

## THE AMAZON TRAIL BY LEE LYNCH

# Future Dyke

**SHE WAS THE MOST ENDEARING BABY BUTCH** I'd come across in a very long time. Slight, fine-boned, with country-cut light hair just short of a pudding bowl-do, a walk that was half-strut, and a face that was all eager bashfulness. She was like sunshine breaking through a cloud of straights.

I saw her in the old fishing town where I live now. The town is filled with hills and old buildings and fishing vessels to spare. The old bay front is crammed with tourist shops, but they have to share space with fish processing plants. There are crowds of sightseers, but there are also lazing, lolling, barking, panhandling harbor seals out on the docks.

Sometimes I feel a little guilty about living in such a place. Surely the Plains dwellers love their flat, dry spaces and East Coast residents don't mind the cold and urban sprawl. In D.C.,

legislators apparently don't mind the drought of reason either. The Supreme Court is about to seesaw to the right. Isn't there some way to find a balance before the guys in robes make or affirm laws that will take the starch out of that baby dyke when she tries to get a job or marry her girl or adopt a baby?

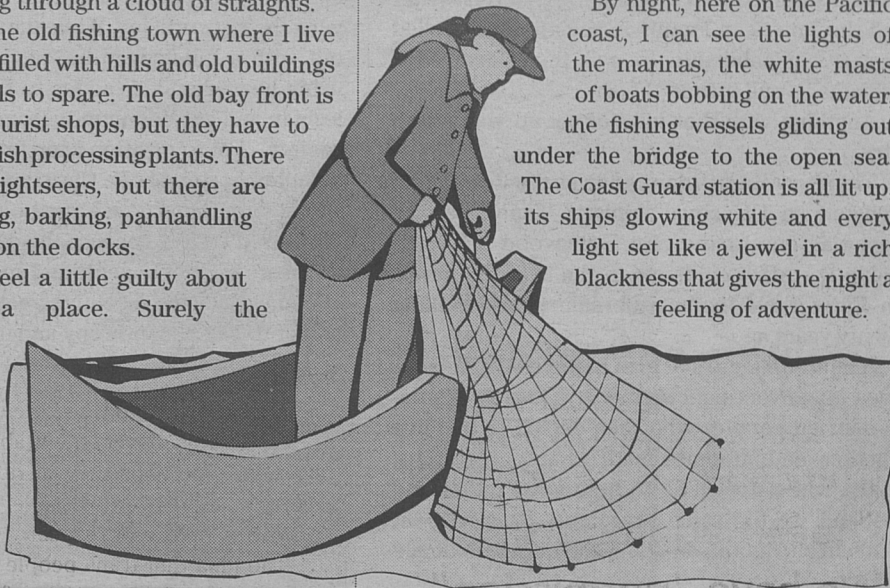
Here, it's been raining a lot, sometimes for days on end. The wind rattles and whistles past the cozy home I rent like it's trying to break in at the sliding glass doors or lift off the roof. Yet the next day, or even the same day, the town will go all balmy, the storm having swept in negative ions and ozonated the air. I can't help thinking that here I am basking in the beauty of it all while people who lost so much in the hurricanes may not even have homes.

This town that's rich with nature's bounty – the ocean, the bay, the river, the hills, the storms and the sunshine and rainbows – is an economically poor town. How do the people on the fish processing lines make it? How do the crabbers get any medical care when the buyers won't pay as much as last year and less still than the year before? There's a memorial walk along the bay front with tiles commemorating fishermen lost at sea. They do this for \$1.35 a pound.

It's always relatively cool here. We complain if it gets much over 70. Locals know shorts are a bad idea any time of year. The shady forests are dense with ferns and mushrooms, trees dripping even after the rain. It's beyond me how American troops survive in a climate like Iraq's or how the powerful can sit in air-conditioned rooms deciding to send kids like the baby dyke into a

place with some of the highest temperatures anywhere in the world. Bad enough the soldiers risk injury—they're also felled by heatstroke. I feel spoiled because I wouldn't last an hour in that climate.

By night, here on the Pacific coast, I can see the lights of the marinas, the white masts of boats bobbing on the water, the fishing vessels gliding out under the bridge to the open sea. The Coast Guard station is all lit up, its ships glowing white and every light set like a jewel in a rich blackness that gives the night a feeling of adventure.



## How do the crabbers get any medical care when the buyers won't pay as much as last year and less still than the year before?

By day, I can walk along the beach, though it is sometimes strewn with birds dead of toxins we put in the sea. Twice a year there are beach cleanups, with hundreds of volunteers picking up tons of litter, from dumped refrigerators to miles of tangled fishing line, from rafts of Styrofoam to flotillas of plastic pop bottles. Now and then oil slicks or entire ships must be cleaned from the innocent shores.

Did the baby butch grow up walking the beaches? Is she from a fisherman's family? Does she know how lucky she is to live in this beautiful place or does she only feel her isolation? Will she go away, find a girl, bring her back? Will they help to take care of the beaches, fight to elect people who'll spend our tax money at home instead of squandering it in hot lands?

I can picture them, not all that long from now, walking the bayfront at night, refreshed from the rain, holding hands. I want them to have that future. ▼

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