

Jonas's parts

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 01 Jun 1999

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Roy C. Lackey — 01 Jun 1999, 15:46

On Mon, 31 May 1999 17:13:32, Mark Millman wrote:

I wonder, by the way (and I don't recall whether we've discussed this before) whether Jonas' distress mightn't be exacerbated because he used more human spare parts than was strictly necessary, in an attempt to pass more easily among the low-tech inhabitants of Urth. It's possible that his head wasn't badly (if at all) damaged, and that he's simply using a human face as camouflage. I realize that this raises questions, among others, of whether a robot's designer would put the CPU in its head or its torso, but assuming Jonas' is in his head, his continued existence would argue that his head couldn't have been very badly damaged.<<

The skimpy details we are given about the crash Jonas was in suggest that his repairs were of the emergency, field-variety. I don't think they were effected with an eye to passing for human -- what would have been the point? --, but human parts were all that were available. Jonas and the crew would have no way of knowing what the conditions were on Urth until after the crash and after his repairs had been made. The way that Jonas phrases it: "I needed his eyes and larynx, and I took some other parts." suggest that he might have used more biological parts than was strictly necessary. Besides the face and hand, descriptions of Jonas necessitate many more biological parts used. At least part of his torso is flesh. His breathing is mentioned several times; his face turns pale, his eyes tear and he sweats. The first two of these imply a cardio-pulmonary system. He may or may not actually eat, but he seems to ingest liquids. Waste functions are not described. The incorporation of all these biological elements in an android, even by a high-tech medical team under ideal conditions would be remarkable. To have such repairs made by "shipmates" -- if his shipmates were anything like the ignorant sailors Sev described on Tzad's ship -- under less-than-ideal conditions is incredible. And why would an android, regardless of where his "CPU" was located, need to sleep?

Sev adjusts his estimate of Jonas's age more than once -- always upward -- yet how old can he look, judging from the parts of flesh? 50, 60, 70 years? His face and hand are not described as looking like those of an old man. Has Jonas found the fountain of youth? We are not given any reason to believe so. How long ago did he crash? 30 years? 50? Longer? What became of the other crewmembers that were on the same ship that Jonas crashed on? Why did they scatter? How does someone such as Burgundofara or Purn ever get a chance to sign on board a ship? Why couldn't Jonas do the same, since he already knows the ropes, so to speak, and get back to the stars to be repaired?

Speaking of "other parts"; Jonas's love for Jolenta seems to be of the Eros, not Agape, sort. Even if she were willing, what could he have done about it? When Jonas tells Sev: "Don't you understand? I will come back for her when I have been repaired. When I am sane and whole.", he means when he has gotten rid of his disgusting, inferior biological parts. Sev's last words to Jonas were: "If I ever see Jolenta, I will tell her you once loved her, and nothing more." I guess that's why Sev nailed her within a day or so after getting out of the antechamber. Sure beats saying it with flowers! What a good friend.

Roy