

**another pSecret pSociety pshort pstory**



**Gallivanting in Galax** by Mike Bozart (Agent 33) | JANUARY 2017

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by Mike Bozart  
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The Main Street shadows were growing longer by the millisecond. A chilly dusk was starting to settle on the idyllic Blue Ridge town of Galax (VA, USA). It was Christmas Eve, and it was very quiet as far as the ear could see from the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, south-facing Rodeway Inn balcony. *I wonder if there's any magic tonight in this little mountain town. Did I have that same thought back in 2012? [We stayed in Galax in October 2012 and a shorty story, 'Galax\_ Galaxy', was the result.]*

I then looked down and noticed that there were only two other vehicles in the parking lot. *Who stays in a hotel on Christmas Eve? People like us – that's who! [We had our family Christmas the previous Saturday.]* I had an internal chuckle that went external.

“What are you laughing about now, Agent 33?” Monique, my Filipina wife, asked as she came over to the metal railing. *Agent 33? Hmmm ... I wonder if Monique is using her new digital audio recorder.*

“Oh, just reveling in the invisible yet detectable, small-town holiday cheer, Agent 32.” *Ok, he knows that I'm recording.*

“You've been reveling in that jug of [Cabernet Sauvignon] wine for the past half-hour, Parkaar. [my ailing alias] I'm bored. Is there anywhere that we could go? Is there any place open?”

“Well, it is Christmas Eve, you know. It's going to be slim pickings, 32.” *Slim pickings? Must be some Americanism.*

Monique then did a Yelp search on her smartphone with the keywords: *best restaurants, Galax, VA*. She studied the first result. *Ah, this looks perfect!* “Hey bana, [husband in Cebuano] they have a craft brewery here that has good pizza. It got four and a half stars out of five. It's called Creek Bottom Brewing. It's on Meadow Street. Are you up for it?”

“Sure, sweetie. But, are they open? Do you have a phone number? I'll call them for you.”

Monique recited the phone number to me, and I called them on my not-that-smart phone. The guy who answered said that they were indeed open, but would be closing early. I told him to hold the door lock, as we were on the way.

“Agent 32, how far is that joint from here?”

“Let me check Google Maps, Parkaar. One minute.”

“No rush. Do you have the distance yet?” I then laughed.

“Just like your dad.” She chuckled as she looked at the route on her screen. “It’s only .7 miles [1.13 km] from here. Want to walk it, Agent 33?”

“Sure, Agent 32. That will increase the short-story potential.”

“And, it will be more adventurous. Life should be an adventure!”

“No argument here. Let’s go now, before they close.”

Soon we were walking south on the east side of North Main Street. After crossing Washington Street, we came upon a tall evergreen tree, perhaps a spruce or fir, decorated with large, solid-color ornaments. Monique demanded a video. My on-location report (now on Facebook) with hands under a couple of six-inch orbs: “Is it on? [Monique: “Yeah.”] It’s Christmas Eve, and we’re in Galax, Virginia, just by chance. And, look at this tree. This tree has got some big balls. Over here. Hey, you’ve ever heard of the dream of the blue balls?”

Bathroom humor, I know. I can do better. My apologies.

Next, we passed a most likely closed (but maybe open?) Macado’s, a sub shop. We kept walking, as Monique is not a sandwich fan. *Maybe next time for me.*

We then crossed Center Street. We walked past a series of closed boutiques and offices. *Next Generation. People put us duh-duh-down. [sic] Just because we get around. Things they do look awful cuh-cuh-cold. [sic] I hope I die before I get old. Well, too late for me. I’m ancient his-his-history. [sic] Talkin’ ‘bout the next gen-uh-uh-ration. [sic] Next generation, baby. / Wonder what nonsense he is thinking right now.*

We then passed The Galax Smokehouse and arrived at an intersection: Grayson Street. We turned left and soon passed the Visitor’s Center, which unfortunately, too, was closed. *I bet they have some nice brochures.*

