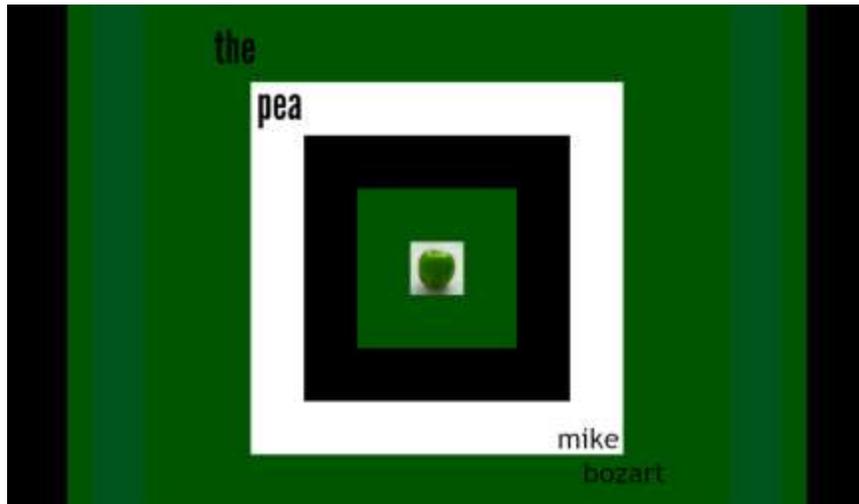


**another pSecret pSociety pshort pstory**



The Pea by Mike Bozart (Agent 33) | MAY 2016

It was back in 2008 or 2009 in east Charlotte. Yeah, one of those years. It was a mild spring day. Most likely it was a Saturday morning in early May. It wasn't too buggy yet.

My son, future Agent 666 (his number choice, not mine; he would later go with 66 when it became freed-up after a rude agent was ejected), was only 5 or 6 years old at the time. We, just the two of us, were sorting out the forty-odd spray-paint cans in the back-yard shed (which was incidentally built by the late, great Agent 107).

We would shake the aerosol cans and then give them a quick discharge. Many of the valves were clogged. If they seemed to have a fair amount of paint still inside, we put them in a designated box. (I would later clean the valve caps with a solvent.) If not, we chucked them into a trash can. If they sprayed satisfactorily, we put them back inside the broken, nearly antique, dining-room-style, cherry-colored, four-shelved, cobwebbed, plate display case.

I began to shake the ninth or tenth can. Before I depressed the valve, my son had a question.

"Dad, what's that noise? It sounds like there's a marble inside that spray can."

"It just might be a marble, son. The correct term would be a pea. The pea helps mix the paint; it gets the pigment and vehicle to combine with the propellant. Sometimes they used glass marbles." *Vehicle?*

I depressed the valve cap. No paint came out. It was clogged shut. I then tossed it into the trash, since the can was very light (almost empty).

“Hey dad, is it possible to get the pea out of that can?”

“Yeah, I guess so. Why, son?”

“I want to see what it looks like.”

“Well, I think we already know what color it is: pea green.”  
[the color name on the label]

My son then picked the spray-paint can back out of the trash. “C’mon, dad, let’s open up this can and see what the pea is made of.”

“Ok, sure. Let me get a hacksaw, a hammer, and a nail.” A  
*nail?*

“Are you going to nail holes in the can, dad?”

“Just one hole, son, to relieve any remaining pressure.”

I left for the house and quickly returned with the three items. I pierced the can with a galvanized 10d nail. There was no audible or visible release of any propellant. *Good, totally dead. Pressure equalized.*

I then cut the top of the spray can off with the hacksaw. It only took about a minute. Some green paint leaked onto the old plywood floor as I pulled the top off. When I tilted the headless can downward, the little pea wobbled out, leaving a medium-green paint trail.

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