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The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 22 Jun 1998

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Alice Turner — 22 Jun 1998, 19:54

Rostrum wrote:

On Mon, 22 Jun 1998, Alice Turner wrote:

You make a good argument wrt Marsch's humanity and villainy, but there's strong evidence against it, and that is his bright green eyes--the boy and his mother both have bright green eyes, and that is not a human shade.

The

boy also has pale skin and dark hair, as does the Marsch we see.

Anyone care to make a prediction whether we'll be genetically re-engineering eye color before or after we have interstellar colonies?

Well, yes, I'm sure we will...but we're analyzing a Wolfe book where he plays by rules of his own. And a particular point in made re "Marsch's" eyes--they are mentioned as a curiosity on each of his appearances in 5HC. And, in VRT, the diarist (Marsch, for argument) makes a point of the boy's eyes, and the boy, remembering, makes a point of his mother's eyes. I'd say this qualifies as a bona fide Wolfe clue, and a hindrance to the Sarge's theory.

-alga-

adam louis stephanides — 23 Jun 1998, 15:34 · follows Alice Turner

On Mon, 22 Jun 1998 Sgt. Rock wrote:

I've been poring over 5th head lately (after getting out of a lengthy stay in sick bay), and my attention was caught by the following words, uttered by one of Marsch's interrogators:

"I have examined your papers, and letters follow your name. I shall call you:

'A Polish Count, a Knight Grand Cross,
Rx. and Q.E.D.;
Grand Master of the Blood Red Dirk,
and R.O.G.U.E.'

You seem to me very young."

This is a real head-banger. What does it mean? First of all, it's in quotes. Does that mean it is a quote from somewhere? If so, can anyone identify it?

I can only make vague guesses about the meaning of this doggerel. "Knight Grand Cross" is in fact a rank in various orders of knighthood--and in Masonic orders. "Grand Master" is certainly a Masonic title. But what means the reference to "A Polish Count"?

It certainly sounds like a quote, but I can't identify it. As for what it means, in a general sense the interrogator is clearly implying that "Marsch's" academic credentials are fraudulent. One possibility that occurs to me for "A Polish Count" is that in Poland before it lost its independence at the end of the 18th century, a high percentage of the population was noble and many nobles were impoverished, and so being a Polish count would have meant very little in terms of status. Another possibility is that in Western Europe, where this doggerel presumably originated, it would have been difficult to check on the bona fides of someone claiming to be a Polish count, so many impostors might have claimed this title and it might have come to symbolize such imposture. But this is just speculation. (My feeling is that contra Tony Ellis, the "titles" of the poem don't correspond one-to-one to genuine academic titles.)

--Adam