

**another pSecret pSociety pshort pstory**



Beanstreets by Mike Bozart (Agent 33) | APR 2015

Back in 1998, when I lived alone in a 907-square-foot camper-to-house conversion on High Peak Mountain (actually more of a low ridge than a prominent peak) in Etowah (NC), I would often take a 31-mile drive to Asheville on Friday afternoons after my safety writing was done. Once I had parked my white 1991 Plymouth Voyager minivan in the 'pearl of the Blue Ridge', I would ensconce me-self for several hours in a lower level, worn-but-extra-soft, gold-colored chair at Beanstreets coffeehouse at the corner of College and Broadway.

Beanstreets was a hit with the locals – a certified caffeinated cerebral power pumper (oh, yeah) – winning best coffee shop year after year through the '90s. Thus, I figured it would be a good place to start my first novel (though, actually my first novel, *Gold, a summer story*, would not come about until 15 years later in Charlotte). I already had the title in my head; it would be called *Monique by the Creek* (hasn't yet become a novel, but did become a short story; not sure what drive it is stored on).

Let me tell ya, this Beanstreets joint had a world-class chill about it. Once nestled in the back catacombs, I often felt like I was back in San Francisco. And on this overcast April day, the interior scene was no exception. The usual kewl, [*sic*] hip, casual ambiance pervaded the multilevel confines.

At a table three feet above me (yes, up a yard in elevation), there were two young customers, a white and a black guy, playing a strange version of chess with coins. *What is a rook? Two nickels?*

Near the front counter, two 20-something females, an Asian and a Caucasian, were comparing notes on poetry. Or, maybe it was song lyrics. *The next female folk-rock duo?*

And, at a table about seven feet to my right was a 50-ish Caucasian fellow donning a brown beret. He was talking to two guys and a girl, who appeared to be college students.

Luckily for me (and you, my highly esteemed voracious reader), I had my analog audio recorder on my person, just to make sure that I could later transcribe their conversation precisely. I flipped the switch to ON, slid it in my shirt pocket, and began to earnestly eavesdrop on their conversation.

The 50-something white guy was already in mid-speech, sounding very professorial. “And, get this, according to the current standard model of cosmology, the observable universe – you know, the part of the whole shebang that we can detect, containing all the billions of galaxies and trillions upon trillions of zillions of stars – is just one of an infinite number of universes existing side-by-side, like soap bubbles in a foamy, spiraling bath tub.” *Now, there’s an interesting theory. I sure picked the right table to record.*

The 20-something, Caucasian, dirty-blonde-haired, maroon-and-white-sweatshirted female then had a follow-up question. “A spiraling bath tub?”

But, before the older man could offer a reply ...

“Hey, what if some entity pulls the drain plug on it, professor?” the 20-something, Caucasian, dark-long-haired, tall male asked.

“Yes, what if, indeed?” the older bereted gentleman asked. “And, yes, Lori – spiraling all around, becoming braided together.” *He must have tenure at UNCA. [University of North Carolina at Asheville]*

They all had a chuckle. *Cosmic humor. They are probably from a cosmology, astronomy or astrophysics class.*

“Sounds like scary end-of-times stuff,” the other white, shorter, short-brown-haired male student said.

“I tend to think it would be very exciting, John. Watch that wormhole! Don’t get too close to the grommet zone. Watch those loose electrons!”

“Grommet zone?” Lori, asked. She continued her line of questioning. “But, professor, why and how can this be?”

“Because it is all infinite, Lori. Every single possible history must have played out ... somewhere, sometime and somehow. All the many permutations and combinations. All of them.” The professor then glanced my way for a millisecond. He had detected my interest in their conversation.

“Sounds like infinite imprecision to me,” John said.

“Well, hold on, John. Actually, the number of possible histories is finite, because there have been a finite number of events with a finite number of outcomes. Oh, the number is astronomically huge, but it is finite, nonetheless. Trust me on this. I stayed up all night calculating it.”

“I bet you did,” Bill said. He chuckled for three seconds.

Lori giggled. “Oh, professor, you’re too much!”

The prof smiled. “That’s not what the wife says, Lori.” *Wow, wasn’t expecting that.*

They all had another chortle. John almost spilled his coffee. The professor coughed a few times.

Bill, the long-haired student, restarted their astronomical discussion. “Ok, so what you’re saying now is that this conversation here at this point in space-time ...”

“Yes, go ahead, Bill,” the professor encouraged. “Keep running with the universal ball. Put it over the goal line this time. All of the cosmos is counting on you.”

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