

Handwriting

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 01 Jun 1998

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m.driussi — 01 Jun 1998, 21:21

Adam,

FWIW I agree with you that the initial reason for the officer to suddenly stop reading the "Marsch Journal" and look back at the beginning of "V.R.T. Schoolbook" is that he is comparing the bad handwriting and finding it the same.

However, there are two other items:

I think Robert Borski is probably on to something, in the way that the two texts relate to each other beyond the handwriting issue. This might be the "next level" of meaning and is probably beyond the officer's awareness.

Next, I'm not sure in my mind exactly how V.R.T. killed Marsch, or on what day it happened.

Granted, the easy answer is that the entry explaining the "absurd accident" with the cat--entry "April 23" (Ace p. 259) makes it seem that the murder happened on April 22 (Easter Sunday 1973; 5HC first published 1972).

But the ballistics table on the flyleaf of the book is for both the heavy rifle and a long range shot. The implication for murder being that V.R.T. must have the .35 caliber rifle (which Marsch almost always has, and since he has it in his seemingly last entry for April 21, if V.R.T. were to shoot him in the tree he would be using the light rifle) and there must be some distance (that is, the table won't work for the light rifle at all, and the light rifle won't give a likely one-shot kill in any event).

We also know that the entries for April 22 through 26 were written on June 1, fwiw. We cannot be certain how dilligent Marsch was in keeping his journal since the officer jumps around in it: we have April 15 (p. 247), April 16 (p. 247), and April 21 (p. 251), a possible lapse of five days.

Okay, so we assume the April 21 entries are the last of Marsch. He was killed sometime after that. But the last part of that entry, the part about V.R.T. being uncircumsised and that he will kill them, seems so bizarre and unlike Marsch (and so much like the fantasies of V.R.T. to come later in the journal) that it makes me wonder.

True, it could be just that the strain is making Marsch crack, and he is so far cracked that he is writing it down. While up in a tree. With a heavy rifle. Waiting for big game.

But if we back up a bit, to that stuff about the heavy rifle? It turns out that Marsch did have the light rifle on April 12, and V.R.T. did have the heavy rifle, and they were separated by some distance. The events went like this: Marsch woke up, found the boy washing himself in the river, obviously having "been with a woman" (according to Marsch); then suddenly there was a roaring, so Marsch grabbed the light rifle and ran off to fire it at the ghoul-bear; the ghoul-bear,

only wounded, ran off; Marsch plans to alternate with the boy standing watch through the night with the heavy rifle.

Okay, =finally= the boy has the big gun. He could conceivably have shot Marsch as Marsch stood there shooting the ghoul-bear at point-blank; if not then, he has ample opportunity to shoot Marsh at point-blank range in the night. (If they keep the same security routine later, he could do the same at a later time.)

(We should probably sift through the wild fantasy of "A Story" for clues as to how and when the murder took place--easy answer would be that it happened on the banks of the river with a confusion of killer and victim, similar to the scene where "Marsch" sees "V.R.T." washing himself in the river on April 12.)

Yet if V.R.T. killed on April 12, then why (you may be wondering) is the handwriting so good until June 1? (I.e., good handwriting for April 15, 16, and 21--bad handwriting seems to start Jun 1 with the April 22 entry.)

The answer =might= be that V.R.T. has succeeded in copying Marsch (note how he is copying Marsch's speech patterns in April 16; and yes, I'm willing to suppose that V.R.T. is "talking to himself" at this point) so successfully that he is identical, a "clone" (the Veil's Theory thing again). He =can= write exactly like Marsch. But his control starts to slip--either because he is only "half" abo, or because even abos can't do it forever, or because abos have to mirror a living subject, or I don't know why--and by June his handwriting has regressed to the level of his schoolbook.

I am full aware that this is highly speculative.

I also wonder if the caribou critter they shot was an abo--that "double pupil" eye thing to me smacks of lycanthropy, as if the thing is trying to shift again but is halted mid-process by death.

Re: conservation of matter as a reason why the cat cannot be a girl. Isn't this a valid argument =only= if the density of the matter remains the same? (Here hold this teaspoon full of neutron star--don't worry, it's only a teaspoon worth.) If somebody tried to pick up the cat . . . ah, but you say that Marsch did pick up the cat . . . but no, even by the easy reading, the "Marsch picked up the cat to show where he shot the tiger" scene was a fabrication by V.R.T./Marsch.

Can I say now that the "new prisoner" being brought in (p. 251), the fat middle-aged guy, is the bewildered sf author G.R.W.

=mantis=