

Mother Godspeak (Redux)

The Whorl list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 15 Mar 2001

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/1273>

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Robert Borski — 15 Mar 2001, 12:49

Adam S. again, asking:

<What, then, is your interpretation of Horn's statement "I asked the Greater Scylla on the Red Sun Whorl how I could find Seawrack again. She taught me how to communicate with her sister here"?

<It can't be that Scylla taught Horn to speak the Neighbors' language, as your earlier post seemed to imply, because: 1) Horn doesn't need to speak the Neighbors' language to communicate with the Mother; 2) According to your reading Horn already knew the Neighbors' language (and in any case the translation scene was prior to the meeting with Greater Scylla).>

I'll concede you the two points about Horn not needing to understand Neighbor to summon the Mother, but am uncertain about the question you ask. Horn has asked the Greater Scylla of Urth how to find his mermaid sweetie Seawrack; why he believes Scylla knows this is beyond me (is she running an intergalactic missing persons retrieval service on the side? Are we to believe she's currently in contact with the Mother?), but apparently she does, for she teaches Horn how to communicate with her sister--the Mother--who subsequently tells Seawrack she must go with PassilkHorn on part II of the Whorl's Great Journey. But again, what is the Mother doing on Blue? Scylla of Urth at least is trying to take over a world; as Typhon at one time puts it, "There are powers in the sea now that would rule." But before the colonists reach Blue, the only "people" hanging around are a few stubborn Neighbors and some inhumani. I'm therefore at a loss to figure out the Mother's mission d'être (or why she'd still be communicating with Greater Scylla, if that's your argument); it must be mighty important, however, if, as you suggest, Cilinia has somehow convinced her father that Blue must be their first target of choice. What, in other words, does Cilinia gain by coming all this way to rendezvous with the Mother? What, precisely, is in it for her? And why, if Cilinia has schemed so diligently to be with Greater Scylla's "sister," does she want to go back to her tomb on Urth and take the long dirt nap?

Somewhat related question to Adam, Blattid, or Alex, whoever cares to answer: why, in your opinion, does the Mother (rather a benign figure compared to Greater Scylla) give Seawrack to Horn? And how does she acquire the mermaid--especially, if, as I've argued, she's really Screadhbhuidhe, a special talent?

PS. Thank to George Terry for sourcing the ignoramus/agnostic quote.

Robert Borski

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

Adam Stephanides — 16 Mar 2001, 17:00 · follows Robert Borski

on 3/15/01 12:49 PM, Robert Borski at rborski at charter.net wrote:
Horn has asked the Greater Scylla of Urth how to find his mermaid sweetie

Seawrack; why he believes Scylla knows this is beyond me

Presumably it was Scylla-in-Oreb who suggested it, as bait to get Horn to take her to Urth.

(is she running an
intergalactic missing persons retrieval service on the side? Are we to
believe she's currently in contact with the Mother?)

Not necessarily; she could give Horn some sort of invocation which could call up the Mother somehow. But it's not impossible, either. If Horn can astrally travel the distance between Urth and Blue, then Scylla and the Mother could be in telepathic contact.

But again, what is the Mother doing on
Blue? Scylla of Urth at least is trying to take over a world; as Typhon at
one time puts it, "There are powers in the sea now that would rule." But
before the colonists reach Blue, the only "people" hanging around are a few
stubborn Neighbors and some inhumans.

We don't know how long the Mother has been on Blue; she may well have arrived before the Neighbors on Blue were hunted to near-extinction. As to why she stayed: while she arrived from space, it doesn't necessarily follow that she can leave the planet on her own. Or maybe she was content to rule over the her underwater retinue and be a god to the remaining Neighbors; just because her sister has world-conquering ambitions doesn't mean she does.

I'm therefore at a loss to figure out
the Mother's mission d'être (or why she'd still be communicating with
Greater Scylla, if that's your argument); it must be mighty important,
however, if, as you suggest, Cilinia has somehow convinced her father that
Blue must be their first target of choice. What, in other words, does
Cilinia gain by coming all this way to rendezvous with the Mother? What,
precisely, is in it for her?

I don't know. My point was simply that, even without Typhon being a Neighbor, there was already an indirect connection between Typhon and Blue through Cilinia, so Typhon picking as destination the world where Scylla's sister lived wasn't necessarily the huge coincidence you argued it was.

Another possibility is that all, or most, inhabited worlds have sisters of Scylla, in which case it's no coincidence at all.

And why, if Cilinia has schemed so diligently
to be with Greater Scylla's "sister," does she want to go back to her tomb
on Urth and take the long dirt nap?

This one isn't so hard. Her plans, whatever they were, would have been predicated upon her arriving as a goddess. Instead she's a "sketch" of herself, trapped in the brain of a bird, hunted, and not much of a natural lifespan anyway. She wants to die with dignity.

Somewhat related question to Adam, Blattid, or Alex, whoever cares to
answer: why, in your opinion, does the Mother (rather a benign figure
compared to Greater Scylla) give Seawrack to Horn?

Beats me; this is one of the things I'd expected RTTW to deal with, and it didn't. At one point Horn conjectures that the Mother "shaped" Seawrack and gave her to Horn so that the human colonists would love her (158, OBW hb). But if that was her plan, letting her go off to the Whorl seems self-defeating.

And how does she acquire
the mermaid--especially, if, as I've argued, she's really Screamhuidhe, a
special talent?

Well, at one point Seawrack says "I was on a big boat, and I remember a woman who talked to me, and carried me sometimes. I think that was my mother....My real mother drowned, I think, and the underwater woman [the Mother] ate her." (244, OBW hb) This suggests that the boat Seawrack was on sank, and the Mother rescues her.

--Adam

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