

another pSecret pSociety pshort pstory



**Surfinland** by Mike Bozart (Agent 33) | July 2019

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Thirty-one-year-old Alexander looked at the digital clock-radio on the walnut nightstand in his apartment bedroom on a warmer-than-normal October 8<sup>th</sup> (2014) evening in southeast Charlotte. He was anxious and quite pensive. 8:57. *Ok, now it's 8:58. What are the chances of seeing the minute change? I guess if glancing for a whole second, the odds would be 1 in 60 – less than 2%. Can I do the math in my head? My mind is frazzled at the moment. Invert 6/10. Reduces to 5/3. So, it's about 1.67%. But, did I look for precisely one second? Hmmm ... What fraction-of-a-second gaze would result in exactly a 1% chance of seeing the minute numeral(s) advance? [0.6 seconds] Hmmm ... Oh, why do I think such nonsense? Sylvia said that she'd be there – there being 'the Queen City's best dive bar' – at ten on the dot. Which dot? The top one. Got 34 minutes to kill. Why so late on a Wednesday? Doesn't she have to work tomorrow morning? Surf Inn. What kind of name for a bar is that this far inland? That suds-and-spirits joint is 171 miles [275 km] from the Atlantic Ocean! Odd, but maybe the owner is a former surfer. Who owned a seaside motel? And then hit hard times? Whew! Boy, I sure am nervous. Need to throw on some more cologne. Haven't been on a first date in ages. Hard to go on a second date without going on a first one. When was the last time? Ah yes, Erie [PA] back in the spring of 2002. What a crazy chick she was. Wonder if Cindy is dripping hot wax all over some dude's dong right at this very moment. No telling. Maybe she's in Pittsburgh now. Yeah, psycho Cindy said that she wanted to move there. Hope she hasn't died from a candle fire.*

Alexander walked into the living room and switched on the old, 25-inch (63.5 cm), tube-style TV. Until it crapped out, he wasn't going to replace it with a flat-screen model. The world news on Deutsche Welle arrested his channel surfing. *Ah, so I missed the total lunar eclipse late last night. Darn. Well, maybe next time. Two more in 2015.*

He then turned up the TV's volume.

“Eric Betzig, Stefan Hell, and William Moerner have jointly won the Nobel Prize in Chemistry for the development of super-resolved fluorescence microscopy.” *Good on them. Smart guys. Maybe I should have stuck with chemistry. Oh, well.*

Alexander then changed the channel to ESPN. Highlights of yesterday's postseason Major League Baseball games (National League Division Series game four) were airing. *Darn it! Both St. Louis and San Francisco won. C'mon Nationals and Dodgers – you're the 1 and 2 seeds for Chrissake! And, look at that – they both lost by the same, tight, one-run score. [3-2] Man, I can't take another Cardinals or Giants World Series win. Though if I had to choose, the Giants would be easier to live with. Not division rivals. Well, it's about time to get rolling. Should scan the surroundings before entering this strange eastside saloon.*

At 9:54:55 PM, Alexander turned left off of northbound North Sharon Amity Road into an entrance for Eastland Office Commons, which looked more like an older townhome complex. He didn't see any signs on the faded, viridian green, overtly-wooden-panel siding, except for a set of bold, stenciled numerals (3553) on a red-painted, horizontal trim strip. *Where the hell is this place? Does it really exist? Well, it's on Google Maps. If it's just a joke, they sure have a lot of people in on it. No, it must really be in here ... somewhere.*

When he had nearly reached the rear lot in his silver, 2009, driver-side-door-dinged Nissan Sentra, he looked to his left and saw a small, very simple, black, business-directory sign encased in glass (presumably so that no one could steal or rearrange the removable white letters and numbers) mounted on the siding. He quickly parked his car and walked up to the sign box. *Maybe we get lucky here. Sure hope so. Only three minutes 'til 10. Please let this be it. Don't want to be late. So tacky. And so rude.*

The sign's heading was the building's address: 3549 (in much larger numerals). And the last entry on the white-bordered directory: The Surf Club. *The Surf 'Club'? Huh? WTF! Well, that's got to be it. But, why an alternate name? This is wack! What kind of business would allow this to go uncorrected? Weird.*

Alexander walked up seven red steps to arrive on a wooden, deck-style landing. However, none of the businesses on either side had Surf in their name. *Well, it sure aint on this level. Maybe the entrance is above. Certainly hope so.*

He then scurried up the wide-plank steps to the upper landing. Once again he studied the names next to the nothing-fancy doors. *Drats! It's not on this level, either.*

*Guess it's on the other side of the building. Must hurry. Don't want to keep Sylvia waiting. That would be a terrible first impression.*

After sprinting across the front of the 1980s-ish edifice, Alexander opened an unlocked apartment-style door. He then began a dimly-lit descent down a quarter-turn-every-six-to-eight-paces staircase covered with ancient, barf-yellow-green shag carpet with off-white streaks. *Looks like they installed a remnant from The Summer of Spoooge. Is this just a setup? Am I about to get rolled? Can almost feel a whack on the back of my head. This is nuts. Bet I'm greeted by a knife or a revolver at the next corner. Jesus, please, no.*

Alexander safely arrived at a window-less, lauan, storeroom-looking door. It was eerily quiet. Cautiously he turned the old, faux-gold doorknob. It wasn't locked. The door popped open.

Seven people came into view: a glum, gray-haired, 60-something guy at the bar donning a newsboy-style golf cap; a disinterested pair of 50-ish, black and white ladies; a 30-something Latino dude watching an overhead TV; and a trio of flannel-shirted, early-to-mid-40s, beer-bottle-upturning, video-poker-machine-hovering-about Caucasian fellows. And infused throughout this bunker-like, semi-subterranean, lost-in-time hideaway of a watering hole was an aura of 'just leave me alone and let me drink in peace'. *Sheez, what a place! Why did Sylvia pick such a bar? Well, maybe the beer here is cheap. Yeah, bet that's it.*

After scanning the bar a second time and not seeing Sylvia, Alexander walked over and sat on a wobbly stool. *Woah!*

The bartender, who was a sexy, svelte, 40-ish brunette, walked over. "Haven't seen you in here before. I'll get you a membership form. We can't afford to get in trouble with ALE. [Alcohol Law Enforcement] You're not from ALE, are you?"

"No, not at all," Alexander replied as he looked up at a TV screen. A commercial for a pharmaceutical was airing. "Advertising prescription drugs. Only in America does the patient advise the doctor on the cure. You know what I've found to be very amusing?" *Hope this guy doesn't go into a longwinded diatribe. Not in the mood for it.*

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