

Urth Digest, Vol 78, Issue 38

The Urth list — 4 messages, 3 voices, 11 Feb 2011

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5969>

Exported from an unofficial mirror of a public mailing list. Copyright in each message remains with the person who wrote it. Email addresses are obscured as `user at host`, the form the original archive published. This file was rebuilt from parsed fields rather than retained headers, so it is faithful in content but not byte-exact.

Andrew Mason — 11 Feb 2011, 23:21

Antonio Pedro Marquez wrote:

I also don't like the idea of multiple Silks or Silk-like figures. For one thing, Horn travels a lot through Blue and always has to explain why Silk is important to him, and nobody says 'yeah, we had someone like that also'. Of course, that lack of mention could be down to Silk/Horn. But like with the Silk-as-clone theory, it's not only that nobody mentions it, it's that nobody behaves accordingly.

Well, for one thing, although Silk has been bred to be special, his specialness is not wholly due to his breeding, but also to the Outsider. Without his intervention Silk might have lived out his life as a humble augur - perhaps gaining a reputation as a specially gifted augur, but no more. For another, we know that the store of embryos below Viron has been raided and all the embryos gone; perhaps in other cities that isn't so. On the other hand, perhaps in some cities they went much earlier.

I agree with Lee that, if Silk is the only person on the Whorl with gifts of this sort, this implies that Viron is special and was seen by Pas as such. But I find this improbable; I think it has become special because of Quetzal, who did not allow the news of Pas's death to get through, and so made it a safe place for the Plan to be reactivated in due course. So I would contrapose, and say that there were probably multiple embryos of this kind.

Andrew Mason — 11 Feb 2011, 23:25 · in reply to Andrew Mason

Andrew Mason wrote:

So I would contrapose, and say that there

were probably multiple embryos of this kind.

Of this kind.

James Wynn — 12 Feb 2011, 03:45 · in reply to Andrew Mason

Andrew-

Well, for one thing, although Silk has been bred to be special, his specialness is not wholly due to his breeding, but also to the Outsider. Without his intervention Silk might have lived out his life as a humble augur - perhaps gaining a reputation as a specially gifted augur, but no more. For another, we know that the store of embryos below Viron has been raided and all the embryos gone; perhaps in other cities that isn't so. On the other hand, perhaps in some cities they went much earlier.

I agree with Lee that, if Silk is the only person on the Whorl with gifts of this sort, this implies that Viron is special and was seen by Pas as such. But I find this improbable; I think it has become special because of Quetzal, who did not allow the news of Pas's death

to get through, and so made it a safe place for the Plan to be reactivated in due course. So I would contrapose, and say that there were probably multiple embryos of this kind.

I don't think it is likely Silk would ever have lived his life as a humble augur. Assuming Silk is the one Tussah was thinking of when he said "my son shall be Calde after me", he knew that his abilities would carry him to the top wherever he was placed. His mother had expected him to go into government. I think the only reason he was placed in the Quarter was because Quetzal knew (and Remora suspected) who he was and put him there to hide him.

It is unlikely that Silk was originally the only one with gifts of his sort. However, he might have been the last. Or there might be others in plain sight. They would undoubtedly be persons in positions of leadership--leadership gained without certification or struggle. His gift was the ineffable power of leadership. Silk had qualities that Urth scientists had quantified as those that caused others to follow him, that is leadership. Typhon, a test tube baby himself, probably had those enhancements as well. He had that "voice of command" and telepathic ability. It's implied that the embryos were granted disparate abilities, but it is hard to imagine that anyone would have thought only one with Silk's would be necessary. By the time of the evacuation, the human embryos had all been lost. Perhaps, they were all located beneath Viron because it was the Cargo most like the Commonwealth. Or perhaps Viron's embryos were raided last of all. Some animal embryos survived.

The relevant citations are below:

"We [colonists] had shared out everything when we landed, we who had come from Old Viron and the new people, the sleepers, the ones who had slept three hundred years in the caverns of the Whorl. Do you know about them, Mora? Their memories had been tampered with, like Mamelta's, so they were confused in strange ways. [snip] The tools and the seeds and the frozen embryos, though there weren't many of those. No human embryos at all. They'd been taken, every one of them. Special talents, you see-untamed and unpredictable abilities that were supposed to help us; but they had been taken by those who had broken the seals. Taken and sold, long ago. [...] Silk had been one of them. Silk had been our leader. That was his talent, leadership. People trusted and followed him, and he tried-I tried very hard, Mora, not to mislead them, not to lead them astray and betray them. But Silk had remained behind in the Whorl with Hyacinth, and it almost destroyed us."

IGJ, Chap 10

"There were human embryos among their supplies, ancient embryos preserved by cold far beyond that of the coldest winter nights. Sometimes the looters simply left those embryos. Sometimes they wantonly destroyed them, and sometimes they took and sold them, packing them in ice in an attempt to preserve them until they could be implanted. [...] There were human embryos as well. There were also seeds, kept frozen like the embryos, so that they would sprout even after hundreds of years; but it is with the human embryos that you and I have to do, because Mucor was such an embryo. So was Patera Silk. I set out to explain Mucor, but there would be no

Mucor---or so I believe---without Patera Silk. Nor would either of them exist without Pas, who was called Typhon on the Short Sun Whorl." RttW, Chap 6

Personally I find it enigmatic that the Rajan claims here that "there would be no Mucor without Patera Silk".

