

**another pSecret pSociety pshort pstory**



**Jane's Final Piece** by Mike Bozart (Agent 33) | AUG 2016

Jane McLyndun was a slender, 28-year-old, half-Caucasian/half-Makah (a Native American tribe of northwestern Washington), black-haired, struggling visual artist. After painting on canvas with oils and acrylics for a decade with minimal success, she shifted to projection art when her dad, the white parent who now lived in Tacoma, showed her an ultra-high-lumen digital projector one evening.

She experimented with the outdoor-grade projector and came up with her own comical surreal style. Jane loved the fact that there was no cleanup with this art form, and that it didn't illegally mark a surface like graffiti.

Soon she was invited to present her first projection – on the side of a municipal building – in Hillsboro, Oregon, a Silicon Forest city, twenty miles west of Portland. Her projected artwork was just a static whimsical image at first, involving geometric shapes and assorted mustaches. Then the droll assemblage's objects slowly moved. And then stopped again. There were long, irregular pauses. It was strange, yet guffaw-inducing surrealism.

It was a well-received debut. There was a most favorable review in the local weekly by an art critic named Art Z. Sportzee, who said that her work 'revealed the innate hilarity of our modern absurdity'. Such excited Jane immensely, and she started to think that maybe she was finally on the cusp of something big.

However, after a few more amusing neosurreal projections in Beaverton, NoPo (North Portland) and Vancouver, Washington, the invitations strangely ceased. And, the local

critics seemed to turn on her. The reviews went south. Way south.

One particular critic, an acerbic fellow named Rudolph Z. Spietzmann, characterized her work as 'deliberately canned from a most derivative tract of pop culture clichés with no meaning for any sentient being.' And another dissenter named Judith V. Owensbury called it 'a nursery rhyme that didn't.' Ouch.

That latter review was the stinger that really got to her. She got distressed and then depressed. Jane stopped creating her wryly humorous projection loops. She started drinking and taking sedatives. Jane wondered where she was going next. It seemed that her just-recently-soaring art career was now nail-in-the-coffin kaput.

Jane had been creating under the art-name of *čapaccaqil*, which translates literally to 'it looks like a canoe' in Makah, as she once overheard someone say that about one of her canvases at a co-op gallery opening in east Seattle. She had an internal chuckle when she heard it. Immediately she knew that it was a keeper for future deployment.

One thing that Jane especially liked about this particular art-name was its androgyny: No one knew if the artist was male or female. And her work reinforced this: It was decidedly bi-gender, and often times gender-neutral. It wasn't laced with flowers or rage. Moreover, Jane tried to keep her sex a secret as much as possible. She had been slighted by an avant-garde group, and was convinced that she was discounted just for being female.

However, when the bad reviews started rolling in, she began to wonder if word had got out in the Pacific Northwest about her identity. She imagined that her unstable, comic artist, meth-head (methamphetamine addict), ex-boyfriend from six years ago was behind it. It would be just like him to sabotage her art career when she finally started to gain some notoriety, she thought. After all, he was insanely jealous. She remembered how annoyed he would become when anyone liked her art.

And then twenty minutes later, with a change of rooms, Jane would tell herself that such was completely irrational. She resolutely renounced the unwarranted paranoia.

However, those menacing, doubt-creating thoughts began to steadily perforate her confidence. When mid-October arrived with its cool all-day rains, it felt like a dense, all-is-hopeless doom-cloud collapsing on her head. She would sit, slowly sip herbal tea, and ponder. *What was I thinking? A famous artist? Me? I only graduated from a community college for goodness sake! I really have no high-level art gallery contacts. No one in my family was an artist. Why in the world did I choose such a path? I know my dad is really concerned about me. Twenty-eight and still waiting tables in a decrepit diner. Going nowhere and arriving ahead of schedule. It's just like that nonperformance artist Galerie Parcouer said: "You only live once ... if you're lucky." Aint that the truth. Would never want to replay this life. That's for sure. Once is more than enough. My mom is so kind to me, but I know that she is wondering about what I'll become. Or, what I've already become. Or, failed to become. Just another drip. Yet another descending alcoholic. Another drug addict? This*

*area sure is loaded with them. I don't want to end up on painkillers or heroin like most of my artist-friends. But, what to do? I'm not the corporate type. Face it, girl; you iz focked! [sic] You put your chips on the wrong square. Game over. You lose.*

Jane slithered into the shower with her vibrator. None of the five men that she had had intercourse with came close to matching the hyper-orgasmic pleasure imparted by the Ultra-Vibrathon 4000. It had a genuine skin-like feel and pulsated in multiple directions with exquisite throbbing. The clitoral massager beat any tongue. It was a 9-inch column of heaven on Earth – worth every penny of the \$89 that she paid for it online.

