

The coins, torpedo, and George

The Urth list — 8 messages, 2 voices, 03 May 2010

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Mo Holkar / UKG — 03 May 2010, 17:01

Hi all,

Just a quick note about something that struck me. When Bax first finds the coins he says "I believe the city must be Corinth, but I've no idea whose head that is" (75). I'm curious as to how he identifies the city. It can't be the word 'KORINTHOS', or he would be certain about it. Presumably then it's from an emblem that he knows is usually associated with Corinth. A quick Google suggests that lots of Corinthian coins depicted the Pegasus on the reverse of Athena's head, so that might be a candidate.

Then when he takes a coin to Port St Jude (127), we are told 'The helmeted woman on the obverse... presumably she is Athena' and that the reverse depicts a different woman, with breasts (plural), a spear and a sword. So either (a) Bax did earlier silently identify this other woman, and associate her with Corinth, or else (b) the three coins don't all have the same design -- which seems more likely, but leaves wide open the question of who the woman is. Warrior women who are not Amazons are pretty rare in Greek myth. Not Artemis, as she would have a bow; not Athena as stated; maybe the obscure war goddess Enyo?

On another, unrelated note: do we assume that the 'long, skinny torpedo' seen with the Greek (198) is Nicholas the Butler? Odd that although Iron Mike gave the Greek the names of Shell and others who were close to Bax, this doesn't seem to have been followed up on. Perhaps knowing that Bax was 'doing swell' was all Skotos really needed.

And a question: how did George get from following Nicholas into the house (233) to being picked up 'on the street' by the police (270)? In between, he seems to have written Letter 37 (assuming that's not a Bax forgery), which Bax 'found' in an unspecified place, but presumably at the house (265). He also may have checked out of the Hilton (266), although that could have happened earlier. And then he somehow gets away from the police again ("I doubt they'll keep him long" (276)) and is back at the house trapping Nicholas (282). We aren't able to guess much about George's motivation apart from insensate hatred of Bax, but I'm curious as to how his timeline goes.

Mo

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Roy C. Lackey — 04 May 2010, 07:07 · in reply to Mo Holkar / UKG

Mo Holkar wrote:

[snip]

On another, unrelated note: do we assume that the 'long, skinny torpedo' seen with the Greek (198) is Nicholas the Butler?

I think so.

[snip]

And a question: how did George get from following Nicholas into the house (233) to being picked up 'on the street' by the police (270)?

Just a guess, but it seems that the house may have outlets into faerie at some remove from the house. That is, Bax left old Nick at the house when he, Martha, Winker and Toby drove to the Skotos Strip, which is some miles away and on the other side of the river. Yet, as the river battle ended, Nick came walking up to the scene. How did he get there?

Nicholas may have left the house in a similar way and come out Here, not There, and George followed him. Or Nicholas may have come out of the house There and knew or found another way back Here. On the day of the river battle, Martha phoned and read Bax an article from that morning's newspaper about two rural families who had been victims of a tall man in black who had sucked their children's blood (276). That was Nicholas, so that may be how George got out of the house and back to town.

It seems that it was the afternoon before the river battle that Kate came to the house to look for George. After the failed search is when she called the station and learned that George was back in jail. It had been night when George let Nicholas out of the trunk and followed him into the house, so that must have been the night before she and Bax searched the house.

George had not skipped bail, so there was no real reason to keep him in jail. He may have been released that same day he was picked up or the next, the day of the river battle.

But all this brings up another nasty problem I should have seen before. In the middle of the river battle, Bax got that silly phone call from Nicholas, who was supposed to be locked up again in the trunk. The problem is, the trunk was on the back of Bax's old car, the same car he and the others drove out to the Skotos Strip in. So was Nicholas back in the trunk when Bax drove the car out of the driveway of his house that day? If so, then Nick failed to tell Bax before he set out, and Bax had talked to him.

