

another pSecret pSociety pshort pstory



Mouth of Mattole by Mike Bozart (Agent 33) | June 2020

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by Mike Bozart

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And with a pair of royal-blue-plastic-paddle push-offs, their setting-sun-yellow, electric-pump-inflated, neoprene, elongated-pentagon-shaped, high-walled lifeboat is unmoored from the quickly-entering-total-shade sandy north bank along Conklin Creek Road in Petrolia (a small township in northern California). It had rained nonstop for thirteen hours two days prior to this last Saturday in September (1987); the dill-pickle-green river is up eleven inches (28 cm) above normal depth for early autumn. The brisk 3.8-knots-per-hour (4.4 MPH / 7 km/h) current soon has them passing under the sans-sidewalk-with-both-narrow-lanes-vacant Mattole Road Bridge at 7:02.

“Ok, watch out for that sandbar on the right,” stringy-blonde-haired, 20-year-old Bill blasts from the stern.

“Aye-yaye, captain,” short-dark-haired, tall, thin, faux-jeweled-cowboy-hatted Dave replies. “I see it. No problem.” Dave then uses his paddle to fend off the sunken-chestnut-brown, on-the-verge-of-being-submerged mound of silt, leaves, and algae-slime-covered sand.

“Who made you captain?” a smiling, fuchsia-haired Paulette asks. And then giggles and thinks: *Bet Veronica broke up with him.*

“Not me,” Bill replies deferentially. “I just don’t want this extra-spatial expedition to end before it gets started. The water is cold. Getting wet will not be any fun at all.”

Tan-skinned, just-turned-19, light-brown-haired Amerasian Amarú glances at 17½-year-old, denim-clad, ebony-haired, half-Latina Lisa, who is sitting directly across from him and thinks: *Bet we’re the only two non-Anglos at this seaside shindig. Wonder if Lisa likes me. At all. Guess I’ll find out by night’s end.*

The other two females, both 18, are looking downstream. Their faces begin to take on a concerned expression. Both simultaneously (and approximately) think: *Oh, no – rapids ahead! Don’t want to get splashed and be cold and damp all night. Being soaked and shivering while bee-buzzing [high on MDMA] would be a major bummer.*

“Bill, are there rapids on this river?” Paulette asks as she peers at the clear ziplocked bag of glow sticks and thinks: *Must not fall in. Could easily drown while high in the chilly*

water. Not a very good swimmer. Why are there no life jackets?

“I thought that you said there were no rapids,” collegiate-gray-sweatshirted, strawberry-blond-haired Janet quickly adds before he can answer. She muses: *He promised that it would be ‘a smooth glide to the finishing line’. Maybe should have got on the float-boat that will bring us back. Have they left Fields Landing yet?*

“No, no rapids in this final stretch of the river, ladies,” Bill assures. “Just some mild riffles. All we have to do is hit them point-on, and no one will get splashed. The biggest hazards are the just-below-the-surface sand shoals. But, you can relax; we’ll be ok. I did this four-mile [6.4-km] run last year in my kayak. It’s nothing like upstream. Thorn Junction to Ettersburg is insane. We had to duck under massive fallen redwoods. There were some four-foot [1.2-meter] drop-offs. We wore wetsuits. Freezing-cold water up there.” Bill ruminates: *They seem anxious. Need to allay their fears. Don’t want anyone to be uptight or worried; that would ruin the roll. [slang for the MDMA high]*

Everyone is quiet as the raft safely passes through the first riffle zone without incident. They begin to notice that the riverside is dark green on the outside of the curves, and light brown on the inside of the serpentine bends. The young men attempt to discreetly observe the young women. But fail. Everyone is wondering how the night will go.

As twilight descends, Dave suddenly unzips his backpack. “And here they are, folks – the little Molly-by-gollies.” [*sic*]

“Is it pure ecstasy?” Paulette asks and thinks: *Sure hope it is. Don’t want to be ingesting ant poison.*

“It will be pure ecstasy in an hour and change,” Dave replies. “This is pure MDMA from a clandestine lab in west Oakland.”

All six then each pop a pill that looks like a neon-green, miniature Fred Flintstone.

“Where is Wilma?” Janet enquires with a grin.

“Probably servicing Slate,” Bill blurts.

“Not with Barney?” Paulette suggests.

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