

PEACE: Sherry as Mrs. Ted Singer?

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 24 Oct 2002

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Michael Andre-Driussi — 24 Oct 2002, 23:19

Here's a wild thought: what if swinging Ted Singer did the honorable thing and married bad-girl Sherry Gold?

There has always been a strange link between the two in the text. When Sherry tells Ted, in the waiting room, "I've got . . ." many re-readers have voiced the opinion that while they expect her to be saying "I'm [pregnant]," given the sentence construction, she must be saying "I've got [v.d.]."

Sherry tells Weer that she has had sex with two "boys at school," but she may be lying about the age of one (one must be a school boy -- she wears next years graduation ring on a chain, iirc). Readers suspect that Sherry at 16 is pregnant because Dr. Van Ness says she is putting on weight.

Twenty-something Ted Singer has that memorable sequence about, basically, cruising along and picking up high-school girls like Melissa and/or Lisa and having sex with them.

Weer, for his part, has an ingrained habit of referring to women by their maiden names.

If Sherry is pregnant, by one of three fellows, Ted might well be her first choice to try and pressure into marriage.

If Sherry marries Ted, then we can see how Weer would know about her for the rest of her life.

As for what Sherry said in the waiting room, I think it was something like "I've got cancer." That is, the voice of 1970s Sherry is grafted on the image of 1950s Sherry, and the message of Sherry's impending death is there and Weer does not want to hear it.

Granted, this is all pretty vaporous. Except there is a haunting line about a female singer in the desert, which comes after . . . well look:

(Berkley 63; Doubleday 66)

Para beginning: "It is very hard for me to remember sometimes that my aunt Olivia is dead."

Next line: some sort of religious/philosophical argument between Aaron Gold and Ted Singer (which must have been before Aaron quit, i.e., before Weer had sex with Sherry).

Next para: about the birth of children.

Next para: about Ted Singer having sex with teenage girls.

Next para: about death. About seeing a woman in the desert, hearing her song as she moves

out of view, we wait for the next note but it does not come; we go to find her, there are only bones and rags.

This sequence, starting off with Olivia, then slewing around to Ted's argument with Sherry's brother, a seeming digression on the birth of children, then Ted's sexcapades (flowing from the birth part, as if to answer where they come from), and ending on a sad note about a female singer suddenly dying . . . well, it has a lot of weight to it.

Olivia's sudden death cast a long shadow over Weer's life, but the death of Sherry seems to have triggered his non-fatal yet debilitating stroke. Weer is very skittish about dealing with Sherry's death, since it also points to his own; so when he sees her in the waiting room he regresses her to the safe age of 16, etc.

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TEXTUAL VARIATION ALERT

In the hc it is "twenty . . . pounds underweight" (3).

In the Berkley pb it is "twenty . . . pounds overweight" (3).

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I'm certain we have talked in the past about the argument between Ted and Aaron as being about Sherry: I recall someone writing that the "religious" angle was probably something like "Keep your filthy goyim paws off my sister!" and the "philosophical" part was "Play the field around the plant like I do or I'll have you arrested for statutory rape!"

I don't recall if we've ever discussed Sherry as Mrs. Ted Singer, but if we have, please remind me! I'm ready to believe.

=mantis=

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StoneOx17 — 25 Oct 2002, 12:58 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

Mantis writes:

Here's a wild thought: what if swinging Ted Singer did the honorable thing and married bad-girl Sherry Gold?

But that same paragraph shows Ted marries Melissa. "... two-headed Ted and Lisa into which each less-than-half had vanished more or less utterly and (though the monster is not completely indissoluble still) never to reappear."

Despite the usual meaning of "the beast with two backs," the "never to reappear" makes it clear that in this case, Wolfe is talking about marriage and not just sex.

But I suspect that you're right that Ted was one of the boys Sherry slept with. Do we really know that Ted and Sherry weren't in high school together? Is there anything that puts Ted working with Aaron and Den in the same time frame as the Gold Hunt, and not a couple of years later, when Ted might be out of high school? Did Ted go to college? Would that be a job requirement?

-- Stone Ox