

**an extra-pspatial pSecret pSociety tale**



**KRON BY NIGHT** a novelette by Mike Bozart (Agent 33) | OCT 2015

[[ ]] Convention for the thoughts of the characters in this novelette:

*My [Tryke's] thoughts look like this. / Burke's thoughts look like this. / Mary's thoughts look like this. / Franks' thoughts look like this.*



In memory of Mr. Frank von Peck

It was back in mid-June of 1984 when Burke Braun (future Agent 2), his then-fiancée (and now wife) Mary (classified agent no.), Frank von Peck (future Agent 107) and yours sure-really (future Agent 33) decided to head up to Morrow Mountain State Park (near Albemarle, NC) for a mind-expanding camping trip. Burke had just procured some high-grade, water-soluble, psychoactive *beads* from a fellow employee (now deceased) at Grapevine Records (now defunct) on East Independence Boulevard (now Expressway).

Mary's still-quite-reliable, olive green, trunky, 1972 Plymouth Valiant 4-door sedan would be the mode of transit for the four of us twenty-something and nearly-twenty Caucasian cosmic cadets on a muggy, mid-morning Saturday. After Frank's courtesy oil dipstick check, we were off and rolling.

It quickly got smoky inside the cab. Mary, a winsome brunette, cracked her window to exhaust the herbal exhalations. *This car is a moving smokehouse.*

The ride was largely uneventful, except for the conversation regarding the not-yet-disclosed psychoactive.

"What exactly is it that we are going to take, Burke?" Frank asked from the backseat, next to me.

"Mark, the guy in the EP (Extended Play) section of the store told me that the active ingredient is a psilocybin spinoff," Burke replied from the shotgun seat. *A psilocybin spinoff? / What in this wacky world? / A toxic spinoff?*

“Is it safe?” I asked. “It’s not some strychnine amalgam, is it?” *Gosh, he is already paranoid.*

“Yeah, it’s safe; it’s not rat poison. Several of the Grapevine crew have already done it. All glowing, super-positive reviews.” *Nice to hear.*

“What’s the recommended dosage?” Mary asked as she briefly glanced over at Burke, while keeping two hands on the steering wheel. *Good question. A very good question.*

Burke turned his brown-haired head to the left. “Mark said that ‘one is fun’; ‘two will do’; ‘three will set you free’; but, ‘four will slam the door’.” *What door? / Wow, Mark managed to make a rhyme out of it.*

“In that case, I’ll be taking five,” Frank immediately blurted. *Good lord.*

“Are you crazy, Frank?” I asked rhetorically. “You don’t want to flip out and fall off the mountain.”

“I’ll be fine, dude,” Frank said assuredly. “That old mountain is just a tired, burnt-out, sloughing-away hill.”

Burke looked back at me. “Let me guess, Tryke, [my nickname, which became my nom de brosse] you’re only going to take half of one.”

“No, Burke, I was thinking of four and a quarter.” *He’s already gone. / Why so precise?*

“Four and a quarter!” Mary exclaimed. “I hope that someone has a razor blade and a magnifying glass.” *I don’t.*

“What’s with 4.25, Tryke?” Burke asked.

“I happened to notice that there were 17 of those orange micro-orbs in the Ziploc bag, Burke,” I replied. “Seventeen divided by four is ...” *I’m already too high for math.*

“My sweet Mary will be zonked out of her gourd if she takes that many,” Burke said. *Probably so.*

“Maybe we should divide them up proportionately by relative body weight,” Mary suggested. *Great idea.*

“If Frank wants to take five, he can go for it,” Burke said. “I’ll only be doing four. Four should be more than plenty.”

