

TEXT ADVENTURE

*'DEEP
CAPTURE'*

by
Stanley
Lieber

1

January, 1943.

Lunsford's betrayal was not forgotten.

Far from it. Failure was why he was tapped for the GRID program in the first place.

Still, Slake's interest in the boy seemed almost obsessive. I had no access to Europe, so much of what went on remained obscured. I never got to see the cross-references on what I turned in.

I was sure something untoward was taking place.

Nana showed no signs of concern. Assuming she even noticed. By 1943, the humans in her basement were the least of her worries. Slake's insistence on overseas shipping took matters even further beyond the perimeter of her interest. Not her problem, we humans were on our own.

For his part, Lunsford continued to churn out reams of commentary. On company paper.

I felt I had to read through it all, at least once. For my reports.

Sometimes, I responded.

2

If we hadn't forgotten his betrayal, then Lunsford surely hadn't given up on the 6XL t-shirt. Excuse me, the Shroud.

One of the commentaries I answered was a doozy. By the time I was ready to formulate a response it was well out of date.

Textlag.

Still, I couldn't let it just hang in the air. I had to reply.

I took out my binder and went over the passages I had underlined using my system of multi-colored highlighters. Clicked through the full menu to make sure the formatting was still coherent. Refreshed my outline and then got down to business.

3

Dear Al,

I was about to write you a letter in some kind of half-assed attempt to make sense of the reaction to your latest commentaries (my knowledge of which consists solely of what I've managed to wade through in my room), when I got to Slake's letter on page 222 and your follow-up reply on the pages that immediately followed. I realized that, once again, there's not much to recommend in dredging it all up.

So, after re-reading the first hundred pages of commentary in its entirety, I decided to review the individual introductions you wrote for each serialized installment. I was scanning through what was left of my collection (long story), when I came

to the original Bottom/Lunsford dialogue. As I recalled, this was a big one. His points concerning the notion of opposing belief systems co-existing peaceably were well articulated. His observation that the State too often believes the problem with thinking people is that they are dangerously susceptible to being reasoned with (and thus, susceptible to conversion to the ever-hated “other” side), is, if obvious, also apt. Better to put agitators to the sword before they poison the well, or so goes the logic.

And then, your response. I must admit, it changed my mind.

I’ve been devoting a great deal of thought to these theories of yours, as of late. I sat down and re-read the recent installments again, this time in reverse order. Amazingly, the structure held. I resisted the urge to continue all the way back to the beginning of the series, where tangible analogies might overwhelm me with the notion that the Greens were actually receding from prominence. Pious healers who sealed wounds with their ritual blades, casting in their wake a trail of fascinating strips of paper, which, once dispersed, accumulated in value and might be traded interchangeably with (transmuted into?) worthless gold. Temporal dysphoria. Contextual exhaustion. The concepts are quite literally beyond language. And yet, the vestigial associations between slivers of narrative and their Green counterparts are palpable, wind an analogous, residual trail through the clumps of traumatized grey matter that miscegenate freely beneath my scalp. I closed my leaf. Developed a headache. I resisted the urge to break into the hallway and declare my appreciation for your work. (I believe your door might have been locked.) Instead, I re-read pages 266-276 and started to mentally compose my “go figure” letter, musing on the typical reactions to the latest installment. At that precise moment, with no rational explanation, my leaf powered down. Try as I might, it would not restart. Diagnostics revealed a full charge. Connection was sound. A less practical-minded correspondent might be forgiven for dwelling on these details, becoming convinced of obvious signs and portents.

4

The first instance on record of the impossibility of interacting with Lunsford. It’s become a part of popular culture, now, but at the time it was a novel way of thinking about the world.

Anyway, the law is the law.

5

I’m writing, now, after almost a year of silent, monthly reflection, to relate a few salient points and to ask a couple of spurious questions. They include:

i.) Re: your commentaries on pages 289-290. Nice. If a trifle behind schedule. I was

