

by Stanley Lieber

"The cook must be in love."

Still angry because the waiter had assumed he was a white man.

Plinth sighed and set down his fork. His shoulders sagged. "The median is the message," he conceded.

"Of course," agreed Plinth.

Both men laughed.

"All is buffering."

4

Ming produced from his shell a small projector, which he positioned at the center of the table and configured to display an aspect of Brandon's realm consistent with the ongoing passage of time.

Moving pictures.

Gradually, the image resolved. Plinth Mold leaned forward to examine its contents.

"Wretchedly literal. Painting the whole world green."

"Ffffffiiiiixxxx iiiiiitttt iiiinnnnnn pppppppooooosssttt..." erupted Ming.

"Black body radiation," Plinth remarked. "He's caught steam off headlines and co-signs. But there's no *there*, there."

Ming sat on his clam foot. He could only agree.

"Ah well. It's his problem now."

Plinth leaned back, interlocking his fingers behind his head.

"I mean."

"Right?"

5

Meal concluded, both men replaced their cutlery and napkins and made their excuses to leave.

Plinth took care of the check.

As Ming rolled away the tablecloth snagged in his mechanism. A raft of plates, forks, spoons, glasses of ice water, pitchers, garnishes, condiments, toothpicks, various chunks of picked over foodstuffs, and other various and sundry food-related items tumbled to the cheaply carpeted floor in disorganized fashion.

Revealed beneath the tablecloth was the usual assortment of bland disfigurements, including a vaguely relevant (for our purposes) inscription:

Who Is Buried In Plinth's Tomb?