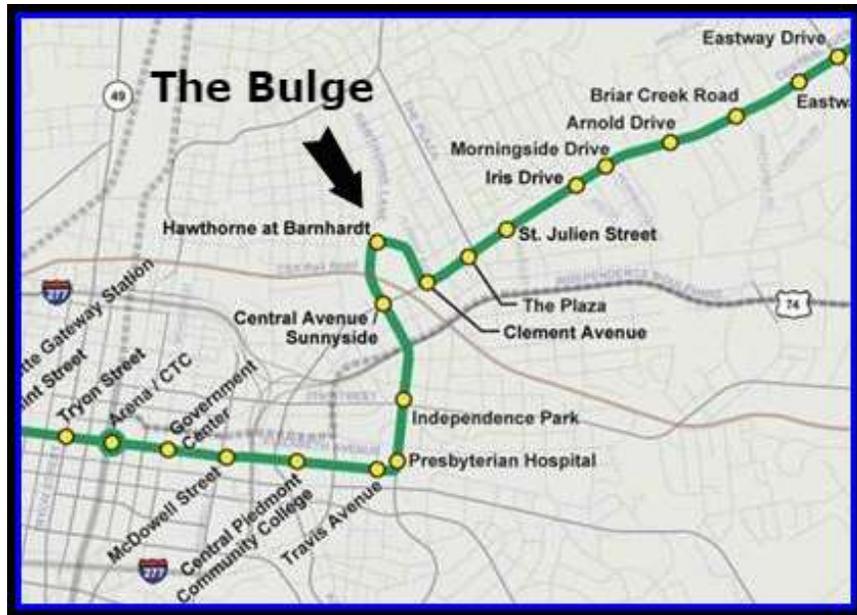


another pSecret pSociety pshort pstory



The Bulge by Mike Bozart (Agent 33) | OCT 2014

While on a Wednesday-in-mid-October lunchbreak, an old yet still quite inventive 40-something, dark-haired, Caucasian, actor-friend that we code-named Al Niño (Agent A-O) - who now lives the posh life in Manhattan - dropped by my spartan Charlotte office without a whiff of a warning. Though, he did reek of the green leaf.

“Mike, Mike, Mike. Mr. Mike van Tryke. Old Agent 33. And what nefariousness would you be up to now?”

“Oh, boy. Well, look who is here. If it isn’t the amazing one himself. It’s great to see you, Al. It has been a wily while.” *A wily while? He’s still cooked.*

“It has. It sore-really has, my friend. You still look like ... well ... you. And not a day over 55.” *Once a joker ...*

“You’re still quite a funny guy, Al. You shouldn’t have given up on that comedy angle.”

“I have a cute, acute angle of attack now, my friend.” *Prepare for PUNishment.*

“Piling on the punnage [sic] already?”

“Ah, you caught it, 33.”

“Why, of course I caught it. I always have my flutterfly [sic] net open for way astrays.” *What the hell did he just say?*

“Way astrays ... straying wayward, by chance?”

“Sure, why not, Al?”

“Ah-hem. Hey, why don’t you ever make good on your autumnal threats to visit me, 33?”

“Ebola, man. I’m not getting on a plane until it settles down.”

“You’ve been freaked-out by the mass media, mate. The threat is way overblown for people in the US.”

“Maybe so, Al. Maybe slow.”

“See, this is why I don’t watch American news anymore. It’s all shock and sensationalism for ratings.” *Here comes his anti-American-media tirade again.*

“Yeah, yeah, yeah; whatever, Al. I’ve heard that rant before. Please spare me the harangue.”

Al then looked at the back of my monitor. He raised his eyebrows and gave a snarky smirk. “So, what do you have up on your screen today, 33? Some kinky Asian porn?” (It was just a diagram of a streetcar track alignment.)

“Yeah, right. Fock you, Al.”

We both chuckled and nearly got engulfed in a guffaw as he walked around my desk, stopping behind my creaking swivel chair to see what was on my computer screen (which was the image on the title page, minus the black arrow and the text).

Al then cleared his throat. “Is that the light rail extension that I keep hearing about? Making the single line longer and straighter?” He chortled.

“No, no, no. Wrong again, amazer. It’s actually the middle section of the streetcar route, the new Gold Line.”

“I don’t know, Mike; I’m not finding this image to be very arousing. Maybe I’m missing something. What’s the attraction? Are you on pills? Got any extras? Sniffing rubber cement again. Ok, where did you hide it? Is it in this drawer? Why is this locked?” *What the hell is he on? Gosh, he’s all hyped-up today.*

“Alright, alright, alright. Please stop. If you can be still and quiet for 100 seconds, I’ll explain.”

“For 1.67 minutes?”

“Good math, Al.”

“As you were saying, 33 ...”

“Ok, just don’t interrupt me. This is slightly complicated. Just slightly. Can you just hear me out without interjecting nonsense and ransacking my office?”

“Ok, I promise to keep my tongue tied in a wet slipknot and my limbs in invisible shackles.”

“Excellent. Let’s hop on subject and stay aboard. Here we go.”

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