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The Urth list — 3 messages, 2 voices, 05 Aug 1997

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Patri10629 — 05 Aug 1997, 23:11

Dear buds,

Would I be entirely a smart ass to admit that I loved that story that you are discussing in indimidating detail and am grateful for all the grey cells you are expending? Really. I have nothing to add. Other than "Wow!" To youse and Wolfe.

My wife has pnemonia (however you spell it) and forced to her bed has finally succumbed to my pestering and is 3/4s thru the LONG SUn books--she loves them.

Wonderful, eh?

THE DEATH OF DOCTOR ISLAND... is killing me as I speak. So Damn Beautiful.

best as always

Patrick

Alice Turner — 07 Aug 1997, 12:53 · follows Patri10629

This is my third attempt to send this post:

mantis,

I was so sure you were going to call me on Cim that I checked this a.m. and, yes, both Buck in CALL OF THE WILD and White Fang catch fish. Plus frozen salmon is a staple for the sled dogs. I've got other aguments too, but I guess I don't need 'em. Oh, and I found a scene in which a wolf pack pulls down a moose that may well be a model for the Nashwonk scene.

Instead, you want to make the Pamigaka boars. Hmmm. Round faces, jowly, small eyes, flat upturned noses, check. Snuffling, bristly, check. Short-handled tools with heavy, curved blades, bingo. Tusks. You win.

Okay, I'm not quite ready to tackle the Min. Let's talk some more about Cim instead. The murder of Fishcatcher that she talks about so artlessly is strange. It's the one killing that seems to have no motive at all. I'm going to assume that the endieva wands (which seem like super-cattle prods----actually there may not be more than one of them) are a human artifact and belong to the dogs because of the dogs' proximity to humans long ago. "Someone" hits Fishcatcher across the face with an endieva wand, Cim takes him to the Great Sleigh and grovels and they heal him not for his sake (noninterference) but for hers, because their presence has given her hope she wouldn't otherwise have. He gets well almost imediatey, and when he gets stronger still, "I struck him again"---do we infer that it was she who struck him the first time?---and he dies. Now she wants only to serve the Great Sleigh.

That's a very odd story, and may need a mantic interpretation.

I don't understand why she turns back, either. You'd think a dog would remain faithful, and would continue to want to be with people and serve them, as she did before. She does make rather a big deal of the lakes and rivers though, doesn't she? Maybe she's an otterhound? (joke) A Sealyham?

Moving on: the cubes are space food, more nourishing than bouillon but the same idea. "Kluy" is a rather Lindsay-sounding name, isn't it? The big warehouse-cave filled with junk actually reminds me of those sub-sub-sub-sub-cellars in C. Smith (see, I couldn't even get through this post without mentioning him?)

And no, how could I do a NYRSF piece on all this when it's you who, like Adam, named the animals? Why don't you? Of course it's 17 years after publication, but they're a little slow!!

Saving the Min, the robots, the dwarf, the staffs for another post.

-alga-

Alice Turner — 07 Aug 1997, 12:56 · follows Alice Turner

My second try with this one:

Whoa, mantis, you're going too fast, especially since one of my posts didn't get there in sequence. You can't get that mantic that fast, without even discussing the cave.

First, we don't know that all the Great Sleighers are "angels" or hierodules. Cutthroat sees only one with wings---and he is in a possibly hallucinatory state. He himself seems human enough, and you'd think that members of the three tribes that saw the Sleighers would have mentioned feathery types. Second, although it's true that Wolfe would have drafted the whole of TBOTNS (according to the Hartwell scenario) at the time that he wrote this, I think it's wrong to interpret one in the light of the other. Cutthroat is no Green Man, he's delirious from pain, exertion *and* lack of food, having shared his last cubes with Whiteapple and Crookedleg.

What is more, bloodshed really is not sinful in an aminal world. And these are animals, to themselves, and even to Cutthroat, unless he is lying to the Min (he might be). They seem human to him, so he cannot eat them (eventually, anyway), but one tribe does not seem human to another. (Of course this is true of the Tutsi and the Hutu apparently, too.)

This terraforming doesn't really compare with the coming of the New Sun either. That destroyed everything, to make a new beginning, a terrible act. This brings spring to a wintry planet. And Mantru certainly isn't analogous to the Autarch. That whole scene is quite wonderfully out of one of the pre-Golden Age pulps, oh, I don't know, Merrit or someone. Or Rider Haggard. One of those ones where the males are always dwarfs or some such and the females look like She, and there are deformed slaves and strange weapons, and the hero has a native sidekick and a beautiful native princess that he is rescuing.....whoops, did I just do a summary?

