

Urth Digest, Vol 65, Issue 6, the fate of Lois

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 24 Feb 2010

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5547>

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blackwilbo at cs.com — 24 Feb 2010, 05:21

Peace: While digging in a pit for the treasure, Weer's shovel it's a rock

and gives off a spark. Lois thinks it's the treasure and pulls her little (hidden) pistol. The next thing we learn from Weer is that Lois has left town. Do you believe that? I don't. He buried her in that pit.

I've been looking at Dougherty's telling of the tale of St. Brandon. It's an allegory of relationship of Den and Lois. St. Brandon is Den's good side, the king of the rats is his dark side, and Pussy is Lois. Brandon's ship is the ship of matrimony and signing the ship's articles is the marriage ceremony. They marry, quarrel a lot (Pussy vs. king of the rats) and after 2 or 3 years she leaves him. About 2 weeks after that, he goes to see Louis Gold.

This is not coming out of thin air. All the other details match up. Verifying that is left as an exercise for the reader.:-)

blackwilbo

-----Original Message-----

From: urth-request at lists.urth.net

To: urth at lists.urth.net

Sent: Thu, Jan 7, 2010 2:17 pm

Subject: Urth Digest, Vol 65, Issue 6

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Today's Topics:

1. Re: An Evil Guest: gold hunting (Gwern Branwen)

Message: 1

Date: Wed, 6 Jan 2010 19:13:06 -0500

From: Gwern Branwen <gwern0 at gmail.com>

To: The Urth Mailing List <urth at lists.urth.net>

Subject: Re: (urth) An Evil Guest: gold hunting

Message-ID:

<cbf55b101001061613q28c1f3f6rf7ab7da5f5c9ab66 at mail.gmail.com>

Content-Type: text/plain; charset=UTF-8

On Wed, Jan 6, 2010 at 11:27 AM, James Wynn <crushtv at gmail.com> wrote:
But we're not given any feeling like 'go there, stay, and shut up'. We really are given the feeling of a not-so-efficient aid agency pensioning off a worker in a cheap island paradise until he finally kicks the bucket:

Neither. Baden is given idea that he is being sent on a particularly unpleasant assignment. An assignment he would only take because the other choice is firing. The tone of his boss while giving him the assignment is pity. And I don't mean pity because he's an alcoholic or had a breakdown, whatever it was. I mean pity because he's being given the assignment and she knows he'll take it.

It's pity because she knows he doesn't deserve the job but he's getting it for old time's sake. Like nepotism. It's not pity like ending a man off to die. When one does that, one is more serious & somber - one doesn't solicitously lean forward and make as if to squeeze or hold hands.

Note that Baden's room is essentially free, his board minimal, and he otherwise isn't a drain on the agency; probably one or two hospital stays in the US would exceed the cost of sending and supporting Baden there. Retirees go to tropical 3rd World countries for reasons beyond the weather, y'know.

But he's almost certainly not of retirement age, and even Baden thought the most reasonable course for dealing with him was termination. Assigning him to the island means they still have to pay his salary. Even charity aid workers don't live on adjusted per diem. They get full yearly salaries. Probably with a bonus for out-of-country service. The idea that an NGO would or could maroon an employee to a remote island to avoid medical expenses strikes me itself as a plot for a speculative fiction story. So I would have expected some exposition to justify it.

They'd still have to pay him unless they fired him: "Permanent sick leave." Sick leaves usually are compensated in some way*, although I don't know how much they'd have to pay him. If you won't countenance outright firing, and he's not bedridden enough to justify sick leave, then you need to find a sinecure for him. A remote island with nothing for him to do is perfect.

* one person tells me they understand in the UK it's something like 6 months at full salary, then half-pay afterwards

He's told that he is to be on the island alone, and within a couple hours of his family arriving on the island, Hanga singles out Baden's wife as a future meal. It's hard to ignore the coincidence.

Hold on. This is the second you've said he is ordered to be alone. What is this based on?

His boss says 'you will be on your own', but this is a prediction about other agency people, not white people or people in general - obviously Rob and the islanders are already there. Nor does he ever think 'The agency won't like Mary coming here, but I sure hope she does anyway!'

