

TSH: Doris and Lupine

The Urth list — 22 messages, 8 voices, 15 Apr 2010

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5581>

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Roy C. Lackey — 15 Apr 2010, 22:54

Letter #18 bugs me, for two reasons. First, it is addressed to Millie, and on p-132, right after the break, Bax wrote: "Joe came for the car. I know I wrote to George about that." Well, no, he didn't. The first mention of Joe coming out to look at the car was in the previous letter (#17, p-118), which was also addressed to Millie.

Is this a mistake by Wolfe, or is it a left-handed comment about the reliability of Bax's account of events?

Second, when Bax got back to Doris's car, a woman who apparently looked like Doris got in as the passenger, after he had offered to return her keys. He drove and suggested that they stop somewhere to eat. She said no. He started to say that he would take her back to her apartment, when they saw another woman standing by the road and waving. The waving woman proved to be Doris, and when Bax stopped for her the passenger vanished, leaving behind a funky smell.

A werewolf is defined in the book as a human who takes on the shape of a wolf. I wasn't aware that a werewolf could take on the guise of another human. (Nevermind being in two places at the same time.) What, if anything, does this episode say about Doris and Lupine? How did Lupine get Doris's keys?

-Roy

James Wynn — 16 Apr 2010, 12:40 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

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Hmmm...Why do you assume a bad smell means a werewolf? I thought it was vampires that had a bad smell. But I never associated the false Doris with Nicholas until now. Incidentally, I kinda think Mary King's ghost might be Lupine's soul.

J.

Dave Tallman — 16 Apr 2010, 17:46 · in reply to James Wynn

James Wynn wrote:

Hmmm...Why do you assume a bad smell means a werewolf? I thought it was vampires that had a bad smell. But I never associated the false Doris with Nicholas until now. Incidentally, I kinda think Mary King's ghost might be Lupine's soul.

Let's see if this all fits together. We have two vanishing passenger incidents involving Doris. One is pp. 132-133, and Bax definitely says this is Lupine. ("She was in here with you." "Yes.

She was."). The other is Mary King on p. 200. Doris sees her vanish (or says she does).

The theory would be that Doris and Lupine are the same person, that she was once known as Mary King and split off her soul as part of the process of becoming a werewolf.

Breaking down the first appearance of Lupine:

- 1) Walking with Doris down to the river, "a hand slipped into mine."
- 2) Doris said "I think I'll turn around and go back" from some distance behind him. This is her sending her soul back away (so she can take Lupine form).
- 3) Her physical body remains with Bax, and the car keys remain in her possession.
- 4) Ghost-husband Ted appears, disapproving of this move. She dismisses him.
- 5) Winkle shows up to protect Bax ("A fox barked") and Lupine races away in wolf form.
- 6) Lupine talks to Bax by the water about heads, arms, etc. She gives Bax the car keys.
- 7) The ghost passenger looking like Doris gets into the car with Bax. She cannot drive and doesn't eat. She has the odor of Lupine, or of carrion.
- 8) They catch up with physical Lupine, who has run ahead and is now back in Doris form. The soul rejoins her, vanishing from the car.

Another interesting fact about Doris is that she was a home-economics major (p. 127). Such a major is very rare these days, but was more common in the past. This allows us to place her in Mary King's days.

Doris knew Martha Murrey and might easily have found out that Bax was dining at her home. She probably killed the neighbor Star Paxton (first victim of the Hound of Horror) at the time she did so that Bax would see the body.

This helps resolve the question of the identity of the "wonderful girl" in the challenge note on p. 261. We speculated it could be Doris or Lupine. Now it seems there is no reason it couldn't be both.

James Wynn — 16 Apr 2010, 17:58 · in reply to Dave Tallman

- 2) Doris said "I think I'll turn around and go back" from some distance behind him. This is her sending her soul back away (so she can take Lupine form).
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Doesn't this work better if Doris body goes off and changes into Lupine, while it is her soul (Mary King) who holds Bax's hand?

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Roy C. Lackey — 16 Apr 2010, 17:59 · in reply to James Wynn

James Wynn quoted and wrote:

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{Hmmm...Why do you assume a bad smell means a werewolf? I thought it was vampires that had a bad smell.}

Just before Martha's neighbor, Star Paxton, was killed by a werewolf, Bax heard an animal, went outside the house and noticed "an odor--a faint, musty stench." (p-82)

After Doris complained of the odor in her car, Bax wrote, "I sniffed. If I had used my nose earlier, I would not have been deceived." (p-133) Doris asked how he came to have her keys. He said, "A girl I met down at the river's edge gave them to me." He went on to say, "She brought the smell that you complained about." (ibid.)

