

Two bugs and a snake

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 10 May 2001

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/2637>

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.

Roy C. Lackey — 10 May 2001, 21:13

Dan'I having written:

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.)

And mantis replying:

Now I've read "Copperhead" a second time and it seems clear that this is a very good case, perhaps the best case: NP was previously the vice president. The elected president died and this has perhaps thrown the country into something of a crisis or trauma reaction. It would help greatly if he was the victim of the murder that seems related to Jane Doe, but since NP brought Jane into this world, it cannot be that.

But maybe the NP was not vp. My sense of NP being something of a faker, like the guy in the Wolfe story who has a second life as a James Bond-type, is due to the constellation: "new," notes on how people can hear a smile, other veneer maintaining details. Except for the first, the newness, the others can be attributed to the pressure of the current and immediate crisis: NP is under a lot of pressure and has been under a strain for the past year or so.

The suicide is clearly related to Jane Doe. The murder, which already has Washington in uproar, must also be related somehow to the Presidency.

There is too much evidence in the story of an election-as-usual to support the theory that the NP came to the office through the back door, so to speak. He spent a year or so campaigning, the "TV showed him with Boone, with Boone and Marsha, with Boone at the convention.", and he refers to "my inauguration". IIRC, when LBJ succeeded JFK he was sworn in as president on the plane back to Washington. There was no inauguration, nor, I believe, has there ever been for a VP who came to the presidency upon the death of his predecessor. For that matter, I don't remember Ford having any sort of inauguration ceremony after Nixon resigned. Inauguration Day, since 1934, has been fixed as January 20 of the year following the presidential election.

Even if, somehow, NP had been elected only as VP, and the president-elect died sometime between the election and Inauguration Day, leaving the VP as the NP, complete with

ceremonies, that is a needless complication which would have no bearing on the story anyway. Whomever was president before the last election is also irrelevant.

The story takes place during about a six-hour time period during the second spring of the NP's term of office. GWB has been in office now for less than four months, it is his first spring in office, but he is no longer referred to as the "new" president. NP has been in office for close to a year longer than GWB has now, yet is still described as the new president. That oddity is all I was pointing out. The trouble in Spokane was a year before. The crash was 7-9 months ago. Lilith appeared 5-7 months ago. The murder must have occurred fairly recently, since her arrival, and the suicide just happened.

It seems safe to assume that the murder and suicide are related (those boys), that Lilith was complicitous one way or another to both, and that the NP also became sexually involved with her. That she was related to the murder is likely what is behind NP's exchange with Rance:

"You're watching her, or you're damned well supposed to be."

"We are." Rance said.

"A hell of a lot of good it did. Bring her here. Now!"

Obviously, something happened on Rance's watch that shouldn't have--the murder. I doubt that the identity of the victim is important to the story; what matters is that sexual jealousy fostered by her mere presence led to it. Whether Boone was the murderer or not isn't really important either; either way, he too fell victim to her wiles. As did the NP, which is why he doesn't want Marsha to see the suicide note. Even if he is not mentioned directly in it, the pattern will be obvious to anyone as close to the president as Marsha. He doesn't want her feelings hurt any more than they already are and, besides, if Marsha has any smarts at all, word might get back to his wife. Whatever his personal feelings for his wife, a sexual scandal, coming on top of all the other problems Lilith has brought, would be damaging to his chances for re-election, which is clearly on his mind.

That old snake is bad news!--which is why he was determined to be rid of her.

-Roy