

Severian's family

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 30 Jun 1997

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/76>

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Geoff Alex Cohen — 30 Jun 1997, 10:16

From: "Kevin McGuire" <kmcguire at itw.com>

While I'm here, though, could someone clue me in on what pointers there are to the identity of Severian's mother and sister?

I started a rough draft of this, at
<http://www.cs.duke.edu/~gac/Wolfe/family.html>.

Overview: we know Severian has a sister, because Severian/Severa is a set of names you give to twins. We know what happens to male children who are born to prisoners; female children go to the witches.

So Severian's sister is a witch, of his age. My guess (and Wolfe confirmed this in the chat) is Merryn, the Cumaeen's companion at the very end of Claw.

Mother: Well, Ouen names her Katharine at the end of Citadel and says she was given to the torturers (which matches our theory for Severian's origin). We do meet one woman in the Guild's care named Katharine...

Geoff

m.driussi — 30 Jun 1997, 17:38 · follows Geoff Alex Cohen

Reply: Item #2453278 from URTH at LISTS.BEST.COM@INET#

"Is there a sister in the text? A father? A mother?"

"We are told that 'Severian' is a name usually given to one of a pair of twins. If there is a sister, she will have been raised in the Witches' Keep in the Citadel, and she may well make some sort of appearance. I have myself gotten nowhere in identifying her, or in tracing any significance that might attach to her presence in 'The Book,' though if she does appear I suspect it is on the road to Thrax" (Clute, Wolfe essay dated 1986, STROKES, p. 164).

"Other relations lurk further back. Ava, the Pelerine who questions Severian in the lazaret, asks whether his name was not `one of those brother sister names . . . Severian and Severa.' Severian does not confirm this, any more than he can say whether he has a sister; but little Severian had a sister Severa, who was in fact his twin. He too asked if Severian had a sister. No question asked twice can be casual."

[Brief paragraph running through a few candidates.]

"A more appealing candidate is Merryn, the witch who appears with the Cumaeen atop the home of Apu-Punchau [i.e., on the road to Thrax]" (Gregory Feeley, "The Evidence of Things Not Shown: Family Romance in THE BOOK OF THE NEW SUN," "The New York Review of Science

Fiction No. 31," March 1991, p. 9).

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