



## **A SEARCH FOR SIDLE ON N**

by Mike Bozart (Agent 33 of psecret psociety) | May 2014

So, there we, Monique (Agent 32) and I (Agent 33), were on a seasonally cool August day in 2012, sauntering down Judah Street in extreme western San Francisco, descending towards the Pacific Ocean. Not that we could actually see the sea, as the marine fog curtain had already dropped by three in the afternoon. *Must log this fog.*

We had just got off the Muni N Judah streetcar at 40<sup>th</sup> Avenue. I felt almost certain that that little, now-defunct, jaundice-yellow-faded-paint-sided, olivine-colored-wooden-front-doored, break-in-the-lapboard-wall watering hole was somewhere in this area of the Outer Sunset district. *It has to be around here. It has to be!*

It was twenty years since I had stepped foot in there. Nothing looked like the little time-passer of a pub in the first block. We stopped at the intersection with 41<sup>st</sup> Avenue and waited for the crosswalk sign to turn white. *Now, where was it? Is my memory sector already toast?*

“Well, maybe the next block is the one, Monique.”

“Ok, Parkaar, [my ailing alias] no problem. I’m enjoying the walk, though it is a little chilly for summer.”

“This town – or, more specifically, this side of town – has the best summer weather of anywhere in my book. Well, Pacifica and Eureka may battle for a close second place.”

“Only you would say that, 33. You fog-loving freak.”

“That, I am. That, I am.” *Not already.*

“Already repeating? It’s not even sundown, 33. Your mind’s clutch is totally shot now.” *She’s probably right.*

“Lotsa kewl fog and sun-shielding overcast skies with no rain. I call that parfait, [French for perfect] Monique.”

“Parfait, you say? I think I’ll take the dessert, instead.”

“Sure, we can do that later, too.” *Oh, boy.*

The crosswalk sign changed to WALK and we continued our very decent descent. I assiduously scanned the storefronts looking for a possible clue, just hoping to notice an architectural feature that would trigger a dormant memory. *It has probably been repainted by now. Heck, it needed a paint job three decades ago.*

Alas, we arrived at 42<sup>nd</sup> Avenue. Then, from out of the fog, a yellow Toyota sedan came whizzing up to the intersection. We were already mid-crosswalk, and I wasn’t sure if it was going to yield to us.

“Hurry, Monique!” I shouted.

We both made it safely, as the car skidded to a stop on the first wide yellow crosswalk line. It then sped off across Judah.

“I thought that you said this town was pedestrian-friendly, Agent 33.” Monique was a little shaken.

“Oh, he must be a former Charlottean.” I chuckled to myself.  
“Or, maybe from Miami,” I added. “He’s probably cranked-up on meth or crack rock.”

“Or, maybe his girlfriend just dumped him, [used in the novella *Mysterieu of San Francisco*] Parkaar.”

“Yeah, maybe so. Either way, he’s driving like a certified douchebag.”

“I agree, 33. I just wish that the cops saw his bad driving.”

“He’s in a rush to get nowhere, and rapidly succeeding.”

“I thought the saying was, ‘in a rush to get nowhere, and arriving ahead of schedule’, Parkaar.”

“If you used a silent k, that’s above his mental grade.”

Monique gave me an odd look as our walk recommenced.

I kept looking and looking for some façade familiarity. However, there were no businesses – nothing but residences. *Where did it go? Where was it?*

We crossed 43<sup>rd</sup> Avenue without incident. Still nothing. *Where the hell is that place? Monique must think I’m bonkers. / Has he lost his mind? What are we searching for?*

We walked past a Presbyterian church and stopped at an adjacent vacant lot. *I wonder if this is where it was.*

“Was it here, Parkaar?”

“Possibly, 32. Possibly.”

“Maybe they razed it, 33.”

“Yeah, maybe. That actually sounds believable. And, it’s starting to look like the case.”

We walked to the next edifice, a gray building with boutique retail on the first level and two stories of apartments on top. I stopped and studied the building.

Monique then looked at me. “Was this it, 33?” *Hmmm ... this is close, so very close.*

“This one has that Sidle on N vibe, Monique. Just not totally sure.”

