

"Kevin Malone"

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 24 Feb 1999

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Roy C. Lackey — 24 Feb 1999, 22:36

I just finished re-re-reading "Kevin Malone", from Endangered Species. What I would like to know is: who did what to whom, and why? Is KM a ghost, or just what he purports to be?

Note that we again have an unnamed narrator, though most everyone else in the story is named. The narrator's wife is named Marcella. Is that name significant? Why does she repeatedly impugn her husband's masculinity? They are newlyweds, after all.

The story, though contemporary (published 1980), evokes, I think deliberately, the era of the 1920s, a la Fitzgerald. Marcella is an alcoholic, and her husband is not far behind. Both are shallow, vapid, and pretentious; basically useless people. The narrator questions their newfound circumstances; his wife accepts things as they are. The narrator is cast out of this Edenic life for questioning it; the wife remains, even if only as a maid, seemingly with the concurrence of all involved. What conclusion are we to draw from this?

The black and white, dog-eared photo he is twice shown of the staff shows some two dozen people, yet only about 1/4 that number appear in the story. Where are the rest? Does Marcella assume, in some sense, the role of the murdered Betty Malone? Were there other "young couples" before them?

What relationship did the murder victim have to KM? Neither KM nor Priest actually refer to her as KM's mother. The incident is related in response to a query about KM going to an orphanage. And what are we to make of the narrator's parting hunch that both murderer and victim being named Malone may be coincidental? Answers anyone?

Roy