

another pSecret pSociety pshort pstory



The Toothache by Mike Bozart (Agent 33) | October 2017

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by Mike Bozart

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Forty-nine-year-old John was out the door at dawn. It was a chilly 48° (Fahrenheit; 9° Celsius) morning. Low gray clouds and mist hovered over the Richmond District of San Francisco (CA, USA) on this date of November 21, 1954. Once on the 15th Avenue sidewalk, the sweater-clad, dark-haired Caucasian gent of average build thought: *No rain is forecast today. The fog should be gone soon. A good day to do some walking. Clear the mind. Maybe burn some belly fat off. Don't want to have to buy new pants. Sure could go for some hot coffee. Yeah, let's hit that joint on Lake Street. It's not that far away.*

Three long blocks later, John was at his intended java joint. It had just opened. The owner, an immigrant from Zadar (a city in present-day Croatia), was still taking the chairs off the red with gold speckles, Formica-topped, round tables.

“Good to see ya, John,” the curly-brown-haired, thin, 50-ish, mustachioed café owner said. “A black coffee with just one lump of sugar?” *Wow! He remembers. Haven't sleepwalked in here in months. Does he not have that many customers?*

“Sure,” John replied. *Wonder why Ivan emigrated from Yugoslavia to America. Probably to escape [Josip Broz] Tito and Soviet hegemony. Hell, I'd want to leave, too.*

“What brings you out so early on a Sunday?” Ivan asked.

“Oh, exercise, I guess,” John answered. “Didn't want to sit around all day again.” *And drink.*

“That's a good reason,” Ivan concurred. “This new television thing is very passive. Just sit, watch, and eat.”

“So true, Ivan.”

Soon Ivan was placing a white porcelain cup of dark coffee down on the saucer in front of John. “Drink up,” Ivan implored. “Don't let it get cold; that brings bad luck.” *Must be some Eastern European superstition.*

John inhaled the *coffea arabica* aroma and took a big gulp. And then another. *This will wake me up and get me going.*

“How is it?” Ivan asked from across the small sitting area.

“Perfect: hot and strong. Good job, Ivan.”

“Thank you, sir,” Ivan said as he slid behind the counter.

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