

# TEXT ADVENTURE

*' SPIRALS,  
PT. 2 '*

stanley lieber

## 1

Nana returned to the kitchen and inspected the three bowls, which remained much as they had always been, situated equidistant in the middle of the table.

In the first bowl resided the cold black liquid. Nana ignored this bowl out of hand.

On the other side of the table, the third bowl was filled with a soft white powder. Nana turned away from this bowl, as was her usual habit.

From within the second bowl, which lived precisely at the center of the table, there emanated a delay, a continuous interruption, an unresolved communication as to the nature of its contents. As always, its secret remained safe within the vast geography of the table.

Nana did not know what to say.

## 2

Slake pushed forward through the black water, stabbing slowly into the white sand. At this depth, the moonlight was uncertain. His chronometer registered the distance between markers as clouds of quartz emerged to surround his feet. He carried on with the march as his conscious mind, dodging obstacles, unspooled recent events.

*There must be some significance*, he insisted to himself.

Presently, Slake had become entangled in a patch of seaweed. Kicking away at the fronds, each of his boots had somehow shaken loose and were promptly swallowed by the darkness. Before he had perceived the attack the fronds had withdrawn.

Sat down on the sea floor and tried to clear his mind.

The child. And also, the woman. The decisions he had tried to avoid. Always, their eyes observed his indecision.

Everywhere, critics.

Bubbles collected along the inner veins of Slake's golden donkey helmet. He grasped at it frantically, tearing it from the gilded railing of his uniform. Purple follicles, visible in the rare glint of moonlight, trailed the latches and snaps as they gave way. His purple flesh contracted rapidly in the freezing black water. It hurt like Hell.

Slake needed oxygen.

Surrendering in kind, the helmet and his body both began to float upwards, towards the surface of the black water.

Nothing mattered, anymore.

Slake Bottom had ceased to presume.

### 3

Plinth Mold awoke in the room where he had been born.

Supple light.

Cold.

Absence of sensation, which was just as well.  
Scan through a book. Toss it in the trash.

Plinth pulled on his uniform and stumbled into the kitchen. Breakfast. Dishes clinking. Patterns on repeat.

Noticed the old woman spinning around with her utensils.

"Old woman."

Plinth's mother nodded and continued her work at the counter.

Then, reflect. Time.

Abort, breakfast half-finished. No time for review. Plinth drove to work.

At the office, confusion, turned back to the parking garage. Forgot his ID in the car. Can't you just scan—okay. Spiral down the stairs. Spiral up the stairs.

The day.

Later, drove back home. stumbled into the kitchen. The old woman, still hard at work.

The three bowls.

Plinth drummed the table with his fingers.

"Plinth."

Plinth nodded and continued to stare into space, tapping out his message on repeat. His finger tending to catch on the lace of the tablecloth.

"Don't disturb the bowls," said Nana, hovering with purpose near the center of the table.

Plinth nodded and continued openly to drum with exposed fingers, visibly dirtying the lace. His finger continued to catch.

Nana turned away, ignoring him, continued with her work.

Plinth knew exactly what he was doing.

Bowls began to sing.

Plinth nodded.

Spin.

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