

PEACE: farmgirl Margaret Lorn and the Bell Witch

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 21 Oct 2002

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Michael Andre-Driussi — 21 Oct 2002, 18:41

I trust that Roy (and anybody else) can answer this quick question. It is quite possible we've been through this before and I've forgotten.

That Margie is sure a little vixen! The sequence with her and Weer at the farm (in section 2: "Olivia") is wonderfully like Tom Sawyer and Becky Thatcher, especially when they are in the cavernous barn and she is teasing him about the bad goat she is about to set loose against him -- then he discovers the egg. (Boy and girl, cave, treasure sought . . . it doesn't harm that Injun Jim and his cave is mentioned in section 5.)

The Bell Witch episode in the "Gold" section is another one: is she playing a trick on Weer, just like her goat trick, or is there a real ghost? As per my rule before, it is real, whether Margaret means it as a trick or not.

But my question is this: when did the Bell Witch scene happen? When the egg hunting party arrived, it was raining cats and dogs. I guess the hunters did spend the night; I guess the Bell Witch scene could be the next day before they left with the egg.

=mantis=

Roy C. Lackey — 21 Oct 2002, 22:06 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

mantis wrote:

The Bell Witch episode in the "Gold" section is another one: is she playing a trick on Weer, just like her goat trick, or is there a real ghost? As per my rule before, it is real, whether Margaret means it as a trick or not.

I think she is pulling his leg, just as she clearly was about the faces on the Chinese teapot. It's the reverse of the country bumpkin in the big city; the girl from the country is taking advantage of the city boy's ignorance of country ways to tease him. As a practical matter, most headstones to be found in rural cemeteries (of those grave markers to be actually made from stone), dating from the 19th century and earlier, tended to be simple slabs, usually no more than 6-8 inches thick. When the egg hunters arrived at the farmhouse, Den noted that there was no porch and "only a single high stone step". (91) That the step was "high" makes me doubt it was even a gravestone.

Also, the Lorn's strict religious observances make me doubt that they would desecrate a grave or use a gravestone for a doorstep. Neither do I think a strict country preacher would enlist the aid of a heathen "wise woman" to lay a ghost.

But my question is this: when did the Bell Witch scene happen? When the egg hunting party arrived, it was raining cats and dogs. I guess the hunters did spend the night; I guess the Bell Witch scene could be the next day before they left with the egg.

It almost has to have been the next day, although the ground would have been quite muddy. When Weer was looking for Blaine's new house it was "in an area that had been a farm when I was a boy, a farm I had passed, once, on my way to the Lorns', when Mr. Macafee and my aunt Olivia had gone to buy the wonderful egg". (171) The "once" makes it sound as though that was the only time Weer went to the Lorns' house.

My question is: what is a Bell Witch?

-Roy