“Ok, if Frank is going ultra-cosmonaut and taking five, and Burke is taking four, then I’ll take four, too,” I said. “And, if my math is correct, this leaves four for Mary as well.” *Did he add that up right? Yeah, he did.*

“No way is little old me taking four,” Mary announced. “That would be like you and Burke taking seven.” *She’s right.*

“I’ve got it solved,” Frank said, projecting his voice mainly to Mary, who was directly in front of him. “Mary will take three. Burke and Tryke will take four each. And me, your fearless Frank, will take six.” *Famous last words. / What an epitaph that would be: ‘He took six’ ... a guaranteed graveyard head-turner, for sure.*

“I don’t think I even want to do three,” Mary divulged.

“Ok, how about 2.5 for Mary, four for Burke, five for me, and 5.5 for Frank?” I suggested. *What’s with Tryke saying point-five instead of half? / He’s stoned out of his mind.*

Burke smelled a rat. “No, you’ll get way to flaky on five, Tryke. I don’t want to have to babysit both you and Frank while I’m off the rails myself, treading water in that green pond. [This green pond is featured in the novella *To Morrow Tomorrow*.] No way, José.” *Wish I had a tape recorder for that one. / Burke is quite baked from my Frankenblend. [weed] / My guy is high.*

As side one of Burke’s custom-edited art-rock cassette tape came to a close with the fade-out of the Genesis *Los Endos* song, I spied the Albemarle City Limit sign on NC 24/27. *Wow, those 45 minutes sure flew by.*

Burke flipped the tape over and Pink Floyd’s *Summer ’68* song started. *‘How do you feel? How do you feel?’ Most excellent, thank you very much!*

Then we began to climb the Morrow Mountain entrance road. Soon, we passed the welcome sign. And then, the *Alcoholic Beverages Prohibited* sign appeared. *We won’t have to worry about violating that one this time. / Check. No beer in here.*

When we arrived at the triangle intersection, Mary slowed the car to a near-stop. “Which way, guys?” she asked.

“Uh, let’s score a decent campsite before we start roaming around,” Burke answered. *Good idea.*

Mary turned to the left and we made our way down to the campground area. The gray tree boughs and green leaves whizzed by. *Wonder where this day goes. / Wonder what adventures lie ahead. / I hope I have enough smoke. Yeah, I am sure I do. / I hope the boys don't get totally incoherent.*

A couple of minutes later, and we were in the campground area. It was only about 40% full. We claimed a distant site on the loop furthest from the main road. *Hope no one sets up shop right next to us.*

After some proper-assembly confusion, we got the tents up, and began to eat lunch on a wooden picnic table. It was a sunny, warm-bordering-on-hot, very high noon.

I then asked the question that I thought was on everyone's meandering mind: "When should we eat those little orange orbettes?" [sic]

"I think that now is a little too soon, Tryke," Burke said. "I want to be peaking when I see the sunset from the top of the mountain." *Me, too. / That sure would be nice. / I'm ready to drop them down the hatch right now and get show going.*

"What's the duration of the trip?" Mary asked. *A most excellent question.*

"Mark said that it lasts about six to seven hours," Burke said. *Good, it's not 14 hours like A. [A = acid, slang for LSD] / Perfect. / Nice.*

"How about a staggered start?" Frank proposed. "That way we can gauge the potency and not end up in the wrong

place at the wrong time.” *Interesting idea. / Yeah, that would certainly suck.*

“That’s a great idea, Frank,” Mary said.

“Sounds smart to me, too, Frank,” I added. “But, did you mean an incremental start? A staggered start would have each of us ingesting those little orange beads at different times, which would be a very interesting way to do them, no less.”

“Ok, Mister Technical, you got me. I meant an incremental start.” *Am I really sounding too technical? Maybe squelch it.*

“But, we may never get the full effect by taking it incrementally; we may never reach the apex,” Burke contested. *That could be true, too.*

“Sorry, my love; it’s three votes to one for a test run first,” Mary said as she gave Burke a funny grin.

