



Disconnected in DC

a psecret psociety pshort pstory by Mike
Bozart [Agent 33]

(written in Apr. 2013; reformatted in July 2015; revised in Mar. 2016)

Agent 32 (code name: Monique) and I, Agent 33 (code name: Parkaar), were then summoned to Washington, DC. Not a subpoena, mind you, but we had to go. No three ways around it.

We traveled under the radar from uptown Charlotte, arriving at Union Station via a double-decker Megabus. We transferred to the Metro Red Line, got off at Silver Spring (Maryland), and walked about a kilometer to a one-point-five-star hotel on 13th Street.

As we walked to the hotel office, we observed the police raiding a hotel room. I thought: *Ah, our kind of place. Surely a short story lies in wait here.*

We threw our luggage down in the room and took a short nap. Mine was dreamless. As for Monique's, well, not sure.

Twenty-seven minutes later, we hiked over to Lotus Café for some Asian chow. It was tasty and satiated our long-travel-induced hunger. The waiter seemed to be up to something, but we didn't ask any questions.

The first night was initially uneventful. No notes were found in the hotel room. The only weird thing was that the tub faucet was fully open at 1:11 AM. Hot water was roaring out of the spout. Steam filled the bathroom.

At first I feared a major plumbing problem. But, upon twisting the (H) valve handle, the water completely stopped – not even a drip. *Now, how did that just happen?*

Monique then woke up. “How do you think that valve opened, Parkaar?”

“Maybe the maid is deaf and doesn’t realize that the hot water valve is faulty and prone to opening from slight vibrations, Agent 32.” *He must have that darn audio recorder running.*

“I’m not buying that explanation, 33. I sincerely doubt that vibration theory, Parkaar.”

“I don’t know, Monique, that little refrigerator’s compressor has a bit of a kick when it shuts off.”

Monique just rolled her eyes and pulled the covers back up. “Yeah, whatever, 33. Just get back in this bed before you get hurt.” *Get hurt? By what?*

Sleep was uninterrupted until 5:05 AM. That’s when I heard a couple arguing outside our door (# 435). I couldn’t make out the language – maybe it was Hungarian? Well, maybe. Anyway, the volume subsided after a thud on our door.

Monique was startled. “Did you hear that?!”

“Yes, I did.”

We just looked at each other, not sure of the best move (or non-move). A few minutes went by with no sounds – nothing audible. Apparently, the ruckus had passed. *Maybe just a domestic squabble.*

We drifted into a half-sleep for 50 minutes. Then we got up and made some coffee. We decided to get ready to go to the embassy.

We were out the door at 8:00 AM on the dot, and on the Metro by 8:15. The ride was morning-commuter uneventful.

Newspapers being read. Coffee being sipped. Distant gazes reflecting off the windows.

We got off the Red Line at the Dupont Circle stop and looked for the exit.

“Wow, Agent 33, this has got to be the steepest and longest escalator in the world!” *Maybe in the Top 10?*

After Monique exclaimed that, I noticed that it was indeed quite a long and steep escalator. It reminded me of one at a BART station in the San Francisco Bay area, but I forgot which one.

We then began walking around the circle and soon found Massachusetts Avenue. We turned to the east and marched right past the Embassy of the Philippines (consular affairs). Silly us, we weren't even looking up.

We went past Scott Circle. That's when we stopped and I realized our oversight. We marched back.

Well, soon I was reaching for a doorknob on a nondescript white building. I turned the brass orb, the door opened, and I was met by the gazes of about two dozen Filipino Americans.

Monique took care of her passport business. Forty-four minutes later, we were outside the embassy. *That wasn't too bad. Nice friendly staff.*

A young Filipina was standing on the sidewalk in front of the embassy with an automaton. She asked us what our plans were for the day. We told her, Krystal, that we would just be doing the usual tourist thing: taking pics down at the National Mall. She asked if she and her mechanized pal could tag

along, and we consented. *A Filipina with an automaton. I've got to write this up later.*

We strolled down 17th Street to the Washington Monument and took some photos. Then we proceeded towards the Capitol. And, finally we were in front of the White House.

“Are you hungry?” Monique suddenly asked.

“Yes, I am,” I said.

“How about you, Krystal?” Monique asked while looking at her red automaton. *What a strange thing. So creepy! Why does she tote that around? I'm sure Parkaar likes it.*

“Yes,” Krystal said. “I could eat a horse!” She giggled.

We began walking back through the Foggy Bottom area, looking for a restaurant with rice. When we got to M Street, we turned west. We literally stumbled upon a step-down joint called Sala Thai.

We were promptly seated. I ordered while the ladies chatted at the large, thick, wooden, ten-seater, communal-style table. Soon the food arrived, and we were chomping away. *This is some good grub. If I lived in DC, I'd be here semiweekly. / I love the taste! / They made a good choice.*

More customers entered. It was obviously a popular Asian eatery. However, seating was limited. It got crowded fast. People kept brushing our backs.

Soon a pair of 50-ish Caucasian gentlemen sat across from each other, right next to us at the long common table. They began an intriguing conversation at a volume that was

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