

MYSTERIEAU

of San Francisco



a novella

by mike bozart

[[[]]] ... *from the inside flap* ...

The 27-year-old author arrives in San Francisco, California in March of 1992, seeking fame and fortune as a wall (visual) artist. He settles in at a small Tenderloin studio apartment on lower Hyde Street and elects to go about car-less, transporting himself by foot, bicycle, bus, train and ferry.

After yet another unsuccessful day of shopping his portfolio, slides and several actual paintings to a downtown art gallery, he takes an intra-city journey by rail to the ever-foggy Outer Sunset district. At a nondescript hole-in-the-wall saloon, he stops in for an end-of-day drink.

To his surprise, there is actually some free entertainment in store. A Vietnamese American donning a purple skull mask, wearing an oversize lavender velvet suit, going under the moniker of *Mysterieau of San Francisco*, soon takes the small stage to perform in front of a minuscule audience.

Mysterieau's act is a mixture of bad magic, non-comedy, trivial pursuits, odd performance art, lame illusions, rambling commentary, motivational speaking, sexual innuendo, and disjunctive storytelling. His style is über-rhetorical, yet highly conversational. The author can hardly believe some of the things he says and does, and is soon mesmerized by his curious word choices and impromptu on-stage antics.

Afterwards, the author befriends the vague-as-fog Suong, Mysterieau's younger sister, who later gives him a shaft-shaking in a strange place. Then Mysterieau and the author trek across Golden Gate Park at night, playing a round of 100 questions.

On Fulton Street in the Outer Richmond, they meet Mysterieau's Japanese girlfriend and confidant, the surreal maven Kasumi, at a soon-to-close restaurant. They shoot some racy, artsy videos.

A fabulous summer of art, love, and intriguing existence awaits in that fabled city of creative renown. But, when you enter off-limits places, unknown hazards may silently seep into your life's equation.

Mysterieau of San Francisco

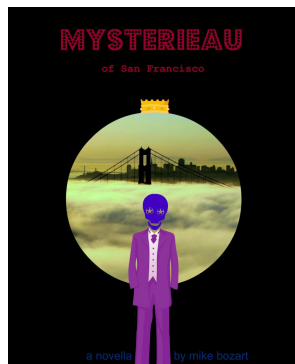
a novella by Mike Bozart

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And now for some somber legalese ...

First and foremost, let's be totally clear in this encroaching fog: This is a work of fiction. *Mysterieau of San Francisco* is not a factual account of any slice of the space-time continuum on Earth or anywhere else. Names, characters, places, events, incidents, and situations are either the product of the author's warped imagination or are used in a fictitious fashion. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or their otherworldly spirits, or any locales or known objects, is entirely, and without exception, coincidental and/or randomly selected.



cover art by m. van tryke

*... for all
who love to
wander and
wonder in that
foggy city by
the bay.*

~!~

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Foreword

So, another novella by my old pal, Mike – van Tryke – Bozart arrives in my e-mail in-box. A slice of life in ultra-expensive San Francisco in the early 1990s. Hmmmm ... Yes, the first thing I wondered: How in the hell did he afford the high rent out there? Ah, but he tells us in this unexpected tale.

Speaking of rent, that Mysterieau character sure had that one figured out: Just live somewhere that doesn't charge any. (You won't believe where he was living.) Eureka! Why wasn't I that smart in my youthful, roaming, lecherous days?

What a cast. The main character is a Vietnamese American whose alter-ego is the highly eccentric Mysterieau. Then there's his svelte, sexy, shy, though direct to the matter at hand, younger sister Suong. What a sausage! There's the enticing Japanese Kasumi with her no-sexual-inhibitions surreal mind. Add the somewhat jaded Native American bartender Tsula, and you have one anomalous pot of soup.

Folks, this a fun, fast-paced, ever-yawing, whimsical read. While it's in the fiction category, I can't help but think that Mike met some people very much like these characters in this unwinding – and undressing – yarn.

I'm not going to give away any more. Let's just say that this was one outlandish journey, sprinkled with a few sudden sex scenes. Quite bizarre in one case.

As I scrolled my way through this fantastical saga, I often felt I was laughing and cringing at the same time in many passages. A moment later I wasn't sure of my reaction to his words. A really odd sensation. I suspect that that's what Mike was going for.

So, go brew a pot. Stir in some granules. Sip it carefully.

- Herman S. Goetze, [Taos, New Mexico]

Preface

I got acutely bitten by the visual-art bug back in late 1989. Assemblages, collages, 2-D, 3-D; I was a factory. Everyone in my family got a piece of my odd art – in many cases, unfortunately – that Christmas. Yeah, I really wanted to be the next Andy Warthauler, or art-world something.