Next, we crossed a little side street: Rex Lane. The nearly dark streets were completely deserted now. We continued our downward trek towards Chestnut Creek. I noticed the old Rex Theater on the right. *Wonder if ‘Casablanca’ played there. Maybe it’s not quite that old. But, that building sure has character. Hope the wrecking ball doesn’t get it.*

Then we came upon a sheet-metal-clad building that came up flush with the sidewalk. The most striking feature: a couple of exterior doors that opened about three feet (one meter) above the sidewalk. There were no steps. *Wow! That is one Paul Bunyan step up – or down. I don't think that would pass ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act).* I had a low-volume chuckle.

Monique noticed me studying the doors. “Where are the stairs, Parkaar?”

“They must have reeled them in for the holiday weekend.” *He's just spouting inanities for the recorder.*

“Why did I have to ask?” Monique asked with exasperation.

“I don't know right now, lovely Agent 32, but maybe it will come to me.” *Whatever!*

Monique just sighed. *Hope he doesn't drink too much at the microbrewery.*

We then crossed Depot Avenue and passed by the USPS (United States Post Office) building. A desolate Railroad Avenue followed. And then, we were walking under the Vaughan Bassett (a furniture plant) over-street connector. It was quite wide. *Wonder if they can run forklifts through it. Is there a conveyor belt in there? Wonder how the safety guy – or gal – manages.*

We stopped in the middle of the bridge over Chestnut Creek, a shallow brook, and looked downstream. *A New River volume feeder. Fries Junction. Yeah, that's the confluence.*

“Well, not much farther, Monique. The brewpub is probably right over there.” I pointed north with my right index finger. “Probably just .2 miles [322 meters] to go.”

“I bet that water is really cold. Do you think it is 33 degrees, [Fahrenheit; 0.56° Celsius] 33?”

“Not that cold, 32. It's probably in the 40s. [Fahrenheit; 4.44° to 9.99° Celsius] But, still way too cold to wade.” *To wade?!*

“Yellow card to Parkaar. One more ridiculous comment and I turn the recorder off.” *Oh, no!*

“That's not much leeway, dearest ref.”

Monique didn't respond. Soon we were making a rounded inside-corner left onto North Meadow Street. The galvanized steel guardrail on our immediate left ended, and then the sidewalk did, too. *Glad that Monique didn't wear high heels. She would be hating it right now.*

We marched on the grass next to the road, passing various industrial businesses. Then we passed a lone residence and arrived at East View Street. We safely crossed Meadow Street, waving a car by. And then as we crossed View Street, I looked back southwestward across the creek. *If there were a pedestrian bridge – or even a low-water weir – connecting Webster and View, it would cut the distance nearly in half, I bet. Would also be a good bike link. / Lord knows what he's thinking of now. Won't even ask.*

We immediately saw the brown wooden sign in front of the PRONETS Building:

### **Creek Bottom Brews – Craft Beer Store & Tasting Room**

We noticed several cars in the gravel parking lot and made our way to the front door of their building, which was an annex of the PRONETS Building. I pulled on the door handle. It opened. *Yee-hee! They're not closed. I'm so hungry for some pizza / Yey! We made it in time. Can't wait to taste their beer.*

We walked in and stopped near the register. A middle-aged Caucasian couple, who were seated near the door, had just finished eating, and were getting up to leave. They chatted with the staff as they made their exit. *Must be locals. They seem to know each other.*

We were quickly seated in the back area by a late-20-something, brown-haired, bearded, white dude. *Prerequisite no. 1 for being a male craft brewer: Full beard.*

"Thanks for staying open for us," I said to him.

"Ah, that was you," he said. "No problem, man. You guys got in under the wire." He then headed back to the kitchen.

I then studied the walls, which were lined with tall shelves of assorted craft beers, while waiting for our waiter. *This was the perfect stop tonight.*

A blonde-haired Caucasian lady of about 25 years soon took our pizza order. When she asked me what I would like to

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