

another pSecret pSociety pshort pstory



**The Vision** by Mike Bozart (Agent 33) | Aug. 2017

## **The Vision**

by Mike Bozart

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Nick awoke bemused. After arriving home from work (commercial plumbing), he had taken a late Friday afternoon nap in his rented single-wide mobile home near Clam Beach (CA, USA). In a very-real-feeling dream, he was walking along the in-the-vicinity Little River, when he suddenly found himself in a lush-and-emerald-green-like-Ireland meadow. A Caucasian farmer then came up to him – seemingly from out of nowhere – and handed him a sheet of paper. Nick, a thirty-four-year-old Dutch American, zoomed in on the image. It appeared to be a detail of a USGS (United States Geological Survey) topographic quadrangle. For some unknown-to-him reason, the farmer then began to gesture with his hands as if he were perplexed, but he didn't say anything. Nick thought: *Is he mute?*

Then Nick looked back at the unlabeled physical map. The contour lines started to pulsate. The shading intensified. A voice – was it in his head? – spoke up. “This is where a gold nugget weighing almost 49 troy ounces [1.524 kg] is not-so-deeply buried. It's on this map, right at the confluence of two streams. Now, go out and claim it before someone else does!” *Troy ounces?*

Nick turned to the left, as he thought that the farmer might have been the one talking, but he had vanished; the old man in faded, oil-stained, holey denim overalls was nowhere to be seen. And then, the hill off to his right seemed to be smiling. A dipping gully then winked at him. The dream ended with a ferocious gust of wind that swept across the field, creating surface waves. *What a strange, surreal dream that was. Did Dietrich sprinkle something in my weed? [marijuana] If so, hope it's nontoxic.*

His cell phone, which was on the oak coffee table, then rang. Nick grabbed it. “Hello, Ed. What's up?”

“Want to go out for a few beers tonight, Nick?”

“Yeah, sure. Where?”

“Clam Beach Tavern.” [2.8 miles – 4.5 km – south-southwest in McKinleyville]

“Ok, let me guess, Ed: You're angling for the new brunette.”

“How did you know?” Ed chuckled.

“I know your weaselly ways. No need to be coy, Roy.” *Just listen to me?*

“See you at nine, Nick?”

“You got it. Later.”

At a regulars-starting-to-pile-in 9:19 PM, black-haired Nick and blonde-haired Ed were playing a game of 9-ball on a billiard table in the back of the bar. The solid-purple 4-ball fell into the near side pocket. *Wow. Ed finally made a delicate cut shot. He seems really focused tonight.*

“Nice shot, Ed,” Nick said.

“Thanks, man,” Ed replied.

“So, when are you going to make your move on Veronica?”

“Probably just before closing time,” Ed said as he took another shot. However, the solid-orange 5-ball rattled out of the corner pocket.

“Pretty risky strategy, my friend,” Nick countered. “V-ron [Veronica] may no longer be available by night’s end.”

Ed just grinned.

Nick sank the 5. And then, in rapid succession, he knocked in the 6 and 7 balls. The solid-black, white-eyed 8-ball was left on the lip of the far corner pocket. “Darn!” Nick exclaimed. “Could we please have a minor temblor right about now?” *What?! / Temble-tumble. [sic]*

“Never joke about earthquakes – not in California,” Ed warned as he bagged the essentially-a-gimme 8-ball.

“Do you really think that my remark will increase coastal Humboldt County seismicity, Ed?” *I sure hope not.*

“Nick, it’s just not wise to tempt fate – the calamitous kind of fate, that is.” Ed then pushed the yellow-striped 9-ball just wide of the side pocket. However, it came to rest a centimeter (b of an inch) off the rail. *It’s safe there.*

“Ed, do you believe in visions?” *Wonder what Nick ingested this time. Or, has he gone wacky-religious? Is a recruiting pitch coming next?*

“Did you eat some [mescaline-containing] peyote buttons and join a cult, Nick?” Ed had a laugh. A few nearby patrons looked at him.

“No, nothing like that, Ed. It was a vision in a dream.” Nick then missed a long and difficult corner-pocket shot.

