

abo profile

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 16 Jun 1998

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Alice Turner — 16 Jun 1998, 18:57

Dan'I doubts that there any abos left---that's not surprising since all the information we have about them is tainted. Early on, David says they're all dead as part of the debate Mr. Million sets up. John V. Marsh (and I'm in the camp that says that V. is for Victor--what else would it be for?) is an unreliable narrator (and mythologizer). OTOH, there's VRT, who isn't reliable either. Do we think that "A Story" was written by Marsch alone or by the JVM/VRT amalgam? If it were placed last in the sequence, surely the latter. As it is, still probably the latter. But it's still a kind of fairy tale, not anything we can really rely on.

The stories about the abos do make them sound like fairies or brownies: supposedly they shapeshift, their eyes are green, they cannot manage tools (remember the fairies' aversion to "cold iron?"), they can sometimes interbreed with men (lots of fairy wife stories, from many countries), they have an affinity with animals, there are no relics or remains of them (we see nothing but fakes, though both David and #5, as students, give good reasons for no implements--though not for no bones).

On the other hand, the older Annese, like Mrs. Blount and the Culot grandfather, speak of them as though they were around until fairly recently. That "shovel test" (Orb 159) sounds awfully authentic, not made-up. VRT and his mother do have green eyes as does JVM--bright green, a color never seen naturally in humans (not by me, anyway, though I've seen pale greenish)--and his mother did take him off to the back of beyond as a child, and she did have a remarkable ability to change her appearance. VRT does seem to have a sort of relationship with the creatures in the wild, though the ones that JVM kills and eats seem to be real animals (could be why no bone remains). VRT/JVM says the abos are animals and so is he, by half (Orb 227). In "A Story," they seem distinguished from animals only in that they speak, not by their actions. Liev's Postpostulate makes out that they are still in the outback, though I don't think we have what we could call "proof."

I'm going to go with Liev's Postpostulate (clap if you believe in fairies!). I don't think Veil's Hypothesis could possibly be true by evidence of VRT himself. Assume that he really is half-abo, and that in some way I can't pretend to understand, his personality has merged with that of JVM. Perhaps, like his mother, he can change his appearance--that thick black beard would help--but he also seems to have absorbed a good deal of JVM's learning, vocabulary and curiosity (he knows what Mr. Million is, for instance, a machine and tool if ever there was one, and about clones), and I find it hard to believe that, as #5 accuses, he learned everything from books on Ste. Anne. His physical abilities, however, have deteriorated. He can write, but only clumsily (VRT started as half-human, and the JVM addition would make him more so, I speculate), he can read books; the only physical thing we actually see him do (I'm pretty sure) is to give #5 a card, though JVM attests to his willingness and ability to do simple tasks around the camp. Presumably no shovels are involved--though a half-human could probably manage a shovel. Clumsily.

So we've actually seen how an abo or half-abo came to impersonate (or merge with) a human,

and the way he did was imperfectly. So imperfectly that #5 sees through it (though I'm damned if I know how). If Mr. Million ordered me to argue the other side of the case, citing Veil, I'd point out that the impersonation or merger was imperfect because VRT was only half abo. Harrumph.

So, as to Aunt Jeanine (yes, mantis, I'm addressing your point), well, there just isn't any evidence other than the withered legs that's she's anything other than what she is presented to be: a sister (of whatever generation) to Maitre and #5, an aunt or great-aunt of David, the manager of a brothel that has been run by her relatives for several generations on St. Croix, and, as an amusement or sideline, "Dr. Aubrey Veil," author of a pseudo-scientific hypothesis that she doesn't believe herself. Those legs don't seem like proof of anything to me. There could be any number of reasons why they weren't regenerated, including lack of money (or the fact that GW, the author, loved the image of her floating along), and she seems to manage just fine without them. Why wouldn't the key serve as evidence as a tool? Wolfe tells us it has "an edge like a saw," just the sort of thing you'd expect VRT to injure himself with.

And with that I'm exiting the Aunt Jeanine/abo controversy for good.

-alga-

-alga-

Tony Ellis — 17 Jun 1998, 09:02 · follows Alice Turner

Alga wrote:

So we've actually seen how an abo or half-abo came to impersonate (or merge with) a human, and the way he did was imperfectly. So imperfectly that #5 sees through it (though I'm damned if I know how).

I've never thought that #5 sees through VRT's impersonation. I've always assumed that he was just being offensive. As he says: "I had come to kill my father, and it was necessary that Dr Marsch leave." The fact that by a million-to-one chance he hits on the truth would be just typical Wolfe.

I have no clever proof of this, except for your own point that that there doesn't seem to be any way that #5 could have seen through Marsch's impression. But wouldn't he have been at least a little bit excited if he really thought he was sitting next to an abo?