After displaying my neosurreal art – under the nom de brosse of m. van tryke – in a co-op gallery (the now-defunct Absinthe) in the emerging NoDa arts district of north Charlotte for a year (1991) to limited success, I decided to ‘go for it’ and move out to San Francisco in ‘92 to see if my acrylic-and-marker schemas would take flight in a fortuitous Golden Gate gale.

Long story shortened, my art is still virtually unknown; however, the ten-month experience in that eminent city was not a complete failure: This novella emerged from recollections and found notecards from that epic epoch, some twenty-three years ago.

After approaching nearly all of the contemporary art galleries – from A to Z – in the SF phonebook, and getting nowhere, I stumbled upon this little dive bar on Judah Street in the Outer Sunset district of the city. And that is really where this tale begins. The characters associated with that never-advertised open casket of a pub became the stars of this novella, most notably that costumed fellow on the tiny stage on that Thursday April evening: the one and solely Mysterieau. **Mysterieau of San Francisco** the banner read.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank all who happened to be in San Francisco in 1992. Your influence, however small and insignificant it may appear to have been, has indescribably affected this work. This novella would have turned out differently without your civic presence and world-class molecular persuasion.

Also, a big thanks to my brother Ron, who drove with me in a moving truck for five days and four nights, greatly aiding my move from Charlotte to San Francisco.

“His words oozed out like molten wax,
solidifying as neural crayons in our ears,
which joyfully tickled our brains.”

- Galerie Parcoeur

It was now about four weeks since I had arrived in San Francisco from Charlotte via a 17' U-Haul truck. My little fourth-floor studio apartment at 737 Hyde Street was almost box-free now; I could walk around in the 444 square feet without tripping over anything but my thoughts. I had memorized the MUNI and BART systems and was enjoying life without a car to worry about. I had already ventured out on my bicycle; I kept it locked in the basement laundry room.

While sipping some Earl Grey tea as the obscured sun went down on an earlier-was-quite-gray April Wednesday, I gazed out my west-facing living room window. I could see an orange glow on the bricks of an apartment building on Hemlock Street. *Wonder what scenes are going on in that building right about now? Any unique stories in progress? Any non-acts of quiet desperation? Any game-changing plans being drawn up? Any new forms of amusement? Any propitious plots being hatched?*

Then I overheard a couple talking in the hallway a few doors down. Mundane matters. The conversation soon ceased. A door shut. I then looked back at the apartment building on Hemlock Street. My little thought parade picked up right where it had left off. *At this very moment, perhaps a horny couple screwing themselves silly? Someone pondering his or her fate? Will anyone in that building become famous? Or, have any famous people already lived in that apartment building? Are there any cute single Asian girls in there now? Are any of them into surrealism? If so, would they prefer Magritte to Dali? How many are stoned out of their minds? How many are hooked on heroin? How many are raving alcoholics, getting drunk once again? How many lifeforms*

are in that edifice? What's the cockroach count? Why am I thinking such nonsense?

Farther out, a reflection of the sinking sun on a Post Street picture window. Several car horns blared out frustration and impatience. Then the orange hues slowly shifted to brown. Darkness was dropping its drape. Some indecipherable yelling and then loud laughter from the courtyard below. *I guess they got that issue worked out amicably.*

My mind meandered with the old, creaking, four-legged, cast-iron radiator at the base of the leftmost bay window. *Well, I made it here. Made it to this hilly, western Shangri-La. Made it to 'the Athens of our time' as that erudite lad said the other day. Wow. So amazing. How lucky am I? I actually made it to the world-famous city of San Francisco. I'm living in freaking San Francisco! Well, at least for a while. But, still no takers on my art. I'm so naïve. Why do I expect improbable things to happen? Another delusional artist-fool. That surely would be me. Yeah, me that surely would be.*

I looked down at the dark gray, almost imperceptibly speckled, long, rectangular, two-tier, laminate coffee table that was custom-made by my pal Frank von Peck in Charlotte. I studied the corners and seams. *Perfect. Absolutely parfait! Man, he really knew what he was doing when he put this together. It was certainly worth putting on the truck. It would be so kewl if he could visit me out here. Yeah, a peck-packed bowl on the roof. So Weltklasse.*

