

**another pSecret pSociety pshort pstory**



**The Fraudster** by Mike Bozart (Agent 33) | October 2018

## **The Fraudster**

by Mike Bozart

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“If you want to get rich, you start a religion,” Ross Stovepson repeated for the fifth time as he laid the book about L. Ron Hubbard down on the mug-circle-stained coffee table. It was Thursday, August 16, 2012 – unemployment day number fourteen. The thirty-one-year-old, slim, short-black-haired Caucasian American had been fired two Fridays ago from his job at a branch bank in Buford, Georgia. The reason: continually opening bogus checking and savings accounts in order to get bonuses after being warned several times to cease and desist.

It was 3:59 PM. Ross began channel-surfing as he fell back on the red sofa with his left hand behind his head. He thought: *What am I going to do? I can't work for any bank in the Atlanta metro now. I'm blacklisted. I'd better come up with something soon, or we're going down the proverbial toilet.*

Ross heard a car horn blaring on nearby US 23 (Buford Highway Northeast) as his program-scanning stopped on a televangelist's sermon from a mega-church in Texas. He studied the exceptionally well-dressed, gelled-wavy-dark-haired, very-thin-wrap-around-microphone-outfitted, hyper-facially-expressive, peripatetic-on-a-large-stage orator. *This must be one of those 'prosperity preachers'. Yeah, I've seen this con artist before. He certainly has the charade down pat. So well-honed. 'Pray for money. God wants you to be wealthy. He really does. Pay me a small amount and I'll turbo-boost your prayer request. I'll triple it if you issue that check within the next five minutes.' I bet this guy has a huge-ass house.*

He quickly researched him on his cell phone. *Yep, I knew it. What a racket! Could I do that? Do I have the right kind of personality?*

Ross then took a quick online test. *Wow! It says that I have all of the requisite traits for something like this. Would need a new set of teeth, though. Must be easy on the camera lens. Though, this cat looks really weird. But, his choppers are perfect. I could charge a set of dentures to the other credit card – the one with some room on it. Yeah, let's give this a whirl. Why not? If not now, when? Time to do some research on how to establish a church. Hope Cindy is game. If not, I'll persuade her. She'll be my first test subject. Must convince her by days end.*

His live-in girlfriend, a twenty-seven-year-old brunette from Commerce (GA), was unlocking the front door at 5:35 PM, her usual weekday arrival time.

“Hello, sweetie,” Ross said with a beaming smile. “How was your day at the office?”

“It was pretty good. I initiated eight new mortgage applications.” She then sneezed. “Damn! The pollen is back.” She wiped her nose with a table napkin. “So, any luck on the job front today, honey?” she asked in a serious tone as she put her purple purse down on the kitchen bar.

“No, and a big yes,” gray-gym-shorts-and-white-T-shirt-clad Ross replied. *And?*

“What do you mean?” Cindy looked confused.

“I mean that I didn’t see any somewhere-worthwhile-in-ten-years openings for my level of expertise. However, I stumbled upon a major revelation that could have us in our very own house in three years. Or, less.” *Oh, no. What money-losing venture now? Did he just watch business-opportunity videos all day?*

“Is it some get-rich-quick pyramid scheme, dear? I thought that we swore off all of those MLM [multilevel marketing] scams. We can’t afford to go backwards again. You need a stable, regular income. Our finances are already getting tight.”

“I know, honey. That’s why I am certain that I have found the ultimate – and permanent – solution: a new way of life with tax-free income – not a mere job with an ungrateful, annoying, could-care-less-about-you boss.” *Yikes.*

“Ok, tell me; what is it, darling?” *Please be something legitimate. Please.*

“We are going to start a church.” *Oh, no.*

“What?!” Cindy exclaimed.

“A church. Hear me out, love. Jim [Ross’s older brother] will give us a cut-rate lease – the first two months will be free – on a hard-to-rent space in his strip mall in Doraville. [the neighboring town] It will be small at first, but trust me; I know how to quickly grow it. I’ve done all the research. I have the required [sociopathic] charisma. All you have to do is dye your hair blonde and lose twenty pounds.” [9 kg] *What the fuck did he just say?!*

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