

Alien Stones, spoilers

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 29 Jun 2001

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/2706>

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Michael Andre-Driussi — 29 Jun 2001, 08:44

For some strange reason I see this story in a very clear light right now.

Please forgive me if I belabor the obvious.

"Alien Stones" is quite dense. It is a braid of a few different stories/types of stories. In the past I've become bogged down in one or the other.

The primary story is a "Star Trek" (and I mean that in a loving way) sort of sf adventure about first contact. The empathy specialist goes on the landing party. Trying to get attention from the hiding aliens, he breaks some alien machinery. Then he is abducted. The captain and the empath's wife go on a search mission. The captain starts to figure it all out, and repairs a broken machine, at which point the weird zombie form of the empath shows up to say that first contact is over, both sides have to retreat to think it all over. The point of this story: the aliens are machine-based (evolved from radar arrays), and the empath, having no sense of non-biological forms, broke a machine (that is, unwittingly attacked an alien); to which the aliens responded in kind (by killing him). When the captain used his engineering skills to heal the break (repair the machine), again the aliens responded in kind by sending a repaired empath. The biological bias of sending an empath has been revealed, and the rift has been mended by the engineer, healer of machines.

There is also a PKD type of story about training starship cadets through virtual reality to become real ("virtuous"? well, competent) starship captains. Yes, like the Lewis Carroll "red king dreaming of a butterfly or visa versa," but in the PKD development. Who is real, the captain or the cadet? What does "is" mean in this context? <g> Which highlights a number of things, including the fact that biologicals use computers (machines) that blur things in this way (life/non-life), and perhaps the machine aliens have a biological analog (bios that they use as tools). The virtual reality, while not a "heaven," is still something that has aspects of angels/ghosts to it (the cadet offers advice), as well as "life is but a dream," sure.

There is also a strange romance of the captain and Helen, a tale of passion, obsession, and possible treachery. This story is jelled by the passages from the Bible (although the passages may also apply to the other "stories" within the story as well). The implication seems to be that the captain knowingly sent the empath to his death so that he could marry the widow, the coveted woman.

=mantis=

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Michael Straight — 29 Jun 2001, 15:47 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

On Fri, 29 Jun 2001, Michael Andre-Driussi wrote:

There is also a strange romance of the captain and Helen, a tale of passion, obsession, and possible treachery. This story is jelled by the passages from the Bible (although the passages may also apply to the other "stories" within the story as well). The implication seems to be that the captain knowingly sent the empath to his death so that he could marry the widow, the coveted woman.

Another point of the Bible story:

When the zombie empath shows up, the woman asks the aliens something like "Is that my husband?" And they say something like "The question is difficult. What is meant by 'is'?"

The passage from the Bible is where the Saducees, who do not believe in the resurrection, ask Jesus about a woman who has been widowed several times and remarries each time. In the resurrection, whose wife is she?

Thus: Is the empath still her husband if he's dead?

-Rostrum