

GOLD, the short story



by Mike Bozart | July 2011

"It was just another trip to the beach until ..."

[revised in April 2016]

Note: This 3,000-word short story preceded the 80,000-word, erotically charged, suspense-filled, deceptive odyssey *Gold, a summer story* by two years. Some of the characters, scenes, and plot in this beach tale were used in the e-novel.

It all started with a weekend trip to Carolina Beach. Record-breaking heat. A late July weekend. The sun was completely mad in a torrid rage.

Her soon-to-be-ex-husband, Mark, was, too. He trailed her. Susan never noticed the small sedan he rented. However, she almost lost him around Laurinburg, when she stopped for gas. Well, almost. While standing at the gas pump, he watched her as she wondered: *Why did I not fill up the tank in Charlotte?*

Two hours later, and she's finally there. Carolina Beach. Out of the car. Barefoot. But, the beach sand was oh-so-infernally hot. It almost blistered her soles. *This sand is as hot as lava!*

She settles her 30-something, tanned, Native American body on a yellow-and-green beach towel in front of the Marriott. Almost immediately, bugs. An array of flying insects. Mosquitoes. Sand fleas. Horseflies. All biting. Then a gnat alights in her left eye. Totally miserable. *Why did I pick such a hot-ass, insect-infested weekend to come down here?*

Susan goes back to her hotel room. Sweaty. She takes a shower. A cold shower. *Ah, this feels much better. Screw that nasty beach. Scummer [sic] sucks. Why couldn't it be October? I wonder where Mark is. Oh, who the hell cares!*

Mark waited under the bed. (He had slyly slipped into her room when the cleaning lady went into the bathroom.)

After eleven refreshing minutes, Susan exits the shower wrapped in a white bath towel. She sits down on the bed and begins brushing her raven hair. While looking in the mirror above the dresser, she sees Mark's left shoe sticking out from under the bed and almost screams. (Mark does not know that she has noticed him.)

She recomposes herself and gets dressed. And then she runs. Outside. Then down the steps. *How the hell did he get in my room? That tricky bastard! That was way too close!*

She makes it safely to the hotel office and reports the intruder/estranged husband. The desk clerk calls the police. A CBPD (Carolina Beach Police Department) officer arrives three minutes later.

The CBPD cop searches her room. Twice. However, her newly estranged hubby is nowhere to be found. *Where the fuck did Mark go?* (He actually jumped off the 3rd-floor balcony onto the sand and quickly hobbled to his car, only suffering a sprained ankle.)

Mark, the brown-haired, thirty-two-year-old Caucasian ex-husband-to-be, drives to a small motel on Canal Drive. He parks the car around back and checks in. Once situated in the two-star room, he begins to drink liquor. Vodka on the rocks. At seven o'clock, it's Xanax for dessert. And a half-hour later, he swallows some hydrocodone pills. He starts feeling crazy at eight. Insane thoughts abound in his cranium. *I'm going to find out what she's doing down here,*

one way or another. Oh, yes; I'm going to win this time, sweetheart. When should I call my lovergirl? Later tonight.

The fiery furnace called the sun finally sets. Mark gets in his car and decides that this is the night. Faster and faster. His rage causes him to depress the accelerator pedal to the floorboard. <Crash!>

Back at the Marriott. "I'm glad that we have some time to be together." They, an older Asian American couple, were both saying this. Him and her. Alternately. In the hotel room next to Susan's as the gloaming glommed onto the piney horizon.

The older Asian American couple, Ben and Bao, heard the afternoon door slam. However, they decided not to get involved, thinking it wasn't their business.

After the police cleared her room, Susan finally fell asleep at 7:07 PM. She was frazzled, but even more exhausted. Then a knock on her door at 8:08 PM. She hesitated to get up, but finally did. *Who is it now?*

She walked to the door and looked through the peephole. She saw a cheerful older Asian American couple in exotic (to her) garb. She opened the door.