Then I spotted and grabbed the A-M volume of the 1991 San Francisco Yellow Pages. It was already opened to the Art Galleries listings. I studied my markings and notes next to

the gallery names. And, once again, my mind wandered away. *That gallery in Sausalito was a bit ambitious; they only represent nationally known artists with agents. The Union Square galleries as well. Longshots. Extreme longshots. The one in Cow Hollow ... she said she'd call back. Yeah, I bet. And the one in the Haight is another no-go. My art is just not hippy-dippy enough, I guess. And for the others, not slick enough. That Inner Sunset gallery seemed promising ... until I told her that I used magic markers for the black lines. What a scowl that was. So classic. A genuine cinema-grade expression there. Whew! This is starting to feel futile. Ah, but we've got an appointment at the gallery in the San Francisco Shopping Centre on Market Street tomorrow afternoon. Well, who knows? Ah, just keep going. Keep pushing your little art-wagon token along. Stay on the board. Keep rolling the dice. Maybe a lucky 7 one day. After all, if it were easy ...*

My musing was broken by the slam of the next apartment door. *I guess Margie is home from work. I really have it made, being able to just do my technical writing at my convenience, and not having to check in anywhere at a set hour. I really need to make the most of this situation. It certainly won't last forever. Must not get lazy. No bad habits.*

I finished my tea and watched the local news. A holdup at a Hayes Valley bank branch. Some parking issue on Russian Hill. Morning fog then sun with temperatures around seventy degrees tomorrow. The Giants in spring training in Arizona.
<click>

I left the living room futon for the single bed that neatly fit in the large walk-in closet. I always left the closet door open and the living room's bay window drapes parted so that I

could see the Sutro Tower's red lights twinkling off in the distance. *That tower is iconic and eyesoric at the same time. Hey, 'eyesoric' is not a real adjective, young man! Well, I guess I can still think it.*

I got under the covers, feeling as snug as a bug in a tightly woven rug. The Sutro Tower seemed to be communicating with me as wispy, cotton-white, low clouds streaked past its three marching-in-place legs. *Come here, boy. Come out here and climb me. Bring a large banner or objet d'art to hang on me. But, don't forget the necessary tools. Listen, I can make you famous. I can make you 'that' guy. It's what you want, right? Notoriety, fame, fortune, and all that jazz? And, hey, I'm only five miles away. You'll get a 30-second spot on the TV news, articles in the papers, be the topic of Bay Area talk-radio shows. C'mon, what are you waiting for? This is your chance! Get out here!*

I rubbed my right eye, trying to rid a fallen lash. *What have I been thinking? If I climbed that tower, I'd be just another arrested loon. I sincerely doubt that I would become famous. I really need to just fall asleep and forget such madness.*

Soon I began to feel drowsy. Semiconscious thoughts commenced with a recklessly deflating abandon. *Need to make an effort to land a girlfriend out here. This bed is getting lonely. And, these porno tapes have become more revolting than titillating. Maybe place an ad in 'SF Weekly'. But my finances are so paltry. What aspiring young lady would want to be with me? I'm headed nowhere, and she would quickly realize that, just like that girl from DC on the Geary bus the other day. Boy was she none-so-much-at-all impressed with me. Yeah, females have a keen sense of a*

dude's trajectory. Probably from evolution. And goofy me, a readily apparent, ever-sinking, waterlogged log, headed towards the lip of Yosemite Falls. I'd pass on me, too.

I heard a water faucet open. Teeth-brushing time in the apartment above. And then the water stopped, but my thoughts continued to flow. *Hope that art gallery likes my art tomorrow. Need a lucky break. Maybe I should just focus on getting my art into a kewl coffeehouse, hip café or artsy restaurant. But that's a path to nowhere, isn't it? But, at least people are seeing it. No chance for anything to happen if the art is just in here ... in this tomb. Should I start playing the lottery? Am I the type of person who wins a lottery? Is there a certain type? A very lucky type! Ha-ha. Maybe buy a ticket tomorrow? No, I can't squander what little money I have. Must stay smart. Stay on plan. There sure are some cute Asian girls in this town. The one in that coffee shop near Ocean Beach two weeks ago. Whew! So svelte. So sexy. So stylish. So studious. She's going places. Yeah, she'll have an office in one of these towers in a few years. Oh, yeah. For sure. Am I the type of ... the type of ... the type of ... <zzzzzzzz> [snoring]*

<>

I woke up at 8:56. Those were the red numerals and flashing colon on my bedside LED alarm clock (the PM dot was unlit). I looked window-ward; it was all a silvery gray out there. The northeastern sector of the city was engulfed in that classic San Francisco AM fog. *What a pea souper! I can't even see the fire escape railing! Pretty darn dense this morning. How I love the fog in this town. I'll take it over bright sun any day. It*

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