

5HOC - no. 5, Marsch, Eastwind and Sandwalker

The Urth list — 11 messages, 8 voices, 06 May 2007

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Maclean Jessica — 06 May 2007, 20:56

Hi all

I have just finished reading 5HOC for the first time- I really enjoyed it and liked the slightly harder sci-fi edge (tech-wise) of the first story in particular. I'm just sorting through my impressions and would love some feedback.

Number 5, and Maitre are two clones of the original Mr Million. Dr Veil and David are children of clones of Mr Million. Other clones, less suitable for whatever reason, are sold.

Marsch is either Sandwalker or Eastwind- when the cat bites Marsch, either, the cat is somehow Eastwind/Sandwalker, or the cat has bitten Eastwind/Sandwalker. The ambiguity of the identity of the prisoner, the many times that his ineptitude with tools is mentioned, the fact that only one comes back from the trip, and the story that Marsch writes all lead me to believe this.

Which means that Number 5 is partially correct when he accuses Marsch of being an abo in the first story, when No. 5 wants to kill Maitre (who he thinks is his father). Who actually kills Maitre? The text only mentions No. 5 being left alone with him after goading Marsch into leaving.

Maitre is also the name of the officer in the third book who is reading "Marsch"'s notes. Is Maitre a clone? He has a slave who I think is a clone like No. 5- the description of "high hunched shoulders" and something about a narrow chin rang a bell. I note that Maitre, just like Eastwind/Sandwalker, prefers to wash himself after being with a woman.

Is Maitre the officer, "Marsch"? Bearing in mind that "Marsch" is half abo and can change his appearance to a certain degree...

Jessica Maclean
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Dan Rabin — 06 May 2007, 22:39 · follows Maclean Jessica

Jessica Maclean asks,

At 8:56 AM +1200 5/7/07, Maclean Jessica wrote:
Maitre is also the name of the officer in the third book who is reading "Marsch"'s notes. Is Maitre a clone? He has a slave who I think is a clone like No. 5- the description of "high hunched shoulders" and something about a narrow chin rang a bell. I note that Maitre, just like Eastwind/Sandwalker, prefers to wash himself after being with a woman.

Is Maitre the officer, "Marsch"? Bearing in mind that "Marsch" is half abo and can change his appearance to a certain degree?

"Maitre" is the French word corresponding to the English "Master". It's actually spelled "Ma?tre", where the circumflex, as is often the case in French, indicates an original "s" in the etymology. I suspect both words descend from the Latin "magister".

It's what servants call the head of the household in which they serve--a title or honorific, not a name.

-- Dan Rabin

Jeff Wilson — 06 May 2007, 23:32 · in reply to Dan Rabin

Dan Rabin wrote:
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At 8:56 AM +1200 5/7/07, Maclean Jessica wrote:
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I believe that it also serves as a double-entendre in the first story; Maitre is also Number 5's figurative "mater", or mother, as well as his father.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
< <http://www.io.com/~jwilson> >

James Wynn — 07 May 2007, 02:05 · in reply to Maclean Jessica

Marsch is either Sandwalker or Eastwind- when the cat bites Marsch, either, the cat is somehow Eastwind/Sandwalker, or the cat has bitten Eastwind/Sandwalker.

The ambiguity of the identity of the prisoner, the many times that his ineptitude with tools is mentioned, the fact that only one comes back from the trip, and the story that Marsch writes all lead me to believe this.

I don't *think* so. After Marsch kills the cat (which is an abo), VRT (who is also an abo) kills Marsch. Then he spends some time in the wilderness growing a beard and preparing to take on the identity of Marsch. The "man" in the cell is VRT. So Number 5 was entirely correct.

The story (so it seems to me) is "abo lore" of when the colonists first arrived. VRT wrote it.

This is all straightforward with the exception that VRT does "share dreams" with Number 5 (as abo twins do). I suppose that this is from his Shadow Child telepathic abilities, but I don't know for sure.

