

mountain and laundress

The Urth list — 3 messages, 3 voices, 20 Oct 2008

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5188>

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Marc Aramini — 20 Oct 2008, 01:50

I normally don't think looking at other texts is extremely enlightening for Wolfe's works but I feel differently for Evil Guest. I happened to be looking on my computer and came across "someone comes to town someone leaves town" and started reading it. It had a blurb from Wolfe and in the opening it says:
"Alan's father was a mountain and his mother was a washing machine... his brothers were a dead man, a trio of nesting dolls, a fortune teller, and an island."

Have not read it yet but that struck me.

Dave Tallman — 20 Oct 2008, 17:39 · follows Marc Aramini

Marc Aramini wrote:

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"Alan's father was a mountain and his mother was a washing machine... his brothers were a dead man, a trio of nesting dolls, a fortune teller, and an island."

I think you've nailed it with this reference. I took a quick look at the online html version of this book: http://craphound.com/someone/Cory_Doctorow_-_Someone_Comes_to_Town_Someone_Leaves_Town.htm and it's a perfect fit.

- 1) The mountain quakes when it's angry.
- 2) There are gnomes and golems in its caves.
- 3) The setting is near Toronto, Canada. (The protagonist goes to Willowdale, a suburb of Toronto, at one point).
- 4) The nearest large mountain to Toronto is Blue Mountain. There is a trek to the summit which takes about 2.5 hours on foot.
- 5) The mother of Alan and his siblings is a literal washing machine. His father is a mountain.

With this mystery settled, there is no longer any real connection to Margaret as a laundress. However, I do think she is a werewolf and a spy.

- 1) The initials M.B. match Mariah Brownlea, and as Cassie remarks Mariah believes in God but Cassie does not. The matching initials suggest to me that Margaret's religion is likewise an act.
- 2) There's the clue of the werewolf's loping gait -- does any other character have a unique walk described? (Margaret bobs along).
- 3) She is gray and colorless.
- 4) Something happened to Alexa right before Margaret started working for Cassie. ("I see you know.")
- 5) She avoids an obvious word when misreporting the name of Sharon Bench as "Ladydog." As a werewolf female she might be sensitive to this word.
- 6) Her kidnapping might be the work of another faction to get her out of the way. One of the

kidnappers seems to wear werewolf colors.

7) The fingering of the upstairs neighbor for the Squid God's killers could well be her work. How else would the assassin know that Cassie even knew his name?

8) She had the opportunity to go after Jimmy and scare him to death when she was sent for the stage manager. She seems to pick up on Jimmy's death too quickly.

9) Cassie doesn't call her from the South Seas, unlike her other friends. Could Chase's warnings of the marks of a werewolf have caused her to suspect Margaret?

Gwern Branwen — 04 Jan 2010, 05:50 · in reply to Dave Tallman

On Mon, Oct 20, 2008 at 12:39 PM, Dave Tallman <davetallman at msn.com> wrote:
Marc Aramini wrote:

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Seconded. Reading through, the very first time, even before the rumbling was mentioned, I thought, 'Didn't I read a story with that already?' I didn't even need to look up Doctorow's book to check.

gwern