There is no doubt about it. According to Bax, Lupine took on the semblance of Doris and left behind a funky smell. Lupine also banished the apparition of the big man Bax had seen in the woods (p-134). The big man, we are told, looked like Ted (ibid.).

{ But I never associated the false
Doris with Nicholas until now. Incidentally, I kinda think Mary King's ghost might be Lupine's soul. }

I don't know about that, but Bax was asking Shell about Mary King (p-157) before he picked her up (p-200). That ain't right.

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Dave Tallman — 16 Apr 2010, 18:15 · in reply to James Wynn

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That's almost as plausible, except that when the hand-holder vanished "something raced away, too big and too dark, too near the ground" (p.

129). That would seem to be Lupine in wolf form. If the hand-holder was just a soul it seems like she would simply vanish without any extra special effects, as the passenger did in the car.

James Wynn — 16 Apr 2010, 18:38 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

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James Wynn — 16 Apr 2010, 18:51 · in reply to Dave Tallman

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Hmm..good point. But I just don't see how we get Doris around to being Lupine. Granted, Lupine impersonating Doris twice is significant of something. But in each case, we have Doris Here and Lupine There (or the other way around).

And Doris seems entirely corporeal. She has a job. She eats. She has sex. Was apparently married. Not typical behavior of a disembodied soul.

Finally, I just can't get around the fact that Doris seems consistently completely clueless about Faeri. For example, why would she just hand over Ted's ring if she had any idea how powerful it was. Maybe AFTER she had bedded Bax (maaaaybe), but not before.

J.

Gwern Branwen — 16 Apr 2010, 19:03 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

On Thu, Apr 15, 2010 at 6:54 PM, Roy C. Lackey <rclackey at stic.net> wrote: Letter #18 bugs me, for two reasons. First, it is addressed to Millie, and on p-132, right after the break, Bax wrote: "Joe came for the car. I know I wrote to George about that." Well, no, he didn't. The first mention of Joe coming out to look at the car was in the previous letter (#17, p-118), which was also addressed to Millie.

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-Roy

I don't like the Doris=Lupine approach. It doesn't gel with the endgame of TSH.

If the ghost is Dorpine's soul, then how do we reconcile this with Lupine selling her soul to a distant powerful wizard?

Doris is in her 30s or 40s at least, the home ec degree aside. Is this consistent with a callow teenager like leayan* falling in love with her and her with him? Lupine is clearly presented as youthful; I don't believe any accounts of werewolves include rejuvenation or extraordinary

longevity**.

How do we reconcile Lupin not especially liking and loathing Bax by the end with Doris's like of him? Even in her last letter, she's more wistful than hateful.

Why would Ambrosius or Goldwurm (whichever we think Ted was this phase of the moon) either buy Doris's soul or tell her how to do it?

Why is it Bax who suggests that on the drive where they are attacked by a werewolf, he stay outside in the risky area? If Dorpine is scheming his murder, she should suggest that. For that matter, Doris doesn't respond as Dorpine would, it seems to me. ('Curses! Foiled again!')

There may be some oddities in the drive scenes which are explained by Dorpine, but the more general considerations are difficulties.

* forgotten the right spelling

** Japanese _kitsune_ on the other hand are canonically nigh-immortal and can choose to appear as beautiful young women

gwern

Roy C. Lackey — 16 Apr 2010, 20:35 · in reply to James Wynn

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I can tell you right now that letters #21 and #25 just being out of chronological order doesn't quite explain things adequately. The reason is; in #21 Bax asked Shell about both Skotos and Mary King, and also talked about having sex with two women. He also mentioned in #21 that the incident with George in the lawyer's office had occurred the night before the day he was then writing. After leaving the lawyer's office that night is when he and Doris made the strange drive to the lake and back. In #24, Shell commented on the two-women sex angle and told what he had learned about Skotos. In #25, Bax told the psychic about picking up Mary King on the way home from the restaurant at the lake.

Letters #21, 22 and 23 all make mention of events of the night of the meeting with the lawyer and/or the drive to or from the lake restaurant, as do letters #25 and 26. Since letter #24 references the contents of letter #21, and letter #21 was written after George went to jail . . . well, what can I say? Somethin' ain't right.

-Roy

Dan'I Danehy-Oakes — 16 Apr 2010, 20:42 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

On Fri, Apr 16, 2010 at 1:35 PM, Roy C. Lackey <rclackey at stic.net> wrote:
James Wynn quoted and wrote:

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To be honest, I believe that the comment that the letters "may" be out of sequence is a red herring, part of Wolfe's editorial "persona."

As someone who's spent years reading and rereading Delany's *_Dhalgren_*, a book where things are seriously out of order, I have to say that I just don't see the signs of it here. It would take a serious smoking gun, something that *_could not_* have happened in that order, to really convince me.