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Maaaaybe. The possibility cannot be discounted. However, for certain, it is another parallel between Number 5 and VRT. They were both prisoners of "Maitre" to be endlessly and pointlessly examined.

J

Tony Ellis — 07 May 2007, 09:51 · follows James Wynn

Jessica Maclean wrote:

Marsch is either Sandwalker or Eastwind- when the cat bites Marsch, either, the cat is somehow Eastwind/Sandwalker, or the cat has bitten Eastwind/Sandwalker.

I don't think the cat bites anyone. When 'Marsch' reports the incident in his journal, he does so to explain why his handwriting has suddenly become so bad. But if Marsch is no longer Marsch but one of the Annese, then of course his handwriting would be bad - he can't use tools.

The ambiguity of the identity of the prisoner, the many times that his ineptitude with tools is mentioned, the fact that only one comes back from the trip, and the story that Marsch writes all lead me to believe this.

Only one comes back from the trip, but two set off. VRT is surely the person who steals Marsch's identity, and no one has to get bitten by anything for that to happen.

That said, there's no doubt that there's a strong echo of the incident of the Shadow Child biting Sandwalker, whose identity is thereafter muddled. But I think the parallel is an artistic one -

there are a lot of such devices connecting the three stories.

Adam Stephanides — 09 May 2007, 15:32 · follows Tony Ellis

Tony Ellis wrote:

I don't think the cat bites anyone. When 'Marsch' reports the incident in his journal, he does so to explain why his handwriting has suddenly become so bad. But if Marsch is no longer Marsch but one of the Annese, then of course his handwriting would be bad - he can't use tools.

Rereading this passage, I noticed something odd. Like you, I had believed that the Apr. 23 entry, as well as the note preceding it, were written by V.R.T. (as the officer's behavior seems to confirm) and that the cat-bite story was V.R.T.'s invention. But the big change in the entries comes a day later: the Apr. 23 entry could easily have been written by Marsch, whereas the Apr. 24 and later entries were clearly written by V.R.T. Stylistically, too, the Apr. 23 entry and preceding note are more like Marsch's entries than the post-Apr. 23 entries. Moreover, the Apr. 23 entry talks of shooting the tire-tiger, but V.R.T. can't use a rifle. (Of course V.R.T. could have made that up too, but in the rest of his entries he does a very poor job of pretending to be Marsch.)

If the Apr. 23 entry and preceding note are in Marsch's words, then what happened must have been something like this: On Apr. 22 Marsch is bitten by the cat. On Apr. 23 Marsch writes the original version of the entry we see: the cat's bite affects his handwriting, though it doesn't look like V.R.T.'s handwriting. Sometime after that, Marsch is either killed by V.R.T. or dies in an accident. On June 1 V.R.T. decides to continue Marsch's journal, writing as Marsch, and the note preceding the Apr. 23 entry shows him how he can do this. So V.R.T. copies the note and Apr. 23 entry, and cuts the original out of the notebook (as the first three pages were cut out). In doing so he also cuts out any entries Marsch may have written between the Apr. 21 entry, where he says he would shoot V.R.T. and the girl if he caught them having sex, and his own death.

I'm not very happy with this, as it's the sort of elaborate scenario with no direct evidence that I generally dislike. But the difference between the Apr. 23 and "Apr. 24" entries is so striking (to me, anyway), that it requires explanation. An alternate explanation would be that Marsch's altered handwriting just happens to look like V.R.T.'s, but this would be too much of a coincidence.

(Apologies if this has been discussed before, though I don't remember it having been.)