Did Doris, Orizia, George and old Nick find and confine Nicholas sometime earlier on the day of the river battle? It isn't clear the time of day that Martha phoned Bax, but after the call he got dressed for the trip, talked to Nick, collected Toby and Winkler, then drove over to pick up Martha and went out to the Skotos Strip. Or was Nicholas captured the day or night before the battle? During the phone call with Martha he told her that George was safe in jail. He must have been wrong about that, but still . . .

The postscript to Doris's last letter just confuses me more. She said that after they found and locked up Nicholas she went with Orizia to her hotel room and talked a bit, and was now going to bed. That makes it seem like it was late in the day if not at night when she was writing. So when did they put Nicholas in the trunk? The real estate inquiries Nicholas got on her cell phone suggest the calls came during business hours.

I'm so confused.

-Roy

Mo Holkar / UKG — 04 May 2010, 08:42 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

At 08:07 04/05/2010, Roy wrote:

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Hmm, that is tricky. I guess it's possible that the trunk had been removed from the car. I have the impression that it's detachable -- "the trunk is an actual trunk, a huge piece of luggage that could... be carried" (108). So it could still be back at the house, with Nicholas inside it, during the battle. It would seem a bit of a cheat not to mention this though (plus, who would be the notional four men required to move it?)

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Those calls may have been received just shortly prior to the river battle, during the presumably daytime period while Bax was collecting his passengers and driving to the Strip, so I don't think they necessarily say anything about when Nicholas was confined. But yes, the Doris postscript strongly implies it was evening.

I am now wondering why it is that on pp242, 244 Bax is hiring cabs rather than driving himself. Maybe he is now wary of using the car, because of the associated (he believes, although Mme Orizia has already told him otherwise, 221) faerie effects?

Also, this cab period follows a conversation with Nick which Bax says he will give Millie in its proper place (242) -- but, as far as I can see, he never does so. I don't think it can be the conversation that he reports to George on 254 et seq, because after that he goes to bed (259).

When I reread this book properly, I'll try to do up a timeline...

Mo

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<http://www.wolfewiki.com/pmwiki/>

Roy C. Lackey — 04 May 2010, 17:26 · in reply to Mo Holkar / UKG

Mo Holkar quoted and wrote:

But all this brings up another nasty problem I should have seen before.

In

the middle of the river battle, Bax got that silly phone call from Nicholas, who was supposed to be locked up again in the trunk. The problem is, the trunk was on the back of Bax's old car, the same car he and the others drove out to the Skotos Strip in. So was Nicholas back in the trunk when Bax drove the car out of the driveway of his house that day? If so, then Nick failed to tell Bax before he set out, and Bax had talked to him.

Hmm, that is tricky. I guess it's possible that the trunk had been removed from the car. I have the impression that it's detachable -- "the trunk is an actual trunk, a huge piece of luggage that could... be carried" (108). So it could still be back at the house, with Nicholas inside it, during the battle. It would seem a bit of a cheat not to mention this though (plus, who would be the notional four men required to move it?)

No, it was on the car. In her postscript Doris said, "We cornered Nicholas and he agreed to go into the trunk (tied on the back of your car) and let us close it if we would give him a cell phone." (290) That she bothered to make her parenthetical comment at all bothers me. Bax knew where the trunk was. It's almost as if Wolfe was drawing attention to this timing issue. I must be missing something.

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I am now wondering why it is that on pp242, 244 Bax is hiring cabs rather than driving himself. Maybe he is now wary of using the car, because of the associated (he believes, although Mme Orizia has already told him otherwise, 221) faerie effects?

He was going downtown to search courthouse and library records (243), so he may have anticipated difficulties parking his big old car, difficulties Doris had mentioned earlier when they left the lawyer's office.

Also, this cab period follows a conversation with Nick which Bax says he will give Millie in its proper place (242) -- but, as far as I can see, he never does so. I don't think it can be the conversation that he reports to George on 254 et seq, because after that he goes to bed (259).

