



Greensboro Gaffe

by **Mike Bozart** (Agent 33 of psecret psociety) | May 2013

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Monique (Agent 32) and I (Agent 33) boarded the 5:15 PM northbound Amtrak in Charlotte. As we rolled out of the rail yard, I wondered: *Might this rail journey yield a short story?*

The trip was largely uneventful, except for a strange Caucasian man of slight build, who boarded in Kannapolis. I'd say that he was about 55 to 60 years old. He seemed very agitated, almost frightened. His head kept turning, as if he were looking for – or out for – someone.

We tried to avoid his gaze, but then he caught Monique spying on him.

“Have you seen Jim?” he suddenly asked.

Monique just shook her head. *He's loko. [crazy in Filipino]*

When I looked at him, he turned away, and began fidgeting with his jacket's zipper. *An odd one here. He's definitely short-story-worthy wort. Must remember this.*

By Salisbury, he had calmed down. And, at High Point, he exited the train and hiked up the station steps and was gone. *Wonder what his story is. Another walk-off mystery.*

The train pulled into Greensboro a few minutes earlier than scheduled at 6:45 PM. The sun was going down on a warm April evening. *What a perfect spring evening in the Triad.*

Our hotel, The Greensboro Biltmore, was only four blocks west of the station. It was an easy walk. We traveled light. I had a backpack replete with previous short stories like this one – the one that you are now reading right now – however, Monique only had a blue handbag.

We signed in at the front desk. The young lad gave us room 225. He said that we would like it. I found that to be a somewhat curious remark. Yet, no notes were found in the hotel room.

The only weird thing that we noticed was that a lower dresser drawer was left open an inch. I promptly accepted the gaping invitation and deposited a copy of *Gold* (the short story; the novel had not been written yet).

Monique and I were tired. We decided to take a twenty-minute recharge nap. We were scheduled to meet Agent 14 at 8:00 PM at Thai Pan on South Elm Street. It was just around the corner. zzzzzz

We woke up at 7:45, and were in front of the closed Asian restaurant by 7:57.

“Well, Agent 14 was right, Monique; this place is indeed closed,” I said.

Monique wasn’t buying that explanation. She checked the note on the door.

“Ok, so what do we do now, Parkaar?” [my ailing alias]

“I’ll text him.”

And, I did. Agent 14 promptly re-texted.

Own m’eye whey, two blocks tew weigh.

Several minutes went by. Monique was impatient.

“Just call him, 33.”

I did. And, as I was talking to Agent 14, I saw him walking down the street. Then he saw me, and we hung up our cell phones.

Agent 14, a 50-ish Caucasian gent, drifted towards us. He had a hobble in his gait. *Is he already smashed?*

We shook hands. He gave Monique a big hug.

“How would you like to be a part of my next short story, 14?” (He was a voracious reader of all things psecret psociety.)

“Does it involve Jim?” he asked.

“Funny that you should ask about Jim, Agent 14,” I said.

“Yeah, there was a guy on the train asking about him,” Monique added.

“Maybe he’s on the steepest and longest escalator in the world,” Agent 14 said. *Ah, he read the DC one.*

“What?!” Monique exclaimed.

“Never mind him, 32; he’s just pulling lines from the previous story,” I explained.

“Thyme’s sprinkled in a brochure,” 14 then said.

“I wish that I could see how you spelled that, Agent 14,” I said, knowing that he probably meant the spice spelling.

“Jest [*sic*] hold the mirror at the write [*sic*] angle when you grab that Pilot felt-tip pen, 33,” Agent 14 directed. “Don’t crash and burn again.”

Well, to make a short story even shorter, we ended up next door at a back table in Crafted – The Art of Taco.

“It’s great to finally meet you, Agent 14,” Monique said.

“Likewise, 32; 33, not so much.” He smiled.

I chuckled. “He’s just as advertised; isn’t he, Monique?”

“Agent 14, you are so funny!” Agent 32 said, still laughing.

We ordered some alcoholic drinks: PBR (Pabst Blue Ribbon) for me and 14; a large, curved glass of Moscato wine for 32.

“Are you hungry?” Agent 32 asked.

“Yes, I am, Monique. How about you, 14?”

“Just hungry for that cook,” Agent 14 said with a leer.

“Ok, Monique; I think he’ll be on a liquid diet tonight,” I said with a chuckle.

The conversation moved from where everyone grew up to where we now sat.

“Why did you change it from Café 23 to psecret psociety, 33?” Agent 14 asked, catching me off-guard, though there wasn’t much to hide or shield.

“Well, you were there, 14. Remember the night it burned down? Remember that electronic earwig in the smoldering embers?”

“Ernie!” Monique shouted.

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