Okay, I'll be serious. On the night of the sixth day, Cim is kidnapped by four of the Min, on the chance that she might be a human woman. Cutthroat is injured with a weapon he doesn't see, and that remains in his body. He destroys his sail to bind his wound. With Cim's wand, he sets out after them. camping out overnight again.

He enters the Min cave on the eighth day and walks a long way, having an irrational feeling of

getting nearer the Great Sleigh, and another that his wound is not so serious. At last he sees light, but when he gets to it, he encounters a warren of vicious humanoid vampires who attack him. He beats them off with the wand, then watches them from an elevated crevice where he sleeps.

Two or three kilometers further, on the ninth day, he comes to what we later learn is an ancient underground warehouse. Machines stand around, and one speaks to him, then shows him food, carrying him on its head.

On the morning of the tenth day, a Min attacks him, but he uses the wand on its flesh part and disables it. He then notices that the street is damp--has it been washed? (Other streets are not damp.) Jeweled kluy flowers lead toward the center of the city, so thickly that they force him to the center of the road. A Min places a horned pole (covered with unreadable script) upright before him, and he grasps it. If he had dropped it, he thinks he would have been killed---but Min appear from everywhere and prostrate themselves before him. (Query: I take it this staff can be held only by a real human [the Min presumably held it in a non-felsh hand] but it certainly seems to be evil; what does that mean?) They lead him to a monstrous ramshackle palace---to "the place of judgment," "the abode of purity," because he is perfect, as they are not.

In a cushioned room is the fat dwarf Mantru (True Man) with a naked Cim Glowing chained to his chair (why do I think of Jabba the Hutt?) The dwarf says he will die. The Min want to repair his damaged lung, but he does not want to "be like you"---i.e. patched with machine parts. The Min, amused, says that is not what they are (Query: does this mean that, like Jonas, they are machines patched with human parts? Where did they get the parts from?) Cim thinks that they were flesh but multiplied their number by dividing their bodies and adding machinery, but the Min says no. The dwarf makes an analogy to a child who had entered a theater "half a minute before the final curtain" and understands nothing of what he sees. (Hey, me too, Mantru!)

Next there is the Ishi dialogue with the Min, which concludes, "Now you are happy because you see no difference between the beasts and yourself. But we will make you whole again." Cutthroat indicates where his choice lies by giving the wand to Cim. The Min speaks of "moral force," then of "various types of healing...Physical, mental, moral." Then he locks them into the room under the throneroom and lets Ketin in.

I'm going to skip a bit, since I noted before that Cutthroat is obviously making some moral choices here wrt Cim and Ketin. He is also, for the first time, acting like a real leader (could this---horrid thought---have something to do with the staff?) He says, pretty firmly that the dwarf did not order the Ketin scenario. Why did the vizier, then? And why don't the Min pursue them?

(Oh, here's something that belonged in the Cim post: when he asks her if Mantru was cruel, she says, "Not like Fishcatcher would have been," and Ketin says, "I think you deceive me--or are deceived yourself." What the hell does that mean?)

They escape, the machines begin to dismantle the palace. (The machines obey only real men, Cutthroat and the dwarf.) The Min pour out; one lays his weapon at Cutthroat's feet, they bargain, dwarf comes out. The dwarf speaks of his hunt for a human woman, and that as the beasts become more manlike his servants make mistakes that they would not "had they the radiations of my own mind for comparison." Cutthroat indicated that he is lying (or being evasive). (Query: What did Mantru really mean to say?)

Then Mantru has his line about human beings returning to "crush the beasts as we did of old and raise new cities to the stars." And C. says, "I understand, but we are leaving." And pulls on

his tunic, prompting the dwarf to attack him with the staff.

Staff battle, which Cim and Ketin cannot see, "taking place outside the ordinary world." These are nasty staffs of human manufacture. I think that the reason C. wins is that he is more human than the dwarf, and the reason he gets rid of it later is that he doesn't want to be that kind of human. He'd rather die...and maybe he does die.

And they leave and close the cave, sealing off the Min for a time at least.

So what does it mean? True Man has degenerated into a dwarf surrounded by cyborg servants, and holding a horrid staff of power? Is that what In the Wake of Man conjures up for Wolfe. (It seems increadingly neat that he has an animal name!) What's all that Min moral force stuff? What about the vampires, if not just for scenery?

I'm beat---hop to it, mantis. And where is Nutria? It's no fun bashing him if he's not around to snap back.

-alga-