

10. Light

In “10. Light,” the narrative revolves around Wong Kim Ark, who was detained aboard the steamship *Coptic* in San Francisco Bay for five months in 1895 after returning from Hong Kong. He was born in the U.S. but faced deportation due to prevailing nativist sentiments amidst the Chinese Exclusion Act. Despite presenting his birth documentation, he remained stranded until his lawyer initiated legal proceedings. Ultimately, the Supreme Court ruled in his favor in 1898, establishing that children of immigrants, like Wong, are U.S. citizens.

Wong's story is often simplified in media portrayals, typically suggesting he "disappeared" post-victory. In reality, he returned to China frequently, maintaining a complex life divided between families in Guangdong and San Francisco. His struggle reflects broader immigrant experiences, shaped by the turmoil in China during his parents' migration in the mid-1800s due to war and political instability. This narrative emphasizes the quest for citizenship, familial connections, and the desire to reunite with loved ones amid harsh immigration laws.

The author draws parallels to contemporary immigrant experiences, particularly about family divisions and the longing to traverse borders. Through personal anecdotes, the author reflects on familial ties, migration, and cultural identity, underscoring the emotional weight such narratives carry across generations. As the author shares memories of returning to Guatemala, he expresses a sense of belonging and nostalgia, emphasizing the significance of family and shared histories.

The chapter concludes with reflections on the enduring spirit of immigrant families, revealing their resilience and strength in the face of adversity. Such stories illuminate the complexities of identity amid migration, capturing the persistent search for connection and belonging across borders. Ultimately, this chapter insightfully threads together Wong's experiences and the author's own familial history, presenting a poignant exploration of identity, the immigrant experience, and the relentless pursuit of familial connection.