

The Tin Man

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 02 Jun 1998

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Robert Borski — 02 Jun 1998, 08:45

For those of you into etymology (and many Wolfeans are), 'mantis' means 'prophet.' And since there is an ancient art known as haruspicy practiced by fortune-tellers and sages, I issued this challenge to our own mantis.

"Do an organ reading for me, brother prophet (this being what haruspicy is, as I'm sure we all remember from LONG SUN), tell me from the blackness of the bile and the glisten of the liver and the bloodcharge on the heart what the following divines:

Among the things the adult Number Five finds above the door lintel, besides David's dessicated trumpet-vine flutes, "there is a 'broken' puzzle made of the bronzed viscera of some small animal." Besides the grisly nature of this (I mean what the HELL kind of plaything is this? Guts-for-tots, a learning toy for junior vet wannabes?), what relevance does it play in FIFTH HEAD?"

Unfortunately, mantis ran out of doves to sacrifice and is already out on bail for rustling free-range chickens, so he's turned the matter back to me.

So then...I see... entrails. Bronzed entrails. Metal-coated organs.

They're Mr. Million's.

We know this because he put them above the lintel himself, with the confiscated flutes.

What do they represent?

Symbolically, several things.

The Wolfe clan's lost connection to the organic, the surrendering of their souls. I.e., they've become so obsessed with their quest (read the cloning-as-immortality-trope for not just its hubristic elements, but its Faustian) and used such dire means to achieve their ends, they've forfeited their humanity. And so like some families did in the old days, to help preserve and remind them of where they've been, but can't return--the "things lost" motif--they've bronzed their much more organic equivalent of baby booties.

And why does Mr. Million put the bronzed viscera above the door?

Because he's the Tin Man from Oz. But unlike Baum's robotic woodsman, whose goal in life is to secure for himself a heart, Mr. Million--easily the most humane character in all of 5H--already has one, and so he can afford to let his broken backup model collect dust above the lintel for all the rest of time.

Robert Borski (who still has Oz-induced nightmares about tornadoes)