

**another pSecret pSociety pshort pstory**



*psatori ... pso psuddenly psuggestive*

by Mike Bozart (Agent 33) ..... June 2013

We, Monique (Agent 32) and I (Agent 33), decided to ride our bikes over to the trendy NoDa area (northeast Charlotte), seeking satori, sustenance, and serendipity (with a silent *p* in front of each *s* word in the final report). Yeah, stuff like that.

We kept watch on our wheel-view mirrors. I moved up alongside Monique on East 35<sup>th</sup> Street. Though, boredom was gaining on us by Charles Avenue. Then a girl on the lawn with her head in her hands.

“Hey, Monique, is she crying or laughing?”

“Probably neither, either.” *Neither, either? What did she say?*

“Ah, blame it on the ether.” *Yep, he’s recording already.*

We arrived at Boudreaux’s at 12:12, m’eyes will kid you not. We got a small table outside. Well, we couldn’t seek refuge in Frank’s store anymore. (R-I-P, Agent 107.)

A lesbian couple was having a fascinating conversation at a table beside us. The short African American lady said to the tall Caucasian American lady that she had to leave her now-ex-girlfriend in South Carolina. Something about catching her having sex with some gay dude. *WTF!*

The compact, black lady said, “Yeah, he was a common friend, or something. When I confronted her, she said that it doesn’t count as cheating if it’s with a gay dude. Can you imagine that?” *Am I really hearing this?*

The white female replied, "But she had a real penis in her vagina!" *Wow! Never expected to hear this when I woke up today. Glad the audio recorder is running. Great stuff for a short story. Primo dialogue. This one will write itself.*

I leaned down and furtively whispered to Monique. "Did you hear that exchange, 32?"

"The women right beside us?"

"Yeah."

"Yes, I heard them. Bizarre."

"Welcome to the NoDa."

At a table just up from ours, an apparent first or second date was in progress. Some goo-goo eyes. Monique looks at the young, black-haired lady.

Monique then turns her head back to me. "The Asian girl appears to be pinay, Parkaar." [my ailing alias] Monique studied her more closely.

I glanced at the 20-something Caucasian guy. "And the guy is a hipster dude. Look at those skinny jeans."

Monique then mentioned something about finding a note inside a discarded lauan interior door.

"What did it say, Agent 32? Do tell. Speak into the mic."

“Between the thin sheets of Philippine mahogany?”

“Yes, and between the vertical lines. Hey, we all want to know. Well, sorta. I think.” *I'll just play along with his game.*

“Well, don't ask me; ask them.”

“Who, Monique?”

“Them. Over there.” She looks at two guys in work clothes.

“The construction workers?”

“No. They're busy. Don't bother them.” *She's surreally on her game – or on my game – today.*

And it went on like this for the next eight minutes. Utter confusion. No rhyme for reason. No time on the broken clock.

We finally ordered the seafood gumbo. It appeared on our table in just four minutes. It hit the spot. *Good stuff for this far inland.*

A cyclist almost got hit making a right turn onto East 36<sup>th</sup> Street from North Davidson Street. The left-turning motorist wouldn't yield. Par for the curse [*sic*] in this burgeoning burgette.

“Did you see that, Monique? We almost had a lunch-hour casualty.”

“I missed that one, Parkaar. I was watching our newly lovebirds.”

I went on and told Monique that I was now finally writing that novel novel (*Gold, a summer story*). It wouldn't be like this – this meandering short story that you are reading right now – it would have some coherence and logical flow to it.

I continued with my novel spiel. “It will even have a central theme, which would be imported and served to all of the characters. Well, maybe just to the main ones. Outliers gonna lie out of bounds, ya know.”

“Ok, that's great.” Monique ran her hands through her long, silky, raven-black hair.

I smiled then recommenced my novel's plan of attack. “I'll dredge up everything at least once. Sift it twice. Replay it thrice. I'll even agree to the customary conventions of quotation marks, paragraph breaks, discernible referencing, and proper pronoun usage. You know, all that boring stuff. I'll play by their rules.”

“*Their* rules? Oh, please, there is much to be said for a clear, concise syntax.”

“Sin tax?” *He never misses a low-hanging pun.*

“Oh, you’ll pay. One way or another, Agent 33.”

“Hey, Agent 32, would you like to hear what I have so far?”