--Adam

Tony Ellis — 09 May 2007, 20:48 · follows Adam Stephanides

Adam Stephanides wrote:

Rereading this passage, I noticed something odd... <snip>

I take your point that the April 23 entry reads a lot like a normal Marsch entry. But the idea that the reader is supposed to infer VRT copied out an entry in someone else's bad handwriting in his *own* bad handwriting is a step too far for me - especially as it also requires us to infer that he cut out the original entry when Wolfe gives us no indication of any such mutilation to the journal. (And that's another thing: the officer notices when pages have been removed expertly, but not when it's done by hamfisted VRT?)

Perhaps the cat bit Marsch and Wolfe doesn't think it's such a big coincidence that his altered handwriting looks like VRT's. After all, VRT's handwriting is what writing looks like when you hold the pen wrongly, and that's what Marsch would be doing.

But I don't think so. For me, it's simply too much to swallow that just before Marsch's

handwriting changes because he's been replaced by an alien that can't write properly, it changes *anyway* because he was bitten by a cat. I suppose it's just down to personal taste.

Coming back to the April 23 journal entry... on balance I think VRT wrote it. The curious business of preceding the entry with an out-of-sequence note seems to indicate that something is up. And more importantly *why does Marsch wait until he has killed the ghoul-bear to tell us he killed the tire-tiger the day before?* The man loves shooting wildlife, and is hugely proud of his kills. If he was so excited about killing the tiger, as the entry says he was, why didn't he excitedly write about it in his journal at the time? His cat bite certainly wasn't a handicap.

Also: "The boy had enticed [the cat] into his lap and was sitting - as he always used to when he wasn't cooking - with his back to the fire..."

Why "as he always used to"? Why write as if that's something that used to happen, but doesn't now? Because the writer is VRT, and the expedition ended a month ago? That would be my guess.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 09 May 2007, 22:19 · in reply to Tony Ellis

Ummm.

I've never believed the cat really did bite Marsch. I've always assumed that was something VRT made up to explain his handwriting.

On 5/9/07, Tony Ellis <tonyellis69 at btopenworld.com> wrote:
Adam Stephanides wrote:

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Jeff Wilson — 10 May 2007, 14:06 · in reply to Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

Dan'I Danehy-Oakes wrote:
Ummm.

I've never believed the cat really did bite Marsch. I've always assumed that was something VRT made up to explain his handwriting.

Perhaps _VRT_ imitates the cat to bite Marsch, then waits a day or two to make sure the sample takes and he can now imitate Marsch, then kills him? The other accounts of abo imitations that come to mind seem to take a certain amount of time and involve blood being drawn, or at least don't rule it out.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
< <http://www.io.com/~jwilson> >

James Wynn — 12 May 2007, 17:07 · follows Jeff Wilson

Adam said:

I had believed that the Apr. 23 entry, as well as the note preceding it, were written by V.R.T.

I have always presumed the April 23 entry was written by Marsch. That was why I presumed VRT had murdered Marsch for some reason relating to this event. Otherwise, it just seemed too coincidental.

the cat's bite affects his handwriting, though it doesn't look like V.R.T.'s handwriting. Sometime after that, Marsch is either killed by V.R.T.

or dies in an

accident.

Once again, the idea that Marsch died by accident seemed way too coincidental, however (something about the way Adam put this timeline together) it does seem reasonable that the cat's bite killed Marsch and so VRT took up his identity to hide the nature of Marsch's death.

I like this idea very much.

Daniel D Jones — 17 May 2007, 11:37 · in reply to James Wynn

On Saturday 12 May 2007 13:07, James Wynn wrote:
Adam said:

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Once again, the idea that Marsch died by accident seemed way to coincidental, however (something about the way Adam put this timeline together)

it does seem reasonable that the cat's bite killed Marsch and so VRT took up his identity to hide the nature of Marsch's death.

To my mind, it only seems too coincidental if you assume that VRT intended to assume Marsch's identity from the beginning. If, however, you assume that Marsch died and VRT seized the opportunity, then it doesn't seem like a huge coincidence. It's been awhile since I read the story, so I don't know how well this interpretation jibes with the text. It's something I'll keep in mind the next time I read it.