

Notes on "Hour of Trust"

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 12 Feb 2002

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/2958>

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Roy C. Lackey — 12 Feb 2002, 20:40

I think mantis was on the right path to interpreting this story when he viewed the suicide-bomber tactics of the rebels as unacceptably barbaric. In the context of the story, I doubt that Wolfe's sympathies lay with either the de facto corporate government or the rebels. Neither side was "right", but one may have been more wrong than the other. Clio's final paragraph decrying the ethos of corporate America echoes Ben Free, who, I think, was expressing Wolfe's sentiments regarding the 20th century governmental/corporate stifling of individual initiative and freedom.

I think the words in the title of the story have been overlooked. To which hour, exactly, does it refer? The obvious answer is the hour of one's death. Two of the six members of the "ken-kins" choose to speak on camera before they "donate their bodies to Peace" (which is clearly doublespeak; the group spread out to maximize casualties). Of those two, the bearded young man, after giving his fuzzy-headed reasons for making his "donation", is asked by the interviewer if he is "stoned". Upon replying affirmatively, the interviewer says he doesn't look stoned, and the kid answers "Trust me." . Then the skinny girl, the "Jesus freak", is described as having "the large, trusting eyes of a fawn". Trust. None of the three ken-kins (is the hyphen there just because of the line break?) we are told anything about appear in any way noble or even well grounded in reality. They seem to have no common cause except a willingness to die and kill others in the process.

The bearded young man (naked, seemingly unarmed and speaking of peace) gained the trust of a soldier; that trust cost the soldier his life, shot by someone from the young man's own side. The young man is then shot in the back by a soldier, fortunately (for the soldiers) before he could blow himself up and cause the deaths of even more soldiers; after all, that's what the young man was there for. The soldiers who gathered around the girl violated her trust when they tried to rape her; but those fawn eyes were a mask; she expected that to happen and came wired for the occasion. The bald man attempted to get close enough to take out the quad-fifties by appearing to be a harmless nutcase. The officer who shot him would have to have been an idiot to have trusted to appearances. If the officer wasn't already aware of ken-kin tactics before that evening, he had just seen what happened with the girl. The barbarity of the rebels makes trust impossible.

Then there is Tredgold, who gets too much ink in the story to be ignored. He is the same age as Peters, but seems much older. He opens Peters' eyes to the realities of corporate life, and is at least partly responsible for Peters' change from a good corporation "yes" man at the beginning of the evening to the wannabe, boat-rocking corporate soldier at the end. (The irony is that Clio [who presumably is on the side of the rebels against the corporations] kills Peters when he continues to talk of making a difference, of exercising personal initiative to change the way corporations do things, right after lecturing him about what was wrong with corporations/big government--that they were mindless, bureaucratic entities who only wanted to preserve the status quo--which is what the rebels were rebelling against in the first place.) Right after joining the party Tredgold shouts to Virdon, who is outlining his battle plans on the vid screen; "Those

marks show where you are now, eh? But where shall you be in an hour?". Then he whispers to Peters "Well, we'll see, eh?". The answer, for Peters, is dead.

When the kid from Philadelphia hacked into the vid link, Peters expected to see a beard and "the conventional, exotic, vaguely erotic, jewelry" that was evidently common among the rebels. When Peters first saw Tredgold before the party, Tredgold was wearing "jade earrings and a (phallic) jade pendant". Coincidence? In a thirty-page Wolfe story? And Tredgold was in a dead-end job with his corporation, and knew it.

The story's title may also play off of Peter's failure to keep watch at Gethsemane, and Jesus's admonition to "not enter into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak".

-Roy