

# TEXT ADVENTURE

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*DOUBT*

*IT.'*

by  
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Lieber

## 1

“First you get good, then you get crazy, then you get good and crazy.”

Albert Lunsford dispensed his wisdom to the children of the basement. Or so Lunsford dreamed.

“Wake up, kid.”

Slake nudged the boy, poking him in the shoulder with his side-arm. The boy just sort of laid there.

“Get up.”

“God, leave me alone.”

Slake banged his gun on the nightstand, causing Lunsford’s glass of water to tip over. It spilled onto his face.

“Hey!”

“Out of bed. You’re wanted in the kitchen.”

## 2

Nana had been busy programming diapers when the recruiter had made his presence known.

“Sit down, Lunsford.”

Albert sunk into a chair, resting his elbows on the table. He didn’t want to be there.

“Why is there a headhunter in my kitchen?”

“Nana, I don’t--”

Wrong.

“Don’t backsass me. Think. How did he get down here?”

Reel it out. Slowly. You can’t afford to be on punishment when you have to report for basic training.

“I... I let him in.”

Slake shook his head.

“Unacceptable!” Nana stamped her foot. It was clear now that she was angry. She shook her own head and passed Albert the gun. “Here. You take care of him. Like we practiced.”

Lunsford accepted the weapon and checked the command history. Logged out and then logged back in.

“Sorry, fella. Not interested.”

He squeezed his eyelids closed and pulled the trigger.

## 3

Royt Piper had heard all about the basement.

From headquarters. From no one in particular. The information coming out had been spotty, but a picture was starting to form. If the intel could be trusted, these basement dwellers had located the Shroud.

“There’s a signing bonus of thirty-five million dollars. BCT is a nine week stint in Vincennes. AIT is another six weeks up in Indianapolis. You’ll get good and tired of Indiana before you’re finished.”

“I believe you,” said Albert Lunsford.

“Thinspirators, Lunsford. Always lurking.”

“It’s plausible, at least,” said Albert.

“The Shroud definitely belonged to Isaac Newton. The material is a verified cotton blend. Plasmoids in the fibers indicate an early 18th century provenance. The inscription, obviously his words.”

“I said it sounded plausible.”

Royt held up the model Shroud. A 6XL t-shirt that drug the floor even as he stood balanced on the edge of the mattress.

“Read it,” he said.

Lunsford’s lips moved as he scanned the words. “I doubt it,” he mumbled, aloud.

“Good,” allowed Piper. “Reading is believing.”

#### 4

Albert folded up the complimentary replica Shroud and placed it carefully in his chest of drawers. He was suddenly feeling very tired. He told Royt he could crash in the empty room down the hall. He then climbed into his bed and turned out the light, his fading thoughts lingering upon his novel-in-progress. Nothing in his life seemed interesting enough to preserve in writing. Certainly not his job, or anything else that happened here in the basement. He resigned himself to fiction and promptly fell asleep.

#### 5

Nana mopped the kitchen floor.

Slake thought, *She seems overly concerned with keeping this place clean.* He leaned back in his chair and lit another cigarette.

“Albert. This is disappointing. Do you really not understand why we can’t have recruiters wandering in and out of the basement?”

Nana leaned on her mop, waiting for an answer. She glared at the ashes Slake flicked onto her floor.

“I--I suppose these men are predisposed to asking a lot of questions.”

“It’s not the questions that are a problem. It’s the paperwork. They’ll trip you up with what they write down.”

“No contracts,” offered Slake, in summary.

“No company will ever pay you enough to successfully sue them,” recited Albert, under his breath.

After a moment, Nana seemed pleased. Slake marked down his grade.

“Very good. Now, let’s get you into your jammies. it’s time for bed.”

Nana and Slake made sure the children were asleep before they locked down the hallway and made their way to Thomas' room.

Knocked on his door. The older boy was evidently still awake. He lay in his bed, staring at his ceiling, perhaps waiting for them to arrive. He signaled for them to enter.

"A diaper marketed to automatically upload its oracular interpretation of the child's feces," he suggested.

"Old news," said the old woman. "We've been using them for years. Hell, from what I understand, you used to wear them."

"Just an idea."

"Something has happened," stated Slake, serious as a library fire. "The Lunsford boy. Brought in a recruiter. Someone asking about the Shroud."

"Mein Gott. Did he sign anything?"

"Unknown at this time. Have to wait it out. That's the word from counsel."

"Not a great position to be in."

"Agreed."

Nana fidgeted, impatiently. "It doesn't matter if he's signed or not. He's still a minor."

"Won't much matter if they've gone and lowered the draft age again. Marketers working now don't even shave."

"Hm. Sounds like they're getting desperate, up top."

"This basement is still off-limits. Regardless of denomination."

And then: "Bah. Stupid shirt doesn't even fit."

## Notes

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