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The Urth list — 3 messages, 3 voices, 27 May 1999

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/1645>

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Patri10629 — 27 May 1999, 02:40

In a message dated 5/26/99 6:33:51 PM, urth-errors at lists.best.com writes:

Timothy Reilly wrote:

Why does the Green Man tell Severian that Agia can be found "above ground"?

Isn't that just his way of saying she's alive? Or as a "plant man" could that be an insult? Plants being both above and below ground. Above ground being perverse...

Or am I being stupid?

Patrick

Timothy Reilly — 27 May 1999, 03:50 · follows Patri10629

----- MESSAGE urth.v027.n006.8 -----

From: Michael Andre-Driussi <mantis at sirius.com>
Subject: Re: (urth) Green Man
Date: Wed, 26 May 1999 15:51:19 -0700
MIME-Version: 1.0
Content-Type: text/plain; charset="us-ascii"
In-Reply-To: <199905260531.WAA20677 at lists1.best.com>

Hello Timothy Reilly!

You wrote:

Why does the Green Man tell Severian that Agia can be found "above ground"?

Since the Green Man can supposedly see into the future, and we have Severian's future in hand, the Green Man's phrase may relate to the mine at Saltus (which is the next place Severian will see her--"above ground" on the surface rather than "under ground" in the mine shaft), or, since this seems rather weak, it may refer to the widow's cabin in the mountains, where Agia comes down the stairs from the attic where she was hiding--definitely "above ground."

Still later, she comes down from the sky on a winged thing and plucks him up from behind enemy lines--come to think of it, that was "above ground," too.

Or maybe the Green Man is just bluffing.

=mantis=

Michael

Thanks for the welcome. I'm an admirer of your book too by the way.

All of the suggested explanations you made had occurred to me, but none of them really seem right, do they? I have read TBNS several times (it is the Book of Gold for me too, as for many others), and have always found this exchange puzzling. Since the scene is a crucial one - Severian then gives the Green Man the stone that will help him escape his imprisonment, and the Green Man is later among those who saves Severian in repayment - it seems odd that this exchange should be so meaningless. For some reason I was reminded of it when Apheta and the other hierogrammates were said to live underground on Yesod in The Urth of the New Sun, only being allowed to venture to the surface as a reward (also puzzling, for me at least).

Maybe, as you say the Green Man is bluffing - but surely a bluff would be more specific and less unhelpful than telling Severian that Agia is exactly where she would be expected to be ie "above ground". Similarly, if the Green Man is trying to help, then his advice is not at all helpful to Severian escaping Agia's later attempts at assassination, or at least so it seems to me. And in any event, he is responding to a question as to where Agia is now, rather than at some time in the future. Yet presumably the Green Man's words have some positive impact on Severian, because he gives him the stone thereafter. So I remain perplexed!

Regards
Tim

Michael Straight — 27 May 1999, 09:42 · follows Timothy Reilly

On Thu, 27 May 1999, Timothy Reilly wrote:

Maybe, as you say the Green Man is bluffing - but surely a bluff would be more specific and less unhelpful than telling Severian that Agia is exactly where she would be expected to be ie "above ground". Similarly, if the Green Man is trying to help, then his advice is not at all helpful to Severian escaping Agia's later attempts at assassination, or at least so it seems to me. And in any event, he is responding to a question as to where Agia is now, rather than at some time in the future. Yet presumably the Green Man's words have some positive impact on Severian, because he gives him the stone thereafter. So I remain perplexed!

I always thought that Severian gave him the stone out of compassion, not just as a reward for his services. Or if compassion is the wrong word, maybe respect, or perhaps out of dislike for the people who were keeping him captive.

-Rostrum