“Sure, lay it on me, Parkaar.” *I’ll lay it on her later.*

“Ok, here are some random lines that I will try to weave into the story. One. It can leave holes in the lumber. Two. Oh, the baseball field where I taught my son how to ride a bike is now a drainage canal, but there’s no gold in it. Three. I checked the box four times before returning. Four. It’s lucky Shamrock Drive. Five. She told him how to break writer’s block: When all else fails, just plainly state what is happening in a patently matter-of-fact manner. Patiently reduce it to the simplest terms. For example, start with a sentence like Jack looked at Jane. Even Hemingway would agree to that. Now, the second sentence. See, the strand of possibilities is endless. Block removed. Broken into small pieces. Six. The usual processes were still at work with no vacation in sight. Seven. He kept his mind churning; it smelled like burning rubber. Eight. Gallery graphics are exploding. Nine. Go write a joke. Or, go ride a joke. Ten. He was going all the way. Far away. One day. Until it crashed and burned, he really knew nothing. Eleven. Make sure you tell them what I forgot to say. Twelve. ‘Hey man, want the short line?’ ‘Sure.’ ‘Ok, just hold this wire for me.’ Twelve. ‘Who did you like in that all-Deutschland Champions League Final?’ Thirteen. Grundel.”

“Fourteen’s enough, Parkaar. You repeated twelve.”

At table 3, we heard a quick back and forth, apparently triggered by my Champions League remark. “Dortmund should’ve scored in the first 12 minutes.” “Think so?” “Oh, yeah. At least once.” “Credit Neuer. He came up big in the biggest game.” “No doubt.”

Their conversation lost steam. I looked into Monique’s pretty dark brown pinay eyes. “Would you like to hear some more lines, Agent 32?”

“Lines like ‘Big Bang theorist,’ ‘microwave menu for 95 seconds,’ ‘go easy on the toilet paper dispenser,’ ‘weave one for me,’ ‘don’t lose your new spare key where the old one disappeared,’ ‘already in the house and still not home,’ ...”

“Ok, ok, you’re making me cringe now. How did you find my notes, 32?”

“An agent never tells, 33.”

“Not even if they are married?”

“The code is the code, and we all live and prosper by it, Parkaar.”

Moreover, this was NoDa in 2013 on a crisp spring day. There are worse places we could have been. We could have been stuck in the Mecklenburg County Courthouse, parked in the lawyer’s stall. Yeah, that malodorous. But at this NoDastic moment, it’s actually a keener kewl scene if you spell it the write [sic] way.

I began writing notes on the back of a business card as the young lovers glanced our way.

“A nice day today, Monique, but I wouldn’t want to be sitting out here in July.”

“You really do hate hot weather, 33.”

“Yes, I most really do, Monique. You know how I despise it.”  
I looked back at the first-daters table. “Look.”

“Where?”

“Over there.” I nodded towards the amorous table. “They are now grinning at each other. I bet they are pumping in two hours.”

“Make it one.”

“Ok, one and done and won.”

“Who do you think she is?”

“Well, she’s not the lady next door. Not today.”

“I know she’s pinay, Parkaar. She gave me the pinay code look.”

“Oh, really?”



“Oo.” [Yes in Tagalog and Cebuano]

“I wonder if it is raining in Boone.”

“At this moment?”

Before I could answer, I saw a squirrel nearly get squashed by a cable TV van. Monique had followed my eyes and saw the rodent’s near-fatality, too.

“Close call there, 32.”

“Perhaps she was chasing a nut. After all, aren’t they all?”

A large semi rolled by on North Davidson Street, slamming its way across 36<sup>th</sup> Street. *So much for the ambiance.*

“Hey, this aint the truck route anymore, pal,” I grumbled, but I doubt the driver heard me.

Monique then said something about just letting it go.

I looked around at the adjacent tables. “Do any of you remember the Hotel Astor at Carolina Beach? [featured prominently in the short story *Carolina Beached*] It was at the beginning of Canal Drive. There was that big sign on the roof with metal supports. Did you climb on it, too? You could see it from a mile down the road in 1986. Nineteen years later it burned down.” Awkward silence.

Then Monique with a muted whistle. “What are you doing? Did you put some crystals in your drink when I wasn’t looking, Parkaar?”

“Huh? And at 1948, the gold melts. Ok, it’s just a working title. We just need to make sure that the total weight of the Au is about 55 pounds. No more than 60; no less than 50. How much is that in kg? More than 100 pounds. It’s hard to find 100 Grand candy bars in this town. Yet, supposedly, hardly anyone likes them. They’re not even in the top 40 of confectionary bestsellers.”

