

another pSecret pSociety pshort pstory



Trinidad Head by Mike Bozart (Agent 33) | JUNE 2017

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by Mike Bozart

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The date was June 4, 2017 and the temperature was 50° (Fahrenheit; 10° Celsius). After walking just .4 miles (.64 km) under an overcast sky from the Trinidad (CA, USA) RTS (Redwood Transit System) bus stop on Main Street (next to a Chevron gasoline station), Monique (Agent 32) and I (Agent 33) arrived at a 5-star panorama of Trinidad Bay on Edwards Street (at Hector Street) that was postcard material to the max. Anchored fishing boats and erosion-defying sea stacks speckled the harbor. Yes, it was a Humboldt County Chamber of Commerce enticement all the way to Pilot Rock. Beyond that, well, it was hard to see. We savored this breathtaking scene for a few minutes, availing the wooden bench between two restaurant signs.

“It’s like a living nautical oil painting,” I told Monique. *Hubby loves this place.*

“It’s magnificent,” she replied. *Indeed.*

We then made our descent to the middle-aged-female-Eurekan-recommended Seascape Restaurant for a Sunday brunch. The mixed-race hostess seated us at a table that had a view of Little Head, a towering angular chunk of metamorphosed gabbro.

Monique noticed me studying the monolith as we waited for our waiter. “You want to climb that, don’t you, Parkaar?” [my ailing alias] *I just know he does. He’s almost 53, but thinks he’s 23.*

“Well, it does look tempting, Agent 32.” *He’s recording. / Frank [deceased Agent 107] would do it. I know he would.*

“I wouldn’t advise it,” our short-blonde-haired, left-eared, early-20-something, assumed college student, wry-grinning waiter suddenly said as he approached on my right. “It’s even steeper and more dangerous than it looks, guys. That old rock stays damp; it’s always slippery. A dude fell off it last year and got cracked-up pretty bad. If you want to do some hiking with spectacular views, do Trinidad Head, instead. It has an awesome looping trail that is much safer.” *Trinidad? Hmmm ... That’s Spanish for Trinity: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. And, this holey toast. Sure could go for a pint of 8 Ball Stout. Wholly Lost Coast. Ah, yes, they’ve got it! Boss begs to boast. They have seafood chowder, too. Gus got the ghost. Looks like a largely liquid*

early lunch for me. Mark marked the most. Wonder what Monique wants. / Yey! They have fried shrimp and scallops.

“Thanks for the warning and sage advice,” I said as I put my menu down. *Ground or rubbed? Round or grubbed?*

“No problem,” he replied. “So, where are you guys from?”

“Charlotte,” Monique blurted.

“Woah!” he exclaimed. “North Carolina. You guys are far, far away from home.”

“Twenty-nine hundred miles,” [4,667 km] I affirmed. “We’ve been staying in Eureka for the past two nights.”

“Ah, Tweakerville,” [*sic*] he announced. *Huh?*

Monique looked puzzled. “What is a tweaker?”

“A meth-head,” [methamphetamine addict] the knit-shirted waiter answered. “Speed freaks.”

“Oh, yes, we saw plenty of them in Old Town,” I added.

“They’re like cockroaches – so creepy and so freaking annoying,” Monique opined.

“But, unlike cockroaches, they come at you instead of fleeing,” I clarified.

“Yeah, the nonstop bummerama [*sic*] can be quite a drag,” he synopsized. *Bummerama? / Nice neologism. A writer?*

“Bummerama – that’s funny,” Monique chimed. *Bummerazzi.*

“Most of them are opioid addicts as well,” he disclosed.

“They usually just harm each other. They’re always getting into stupid arguments and fights with themselves. This is why I haven’t gone to Old Town in years.”

“It sure seems to have potential, though,” I suggested.

