

Who is Patera Grig?

The Whorl list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 26 Mar 2001

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Robert Borski — 26 Mar 2001, 14:05

Here's another little scene from the Short Sun troika I'm puzzling over.

Horn has transported himself, Fava, and a number of Soldese from a snowy hillside on Blue to a prison cell on Green. (Chap 13, IGJ) Having had his wooden staff previously confiscated upon the orders of Captain Sfidio, Horn offers to tell the disconcerted Soldese how they may get back to Blue if they'll return the staff to him. Horn misses Oreb, you see, and believes that repossessing the staff may prompt the bird, who likes to perch on it, to come back (the soldiers having chased him off earlier).

Fava soon notes the return of Sfidio, but remarks that he doesn't have the staff. Whereupon Horn says cryptically:

"Once in a while," I whispered, "when I'm nearly awake..." (p.203)

Question # 1: how might the whispering Horn have finished this sentence? When he's nearly awake (as opposed to nearly asleep), what??? It seems to pertain to Sfidio, but how so?

Horn subsequently segues into how Sfidio sounds: "At times Sfidio had an oily, almost feminine way of speaking that reminded me of one of the augurs at our schola"; and then seems to fall into a sort of trance, wherein he pictures Oreb soaring above Lake Limna.

Meanwhile, Fava is still attempting to relocate Horn's staff, which originally has been confiscated by one Private Gevaar:

Fava asked someone, "Where did he put it? and Patera Grig replied, "What difference does that make?"

But there is no Patera Grig in the Soldese party. So is Horn, tranced out, confusing Captain Sfidio with the aforementioned (but unnamed) augur? The next sentence after the above mentions "a rougher voice," so I believe this is plausible. But why doesn't Horn correct this when he details the scene in his manuscript--since by then he must know there's no Patera Grig present. What also, we're given to wonder, is the relationship of "grig"--which can mean, variously, grasshopper, cricket, young eel, short-legged hen, or dwarf--to Sfidio, and does it somehow connect to Horn's unfinished sentence? And just whose schola is Horn talking about, anyway? The one of his Vironese childhood? There's no mention of a Patera Grig in LONG SUN (or at least none that memory recalls or mantis's Characters in the Long Sun pamphlet lists). So perhaps he means the schola in New Viron, or possibly even this is the Silk remnant of PassilkHorn recalling

a P. Grig from either his pre-or-post EXODUS days.

Either way, it's an odd mention, but I've learned to be very wary of Wolfe's one-off references because they usually connect up somewhere.

Unfortunately, with this one, I remain clueless.

Robert Borski

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