

Midnight In the David Lynch Memorial Basement

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there is a guy who lives in an apartment complex. the complex is a series of 7 victorian buildings in mount airy (part of northwest philadelphia), and they are connected by a common basement. the walls of the apt complex are painted baby-girl pink, and the woodwork is baby-boy blue.

the David Lynch Memorial Basement: that's what we call it. it, too, is pink and blue, but in a more subversive manner. on one end of the basement (the side we enter), everything is fairly normal, although we immediately see that it is not kept as well as the other parts of the building. however, there are apartments here, as well; they cost less than the ones with full sized windows. we pass the building g elevator and walk through a double door. the difference is instantly noticeable: some of the tiles in the drop ceiling are missing or stained, revealing electrical wires that have been haphazardly spliced with black tape. there is a panel on the left hand side that holds all the phone connections in the building. it has been left open by a careless Bell of PA employee long ago, and nobody ever bothered to close it. we travel a bit further, toward the first bend in the hallway. here is the first fire door. these fire doors are old heavy doors of metal on rollers. they are held open by a series of pulleys and an object of sorts, sometimes sandbags, sometimes large iron rings, sometimes objects found on the side of the railroad tracks. the theory is that a fire will burn the rope, the object drops, the doors roll closed and contain the fire. fortunately, we have never needed to rely on them. there is a couple having sex on an old spring-style mattress in the apartment there. we walk passed, grinning at the sound of squeaks and moans and ohs and turn left, avoiding the deep pit that the maintenance men dug one day, then never got around to refilling. as we walk further into the depths of the Memorial Basement, the decor becomes more and more decrepit. the ducts now live, Brazil-like, on the outside of the walls, which have holes in them. bare bulbs illuminate the scene. one door opens into the parking garage, a huge chamber containing a number of cars, both living and dead. for reasons unknown to any living person, there are chains hanging from the 30 foot ceiling. we do not ask why, but rather return to our pink and blue haven, up the half-flight of stairs (and past another fire door). we are now in the space that exists between building c and building d. we are now at the laundry room. today we will not go past the laundry room, for we have reached the culmination of today's quest. past the laundry room are rows of doors, all sealed with drywall screws, the door handles removed. some of the doors are additionally secured with sheets of plywood, but in a few cases, both plywood and door have been pried off, and within lies entropy. but i see that you are not ready for that today. today we stop at the laundry room.

picture, then, a largish room, four washers deep and six dryers and four washers wide. on the wall by the door is a coke machine. on the left hand wall is a long table of the sort that one finds in churches, or elementary schools. there are several chairs scattered about. a number of the washers are running, and a large black woman is busily

overstuffing another. she smiles at us as we enter, and her small daughter holds her leg and watches us. she seems to want to say hi but doesn't know if she should. sitting at the table facing the wall is a man in sortof grayish beige ill-fitting clothing. he looks at the wall. he speaks, to himself alone. there are eight diet cokes lined up along the wall. he is drinking from the ninth. occasionally he speaks louder and scribbles something in a notebook. it is 1 am. He has been there since the afternoon. he will be there when the sun rises. he will be there tomorrow.

it is my opinion that this man is Thomas Pynchon.