“Are you sure that we’re on the right side of the street?”

“Yes, we’re on the right side of the street as we walk away from central San Francisco towards China.”

“Ok, silly-dilly ... I mean, do you think it was on the other side of the street, as in over there?” Monique quickly pointed across Judah.

“No, I am certain that it was on this side, astute Agent 32.”

“What makes you so certain of that, 33?”

“Well, I can remember seeing a few shards of heavily filtered sunlight hit the concrete floor for a few seconds. I can see the dust in the air. Those scenes would not have occurred on the other – south – side of the street.”

“You remember that?”

“Absolutely.”

“You remember the oddest things, Parkaar. But, yes, it sounds believable.”

“My brain is not totally baked yet, 32; it’s just slightly parboiled.” *Parboiled loon.*

“That’s what you say.”

“Why, of course it’s what I say, Monique. Or, is it that chip you planted behind my left ear last night?”

We both laughed and continued our fabled-bar-seeking trek. Nothing of consequential note appeared between 44<sup>th</sup> and 48<sup>th</sup> Avenues. We walked in silence, letting our thoughts bounce down the in-street railroad tracks. *If I were a superball ...*

Then as we neared La Playa, Monique chirped out her plea.

“Hey, want to duck into Lava Peach for a cup of hot coffee? I’m freezing!” She even shivered a couple of times.

“Sure, 32; let’s do it.” *I know what he wants later.*

We entered the corner coffeehouse and ordered a couple of caramel mochachinos, or something like that. While waiting, I spotted a psecret psociety quadra-fold on a table near the front window. I showed it to Monique.

“You sent copies of your short stories here?”

“I did. To here and many other places in the Bay Area.”

“Knowing you all too well, 33, I bet you’ll use this occurrence in a future short story.”

“Yeah, I would think that is a safe bet, Monique.”

“Our coffees came and we sipped at them at a corner table. They were piping hot and delicious. The whipped cream laced in liquid caramel was sinfully divine. I had to have more.

I went up and paid for an extra blast-n-drip. Maybe I was at a low-blood-sugar-level moment. But if I was, that was surely corrected.

We sat back and relaxed, just taking in the scenery and the peoply. [*sic*] The busy South American college-age barista

was all a-hustle. *I don't think that I could do her job. Hell, I know I couldn't. What a tough gig when it's this busy.*

A Caucasian, very bookish-looking, 40-something lady with dark hair was reading at a window-side table. She had the largest-lensed glasses that I had ever seen. She was buried in her new hardback novel. *I wonder what she is reading. Romance? Mystery? Mysterious romance? Romantic mystery? How in the world can she read in here? The light is so low and the noise is so high. I couldn't stay story-focused for one paragraph.*

A bronze-faced, athletically thin, 20-something surfer dude in a black wetsuit walked in with his board in hand, exhaling visible vapor. *He's probably balling some hottie around here tonight. / I bet he likes the barista ... likes to pump her hard.*

A pair of Asian female high-school students were doing their math homework together on a bench seat, while occasionally giggling. *It was probably a text message. One of them has a crush on some schoolboy; it's obvious.*

An Amerasian businessman was now getting some pastries to-go, while juggling with his cell phone. *The wife sure has him jumping. She must be hungry back at the house. / This guy is obviously hen-pecked.*

More sounds of the cash register drawer opening and closing. <cha-ching> *Business sure is brisk. I wonder how much money this place brings in.*



Then the mixing of soft conversations. *Oh, my Lord! Did she say something about an utin? [utin is Tagalog and Cebuano for penis] Is she pinay?*

Some workers were leisurely fixing some issue with the side window's sill. They were getting ready to shim it and re-caulk it. *They seem to be milking this task. They're probably getting paid by the hour and not by the job.*

And then the sound of the waves in the distance. *I wonder how high those waves are. I haven't even seen the ocean due to this dense fog.*

I noticed separate eddy streams of fog wafting and curling past the open door. *This really is Fogville USA. I love it!*

Three Caucasian guys in college sweatshirts were talking about the upcoming ball game near the counter. A skinny white dude in a sleeveless T-shirt was leaning against a utility pole, just outside the front door. Monique was studying him. *I wonder if he is bayot. [gay in Cebuano]* An Hispanic plumber at a table across the room had a water hammer arrestor in his hand. (Reference the *Water Hammer* short story.)