They said hello to each other. Susan noticed that Bao had a handbag just like hers. *That's mine! How did she get it? What a day!*

"I come to return your handbag, miss," Bao said. "I saw it sitting in the parking lot." *What?!*

Susan accepted it. "Thank you so much."

"Are you alright?" Ben asked.

“Yes, I’m fine. I just need to rest. It’s been a long day.”

“Ok, goodnight,” they said in near-unison.

She closed and double-locked the door. Susan even pushed the recliner against it. She suddenly remembered that it was their 9th anniversary. *Please God, don’t let Mark come back here. Police, please find and arrest him.*

She went into the bathroom. She could hear a conversation in the room behind hers via the HVAC ductwork. Susan put her left ear next to the vent. *Am I really hearing this?*

“Jesus H. Christ, Jane, I just wanted a quiet, relaxing weekend at the beach. Is that too much to ask at my ripe old age?”

“You forgot the Viagra, didn’t you? What fun we will have now. Not!” *He’d forget his dumb head if not for his neck.*

“I’m sorry. Damn, I hate this memory loss. But, I can’t help it.”

“Ah, maybe I can get your old pecker hard. C’mon, get over here, big boy.”

“Who are you on that bed?”

[some female laughter]

“It’s me, Charlie – your goddam wife for the last 48 years! Now, get over here and fuck me like a man.”

“You won’t let go of that pouting mood just yet; now will you, Jane?”

As entertaining as their conversation was, Susan decided to stop eavesdropping. She lay back down on the bed, listening to some Fleetwood Mac on the nightstand radio. She drifted into a twilight sleep and began hearing little audio tidbits in her quasi-dream.

They are uneasy. | Like that lady next door. | What kind of mischief is she involved in? | He tells her not to worry about it. | Ah, the police will sort it out. | They always do. | Let's enjoy us! | The need was great. | It had been a stressful three years. | The foreclosure. | The bankruptcy. | The lawyers. | The creeps. | That evil moon. | That eternally restless sea. | Madness nonstop. | An easy life is now gone.

Then a knock on her door again. She looked at the LED alarm clock on the nightstand. It was 10:09 PM.

Susan struggled to get out of bed. She slowly moseyed over to the door. But, before she could look through the peephole, she heard a deep male voice: "Carolina Beach Police. Anyone in there?"

"Yes, one second, officer."

She unlocked and opened the door. "What is it officer? Did you catch him?"

"We need to have a word with you, if you don't mind, ma'am," the burly, middle-age, white cop said. "Just a few questions down at the station." *Oh, my God! Why?*

"Oh my, what was happened, officer?"

"We'll discuss it at the station, ma'am." *Huh?*

She followed the officer to the CBPD station, just three minutes away. Once there, she took a seat in the tiny interrogation room.

“What is this about?” Susan asked. “How long will I have to be here?” *What a totally screwed-up vacation this has been. All thanks to my adorable a-hole husband.*

“We’ll start in just a moment, miss,” the rookie white officer said as he chomped down on a caramel. “It should only take ten minutes, tops.”

Susan spied what he was eating. “Ah, caramels. C’mon, pass that bag over here, officer. Make this a little more bearable for me.”

A shift of scene. The Carolina Beach McDonald’s the next morning. Tourists had already saturated the place by 8:30.

Down from Michigan, four Caucasian college lads tried to undo their hangovers with strong coffee.

“There are too many loud kids in here,” one of them (Rick) declared.

The screams of finally-at-the-beach kids and cash register tills slamming shut cacophonically intermingled.

“I agree, Rick. Too much noise and commotion. Guys, let’s get out of here. It’s making my hangover much worse.”

One of the hungover foursome picks up a local newspaper and reads the headline to the other three: “Man drowns after car goes off bridge.”

“That’s why the right lane was closed, man!”

“I wonder what led up to that, Ed.”

“Who knows?”

The gang of four departs. Soon they are at the Marriott. They check in. In short order they are poolside. One of them sees a note in the sand and retrieves it.

“What is it, Rick?”

“It’s just a fortune from a cookie, Ed.” *A fortune from a cookie?*

“Well, what does it say?”