“My Native American friend’s dad grew up in Eureka,” [23 miles (37 km) south of Trinidad] he stated as he gazed at my UNCC (University of North Carolina at Charlotte) 49ers patch on my green polyester shirt. “He said that Old Town has sucked for four decades. ‘Maybe it gets better next year’ is the semi-official mantra.” *Semi-official mantra? Yeah, he’s a writer, too. Choose your words wisely.*

We finally ordered our drinks and food. While waiting for our waiter's return, I slipped a *Gold* card (a cardstock coupon for a free download of my risqué, noir-esque, 2013 e-novel *Gold, a summer story*) through a slit in the wooden wall planks. *Wonder when someone discovers it. A decade from now? Two? Will this place still even be here? Will a tsunami have washed it away? Will I be dead? Fifty-fifty odds. R-I-P, Mr. Zappa.*

Monique looked at me and shook her head. "Delayed discovery may be fine if you have time, but you don't, Parkaaroni Wankeroni." [sic] *She's already on her game.*

"I know, I know, I know. I'll leave the waiter one with the tip, asawa." [wife in Tagalog and Cebuano]

Our drinks soon arrived. Monique had her now-becoming-customary Sprite® with ice. My chilled porter was almost as good as off the tap at the brewpub on 4th Street (US 101 South) between H and G Streets in downtown Eureka.

"This is really nice, isn't it, mahal?" [love in Tagalog] I asked my raven-haired pinay (Filipina) wife.

"I really love this cool weather with no scorching sun, bana. [husband in Cebuano] Great pick, 33!"

"Yeah, I like it, too. Nice castle weather – the kind we crave."

A Latino family of four were sitting at the table across the aisle. Their exuberant young boy squirmed up to the window sill to see something. He then pointed and muttered something in Spanish. Then his dad plucked him from the table and reseated him. *Wonder what he saw. Was it that column of seagulls? / Bana is spacing out.*

Our food arrived nine minutes later. The creamy soup was tasty. Monique devoured her breaded seafood.

The energetic waiter returned just as we finished eating. "Anything else? Maybe some dessert?"

"All good here," I answered.

"No more for me," Monique replied.

"Well, enjoy your day. You guys just up here for pleasure?"

"We're on a mission – a nebular mission," I told him.

“Have you heard of psecret psociety?” Monique asked him. “It’s spelled with silent p’s. I’m Agent 32 and he’s Agent 33.” *Announcing Ernie the electronic earwig would be too much. Yeah, let it go.*

The 5’-8” (172.72 cm) waiter looked confused. “No, I haven’t.”

“Trust me, man; it’s not important,” I said with a half-laugh.

He smiled and walked away with an uncertain-about-these-two look. *Leave no coast unscathed. / Maybe I shouldn’t have mentioned psecret psociety and agent numbers. Maybe he now thinks that we’re part of something unsavory.*

Once outside the modest restaurant, we ventured out on the almost-vacant concrete fishing pier known as Trinidad Wharf. Monique took some pics of the slate-blue bay, capturing Prisoner Rock and the more distant Flat Rock. Then she wanted to position me for a snapshot.

“Move to your right a little, Parkaar. I want to get one of you in front of Little Head.” *Avoid thinking with the little head.*

After she snapped the photo, I pointed to the verdant Trinidad Head, which was only 200 feet (61 meters) across a small cove. “Well, mahal, that’s the waiter-suggested hiking area.” *Kind of looks like a piece of Ireland. / Looks very strenuous.*

“We’re going to the top of that?!” Monique looked horrified.

“No, the very top is off-limits to interloping interlocutors like us. The tossed-down-belt trail winds around at mid-girth.” *He said that for the recorder.*

“Ok then, lead the way, Art Z. Sportzee.” *She said that for the recorder.*

We walked back up Bay Street to Lighthouse Road. There we made a left onto a narrow, vehicle-restricted, paved lane that passed by a loose-sand parking lot in front of a sparsely occupied, northwest-facing, finely ground, gray beach. After walking 700 feet (213 meters) and rising about a hundred feet (30 meters), there was a sharp turn to the left. To the right a hiking trail began. We took it. *Well, here goes. Hope we don’t have any health issues. / Are there poisonous snakes on this rock? Sure hope not.*

The flora was mostly maritime chaparral. The often dense, hedge-like, mainly manzanita shrubbery was up to eight feet (2.56 meters) tall. We soon rounded the northeast corner of the massive domed prominence. And then, boy oh boy, the NNW wind was howling. It must have been about 30 MPH (48 km/h).

