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The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 09 May 2001

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Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 09 May 2001, 15:22

Mantis wrote:

My sense, and I've only read the story one time, is that there is indeed something odd about the president: that he is "new," and his "newness" is not due to having just been elected. Something other than that.

Well, he's been through some kind of inauguration, but I can't find any statement of his being elected. OTOH, there's no direct hint that he wasn't.

He's worried about some future re-election, though.

One explanation that seems to me to fit all the facts: he was the vice-president and was elected when his predecessor's term ran out. (Weird variant: his predecessor was re-elected for a second term but died between the election and the inauguration.)

My feeling as I was reading was that he was perhaps some sort of usurper and/or doppelganger and/or otherwise unelected-to-the-Presidency.

Don't want to dismiss M's feelings, but I'd need evidence.

The "easiest" solution to all this seemed related to the alien dingus: that he had somehow used it to make himself president (yet he was seemingly already president when he got the dingus, so it couldn't have been at that moment without some serious timewarping going on).

Right, that won't work.

(Snip, cut.)

As for the timeline: my strong sense was that the Constitution has been suspended;

Huh -- no; there's an election scheduled, even if it isn't for a while.

the nation is in a state of emergency, martial law, perhaps even a new War Between the States.

Now THAT is an interesting point... In the previous American Civil War, there was a group among Northern Democrats who favored making peace with the South and letting them have their independence from the Union. And what was the common name for this group?

Why ... Copperheads ...

If the situation is as bad as I suggest, then it is obvious to everyone that there won't be an election in four years, and nobody expects "life as usual" to go on until the crisis is resolved.

I suppose it's not worth pointing out that no previous war has delayed a Presidential election by so much as one day?

There is talk about a fire in Idaho that cut short the presidential vacation. (The old president and others could have been killed in a fertilizer/fuel bombing--are you getting the contemporary details here?)

I got a whole different set of contemporary details -- when I read "fire in Idaho," I think of a mutated combination of Waco and Ruby Ridge. But then I'm just plain paranoid about Janet Reno...

Funny thing about the title: I immediately thought of the snake.

Yeah, me too.

But the way that the new president is fixated on that maple tree,

Not quite ...

"There was something in there, something under the leaves, and I guess my hand tightened on the Changer. It must have, because there you were."

Someone (sorry, I can't recall who) suggested a day or two ago that she'd been swapped in for a snake under the tree, and this makes sense to me.

Since there has just been a suicide (with a weird Vince Foster feel to it),

One of the (many) reasons I suspect this of being some kind of obscure anti-Clinton screed. It does indeed remind me of the Vince Foster thing, but then it seems to have little or nothing to do with the rest of the story.

This piece is very disjoint.

I supposed that the suicide was related to Copperhead herself (and her dalliance with the new president has a Monica feel to it, no?).

See previous comment.

What's with the barking trees and winding ram's horns?

I assume that's just Wolfe's way of saying "he's a in a very weird cognate of our reality."

I agree. I was reminded of the weird other world in George Macdonald's LILITH; that degree of weirdness.

Ummm... assuming for a moment that "Copperhead" is another world's Satan/tempter/snake/Lilith/Eve (some combination thereof), and that "dhose boyss" are its Cain and Abel ... doesn't it make sense to suppose that this is that world's Eden? Or perhaps its uh, wherever the postlapsarian Adam lived?

But is NP from Earth, or is he now coming home again, or is he from the other place and now visiting the third universe (a grand tour)?

I think Occam applies here. We have no reason to suppose he's from somewhere else and some reason (the fact that he was already President when the Changer was found) to think he's from "here."

Roy writes:

"Vhas a grouse.", I translate as "[He] Was a grouse." In American slang, a grouse is a person who habitually complains.

Dunno. I've seen "to grouse," a verb for a kind of habitual complaining, but I've never heard or seen a nominal form. MW on line only lists (as noun) the bird and "a complaint."

Other possible words might include "cruise," "crews," "cross," "grows," "gross," -- but the next statement, "nawt lak 'ou," clearly implies that she's talking about a person. "He was a grouse?" "He was cross [with her]?"

But why, I wonder, doesn't the "glorious" naked man speak with a similar accent...

... when Lilith grabbed the Changer and pressed the button, *she* exchanged the NP for the old Adam she disdained, who "grunted" over her, who is the very tall man at the end of the story. And he is a man, not God; Wolfe conflates the biblical passages alluded to so that it is the new Adam who does both the cursing and who "shall crush your head under my heel."

Umm... is it maybe both? You put the words there: "the new Adam." Who, in Pauline terms, is Christ, is the God-and-Man, and in fact the one who crushes the serpent's head underneath His heel.

--Blattid/Dan'l