“A vision in a dream? How about a vision in a dream wrapped around a real-life hallucination? Something like that *Waking Life* animation film.” *Ah, that moment on a Gulf of Mexico oilrig when Richard Linklater had that filmmaker-is-my-true-calling epiphany. Wonder when that was precisely. Should I tell Nick that I’m writing screenplays now? Nah, not yet; just sit on it for now.*

“Ed, I’m serious.”

“Ok, what was the vision in the dream, Nick?”

“It was a section of a topo map – a very detailed section – somewhere along Little River. I think it was up near Crannell. [3.4 miles – 5.47 km – north of the tavern] When I looked at it in the dream, a voice said that a nice-size gold nugget could be found at the confluence of two streams, and at a shallow depth”. *Oh, dear. He’s coming unglued again.*

“Ha! Not only a vision in a dream, but a vision with a voice in a dream. My dear pal, I think you now may be schizophrenic. There’s medication for it, Nick. My cousin in West Virginia is schizoid to the max. But, when he’s on his meds, he’s perfectly normal.” Ed then sank the 9-ball in the far side pocket. “Game, set, match.” *He sure is feeling his oats.*

“Ok, thanks for humoring me, Ed. I’ve got to roll. Here’s a fiver for that last beer.”

“So early? Don’t you want to see me put the smooth moves on our new bartender?” *More like drunken pestering.*

“Uh, no; that’s ok, Ed. Message me the highlights tomorrow.”

“I bet that you’re going to get a new 9-volt battery for your old metal detector?” *How did he guess?*

“Hey, good luck with V-ron.” *I know Nick. He’s up to something.*

“Thanks, buddy,” Ed said.

“See ya later.”

Nick exited the pub. He stopped at a convenience store on his way home. At 10:22 PM Nick was back in his pea-gravel driveway. The September (2016) night air was cool. Some moonlight tried to pierce through the overcast sky as he finger-pecked his smartphone. *Let's see ... \$1,447/troy ounce x 49 = \$70,903. Wow! \$71K. Time to go inside and examine topos on a larger screen.*

Soon Nick was on his semi-ancient desktop computer, honing in on enlarged topographic images along Little River. He sipped on a local dark beer and took a puff from his pipe. Then he advanced the zoomed-in area to the west. He was amazed at what he saw. *There it is! That's the junction of the streams! The exact angle! Those are the streams. The confluence mentioned in the dream is where Raccoon Creek merges into Little River. That's got to be it! No doubt about it. A perfect match – identical. Now, when is the best time to look for that nugget? Not sure if I'm going to be able to sleep now. Maybe slip out after midnight. The sky will be clearer then. Will have more moonlight. But, still bring a flashlight. And, don't forget the metal detector! Nor, the earphones. Can't take the truck, though. Nowhere to park it on Crannell Road. The cops would have it towed away in ten minutes. Let's see ... A mile and half [2.41 km] away. That's a little long – and would be very suspicious-looking – for a walk toting a metal detector. I know – I'll use the old mountain bike! Yeah, it will be perfect. I can stash it in the woods, just off the road. The bankside walk from there to the 'golden Y' is only 725 feet. [221 meters] Yep, we've got this.*

After consuming a microwaved frozen burrito, Nick strapped the metal detector to the top tube of his 15-speed bicycle frame. He let the earphones wrap around his neck like a scarf. The flashlight holster was clasped onto his belt. *We're all set. Fingers figuratively crossed. Nothing ventured, nothing gained. Plus some other clichés. 'And, he's off.'*

Nick pedaled hard. Only one vehicle passed him: a loud dually pickup truck. He would arrive at his bike-drop spot in 5:05. He then expeditiously tucked his green bicycle under some brush, about 20 feet (six meters) off the two-lane road. *First phase completed. A success. Next, a little riverside walk. 'Little River. Big winner.' Well, let's hope so.*

There was a faint fox path on the bank's edge. The walk was not difficult; the only obstacle was a fallen sycamore tree. Three minutes later Nick was staring at the sandbar that was

created by deposition from Raccoon Creek. *It's in that sandbar. I know it is. Looks like we may have to get wet. A pair of chilly feet will certainly be worth it.*

