

The Land Across (letters, hands, and shoes)

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 02 Mar 2014

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Greg Kurzawa — 02 Mar 2014, 20:53

**** potential spoiler alert ****

I'm working on analyzing one particular evening in "The Land Across," and I'm hoping someone can offer a bit of insight, or maybe just another perspective. The evening in question is Grafton's second night at Naala's (the first night they slept together). Grafton claims that he and Naala showered separately, then went to bed together. Later that night, the hand climbed into bed and attempted to strangle Naala. They searched for it high and low, to no avail.

I have two theories, and one question.

Theory 1(a): Grafton wrote a letter to someone while Naala showered. I feel like this is fairly obvious; the text practically states it. Grafton is wondering how to get in touch with Russ, then mentions sharpening his pencil and tearing a couple of flyleaves from one of Naala's books. He even says, "I did it while Naala was in the shower." The only thing he doesn't specify is exactly what "it" is. But does he really need to? Pencil + paper + time alone = he wrote a letter.

Question 1: To whom did Grafton write that letter, and what did it say? Russ seems the most likely recipient. I'm thinking Grafton outlined his current situation with Naala while requesting that he and Russ help one another if possible. If he did write the letter to Russ, it might mean that the events of that night (Yelena being attacked and Rosalee escaping prison) are consequences of his writing that letter. It might also explain why Grafton appears so broken up about Yelena's death, for which he might feel personally responsible.

Theory 1(b): What good is a letter undelivered? I'm thinking that maybe Grafton gave it to the hand for delivery. At this point in the story, Grafton has already repeated the idea that the hand came from Russ (pg

140) so it's logical to assume that it would know how to get back to him. With Naala showering, Grafton writes his letter, tucks it into the hand, and lets it out the front door. Later, while Naala sleeps, Grafton gets up and lets the hand back in. We learned that Naala sleeps deeply when Grafton got up the previous night to use the bathroom. When he flushed the toilet it "made so much noise I felt sure it would wake up Naala, but it did not" (pg 101).

The hand then attempts to strangle Naala, and hides so well that it seems to have vanished.

Theory 2: Grafton found the hand and hid it from Naala in his shoe. Why in a shoe? Earlier, Grafton states, "If I ever got my hands on something really fancy I would put it in my shoes." (pg 103). Of their search, Grafton says, "we searched [the apartment] good. I did, particularly." Naala never had a chance of finding the hand because she "was looking for a person, but I was looking for the hand." (pg 147). The next morning they visit the prison and learn of Rosalee's escape. Naala sends Grafton off to hunt for Rosalee (a wild-geese chase, but that's a different puzzle) while she claims to spend the entire day turning the apartment upside down looking for the hand, which she fails to find. After a long day in the city, Grafton returns to the apartment

for a suspicious little sequence involving shoes (pg 182). He removes one, after which he seems to want Naala out of the room. As soon as she's gone, "something" touches his hand---perhaps the hand climbing from the shoe he's probably still holding? Only after he's had some wine does he get around to removing the other. It's my belief that Grafton had the hand with him all day, although maybe not in his shoe the whole time.

My hope is that someone will either tell me I'm wrong (and why) or else confirm that others have thought the same thing. I know that these are fairly minor points, but it seems as good a place to start as any.

Gage