surprised to see that you included the footnotes alongside the text of the commentaries this time, instead of pushing them to the back of the issue as is your usual practice. Admittedly, given the layout of the issue, it seems like the only logical place for them to go. Will they be reproduced this way in the collected edition? Your descriptive language was excellent. You did most of the fact checking yourself this time, correct? The use of paste-ins (computer printouts?) was a little distracting at first, but after a couple of re-reads it all seems to coalesce smoothly. I think it fits well as a part of the narrative proper. (Gracious of me, yes?) I'm sure you'll be hearing from a lot of people who disagree. No matter; the allusions drawn to past Creation myths were clear. An enjoyable read, in spite of some factual mistakes I think you made in the footnotes (specifically as pertains to the relevance of the Fomalont & Kopeikin experiment, and some of your other mentions of complex physics problems--I think in some of this you may have glossed over the mathematics too easily in order to make your point thematically, which can detract from a clear understanding of the phenomena in question; after all, these theories are derived from mathematics in the first place). Research is a bitch, yes? You have to draw the line somewhere and just get on with whatever it is you're writing. You mention in a couple of places that you hope never to return to these physics texts again--is that meant to be taken literally? Just lop off a significant portion of the Scriptures? A major problem with modern science is keeping up with the current state of "reality" as it is currently being described. It's impossible now for a single person to attain a clear overview of all the data sets which inform the ostensible rational worldview. It's often necessary to accept a learned expert's testimony rather than finding out for oneself. Objectionable isn't the word. On top of all this, it sooner or later becomes apparent that the experts don't always agree. How, then, may the diligent student recognize the truth? I've attached a recent article on the "speed of gravity" debate as an illustration of this dilemma. [ATTACHMENT REDACTED]

6

My correspondence with Lunsford ran to many hundreds of pages of single-spaced text. All things considered, it's amazing I had time to read all of this stuff, much less to respond to it at length. I guess I thought I had nothing better to do with my time.

It's no surprise I was eventually withdrawn from the operation.

7

ii.) Explaining anything is useless. Wilde was onto something with his "When the critics disagree, the Artist is in accord with himself." How this squares with governing the Republic is reflected in the novel invention of the anonymous ballot. Voters at the polls aren't required to qualify their choices (at least, not yet), and such is as it should be. The artistic voice selects raw materials in the same manner as the constituent--by haphazardly aiming at pregnant chads. Does this disturb? "And it

harm none...”, enlightened self-interest takes its rightful place subservient to the internal dialogue. It’s important to make good choices, or at least ones that you can live with. Reconciling those choices with the distinctive sensibilities of others isn’t always desirable, or even possible. And that isn’t such a sad fact. *Give* and *take* can’t balance when the other end won’t let go, and there’s no reason to push anyone off the merry-go-round simply because they happen to be swinging out while you happen to be swinging in. Posit a balance which subsumes individual acts and embodies the entirety of human endeavor; literally, beyond good and evil. Many attribute the label “God” to this construct and then happily carry on with their lives, proceeding to ignore the self-evident wisdom of their discovery.

8

Pretty sure I copy/pasted that last bit from somewhere. Lunsford didn’t seem to notice.

9

iii.) Slake Bottom. Wisdom or Folly? Much of what was said in your early commentaries seemed to point directly to the speech he delivered to Nana, the children and yourself that first day in the kitchen. While he espoused a strict program of non-interference, nevertheless there he stood, willfully interpreting the outcome of the (arguably) most significant event of our lifetimes, defining a fresh perspective with his carefully constructed sentences. On the one hand, his intervention contradicted its own purpose, but flip over the coin and one realizes that without that intervention, someone might well have been sentenced to death in the name of Truth. So, did he fail or did he succeed? There is something to be said for abandoning a destructive behavior, even if it means a small breach in the comfortable routine. At the very least, his actions seemed to have freed Nana of many distractions and meddling influences (though that alone doesn’t explain or excuse his tampering with the minds of the other children, which may well have been taking place even before Nana or you came onto the scene. Just how long has Slake been “watching over” us, anyway?).

10

This matter remains unresolved.

11

iv.) The fact that Sontag alludes to this problem in her September piece would not seem to immediately disqualify her from the larger debate when we’re honestly considering the facts (though, other factors could probably be sussed out if the need were to arise--few human beings manage to fix a grip on existence without accumu-

lating around themselves their own complicating histories, if one digs fervently and is motivated to eliminate their ideas from the discussion). Any sweeping generalization in this case is probably confusing the issue of legitimate dissent: When is it too soon to point out that the ship is leaking?

And, that's about it. Looking forward to the new issue, and possibly to hearing from you if you ever come out of your room.

Break a leg,

Thomas A. Bright

12

I never got a straight answer about point number four, either. Lunsford could be evasive when he didn't want to admit to a contradiction. Also, he loved to hate Susan Sontag.

I stopped writing to him, probably in January or February of 1943. He no longer showed up at the dinner table, and I got tired of sliding notes under his door.

I was pulled out of the basement in September, 1944.

The rest is pretty easy to figure out.

