

Saltus Mine Deep One

The Urth list — 7 messages, 7 voices, 14 Jun 1998

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m.driussi — 14 Jun 1998, 17:54

It is good to step back and recall that the reason why we continue to turn this one over (and why alga waxes huffy against Wolfe, showing that he is both extra special and unique <g>) is that Severian basically says, IIRC, yeah, I didn't know the name of that critter then but I do (or I think I do) now. Which makes it into a clear riddle for the reader, suggesting that we've been given enough clues to figure it out.

The central answer, then, is a specific name (what, again?! <g>).
For all we know, it might be "Abaddon," the angel guarding the pit of hell (if "Abaddon" <> subspace and "Abaddon" <> planet Mercury!).

Maybe there is a bit of Jesus's visit to hell--in Dante's work wasn't there something about landscape shifting earthquake(s) caused by the passage of the saviour?

=mantis=

Peter Westlake — 15 Jun 1998, 16:01 · follows m.driussi

Disagreeing with so learned a one as mantis is a perilous undertaking, especially for a bear. However, needs must.

At 17:54 1998-06-14 GMT, mantis wrote:

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Agreed. To be precise:

"What creature it was we had called from the roots of the continent I think I now know."

The central answer, then, is a specific name (what, again?! <g>).

Nothing about a name there. There is the grinding sound, which does suggest that the thing is freeing itself from long imprisonment in the rock, perhaps. Then the footsteps:

"From far below I heard a step that might have been the walking of a tower on the Final Day, when it is said all the cities of Urth will stride forth to meet the dawn of the New Sun."

Now there isn't much about towers walking elsewhere in the book (reasonably enough!) so the occurrence of it in Citadel is the Clue that mantis suggests must exist. It even reads like one:

"Far behind it loomed a machine that flashed fire, a machine that was like a tower walking."

It's hard to see how it could be much more explicit than this. I was really quite surprised to find a reference on the next page but one:

"I opened my mouth to cry for help, then closed it again, thinking I might call upon myself something more terrible than that I had once waked in the mine of the man-apes."

For all we know, it might be "Abaddon," the angel guarding the pit of hell (if "Abaddon" <> subspace and "Abaddon" <> planet Mercury!).

a) see above

b) would Severian fear something "more terrible" than the angel of hell turning up on the battlefield?

c) *all* large living creatures on Urth have to live in the water.
So it must be a machine.

SBear.

Joshua A. Solomon — 15 Jun 1998, 20:37 · follows Peter Westlake

Peter Westlake wrote:

"What creature it was we had called from the roots of the continent
I think I now know."

"From far below I heard a step that might have been the walking of
a tower on the Final Day, when it is said all the cities of Urth
will stride forth to meet the dawn of the New Sun."

"Far behind it loomed a machine that flashed fire, a machine that
was like a tower walking."

"I opened my mouth to cry for help, then closed it again,
thinking I might call upon myself something more terrible
than that I had once waked in the mine of the man-apes."

Could this be a rocket, or an ICBM? Severian thinks that the Citadel in Nessus is

(at least part of) a city, but we know that it is
really a bunch of rocketships.

bee

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Marty Light — 15 Jun 1998, 18:41 · follows Joshua A. Solomon

Ditto on Alga's comment about Peter S.'s translation! It's been great lurking in the background, watching the posts proliferate. Not that anyone ever needs a reason to re-read Wolfe, but 5HC is getting another perusal by me. "A-bo, a-bo, it's off to read I go..." No, I'm not going off on some "Three Fingers" discussion; rather, some idle speculation of mine own which

mantis/borski/etal's comments will dwarf in no time:

Peter's Stephenson & Westlake (aka SBear) have been guessing about the type of machine awakened at the mine. I've always assumed it was some sort of major-league mining equipment -- perhaps an overgrown pile driver. In a vertical orientation, a pile driver could generate some sparks, lots of noise, and appear like a tower walking. Serverian could have unknowingly triggered the equipment into action as he traveled through the mine.

