

Tracking Song

The Urth list — 3 messages, 2 voices, 18 Mar 2014

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/6521>

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Antonin Scriabin — 18 Mar 2014, 14:33

I've found little snippets online talking about this story, but I wanted to see what the list thought of this idea: the planet / moon is undergoing some kind of accelerated evolution. Here is my idea:

At some point in the past, human colonizers landed on the planet, built the underground city / research center, and explored the surface.

Something went wrong, that left the colonizers stranded on the planet. Some remained underground, eventually becoming the half-machine, half-man denizens. They seem to have forgotten how to manage the giant mechs.

Others tried their luck on the surface, and they evolved rapidly for some reason, which explains why the various species the narrator runs into are almost all humanoids of varying sizes / social structures, speak the same language (or one very close), etc. They have filled most of the ecological niches, which explains the rampant pseudo-cannibalism.

The narrator is a member of a rescue team, and through some accident is left behind by his crew on the Great Sleigh, which could be some kind of spaceship that can also operate on land, or a vehicle left over from the colonizers. We know that individuals on the Sleigh have interacted with some of the humanoid tribes, giving them instructions (not to harm certain birds, etc) that imply some sort of terraforming sequence is in the works, some way to make the planet more livable. Perhaps they settled on this plan after realizing that the first colonizers had rapidly changed form, and were no longer "recoverable" humans as such.

I think the man with wings that the narrator sees at the end of the story is simply a member of the rescue team (his crew) wearing some kind of biohazard suit / flying device (we know that gravity is very low on this planet, which would make jetpack travel much easier).

DAVID STOCKHOFF — 18 Mar 2014, 15:55 · in reply to Antonin Scriabin

That pretty much lines up with what I have always thought. Humans are visitors to the planet/moon (who nevertheless seem somewhat familiar with it), and yet they also are natives, having evolved there. This presents an initially baffling conundrum, but it's actually simple if you assume the passage of huge amounts of time---tens of thousands of years. Terraforming and interstellar travel both offer well-accepted explanations for these extremes.

If not terraforming, then at least some kind of Blishian star-seeding. This explanation would both allow and require the extraplanetary colonizers to leave the planet alone for a far longer time than terraforming would, and the surface could have been settled much sooner if it were always habitable. The underground dwellers are those least adapted to living on the surface and have adapted slightly by becoming dwarfish and using technology, while the surface dwellers have evolved dramatically as depicted.

The dwarf might be taken as a sign that this evolution was not desired, however. And would "improving" circumstances slow evolution (because selection pressures become weaker) or

speed it (because humans could interact more with the environment)?

On the other hand, why bother with a moon/tiny planet at all? Could it be our moon? Does the story track with travel around a moon the size of ours? If so, it's been heavily terraformed already.

On Tuesday, March 18, 2014 10:40 AM, Antonin Scriabin <kierkegaurdian at gmail.com> wrote: I've found little snippets online talking about this story, but I wanted to see what the list thought of this idea: the planet / moon is undergoing some kind of accelerated evolution. Here is my idea:

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Antonin Scriabin — 18 Mar 2014, 16:04 · in reply to DAVID STOCKHOFF

The only reason I think it might be a somewhat distant planet / moon is that a lot of time seems to have elapsed between the initial colonizers and what I am calling the rescue team. If it were *our* moon, one could presume they would come before the evolutionary changes had taken place. It is also possible that the Great Sleigh doesn't travel around the circumference of the body, but makes some smaller (more northerly?) track. Hard to tell based on the descriptions of the narrators movements if it is a moon-like level of gravity or some larger body that is still smaller than Earth. Assuming the humans in question come from Earth. Gah.

On Tue, Mar 18, 2014 at 11:55 AM, DAVID STOCKHOFF <dstockhoff at verizon.net> wrote:

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