

another pSecret pSociety pshort pstory



Mad River Madman by Mike Bozart (Agent 33) | June 2017

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by Mike Bozart

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Bill Monziweuk, a balding, 47-year-old, Caucasian, divorced, childless Gulf War veteran who took part in Operation Desert Storm (January – February 1991), had an old 5th-wheel camper on Airstream Avenue near the spare playground in Town & Country Mobile Villa, a neater-than-most mobile home and RV park in the Korplex area of Arcata (CA, USA). He would often watch the children playing while downing his after-dinner Pabst Blue Ribbon beer and think, sometimes aloud. *Hope none of these kids has to experience what I did in Kuwait and Iraq. My God, that has to be the most forlorn slide in America. Is it even safe? What is safe? Where is safe? Hope that little girl doesn't fall off that merry-go-round. World keeps spinning. Keep your hands on the railing, young lady. And, keep your head down. And, keep your fear to yourself. And, keep yourself free from the keep. Doug. Yes, it was Doug who said that 'keep' can mean jail. Where is Doug now? In some small-town Texas keep? Maybe try to track him down later.*

It was a drizzly March (2014) Monday morning. Bill was getting ready to head out the door to his electrical company's work van when his cell phone buzzed in his jacket pocket.

"Hello boss, where do you need me to start today?"

"Bill, I've got some bad news. We're going to have to lay you off, effective immediately. We have lost too many lucrative accounts. We just don't have the money right now. We're laying off Larry, too." *Wonderful. Let go with lazy Larry.*

"Wow! Right in the gut with a quarter twist. Mince no words, Marty. Though, thanks for not sugar-coating it."

"Listen, I'm sorry, Bill. I hate being the bearer of bad news. Your work performance has been exceptional. We may be able to hire you back in a couple of months when our cash flow improves." *And, until then ... exactly what? Just tell the park manager to chill out, and that I'll have the lot rent in two or three months? That should go over really well. Not!*

"What about the van?" *Hope Bill doesn't flip out and take it on a joyride to Crescent City [75 miles (121 km) north] to see that tramp again.*

“You can drop it off today or tomorrow. No rush. Someone will be here to drive you back home.” *No thanks, ex-boss. I’ll just take the bus.*

“Ok, Marty. Will do.” Bill then terminated the call. *Some days it doesn’t pay to wake up. Yeah, some mornings you envy the deceased.*

On April 10th, while returning from a morning walk, Bill saw a white envelope taped to his front door. It was from the park office. The form letter was giving him official notice that if he didn’t have the full rent payment by April 15th, he would be evicted. *Oh, crap! What to do now? Can’t hit up the bank of mom and pop anymore. [They died in 2013 and 2012, respectively.] Should I hit up Steve [his five-years-younger brother in Flagstaff, Arizona] for a loan? Or, maybe Sylvia? [his three-years-older sister in New York City] No. This is my problem to deal with. Just figure something out.*

Bill glanced out the main window. A small Hispanic boy in the playground was trying to carry two red kickballs, but kept dropping them, as his arms just weren’t long enough yet to cradle both. Then the boy left one ball on the ground and ran off gleefully with the other one. *That’s it! I’ll sell the old pickup truck and keep the camper right here. [Kelley] Blue Book value is \$3,400 for a private-party sale. Price it much lower. Maybe \$2,500. Yeah, that’s it; that should move it fast. A quick cash-only sale. Yes! That’s the ticket. Anyway, the grocery store and fast-food restaurants are only a short walk away. Plus, both orange and gold [route] bus stops are right there on Giuntoli. [Lane] Yeah, let’s list that truck online right now.*

Three anxious, nearly sleepless, gray days later, Bill got lucky: His burgundy, high mileage, 2001 Dodge Ram pickup was bought by a middle-aged Caucasian man from Blue Lake (5.6 miles – 9 km – east) for the asking price. After being dropped off by the new owner on Boyd Road, he walked to the park office and paid his outstanding balance. Bill breathed a sigh of relief as he ambled down Oasis Street towards his camper. *Mission accomplished. Wonder when Marty will call? Sure hope he calls by May 1st.*

April turned into May with no word from Marty. Bill then began calling around for work. However, there was no

electrician work to be had, except for a small company in Fortuna (28 miles – 45 km – south). But, he thought it was just too far away, and ruled it out.

And then, with hours of free time on his hands, Bill started drinking. Heavier. And heavier. By June 1st he was up to a 12-pack a day. And by July 1st, he was up another 25%. Yet, his savings were down 75%. Time was running down. But, his stress was running up. Way up.

On Friday evening, July 4th, a nine-year-old boy lit off a firecracker in the playground. It triggered a PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) episode, Bill's first since 1997. Bill immediately had a vision of a charred, still smoldering, blown-off left arm – his army buddy's – on the kitchen floor. He ran outside, somewhat drunk, and began yelling: "Get down! Incoming! Everyone, get down now! And, stay down."

The kids stopped and looked at him, all mouths agape. Time froze. A passing vireo almost forgot to flap her wings.

Then, about ten seconds later, he realized that he had suffered another PTSD event. He turned around, lowered his head, and slowly stumbled back inside his camper. *It's over. I'm cracking up. I'm almost broke. What to do now? Ah, yes, I know. It's mini-storage time.*

The next Monday he walked to the park office. He told the sandy-blond-haired, 40-ish, slightly overweight Caucasian lady the truth: He was just about out of money. Bill also told her that he was willing to sell his camper for only \$3,500, just 70% of its current value. She agreed to give him one month to sell it.

Bill put a *For Sale* sign on his camper and advertised it on a local buy-sell-trade website. In the last week of July, a prospective buyer showed up and offered him \$3,200. Bill accepted the bid, provided that the 50-something, thin-mustached Honduran drive him and his belongings to Mad River Storage Center in Glendale (3.7 miles – 6 km – east). The man then replied: "Deal, señor." [mister in Spanish] And, off they went in the man's shiny, blue, 2012 Ford F-250 pickup, camper in tow. *So much for this place. It's been mostly nice.*

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