We took a break. Soon we were being passed by a late-50-something couple. The Amerasian-appearing man was in jeans and sweatshirt. The Caucasian woman was in a pink jogging outfit. We exchanged nods and waves. *Wonder what their story is. Probably won't see them ever again. / They seem nice.*

Two minutes later we started scaling the first switchback. We took another short break in the upper hairpin bend. *Whew! Haven't hiked like this in ages, and my body is letting me know. / Hope Monique doesn't faint. Don't rush her. We're on no schedule. The whole day is open. At least until the last bus to Arcata. [15 miles (24 km) south] 4:29? Damn! Forgot to bring a water bottle for her.*

The well-worn trail leveled out after that. We then came upon a spur trail. However, Monique wasn't interested in making the hike longer. Thus, we continued on the loop trail, passing under an arch in the lush canopy.

The next flora feature was what can best be described as a cave in the thicket. It was off to our left. I peered inside, half expecting to see a homeless person in the dark chamber. But, no one was in there. *This would be an interesting place to throw down a sleeping bag and spend a night. Some surreal thoughts would surely ensue. / I bet he's thinking of sleeping in there. No freaking way!*

I looked back at Monique.

"The answer is No!" *She read my mind.*

"Not even a nap, mahal?"

"No. Final answer."

I grinned at her. *Why does he want to sleep in there? Who knows what dangerous animals live in there? Kano loko. [crazy American' in Filipino]*

In a few minutes we were looking at a carved-into-a-square-wooden-post sign for another spur off to the right. Eleven

seconds later a husky, ball-capped, navy-blue-jacket-clad, caramel-brown-mustachioed Caucasian guy in his mid-40s came marching up the branch trail towards us.

“How long is this trail?” I asked as he passed.

“Maybe seventy-five feet [23 meters] at most,” he replied. “It goes to a craggy overlook with an incredible view.” *Craggy? Is everyone a writer up here?*

“Ok, thanks,” I said.

He then resumed his hike on the loop trail.

“Well, asawa, want to check it out?”

“Sure, honey. I can tack on another 150 feet.” *150? Huh? Oh, 75 x 2. Forgot the return distance. Wake up!*

The spur trail was an easy walk. Well, until the last twenty feet (six meters). We were glad to be hands-free. *Slip not.*

After safely negotiating a four-point scramble, we were there. And, there was it. The view wasn't incredible; it was beyond incredible. We could see the waves below crashing into the flocks of rocks. Nearest and notably, Blank Rock was getting blanketed by marshmallow-cream seafoam, which streamed southward like Portuguese man o' war tentacles, blown by the fierce Aleutian wind. To starboard, Flatiron Rock was frenetically fending off the attacking sea and had no time for heat-transfer LFC (Liverpool Football Club) crest badges. And, way over in College Cove, Pewetole Island was getting a full facial to ease last September's forehead burn, whether desired or not. Moreover, all of their stoned-in-place cousins were getting a jolly cold splash. Then the fog bell abruptly clanged. *If an 8.0-magnitude seismic jolt toppled this rock and ended it all right here and now, I'd call it a bargain – a way-more-than-fair deal for me. Actually I'd be way ahead. So very lucky to have experienced so much with my shunted hydrocephalic bean. Wonderful wife. Sly son. Yet, all those tragic lives shortened by fatal diseases. Or birth defects. And, all those accidental deaths. All those innocents murdered. How does it figure into the grand equation? So many early exits. Why? How does it fit into the cosmic scheme? Is there one? Way beyond my faulty neural circuitry. There's something about this existence. Something not to be fully trusted. An amoral merciless process. But, wow! So marvelously majestic. Yeah, this is the pictorial*