I think it is the conversation in that letter (# 36) addressed to George. Though the letter is addressed to George, he didn't know where George was so he was sending it "to your dear and loyal Millie" (255), knowing she would read it (260). He went to bed but hadn't finished the letter. The postscript was evidently added the next morning after breakfast. (ibid.) In fact, in the postscript he says that Martha "has asked me to join her in search of her son Emlyn." Martha told Bax in the phone call she made to him the day of the river battle that that was the real reason she had called (278). She wanted to search the house for Emlyn, but Bax thought that it would be easier to find him by finding Lupine, and that was the reason for the trip to the Skotos Strip.

-Roy

Just to follow up on what I wrote earlier:

Even if the trunk had been removed from the back of the car by an unknown person or persons for unknown reasons after Nicholas was back inside it, I find it very hard to believe that Bax either failed to notice it was gone when he went out to the car, or failed to mention it if he did. After all, he troubled to mention that he put the cased pistols under the seat and the sword in the compartment intended for golf clubs. If the trunk had been missing it would have been a big deal to him and I know of no reason why he would fail to make mention of it. And when he got the phone call from Nicholas he seemed completely ignorant of Nicholas's plight.

But even if these objections could be waved away, that doesn't address the issue of **when** Nicholas was found and put in the trunk. Worse, where was Bax while Doris and Orizia and George and Nick were searching his house? Where was he when Nicholas was put in the trunk of the car?

I said before that it would seem to have been late in the day when Doris wrote her postscript and went to bed. For Nicholas's sake, it should have been after sundown when he was put into the trunk. I think that Bax suspected, by the time George showed up at night and wanted to open the trunk, what the trunk might contain. Which is why he said, "Because I believe it wiser to open it when we have daylight." (232)

-Roy

Mo Holkar / UKG — 04 May 2010, 22:08 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

At 18:26 04/05/2010, Roy wrote:

No, it was on the car. In her postscript Doris said, "We cornered Nicholas and he agreed to go into the trunk (tied on the back of your car) and let us close it if we would give him a cell phone." (290) That she bothered to make her parenthetical comment at all bothers me. Bax knew where the trunk was. It's almost as if Wolfe was drawing attention to this timing issue. I must be missing something.

Mm, that is odd. And Mme Orizia speaks on p292 of locking Nicholas "in an old trunk" which she then advises posting on somewhere, rather than eg. "in the trunk of your car". I suppose it's reasonable that it's obvious to her that the trunk is meant for detachment, but again it feels like it's being brought to our attention.

Also, this cab period follows a conversation with Nick which Bax says he will give Millie in its proper place (242) -- but, as far as I can see, he never does so. I don't think it can be the conversation that he reports to George on 254 et seq, because after that he goes to bed (259).

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Yes, I guess that must be it. It's complicated by the way that when mentioning the conversation to Millie earlier (242) Bax says it was prompted by Nick interrupting him having just been speaking with Doris on the phone, prior to which he was in lethargy, but on 254 there's no reference to any such interruption or phone call -- rather, the conversation with Nick there seems to follow on from Bax finishing searching for George. Of course it would be otiose for Bax to give overlapping accounts of events in these two letters which he expected to have the same reader, but to be marshalling incidents in this way -- such that the timeline skips back and forth

between the two letters -- is quite a strain on my deductive powers, never mind Millie's :-)

best,

Mo

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<http://www.wolfewiki.com/pmwiki/>

Mo Holkar / UKG — 04 May 2010, 22:42 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

At 20:23 04/05/2010, Roy wrote:
Just to follow up on what I wrote earlier:

Even if the trunk had been removed from the back of the car by an unknown person or persons for unknown reasons after Nicholas was back inside it, I find it very hard to believe that Bax either failed to notice it was gone when he went out to the car, or failed to mention it if he did. After all, he troubled to mention that he put the cased pistols under the seat and the sword in the compartment intended for golf clubs. If the trunk had been missing it would have been a big deal to him and I know of no reason why he would fail to make mention of it. And when he got the phone call from Nicholas he seemed completely ignorant of Nicholas's plight.

