

Mysteries

The Whorl list — 4 messages, 4 voices, 09 Mar 2001

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/1256>

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David Lebling — 09 Mar 2001, 21:45

Wolfe has a habit of introducing a mystery, having Silk/Horn state that he knows the answer, and then not saying what it is. Does anyone here know the answers to:

1) IGJ. Silk/Horn asks Mora(?) if she knows why her father's brother was called Incanto, then declares that he knows why, but he never tells us the answer. Why was Inclito's brother called Incanto?

2) RttW. Silk/Horn gives several explanations for how he can perform astral travel without an inhumu present. He lists several explicit ones (hidden inhumu, etc.) then a final one which worries him, but doesn't say what it is. What is it?

Feel free to add more to this list...

Dave Lebling
aka vizcacha

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

Adam Stephanides — 09 Mar 2001, 15:01 · follows David Lebling

on 3/9/01 8:45 PM, David Lebling at dlebling at ucentric.com wrote:
Feel free to add more to this list...

This may just be something I missed, but in New Viron "Father" is talking to Hoof about Scylla, "and I asked him if there had ever been a real Scylla. 'Yes,' he said. 'Yes, that's the terrible part.' Then he said something I did not understand at all: 'I feel sorry for Beroep.'" (339) I'm also mystified by the reference to Beroep.

--Adam

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Robert Borski — 11 Mar 2001, 14:38 · follows Adam Stephanides

Vizcacha the wonderer writes:

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I've already attempted to answer this one, but to recapitulate: if the Neighbors are able to

bilocate the same way the inhumi are, and if Pas/Typhon is a Neighbor, then PassilkHorn should also be able to do so. For the Narrator to acknowledge this, however, means he has to accept he's not simply Horn--something he avoids all the way to the end of the Short Sun series. Thus his worriment.

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Wolfe gives this prominence in the PROPER NAMES section as well, adding parenthetically under the Incanto entry: "Also the name of Inclito's older brother, who died in infancy." So it does seem important.

Possibly we can look for clues in the two stories Salica--the mother of Inclito and Incanto--tells during the dinner storytelling sessions. In the first we learn that she has been married five times; not until husband number four, however, does she finally conceive a child. Here's where perhaps the title of her second story may become relevant: "Stuck in the Chimney." On a Freudian level, this may be how Salica envisions her barrenness. Her delight at eventually bearing a son may therefore be why she names it Incanto -- "enchanted child"-- which to the newly-married couple he surely is, at least until he dies.

But this is hardly the only mystery associated with Inclito's family. As has been mentioned before, at one point Inclito tells Mora the following:

"...after racking my brain for long days I've finally realized who you and your father remind me of. I knew--I felt, at least--that I had met you both before. I won't tell you because the names would mean nothing to you."

Mora subsequently asks if they're good people, and Wolfe/Horn writes:

"'Very good people.' Without my willing it, my voice grew softer. I myself heard it with surprise."

So obviously it's someone Horn (or Pas or Silk) cares about, although this seems to surprise him (them), and quite probably a father-daughter tandem.

Then there's the very bizarre and disturbing scene where young Mora comes to visit Horn wearing jewelry and scent. Notes Horn: "What ran through her head as she thus dressed herself to visit me? I can only guess."

Several paragraphs later Horn declaims:

"I know what she is going through, poor child. And she is a child. 'I won't ask you to disrobe,' I said, 'because it doesn't matter whether I know. You'll know if I'm right, and that's enough.'"

Horn then attempts a biology lesson, telling Mora how various individuals come to maturity differently and the various factors involved; in my opinion it's completely bogus because he tells Mora, "In general, the larger the individual the slower the onset." This, of course, flies in the face of evidence, because, all other things being equal (nutrition, age, etc.), girls with a higher fat percentage tend to achieve menarche before their thinner peers. And what exactly is it that Horn expects to see if indeed Mora does disrobe? Her lack of pubic development? And why has Mora come to Horn all tarted up? Is she the virgin sent to satisfy the potentially-malicious stego?

For a while I wondered if the father-daughter tandem that Inclito and Mora reminded Horn of were Hammerstone and Olivine (the only other potent father-daughter combination I could think of is Pas-Scylla). Would a disrobed Mora therefore be discernable as a chem? (Horn at one point tells Olivine it would not be inappropriate of him to ask her to strip and calls it "an eminently just punishment." Would a naked chem feel shame and embarrassment, or simply revealed as not-human?) This led me to all sorts of alternate speculation, such as: do chems "grow" after being birthed, replicating the infant-adolescent-adult growth curve? And how much physiological fidelity is there between bios and chems? Can the latter, say, be sexually violated, as Mora is? Also, is it possible that the occasional chem tries to pass as human, the same way the inhumis do?

And while I am at least talking about chems, who is the woman in the north that Olivine tells us her father, who's been gone a long, long time, has gone in search of?

Like I said in an earlier post: lots of little mysteries in the Short Sun series. And I love 'em all!

Robert Borski

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Kevin J. Maroney — 11 Mar 2001, 16:24 · follows Robert Borski

At 02:38 PM 3/11/01 -0600, Robert B wrote:

I've already attempted to answer this one, but to recapitulate: if the Neighbors are able to bilocate the same way the inhumis are, and if Pas/Typhon is a Neighbor, then PassilkHorn should also be able to do so. For the Narrator to acknowledge this, however, means he has to accept he's not simply Horn--something he avoids all the way to the end of the Short Sun series. Thus his worriment.

Why would we believe that Pas is a Neighbor?

I agree that Horn's reluctance to consider or explicate the reasons that he can Travel without the Inhumis present is a reflection of his fears about his own status, but it seems more likely that he fears that the translation from his birth body to the body he finds himself in on the _Whorl_ has made him no longer human. This, in fact, seems the most likely to me; Horn is no longer human, even in Silk's body.

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