Nick began splashing his way across the calf-deep stream, utilizing slightly submerged boulders. But, he slipped into a hole and the water level rose above his kneecaps. He managed to keep his metal detector dry by holding it horizontally. Soon he was standing on the spit of sand, gravel, and sundry pebbles. *Woah! That water is cold!*

He donned the earphones and clicked on the metal detector. Nick began sweeping the coil back and forth just above the sandbar. No beeps. But then, 29 seconds later, a bold low tone. *That's it! That's got to be the nugget. The depth meter says that it's 20 inches [51 cm] down. That's deeper than expected. Damn! Forgot to bring a spade. Just use a stick.*

Nick noticed a fallen branch on the bank. He grabbed it and snapped it over his right thigh. *Nice tapered edge. Yeah, this should work just fine.*

After digging to a depth of about one foot (30 cm), he heard a dog barking. The hound was getting closer. *Wouldn't you know it! Just my luck – or, lack thereof. Guess I need to abandon the digging and hide. Where? Or, should I make a run for the road across the field. It's only 200 feet [61 meters] to that big curve. Yeah, let's get the hell out of here before we get charged with trespassing.*

Nick would safely make it to Crannell Road. He would also safely make it back to his bicycle, and back home.

While lying in his double bed, he thought about his next move. *I'll just go back there tomorrow night. Only this time, I'll bring that short shovel. I know where to dig, so I can leave the metal detector at home. Yeah, that's it. I'll have that nugget unearthed in two minutes max. I'll be in and out before Fido gets a whiff of my scent. Yeah, we've still got this; we're still bringing home the jackpot.*

Sleep finally overtook Nick's restless mind at 3:33 AM. He would not awake until noon. And, even then, Nick still felt groggy. He yawned and switched on the local TV news. An attractive, 30-something, Asian female reporter was interviewing an older Caucasian man who looked very much like the farmer in yesterday's dream. They were standing in a verdant pasture. *That field looks familiar. Eerily familiar.*

“And, exactly how much does it weigh?” the reporter asked as a gust of wind blew her long black bangs across her face.

“After it was all cleaned up, the nugget came in at 53.2 ounces,” [1,508 g] the farmer answered, brimming with pride.

“Now, what made you think to dig in that specific location?”  
*Oh, no. What’s this? No, don’t tell me ...*

“I had a vision; it was in my dream last night,” the beaming farmer replied. “I saw my good-luck canine, Leprechaun, digging down by the river where a tributary flows in from the north. I saw his claws scratching a yellowish rock. The rock was soft; his intense digging was leaving marks on it. Then I recognized the exact spot. After breakfast I headed out to the site. And, sure enough, Leprechaun had dug all the way down to a kidney-shaped three-pounder. All I really had to do was pluck it out.” *All ‘I’ really had to do was pluck it out.*

As a close-up of the gold nugget appeared, Nick disgustedly turned off the TV. *Un-fucking-believe-a-bull. [sic] Why did this have to happen to me? Face it, dunce; you blew it. Spectacularly. Won’t ever forget this. A once-in-a-lifetime chance. Is gone. Came up eight inches [20.3 cm] short. Just short of the goal line. And, eight minutes wanting. If I just would have had eight more minutes. If bad-luck Leprechaun would have just stayed asleep. If the wind would have blown east. If, if, if ... ‘Sorry, no grand prize for you, Nick van Pech.’*

Then Nick’s cell phone chirped. He had received a text message from Ed.

V-ron and I hit it off. Early and often. All night long. She’s one fine lady. She moved here from Portland – the other one – Maine. Oh, did you see the big local news story – the gold nugget found by the farmer? It was just on TV. If not, Google it. Now, get this – V-ron said that her friend sold the sheepdog to that farmer last year. Crazy, right? Any luck finding your gold nugget? Call me when you get a chance, prospector.

<bang>

Note: Other tales involving buried/hidden gold include *Gold, a summer story* (a deceptive, suspenseful, X-rated,

noiresque novel), *Gold, the short story* (PG-13 rated), and *The Mound* (a G-rated short story).