

another pSecret pSociety pshort pstory



On The Gold Line by Mike Bozart (Agent 33) | JAN 2016

It was a snowy Sunday morning, the 17th of January 2016, which found Monique (Agent 32) and me (Agent 33) at the CATS (Charlotte Area Transit System) Gold Line's eastern terminus on Hawthorne Lane at East 5th Street. It was 9:12 AM in the inner eastside neighborhood of Elizabeth. We were the only ones waiting under the plexiglass-covered shelter.

"Well, Monique, the green trolley dog should be here in less than three minutes," I announced.

"Green trolley dog!" she exclaimed. "That's so funny, Parkaar." [my ailing alias] She then looked at my hands. "You forgot your gloves, didn't you, 33?"

"I did, but I remembered my digital audio recorder! I'll be ok. Thirty-six Fahrenheit is not that bad. And, anyway, the snow and sleet is forecasted to end by 11 AM."

Just then we spotted old streetcar no. 91 turning onto Hawthorne from Elizabeth Avenue. It slowly closed in on the berth. Once stopped, the front and rear doors opened. We hopped up the front steps and sat in the middle of the electrically powered trolley. *Ah, nice and warm in here.*

The middle-age African American male driver was talking to two older white men – the only passengers who didn't get off – who were sitting in the front bench seats. One was on the far left; the other, far right.

"I can deal with the one or two snow events a winter down here," the trolley operator said from his front and center

position. “No, I don’t miss Buffalo in January at all. No, not at all. You can have that four feet of lake-effect snow.”

Monique wondered aloud: “What is lake-effect snow?”

“I’ll tell you later, asawa.” [wife in Filipino]

The older of the two white guys (on the left side), who had pony-tailed gray hair, just nodded.

The guy in front of us on the right side of the trolley then spoke up. “I don’t miss those winters in Brooklyn, either. Nope.”

“Snow is just a novelty down here,” I interjected, launching myself into their conversation as the vintage streetcar took off in a herky-jerky manner. “My dad was born and raised in Brooklyn. He doesn’t miss it, either.”

“Oh, whereabouts in Brooklyn?” the passenger in front of us, who also had gray hair, but shorter than the other fellow, quickly asked.

“Avenue D – East Flatbush,” I said.

“Oh, yeah, I know that area well,” the man in front of us said as the trolley rounded the curve onto Elizabeth Avenue.

I looked straight ahead through the windshield. “Well, Monique, there’s where we’re headed. It’s now a straight shot to uptown.” The Charlotte skyline was shrouded in low, gray clouds, interspersed with snow squalls.

The man in front of us heard my comment to Monique. He looked back at us. “Are you guys going to the Panthers-Seahawks game by chance?” *Only by a lucky chance.*

“No, we’re just going to RíRá to watch the Liverpool – Man United match, and then we’ll watch the Panthers game in another sports bar,” Monique explained.

We had Liverpool T-shirts on over our sweaters. Monique had an LFC beanie on and a Liverpool FC backpack in her lap (which had Panthers shirts inside for a changeover at 11:00). The man studied these items.

“RíRá?” he asked.

“It’s an Irish bar on North Tryon near 5th Street,” I said. “It’s the official Liverpool FC bar in Charlotte. They show all of their games. It’s a fun crowd.”

“So, you guys like both kinds of football?” He smiled at us.

“Yes, we most certainly do,” Monique said. “We root for the Reds and the Panthers.”

“The Reds? Cincinnati?” He seemed honestly confused.

“No, the Reds are the nickname for Liverpool’s soccer team,” I told him. “Though, I loved the Big Red Machine in the ‘70s.”

“And, LFC stands for Liverpool Football Club,” Monique said as she pointed to the front of her red beanie.

“I see. You learn something new every day. Soccer is really growing in popularity in this country.”

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