

another pSecret pSociety pshort pstory



SFO |__| SOFA

by Mike Bozart (Agent 33 of the psecret psociety) |
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I arrived at the SFO airport via BART train about an hour before Agent 32's flight from Manila would touch down. The sun was setting on a late August day, as fog billowed over Sweeney Ridge and funneled into the valleys above San Andreas Lake, just like dry ice vapors going down the side of a flask in a college chemistry lab.

Feeling restless, I kept moving around in the airport, taking the AirTrain to all four terminals. I kept thinking about what she said as I paced about the concourses. *What kind of surprise did she have in store? Would it really be a game changer? A mind blower? A tickle-me-goo-goo? Oh, what unabated nonsense goes through my mind.*

And then, peering around the food court, I wondered who knew I was here. With about 20 minutes left to kill, I ducked into a Peet's Coffee & Tea in the international terminal. I looked for something to read as I sipped the dark Colombian roast.

I quickly spied an *SF Weekly* that someone had discarded. I grabbed it and thought back to when I lived on lower Hyde Street, some 20 years ago. I remembered calling the paper's office. I was going to place a singles ad. It was kind of common back then. The girl who answered the phone was new. She wasn't sure whom I should speak with. We made some small talk, and then joked, 'who will remember this 20 years from now?' *I did, but I somehow doubt that she did. Or, did she? Well, who knows? Is she still alive? Oh, I'm sure that she is. She is probably married to a millionaire techie now, living in Palo Alto. She probably has too precocious little brats. Ah, how time ensnares everyone and everything.*

My mind drifted back inside that small studio apartment in the upper Tenderloin district. (This is where the novella

Mysterieau of San Francisco begins.) I kept thinking about the surreal art I hid in the building before I left. *Was it still in the laundry room walls? Back behind that noisy commercial-size dryer? Oh, well, what does it matter now? Or, even then? Why did I do such frivolous things? And, still do them? MAD - Mad Artist Disease.*

Then I glanced at my cell phone. Ten minutes until Agent 32's plane would be rolling down the bay-bordered tarmac. *I hope there are no mechanical issues with her plane. No crash. Ughhh ... that would be too much to deal with.*

I took a seat on a green sofa. It may have been for customers only, but I was tired now. No one asked me to move. Then it dawned on me: *This would be a great place to hide a copy of 'Galax_ Galaxy'. [a recent short story] Yeah, let's do this. We'll leave a copy right here.*

I then surreptitiously placed an 8.5" x 5.5" (22 x 14 cm) copy between the padding and the base of the sofa. When I looked back up, an older Asian lady was wagging her finger. At first, I thought her ire was directed at me for my little literature-stuffing stunt. *Oh, crap. Here comes a lecture. Maybe she'll even alert security. Arrest this sofa-inserting freak now!*

However – to my great relief – she was actually scolding an Asian teenage girl, perhaps her granddaughter, who happened to be passing right behind me at that moment. They moved along. *Whew!*

I recomposed myself, and boldly exhibited what I felt to be a nondescript Silicon Valley businessman's face. I snapped the newspaper to ensure a crisp fold. It was way over-the-top, but hardly anyone even noticed. I then rubbed my eyes,

and an announcement began over the public address system:

“Philippines Airlines flight 104 will be arriving at gate A-12 on time. Flight 104 arriving at gate A-12.” *Five minutes!*

I gathered my things and scurried down the concourse. I was almost running. I wanted to make sure that I would have the sight line to see her first. I wanted to get the drop on Agent 32. But, as I hid behind a support column, I suddenly heard an unmistakable Filipina’s voice behind me.

“You-hoo! Hello there, Agent 33. Are you holding up that post?”

“You sneaky thing! How did you get back there without me so much as noticing?”

“Ha-ha-ha ... This girl has her ways.”

“I see. Well, you can call me Parkaar – my most recent ailing alias. How shall I address you, Agent 32?”

“Call me Monique. Monique by the creek!” She burst into uproarious laughter.

“Monique, you freak! You read that short story?” *Where did she find it? Ah, the magic of the internet, I suppose.*

“Yep! Sure did.”

“That’s freaking amazing! The distribution was, shall we say, very limited.” I chuckled. “Know what I mean?”

“I do. Oh, yes, I do. I found a copy in the Pisgah National Forest, under a footbridge near the Mills River.” *How bizarre! When was she there? Who was she with? Anyone?*

“The South Fork?”

“Yes!” *Truly amazing. Never thought that anyone would ever find that one.*

“Ah, passerelle perfect!” *Passerelle?* “Well, how was the flight?”

“Long, so very long! The pinay [Filipina in Tagalog and Cebuano] beside me wouldn’t stop talking. So concerned she was about her boyfriend. Always asking me for advice. She was an emotional mess, Parkaar.”

“I see. Sorry to hear that, Monique. Hey, are you hungry?”

“Yes, I actually am a little hungry despite eating twice on the plane during the 11-hour flight.” *Eleven hours in a pressurized aluminum can. My butt hurts just thinking about it. Ugggh.*

“There are a couple of Asian restaurants in the food court.” *Oh, good. Yum-yum!*

“Ok, let’s do it!” *Wow, there’s an opening.*

“Uh, can we wait until the hotel room?” *What a horn-dog.*

“Very sly, Parkaar. Don’t get ahead of the situation.” *Must calm down. Take deep breaths. She’s so damn sexy.*

“Well, Monique, you left that line hanging out over the plate as we say in America in the summer.” *Only in the summer?*

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