Jane knew that she didn't want kids when she was fifteen. And now, thanks to modern technology, she knew that she didn't want another boyfriend, either. As far as lesbian curiosity, there was that 30-ish Caucasian lady that slid up her skirt while seated at her restaurant, and then stared at her a second too long. She returned every week. Perhaps she would take her up on her nonverbal proposition one night, she thought. Well, maybe.

As she toweled off, she suddenly felt nauseous. She vomited in the toilet.

Then her belly started to ache – all the time, every single day. Jane lost her appetite and dropped 14 pounds (6.35 kg) in just two weeks. She needed a belt now to keep her jeans from falling off.

Her mother noticed the weight loss and demanded that she see a doctor, suspecting anorexia nervosa. Jane relented, even though she despised the American medical system. Even with so-called Obamacare, she felt that the out-of-pocket expenses were exorbitant, especially the astronomical cost of prescription drugs, and that profiteering off of a person's bad health was just plain immoral.

Three days after her visit to her mother's female Asian physician, she got a shocking diagnosis: She had advanced pancreatic cancer. The prognosis: Terminal – she would most likely be dead in a matter of weeks. There was no cure. She was devastated, and yet in some weird way, relieved. She thought: *Now I have a natural out.*

Jane didn't tell her mom. She kept a brave face at home. When her mom asked what the doctor had said, she told her, "Oh, just stress."

Then two days later, a Saturday, her dad called. Jane didn't tell him about her dire health situation. However, she did ask if she could spend some time at his vacation condo on Cannon Beach (67 miles – 108 km – from her mom's house). Her dad told her that she could stay there for three weeks, as he wouldn't be using it or renting it out before Thanksgiving.

The very next afternoon found Jane heading northwest up US 26 in her twelve-year-old, green Subaru Legacy. She had told her mom that she would only be up there for a week. She explained to her mom – convincingly, she thought – that it would de-stress her. Her mom had given her \$300 of her hard-earned money as she walked out the door, and told

her to just relax and meditate on the sea, and to forget everything else.

It was a foggy November Sunday when Jane rolled up to her dad's condo at 3:53 PM. The two hydros (hydrocodone pills) had taken care of the pain on the 80-minute drive. She was determined to only use the oxies (oxycodone pills) when the pain was acute and unbearable.

Her dad's condo was a one-bedroom end unit on the third level, which was the top floor. It was oceanfront with a view of the iconic Haystack Rock.

Jane walked out on the balcony and listened to the surf. She saw the white spray fly in the air as the waves crashed into the mightily defiant monolith. Her mind began to wander. *That big rock would make a great natural screen for a projection. Tomorrow morning I'll go down there and make some measurements, check the angles and sight lines. It will be my last projection. My final piece. Wait, do I have the projector and laptop? Oh, yes, I do! Yey! They're both in the trunk. And so is the hundred-foot-long [30.5 meters] extension cord, the high-wattage bulb, the digital protractor/distance measurer, the compass, and the special long-range lens; they're all in there! We're all set for one last one.*

Jane ordered take-out from a local Italian restaurant. She had a glass of white table wine and fell asleep at 9:19.

She dreamed of being atop Haystack Rock. It was sunrise. The horizon jumped up an inch. A tsunami was fast approaching. A two-hundred-foot-high (61 meters) wave was

getting ready to crash into the 235-foot-tall (72 meters) intertidal sea stack. And then it hit. The splash of sea foam rose to her feet.

Jane grabbed the headboard and woke up. *Whew! What a dream! Well, no doubt about it: I will make Haystack Rock the focus of my last artwork.*

She quickly got dressed and had a light continental breakfast. She popped down a couple of hydros and was on the chilly, fog-enshrouded beach at 7:37 AM. The seagulls were already cawing away, sometimes hidden in the low, gray cloudbank.