“Ok, ok, I’ll do it your way,” Burke relented. “But, I better get some high voltage running through my bean, or you’ll be buying the next round of seventeen.” *Burke wants to go over the galactic cliff.*

Frank and I just smiled. Mary playfully stuck her tongue out at Burke. And Burke, well, he seemed suddenly lost in thought as a lone sparrow darted by. *Burke’s ozoned. [slang for stoned on marijuana] / Burke’s high as a kite. / What is my beau thinking of now?*

In surreptitious short order, we each dropped one orange micro-ball into our paper cups of pulpy orange juice. We looked at each other. *The moment of truth has arrived.*

Frank broke the anxious silence: “Here’s to an epik [sic] with a hard k voyage.” *Epik kaos. [sic]*

We raised our 7-ounce (207 mL) cups and tapped them together. Then we commenced the psychedelic-solution ingestion. With the last gulp, I looked down at my Casio digital wristwatch. It was 12:21 PM. *A curiously palindromic start time. I wonder when we leave the launch pad. / Tryke, already watching the clock.*

“Ok, group, where should we go first?” Frank asked.

“Do we already have to go somewhere?” Mary questioned. *Oh man, I don’t want to stay here all day.*

“Hey, if Frank feels the need for motion, why not just let him drive your car, Mary?” Burke suggested.

“Ok, that’s fine by me,” Mary said. “But, stay in the park, Frank.” *‘In the park.’ Yes, absolutely. / Please stay inbounds, Peck. / Do they really think that I would drive out of here? Is my reputation that outlandish?*

And with that tempered approval, Frank got the car keys from Mary and we re-occupied the venerable Valiant. I grabbed shotgun; Burke and Mary sat in the backseat.

“Did everyone bring their valuables?” I asked. “No one left anything important in the tents or on the picnic table, did they?”

“All good back here,” Mary and Burke said in unison.

“Got my stuff,” Frank said as he eased the steering-column shifter into D. *Gosh, I hope this goes off without a legal hitch.*

Frank slowly drove us out of the campground area, going extra-slow to keep the gravel dust down. A few campers waved to us and we waved back. *Maybe they appreciate Frank’s considerate, slow speed. / If they only knew ...*

He turned right onto the main, now-showing-some-age asphalt road and we began to descend towards Lake Tillery. We all rolled down our windows. The late spring air was infused with a multitude of fragrances. *Am I already having olfactory hallucinations? The scents in the air are divine.*

In no time we were down at the lakefront. Frank parked Mary’s sedan near the unoccupied boat ramp. We walked over to the wooden dock.

“Well, we’re about fifteen minutes out, team,” I stated. “How are we flinging, I mean feeling?” *Team? / Flinging? / Tryke’s already getting goony.*

“I’m flinging just fine,” Mary said. *Whoops! Misspoke there.*

“I think I’m getting an initial start-up charge,” Frank notified. *I’m sure he is. / I hope Frank doesn’t end up in a dangerous place again.*

“Nothing for me, yet,” Burke informed. “I hope this isn’t like the last *great* mushroom excursion. What a fizzle that was. I sure hope these little beads aren’t stale.” *Or oxidized?*

I looked down at my watch. “Folks, my mind’s elevation is twelve hundred thirty-seven feet [377 meters] above ennui level.” *Ennui level? / Gosh, what is he talking about now? / Tryke’s already wiggling out.*

Frank quickly picked up on my time-as-mental-elevation game. “Well, in twenty-three minutes, your lofty thoughts are going to crash down eleven hundred sixty feet. [353.6 meters] That’s one tall, steep-ass cliff, leading to complete despair, my friend. That will probably be all she wrote for you, Tryke.” *What a rosy prognosis. / 1260 – 1160 = 100.*

“That good, huh?” I retorted.

“Let’s not make this into a by-the-numbers trip,” Burke forewarned.