"When Pas [...] decided to send mortals to the whorls beyond the Short Sun Whorl, he used no less than three separate means. Some he sent as sleepers, unconscious in tubes of thin glass until they were awakened by the breaking of the glass. Some---your ancestors, Hound, and mine---he simply set down here inside the/Whorl./ And some he sent as frozen embryos, the products of carefully controlled matings in his workshops." RttW, Chap 6

For those who say Silk was a test tube baby and not a clone, here is your confirmation.

" 'To colonize Blue and Green, Pas had to make certain that some human beings reached them alive. He pretty well assured that by dividing us into the two groups---ourselves, and the sleepers. If the sleep process, whatever it was, couldn't keep them alive for three hundred years, we would supply colonists. If we were wiped out by some disease as you suggested, the sleepers could be roused by Mainframe, or by the chems that Pas put in this whorl as well. But though our surviving until we reached Blue and Green was necessary, it was not sufficient. We had to survive on those whorls afterward. Blue is a hospitable one; we are our own worst enemies there. Green is much harsher. It's where the inhumis breed, and there are diseases and dangerous animals. Pas felt we ordinary people might not be able to deal with those, so he took steps to see that we'd have some extraordinary ones as well, people like Mucor, who can send out her spirit without dying; and people like Silk, who was the sort of leader we weave legends about but seldom get---or deserve, I might add."

Hound stared at the fire before he spoke. 'You said most of those embryos had been stolen or destroyed.

'I'm afraid so.'

'Does that mean we'll fail?'

'Perhaps. On Green at least.'

'I'd like to go. Am I crazy? I've never felt this way before.'

'The crossing is very dangerous---I don't deny that. But you and Tansy might make a better life for yourselves and your children on

Blue than you will ever have here, and you would be doing the will of Pas.'

'Not Blue,' Hound said. 'I want to go to Green. I want to go where I'm needed, Horn.'

[...] 'You're a brave man.'

'I'm not! I know I'm not. But---but . . .[...] But I'm steady, and I've got a good head on my shoulders, and I don't drink or get so angry I ruin everything. I'm no troublemaker. I can work with my hands, and I drive a hard bargain. They could use me. I know they could!' "

RttW, Chap 6

I think the meaning of this is that the engineered embryos are not the only humans that count. That people like Hound are a more valuable resource.

u+16b

Gerry Quinn — 12 Feb 2011, 15:09 · in reply to James Wynn

Nice list, James. Couple of points relating to the bits below:

I'm not convinced that "No human embryos at all" should be taken as applying without exception to every city in the Whorl. Horn could not reasonably know this, after all. I would tend to say that they were all destroyed in Viron, and Viron was reasonably well-ordered, so they were probably all or nearly all destroyed in most cities. But that's really just a case of what I prefer in literary terms - as far as the story is concerned Silk is more or less unique even if there are probably some cities here and there that we didn't hear of in which embryos engineered for leadership are present.

With regard to Mucor, I think the line simply means that without Silk, Mucor would eventually have starved herself to death or otherwise killed herself.

- Gerry Quinn

From: James Wynn

It is unlikely that Silk was originally the only one with gifts of his sort. However, he might have been the last. Or there might be others in plain sight. They would undoubtedly be persons in positions of leadership--leadership gained without certification or struggle. His gift was the ineffable power of leadership. Silk had qualities that Urth scientists had quantified as those that caused others to follow him, that is leadership. Typhon, a test tube baby himself, probably had those enhancements as well. He had that "voice of command" and telepathic ability. It's implied that the embryos were granted disparate abilities, but it is hard to imagine that anyone would have thought only one with Silk's would be necessary. By the time of the evacuation, the human embryos had all been lost. Perhaps, they were all located beneath Viron because it was the Cargo most like the Commonwealth. Or perhaps Viron's embryos were raided last of all. Some animal embryos survived.

The relevant citations are below:

"We [colonists] had shared out everything when we landed, we who had come from Old Viron

and the new people, the sleepers, the ones who had slept three hundred years in the caverns of the Whorl. Do you know about them, Mora? Their memories had been tampered with, like Mamelta's, so they were confused in strange ways. [snip] The tools and the seeds and the frozen embryos, though there weren't many of those. No human embryos at all. They'd been taken, every one of them. Special talents, you see-untamed and unpredictable abilities that were supposed to help us; but they had been taken by those who had broken the seals. Taken and sold, long ago. [...] Silk had been one of them. Silk had been our leader. That was his talent, leadership. People trusted and followed him, and he tried-I tried very hard, Mora, not to mislead them, not to lead them astray and betray them. But Silk had remained behind in the Whorl with Hyacinth, and it almost destroyed us."

IGJ, Chap 10

"There were human embryos among their supplies, ancient embryos preserved by cold far beyond that of the coldest winter nights. Sometimes the looters simply left those embryos. Sometimes they wantonly destroyed them, and sometimes they took and sold them, packing them in ice in an attempt to preserve them until they could be implanted. [...] There were human embryos as well. There were also seeds, kept frozen like the embryos, so that they would sprout even after hundreds of years; but it is with the human embryos that you and I have to do, because Mucor was such an embryo. So was Patera Silk. I set out to explain Mucor, but there would be no Mucor-or so I believe-without Patera Silk. Nor would either of them exist without Pas, who was called Typhon on the Short Sun Whorl."

RttW, Chap 6

Personally I find it enigmatic that the Rajan claims here that "there would be no Mucor without Patera Silk".