Another thing: Bax speaks with Nick on 279 while he's packing the car to leave for Martha and the Strip, so you'd think Nick would have mentioned then that there was a recaptured vampire butler in the trunk. He may have had sorcerous reasons for not doing so, but I can't think of any.

But even if these objections could be waved away, that doesn't address the issue of *when* Nicholas was found and put in the trunk. Worse, where was Bax while Doris and Orizia and George and Nick were searching his house? Where was he when Nicholas was put in the trunk of the car?

I think it would have to have been during the otherwise-event-free night between Bax and Kate's search for George, which ends at dinner time (270), and Bax's phone call with Martha, which is in the morning (276). This would mean Bax was incorrect to say George was still in jail at the point of that phone call; but that's not a problem, as he would have had no way of knowing.

I said before that it would seem to have been late in the day when Doris wrote her postscript and went to bed. For Nicholas's sake, it should have been after sundown when he was put into the trunk. I think that Bax suspected, by the time George showed up at night and wanted to open the trunk, what the trunk might contain. Which is why he said, "Because I believe it wiser to open it when we have daylight." (232)

Although Bax would naturally want the precaution of daylight to protect himself from a possibly rampaging Nicholas, I guess if Nicholas is willingly agreeing to go in the trunk, that could be accomplished during the day if it was indoors so no daylight actually fell on him? But as you say, the Doris postscript strongly implies evening anyway.

There is also the question of how he steals washing if he's only operational at night. Not really common practice to hang one's washing out to dry during the hours of darkness?

I get more puzzled the more I look into this, rather than less! Hmm.

best,

Mo

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Roy C. Lackey — 05 May 2010, 15:18 · in reply to Mo Holkar / UKG

Mo Holkar wrote:

Another thing: Bax speaks with Nick on 279 while he's packing the car to leave for Martha and the Strip, so you'd think Nick would have mentioned then that there was a recaptured vampire butler in the trunk. He may have had sorcerous reasons for not doing so, but I can't think of any.

Neither can I. But he seems to be notorious within his family for staying out of his children's disputes. In their earlier conversation, Nick told Bax that he (Nick) was just a "thing" that had never even been born (256), something like a living tool in the service of the master (or owner) of the house, a thing grown in a "trough" (258). Rather than get distracted here by the veracity or implications of Nick's claims, I will just point out that Bax asked Nick to serve George as well. Nick agreed and said, "I shall assist him to the best of my ability, provided that his interests do not conflict with your own." (256)

This may explain why, in the letter addressed to George about the river battle, Bax said that he knew that it was really their father ("as Nick, my elderly butler"), not George, who had found and cornered Nicholas (286). If George had asked Nick to help him find Nicholas, Nick would probably have done it. I can think of no reason why getting Nicholas back in the trunk would have been contrary to Bax's interests. George might even have asked Nick not to mention it unless asked.

But even if these objections could be waved away, that doesn't address the issue of *when* Nicholas was found and put in the trunk. Worse, where was Bax while Doris and Orizia and George and Nick were searching his house? Where was he when Nicholas was put in the trunk of the car?

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That stinks. Not your reasoning, but the void in the narrative. We don't know for sure that Bax had dinner with Kate; just that she offered to buy. But it was definitely well after noon when they finished searching the house and she learned that George had been picked up. Bax had walked to the diner where they had lunch, so Kate must have driven there in her car. After they searched the house they looked at his car and the trunk. If they did have dinner somewhere, they would have taken her car. Bax would have come back home to write the letter about the search with Kate.

Next thing we know, Bax is writing the letter about the phone call from Martha and the river battle. That, of course, was written in the wake of the battle. So there is really no way to tell

how much time passed between Kate's search and Martha's phone call. Even if we assume just the one night between those events, where was Bax when Doris came to the house?

That house scared the hell out of her, as she makes plain. Bax even said that she was willing to help search it for George, but only in his company (260). She went to the house for just one reason -- to make up with Bax. Yet she got drafted into searching for a vampire while Bax was out somewhere with Kate? Or Bax was home writing the letter about their search of the house that day? Something isn't right.

-Roy