

another pSecret pSociety pshort pstory



Black Sand, White Surf by Mike Bozart (Agent 33) | April 2020

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by Mike Bozart

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“Well, that was one hellishly long, curvy-ass road, Milton!” 27-year-old Janelle exclaims as the pastel green, 1951, two-door Studebaker Champion comes to rest just before a log wheel-stop. “Where in the world are we? Do I hear the sea?” *What a forlorn, fog-enshrouded place. There’s no one around. No houses, no stores, no anything. He could rape and kill me and no one would ever find my body. Ever. Oh, why am I thinking such gruesome thoughts. He’s a good guy. I think. I hope. / Good deal, the condom is still in my back pocket. Perfect. This should be a memorable night – quite an unforgettable night.*

“We’re just north of Shelter Cove, [on the northern California coast] my sexy chanteuse. And, yes, you do hear the Pacific Ocean. Want to walk down to it? The fog won’t bite, but I might.” Wide-grinning, 29-year-old, short-tawny-haired Milton chuckles menacingly. *That look on his face ... It’s suddenly so creepy.*

“Oh, will you please stop it, Milton?!” Janelle insists with faux exasperation. “You’re scaring me.” *She likes me. Or, does she? Of course she does, or she wouldn’t have ever got in this car and agreed to go with me to such a secluded, far-off-the-beaten-path place.*

“Ok, ok, no more joking around,” Milton assures with a serious expression. “I’m all business from here on.” *All business?*

“And, exactly what is all of your business, mister?” Janelle enquires, and then giggles, feeling less tense.

“I’d like to merge my business with your business,” Milton dryly divulges.

“What?!” Janelle blurts. *Knew that sex was on his brain.*

“The next Sarah Vaughan paired with the next Dave Brubeck. What do ya say, princess?” *Wow!*

“Well, you certainly know how to flatter a lady, sir. But, I didn’t know that you played piano, Mr. Strawbridges.” [a play on Milton’s last name]

“I’m getting the hang of it quickly. Yes, rather quickly. I’m a fast learner, sweetheart. It’s just tilting black and white rectangles. Not really that complicated. Most people

overthink it. I get in a zone and – bam! – it’s magic. Twinkle fingers.” *Don’t think he can really play.*

“Milton, my dear, it’s more than that. Have you even learned any chords yet?” *Darn, she called my bluff.*

“I’m a cord-free kinda guy, babe; I don’t like to be tethered.” *Oh dear ... Think he’s had one swig too many. Don’t think he’ll be able to get his rod up. Should be safe. Anyway, my period is coming up. I’m sure that I’m infertile right now. I can relax.*

“An untetherable lad, are you? We may only make for a one-night shipwreck, twinkle fingers.”

Milton chuckles. “Speaking of shipwrecks, Janelle, did you know that two schooners collided right off this coast exactly forty-eight years ago [1907] on this very date? [July 21st] It was a foggy night, just like right now, when a passenger steamer, the *Columbia*, rammed the cargo ship *San Pedro*. The collision was much worse for the *Columbia*, though; it sank, and eighty-eight souls were lost, despite a gallant rescue effort by the crew of the *San Pedro* to save everyone in the chilly water.” *Certainly don’t want to get anywhere near that frigid seawater.*

“That’s a most horrible way to die,” Janelle declares.

“No doubt. Drowning via hypothermia. Awful.”

“Is it cold outside?” the slender, attractive, long-relaxed-ebony-haired African American woman then asks after a three-second pause. *Sure looks like it.*

“It’s not too bad – just a wee brisk. I would put my chip down on 59; yep, I bet it’s 59 degrees, [Fahrenheit; 15° Celsius] sexy goddess of the night. Sweater weather.” *Sexy goddess of the night? Yep, he’s thinking of having sex with me tonight. But on a cold-ass beach? No freakin’ way! Where is that cottage he was talking about? Wish we could just go there now.*

“Hey mister, 36 is the highest number on a roulette wheel,” Janelle rectifies. *How does she know this?*

“Did you once work in a casino?” Milton enquires while setting the parking brake.

“Nope. Never. My one and only occupation has been off-night singer at the MoMo Club.” [a popular interracial jazz joint in the capitol district of Sacramento in the post-World War II years; razed for redevelopment circa 1956]

“Just checking, my lovely. So tell me, Janelle, where did you grow up?” Milton is quite eager to hear her answer.

“Jackson – Jackson, Mississippi. Not the best place for an aspirational, agnostic black family. Most of the whites hated us, and our fellow blacks shunned us because we never showed up at the local Baptist church on Sundays. When my dad’s half-brother said that there was a pipefitter apprentice opening in Chicago, we were gone. And when that job fizzled-out in the Great Depression, a cousin told my dad about a public works job in Sacramento. Thus, we moved again. No regrets so far. Chicago’s winters were so darn cold; I don’t miss them. At all. And, what about you, Milton? Are you a Sacramento blue blood? A Comstock ‘loder’ with bars of bullion in a basement safe?” *Huh? What in the world?*

“No, not a blue blood; not Sacramento royalty by any stretch, love. No solid-silver spoons in my mouth growing up. And, no, no one in our family ever found a gold nugget. Dad just worked hard at *The Sacramento Bee*. First to arrive; last to leave, every single day. Never called in sick. Not once. So, how does your story go in your teenage years, Janelle? Who was the first crush?” *He sure wants to know all about me. He likes me. He wants me. But, could we really be a couple? Sacramento is not like the Deep South, but ... people would look ... and talk ... just don’t know how it would work. Dad and mom might be ok with it. But, would his parents and siblings? Doubt it. Well, maybe just see how things unfold. Maybe it could work out after all. Or, maybe just a fantasy. Such a gamble, though. But, one only lives once.*

Janelle then opens the passenger door and jumps out of the car. “I’ll tell you my whole adult story if you can catch me, loverboy.” *Loverboy? Yep, tonight’s the night!*

Milton then leaps out of the car, stumbles, steadies himself, and gives chase. *Well, she’s got a decent head start. Hope she doesn’t fall and get hurt. Hope I don’t fall and get hurt.*

Janelle immediately finds the footpath. Her agile, athletic body dashes beachward. She beats Milton by 22 feet (6.7 meters). *She’s fast. Wonder if she ran track in high school.*

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