

another pSecret pSociety pshort pstory



That Day by **Mike Bozart** (Agent 33) | November 2017

That Day

By Mike Bozart

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That day, February 10th, 2016, was very much a winter one. The temperature was a toe-chilling 23° Fahrenheit (-5° Celsius) at 6:36 on that Wednesday morning as I wheeled my single-speed bicycle out the back door of our east Charlotte (NC, USA) basement apartment. On the cracked-and-bulging-due-to-unruly-roots asphalt driveway, I reset the trip odometer, turned on the fast-flashing taillight, switched on the slow-pulsing headlamp, fastened my helmet's chinstrap, and then began my commute to work. A frigid 11 MPH (17.7 km/h) WNW headwind greeted my ski-masked face in the all-quiet-save-for-a-rolling-beer-bottle darkness. *Should I just take the car? No, ride for the calorie burn. This is balmy compared to that 7° Fahrenheit [-13.9° Celsius] morning.*

My 6'-1" (1.85 meters tall), 192-pound (87 kg) frame glided down mostly-still-asleep Kavanaugh Drive. Then my 51-year-old legs pedaled up and over the first knoll in the built-in-the-1960s, mature-treed, lower-to-middle-middle-class Windsor Park neighborhood. The air entering my lungs was hardly pre-warmed; it stung. Several minutes later, after riding and turning on several British-named streets, I was approaching Kilborne Drive on Enfield Road. There wasn't much traffic yet; I crossed without stopping. When I got to busier four-lane Eastway Drive, I had to wait two minutes to cross old Route 4. *Probably shouldn't go this way anymore. Kind of dangerous. And, Mr. Scraggly-Beard-With-Only-A-Few-Teeth-Left [a crazy, bile-spewing, inbred meth-head] lives around here. What a plod [lout] that fock [sic] is. He'd be better off as lawn fertilizer.*

Finally a sufficient-for-nearly-frozen-legs gap appeared. I charged across and swooped down the first dip on Arnold Drive into the up-and-coming-or-already-arrived Merry Oaks neighborhood. Three minutes later I was winding down a curvy descent to Central Avenue. I merged onto the sidewalk at 22 MPH (35.4 km/h) and used the speed to help climb out of the Briar Creek Valley. Atop the rise at Morningside Drive, I waited for the traffic light to change. *Don't feel as cold now. I'll take this over those sauna-like summer 'lows'. [often over 68° Fahrenheit; 20° Celsius] Wonder if that convenience store [Sun Express Food Mart] is open. Doesn't look like it. I'll buy a Powerball ticket later. Yeah, just get it at lunchtime.*

The signal clicked to green. I continued riding on the vacant sidewalk (allowed in Charlotte), as Central Avenue already had a fair amount of not-so-courteous-to-commuter-bicyclists traffic, and the bike lane had vanished. (It had ended .8 miles – 1.29 km – behind where I now was.)

I weaved down the slope, avoiding the offsets in the sidewalk and concreted-over adjacent spaces. Then a brisk climb ensued up Veterans Hill. Once up at The Plaza (actually a street), I looked over at the upscale Harris-Teeter grocery store on the left while the light was red. *Should I get a Powerball ticket right now? Nah, I'll get it somewhere else. Too cold to be fumbling around with that combination lock.*

After cutting through the historic – and now quite expensive – Elizabeth neighborhood on Pecan Avenue, Bay Street and Hawthorne Lane, I turned right onto beware-of-the-inset-trolley-tracks, still mostly quiet, two-lane Elizabeth Avenue. It was now dawn; the 7:15 sunrise was only ten minutes away. I was locking my bike in Student Deck 1 two minutes later at

7:07 AM. I looked at my bike computer. *Wow! It dropped another two degrees. [down to 21° Fahrenheit; -6.1° Celsius] A pretty direct route today – only 5.97 miles. [9.6 km] Rolling time: 28:28. Way off the record of 19:26. Slowed by that gelid breeze. Ah, but look at those repeating digits. Maybe Lady Luck smiles on my freckled mug today. Odometer now at 19,364. Wonder when this \$69 [bought on sale on March 11, 2012] Walmart bicycle [a Kent Thruster 700C] hits the 20K-mile [32,187 km] mark. [It would occur on May 10, 2016 – the day that ‘RiRá Ruckus’ was published online.]*

I walked across East 4th Street to my office. Once logged-in to my work e-mail account, I saw that the boss would be in late. *Hmmm ... A good day to do some writing; a good day to start that sex-robot story. [‘A Novella Idea’] It’s only going up to 38° Fahrenheit [3.3° Celsius] today. It’s a great day to drink four cups of java and tap out some thoughts on the keyboard. How should I start the story? What is the premise? How are the attitudes and relationships? How does it end? Guess something will come to me. Hopefully soon. I better still have some creamer in the drawer. Yes!*

I got the coffee maker going, and lo, high, and behold, I cranked out the first 1,229 words of the 1,500-word short story by noon, even after attending to several safety-related e-mail inquiries, code issues and miscellaneous phone calls. I then took a break and walked across East 3rd Street to the (then) Marathon gasoline station. In their cramped and crowded convenience store, I redeemed my big \$1 scratch-off winner. However, for some unfathomable neural-short-circuit reason, I failed to buy a Powerball ticket.

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