Mind you, I'm not saying that the letters are all in "perfect" order -- or indeed that any such "perfect" order is possible. When you're dealing with letters from multiple people to each other there is always questions that arise of synchronization. But I suggest that the letters are in a good *_functional_* order, one that, as best as possible, captures the order of events.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

brunians at brunians.org — 16 Apr 2010, 21:14 · in reply to Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

There's a lot more happening in *Dhalgren* than things being seriously out of order.

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Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 16 Apr 2010, 21:17 · in reply to brunians at brunians.org

On Fri, Apr 16, 2010 at 2:14 PM, <brunians at brunians.org> wrote:

There's a lot more happening in *Dhalgren* than things being seriously out of order.

Well, *_yes_*...

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

Gwern Branwen — 16 Apr 2010, 23:33 · in reply to Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

On Fri, Apr 16, 2010 at 5:17 PM, Dan'l Danehy-Oakes <danl do at gmail.com> wrote:

On Fri, Apr 16, 2010 at 2:14 PM, ?<brunians at brunians.org> wrote:

There's a lot more happening in Dhalgren than things being seriously out of order.

Well, _yes_...

I once tried to read _Dhalgren_; couldn't finish it.

As it happens, Delany was a guest this year at I-CON and I attended one of his panels and watched a fair bit of the Delany movie; both covered _Dhalgren_ at some length.

I won't give any speciously specific quotes since I wasn't especially interested in the comments on _Dhalgren_, but I gathered that one shouldn't look too hard for answers in it - Delany is definitely not Wolfe and the significance of many of the allusions and themes is minimal.

gwern

brunians at brunians.org — 17 Apr 2010, 00:28 · in reply to Gwern Branwen

Yeah, that's right.

It's a very, very bad idea to treat Dhalgren like a Wolfe book.

Wolfe uses unreliable narrators.

Delany uses an insane narrator.

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On Fri, Apr 16, 2010 at 5:17 PM, Dan'l Danehy-Oakes <danl do at gmail.com> wrote:

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Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 17 Apr 2010, 00:30 · in reply to brunians at brunians.org

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brunians at brunians.org — 17 Apr 2010, 00:32 · in reply to Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

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You're being a pedant.

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Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 17 Apr 2010, 00:34 · in reply to brunians at brunians.org

On Fri, Apr 16, 2010 at 5:32 PM, <brunians at brunians.org> wrote:

You're being a pedant.

On _this_ list?

Heaven forfend.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

brunians at brunians.org — 17 Apr 2010, 00:44 · in reply to Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

And I don't think there is any doubt at all that the Kid is insane.

There may very well be something wierd going on in Bellona, but the Kid is definitely insane.

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David Stockhoff — 17 Apr 2010, 00:52 · follows brunians at brunians.org

Oh Joshy

Is a pedant someone who knows more about something than you do?

Message: 9

Date: Fri, 16 Apr 2010 20:32:09 -0400 (EDT)

From: brunians at brunians.org

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

Subject: Re: (urth) TSH: Doris and Lupine
Message-ID: <6124.72.171.0.142.1271464329.squirrel at brunians.org>
Content-Type: text/plain; charset=iso-8859-1

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brunians at brunians.org — 17 Apr 2010, 01:41 · in reply to David Stockhoff
No.

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Date: Fri, 16 Apr 2010 20:32:09 -0400 (EDT)
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Craig Brewer — 17 Apr 2010, 14:45 · in reply to brunians at brunians.org

I just finished my first VERY fast read, so pardon any incorrect details.

But I have to say that I'm taken with Thomas Bitterman's suggestion that nothing "fantastic" actually happened. I'm not sure how (or even if) one could prove it, but a number of things lead to the notion that what we have is just a complicated scam by one brother to scam another brother. We know that Bax was jailed for "fraud" of some sort, so it makes sense that he understands something about perhaps how to defraud real estate agencies or something of that nature, so there's at least the reasonable possibility that his "good fortune" with acquiring a house, etc., has quite other explanations. He knows about Millie's weaknesses (both in terms of her feelings for George and Bax and the fact that she already visits a psychic...who even tells Millie that she cons other patrons...but not Millie, of course). The compiler's note suggests that he got the letters from Millie after Bax disappears, so, perhaps this is all coming out after Millie realizes that

she's been conned, etc. Millie is even jealous of Doris in her first letter, and the facefox could just be another way for Bax to play that angle up while also playing on Millie's belief in the supernatural. And I don't recall, but Bax never mentions anything supernatural in his letters to Shotgun, does he?

I'm starting again, so I'll have a better notion later. But after reading Millie's first letter to Bax and seeing her naivete, I started to wonder. Bitterman's post just made sense after that.