

another pSecret pSociety pshort pstory



BANGKOK IN SALISBURY

by Mike Bozart (Agent 33) | July 2014; rev. Feb. 2016

So, there we were in downtown Salisbury, North Carolina on a hot, yet dry, July afternoon in 2014. Monique (Agent 32) and I (Agent 33) were hungry for some Asian fare, when lo and behold, we spied a Thai restaurant on the corner of Innes and Lee.

Bangkok Downtown was the name on the glass pane of the old green door of the renovated, three-story, 90-year-old building. Not being sure if they did late Saturday lunch, I pulled gingerly on the old brass door handle. The door opened easily with nary a creak. We entered the cool foyer.

A Thai hostess quickly had us seated. There was only one other couple in there at the time, both buried in their plates. *They seem to love the food here.*

The World Cup soccer match between the Netherlands and Costa Rica was running on the LCD screen, high overhead. The original, white, raised-relief, tin Queen Anne ceiling tiles had been cleaned up and retouched very nicely. In fact, the whole building had been expertly redone.

Soon a diminutive Thai waitress arrived at our table in traditional attire. We ordered green and red curry dishes. Then the waitress promptly disappeared into the kitchen.

I refocused on the soccer game, while Monique continued to study the menu. Halftime arrived along with our plates. A scoreless draw at the break.

The food smelled heavenly and got the wall elephant's nod of approval. Monique began to feast as I pondered the first half.

"Van Persie needs to get his head into the game."

"No dolphin dive yet, 33?"

"No, nothing even close, Monique. Though, Robben, as usual, is playing like a man on a mission."

"Well, maybe he can score in the second half."

"Yeah, maybe," I said as I looked around for the restroom.

I got up and headed for a narrow back hallway. I had gulped down a quart of ice water while watching the tense first half. I left a *Gold* card (a coupon to purchase my e-novel *Gold, a summer story* for just 99 cents) in the men's room in a location that probably won't lend itself to being discovered for several months to several years. I'll just leave it at that.

Well, for now, as it was. (Not sure what that means, either, but I seemed to think it was clever at the time.)

Once back at our table, I devoured the vegetarian red curry dish. It was – in a commonly used English word – delicious. *Good, tasty, healthy chow.*

Monique was almost done with her green curry bowl. She seemed to like it as much as I liked mine. Her fork and spoon were nonstop.

Soon the game recommenced as another pair of middle-age couples arrived and were seated on both sides of us with a table between. *I'm glad they didn't cram us all awkwardly together. This spacing is perfect for intentional overhearings.*

The goateed 60-ish Caucasian man to my right had a casual interest in the match, looking up at the screen from time to time. I'm not sure if he had a rooting interest, though. Since this wasn't a sports bar, I curbed my enthusiasm whenever the Dutch team had a scoring chance, or whenever they were close to being scored upon. Nonetheless, the bearded man to my right picked up on my interest in the game. *Now it's time to have a little fun. Time to click on the digital audio recorder. I might utter a good line and forget it when write-up time comes.*

The game seemed to slow down. Costa Rica was being defensively cautious, but would still launch surprise counterattacks. Suddenly, Robben led another break down the pitch. A beautiful cross to Robin van Persie gets misplayed. *Darn it! Wake up!*

"Did you see that, lovely Agent 32? Van Persie almost tripped over his own two feet. He can play so great and then ... well, I don't know."

"You were just talking him up the other week, telling me how he was going to score at least twenty goals with Manchester United next season with fellow countryman Louis van Gaal as manager, and how Liverpool were in deep trouble."

"I know, I know, I know. It's a what-have-you-done-for-me-lately World Cup kind of thing, I guess."

"Don't take it too seriously, Parkaar; [my ailing alias] it's not the United States."

"Yeah, you're right, Monique."

"Do you even know any Dutch, 33?"

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