

Short Story 8: Volksweapon

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 08 Oct 2014

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/6682>

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Robert Pirkola — 08 Oct 2014, 14:27

Marc Aramini wrote on October 7, 2014: "Off topic, your input on volksweapon from a few months ago .. It is very suspicious that the hero wants to leave the dead girl alone, and the alleged killer wants to stay with her body or bring it. I feel that as an unrealistic meta mystery your solution would work ... But with any degree of realism, the proper authorities would have the "hero" if he were at all related to the dead girl or her husband. He wouldn't get away with it as his motive would be obvious to authorities. "Oh wait... You are her husband?" However, the image of blinding the deer with a flashlight also seems as if it could describe the murder of the girl if the person who presents our solution is not trustworthy. I don't know. Maybe it should be revisited."

Yeah, I am pretty sure you are right that Smythe can't have been the husband. It was an hypothesis too far, especially given that the third-person narrator specifically identifies him as, "game warden", which I think we have to trust. However, if you forget that ill-considered bit of speculation and make a different assumption (that does have plausible textual support) it remains narratively sound. Assume that Smythe was the person the moon-faced boy claims initially confronted he and Judy, and that his name is indeed an indication of his character. I generally associate smiting with Old Testament-style justice from on high and if Smythe knew that Judy was married and was committing adultery, he may have taken justice into his own hands and killed her for the transgression. Leviticus 20:10 ?If a man commits adultery with the wife of his neighbor, both the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death." This would also help explain why he disposes of the old hunter's derringer rather than allowing the judicial process to proceed. It is an example of justice like that exhibited by Solomon, though thankfully no babies were harmed in the making of that reference.

This of course fails to explain two ambiguous statements from Smythe: The last line of the story, "I wish I could have given it to her" and ?I suppose she and that fellow were driving out to one of the summer cottages on the lake — maybe not for the reasons you would think.

Yeah, I want to believe the jacklighting bit is relevant beyond implicating the hunters, but I can't seem to make it fit the narrative. Smythe couldn't have used the technique to kill the girl as the MFB would have mentioned something about a bright light coming out of nowhere. The description of jacklighting given by Smythe on pg. 49:

"The jacklighter shines a lamp or the headlights of a car into the woods and kind of hypnotizes the deer. Since the deer's eyes reflect the light, your poacher has a perfect target; the range is short and the deer's not moving. Usually your jacklighter uses a car and you can stop him on the road with the carcass in his trunk."

Any ideas?

For those interested, the discussion of this story started with Marc's post on March 29, 2012.
<http://lists.urth.net/pipermail/urth-urth.net/2012-March/026740.html>
My follow-up was on July 2, 2014.
<http://lists.urth.net/pipermail/urth-urth.net/2014-July/054877.html>

Norwood, Frederick Hudson — 08 Oct 2014, 14:57 · in reply to Robert Pirkola

I'm so glad to see this discussion returning to the works of Gene Wolfe.

Rick Norwood

From: Urth [mailto:urth-bounces@lists.urth.net] On Behalf Of Robert Pirkola Sent: Wednesday, October 08, 2014 10:28 AM To: urth at urth.net Subject: (urth) Short Story 8: Volksweapen

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"Off topic, your input on volksweapen from a few months ago .. It is very suspicious that the hero wants to leave the dead girl alone, and the alleged killer wants to stay with her body or bring it. I feel that as a nonrealistic meta mystery your solution would work ... But with any degree of realism, the proper authorities would have the "hero" if he were at all related to the dead girl or her husband. He wouldn't get away with it as his motive would be obvious to authorities. "Oh wait... You are her husband?" However, the image of blinding the deer with a flashlight also seems as if it could describe the murder of the girl if the person who presents our solution is not trustworthy. I don't know. Maybe it should be revisited."

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