

another pSecret pSociety pshort pstory



The Balcony by Mike Bozart (Agent 33) | DEC 2014 (rev. OCT 2015)

We, Monique (Agent 32) and I (Agent 33), checked into the Golden Sands Motel at Carolina Beach around noon on Thanksgiving Day 2014. We quickly learned that the motel actually consisted of two mid-rise oceanfront buildings.

A bored, oafish, 60-ish, Caucasian innkeeper assigned us to a room on the top floor of the taller north tower.

Soon, we were on the elevator of the nearly vacant hotel building. Monique depressed the 7 button and up we went in the glass enclosure, watching the parking lot grow smaller.

When the elevator doors opened, I was staring at our room: 718. *Jeez, this is right where the elevator dumps out. Hope it doesn't get too loud tonight with holiday drunks.*

I double-checked the numerals on the door and turned to Monique. "Well, this it, hon."

"I'll open the door, honey," Agent 32 offered. "You have all that luggage in your hands."

"Salamat, mahal. ['Thank you, love' in Tagalog] You're a big help. Cute, too."

Monique smiled and quickly swiped the key card, got a green light, and opened the door. It was a nice room with a mini-fridge, microwave, coffee maker and hair dryer. The king-size bed was clean and quite comfortable, as I promptly flopped down on it. I was quite tired from the 210-mile, four-plus-hour trek from Charlotte.

Monique wasn't ready for naptime just yet. "Don't fall asleep, my dearest kano. [kano is Filipino slang for American] You've got to check out this incredible view!"

I quickly got up from the bed and followed Monique through the sliding glass doorway, making sure to step over the door's lower trackway. It was a narrow balcony. The view, though, was ultra-expansive.

"Yeah, you're right, Monique; this is a million-dollar view. From far left to far right, nothing but Océano Atlántico. [Atlantic Ocean in Spanish] It's mega-maritime!" *Why is he talking in Spanish? Does he already have that audio recorder on?*

"Good pick, 33."

"Look, Agent 32, if you squint your eyes just right and stare straight out, you can see Rick's Café Américain in Casablanca."

"Casablanca? The place in that famous movie?"

"Yes, that place: Casablanca, Morocco." *He's just testing me.*

"Parkaar, [my ailing alias] we can't see that far, even if it is a crystal-clear day."

"Just a geography pop quiz, asawa." [wife in Tagalog and Cebuano] You passed."

We both had a laugh. Some seagulls cawed as they flew by. Maybe they thought it was funny, too.

“Hey, my geography isn’t that bad, map freak,” Monique blurted out.

I chuckled. “All kidding aside, we are on about the same latitude as Casablanca.”

“Really?”

“Yep, yep, yep, as Mr. Malloy [a character featured in the *Mysterieau of San Francisco* novella] would say. We are about 34 degrees north of the equator, give or take a few minutes to think about it.” *Give or take a few minutes to think about it? He’s definitely recording.*

We then got quiet and just stared out over the immense expanse of saltwater. A lone cloud cast a dark splotch on the languidly rolling blue-green surface. The sea was generally calm, but a few whitecaps could be seen about a mile out. *What a picture-perfect nautical scene.*

I then grabbed the top, white, plastic-covered, metal balcony railing and gave it a little shake. Thankfully, it was snug. No loose bolts or screws.

“What in the world are you doing, 33?!” Monique exclaimed.

“Just making sure it is secure. You can never trust these railings. People die from balcony falls every year.”

“You’re always Mr. Safety, aren’t you?” *Safe Tea?*

“Well, I’ve just read and seen the horror stories over the years, Agent 32.”

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