

# TEXT ADVENTURE

*'INFINITE  
SUB-  
BASEMENT'*

by  
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## 1

March, 1943.

Enough writing. Never get through to him anyway. More important crises to be dealt with.

Up top, war escalating.

Down here, subbasement refactoring. Features scale beyond maintainability. Nana will never admit it, but sometimes she can barely keep up with the changes. The sheer number of children results in a massive administrative overhead. No one could manage this alone, all by themselves. So, automation. Offload low-level maintenance to past graduates. Some of them humans. Back of the envelope calculation, resources will be exhausted by the end of the year.

Example: Just ran out of soda.

Elevator to subbasement seventeen. Always disorienting. Final shift into presence calls much into question. Six perspectives, simultaneous counterparts vying for dominance.

Hexapla.

Slake would be useful here, could help me move the racks, but he won't be back for several weeks. Overseas silence. Hasn't even opened his checkbook.

Careful work, navigate glass corridors.

Flags: -u, -v, -v.

Queasy, lost. Rooms all look the same. (There is only one room.) Hex walls, tearaway ceiling. Fadeaway outline. Eyes on my chronometer and back into the corridor.

I'm not alone, down here. Six of me argue the point. Failed notions strip weapons, then clothing. Try another room.

Which direction? Glass partition, infinite mirror. Walls don't lie, but consider the source.

Have to get out of here.

Back in the hallway. Lie on the reflecting floor, laminate quietly.

Some time later, an interruption. Nana on the intercom. Scolding that I'm late for... my...

...seventeenth birthday party. Abrupt context deflation. Flash perspective on subbasement seventeen. Hexapplication.

Return.

Oh God, I never thought of it that way before.

## 2

September, 1943.

Six months to the top level of the basement. Slow to rise, avoiding the bends.

Back at my standard depth, finally seeing things clearly.

Have to get out of this place.

"The infinite closet! You've been in the closet. Shouldn't have looked in that

closet.” Nana crosses her arms and taps her foot on the yellow linoleum floor, nervous and possibly angry. Her eyes drill into my face. I struggle to turn away. She keeps on repeating the phrase. Lyrics?

Feeling guilty, but what is she talking about? Didn't notice any closets down there. Unless she means...

“You saw the closet full of 6XL t-shirts? One for every day of the year? Just wait 'till you tell Lunsford.” Slake is laughing. Smoking indoors. Definitely back in town.

“Hush, Slake. Anything from that closet is endless. The t-shirts mean nothing to me. He should have remembered the soda. Now, no more details.”

Nana starts a flame on the stove. Produces a frying pan and a bottle of cooking oil. Adjusts the scan rate, then sweeps the contents of her wooden cutting board into the pan. Grips the handle with her apron.

The vegetables cook.

Slake starts to say something, clearly intended as sarcasm, but Nana pulls a hard face and he changes his mind. Brushes the ash from his lap and lights another cigarette.

He laughs again as the smoke alarm pierces Nana's fraudulent kitchen silence.

### 3

March, 1943.

No, not really the kitchen. Haven't moved. The floor hasn't changed a bit.

Face against the glass.

Legs click and I'm back on my feet, moving down the corridor towards the freezer.

Get really turned around in this place. Can't remember what I'm doing.

Go through a lot for a Gray Pop.

### 4

September, 4043.

Must be the t-shirts she mentioned.

Page through the hangers. Shrouds. Like Slake said, they're all identical. What else is in here?

“Not a closet.” The six of me, still arguing architecture.

Books, boxes of toys, old diskettes. A lot of other junk under the clothes. Some of it probably valuable, to somebody.

Finally, the rows of soda cans.

Scoop a few into my backpack. One in each pants pocket. As many as I can carry in my arms. Makes it awkward to walk.

Back in the corridor, floor slippery, scared of my own reflection.

Plaque on the elevator baring the legend: FAIL SAFELY. The plaque blinks knowingly, but I can't guarantee anything. Jab the button underneath, grab the cans before they bounce off the floor.

Gravity still wrong.

Fall down, lose a can.

Bell dings. Door opens on a stairway. Nana tosses down a snack from the kitchen but really, I'm not hungry. Portholes on the stairway. Outside, the stars. Space. Orbit.

Chronometer can't be right.

Can't remember what I was doing.

## 5

September, 1943.

Really am late for my party.

We're all at the table when Nana wheels out a cake. Ah, I don't know what to say.

Slake is here. Lunsford too. And the quiet boy, Plinth.

Conversations recede as each portion is distributed. Paging through our booklets. The occasional bite of icing. One of the interns straightens her pinafore.

Everyone is surprised when Plinth dings his wine glass and stands up to make a speech.

# Notes

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