“It says, ‘Summer lust is a bust’ ... he-he ... Can you believe that?”

“No, not really.”

“Well, want to throw some football on the beach?”

“Dude, the beach is way too crowded now.”

“Yeah, you’re right.”

It is now mid-day by the outdoor hotel pool. The most studious Michigander continued to read the newspaper article. He wondered: *Why did he jump off the bridge? No, he didn’t jump; he was in his car. Oh, it was a vehicular accident. He went off the bridge in his car. But, how? Why? There were no vehicles on the bridge at that time, it says.*

Then all four semi-discuss it, while checking out the bikini-clad girls by the surf.

“Which ones do you think are single?”

“Cool off, Rick.”

“Do you think she is, Matt?”

A 20-something Asian lady walks past the four with a parasol.

“That girl ... you think she’s Vietnamese?”

“No, I think she’s Korean.”

A 7th wave washes over a six-year-old’s sand castle. He begins to cry. His mom consoles him.

“Looks like there ... is becoming here,” Ed announces.

The 20-something Asian lady, Saatchi, turns around and walks up to them. She calmly asks, “Did any of you know him?”

“Know whom?” Rick asks.

“Ok, have a nice day, guys,” Saatchi says and walks away.

The four lads were completely dumbfounded.

“Do you know her, Rick?” Ed asked.

“No, not yet.” He chuckles to himself.

“You aint hitting that, dude. Only in your dreams.”

“Did you ever see her before, Ed?”

“No. Never.”

“That strange music. Where is it coming from?”

The four dudes look around, not sure of the sound source.

Backtracking the story again. Saatchi was at that McDonald's, too, earlier in the morning. In fact, unobserved, right behind the four college lads. She overheard them talking about her new boyfriend. *How could he do it? I bet he was trying to get with Susan, yet again? That weasel dick!*

Saatchi's mind was a million missiles a minute. And they were all striking. Exploding. A neural battlefield. *What in the hell happened? My idiot loverboy is now dead. He went off the Snow's Cut Bridge. But, why?! He never even called me.*

Saatchi took a deep breath as she started to walk back to her car. She was going to the police. She couldn't suppress the urge to know more. *Was he still screwing her?*

Saatchi's mind got caught in a vicious loop. And then in leaning columns. Nothing was stacking satisfactorily. She could see his eyes. *How many times did he lie? What was his facial expression when he was fucking her? Well, he's dead now. I should just let it go. I was always going to be the hidden, tucked-away, secret mistress anyway. He was never going to divorce Susan. I know it.*

Suddenly, a tap on her shoulder just before she reached her car. She turned around. It was one of the four collegiate crew: a shirtless Rick.

"Miss, I think you dropped this," Rick said as he handed her his 'business' card.

"Well, that's some technique, young man."

"My first attempt. Well, what do you think, ma'am?"

"Maybe if the times were different, Rick." *What?*

“Every day is different.”

“Is that what they are saying these days on campus?”

“No, just me.”

“Listen, you seem like a sweet guy. Maybe I’ll give you a call when my life settles down.”

“Ok, but what’s your name?”

“Saatchi.”

Rick watched her get in a red Porsche and drive away. *Man, I’d love to have some Cialis-enhanced sex with her.*

Back to the CBPD interrogation room. Routine questions from the sergeant. Susan would answer truthfully.

“Did you see Mark after he broke into your hotel room?”

“No, I never saw any part of his body after seeing his shoe protruding from under my hotel bed.”

“Were you two still together?”

“Yes, we still lived in the same house in Charlotte.”

“Was Mark addicted to drugs or alcohol?”

“No, not to my knowledge. He did smoke a little weed, though.”

“Was anyone out to get him for any reason?”

“No, not that I was aware of.”

Then the shocker: “Did you know that your husband died in a car accident tonight?”

“No way! Oh, no!” Holy cow! How? What a cursed vacation.

