhere awful ice fields and snow straws; one blade of grass jiggling in the winds of infinity, anchored to a rock. To the East, it was gray; to the north, awful; to the west, raging mad, hard iron fools wrestling in the groomian gloom; to the south, my father's mist. Jack Mountain, his thousand-foot rock hat overlooked a hundred football fields of snow. Cinnamon Creek was an eyrie of Scottish fog. Shull lost itself in the Golden Horn of Bleak. My oil lamp burned in infinity. "Poor gentle flesh," I realized, "there is no answer." I didn't know

that perpendicular hill. The vision of the freedom of eternity was mine forever. The chipmunk ran into the rocks and a butterfly came out. It was as simple as that. Birds flew over the shack rejoicing; they had a mile-long patch of sweet blueberries all the way down to the timberline. For the last time I went out to the edge of Lightning Gorge where the little outhouse was built right on the precipice of a steep gulch. Here, sitting every day for sixty days, in fog or in moonlight or in sunny day or in darkest night, I had always seen the little twisted gnarly trees that seemed to grow right out of the midair rock.

And suddenly it seemed I saw that unimaginable little Chinese bum standing there, in the fog, with that expressionless humor on his seamed face. It wasn't the real-life Japhy of rucksacks and Buddhism studies and big mad parties at Corte Madera, it was the realer-than-life Japhy of my dreams, and he stood there saying nothing. "Go away, thieves of the mind!" he cried down the hollows of the unbelievable Cascades. It was Japhy who had advised me to come here and now though he was seven thousand miles away in Japan answering the meditation bell (a little bell he later sent to my mother in the mail, just because she was my mother, a gift to please her) he seemed to be standing on Desolation Peak by the gnarled old rocky trees certifying and justifying all that was here. "Japhy," I said out loud, "I don't know when we'll meet again or what'll happen in the future, but Desolation, Desolation, I owe so much to Desolation, thank you forever for guiding me to the place where I learned all. Now comes the sadness of coming back to cities and I've grown two months older and there's all that humanity of bars and burlesque shows and gritty love, all upsidedown in the void God bless them, but Japhy you and me forever we know, O ever youthful, O ever weeping." Down on the lake rosy reflections of celestial vapor appeared, and I said "God, I love you" and looked up to the sky and really meant it. "I have fallen in love with you, God. Take care of us all, one way or the other."

To the children and the innocent it's all the same.

And in keeping with Japhy's habit of always getting down on one knee and delivering a little prayer to the camp we left, to

the one in the Sierra, and the others in Marin, and the little prayer of gratitude he had delivered to Sean's shack the day he sailed away, as I was hiking down the mountain with my pack I turned and knelt on the trail and said "Thank you, shack." Then I added "Blah," with a little grin, because I knew that shack and that mountain would understand what that meant, and turned and went on down the trail back to this world.