

**another pSecret pSociety pshort pstory**



**De Panne** by Mike Bozart (Agent 33) | September 2019

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by Mike Bozart

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Seppe, a yellowish-blonde-haired, 42-year-old anthropologist from Bruges, continued walking northeastward on the elevated, spiderweb-cracked, paved, rapidly-becoming-deserted strandway on the senna-sand beach of De Panne (West Flanders, Belgium). It was a quiet-yet-forlorn Sunday dusk. Tomorrow would mark eight years since the tragedy – a psychologically torturous 2,922 days since his four-year-old son, Tuur, drowned. In that haunted stretch of time, he suffered one foreclosure, two divorces, three non-renewals, and four abandoned longtime friendships.

He looked to his left at the white-capping-in-random-splotches North Sea. The breeze out of the west-northwest was a brisk 18 MPH (29 km/h). Seppe mused. *This patch of the North Atlantic [Ocean] is forever cursed for me. Was it also cursed for a Neanderthal? Or twenty-two? Why 22? Why did I just think of that number? And, why here in De Panne? De Panne – the breakdown. Certainly was for my psyche. ‘Are you out there, Tuur? I came back, hoping to find a clue – a clue to you, precious son.’ This inescapably tragic hominid-life. ‘I’m so sorry, son, for being unobservant for those ten seconds. Was it a rogue wave? A sudden undertow? I’ve replayed the sequence a million times. The ending is always the same: a void – a void surrounded by dense despair – suffocating despair. I failed you as a father, son. Truly failed.’ Guess I thought such misfortunes would always happen to someone else – some other hapless parent. There was certainly nothing special about me or Ève. [Seppe’s first wife (from Wallonia) and the mother of Tuur] Nothing at all. Just a couple of Homo sapiens – two of the billions – fumbling and foibling [sic] about on this planet Earth. Temporarily. And then forgotten. Eventually. Or, so it would seem. In this heartbreaking-for-our-species cosmic mystery. Why? Why us? That one always goes unanswered. And probably always will. Just like the wonderings of that young Native American woman in ‘Gold, a summer story’. How did Mats [a former friend] ever stumble upon that lurid e-novel? Maybe ultimately a foolish question. Maybe we just don’t know how slow-witted we are.*

A seagull swooped down for a peck at a dead crab beside Seppe. His musing continued unabated. *Was so unusually hot on that fateful day. Even hotter than today. [The high was 27° Celsius; 81° Fahrenheit on August 19, 2018.] Think it hit 31° [Celsius; 88° Fahrenheit] on that Sunday afternoon in 2010. ‘Was that why you ventured into the chilly water,*

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