

Sample Annotations Packet
E319 Summer Project

THE ALASKA INTERIOR

April 27th, 1992

Greetings from Fairbanks! This is the last you shall hear from me Wayne. Arrived here 2 days ago. It was very difficult to catch rides in the Yukon Territory. But I finally got here.

Please return all mail I receive to the sender. It might be a very long time before I return South. If this adventure proves fatal and you don't ever hear from me again I want you to know you're a great man. I now walk into the wild Alex. — Who is this?

POSTCARD RECEIVED BY WAYNE WESTERBERG
IN CARTHAGE, SOUTH DAKOTA

Is Alex from South Dakota?

Alex?

Jim Gallien had driven four miles out of Fairbanks when he spotted the hitchhiker standing in the snow beside the road, thumb raised high, shivering in the gray Alaska dawn. He didn't appear to be very old: eighteen, maybe nineteen at most. A rifle protruded from the young man's backpack, but he looked friendly enough; a hitchhiker with a Remington semiautomatic isn't the sort of thing that gives motorists pause in the forty-ninth state. Gallien steered his truck onto the shoulder and told the kid to climb in.

The hitchhiker swung his pack into the bed of the Ford and introduced himself as Alex. "Alex?" Gallien responded, fishing for a last name.

"Just Alex," the young man replied, pointedly rejecting the bait. Five feet seven or eight with a wiry build, he claimed to be twenty-four years old and said he was from South Dakota. He explained that he wanted a ride as far as the edge of Denali National Park, where he intended to walk deep into the bush and "live off the land for a few months."

Gallien, a union electrician, was on his way to Anchorage, 240 miles beyond Denali on the George Parks Highway; he told Alex he'd drop him off wherever he wanted. Alex's backpack looked as though it weighed only twenty-five or thirty pounds, which struck Gallien—an accomplished hunter and woodsman—as an improbably light load for a stay of several months in the backcountry, especially so early in the spring. "He wasn't carrying anywhere near as much food and gear as you'd expect a guy to be carrying for that kind of trip," Gallien recalls. → Krakauer includes this to speak to Alex's overly ambitious nature

The sun came up. As they rolled down from the forested ridges above the Tanana River, Alex gazed across the expanse of windswept muskeg stretching to the south. Gallien wondered whether he'd picked up one of those crackpots from

a North American swamp or bog w/ water and dead vegetation

Appears as younger

Speaks to Gallien's ethos

Implies no return

Alaska

Who is this?

ALASKA

Alex is from SD

Sense of adventure

Does this mean Alex is unprepared?

Alaska

Alaska

Figurative lang.
suggesting Alex feels
unfulfilled

does Krakauer
imply Alex is
this?

American
writer - The Call of
the Wild
and White Fang

the lower forty-eight who come north to live out ill-considered Jack London fantasies. Alaska has long been a magnet for dreamers and misfits, people who think the unsullied enormity of the Last Frontier will patch all the holes in their lives. [The bush is an unforgiving place, however, that cares nothing for hope or longing.] - foreshadowing?

depicts
"elemental
struggles
for survival"

"People from Outside," reports Gallien in a slow, sonorous drawl, "they'll pick up a copy of Alaska magazine, thumb through it, get to thinkin' 'Hey, I'm goin' to get on up there, live off the land, go claim me a piece of the good life.' But when they get here and actually head out into the bush—well, it isn't like the magazines make it out to be. The rivers are big and fast. The mosquitoes eat you alive. Most places, there aren't a lot of animals to hunt. Livin' in the bush isn't no picnic."

Ethos from pg. 1 helps support the idea Alex isn't crazy

It was a two-hour drive from Fairbanks to the edge of Denali Park. The more they talked, the less Alex struck Gallien as a nutcase. He was congenial and seemed well educated. He peppered Gallien with thoughtful questions about the kind of small game that live in the country, the kinds of berries he could eat — "that kind of thing." — Do these questions suggest an insatiable curiosity?