Halfway to Haystack Rock, now only 500 feet (152 meters) away, Jane began to wonder about the evening weather conditions. *Is it going to be foggy all day, and into the night? Is it going to rain later?*

She checked the weather forecast for Cannon Beach on her old, dinged-up smartphone. The weather site stated:

Low 45°F / 7.2°C | High 59°F / 15°C | Morning fog, clearing by late afternoon

“Perfect!” she thought out loud.

Soon Jane was surveying the area around Haystack Rock and the much smaller monoliths known as The Needles. A good projector location was easily located. She made her measurements and recorded them on her cellphone’s notepad application. She was all ready to leave when a troubling thought bounced through her gray matter: *Where is an electrical outlet?*



She looked around. Then she walked along the vegetation-sand border, which was essentially the back-yard property line for the bungalows. Sure enough, she saw an outdoor receptacle next to a shed that was only ten feet (3 meters) over the boundary. Jane paused to think. *Well, it's my last night on this planet. Stealing a dime of electricity won't be a cardinal sin. He or she may even like the show. Hell, they'll get a free extension cord. They'll come out ahead. And, if they happen to retrieve the projector and laptop, too, they'll be way ahead.*

Between 8:08 AM and 11:11 AM, Jane diligently worked on her last projection piece in her dad's condo. It was a 7-second gif (graphics interchange format) loop of a blue ball rolling down a bright green slope on the right. In the middle of the composition was a gray oval that the ball rolled towards. And on the far left was a ghastly red-eyed creature with a small magenta-colored cigar-like object below.

Once completed, she ran a simulation on her photo of Haystack Rock and two of The Needles. Then she removed her dad's large framed René Magritte print and projected the simulation onto the living room wall. The spacing was correct with no under/overlaps. Jane was satisfied. She clicked save and turned the laptop and projector off.

Jane then switched on the flat-screen TV and watched the midday news out of Portland. A stabbing on Mount Tabor. A drunk hits a pedestrian and then an old brick building in the Pearl District. An embezzlement scandal in the run-up to the city-county elections. Jane mused. *My last newscast, I suppose. It will be the same nonsense tomorrow. And the*

*day after. And the year after. And the decade after. And the ever-after? Well, time for my last lunch.*

Jane walked over to The Wayfarer Restaurant & Lounge. It was moderately crowded. She was quickly seated and ordered a bowl of clam chowder. It arrived piping hot and was delicious. Though, she only ate half of it.

The Monday lunch scene was desultory, except for one remark made by a 40-something, brunette-with-a-red-tinge, tired waitress to a table of Japanese tourists behind Jane: "This afternoon might be the last time we see the sun for a long, long time." *Yes, for a long, long, loooooong [sic] time.*

Back at her dad's condo, Jane made some minor changes to her projection. At 2:02 PM she felt severe abdominal pain, like acupuncture was being performed on her stomach. She took two oxies with some Chardonnay that was in the wine rack on the counter.

At 3:03 PM she dropped her last three hydros and finished off another glass of wine. At 4:04 PM Jane had one stupefying buzz going.

She packed the laptop, projector, the thirteen remaining oxycodone pills and the wine bottle in a duffel bag. She stumbled outside and added the other accoutrements from her sedan's trunk.

The sun would set at exactly five o'clock; twilight would be thirty minutes later. Jane had everything ready to go at 4:44 PM. She then sat on the sand next to the projector and watched the sun descend towards the Pacific horizon. *Well,*

*girl, you picked a winner of a night to go out on. Won't be long now.*

At 5:05 PM Jane downed all of the remaining oxies with slugs of wine. She then walked over to where the shallowly buried yellow extension cord reappeared from the ground. She plugged it in. Then she just laid in the lush maritime ground cover ... and passed away.

It all worked out just as Jane had planned. Beachcombers watched her projection in amazement, taking pictures and videos, which were posted to social media sites.

The projected loop replayed with random pauses until 9:09 PM. That's when the projector overheated and cut off.

Jane's parents would read her explanatory send-delayed e-mail the next morning.