I then took my watch off and put it in my left-front pants pocket. *Burke’s right. I don’t want that damn watch to meter this trip. Let’s forget about the exact time ... for a long time.*

Then we all sat down on the dock and looked at the slightly undulating surface of the lake. We were quiet; the conversation ceased. *Getting lost.*

It appeared that the different shades of bluish green on the lake surface were being raised to different levels. The effect was like looking at a 3-D image without the special glasses. *Wonder if anyone else is seeing this. / I wonder if Burke is*

*feeling what I'm feeling. / Woah, I feel it now. Oh, boy. Here we go. / Whose keys are these? Oh yeah, they're Mary's. Must not lose them.*

After a speechless twelve minutes, Frank stood up. "Ready to go to the top?" *I hope that he can still drive satisfactorily. / Where? / Yes!*

"Sure!" Burke exclaimed with verve.

"Think you can still drive ok, Frank?" Mary asked.

"Better than ever," Frank said über-confidently. *Oh, no.*

We got back in the now-glowing green Valiant. Frank started the car up and began the climb out of the valley without a hint of trouble. He went straight at the triangle intersection and began to ascend Morrow Mountain proper, an ancient, now-rounded, heavily wooded, prominent Uwharrie peak.

Frank's driving skills were still excellent. He expertly navigated the stone-and-mortar-wall-lined hairpin turn. His window was rolled down with his left arm on the door. With his dark shades on, he looked like a younger Bryan Ferry. (Reference the *In Your Mind* album cover.)

A minute later, Frank was parking the car near the circle at the top. We all got out and walked towards the overlook.

"Man, it looks just like a book cover, [This scene is the cover of the *To Morrow Tomorrow* novella.] a most magical book cover," Frank declared.

We stopped for a moment to take in the splendid view of the green forest blanket with other well-worn Uwharrie peaks here and there, and Lake Tillery way down below. The air temperature was now 79° (Fahrenheit; 26° Celsius). The sun was bright. White cumulus clouds seemed to be puffing out and expanding every nanosecond. *This day sure feels incredibly alive.*

After a five-minute group silence, I spoke up. "It sure is something else." *He's ripped.*

"It certainly is," Mary added. *She's ripped, too.*

"Unless it's just something," Burke contended. *Burke's shredded.*

"Or else," Frank looped on. *Or else, what? / How is that?*

"Are we nowhere or elsewhere?" Mary asked. *Knowhere? [sic]*

"Maybe it's a meaningless distinction," I said. "You know, the treachery of words and all that jazz." *What did he just say? / Here comes the nonsense. / His cake is baked.*

Frank then began walking on the slabs-of-slate wall. We followed him. He stopped after about a hundred feet (30.5 meters), in the main parking lot area, and jumped down on the outside of the three-foot-high (one-meter-tall) stone barrier.

He seemed to be looking for something for a few seconds. (What he was looking for is mentioned in the *To Morrow*

Tomorrow novella.) Then he shot up on the wall again. Eventually, we all sat down on the masonry wall.

“Burke, where are those orange dots?” Frank asked. “I think I’m going to go for it and take four.” *Oh, dear. / Four more?! / So, Frank really wants to get some mileage. I’ll match him.*

“They’re right here in my pocket,” Burke said as he looked around to see if the coast was clear for extraction. “Four seems like a man overboard, Frank.” *He’ll be overboard alright, after creating a foundering of our ship. / Maybe I can talk him down. / Why does he want to do so much?*

I now felt that it was my time to claim a cut. “I guess I could go for just one more. I’m pretty high already. This stuff is clean. Elle Sioux Prima.” *El suprema? / I hope that we don’t encounter the park ranger. His mouth will get us all hung.*

“I could maybe do two more,” Burke said. *Two more?! What is my fiancé thinking? / Burke and Frank may end up over the dam at this rate.*

Mary then looked at the two psychic daredevils. “Guys, just do another one. I’m already soaring. Just a single one each. Then see where you are an hour from now. Doing two or more seems like an invitation to a grave mishap.” *Superb advice. / Yep, she’s right. / I will go all night, taking one every five hours.*

Burke got the plastic bag out and carefully unzipped it. He, Frank and I each swallowed one more orange orbette. *Buckle up, spaceman. It could get bumpy. / Booster rocket,*

*commence firing. / I'm ready to really zoom. Want to exit the stratosphere. / Hope the boys will be ok.*

“Hey, let’s check out the old picnic shelter up on the knob before we leave,” Frank suggested. *Up on the knob?*

I looked up towards the shelter. It looked vacant. “Sure, good idea, Frank. Let’s do it.”