Final question: Are "Endangered Species" and "Planet Engineering" still in print? My copy of 5HC lists "...Species" on the Tor list, but I have been unable to turn up a copy. Thanks!

Jason Voegele — 15 Jun 1998, 19:36 · follows Marty Light

Marty wrote:

Final question: Are "Endangered Species" and "Planet Engineering" still in print? My copy of 5HC lists "...Species" on the Tor list, but I have been unable to turn up a copy. Thanks!

I've tried everywhere for both of these, to no avail. However, check out amazon.com and try their "out of print" ordering, they turned up a copy of "Species" within a matter of hours, but I regretfully couldn't afford it at the moment. You may have to pay a little extra, but I'm sure it's worth it to you.

Jason Voegele

(still lingering, although my "Urth" folder is starting to become an archive in its own right)

Peter Stephenson — 16 Jun 1998, 09:28 · follows Jason Voegele

Peter Westlake wrote:

(pedantically, GW wrote and PW typed in and added quotes)

"From far below I heard a step that might have been the walking of a tower on the Final Day, when it is said all the cities of Urth will stride forth to meet the dawn of the New Sun."

"I opened my mouth to cry for help, then closed it again, thinking I might call upon myself something more terrible than that I had once waked in the mine of the man-apes."

Just wanted to agree (belatedly --- fast list!) with the Lovecraft overtones. (The Baba Yaga joke was good, btw.) All we need is the word 'eldritch' and a reference to the forbidden Necronomicon of the mad Arab Abdul Alhazred. The ancientness and otherworldliness of Lovecraft's creatures translates well to Wolfe, although we don't usually get the horror element as clearly as here.

As for created beings: I left the first quote in as a contrast --- what's missing in Lovecraft is the sense of something having been 'engineered', as a tower is but a shuggoth (have I got that right?) isn't. There are parallels: there are lots of cases in Lovecraft of inventors or people who are making something nameless in their basements which tend to remind me of the things you find in the back of the fridge (or refrigerator for you lot over there) a few months too late. It somehow seems more chemical than physical, though. Strange that Wolfe picked the name 'chems' for his whorl creatures --- maybe that was a deliberate way of making them seem more organic, in comparison with taluses etc.

By the way, Lovecraft has some of my favourite 'how not to do it' pieces of prose, I'm glad GW wasn't too heavily influenced: "Dark the caverns where no man has trod and evil the mind that

is held by no head" [who was it said `backward ran the sentences until reeled the mind'?], and my all-time favourite: "What we heard was not the fabulous note of any buried blasphemy of elder earth from whose supernal toughness an age-denied polar sun had evoked a monstrous response" which says it all, really (it's from `At the Mountains of Madness' and I think what they heard was something like `tekilili' --- come to think of it, the Antarctic remains in this story, one of Lovecraft's longest, are rather Wolfean, too).

If you need a Vironese name for me (though last time I came near the place His Cognizance made the sign of addition at me and vanished) you can call me `Corncrake', if it hasn't been taken. No associations, I just like the word. I will continue to respond to Peter S or pws.

pws

William H. Ansley — 16 Jun 1998, 12:15 · follows Peter Stephenson

As for created beings: I left the first quote in as a contrast --- what's missing in Lovecraft is the sense of something having been `engineered', as a tower is but a shoggoth (have I got that right?) isn't.

Actually, a shoggoth is engineered, rather surprisingly for Lovecraft. "At the Mountains of Madness" is about as close as he ever comes to writing "hard sf."

They had done the same thing on other planets; having manufactured not only necessary foods, but certain multicellular protoplasmic masses capable of moulding their tissues into all sorts of temporary organs under hypnotic influence and thereby forming ideal slaves to perform the heavy work of the community. [p. 272, _The Annotated H. P. Lovecraft_, S. T. Joshi, ed.]

"They" above are the "star-headed Old Ones" (please don't confuse them with the "star-bellied sneetches").

William Ansley