

At this time we had three cats, forty-two dogs, fifteen or twenty chickens, eight ducks, nineteen large white geese, a few banty hens . . .  
40 ten fryers which we'd raised from chicks and couldn't (as my wife put it) "snuff and eat," and six woods-wise goats. **C**

The bears, strangely, didn't bother any of the yard animals. There must have been a rule, or some order to the way they lived, because they would hit the kennel and steal from the dogs but leave the chickens and goats and other yard stock completely alone—although you would have had a hard time convincing the goats of this fact. The goats spent a great deal of time with their back hair up, whuffing and blowing snot at the bears—and at the dogs, who would *gladly* have eaten them. The goats never really believed in the **truce**.

50 **T**here is not a dump or landfill to take our trash to, and so we separate it—organic, inorganic<sup>2</sup>—and deal with it ourselves. We burn the paper in a screened enclosure, and it is fairly efficient; but it's impossible to get all the food particles off wrapping paper, so when it's burned, the food particles burn with it.

And give off a burnt food smell.

And nothing draws bears like burning food. It must be that they have learned to understand human dumps—where they spend a great deal of time foraging. And they learn amazingly fast. In Alaska, for instance, the bears already know that the sound of a moose hunter's gun means there  
60 will be a fresh gut pile when the hunter cleans the moose. They come at a run when they hear the shot. It's often a close race to see if the hunter will get to the moose before the bears take it away. . . . **D**

Because we're on the south edge of the wilderness area, we try to wait until there is a northerly breeze before we burn, so the food smell will carry south, but it doesn't always help. Sometimes bears, wolves, and other predators are already south, working the sheep farms down where it is more settled—they take a terrible toll<sup>3</sup> of sheep—and we catch them on the way back through. **E**

That's what happened one July morning.

70 Scarhead had been gone for two or three days, and the breeze was right, so I went to burn the trash. I fired it off and went back into the house for a moment—not more than two minutes. When I came back out, Scarhead was in the burn area. His tracks (directly through the tomatoes in the garden) showed he'd come from the south.

**C SETTING**

Reread lines 38–41. What words show that Paulsen has a personal connection to the setting?

**truce** (trōōs) *n.* an agreement to end an argument or fight

**D AUTHOR'S PURPOSE**

Reread lines 56–62. Why do you think Paulsen wants you to know these facts about bears?

**E SETTING**

Reread lines 63–68. How is Paulsen's knowledge of the wilderness useful to him?

2. **organic, inorganic:** *Organic* refers to plant or animal material that breaks down naturally. *Inorganic* refers to man-made material that will not break down naturally.

3. **take a terrible toll:** destroy a large number.