

Robin Coe #1

David and Louie's first piece of property on Cultus Bay Road was under development when my college English professor and I came for a visit. The professor and I became friends at a local bar in Ellensburg where I was the bartender. He was walking a very thin edge mentally after a nasty divorce, so he drank a bit. Well, we all got along fine in that regard. It was my second try at English 101 and he repeatedly told me I could have any grade I wanted, deservedly or not; but I always deferred for the hope of some competence. Ah well, education.

Anyway, David had two bulldozers on the property at that time – a little one and a big one. The little one he later shot through the radiator at 60 yards with his lever action 30.30 for its slipping its track just once too often. I don't know if he dug a hole with the big one and buried the other later. I hope so.

Upon our arrival, David was working the big cat, pushing big stumps into piles. We helped, pulling larger limbs and roots that the cat left behind. We pulled and burned slash late into the night. Stories were told, fictions created, nebulous nymphs remembered and smoky things resolved.

Morning brought a desolate scene. Sleeping bags littered about the torn dirt and smoky fires were everywhere. My friend the professor was the last to arise as the small and large bulldozers were inching toward his spot. David had showed me the rudimentary stuff to make one operate. Pushing dirt toward an inert form in the early morning, my friend the professor still lay in his bag. As the two machines inched closer belching smoke he sat bolt upright, chest bared, pointed directly at me on the smaller machine and cried "D###!"

Robin Coe #2

David bought plane tickets for two. Kodiak Alaska, here we come! Guns, whiskey, tents, sleeping bags, piles of food were all boxed and ready. Fishing poles were fine tuned, fish cartons stacked and ready. Hell, we had orders for half the island; 50 pounds here, 100 pounds there and 200 for a restaurant on the mainland.

We landed on Ketchikan in the rain and didn't see blue sky until the day we left, briefly for about four hours. After a short ferry ride, the fellow we had contracted for two 16 foot skiffs picked us up. We loaded all the gear, tarped it down and set out for another little set of islands. The first night was a total disaster. We had camped upon ground that looked well above tide line, but in the middle of the night we awoke to cursing from the neighboring tent, "Goddamn there's water coming in!" Scramble in the dark. Funny who thought what was important. David's down coat apparently wasn't. In the morning that coat by a smoky fire with a light drizzle got a hole burned in the back, goose feathers everywhere for the next couple days.

We had dragged the boats up, but not far enough. In the misty morning there they were bobbing along with our beer stash about forty yards off shore. David fortuitously had his pole in camp, as he had been fishing from shore the night before. With a few casts and a large spoon, he snagged the closer boat.

After days bouncing around in the drizzle with stale beer and old salty chewing tobacco, we were greeted by a forty foot gray whale and her calf; twenty feet from a sixteen foot boat, surfacing to say, "Hello".

NO FISH

The last day, number seven, we brought the boats back in the teeth of driving rain and howling wind, unable to see, it was a dead reckoning to our port. Upon landing, our empty fish cartons gaping, our guide took us inland. There is a river there that is chock full of salmon. "Here," he said, "catch them with this cadis fly." And off he went. He would pick us up at the end of the day for our flight out.

David and I wandered down river casting and pulling in every pool. We came together at a real deep pool where there were hundreds of fish gleaming scarlet. None would bite. "Ah" or "Arg" was said and out came the snag hooks. We each got four and looking at the time, started back. The fish were soft, so we couldn't carry them through the gills. So, putting them into our hip waders, we arrived back to the pickup point. No time for a change of clothes before the flight. David gave me his first class seat coupon, where, stinking of fish, I ordered something with gin with an umbrella.