The grim reality set in as Susan drove off the CBPD lot. Where should I go now? Mark is dead. He’s really dead. Well, I won’t see him under my bed again. I grew to hate him, but I didn’t want him to die. Why did he drive off that bridge? None of his tires were blown out. The steering linkages were fine. So strange. And just like Mark.

And everything kept moving along. A long, gritty, sea-salter [sic] of a day followed. Susan felt the grime on her neck as she walked along the beach beneath an indifferent rising sun. It had been a night of broken, torturous sleep.

Susan then headed back to the hotel and ate a light continental breakfast. She was ready to head back to Charlotte, get Mark buried, and start over.

When Mark’s car crashed and flew off the Snow’s Cut Bridge, it nearly hit Ned’s fishing boat, 55 feet below, just missing it by 20 feet to the aft. A thunderous splash was followed by a four-foot-high wake. It nearly capsized his skiff.

The car windows were down. The Honda sank before anyone could get near it. Mark was unconscious. Ned saw his lifeless face go underwater. He made the 911 call.

A pair of emergency-rescue divers extricated Mark’s body from the sunken car. Then they placed a buoy where the car sank. It had become too dark to continue operations.

The next day Mark’s car was floated to the surface and placed on a barge. Two weeks later it was in a junkyard off US 421. It sat there, untouched, for a month.

Then one late August day, a guy named David, who needed a 2009 Honda Accord trunk walked in. He popped the trunk open to be greeted by 24 gold bars scattered about the interior. He looked around. *Am I on camera?*

David stared at the golden fortune and wondered: *How can I get this gold out of here without being detected? Obviously, no one knows what is in this trunk. Must act fast. Must be smart.* He quietly shut the trunk.

At the junkyard shack-office, he told the older man, Sam, that he would like to buy the totaled Honda for \$2,500. He hoped that Sam would agree to his price, but was ready to go higher.

Sam, a white-haired, Caucasian, 60-ish, one ear-missing junkyard owner, looked at him for a few seconds. He maintained his nonchalant expression as he studied David, a 28-year-old Amerasian techie from the Triangle area.

“You need the whole car, mate?” Sam asked.

“Yeah, it will be worth it to me for the parts over the next 10 years,” David said with minimal enthusiasm. “I drive these Hondas until they die.” *Hope that sounded convincing.*

“Ok, deal,” the oblivious owner replied.

David paid with a credit card for it to be brought to his home, 135 miles away. Sam then had his lone employee, Jed, put it on a flatbed-style wrecker. None of the junkyarders [*sic*] knew what was in the trunk, not even the guard dog.

Over the next few weeks, David melted the gold down and had it recast into little ingots. No control numbers were on it now. He could slowly start to sell it, which he did.

David found a jeweler in Wilmington that didn't ask too many questions, and gave him \$1,000/ounce. He sold this jeweler one five-pound bar every Saturday morning. And like clockwork, he left each Saturday at 9:30 AM with a check for \$80,000.

This lucrative routine went on for months. Then one Saturday morning in late November, David noticed police cars parked in front of the jewelry store. *Oh, crap!*

He never went back. He couldn't risk it. And, the jeweler never called him.

Three Saturdays later on a gray mid-December afternoon, curiosity got the best of him. He called the jewelry store at 3:33 PM. No answer. All he got was a generic outgoing message. *Is he in jail?*

He hung up the phone. Fearing that the police now had his cell phone number, David packed up the remaining gold bars and headed for Fort Fisher. His mind was loud. *I'll bury the gold just before sunrise. If the heat comes down on me, I won't have any gold in my possession or on the premises. Whatever you do, David, don't fuck up this once-in-a-lifetime fortune!*

At 4:44 AM, he threw the last shovel load of sand over his golden stash. He even transplanted some sea oats over the burial spot. *Ah, perfecto! No one will ever find it. It looks*

untouched, and the gold bars are too deep for any metal detector to locate.

David drove off on the high-tide-softening sand. He would just lie low for a while. He had plenty of loot on hand.

Ah, but he never saw Saatchi smiling behind that tall sand dune.