definition. What a place in time. The scene will look about the same tomorrow. Most likely. What does it mean to see it today – right now? What if we were here yesterday? Ok, so what? The weather was similar. It would be about the same. But, the people encountered would be different. Oh, why do I think such nonsense? Maybe I'm going mad. Ha! One sure must make a lot of loot to live in coastal California. And, wouldn't you know it, that's only where the cool, foggy, overcast castle weather is. Maybe retire somewhere on the Oregon coast. It's cheaper up there. Cheaper? Just less exorbitantly expensive. Stop kidding yourself. You'll never have that kind of money. But, what if some well-off person liked my weird ramblings enough to pay me to write just for him/her? They could have the publishing rights. What if they then paid me to write while seated on Pilot Rock? Yeah, while up in a ridiculously high chair with a seawater-resistant laptop computer. A boat shuttle. Four-hour sessions. Eight in the morning until noon. Typing in the great gray gloom. Oh yeah! That would be sublime. Piloting a pliable plot to nowhere. [sic]

"Earth to Agent 33. Hello! Anyone home?" I hope he's not thinking of diving off here.

It was Monique's voice. I had become totally immersed in my reverie. "Yeah, still here, 32. Just got lost in my thoughts."

"What were you thinking about?"

"Oh, just my usual meandering nonsense. You'll be able to read it in a week or so. I'll write it up when we get back to Charlotte." *I'm sure he will.*

"Ok, ready to head back to the main trail?"

"Yeah, sure, mahal."

We retreated back to the loop trail. Just before we turned right to continue our counterclockwise trek, the couple that we had seen earlier appeared. *Wow! That was quick. They must be in great physical shape.*

"Are you guys already on lap two?" I asked.

"Oh, no; we took the first spur." *I knew it. My bana assumes the unlikeliest things.*

"Oh, I see," I said with a grin. "I was going to say that you two may want to go out for the Olympics." I guffawed.

The couple laughed.

“No, we’re not in that good of shape,” the woman said.

Off they went. We let them open a nice gap before proceeding, so as to not crowd them. Soon they were out of sight.

We recommenced our hike. The path began to ascend again. And then, we were trudging up another switchback. Once out of the zig-zag, the trail leveled out and the wind died down, as we were now on the south side of the nearly-an-island. We then came to a sharp left turn. A few paces later, and we were staring at a granite cross. *1913. Wow! That cross was put up before World War I.*

“I didn’t know that there was a cross up here,” I admitted.

Monique got her smartphone out and went to Wikipedia.org. “This isn’t the original cross, bana. The first cross went up 242 years ago. See the 1775 engraving? That’s when two Spanish naval explorers landed here.” *Wow! Before the United States officially began.*

“It was probably even more scenic back then, asawa.”

“What do you mean, 33?”

“Oh, the coastal forest was still intact. The redwoods hadn’t been felled left and right. And, no seaside towns or cities.”

“Oh, yes. A pristine natural scene, I’m sure.”

“I wonder what thoughts went through their minds, Monique.”

“I wonder what thoughts went through the Yuroks’ minds, Parkaar.” *Grim thoughts.*

“Probably, ‘oh, shit – they’re already here’, I would venture. A dour attitude most likely suffused the tribe.” *He’s playing for the recorder again. I just know it’s still on.*

We then had a few minutes of silence, seated on a bench near the stone cross. *The Spanish and Christianity arrive on the North Coast. I’m sure that the Yuroks were overjoyed. / I just know that my bana is having negative religious thoughts. He’s always fighting with God. He should just accept the Lord’s blessings and stop questioning everything.*

I stood up, looked around, and started walking back down the path. Monique followed me. We soon came to a faint, very narrow, overgrown footpath on the left. *Nope.*

“This can’t be the right path, bana.” *This little trail looks dangerous. No way am I walking on it.*

“You’re right, asawa. I guess the main path continues up past the cross.”

We then marched up the hillside. Soon we had reached the junction with an old, one-lane, crumbling-asphalt service road. We turned right and began our descent back to the sandy spit, some three hundred feet (91 meters) below.