Still, Gallien was concerned. Alex admitted that the only food in his pack was a ten-pound bag of rice. His gear seemed exceedingly minimal for the harsh conditions of the interior, which in April still lay buried under the winter snowpack. Alex's cheap leather hiking boots were neither waterproof nor well insulated. His rifle was only .22 caliber, a bore too small to rely on if he expected to kill large animals like moose and caribou, which he would have to eat if he hoped to remain very long in the country. He had no ax, no bug dope, no snowshoes, no compass. The only navigational aid in his possession was a tattered state road map he'd scrounged at a gas station. Rep. "only" is a word of limitation.

lots of
negative
diction

concerned
tone?

parallel
struct.

listing how
limited
Alex is

Personifying the
expansive nature

A hundred miles out of Fairbanks [the highway begins to climb into the foothills of the Alaska Range] As the truck lurched over a bridge across the Nenana River, Alex looked down at the swift current and remarked that he was afraid of the water. ["A year ago down in Mexico," he told Gallien, "I was out on the ocean in a canoe, and I almost drowned when a storm came up."] - Krakauer wants the reader to know how ill-prepared Alex is

38 miles

A little later Alex pulled out his crude map and pointed to a dashed red line that intersected the road near the coal-mining town of Healy. It represented a route called the Stampede Trail (Seldom traveled) it isn't even marked on most road maps of Alaska. On Alex's map, nevertheless, the broken line meandered west from the Parks Highway for forty miles or so before petering out in the middle of trackless wilderness north of Mt. McKinley. [This, Alex announced to Gallien, was where he intended to go.] - Krakauer includes the intimidating task at hand ~~before~~ before this sentence to reinforce how wildly ambitious Alex is

Gallien thought the hitchhiker's scheme was foolhardy and tried repeatedly to

- Q: Why does Krakauer begin this book with this interaction between Gallien and Alex?

Idea: He wants to make ~~Alex~~ Alex seem one way to the reader with a well credible voice. Krakauer's journalism comes through with establishing the credibility of the people he interviewed.

dissuade him: "I said the hunting wasn't easy where he was going, that he could go for days without killing any game. When that didn't work, I tried to scare him with bear stories. I told him that a twenty-two probably wouldn't do anything to a grizzly except make him mad. Alex didn't seem too worried. 'I'll climb a tree' is all he said. So I explained that trees don't grow real big in that part of the state, that a bear could knock down one of them skinny little black spruce without even trying. But he wouldn't give an inch. He had an answer for everything I threw at him." (So Alex is ambitious and stubborn)

Gallien offered to drive Alex all the way to Anchorage, buy him some decent gear, and then drive him back to wherever he wanted to go.

"No, thanks anyway," Alex replied, "I'll be fine with what I've got."

Gallien asked whether he had a hunting license.

"Hell, no," Alex scoffed. "How I feed myself is none of the government's business. [Fuck their stupid rules.] - Anti-government mentality (is this why he's going into the wild?)

When Gallien asked whether his parents or a friend knew what he was up to—whether there was anyone who would sound the alarm if he got into trouble and was overdue—Alex answered calmly that no, nobody knew of his plans, that in fact he hadn't spoken to his family in nearly two years. "I'm absolutely positive," he assured Gallien, "I won't run into anything I can't deal with on my own." - Gallien, the knowledgeable, established local thinks otherwise

"There was just no talking the guy out of it," Gallien remembers. "He was determined. Real gung ho. The word that comes to mind is excited. He couldn't wait to head out there and get started." (Lack of patience)

plant
Three hours out of Fairbanks, Gallien turned off the highway and steered his beat-up 4x4 down a snowpacked side road. For the first few miles the Stampede Trail was well graded and led past cabins scattered among weedy stands of spruce and aspen. Beyond the last of the log shacks, however, the road rapidly deteriorated. Washed out and overgrown with alders, it turned into a rough, unmaintained track. Imagery of civilization disappearing - Alex is leaving

In summer the road here would have been sketchy but passable; now it was made un navigable by a foot and a half of mushy spring snow. Ten miles from the highway, worried that he'd get stuck if he drove farther, Gallien stopped his rig on the crest of a low rise. (The icy summits of the highest mountain range in North America gleamed on the southwestern horizon) - some hopeful imagery
vehicles shouldn't even venture in

giving away possessions
- Alex insisted on giving Gallien his watch, his comb, and what he said was all his money: eighty-five cents in loose change. "I don't want your money," Gallien protested, "and I already have a watch."

"If you don't take it, I'm going to throw it away," Alex cheerfully retorted. "I don't want to know what time it is. I don't want to know what day it is or where

- Alex really wants to disappear off the grid.