

another pSecret pSociety pshort pstory



Lost Time in Rockport by Mike Bozart (Agent 33) | Feb. 2020

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by Mike Bozart
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Rockport – or what is left of it – is on the northern coast of California. It is commonly considered the beginning (southern boundary) of The Lost Coast.

A group of seven men, five Caucasian and two Chinese, all in their mid-20s to mid-30s, are walking along an ashen-sand beach, following a wide-but-shallow brook (Cottoneva Creek) upstream. Their well-worn denim work clothes are frayed and stained. They are chanting in the quickly-becoming-eerily-dense advection fog.

“Summer Landing. Summer Landing. Some are landing on Summer Landing. Winter schooners a-mooring at Summer Landing. That tall rock’s top got lopped. Tomorrow another redwood gets chopped. Old man [Robert E.] Miller suspended a flat bridge. But the footing is tricky up on that ridge. We came for the gold. Now we sleep with the mold. And we always have a cold. Summer Landing ... pfft! Summer Landing. Some are landing on Summer Landing. Summer Landing. Some are landing on ...”

The two Chinese immigrants, whose English is quite limited, mouth the verses to fit in. They are with the only white workers who will associate with them. Yes, the anti-Asian racism was pervasive and bluntly invidious.

At a still sylvan Dodge Gulch, the white Americans split off from the Chinese men on this grayer-than-grey February Saturday evening in 1879. All begin heading to their company-apportioned living quarters.

“Enjoy your Sunday off, gents,” the brown-haired white man with a rusty mustache pauses to say. “See you bright and early Monday morning.” *Bright? Haven’t seen the sun before noon in months.*

The two Chinese men, Bohai (means sea waves) and Bolin (means soft rain), both nod and wave goodbye. Soon they are back at their rustic lodgings. Bolin, who is older (35), sleeps on the narrow bed; Bohai, aged 26, sleeps on a makeshift cot that is set off to the side of the fireplace. In front of the stone hearth is a small dining table.

After quietly eating their bowls of rice, the men begin to converse in Cantonese (approximate translations) over a bottle of whiskey.

"Is this really worth it?" Bohai asks dejectedly. "Shouldn't we have just stayed in Shanghai?" *Is he freaking nuts?!*

"And starved to death?" Bolin rejoins. "I've already saved a tidy sum of money. I'm content to stay right here."

"But, most of the Americans don't like us."

"Most is not all, Bohai. Remember when we first started logging here? Remember how no one would come near us?" *Exactly.*

"Yes. That's what I mean. We are not welcome here."

Bolin sighs. "But now we walk home with five white men who talk to us as friends." *But, are they really our friends?*

Bohai groans. "Hardly any Chinese women around here, Bolin. The white women won't have anything to do with us." *Guess he's tired of shaking his snake.*

"Ah, the young buck is feeling horny. Maybe you need to go down to Chinatown in San Francisco for a week and get it out of your system. I'm sure that the boss would give you some time off." *This is just lost time in Rockport. My youthful years ... quickly slipping away. Don't want to be old and alone, looking back on a life that was only spent working. What is the point in that?*

"Don't you want to get married and start a family, Bolin?"

"No, not really." *I knew that he was an odd one. Why did I ever set foot on that boat in Hangzhou Bay? Why?! What an astoundingly dumb idea!*

After five seconds of pensive silence, Bohai looks back up. "Well, I do. It's normal to want to start a family."

"Like I said, go down to 'Frisco'. Have a whore straighten out your noodle. You can go ahead and bring her back here if you'd prefer. It's ok with me." *A whore? Noodle?*

"I don't want to marry a whore!" *Marry? Oh, dear.*

"Listen." Bolin then sets his glass down on the wooden table. "I'll let you two have this place to yourselves. In three months I will have enough money to build my own place on a small plot of land up the creek that an American sold me last year."

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