

PEACE: Santa's magic

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 23 Oct 2002

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3504>

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Roy C. Lackey — 23 Oct 2002, 07:54

In one recent post mantis (aka, "I'm a lumberjack and I'm okay") wrote:
I confess I had never before seen that the Christmas book "from Santa" was the green book, the one and only book that serves Weer in the same oracular fashion that the brown book serves Severian in TBOTNS. Previously I had thought that "The Princess and Her Three Suitors" and "The Tale of ben Yahya and the Marid" were inventions by Weer to explain his life after the fact -- they are not. They are stories from the green book, which is the first book that Weer ever possessed, the first book he ever read on his own. The book is truly magical and the stories tell about the world around him: specifically about his aunt Olivia's courtship in the egg hunt and his own adventure in the gold hunt.

And in another post mantis wrote (of Santa):

In the present example [heh], I'm thinking of him as being a ghost, albeit of a higher order than most, and entirely benign. That is, his name was voiced and so he was summoned (this really is a critical key of PEACE), he did his magic without being heard or detected, he vanished.

[dismissing my argument for who switched the gifts]

Which is great for determining the switch of the water for the pearls! But it cannot explain the switch of the book (which presumably was a mundane book bought by one of the adults). The obvious switch of water for pearls is the cover for the more important switch; in a similar way the obsessive importance of the Christmas knife that Weer searches for is a cover for the magical origin and magical nature of the book.

Now, we both know that the "heavy, square package with its ribbons and trimmings somewhat crushed and flattened" (24) that grandpa showed Den just after midnight contained a book. Den and his mother arrived on Christmas Eve, having traveled by train. Della's Christmas shopping had been done in advance; the package trimmings got flattened from being packed for the trip. Della bought the book, as evidenced by the fact that she knew that "Santa" might bring Den one (21).

Are you seriously suggesting that the book Della bought for Den is not the "weighty book, bound in green buckram" that Den unwrapped on Christmas morning? That Santa Claus came down the chimney and switched books? **That Della didn't notice the switch?**

[of the toilet water and pearls]

(If grampa did do the switch, then it was clearly not premeditated, since he showed young Weer the situation at that time. Risky, if not stupid, of grampa to make the switch after showing Weer, since as a little kid he is very likely to blurt out what he knows, causing all sorts of trouble. From this standpoint it makes more sense for Della to make the switch, she not knowing that Weer and grampa had met in secret at around midnight.)

Fair enough; but regardless of who made the switch, the switch was made and Den knew about it, and apparently _didn't_ blab. There is no question about who bought the pearls; Mr. Elliot bought them. If he made the switch, only he and Den knew about it. If Della made the switch, then she, her father, and Den knew about it. And if Santa made the switch, then he had to have made a second visit to the Elliot home after Den and grandpa went to bed. Santa just doesn't have time for that kind of thing! And the nerve of that old elf, to go playing tricks like that on decent people, switching gifts that he didn't even bring! And Den and grandpa would still have known about the switch.

-Roy

Michael Andre-Driussi — 23 Oct 2002, 13:56 · follows Roy C. Lackey

Roy wrote:

Now, we both know that the "heavy, square package with its ribbons and trimmings somewhat crushed and flattened" (24) that grandpa showed Den just after midnight contained a book. Den and his mother arrived on Christmas Eve, having traveled by train. Della's Christmas shopping had been done in advance; the package trimmings got flattened from being packed for the trip. Della bought the book, as evidenced by the fact that she knew that "Santa" might bring Den one (21).

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Yep, that's the book switch as I see it. The book exterior looks exactly like the book that Della bought, and it is in the same squished box that she wrapped it in. Since I don't think that Della actually read the entire book before purchasing it, that is about as far as her detective powers could take her.

The book Della bought might even have been Lang's THE GREEN FAIRY BOOK, since Weer mentions this title early on, and since the stories (and the illos!) seem like they come from a Lang anthology, and, not the least, the title has that "green" in it. But I have read Lang's THE GREEN FAIRY BOOK (and I've overturned a few children's libraries unsuccessfully looking for those two stories -- sorry kids, I'm on a quest) and I'm certain that Weer's book is not Lang's.

(I suspect the green book has the Paul Bunyon story in it, too. Weer only mentions it in passing in the episode of hiking to the cave.)

Weer, beginning writer, is basically a reporter like his aunt Bella, he is not a forger like Lou Gold. He did not invent those green book stories, he read them.

And if Santa made the switch, then he had to have made a second visit to the Elliot home after Den and grandpa went to bed. Santa just doesn't have time for that kind of thing! And the nerve of that old elf, to go playing tricks like that on decent people, switching gifts that he didn't even bring!

Well, technically I think that Santa had not been there yet when grampa said he had, so Santa only made one trip. As for the time it takes, well, if a body isn't entirely physical, if one does not have to park the sleigh, grab the bag, crawl down the narrow soot-chute, et cetera, then it goes a lot quicker!

(LOL, the "okay lumberjack" ref. I was trying to work an imaginary "Lang's THE PLAID FAIRY BOOK" into the text above, but these . . . suspenders I'm wearing are so distracting.)

=mantis=