

Jonas's Distress

The Urth list — 3 messages, 3 voices, 28 May 1999

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/1650>

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Robert Borski — 28 May 1999, 20:35

<Now then, if we are back in the antechamber, again talking about Jonas, the central mystery seems to me to be: what is so upsetting to Jonas? It seems to be something(s) that the prisoners told him, rather than just an upwelling of empathy for their terrible situation. Why does he seem to take it so personally (again, moreso than just an empathetic surge along the lines of ". . . and I'm in the same situation as these poor bastards, I might as well be one of them")? Why does he become so panicked? (This is before the attack by the exultants.)>

mantis:

I've always felt that Jonas's emotional distress is predicated by his realization he's going to be imprisoned for a very long period--not simply seven generations worth of time, or seven times that, but possibly eons (depending on how long his metal parts hold up), a fact hammered even more severely home by his hearing the name Kim Lee Soong again and recalling exactly how long it's been since he last heard it. Not only does this mean he'll be condemned to spend entire centuries answering naive questions about the outside world, but that he'll never be able to return home--his most desired goal (well, maybe after nailing Jolenta). I'd be upset, anyway.

I'd also like to redirect your attention to something Jonas says in the antechamber. Confides he to Severian: "You told me once that you thought I had an unusual name. Kim Lee Soong would have been a very common kind of name when I was...a boy. A common name in places now sunk beneath the sea." The ellipsis in the second sentence is Wolfe's, not mine, and seems to imply, since robots don't have boyhoods, Jonas is searching for a mutually comprehensible term--one meaning an equivalently early time in his own life as a sentient tin can--hence his choice of "boy." And again he might well have acquired the information about KLS's popularity from Asiatic spacers, without ever having even been to Urth.

Robert Borski

Michael Andre-Driussi — 28 May 1999, 20:55 · follows Robert Borski

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That's a pretty good answer and we'll go with it. His panic seems almost like that of a claustrophobe suddenly confined--which fits with what you are saying. (Still, Jonas is usually

more direct in saying, "Ouch, that hurts!" in this case, something more like, "Holy caca, I'm going to fossilize in this joint!" rather than the more tangential method of talking about geneologies, generations, folklore about bees and honey, outlandish names, geological time frames, etc. <g> All of which add up to "hard time," but with a lot of weird baggage.)

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Right, I'm with you on the first point: boy as metaphor for the androidal equivalent. I thought he was from Urth, though. Can't remember where I got that idea . . . upon securing the notule he speaks of sailors having brought them "home" from the notule planet of origin, but this could be a less personal use of the word "home" than "[my] home." Lessee, where was the bit where Jonas talked about his "parents"? Doesn't he say somewhere his parent was a "craftsman"? (Ah, that would be Sears . . .)

=mantis=

Mark Millman — 29 May 1999, 10:15 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

" . . . when I was . . . a boy," says Jonas,
whose father was a craftsman.

Poor Pinocchio! He's a puppet again!

Mark Millman