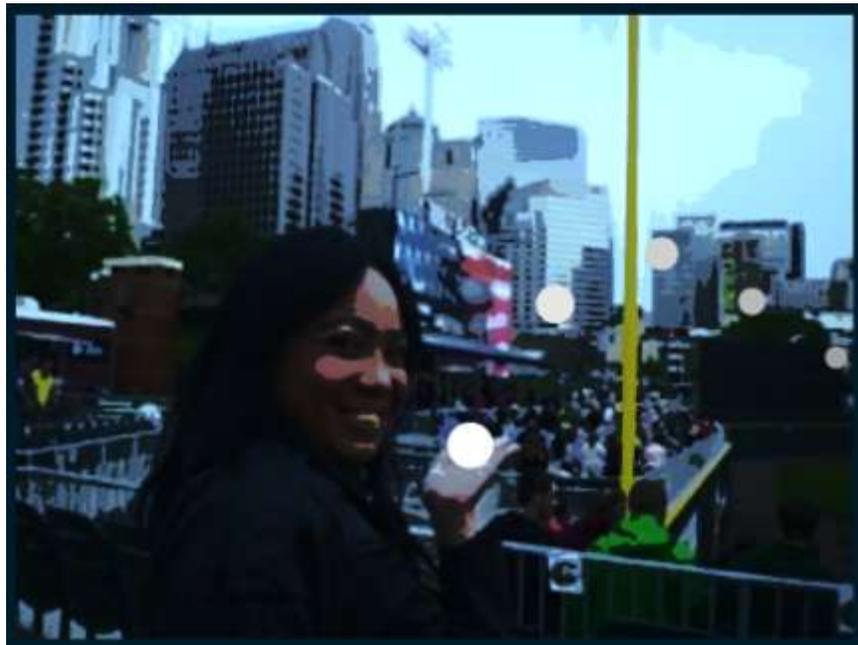


another pSecret pSociety pshort pstory



That OLD BALL GAME

by **Mike Bozart** (Agent 33) | April 2014; rev. Sep. 2015

Charlotte had just opened a brand-new downtown minor league baseball stadium a couple of weeks prior to the rain-now-gone evening that found Monique (Agent 32) and I (Agent 33) staring at a yellower than a canary left-field foul pole. We had just consumed some standard ball-park fare in the standing-room-only area, and were now seated as the Durham Bulls came up to bat in the top of the third. The game was still scoreless.

Monique was now taking in the surroundings. She was noticing the tall buildings behind right and center fields. She then commenced the conversation at BB&T Ballpark.

“The city skyline certainly is an impressive backdrop, Parkaar. [my ailing alias] They really thought this out.”

“Yeah, the design is excellent. I’m glad that they placed home plate in the southwest corner of the stadium. That way the late afternoon sun is blocked, unless you sit in the outfield bleachers.”

“Hey, let me take your picture!”

“Only if I can take yours.”

“Sure!”

We snapped some obligatory photos as the Bulls started putting some men on base. *Need a double-play ball.*

Monique was disappointed when she couldn't make a wireless connection to facebook to upload the new pics.

"Does this place have free wireless, Agent 33?"

"Hmmm ... I'm not sure, 32."

The next thing you know, we hear that unmistakable sound: the crack of a well-swung wooden bat solidly connecting with a cowhide-covered, three-inch-wide, red-seamed, white ball. And boy was that white ball sailing into the darkening evening sky. Heck, it was headed right for us!

"Heads-up, Monique!"

"What? Where is it?"

Monique had no idea where the baseball was, or where it was going. And, before I could answer her questions, the ball moved back into fair territory, soared over the left-field-corner wall, and bounced off the picnic area canopy. It then hopped and bounded into West 4th Street. *What a shot!*

"Wow! That was some home run there, Monique. An epik [sic] with a k blast."

Monique followed the ball as it rolled down the sidewalk. "Yeah, it really was, Parkaar."

"Too bad the wrong team hit it."

“Can you hit it that far, 33?”

“In my dreams. In my fading youthful dreams.”

We both laughed as the Durham Bulls were finally retired. They now led 3-0.

“The Knights have got themselves into a bit of a hole, Monique.”

“But, there’s 72.22% of the game left to go, Parkaar.”

“Good, quick math, 32.” *How did she calculate that so fast? She must have used her calculator on her cell phone.*

The teams tacked on a run each in the fourth, and then the game fell into a fifth-inning lull.

“You know, Monique, I think that this is the first professional baseball game that I’ve attended since seeing the San Francisco Giants play their archrivals, the Los Angeles Dodgers, in that old, soon-to-be-razed, windy-as-hell Candlestick Park.”

“And when was that, Parkaar?”

“It was Wednesday afternoon, July 29, 1992 to be exact.”

“No way! You’re making that up.” *How would he remember that exact date? Did he find gold out there that day?*

“No, I’m for real, 32; that was the date. I looked it up on one of those baseball almanac websites the other day. I remembered that the Grobster – remember him from our wedding? – came out to visit me in late July of ‘92. I can still remember the stadium conditions: sunny, windy, and as cool as a fog sandwich.”

“As cool as a fog sandwich? You’ve got that audio recorder going again. Yes, I can tell.” *I guess fog sandwich was a little too surreal for normal conversation.*

“Oh? Maybe so.”

“Oh, I know so. But, please continue.”

“Well, the game-time temperature was 65° F, but it felt like 45. Rob was so amazed that an American city in the lower 48 could be so cool in late July. You know how hot Charlotte is in late July, Monique.”

“Oh, yes, darling. I’ve experienced two of them already. Even hotter than Manila!”

“Ok, I remember that the ‘stick [local slang for Candlestick Park] was only half-full. Back then the Giants were practically giving the tickets away. The team almost got relocated to Tampa Bay that year. I think both of us got in for only \$10. Crazy cheap. Not like the ever-sold-out AT&T Park of today.”

Monique just nodded. Then she began to eat the rest of her tucked-away pretzel.

Neither the Bulls, nor the Knights, scored in the fifth. The game lumbered into the sixth with Durham still up by three.

Darkness had completely taken over now. Rectangles of light from the office, apartment and condo towers appeared sporadically in columns and in rows, but I'm not sure if a connect-four was ever scored.

My mind meandered back to Candlestick Park. *I wonder how many people who attended that game in '92 are still alive. Are any of them here tonight? Maybe a transferred BofA employee? Were any famous people at that particular game? A now-famous Silicon Valley techie, perhaps? Anyone who later committed a horrific crime. A garotter? [sic] A lottery winner?*

Monique noticed that I had become lost in my thoughts. She shifted in her seat and placed her cute, tiny, perfectly bronzed, right hand on my left arm. "What are you thinking, my dearest Parkaar?"

"Oh, just wondering who might have been at that particular NL West baseball game back in 1992." *Of all the things to think about.*

"Were you even at that game? Are you sure that you were really there?"

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