

Severian and Thecla; V.R.T.

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 18 Jun 1998

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adam louis stephanides — 18 Jun 1998, 17:01

From: "Dan'I Danehy Oakes" <DDANEHYO at us.oracle.com>

Subject: Concerning Severian's Lacunae; also, "Later, dudes"

Side note. Are we in fact certain that Sev and Thecla were lovers?

The first time I read those passages I was quite convinced that they were fantasies on Severian's part, or perhaps on the part of the Sev+Thecla combined personality. While I am no longer convinced that this is so, I am far from convinced that it is not so.

Given Wolfe, I wouldn't swear positively that Sev and Thecla were lovers. Sev does tell us more than once he may be insane, and I'm also beginning to entertain the possibility that parts of Sev's narrative are outright lies. But I see no reason why Sev and Thecla shouldn't be lovers: it's a natural development given their situation, Sev make love to most of the other attractive women he encounters (at least the ones he mentions), and it's more likely that he would break his guild vow at risk of his life for a lover than for someone who he'd had stimulating discussions of theology with.

From: "William H. Ansley" <wansley at warwick.net>

Subject: Re: (urth) Re: abo profile and a new Jeannine theory

I am "another poster". I agree that VRT could have learned enough anthropology from books so he could impersonate Marsch under the conditions he found himself. But I find it impossible to accept that he could just look at #5 and guess he's a clone by means of knowledge picked up this way. It seems to me we run into a chicken and egg problem here. How could he figure out the Wolfes are clones without knowing about anthropological relaxation (AR) very well. And why would he bone up on AR unless he knew the Wolfes were clones. Of course he could have some other source of knowledge about the Wolfes that we don't know about as you almost seem to imply, but, from the text, this seems unlikely and having to rely on events totally unsupported by the text is unsatisfying, at best.

But even if V.R.T. had somehow inherited Marsch's knowledge, how would that tell him #5's a clone? He hasn't seen #5's father; all #5 tells him is "'I'm supposed to look a great deal like my father,'" something not uncommon among us non-clones, not "'I'm supposed to look exactly like my father did at my age'"; and as far as I know clones per se have no distinguishing marks. It's a strange passage (and has been so noted earlier on this list, IIRC). Maybe he saw a photograph of #5's father somewhere. Another, perhaps less likely, possibility is that V.R.T. has heard rumors that there is a wealthy family of clones somewhere on St. Croix, and when he meets #5 and hear his remark he thinks "Oh, maybe this is that family." I agree that it's best to stick as close to the text as possible, but I think the above suggestions are preferable in this regard to positing an otherwise unmentioned ability in V.R.T.

I have noticed an *interesting* parallel between the novella 5HC and "A Story". (What's with the quotes here anyway? A story is a fiction; is "A Story" then supposed to not be one?)

And since it's not really by Marsch, the true title should be not "'A Story,' by John V. Marsch" but "A Story, by 'John V. Marsch'!"

We have VRT as Marsch (an abo, probably?) going on quest for reasons that are not clear? (Wouldn't you think he'd want to avoid other anthropologists who might see through his charade, even if he found the scholars from the local universities easy to fool?)

My guess would be that his desire to figure out the origins of his people is strong enough to induce him to risk being found out (although, as I said before, it's not all that much of a risk; or rather, there is a real risk, but ironically it's from #5 and not from "Dr. Veil"). Very interesting parallels, by the way.

--Adam