

# Three Fingers

The Urth list — 7 messages, 4 voices, 16 Mar 2003

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3901>

Exported from an unofficial mirror of a public mailing list. Copyright in each message remains with the person who wrote it. Email addresses are obscured as `user at host`, the form the original archive published. This file was rebuilt from parsed fields rather than retained headers, so it is faithful in content but not byte-exact.

---

Gareth Jelley — 16 Mar 2003, 00:38

Hello All,

I read 'Three Fingers' today, and I have to say I'm perplexed. That is my response :o) At least, that is all I can come up with, at this time... I thought it was an intriguing, well-written story, and it kept me reading, and I thought the confrontation at the end was very effective... But what did it mean? Or, what /could/ it mean? What do people think of it?

Very Best,

Gareth.

gjelley at btopenworld.com

---

Alice K. Turner — 17 Mar 2003, 05:23 · follows Gareth Jelley

From: "Gareth Jelley" <gjelley at btopenworld.com>

A fine Whorl surname, should you be inclined that way. Where is this story to be found?  
-alga

-----

We like March, his shoes are purple,  
He is new and high;  
Makes he mud for dog and peddler,  
Makes he forest dry.  
--E.D.

-----

I read 'Three Fingers' today, and I have to say I'm perplexed. That is my response :o) At least, that is all I can come up with, at this time... I thought it was an intriguing, well-written story, and it kept me reading, and I thought the confrontation at the end was very effective... But what did it mean? Or, what /could/ it mean? What do people think of it?

---

Michael Andre-Driussi — 17 Mar 2003, 15:01 · follows Alice K. Turner

The story is in THE ISLAND OF DOCTOR DEATH AND OTHER STORIES AND OTHER STORIES.

IIRC the story has been covered a bit here in the past -- you might check the archives and see what has been said.

=mantis=

---

Gareth Jelley — 17 Mar 2003, 19:49 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

From: "Michael Andre-Driussi" <mantis at siriusfiction.com>

The story is in THE ISLAND OF DOCTOR DEATH AND OTHER STORIES AND OTHER STORIES.

I've just finished 'Three Fingers', and am working my way through tloDDaOSaOS, in order. Each of the stories has been perplexing in its own way, but 'Three Fingers' left me more satisfied, perhaps, than others I've read so far.

I've read the archived messages, and I have to admit that I hadn't thought of them as Disney villains, specifically... I'd simply pictured them as sort-of generic bad-guys... The Disney link is no doubt there, it's just that there are certain things in stories that no matter how clearly sign-posted, I always miss.

But what do people think about this passage, and what it means?

"He tried to swallow it before she could get in another, and found that it had become a red jelly bean too, and went down easily."

Do you think it is supposed to imply that the boy's perceptions are changing, and that he is, thus, delusional? Or are his perceptions being changed. Is he mad, basically?

Is the whole denouement, basically, just a confrontation between three caring adults, and one mad child; and is the child, because he is delusional, imagining this confrontation in terms and codes and conventions that he is familiar with (and obsessed by)?

So all 'bad people' become bad people from cartoons, and all the nasty pills people use become the sweets, dangerous in the same way the sweets in Hansel-and-Gretel are dangerous?

I'm intrigued, anyway, and would be interested to hear from others :o)

Best,

G.

<http://scribeoflight.livejournal.com> - updated frequently

---

Michael Straight — 18 Mar 2003, 00:51 · follows Gareth Jelley

On Mon, 17 Mar 2003, Gareth Jelley wrote:

Do you think it is supposed to imply that the boy's perceptions are changing, and that he is, thus, delusional? Or are his perceptions being changed. Is he mad, basically?

Is the whole denouement, basically, just a confrontation between three caring adults, and one mad child; and is the child, because he is delusional, imagining this confrontation in terms and codes and conventions that he is familiar with (and obsessed by)?

The whole idea of ending a story with the revelation that the viewpoint character is insane and has hallucinated the whole story is so cliché and (usually) so sterile, that I'm tempted to read another meta-interpretation into the ending.

Perhaps we're supposed to imagine Wolfe turning in this story in which Disney is the villain, but Disney is too scary and powerful so the editor forces Wolfe to tack on a "not really, it's just the crazy delusion of a lunatic" ending.

Note that the very next story in the collection ("Death of Dr. Island"), is one which gets weirder and weirder for several pages, constantly forcing you to revise your hypotheses of where/when the protagonist is and what is going on and what sort of universe it is. The answer is that old cliché, that the protagonist is insane and in a mental institution -- except the twist is that none of the weirdness is the protagonist's delusion.

-Rostrum

---

Gareth Jelley — 18 Mar 2003, 01:10 · follows Michael Straight

From: "Michael Straight" <straight at email.unc.edu>

Note that the very next story in the collection ("Death of Dr. Island"), is one which gets weirder and weirder for several pages, constantly forcing you to revise your hypotheses of where/when the protagonist is and what is going on and what sort of universe it is. The answer is that old cliché, that the protagonist is insane and in a mental institution -- except the twist is that none of the weirdness is the protagonist's delusion.

I haven't read that one yet :o)

I don't mind about Spoilers. Thankfully ;o)

re: delusions - I don't think that /is/ an answer, or plausible reading, but it struck me as being one way to explain what is going on...

Personally, I've got no idea how to read it - the most plausible reading seems to be that we're supposed to be left clueless. A reading which can be applied to many of Wolfe's stories.

Best,

G.

---

Gareth Jelley — 18 Mar 2003, 22:56 · follows Gareth Jelley

From: "Alice K. Turner" <aturner6 at nyc.rr.com>

A fine Whorl surname, should you be inclined that way. Where is this story to be found?

What would I need do to be inclined that way? I'm perplexed :o)

But yes, it is an intriiiiiguing surname, to say the least :o)

Best,

G.