

another pSecret pSociety pshort pstory



Fortunate in Fortuna by Mike Bozart (Agent 33) | July 2017

Fortunate in Fortuna

by Mike Bozart

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Fortuna. Spanish for fortune. A place with a name like that surely invites a psecret psociety visit when in the vicinity. And we, Monique (Agent 32, my wife) and I (Agent 33), very much were on Saturday, June 3rd (2017).

The two of us hopped aboard a half-full RTS (Redwood Transit System) bus at 4th & H Streets in Eureka (CA, USA) at a refreshingly cool – and agreeably overcast – 3:11 PM. The 36-minute, 18-mile (29 km) ride was relaxingly noneventful; this time there were no deranged conga-drum-toting passengers.

At 3:47 we disembarked onto N Street (near 11th Street) in the log-sign-proclaimed ‘friendly city’, a small town of 12,321 (or so) inhabitants. We paused to survey the scene from the sidewalk. *So, this is Fortuna. Seems nice enough. A bit warmer down here. / This town is sunnier than Eureka. I don't like it. I forgot my parasol. I don't want my pinay [Philippine] skin to get any darker.*

“Hungry, asawa?” [wife in Cebuano and Tagalog] I asked my brown-eyed, black-haired, late-30-something spouse.

“I could go for a little something, 33.”

“How about that Mexican place that the lady told us about in Eureka?”

“Sure, Parkaar. [my ailing alias] Lead the way.”

After only a two-block walk, we had arrived at Taco Loco (on the corner of Main & 10th Streets). The veggie tacos did the trick: not too large, fairly tasty, reasonably priced.

“Where’s an interesting place to check out in Fortuna?” I asked the mid-20-something, dark-brown-haired Latino waiter. *Check out? Does he want to die today?*

“Tourists?” he asked. *My red hair. / Because I'm Asian.*

“Yeah, bus-to-foot tourists from Eureka,” Monique informed.

“Why did you guys journey down to Fortuna?” our genuinely curious waiter asked.

“It’s an intriguing Spanish name and it’s on an RTS bus route.” *And Ernie [the electronic earwig] would approve.*

“You mean that you didn’t come here for the Eel River?” he asked, surprised that I didn’t mention the shallow-this-time-of-year, yet still wide, northwest-flowing stream.

“Well, I’m not much of an eel fisherman anymore,” I replied. *Probably out-of-staters. [sic]*

“Oh, the name is a bit of a misnomer,” he then stated. “What the early white settlers thought were eels were actually lampreys. You know, those gnarly-mouthed whale suckers.” *Whale suckers? Yuck! / Gnarly? People still say ‘gnarly’? And way up here, a long way from the San Fernando Valley.*

“I see,” I acknowledged. “Wrong names often stick.”

Our Hispanic American waiter wasn’t phased in the least by my remark. “You can still land steelhead and even nice-size salmon. It’s not completely fished-out like many think. As for an interesting nearby place to visit, there’s the [Fortuna] Depot Museum. Lots of artifacts and history in there. Just walk down Main Street and make a left on Park Street. You’ll be there in ten minutes max.” *That sounds perfect. / That’s not so far. Don’t want to get too far from the bus stop. Hope hubby knows the time of the last bus back to Eureka. Don’t want to get stranded here for the night. It might be scary.*

We thanked him for that bit of info and left him a generous tip with a *Gold* card (a cardstock coupon for a free download of my erotic, deceptive, maddening 2013 roman noir).

In nine minutes and nine seconds, we were on the front porch of the waiter-recommended, lapboard-sided, old railroad depot museum. An ancient caboose was moored to the right. The corner entrance door was to the left. It wasn’t locked. We casually entered.

A 70-ish Caucasian couple were the only two inside. The older woman cheerfully greeted us. Then the older man stepped away from his desk and walked up beside his apparent wife.

“Want the just-for-you guided tour?” he asked us.

“Sure, if it doesn’t cost an arm and a leg,” I replied.

“We’re frugal travelers,” Monique revealed.

“No body parts need to be donated; it’s totally free,” the white-haired man announced with a smile.

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