And Baden is hardly being lassoed by his wife. "There really nothing in the story to imply that Baden is a great catch. He doesn't see it that way. The picture we get from Baden is that his wife is a forgiving person who is staying with him *in spite* of their history.

She pressures him with the jeep rental, and then there's the 'Mary wanted children, so she stopped the pill and did not tell me. That was what she told me when I drove Rob's jeep out to North Point.' line;

sn't this one of the stereotypical gambits attributed to women"

Both examples point to a woman trying to get him to leave with her; as civilized Christian woman, no doubt she doesn't want to raise a family on the pimply backend of nowhere.

As you pointed out, Baden was told that he was to be stationed at the island *totally on his own*. If he's being retired, there's no point in that. It's presented to him as a tough, perhaps hazardous assignment. That's hardly a way to sell a plan to "pension him off". If the island was such a cheap alternative to paying medical expenses, why would he be the only one the Agency would station there? He can't be the only employee who has ever had chronic medical expenses. If The Agency had even pro forma duties there, why isn't Baden at least going through the motions of doing them, or mentioning them.

He does complain about their lack: "All right, I'll keep my eyes open, and maybe someday the Agency will send me someplace where I'm needed." And why would his family want to take him back to civilization when that would mean he would have to quit his job? That is, if the job benefits with the Agency were so ideal.

Because the benefits may be fine for Baden alone, but to raise a family with? I recently read a history of the British Raj, and the civilians, even though paid very well, with money that went *very* far in India, still had financial hardships putting their kids through school and supporting them and often their entire family way off in England. The USG doesn't pay as well as John Company did. And then here's the location and populace.

And if hostage, hostage against what?

That's the million dollar question. What exactly is the Agency getting out of Baden being there? What are the rules that require he be there alone on the island? The Tree Is My Hat and An Evil Guest are both interesting introductions to this world. I wish Wolfe had deigned to actually explain it.

They seem to get nothing out of it beyond shuffling off a burden. What is he hostage against? If Hanga saw Baden as a hostage against the USG attacking Hanga, or something, then *why on earth* would he make a blood oath with Baden? That defeats the entire point! What is a hostage you have sworn to never hurt or kill? Not a very useful one. Similar for a sacrifice.

On the other hand, Baden going there for non-Hanga reasons and Hanga making a shine to this naive foreigner who is pasty-shark-white makes perfect sense with the blood oath.

IIRC, doesn't Reis specifically say he hired Chase a few years ago and ever since Chase has been greedy and sought to extort more money out of him? I don't see any reason to disbelieve him.

I forgot he said he'd hired him at that dinner with Cassie. There's no more reason to believe Reis more than Chase. Cassie doesn't take his words at face-value or she would have abandoned Chase. But you're right. It does make one wonder why he kept those pictures. It's entirely possible that while Reis ended up paying for Chase's services, the two never met. Which definitely would suggest that Reis is not above *shading* a story. "I do agree that Chase is a prostitute who will do anything for money (ala Sherry Gold and Hyacinth).

Reis is probably lying about the extortion part, I agree. That's calculated for sympathy, and we have no evidence that Chase actually tried to extort Reis, do we" But Wolfe's lies usually contain truth.

where's the sacrifice of Reis in Peace or
TBOTNS? [snip]

A lover killing the sacrificer of the loved
doesn't match up

I don't expect you to be persuaded but:

Peace: While digging in a pit for the treasure, Weer's shovel it's a rock
and gives off a spark. Lois thinks it's the treasure and pulls her little
(hidden) pistol. The next thing we learn from Weer is that Lois has left
town. Do you believe that? I don't. He buried her in that pit.

TBOTNS: Severian takes Dr. Talos's sword from him (til now concealed in his
cane) and strides into Baldander's ruined tower to kill him. But the
antagonist is only over thrown.

Cassie shooting Kanoa matches up perfectly with these and other instances IF
you re-assess Kanoa as a more important figure than is immediately apparent.
Otherwise, the scene has all the elements of the others but is carried out
"wrong".

J.

But again, in Peace and TBOTNS it's a duel. Severian against
aldanders, Weer against Lois. There is no third sacrificed party. If
major piece of the analogy is missing, you can't make any
nferences.

wern

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End of Urth Digest, Vol 65, Issue 6
