

# Jonas & Hethor

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 18 Mar 1998

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m.driussi — 18 Mar 1998, 06:28

Reply: Item #3591065 from URTN at LISTS.BEST.COM@INET02#

Tony Elis,

You're right, of course--I'm making the whole thing up.

There's so much tangled here, I hardly know where to start. Belabor the obvious? Shorthand a detail covered in an essay somewhere?

Is it understood that certain prisoners are n-th generation ship crew? Is this unclear? The death of "the navigator," (II, ch. 16) yes? Why would an entire crew be wandering around the Gardens of the House Absolute together? Is there such a thing as "simple unconnected coincidence" within the elaborate labyrinth of a Wolfe fiction? We have ancient mariners, we have prisoners descended from sailors . . .

(How many old men poling on the Lake of Birds? You don't suppose that was the =same= old man on hand after Severian's near drowning [I, ch. 2], asking about seeing a woman underwater?)

Is it understood that both Jonas and Hethor are sailors of great age?

Is it understood that Hethor is being very crafty in keeping Jonas from seeing him, even when the two characters are seemingly in the same scene? For instance, at the Wall of Nessus. That if Jonas were to see Hethor he would be able to blurt out the terrible secret? Even Severian (one time, that means "penultimate level hint"; because the ultimate level hints are =things not shown yet sensed by their absence=) notices this avoidance, and wonders =if they served on the same ship= (III, ch. 16).

Is it understood that Hethor has spent time on starship Tzadkiel? (IV, ch. 4). That the most likely source of Hethor's magic mirrors is that he stole them from Yesod, making him a sort of Prometheus?

Is there any real doubt that "Fortunate Cloud" and "Quasar" are different translations of the same anciently named ship? (The 20th century term "quasar" is for a quasi-stellar object, i.e., somewhat "cloudlike"--and at least one quasar has been clocked moving away from Earth at a very interesting 94.4% of the speed of light [Emiliani, THE SCIENTIFIC COMPANION, p. 90].) The principle here (multiple names) is exactly that of "canna" in THE BOOK OF THE LONG SUN as "the least revealing name for a PM [propulsion module]" (IV, ch. 12). Those coincidences just keep on piling up.

Is it understood that Hethor's real name is "a much older one, that hardly anyone has heard of now" (III, ch. 16)? How many ancient names in TBOTNS fit that specification? Does Severian

draw a blank at "Robert," "Marie," or "Isangoma"? Nope. How about "Catherine"? Nope. Confusion on "Urvashi" or "Pururavas" (I, ch. 19)? It seems not. Does he draw a blank on "kimleesoong"? Yep.

Re: the Shepherd of Jonas. Rather than argue, let me turn the tables and praise you for your brilliant conceit: yes, of =course= the stricken man-on-the-ground was a =soldier= . . . hence =Miles=!

But nah, I can go to all this effort and more, with the same results. You won't believe my reading and I'm not interested in forcing you or anybody else to believe my reading.

You're right, of course--I'm making the whole thing up.

=mantis=

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C R Culver — 18 Mar 1998, 20:33 · follows m.driussi

Mantis said:

Is there such a thing as "simple unconnected coincidence" within the elaborate labyrinth of a Wolfe fiction?<

No, that's also why I think Jonas speaks Korean, because Korea was mentioned in the following chapters.

Is it understood that Hethor's real name is "a much older one, that hardly anyone has heard of now"<

The first time I read that, I thought his original name was Hector. I hope I'm not the only one...

Re: the Shepherd of Jonas. Rather than argue, let me turn the tables and praise you for your brilliant conceit: yes, of =course= the stricken man-on-the-ground was a =soldier= . . . hence =Miles=!<

Speaking of the relationship between Jonas and Miles opens up another can of worms. I'll post something soon about my hypotheses and sit back whilst you all laugh them off the face of the Urth...err, Earth.

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<http://members.aol.com/crculver/index.html>