

Tussah's children

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 10 Oct 2002

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Roy C. Lackey — 10 Oct 2002, 02:29

Crush wrote:

So the list of characters and places should not be viewed as decisive.

What

of textual evidence? I can't at this point name the page, but at one point

Silk's remembers seeing a picture (or image?) of Calde Tussah and he's wearing makeup. We know men don't wear makeup in Viron because Quetzal had

to justify his use of it due to a "skin condition". What reason would Tussah

have for wearing makeup if he were not an inhume? If he's an inhume, then he

can't have a natural human daughter.

I think you should read that passage again. It's in the last chapter of CALDE (pp. 335-36 of the paperback), at the point where Silk is being brought up from the cellar of Blood's house by Potto. Silk is sick, wounded, sleepless, and exhausted; he's not thinking clearly. He is mentally comparing himself to Sand, which leads to thoughts of his "mother's" desire for him to enter politics, then to thoughts of the old calde. He spends a paragraph on the calde's bust his mother had shown him, which concludes with, "The calde's carved countenance rose again before his mind's eye, and it seemed to him that he had seen it someplace else only a day or two before."

And he had seen it, on Chenille's face. He continues:

"Streaming sunlight, and cheeks that were not smooth wood but blotched and lightly pocked. Was it possible he had once seen the calde in person, perhaps as an infant? [. . .] ". . . had seen the calde outside, because even without his lost glasses he had noticed the powder on the cheeks and the flaws that the powder tried to cover--had seen him, in that case, under the auspices of the Outsider, in a sense."

Note the lost glasses, which he didn't have as an infant, or need to see a divine vision. The powder was on the imperfect face of Chenille. Men tended to look at her tits, not her face, which wasn't really pretty. She probably had acne scars. Silk finally makes the correct connection a few pages later (340).

"'You're sunburned!' Inwardly, Silk reproached his own stupidity. 'I've been looking at you--gaping actually, I suppose. I hope you'll excuse it, but I couldn't imagine how your face had gotten so red, so close to the red-brown color of a wood-carving my mother used to have.'

"'She wore nothing on the boat,' Incus interposed. 'Then my robe. Maytera forced them to give her that gown'

"Loris snapped, 'Is this germane?'

"'Perhaps not,' Silk admitted. 'It's just that Chenille has reminded me of a childhood incident, Councillor.'"

Also, Chenille exhibits stunning visual acuity and manual dexterity when (while talking to Remora in LS2) she was able pull a knife from the wall, throw it from across the room and stick it exactly in the slot she from which she pulled it. I realize that she was possessed by Kypris at the time.

But there is no reason to believe possession grants the possessee with any powers he would not have while unpossessed - any more than Mario Andretti could win the Indy 500 in an '85 Toyota Sentra. Anyway, proficiency with knives is a province of Kypris. That trick required physical powers normal humans could not perform after any amount of practice.

I think the knife-throwing bit was all due to Kypris. Recall that when Scylla possessed Chenille at the lake, Chenille had been exhausted. After possession, Chenille dove off the cliff into the lake "a hundred cubits or more" below (LS2, p259, paper). And, later "A moment later Auk saw her leap--flying in a way that he knew would have been impossible had she not been possessed--to land with a roll upon the deck of the fishing boat." (263) And "she had an alarming habit of remaining immobile in attitudes no mere human being could have maintained for than a few seconds" (LS3, p15, paper). So, possession does grant extraordinary abilities.

Remora himself knew this to be true. He told Gulo that she was the biologically engineered heir of Tussah ("son not my son" this is another hint of why Chenille's name is sexually ambivalent although I have not unraveled the puzzle yet). Remora was a "whorlly-wise" political operative; knowledgeable about, and usually involved with all occult (in the old sense) activity in Viron. His deductions should not be casually dispensed with.

Remora did not say that to Gulo. He may have suggested it, and certainly Gulo jumped to that conclusion, but he was wrong. Pages 268-71 (LS4, hardback) establish Chenille's parentage about as clearly as Wolfe ever makes anything. In that section Silk says, "Chenille's mother had recently given birth to the calde's child, or if she had not, she was carrying that child--and it was her child, too. She must have guessed, or known, that the calde had been murdered. At that time the Ayuntamiento was searching everywhere for the adopted son mentioned in the calde's will; and she would have supposed, as I believe most people did, that it would kill him if it found him. She needn't have been an educated woman, or an imaginative one, to guess what would happen to another child of the calde's, if it learned that she existed."

That section makes clear that 1) Tussah was not an inhum; he was a man who preferred big, amazon-like women, such as his mistress, Chenille's mother. Loris called her a "virago", and it was from her that Chenille inherited her physique. Also, as on p. 270, the inhumu, Quetzal, is often described as "lipless", while the bust of Tussah has a "generous mouth"; 2) the "son not my son" you mention must be the "Though he is not the son of my body, my son will succeed me." from the calde's will. That seems straightforward enough to me. The expensive, enhanced, frozen embryo (and Remora mentioned only the one to Gulo) Tussah bought was implanted in the woman Silk calls his mother. That embryo was Silk, who had been born about three years before Chenille. Thus Silk is biologically unrelated to either his "mother" or adoptive father, Tussah. Which, of course, is why Silk saw two sets of parents when he "died" and went to Mainframe. And, of course, he and Chenille are unrelated, biologically

-Roy