

Tracking Song decoding

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 22 Oct 1997

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John Bishop — 22 Oct 1997, 14:23

I was re-reading saved digests (no, I _do_ have a life), and wanted to a) thank Alice Turner and =mantis= (and others) for the animal identities and b) disagree with them on said identities:

Alice says:

Nashwonk -- elk

Lenizee -- deer

Wiggikki -- wolves

Mimmunka -- lynx

Cim Glowing -- dog

=mantis= ditto:

Pamiguka -- boars (obviously right, once you hear it)

Cim Glowing -- mink

General consensus:

Ketin -- lion

General confusion:

Min -- Men (cyborgs) or Monkeys?

Mantru -- Man?

I had first wanted to mention the "fisher" or "fisher cat", a member of the weasel family like mink, but much larger. They are woods-dwellers, about the size of a small dog, and fierce and beautiful enough to qualify for Cim. They live around here (New Hampshire), where they are blamed for eating cats and small dogs.

However, I'll point out that we've been mostly working in the "Nearctic" context, where "Nearctic" comprises the northern parts of North America, Europe and Asia. All those areas have elk and wolf, etc. It's the snow that makes us do this, I think.

But lions are African, Middle Eastern or Asian. While Siberian tigers are strong, Ketin has a mane. He's also spoken of by the others in a way that makes the identification of Ketin as the "king of beasts", i.e. literally a lion, _panthera_leo_(?), hard to avoid. I think we are intended to so read him. That identification,

as well as that of the Pamiguka as wild pigs, seems solid. Consider the heavy curved knives--they are tushes/tusks.

This means the context isn't Nearctic. But that's good, as the "snow monkeys" don't work either unless we go south (or say they are squirrels). Given the echos of Kipling (i.e. Mowgli), I'd like to suggest India, but an India-with-snow. This has the advantage that we get the abominable snowman for free if we need him. And there are lions in India. They are quite rare now, but they used to be more common.

So I suggest:

Wiggikki -- wolves

Lenizee -- deer

Nashwonk -- buffalo (wild, not tame. Like the Nearctic bison in reputation, but unrelated). Big sharp strong horns, quite capable of catching and throwing a wolf. I thought of elephant, but they're just too big.

Pamiguka -- boars

Mimmunka -- leopard

Cim Glowing -- Some kind of mink/fisher--what's around in India? Mongoose?

Ketin ----- lion

Min ----- Monkeys

Finally, what about "I", the narrator? We've been saying he's human (but not angelic). I keep thinking that the name "Cutthroat" should be triggering something, but I don't know what.

I'd sure hate this to be another "narrator is dead" story. Once is clever, twice is repetition, third time is obsession.

-John

m.driussi — 23 Oct 1997, 00:15 · follows John Bishop

Reply: Item #2695614 from URTH at LISTS.BEST.COM@INET#

John Bishop,

Re: analogous location of land in TS (India vs. anywhere else), you raise good points. But also there is the terrain defined by a weather period--i.e., the fauna of ancient Europe (with Celts, Picts, Gauls as homo sapiens sapiens humans) was not the same as the fauna of ice age Europe (Irish Elk, Mammoth, Sabertoothed Tiger, Woolly Rhinoceros, Cave Lion, Cave Bear; with possibly a separate human species in Neanderthal co-existing alongside homo sapiens sapiens). And I think that TS is profoundly an Ice Age story . . . in fact, back when I

thought Cim Glowing was a bear I felt I had the whole thing within reach--because in ice age times the bear and the smilodon are emblems of north and south, winter and summer; the reason why Gilgamesh wears a lionskin (even when he's Herakles) and why the Ainu (aborigines of Japan) sacrifice bears as gods, et cetera, et cetera.

So throwing the hero in an arena with a lion and a bear, well! And to have him play "master of beasts" by getting them to co-operate so that everybody can escape, well-well!!

But Cim isn't a bear, alas!

(Since the land of TS is presumably not Earth/Urth, all our guesses are analogies in that respect. Right--the lighter gravity felt by Cutthroat . . . difficult to explain =that= away if he isn't an offworlder who fell off the Sleigh . . .)

=mantis=