

PEACE mansion denizens & one stroke or two?

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 27 Oct 2000

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/2427>

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Michael Andre-Driussi — 27 Oct 2000, 09:16

Roy's post on the plural pronoun (re: the dishwasher) and the cigarettes, pointing to at least one other person living in the mansion, if true, also serves to validate Den's sense of being all alone in the frame tale (in contrast with a different state before).

Roy wrote:

If Den had a stroke related to Sherry's death, after becoming president, where was Sherry that he would even know of it? And why should her death provoke a stroke? She was about 25 years younger than him; did she die of natural causes? Was she in his home the night she died, living there in much the same capacity as Mab served his grandfather?

This brings up many good points. It also seems like an opportunity to raise the "one stroke or two medical emergencies?" tangle.

If Den had just the one stroke, and died of it (within, say, twelve hours), then we would have to place that stroke/Sherry's death at Den's age of 60+. And Den's astral visit to the doctors is about this one and only medical crisis.

OTOH, Dan French and Miss Birkhead seem to see Den's limp and know something of its history; Dan French expresses concern over Den's upcoming appointment to visit Dr. V. This suggests that Den had the stroke, then recovered enough to be able to work at the plant for some time (if we bar the idea that Den's frametale condition is projecting into the astral frame so that people can see it). This suggests there was the stroke/Sherry's death, and then a year or maybe several years later, a second medical crisis that proved fatal. This decouples Sherry's death from Den's age of 60+, and puts Den's age at time of stroke somewhere between 50 and 59.

(Then again: it is Miss Birkhead who can see the limp, which might be just another pointer to her psychic connection/walking regret condition. That is, if there is someone who can see the shadow of the future self, it might be such a person.)

=mantis=

Roy C. Lackey — 27 Oct 2000, 13:55 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

mantis wrote:

This brings up many good points. It also seems like an opportunity to raise the "one stroke or two medical emergencies?" tangle.

Wouldn't you know it; I just happened to have a piece more or less prepared on this topic! Unfortunately, it repeats some of the points mentioned by mantis, but I'm too lazy to change it.

Page numbers from the Berkley paperback, which runs from 1 to 246, if that helps anyone.

When Den wakes up on page 1, from sleep in his bed before the fire, it was not because Eleanor Bold's tree fell, as he makes clear. Nor was it, as is made clear later on when he complains that

he is "sicker, even, than I was this winter, before Eleanor Bold's tree fell" (181), to his Life-After-Death (LAD) that the tree woke him. For some unknown period of time he has been experiencing his LAD. The tree falling serves to tell us that he is dead, and that he has been dead for a long time, as is, not incidentally, everyone else in the book.

Yet his mind seems to be preoccupied with the effects of what he believes to have been a stroke. Whether we regard Den as some sort of revenant, a ghost or ghoul or whatnot with some sort of corporeal substance, or that his LAD is all cerebral, that he is an ethereal spook lost somewhere between Heaven and Hell, I feel equally certain, as certain as can the living, that dead people do not have strokes.

He can use one ax, but not the other. He drags one leg. He lights candles and fires. He eats, or claims to. He pulls weeds and flowers and vegetables in his garden for exercise (15), the same garden that was still locked in the weakening grip of winter a few pages before (2). Dead people do not do these things, and dead people do not get any deader, do not need advice on how to treat a stroke. Why, then, does he complain of one, and behave as if he is suffering the effects of one? Clearly a stroke has impressed itself on his mind at some time. He told Dr. Van Ness that he woke up with its effects the morning after Sherry Gold died (14). Whenever Sherry died, it was a long time ago, long before that elm tree was mature. There seems little recourse but to assume Weer had at least one stroke in his life, possibly two, the second of which led to his death, which would account for having a stroke on his mind whenever he woke to his LAD.

So was it one stroke or two? If one, then how to account for Dan French reporting that Den's secretary could tell when Den was tired, because he started to drag one leg (233), which is one of the symptoms he complains of in his LAD (78)? Did he recover from that stroke, only to die later of some other malady? If so, then why was that stroke on his mind in his LAD, rather than whatever malady that eventually killed him? If he recovered from that stroke, then he had to have had medical attention, hence no need for imaginary medical advice to treat it from Drs. Black and Van Ness. If two strokes, then when did he have the first? On the night that Sherry died? If so, then how much time passed between the strokes? Did he then recover from the first stroke, more or less completely, which would account for the leg dragging only when he was tired? Did he then have a second stroke, possibly years after the first, possibly right after hearing the Sidhe story from Dan French, the stroke which killed him, which was why he was unable to keep the doctor appointment he had for that afternoon, the reminder for which was nailed to his desk?

The two-stroke theory does not explain his claim that he had had only one stroke (14), that coming the night that Sherry died. I believe that Den died shortly after hearing Dan French's story, which is where the book ends. If that is correct, if he had a heart attack that afternoon (which is one of the things he fears on page 1), he may have lived long enough to have a stroke (often a consequence of heart trouble), which led to his death, which is why the subject was on his mind when he woke to his LAD. If Sherry died the night before this stroke, so much the better (for this theory <g>); knowledge of her death leading to the stroke. Note also that the enigmatic Miss Birkhead died the same day as the Dan French story. Coincidence?

As for the stroke/heart attack possibilities: Dr. V asked Den (when he questioned him about the symptoms of his future stroke) "Do you find it painful to move about? Very painful?" Den answered no. (14) But, on page 152, in the office in his house, Den writes "My side hurts so much I do not want to leave my chair. The label on the can says, 'For Den--Merry Christmas and Happy Memories from Dad', and I have forgotten in the pain what it contains." He had been wondering if he should buzz Miss Birkhead, because he thought he heard a door close. _Twice_ in that paragraph he asks "What if she should answer?"

This scene, I believe, is a reenactment of one which occurred at his real office, the day that Dan French told him the Sidhe story and Miss Birkhead died. He suffered a stroke/heart attack, which brought him real-life pain. He fears Miss Birkhead answering the buzzer instead of Miss Hadow, because he had just learned that Miss Birkhead was dead. If she answered--then he must be dead, too.

Roy