Then I heard an older man saying, "Yep, yep, yep" as he walked in. *That phrase and that man. Very familiar. Is that really him?*

I studied him closer. Then I walked up to the late-60-ish-appearing Caucasian fellow, who was donning an SF Giants cap.

“Is that you Mr. Malloy?” I politely asked, now fairly confident it was him.

“Yep, yep, yep,” Mr. Malloy stated without a stutter. (Mr. Malloy also appears in the *Mysterieu of San Francisco* novella and in the *Vermont Street* short story.)

“You’ve aged well, Malloy. Very well.”

“Yep, yep, yep, and much, much, much thanks.” *He’s still got that repetitive shtick down pat. Or, is it involuntary?*

“Hey, want to pull up a chair and chat with us? I’d love the catch-up conversation. We can put some questions to rest.”

“Sure, sure, sure.”

Malloy followed me back to our table. I grabbed a vacant chair from a nearby table for him. He quickly took a seat and cracked his knuckles a few times.

“Mr. Malloy, this is my wife, Monique,” I announced.

“Ah, yes, the lovely Agent 32. Yep, yep, yep.” *WTF! How did he know her agent number?*

“Nice to meet you, Mr. Malloy,” Monique said.

“So, so, so, what would you like to talk about?” Malloy asked, as if time was of the essence all of a sudden.

“Oh, just a few of things,” I said. “We won’t keep you long.”

“Would you like to know how I won the multi-million-dollar lottery?” Malloy asked out of the blue. *Holy cow! He won the lottery? Well, that would explain him being able to drop C-notes in Sidle on N. Yeah, it would make sense. He never seemed like the business millionaire type, anyway. This would explain his idle wealth.*

“Why, sure,” I said, not sure of what I would hear.

“It’s two strikes, not three,” Malloy firmly stated.

“What do you mean, Mr. Malloy?” Monique asked, very interested to know.

“Once you pick your set of numbers, don’t change any of them until they have been called twice – not once,” Malloy said while rubbing his right hand across his forehead. “It’s two hits and you’re out at the old Malloy lottery game.”

“So, don’t change a number the first time it’s called?” Monique asked, while taking mental notes.

“No, not the first time,” Malloy said while tapping his left index finger on the wooden table. “But, don’t wait for the third strike, either.”

“Thanks for the gambling advice, Malloy, and a big congrats. I guess you’ll be buying the next round of drinks. Hey, I’m just kidding.”

“Yep, yep, yep,” Malloy beeped out. “What is your second question, Agent 33?” *He must know Ernie.*

“Well, Malloy, the real reason that we’re out here in the sunless Sunset today is to revisit the old Sidle on N,” I confessed. “However, we can’t seem to find it. Would you happen to remember exactly where it was?”

“Sidle on N. Sidle on N. Sidle on N.” Malloy now looked sad.

“Yeah, Sidle on N,” I confirmed. “Back in ’92. Wasn’t it in the mid-40 avenues, around 44<sup>th</sup> or 45<sup>th</sup>?”

“Yep, yep, yep. It surely was, Agent 33. But after Tsula died in there, they soon scraped it.” *Oh, no!*

“Tsula is dead? How?!” I could hardly believe it.

“She was party, party, party one night with the owner. Overdose, the coroner said. There was a fire, too. Many suspect there was foul play, and the fire was intentionally set to cover it. But, no murder or arson conviction ever came about. The place was a total loss. It was finally bulldozed back in January of 1995. The owner later did go to prison for tax evasion.”

“Woah, what a tragic ending to our old haunt, Malloy,” I said while looking down at the table. *What a horrid ending.*

“Where did you end up?” Malloy asked me.

“Back in Charlotte. But, I bet you already knew that.”

“Oh, just checking your veracity, Agent 33, Yep, yep, yep. Just checking.”

Monique was speechless.