Monique looked at the diners at the nearby tables. “Please excuse him. He skipped his medication.”

“Sorry, folks. I got carried up, up, and away.”

The surrounding diners hurried their eating and drinking. *I guess I shocked them. Must tone it down. Way down. Oh, it’s probably too late.*

And then Monique asked me why I type and copy these little wandering short stories.

“Because I don’t see anyone else doing them, Monique. There’s a niche to be filled. Yeah, stick that copy in that crack. Perfect. Plant one in that nook. Good job. Let’s put this town on the meta-map, cranny by cranny.” *Meta-map? He’s flying high and wide.*

Next, the hipsteresque waiter returned. “Are you guys alright? Would you like anything else?”

“Just the check, mate,” I said. *Checkmate. He planned that.*

“Certainly.” The waiter soon disappeared.

“Dig these lines, 32. Rook out with your bishop out. Pawn up as knight falls. Frank’s dead and nothing seems to matter to space anymore. Awash in astounding credit card debt. All their lies matched up linearly. Light down the dashed line. Yo, it’s starting to slant. Shunt it down, then shut it off. I’ll be dead before I live. What do ya think, Monique? Am I gaining any headway?”

She just shook her head and cleared her bowl.

We paid up and left a nice 22.22% tip.

Once safely across the street, we posted some short stories on the official NoDaBoard, a triangular bulletin board at North Davidson and East 36th. It had a roof on it. Weather protection, no less.

“Monique, we are just playing for one swing. Walk off a hero or die a goat in a moat. Yeah, it sounds like a Secteur de Tryke rip-off. And it probably is. I’ll go back and check those 3.5” floppy discs someday.”

“You’re really getting some mileage out of those granules, aren’t you, 33?”

I just continued my neosurreal ramble. “Well, the plank is already in place, securely affixed to the transom for ransom. In that scene, they’re chumming the water with pig’s blood in Sheepshead Bay. My dad cursed that anodyne. It never worked, except at the worst possible time. None efficacious, though many still in tarnished armor.”

And it went on like this for 11 more torturous minutes.

“Are you finished now, 33?”

“Monique, I thought you were going to say, ‘Some sharp commotion around that slight corner. It always seems to start out of a slight.’ Am I right?”

She laughed. “Yeah, that’s it exactly, Parkaar!”

We walked up to The Smelly Cat (a coffeehouse). A newly arrived couple had just been seated outside. We got within eavesdropping range. He was telling her some myths about Kerouac’s famous *On the Road* novel.

“You know, Kate, he did not write that novel in one weekend. It was edited and re-edited over almost a decade. Moreover, it was meticulously crafted.”

“But, the scroll, it travels all around the world now, George,” Kate said.

“Yeah, but it always winds up the same. Always someone trying to get someone to jump. Higher. Farther. Faster. Always battling with the averages. Hoping for a big win. Le Gran Prix.”

Monique couldn't suppress her urge to know. Was that guy now screwing the pinay? Her mind got caught in a loop. And then in columns. Nothing was stacking up right. She could see his eyes. And her eyes. She saw the whole scenario unfolding.

I knew that the granules had finally zapped her brain, too. Any line was fair game at this stage.

“How many times did he lie in the lye, 32?”

“What a caustic gooffoon,” Monique tersely replied. *Gooffoon, that's a money word. Score one for 32.*

“I'm sure his back was cauterized by now.”

“What?” Monique was having trouble staying on one train of thought.

“Hey, Monique, I'll just give them some of the *Gold* novel.”

“You're going to give the whole plot away for free?”

“No, just an excerpt.”

“Ok, whatever, 33.”

“How about I give them this for nada: He had his buddy’s flatbed pull it out the next day. Over the next few weeks, he melted the gold down, and had it recast into little ingots. He could slowly start to sell it, which he did. A jeweler in Wilmington didn’t ask too many questions, and gave him \$1000/ounce. He sold the jeweler one 5-pound bar every Monday morning. And, like clockwork, he left at 9:15 AM with a check for \$80,000. This went on for six weeks. Then one Monday morning in September, he noticed police cars parked in front of the jewelry store. He never went back. Too risky. The jeweler never called. One Monday, curiosity got the best of him. He called the store. A recording. What happened to him? He hung up. Fearing that they had his cell phone number ...”

“Ready to go back?”