

Agia: Thief?

The Urth list — 3 messages, 3 voices, 16 Oct 1998

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/1198>

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Alex David Groce — 16 Oct 1998, 13:45

Hmm... Rereading that and the section of the theft, I'm now doubtful that Agia did steal the Claw--I'm not sure what she was groping for in the cell, but I think there's a strong suggestion that the Claw may have "stolen itself" or something of the kind. Severian's failure may, in fact, be that he has failed to attribute his possession of the Claw to the proper agency. I think it's clear that Severian thinks Agia took it, and that at first the reader is meant to concur; but I'm not so sure it's actually the case now.

On Oct 16, 12:00pm, Robert Borski wrote:

Subject: (urth) Agia: Thief?

raster having written:

"But it occurs to me that your theory can still be salvaged. If Agia isn't trying to filch the Claw, then she must be after the keys. We know S. has the door keys; where else would he carry them but his sabretache? Agia doubtless assumes that he has the key to Agilus's chains as well."

Actually, I like this notion rather well. And I don't think the coins theory can be totally discounted either, since Agia takes the orichalk Sev tosses her.

Re Agia as the Claw's thief. I've already stated I find this difficult to accept, and wonder what mantis or other proponents of the Agia-as-thief theory make of the following scene in SWORD. Sev wants the Claw back from the cacogens, and Barbatus asks, "If it is yours, where did you get it?" Sev lays his Agia theory on him, but Barbatus seems almost incensed by this. "All this is speculation. You did not see this jewel upon the altar, nor did you feel the woman's hand when she gave it to you, if in fact she did. *Where did you get it?*" (p. 271, and these are Wolfe's italics, not mine.)

Baldander's answer to the same question--"I got it from the drawer in a table"--also does not seem to satisfy Barbatus, and not much later Famulimus says to Sev, as they're walking to their timeship, "Though you did not now pass our test..."

It seems to me that passing "the test" somehow involves correctly answering the question, "Where did you get it?" What think you?

Re: EMPIRES OF FOLIAGE AND FLOWERS. I have a copy of the non-deluxe edition I'll let go for \$175.00. It is a nice book, but perhaps too much so--I'm afraid to handle it, fearing fingerprints or drool may soil it.

Robert Borski

Robert Borski — 16 Oct 1998, 12:00 · follows Alex David Groce

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Robert Borski

Mark Millman — 16 Oct 1998, 14:14 · follows Robert Borski

On 16 October 1998 at 5:00 PM GMT,

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I'm not convinced that the literal question "Where did you get it?" is really at issue for Famulimus and Bar- batus here. I think it's the only way that they can ask the real question without giving away the answer; if Severian knows the answer, then the phrasing won't throw him off, but if he doesn't have a clue (as he, in fact, proves he hasn't), then he'll try to answer it as it stands. Any physical answer--"Agia planted it", "it was in the drawer", even "well, it just appeared there one day"--is going to be incorrect. The correct answer is something like, "It's a part of me." But as Severian doesn't yet recognize this, he can't pass the test.

Remember also that the Pelerines search Agia because she looks guilty to them, and don't bother with Severian because he appears plainly to be an innocent. There's more to it than just appearances, too; if I recall correctly, mention is made of the chief Pelerine's (is she a Mother Superior?) ability to see the truth regardless of circumstance.

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Drool, Robert? If you love the book that much, I'm surprised that you're willing to let it go at all.

Robert Borski

Mark Millman