



**LUCKY STRIKES** by Mike Bozart (Agent 33) | AUG 2014

After eating a scrumptious soup-and-bread lunch – and strategically placing some *GOLD, a summer story* (my e-novel) quadra-fold excerpts – at the Panera Bread on US 52 in Salisbury (NC, USA), we, Monique (Agent 32) and I (Agent 33), went to visit my dad at the VA Hospital.

He was doing much better. The above-the-knee amputation had been called off. He was in a very jovial way, telling one joke after another.

“Dad, do you think you got lucky this time?” I asked.

“No, son, lucky got me.”

We all laughed. After about two hours of lighthearted, in-room conversation, we noticed him getting tired. Monique and I then left so that he could take a nap.

Soon we were back on I-85, headed southwest, listening to Roxy Music’s *Siren* album. *Were you ever lonely? Mystified and blue? Realizing only – your number’s up. You’re through!*

“Well, Monique, the whole day is open. We’ve got knowhere [sic] with a muted k to go, and all day to get there. Anywhere that you would like to stop on the way back to Charlotte?”

“Let’s check Concord Mills for Liverpool jerseys.”

“Ok, sure, Agent 32. Let’s get our Anfield on.” *He must already have that darn audio recorder on.*

We were soon taking Exit 49 to a very congested mall. Parking was an irksome misadventure. *The most-visited site*

*in North Carolina: a shopping mall. Go figure. Well, I guess we're now adding to the tally.*

We entered the mall and walked the large oval concourse and found one store selling LFC (Liverpool Football Club) gear. The name of the outlet was Flag-something. However, they didn't have our sizes, and the prices were on the steep slope. *I can beat these prices online all day long.*

We then moved along and settled for a pair of caramel fraps at the obligatory Starbucks.

"Is this mall always this busy, Agent 33?"

"Oh, it gets even worse in the fall, Agent 32. It's really bad in December in the run-up to Christmas."

"Oh, let's not come then."

"Don't worry; we won't."

We both chuckled and slurped down the gooey dregs of our frappuccinos. Then we promptly exited the mall.

Once back in the gray Kia Rio hatchback, we slowly made our way down to US 29. At the stoplight, Monique looked in awe at the large speedway looming just ahead.

"Is there a race this weekend, Parkaar? [my ailing alias] Are the racecars in there?"

"No, Monique, not this weekend. The next race is in mid-October. Probably no racecars in there now. I think the dragway has something going on next month, though."

The light turned green and I turned right. About a mile later we could see the Charlotte skyline from a hill near the Mecklenburg-Cabarrus County line.

“Hey, 33, let’s go to downtown Charlotte!”

“Ok, sure.”

“Yey! You know, just walking around and hanging out in Romare Bearden Park.”

“Sounds good to me. Let’s do it.”

“I love hanging out there, 33. I love the downtown scene.”

“You mean uptown?”

“Oh, is it uptown?”

“Just joking, 32. Either is correct. But, you know what: I forgot something.”

“What?”

“A typewriter.” *What in the world? Is he already granulated?*

“A typewriter? Why do we need a typewriter, Agent 33?”

“Because one is not truly hip in the CLT until one brings their typewriter to Romare Bearden Park.” *And types collages.*

“Oh, Parkaar, that would be such a funny pic. Just do it next time when you have your über-hipster sunglasses – the ones with the dangling yellow moustache.”

“Ok, I’ll wait for a nice fall day. Hey, you want to stop at Ross in University Place first? Sometimes they have Premier League T-shirts. I’ve seen United, Arsenal and Chelsea shirts in other Ross stores.”

“Sure, Agent 33! You know that Ross is my favorite store.”

“I do know that, lovely Agent 32.”

We laughed. Monique was excited about another visit to Ross. Unfortunately, we struck out at this store on this mission.

We continued going south on North Tryon Street. Once in the uptown area, I found a free parking spot on College Street near 8<sup>th</sup> Street. This free parking zone was once a little-known secret, but now that word had spread about it, vacant spaces could be hard to come by.

“Well, we’re here, 32.”

“How long can we park here, 33? I don’t want our vehicle to get towed again.” *No, not again. Only eight minutes past ten and they had already hooked the old van. Yeah, that would suck a groty [grotesque in California Valley Girl slang] goat egg. Wait, goats don’t lay eggs. What was I thinking?*

“Monique, we’re good here until ten o’clock. We’ll be back way before then, I’m sure.” *Must stay cognizant of the time. Can’t afford another \$140 towing episode. / Better remind him.*

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