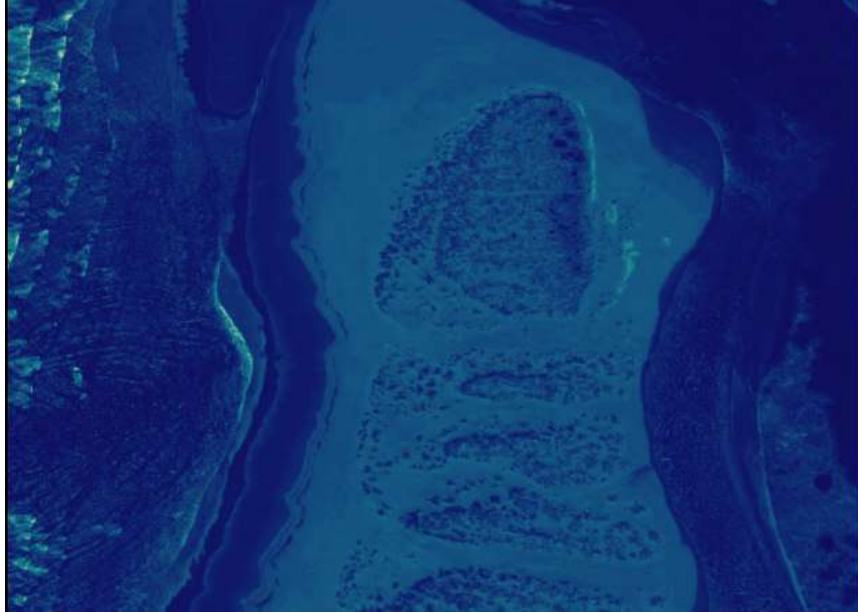


another pSecret pSociety pshort pstory



Moonstone Moonchild by Mike Bozart (Agent 33) | Aug. 2017

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by Mike Bozart

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Moonchild, a child of the moon; someone born under the zodiac sign of Cancer (June 21 – July 22). And, in common present-day parlance, a person who is a space case. Manda was both. And, yes, she had heard the 1969 song of the same name by the English progressive rock band King Crimson; in fact, she adopted it as her anthem.

On her 21st birthday, Caucasian American Manda found herself once again meandering about Moonstone Beach (CA, USA) in a beige, linen, full-length peasant dress. It was a foggy July 16th Sunday morning (2017). She was searching for those surf-rounded, alkali feldspar, pearly white, slightly translucent stones. With her head bent down, her thoughts flowed out. *'Playing hide and seek with the ghosts of dawn.' I'm the local lass who went nuts. That's what they think. I know they think that I'm crazy. I'm the girl who took too much acid (LSD) at the house party three years ago. 'She's just coo-coo, lost in her imaginary world, aimlessly wandering the beach.' Yeah, just let them think that. Today is a full moon. It's out there, pulling on the ocean. And, pulling me along. Need to play up the insane woman bit to the max. Most guys like an easy score.*

Manda lived in the nearby, mostly affluent, Westhaven community with Bruce, her now-hardly-ever-home, 52-year-old father. Her dad had received their modest, secluded, 1,111-square-foot (103-square-meter), three-bedroom house in some kind of real-estate swap, which Manda was very suspicious about; she wondered if it had something to do with illicit drugs. Her soft-spoken mom, Alice, had passed away from ovarian cancer four years ago. Her two-years-older brother, George, was now living in Sunnyvale (CA), working for a specialized software startup.

Crouched down with her long brown hair drooped over her face, Manda dragged her right hand through the cool wet sand. *If I find the right moonstone, it will be so irresistibly alluring. And, things will align. Just need some lunar luck.*

"Excuse me," a male voice suddenly announced. "Did you lose something?"

Manda looked up at the stocky, rusty-blond-haired, mid-20-something, well-tanned Caucasian gentleman. "Oh, I'm just searching for moonstones."

“Having any luck?” the young man asked. His light gray sweatshirt had a big, red, bold Stanford University S on it.

“Not yet, but the day is young.”

“Care to take a short break and join me for a coffee or hot tea at the Moonstone Café? They are having a special once-in-a-blue-moon early opening today.” *Was I too forward? / Blue moon? Is it one? He'll get the special alright.*

“Ok, sure,” Manda replied. *Yes! I know that I can get in her pants – or up her dress – if I play my cards right. She'll be eating out of my lap. / Stanford. I bet he's from a rich – and über-smart – family. Did he ace the SAT? [Scholastic Aptitude Test] No, he's probably not 'that' smart.*

“Great. It's my treat.” *We shall see about that.*

They walked, side by side, over to the little beachfront restaurant that was only 35 yards (32 meters) away. They were seated at a two-top next to a large picture window.

Manda and the fairly handsome young man gazed at the beach. It was low tide. The nearest sea stacks were not even touched by the Pacific Ocean at the moment.

Then Manda looked across the table at her impromptu admirer. “So, what's your name?” *I bet he was a frat boy in Palo Alto. [CA] / She certainly has a nice rack. Hopefully I'll be feeling it and more before too long.*

“Oliver, but you can call me Ollie,” he stated in a businesslike manner. *A jolly Ollie by golly. I bet he had sex with a cheerleader. Or, wished he did.*

“Oh, my name is Manda.” *So mandacious. [sic]*

“Tell me, Manda, are moonstones worth a lot of money?” Ollie eyed her cleavage.

“They're just classified as semiprecious, and on the lower end of the scale at that. But, I don't sell them.” *Hmmm ...*

“So, what do you do with them?”

“I arrange them,” Manda answered as their coffees arrived.

“Arrange them?” *She's even more whacked-out than I thought – a real space cadet. Wonder who looks out for her. Anyone? Does she have a boyfriend? Doubt it.*

“Yes, I arrange them in a special, secret garden.” *She’s certifiably bonkers. Though, she sure is cute. Sexy body. Need to make myself become her moon god.*

“A moon garden?” Ollie asked.

“Yes, a moon garden,” Manda replied. *I bet she’s all into astrology and the zodiac. Probably into tarot cards and mysticism, too. I’ll just pretend to believe. / I can tell that he thinks I’m just another Northern California frosted flake. That’s fine.*

“Does this moon garden exert any supernatural powers?” *What a ridiculous question.*

“No supernatural powers, Ollie. But, it does lend clues.”

“So, at some time in the future, the clues must be returned, right?” *Huh?*

“What?” Manda had no idea of what he was talking about.

“You said that your moon garden lends clues.”

“Oh, a stickler for meanings, are you? Say, would you like to see my secret, semi-sacred moon garden tonight, Ollie? Maybe glean an insight into your life’s trajectory.” *Semi-sacred? Insight into my life’s trajectory? Oh, this is going to be too easy. Just like taking candy from a baby.*

“Why, sure. Where and when?” *And then, how and why.*

“Meet me here at 11 PM, and I will lead you to it. That’s not too late, is it?” *I do have some spreadsheets to review before Monday morning, but I can’t pass this up. Easy casual sex doesn’t come along that often.*

“No, that’s fine,” Ollie enthusiastically confirmed. “But, this restaurant closes at 10 tonight, Manda.”

“Ok, I’ll be in the beach parking lot at 11 sharp. It’s safe to park there after hours. The police won’t ticket you.” *Good.*

“Ok, whatever you say, mysterious moon lady.” Ollie smiled at her ... a little too long. *He’s quite winsome. But, he’s a wee cocksure. / This young lady is in for it. I’m going to wear her ass out. Can hardly wait.*

The bill for a whopping \$4.48 arrived. Ollie promptly paid it, leaving an overly generous \$10 tip. They then went their

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