

PEACE: enigma Doris, Cinderella electric

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 26 Oct 2000

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/2420>

Exported from an unofficial mirror of a public mailing list. Copyright in each message remains with the person who wrote it. Email addresses are obscured as `user at host`, the form the original archive published. This file was rebuilt from parsed fields rather than retained headers, so it is faithful in content but not byte-exact.

Michael Andre-Driussi — 26 Oct 2000, 09:39

What a day that was for President Den: Bill Batton with his clockwork orange, er, clockwork elephant; Eleanor Bold with her rather ominous request to plant a tree on his grave ("I'm not dead, I feel better--much better!"); and dinner with dog man Charles Turner!

Difficult to date this day, other than to say that Den is President (safe bet: age 50 to 60; wild range: age 41 to 60ish). Is it within the first few years of his Presidency, or say a dozen years in?

Some relatively short time after the dinner, Charlie Turner wrote his letter to Den, wherein we learn that they talked a lot about a new carny girl named Doris and tried to think up a happy solution for her situation. Charlie gives us the background info and then goes into "what happened next": as the picture develops we see that Doris is Cinderella.

Doris Cinderella
Mrs. Mason wicked step-mother
Arline Mason step-sister
Candy Mason step-sister
Tom Lavine Prince
Old Lady from Kilgore . . fairy godmother
Charlie Turner narrator/animal assistant*

(* Some versions of Cinderella have the girl's dead mother rather than a fairy god mother, and this mom often possesses the body of an animal, which then talks to and assists Cinderella.)

But this is a twisted version of Cinderella, where the poor girl gets beaten by the others and then commits suicide through electrocution.

(We can even see Charlie's motives for telling the tale: at first it seems like it would be the perfect set-up for a con job of one kind or another, a way to fleece a wealthy old man. But the death of the girl scuttles that notion, doesn't it?)

So easy! So obvious! So clear!

Ah, but the reference points to Den's life have been erased. Hence, the Doris enigma: who is she, or who does Den think she might be, that he cares so much about her?

Who is the woman in Den's life who looks like Carole Lombard?

If you think that dinner with Charlie happened twelve or more years after the Gold Hunt (nevermind what year of Presidency), then you might suspect that Doris is the daughter of Den and Sherry Gold.

If you think the dinner happened within a few years of the Gold Hunt, then (you assume that

Den became President shortly after the Gold Hunt, and) you might suspect that Doris is Sherry Gold herself.

If you are willing to think Doris is a daughter of Den, then maybe you can increase the field to include Lois as her possible mother.

Whoever she is, it is relatively easy for me to imagine the following: Charlie shows up to meet the (new) President, suggesting that Smart maintained some link to the carnies (perhaps he even inherited Tilly's invisible empire--is Charlie the emissary to visit their new king?); at the dinner, Den recognizes Doris in a photo; Den and Charlie try to plot a happy landing (so Charlie is a soft agent of Den); afterwards, Den arranges for some sort of help, the "fairy godmother" at least, maybe even a spy among the carnies as well; the agent arrives and buys Doris new clothes . . . but then the happy plot spins out of control and tragedy follows.

However, there are some readers (for instance Bill S. and Roy C. Lackey) who find Charlie's sudden appearance simply too weird to be true within the realistic frame. They think that Den is making it up: the visit, the dinner, the letter. It is all a vehicle to tell the tale he cannot bear to tell--well, I can agree with that part, but if Den is making things up, and people in the astral projection timeframe =can see and hear= the stuff he's making up (Bill Batton and Miss Birkhead both see Charlie at the factory), then it seems to me that rules seemingly established throughout the novel are being broken, or bent.

Which, in turn, might be a good thing: that Den is finally gaining mastery. After failing to convince Doctors V and B; etc.

The references within the Doris story seem to point every which way: "Doris" means "of the sea" (like the princess in her tower?), but it might be (if we stretch it really far) "d'Or" (of Gold).

"Arline" is an oath; "Candy" . . .

But "Mason," ach! That points to Litho, and Tilly. And all that bundle of associations. Invisible Empire stuff: Tilly had a second wife among the freaks? (Well, the wife we know of was a freak.) As Tilly's heir, Smart had a second wife among the freaks? (boggle)

Furthermore, dogman Charlie might somehow link back into "The Princess" story: remember how the prophesy about the child was delivered by a guy in wolf skins? But Charlie doesn't seem to play any part in "The Princess" story (which even Den links to Olivia) --he delivers the Cinderella story (which doesn't have a prophesy).

This funny dog detail causes further contortions: Bill S. wonders if Doris being electrocuted completes the prophesy regarding Princess Elaia "Fire will win her"; that whole bride burning thing again. Remember that Den was Sherry's third lover. Scary, scary!

In any event, the Doris story is another case where a fairy tale (this time a well-known European one) is being told as eye-witnessed in the 20th century, but the happy ending has been replaced with something very sad; but here the threads that might tie it all to Den's life (why he cares, why we should care) have been hopelessly tangled.

The tale becomes rather more like a TAT card (which are real, by the way: there are thirty of them with pictures, iirc, and one card that is blank) than the other cases I've expanded upon here, and the reader is both patient and doctor.

===

Well, that's all I wanted to say about fairy tales in PEACE. Next up: time lines (which is rather big) and the frame tale.

=mantis=

Roy C. Lackey — 26 Oct 2000, 14:30 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

mantis writes:

<<What a day that was for President Den: Bill Batton with his clockwork orange, er, clockwork elephant; Eleanor Bold with her rather ominous request to plant a tree on his grave ("I'm not dead, I feel better--much better!"); and dinner with dog man Charles Turner!>>

<<Difficult to date this day, other than to say that Den is President (safe bet: age 50 to 60; wild range: age 41 to 60ish). Is it within the first few years of his Presidency, or say a dozen years in?>>

Den said that he started to tell the Tilly Tale to Bill Batton "thirty-five or forty years" (135) after hearing it at age 9, therefore he can't be older than 49 on that day.

<<However, there are some readers (for instance Bill S. and Roy C. Lackey) who find Charlie's sudden appearance simply too weird to be true within the realistic frame. They think that Den is making it up: the visit, the dinner, the letter. It is all a vehicle to tell the tale he cannot bear to tell--well, I can agree with that part, but if Den is making things up, and people in the astral projection timeframe =can see and hear= the stuff he's making up (Bill Batton and Miss Birkhead both see Charlie at the factory), then it seems to me that rules seemingly established throughout the novel are being broken, or bent.>>

People in the astral projection timeframe *can* at least *hear* things Den makes up. At several points Den incorporates anachronisms into his conversations; e.g., giving Lois (in the 1950s) his future telephone number without an exchange prefix (162), which Ma Bell started doing in the 1960s; and when Sherry came to his apartment he asked her to forgive him for not standing up because "I have suffered a stroke resulting in partial paralysis of one leg." Sherry responds: "That's all _right_." (202)

Perhaps I should go ahead and post my timeline, such as it is, which will at least give us a starting point to argue from.

Roy