

HUGE SPOILER - Kevin Malone

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 03 Mar 1999

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Tony Ellis — 03 Mar 1999, 10:56

If my personal reluctance to spell out the ending of a good story is making other people reluctant to post, or just plain annoyed, it's obviously time for me to stop standing on my principles and sit on them. Here's the explanation I posted to Roy: if you don't want "Kevin Malone" spoilt for you, look away now!

<START OF E-MAIL>

I hope these questions were not rhetorical. :-) If there was no child,
then who is Kevin Malone? Where did (does) the money come from to buy
and
maintain the estate?

Well, Kevin Malone tells us that he was an orphan and that he made his own fortune, and I don't see any reason to disbelieve him.

If any of the testimony of the narrative is to be
trusted, then a maid named Betty Malone was murdered and someone, who
may
or
may not have been the murderer, committed suicide in consequence
thereof.
Why was she murdered, and by whom?

Again, I don't see any reason not to go along with what we're told. The elder Mr Malone killed Betty Malone, and then himself. Why did he kill her? I don't think we're supposed to know for sure, and I don't think it

matters, but a lover's tiff seems a likely cause. Maybe he just didn't like women very much - as you say, there's a certain element of misogyny

to the story.

What bearing does that have on Kevin, or the current "young couple"?

The young couple are there, as is said, as stage properties, to recreate

the house as Malone remembers it. The twist is, those aren't -his- memories...

Possessed by whom or what? Spoil it for me, by private e-mail if you wish.

Kevin Malone is possessed by the elder Mr Malone. (Do we know his first name? Can't remember, but if not then I suspect it may well have been Kevin.) That monomaniacal desire to own the big house, to get back to his lost childhood, isn't his, it's Malone-the-servant's. That's why he could never be happy as master of the house: in the home he "remembers",

he slept in the servant's annexe.

The subtext of the story is "you can't go home again" - the quote from Tom Wolfe. I suspect - and this is pure conjecture - that the inspiration for this story was GW thinking to himself "...or can you? What if a man was rich enough to buy his own childhood home, and maintain it just as it was?"

...I could go on, but I think that once you understand the significance of the last line (and the last line in a good short story is -always- significant) the story speaks for itself. See what you think.

All the best!

<END OF E-MAIL>

Postscript: Peter Westlake sent me an e-mail in which he arrived at very

much the same conclusions, which reassures me a little that I know what I'm talking about for once. He adds the interesting idea that Marcella too has been possessed - by the ghost of Betty Malone. I'm going to have to re-re-re-re-re-re-re-re-read the story before I can decide one way or another on that one.

Post-postscript: while trying to convince Roy of my theory, I remembered

another telling point. Priest says that the body of Betty Malone was never found, and Malone immediately says that she was "buried on the estate." He seems very sure, doesn't he? <g>