

A Bite of Night Chough, er, Crow (with spoilers du jour)

The Whorl list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 13 Feb 2001

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/1152>

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Dave Lebling — 13 Feb 2001, 21:13

<<From: "Robert Borski" <rborski at charter.net>

To Adam Stephanides and vizcacha: are you now still going to argue that Silk has suffered a failure of nerve and cut himself not only on the arms, but his hands, his face and his neck too?>>

Ok, I concede on the details. However, I still think Silk was passively committing suicide and his spirit was broken. Hyacinth was dead. Silk was unable to prevent this. He is injured, bleeding to death. Devoted husband and general good-guy that he is, he places Hyacinth on her bier and settles down to die himself. In the nick of time Horn's spirit infuses his brain, suppressing his depression and defeatism, his wish for death. Horn is a can-do kind of guy, he won't let himself bleed to death for no reason.

So, to discuss the implications...

The unnamed farmer and his wife appear to know of Hyacinth living at the manse: "Some woman's there now. Came out from the city, I guess." Note there is no mention of Silk here. Did Silk and Hyacinth live apart? "Said she was sick." "She looked sick, too." So, this seems to at least suggest Hyacinth died of natural causes. No injuries to her are mentioned. Someone, presumably Silk, laid her on the bier.

So, how was Silk injured? Possibilities:

1) He did it himself.

In favor: Occam's Razor.

Against: clumsy suicide attempt for a guy who was a "butcher."

2) The manse was attacked.

For: eliminates clumsy suicide objection. Various candidates: Pig, opposition political groups in Viron, actual godling, Hari Mau & Co. Also farmer's attitude is suspicious (see below). Against: timing is very coincidental as compared with both Hy's death and Horn's on Green. One of these is bad enough, two is awful, but three? I try not to swallow too many coincidences before breakfast. Also, a lack of
plausible candidates.

3) Candidates for an attack.

a) Pig.

For: farmer's comment about fighting off a small godling. Pig is clearly such. Against: Pig has changed his ways since being possessed (but maybe not completely).

b) opposition party

For: Mint was attacked, Bison is scared that Silk will come back and resume the exodus, nutcases abound. Against: No hint or evidence that I can see.

c) actual godling

For: there's one in the vicinity.

Against: he shows no interest in hurting Silk later on.

d) Hari Mau & Co.

For: opportunity. They went out to the manse.

Against: no motive, they want him alive.

Let's look at Pig as suspect again, though as I said, I find it an unattractive scenario.

Later in the story, at the ruins of Blood's mansion, Pig is a serious danger to Hound and Horn/Silk when he is mourning Hyacinth in a room she once occupied. It is not hard to imagine a scenario where Pig happens upon (or is directed to) Silk's manse (Hyacinth's cottage?). There he finds Hyacinth, dead, and goes into an even more dangerous mourning fugue than we see later at Blood's. (How does he know it's Hyacinth? He's blind. Her scent?) Silk comes in (Where was he? Why did the farmers only know Hyacinth?) Pig attacks Silk and does some damage, but flees. (Why? Does he recognize that he's attacking himself? Is Silk winning? If there was a fight, why doesn't Pig appear injured not much later? Why is Pig so friendly to Horn/Silk when he meets him just one day later?)

Some other loose ends. The farmers clearly recognized Silk as Silk:

"Do either of you know Patera Silk? Calde Silk of Viron?"

Neither spoke. They edged closer together, regarding him through slitted eyes.

Then a few pages later the farmer tries to drive Silk off with his stick. Is he afraid of Silk because the farmer knew of an attack on the manse and thinks Silk knows he was complicit in it, if only by silence? He denies even knowing Silk lived in the neighborhood, and casually mentions that he has a slug gun.

I don't know what to conclude. In honor of Pig's native culture, the jury returns "Not Proven."
The colophon of the Urth list seems very appropriate here.

Dave Lebling

aka vizcacha

*This is WHORL, for discussion of Gene Wolfe's Book of the Long Sun.

David DiGiacomo — 13 Feb 2001, 19:18 · follows Dave Lebling

On the matter of Silk's wounds:

From: dlebling at shore.net (Dave Lebling)

1) He did it himself.

In favor: Occam's Razor.

Against: clumsy suicide attempt for a guy who was a "butcher."

I think that he cut himself because he wanted blood for Hyacinth's final sacrifice. He wouldn't have wanted to die until he had completed it.

3) Candidates for an attack.

a) Pig.

For: farmer's comment about fighting off a small godling. Pig is clearly such.

Against: Pig has changed his ways since being possessed (but maybe not completely).

Against: Pig is armed with a large sword, which would tend to make one large wound, as opposed to many small ones. I suppose Pig could have taken the sword from Silk after attacking him with the knife - but I thought it was intended to be Silk's old sacrificial knife.

c) actual godling

For: there's one in the vicinity.

Against: he shows no interest in hurting Silk later on.

Against: Silk would have been squashed, not cut.

Then a few pages later the farmer tries to drive Silk off with his stick. Is he afraid of Silk because the farmer knew of an attack on the manse and thinks Silk knows he was complicit in it, if only by silence? He denies even knowing Silk lived in the neighborhood, and casually mentions that he has a slug gun.

Perhaps Silk went on a rampage through the manse and grounds after Hyacinth's death, frightening the farmers.

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