

5H Star Hunt

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 19 May 1998

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/637>

Exported from an unofficial mirror of a public mailing list. Copyright in each message remains with the person who wrote it. Email addresses are obscured as `user at host`, the form the original archive published. This file was rebuilt from parsed fields rather than retained headers, so it is faithful in content but not byte-exact.

Robert Borski — 19 May 1998, 02:03

mantis wrote:

"Hey, Cerberus-heads!

"Let's find the star of Saint Anne/Saint Croix! Let's work out the other planets in the system!"

Frankly, mantis, I believe you did a very nice job of scoping out the more pertinent details, but I do have a few comments.

"1. We are told that Marsh aged "20 years Newtonian" in his trip, suggesting that the star is within 20 lightyears of Sol (since the ship would seem to be travelling sublight)."

Actually, Marsh "aged" only six months, still being in his early 20s when he makes planetfall. Twenty years Newtonian have passed, but apparently the starcrossing travelers are placed in some sort of biostasis, where aging is much diminished. (Mrs. Blount, in "V.R.T," mentions being "put to sleep.") She also mentions that the trip from Earth took 21 years, suggesting either St. Croix - St. Anne are galactically further at this time or improvements in star-travel propulsion have taken place since her ship left. Mrs. Blount also tells us, "Both our worlds remained unknown when planets more distant from Earth had been colonized for decades," hinting at perhaps some sort of astronomical obscurity or deviation from normal (i.e., in terms of potentially hospitable worlds) .

"3. We are told that one local year on St. Anne is 402 days . . . do we have any hint as to the length of the local day? (This can be used to calculate orbital distance for St. A/St. C around their star, which in turn can give a hint as to stellar class, etc.)"

Apparently, the day is also somewhat longer--at least if we are to trust Marsh's initial observations. Early on, in his journals (p.140), he cites the "too-long days and stretched nights" of St. Anne, suggesting they are lengthier than what he is used to on Earth. Disappointingly, however, Wolfe never indicates how the extra 37 days of the Annese year are apportioned. Both Marsh and Number Five utilize the imported Terran calendar, referring to actual specific months, but not whether these have a few extra days (3 would work, giving us months of 33-35 days) or whether a new month itself has been invented.

Re: "Shadow Child (with "two bright star eyes")"

Is "Shadow Child" with "two bright star eyes" how it's listed in your edition of 5TH HEAD? The Scribners edition shows "Shadow Children" and "two pairs of bright eyes." Also, since Marsh can no longer find them in their usual place (p.154), might it/they possibly be either paired planets or moons, rather than stars?

Might not Fomalhaut also refer to the piscine half of Thousand Feelers and the Fish, with one of

the more local nebulae (Eagle, Lagoon, Trifid?) comprising the Thousand Feelers half?

One last possible clue: the gravitational attraction of St. Croix on its sister planet is powerful enough to produce 15 foot tides. (What this portends I have no clue--the last time I delved into matters astronomical we only had 8 planets, though now that Pluto has been declassified, at least in non-Disney systems...<g>)

Personally, if Wolfe did have an actual star in mind, I'd like to believe it adhered to one of the etymological conventions he used in FIFTH HEAD. i.e., religious (St. Anne), French (Port-Mimizon) or lupine (#5=Wolfe). Given also that there are at least three prominent astronomers named Wolf, and one actually being French (C.J.E. Wolfe, co-discoverer of Wolf-Rayet stars), I'd like to cast my vote in favor of Wolf 294 (though the Shadow Children supposition might augur a multiple star system).

Robert Borski

m.driussi — 19 May 1998, 14:15 · follows Robert Borski

Robert Borski,

Re: Newtonian vs. biological. Right, I didn't mention the biological time dilation because it is a bit ambiguous and doesn't directly address the distance issue. Said dilation could be due to a near-light-speed velocity of between 0.999 and 0.9999c; or, as you say and the text alludes, it could be just a side effect of hibernation rather than "suspended animation." If we knew the mile-long starships were using Nearly As Fast As Light drives, then we'd also have a better idea of how far the star is.

Excellent point re: hidden/overlooked nature of the star. If overlooked, then an M type star is more likely--but an M-star with a long year like that, hmmm, that causes problems.

Re: longer local day. So let's ballpark it--48 hour days would be much longer; how about 30 hour days?

Re: "Shadow Child" with "two bright star eyes," in truth my notes are pretty bad, lacking even page numbers, but I managed to find this one because it is close to the beginning of "A Story": "When morning came the sun would rise in Fever; but sisterworld, whose great blue disk now showed a thin paring above the encompassing trees, obscured the two bright stars, the eyes, that were all that could be seen of The Shadow Child" (Ace paperback, p. 87).

Re: Thousand Feelers and the Fish. This makes me think of those sea monsters, like Hydra, Draco (starry sea), and Cetus. Cetus would put us right next to Pisces, but yeah, that's Fishes not Fish (of the South).

Re: 15 foot tides, a good datapoint for the separation of the twin worlds.

=mantis=