

another pSecret pSociety pshort pstory



King Range Blues by Mike Bozart (Agent 33) | May
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by Mike Bozart

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Kyle Klarkenson, a 31-year-old, average-build, moderately Methodist, of-West-Midlands-England-ancestry Caucasian American, continues walking southwestward on a damp-in-sections dirt trail in the Delgada Canyon area of the King Mountain Range in northern California. The misty-in-shady-pockets air is refreshingly cool on this Saturday morning in May of 1964. He soon becomes lost in his thoughts as he chews on a rubbery wad. *This sure isn't the tastiest toadstool in the world. Pretty darn rancid. Earl [a trusted friend] said to mince it into a mushy paste, and then to swallow it – all of it. 'You must NOT spit it out, Kyle. If you do, you won't get the whole effect.' Hope I can hold it down. Almost to the oceanside bluff now. Maybe only ¾ of a mile [1.2 km] to go. Wonder what thoughts I will have on this so-called 'magic mushroom' [Psilocybe semilanceata] today. Bet it's overrated. Funny what Earl said about the origin of religion: One major reason for it was to stop hominids – the male ones – from killing – at least immediately – unknown hominids. Was it really kill strangers first and ask questions later? Jesus Christ! What a species we are. But, we're not Neanderthals anymore. Yet, that violent proclivity persists. War after war after war. Murder after murder after ...*

“Woah!” Kyle shouts as he spies a dark-brown-rhombus-shapes-on-yellow snake on the trail motionlessly basking in an oval band of filtered-sunlight rays. *Could that be a western diamondback rattlesnake? This far north?*

He cautiously moves closer to get a better look at the four-foot-long (1.2 meters) terrestrial serpent. *No, it's just a Pacific gopher snake. Nonpoisonous. No health hazard here. Onward.*

After sidestepping the attempting-to-warm-up-enough-to-move colubrid snake, Kyle continues his hike. Eighteen minutes later he is standing in the middle of an incredibly steep slope that descends all the way to the Pacific Ocean. He spies a light-brown-hatted hiker far below walking on the narrow beach. *Wonder if that guy is coming or going. Is he coming up here? Is he going to take the Shipman Creek footpath? Must be careful to not accidentally dislodge a rock, as it could hit him in the head. And kill him. I'm pretty high up right here. Probably around 400 feet [122 meters] above sea level. Feel a wee wobbly. Should sit down and take a break. Catch my breath. Yeah.*

As Kyle bends to sit on a nature-made stone ledge, he inadvertently kicks a cobble, which tumbles and bounds, and

then bounces out from the 77° promontory. *Oh, no! I hope that stone doesn't hit that guy down there. Please, dear God, no! Can't believe that I did this just after reminding myself to NOT do it. So clumsy of me.*

The rock splashes into the shallow surf, thirteen feet (four meters) from the man below, who promptly looks up as Kyle ducks backward. *Oh crap! Bet he thinks that I did it on purpose. Should I yell an apology down to him? 'Sorry, man, it was an accident.'* No. *He wouldn't believe me anyway. Best to do nothing. I suppose. Starting to feel a little strange. These leaves sure are ultra-green all of a sudden. So very verdant. Maybe take a look again. See if that guy is still there. Will he be waving his fists in anger? Will he be aiming a rifle at me?*

Kyle stands and peers down the eroding scarp. There is no sign of the man. *Guess he's gone. Wonder if he's coming up here. Maybe so. If he's coming up here, I'll go down there. He can come up to 12 o'clock via 9 o'clock, and I'll go down to 6 o'clock via 3 o'clock. We'll keep it clockwise. And I'll successfully avoid him, staying 180° opposite him on our tilted loop. Maybe I'm making a mountain out of a molehill, but I really don't want to encounter him. Or anyone. Well, let's get going.*

After walking about a hundred feet (30.5 meters) on the same invisible contour line, the trail fizzles out. The coastal redwood forest is suddenly quite dense. As taupe-straw-hatted, 6'-2" (1.88 meters tall), dark-brown-haired Kyle makes his way into the lush woods, he notices that the terrain soon becomes a cleft ridge. *This is a dead end. That ravine is certain death. No way am I going to attempt that. Certainly not in this state of mind.*

Kyle then begins to retreat with his head down. *Better to be safe than sorry. A mishap up here could leave me in protracted agony. A slow death. Alone. Well, until a cougar devours me alive. What a 'lovely' thought.*

"Yep, it's hard to get down from there, partner," a mid-40-something, russet-haired, suntan-faced, wide-brimmed-leather-hatted hiker says from out of nowhere. *Who the hell is that? Is he the guy from down below? No way; he could have never got up here that quick. Never. Not even if he could fly. My mind sure is flying now. Soaring.*

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