

"Good-bye Old Buddy" -- a murder mystery in Pirate Freedom

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 27 Nov 2008

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Dave Tallman — 27 Nov 2008, 14:20

The discovery of the body of Valentin and his dog Francine in the cave on Hispaniola (p. 204-205) leaves the reader with a mystery. Who killed Valentin?

1. Suicide is suggested, but with the musket Valentin at last had hope for a better life. He would have had to kill his dog, too.
2. It had to be someone who knew about the cave. Chris told nobody else.
3. It could not be a random buccaneer who stumbled on the place, because he would have taken the musket.
4. It was probably not Lesage, because the death was by a quick shot to the head rather than beating Valentin to death (p. 85).

This murder has the fingerprints of a time-traveler all over it. The killer has to be Chris2, aka Ignacio. This is one of the worst of his killings, because the man saved his life when he first arrived in Hispaniola. Ignacio knew that Valentin would come to the cave and he was there waiting for him with the musket. He converted his own generous gift into a deadly trap. When Chris says "If you had asked me then, I would have said Valentin would be joining us in a few days... Now I wish he had" (p. 92), he reveals his guilt and regret.

Why did he do this? I believe the answer is to enlist the help of Lesage. Ignacio needed Lesage for various important actions, and he had a reward for him in each case based on his future knowledge.

1. Help get Chris voted in as captain of the /Windward/, and get his gun for him (p. 64). His reward: Lesage ends up as captain of the /Windward/.
2. Using the "Windward", transport Ignacio around Hispaniola so that he can kill Gagne by a simultaneous shot from hiding when Chris duels him (p. 90). (That shot was too lucky for the inexperienced Chris). His reward: the life of Valentin. Ignacio probably did it himself to spare Valentin a cruel death.
3. Put out a reward for Valentin much later (p. 204), to throw Chris1 off track. Lesage knew he would never have to pay it. His reward: a lead to capture a three-masted ship (probably the wounded Santa Lucia) (p. 197).
4. Get to Rio Hato and betray Bram Burt, so that Chris and Novia will end up in Veracruz with the treasure maps. Ignacio probably didn't suggest the betrayal himself (since he thought about avenging it), but he gave Lesage the information to be in the right place at the right time. The big hole in Lesage's story (p. 302) was that he knew about Portobello. If he learned about it through Harker, then Harker would have come with him (p. 228). But Lesage showed up

without Harker.

These actions show the moral degradation of Ignacio is complete -- he's a monster. Chris didn't start out that way. It took great moral courage to say "I won't take part" (p. 78) when he knew being marooned was an almost certain death-sentence (p. 61). He was corrupted by his desire for Novia and for a life of "pirate freedom."