

**another pSecret pSociety pshort pstory**



**The Boxcars Line** by **Mike Bozart** (Agent 33) | DEC 2018

## **The Boxcars Line**

by Mike Bozart  
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“So tell me, what have you been doing during your retirement?” his old pal, who was seated across from him at a booth in an east Charlotte (NC, USA) diner, casually asked as he sipped an iced tea.

“An ongoing art project in that weird, unfinished, gray-walled, 8' x 7' [2.44 x 2.13 meters] basement room,” Dennis replied as he ran his right-hand fingers through his thinning, now completely white, collar-length hair. “Remember that little oddball room?”

“I do. Please don't tell me that it's now a meth lab.” Paul, an Italian American, began to chuckle.

“Very funny, Paul. No, nothing illicitly dangerous like that, my friend. I'm in no rush to get blasted to Mars.”

“I thought that it was going to be a darts room.” Paul now had a serious expression.

“It was, but it's not quite deep enough. You need a bare-minimum straight-line dimension of ten feet [3.05 meters] for darts. The regulation oche [throw] line is seven feet, nine and a quarter inches [2.37 meters] from the face of the dartboard.” *Oche? He did research this.*

“Did you just measure it the other day? How do you remember such an odd distance, Dennis?”

“Because it is an odd distance, Paul. You know me and numbers; I remember them better than people.” *That is true.*

“Ok, so what is this ongoing art project in the little basement room? One hundred bottles of craft beer on the wall?” *He’s always thinking about beer. Bet he orders one very soon.*

“You’re a real comedian today, Paul. Did you pop a blue pill and pump Gola last night? Is that why you’re so giddy?” *How’d he know?*

“No comment.” Paul grinned.

“Well, it involves four common items,” Dennis divulged. “Care to take a guess?”

“Are two of them, diesel fuel and ammonium nitrate?” Paul enquired, and then began to laugh.

“Oh, that’s *really* funny in this day and age, Paul. No, I’m not making aesthetically pleasing pipe bombs.”

Paul playfully sighed. “That’s a relief. I didn’t want to have to turn you in to the FBI. [Federal Bureau of Investigation] But, it would have been hard to pass on a \$500 reward. A guy can always use five bills.”

“Is the comedy hour over now, John Belushi?” Dennis was no longer amused with the zingers.

“Ok, ok, elucidate your subterranean masterpiece to me. I’m all hairy ears.” *Indeed he is.*

“The four items are a broad-tip magic marker, a yardstick, a large protractor, and a pair of dice.” *A pair of dice? Is he gambling again?*

“You’ve lost your mind,” Paul remarked in deadpan fashion.

“Maybe so. But, who cares at this point? I’m a sixty-seven-year-old widower with nothing to do and all day to do it. I had to come up with something, Paul. Just wait until you retire next year. You better have a hobby – besides drinking.”

Sixty-four-year-old, tan-faced Paul grabbed his jaw with his left hand. “You know, Dennis, I do worry about becoming a full-blown alcoholic. But, back to your art project.”

“The Boxcars Line started two years ago [2016] on this very date.” [December 3<sup>rd</sup>] *What did he just say?*

“A line of boxcars? Is it a Z-scale train layout, Dennis?” *But, why the dice and magic marker?*

“No, Paul, it’s a black line on that unusual room’s ashen walls. On average it grows an inch every day. Thus, this being the biennial date with no intervening leap days; it is now 730 inches [18.54 meters] long. That’s sixty feet and ten inches.” *What in the world?! His deck has definitely lost another card.*

“Dennis, how do you fit a sixty-foot-plus-long line in an eight-foot-long room?”

“It’s not a straight line, Paul.”

“Where did this line start?” Paul asked, now quite curious.

“In the inside corner to the right of the door-less opening at a height of four feet, [1.22 meters] halfway between the floor and ceiling.” *Pure madness. Poor Dennis.*

“Ok, how does the line grow? Do you water it?” *Smart-ass.*

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