“It’s all easy walking now, asawa. All downhill on pavement from here. A gentle decline.” *A gentle decline: my current life story. / So glad that the inclines are over.*

“Yey!” Monique exclaimed. “My calves are aching, bana. This has been an intense hikerazzi [*sic*] for me. My legs are not used to it anymore. I can’t even remember the last time I hiked.”

“I hear you, sweetie. You have some Icy Hot[®], right?”

“Yes, I brought the new tube.”

“Good deal. I’ll work it into your legs tonight.”

“You mean between my legs, Agent 33?”

“Naughty-naughty-naughty, Agent 32.”

We both laughed as we made a sharp right turn. The eastern view was just as splendid. Trinidad Harbor and the overall bay could now be seen, as the fog had completely dissipated. Even the low cloud deck was breaking up; sunlight was filtering through. *Damn it! The blasted sun is now out. Was hoping that it would stay gray all day. / I thought that he said that there wouldn’t be any sun here today. Drats! I don’t have my sunscreen.*

“Asawa, we’re losing our castle weather – unfortunately.”

“I hate the sun!” Monique rejoined.

“I know. We both do. It’s strange how some people settle here and then complain about the gray skies and fog. They should move inland or to SoCal.” [Southern California]

“No doubt, Parkaar.”

At a sharp left turn, Monique stopped and pointed at a slanted sea stack. “What rock is that, my geographicator?” [sic]

“That’s Prisoner Rock, 32. Legend has it that an escaped convict hid on it.” *What?!*

“That’s too far to swim without a wetsuit, 33.”

“An accomplice’s skiff probably let him off there, Monique.”

“I sure hope that they left him some food and drink, Parkaarstarveroni.” [sic]

“Maybe he just stayed on it until the heat subsided, 32.” *Let me check.*

“Or, until he sobered up.”

“Surrounded by thirty-three feet [10 meters] of chilly water.”

“Thirty-three feet, 33?” *He’s just plucking his agent number.*

“It’s approximately ten meters. Good for a guesstimate.” *Huh?*

“Oh, why did I have to ask? And, please don’t say ‘I don’t know – why?’, silly bana.”

“Deal.” *Deal me an ace. / I wonder if he slipped some of those ‘granules de grandeur’ in his oolong tea back there.*

We ambled down the remainder of the looping path, now back on the northeastern face. Trinidad Wharf was clearly visible below. Fisherman were moving to and fro. And then, I spied Seascape Restaurant.

“Well, that’s where we ate about an hour ago, asawa.”

“Oh, yes. The pier looks fairly new, 33. Notice how the concrete is still white.”

“Good observation, 32.”

We soon arrived at the beginning of the loop. We turned right and descended towards the beach. A stepped footpath appeared on the left. We took it down to the unmetered parking area. There were only eight vehicles in the sandy lot.

I looked back at Trinidad Head. “There’s a short story emerging from that domical rock, Monique.”

“A tall tale, I’m sure, Parkaar.”

“No, I’ll stick to the recording. Just a few minor embellishments.”

“Just a few, huh?”

I nodded. *I’m really going to enjoy writing this day up. / He’s already outlining the story, I can tell.*

We then walked back to the Trinidad RTS bus stop. We had some time to kill, so we moseyed into the Bergeron Winery for a vintage tasting. I ordered us a flight of nine. (They were actually pretty good, especially the Cabernets.)

While sipping a 2010, oak-casked, medium-sediment, gluten-free (smart-ass adjectival insert) Merlot, I overheard a conversation at an adjacent table.

Caucasian brunette (probably 34 to 37 years old): “Oh, by the way, I’m writing again! There’s just something about this area that brings out the literary juices.”

Caucasian strawberry blonde (perhaps 31 to 34 years old): “Ah, that’s so great to hear! You know, I’m so glad that the sun has come out. They were predicting a gloomy afternoon. The spring sun makes me feel so alive.”

I looked at Monique. She had overheard the dialogue, too. We both shook our heads.

“Check, please.”

