

another pSecret pSociety pshort pstory



The Hermit by Mike Bozart (Agent 33) | May 2018

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by Mike Bozart

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From an asphalt-driveway-cracks-annually-sealed, backyard-fenced, front-lawn-meticulously-maintained, resolutely middle-class, 2,153-square-foot (200 square meters) split-level home in King of Prussia (a suburb of Philadelphia) to a cozy-on-demand, 646-square-foot (60 square meters), metal-roofed log cottage in the woods, just outside the town of Marshville (36 miles – 58 km – southeast of Charlotte) in the rural farmland swath of Union County (south-central North Carolina). As 49-year-old, cinnamon-blonde-haired, hazel-eyed Amanda sipped her hot herbal tea on a mild May (2016) morning, she wondered: *How in the world did I ever wind up here? Could never have imagined this as a small girl in Pennsylvania. Though, I'm so glad that I'm here now. I'm all set. I'm here – in splendid sylvan seclusion – right where I wanted for a self-sufficient solitary life of writing, music, art, and mapmaking. I surely have it now. Mission accomplished. No more fulltime job – can just work when I want at the local elementary school. No more mortgage. No more car payment. No more noise, save for the evening crickets and cicadas. No more annoying neighbors. No kids. And, no man. Not even a single relative within 500 miles [805 km] of me. Nope, no familial or relationship entanglements to worry about. None at all.*

Amanda didn't hate the masculine sex; she just realized in college (at next-door Villanova University), after a not-much-out-of-the-ordinary, half-semester-long dating experience during her sophomore year, that being paired with a man cramped her uniquely idiosyncratic, independent style. And, after giving in to an impromptu lesbian tryst during her senior year, she ruled out live-in female companionship, too. However, she wasn't antisocial; much to the contrary, she could be quite gregarious at concerts, parties, weekend outings, and ball games. But, a coupled life just wasn't going to be for her. At the end of the day, she wanted to be the only one in her humble abode whispering mangled clichés.

An adult blue jay suddenly perched on her sole northeast-facing windowsill. Amanda remained motionless as an old memory was jogged involving an incident with this passerine species at Caley Elementary School in her childhood neighborhood. The startling scene was as fresh as yesterday in her mind. A dictatorial blue jay was running the sparrows, robins, and finches away from the student-installed bird feeder behind the school. Then as this bully-like blue jay flew back to engorge on the prized seeds, a red-tailed hawk

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