“Yeah, let’s go check it out.” Mary also consented.

“But, let’s get some drinks out of the car before we go up there,” Burke advised.

With non-alcoholic drinks in hand, we marched up to the slate-and-mortar shelter. One hundred twenty yards (109.7 meters) later and we were there. It was still unoccupied. *Great. No one is here. / How long before a family of eight invade?*

There were four large picnic tables under the shake roof. Burke and Mary sat on one and I sat on an adjacent one near the shelter’s wide, rear, expansive-view opening.

Frank hoisted his left leg up on the stone wall. We were all looking out towards Lake Tillery and the other Uwharrie Mountain Range mounds to the northeast, two to five miles (3.2 to 8 km) away.

With the shade and the mountaintop breeze from an approaching cold front, the setting was not that uncomfortable. After a few slugs of our drinks, we all grew quiet. *What does it mean to have such abstract, seemingly*

*inconsequential, random thoughts? And, what does it mean to question them? / Sure is a wonderful day. / Patterns are everywhere, in everything. / Fifteen months ago ...*

Frank suddenly blurted out a shocking revelation (to him): “Damn, man, your hair has the weirdest shades of red in it, Tryke. It looks like it’s on fire. I see individual flames.” *Well, he sure doesn’t need anymore. / I see it, too. / Glad that I didn’t do another one.*

“I’ve heard that before,” I replied.

Then the silence spells started. Five – or more – minutes would go by without a spoken word. Yes, we were megamind-zapped. The orange dots were not placebo-ineffectivo. [sic]

Over the course of the next two-plus hours, someone would say something like ‘Hey, did you say something?’ Then someone would reply, typically about a minute later, with a line like ‘No, I don’t think so.’ And, sure enough, this would be followed after another significant delay with a line like ‘No shortage of thoughts today.’ And, yes, this in turn would be sent onto a Moebius strip with a line very similar to (if not exactly) ‘Now, what did you say?’ Moreover, our minds were flying way too fast for a real-time oral report.

There were a few visits from other park guests of various temperaments and ages. But, we just held our tables. (Frank had settled on the other side of my picnic table.) Perhaps we were being picnic shelter hogs, but at the time, we were honestly oblivious to it. We were tactically immobilized.

Then Mary noticed some large buzzing bees that appeared to be hornets. We all started to watch them, noticing that they would return to the fireplace and fly up the flue. They left a nice, easy to follow, trail in the air. *Man, I'm trailing bigtime. / They must have their nest in this fireplace's chimney. / I'd hate to get stung by a bee right now. That would truly suck. / Probably time to move elsewhere.*

Mary finally spoke up. "Guys, I think it's time to leave this place to the bees."

"Agreed," I said.

Burke and Frank just nodded. *They're chasing after their lost marbles, I can tell.*

We slowly walked back to Mary's car, which was now pulsating. *Man, I'm glad that I'm not driving. / Hope she's ok to drive. / Take it slow, Mary ... nice and slow.*

Mary got her keys back from Frank, opened the driver's door, got in, and acted like she was going to drive off without us. We all had a laugh, though I think we all fell for her joke for a few seconds. She then unlocked the other three doors. We all retook our Charlotte-takeoff seat assignments.

"Are you ok to drive, honey?" Burke asked Mary.

"Yeah, I feel ok. I'm high, but not nearly as high as you guys. The road still looks like the road." *Whew! It looks like a cooling black lava flow to me. / It has ripples and waves in it.*

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