

The Crab Monster

The Whorl list — 3 messages, 3 voices, 16 Apr 2001

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/1356>

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Robert Borski — 16 Apr 2001, 00:58

Here's another little mystery from ON BLUE'S WATERS.

While at sea, sailing to Pajarocu, with Babbie and Seawrack aboard, Horn records the following encounter during a storm with an apparition from the depths:

"Something climbed into our sloop that night that was neither a beast nor a man, and was not a thing of the sea, nor even a thing of the air like the inhum...

"If you do not believe this, believe at least that I believed that I saw it. And Seawrack also saw it. She confirmed for me that she had, although she did not like to speak of it. Babbie saw it, too, and rushed at it; it laid hold of him as a man might lay hold of a lady's lapdog, and would, I believe, have thrown him over the side and into the raging water if Seawrack had not prevented it. In appearance it was like a man of many arms and legs, long dead and covered with crabs and little shellfish and other things; and yet it moved and possessed great strength, although I think it feared the storm as much or more than we." (161-162)

Horn subsequently imagines the monster to be some sort of alien Tithonis, granted immortality by the gods of Blue, but throwing itself into the sea because it has tired of life, or despaired because of the Neighbors' offplanet exodus, or it wants to be near the deity that granted it eternal life.

I, of course, don't believe any of this. Rather, I suspect the crab monster is the Mother in her native, most unaltered, form.

We know from Seawrack that the Mother is capable of shape-shifting, so this infers a natural, unshifted ur-state--plus the Scylla of classical mythology had six legs, matching the monster's many limbs. Seawrack not wanting to talk about the incident is consistent with her similar reticence at times about discussing the Mother, while the monster being afraid of the storm might well symbolize Whorlish Scylla's fear of Pas/Typhon. But what really seals the deal for me is that the recently mutilated Seawrack is able to stop this monster of great strength from flinging the rather formidable Babbie--who most of you believe, after all, has severed Seawrack's arm--into the storm-tossed sea. Horn does not detail how she accomplishes this, but doesn't the most likely scenario involve our little merfrow somehow communicating with her former protectress, either vocally or otherwise, telling the Mother to lay off, Babbie's a mate, please don't toss him into the briny blue?

Robert Borski

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

Spectacled Bear — 24 Apr 2001, 13:34 · follows Robert Borski

At 06:58 2001-04-16, Robert Borski wrote:

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Well, it would account for Seawrack being able to stop it throwing Babbie overboard (no easy task) and for it being in the story at all. So yes, it could very well be the Mother. That doesn't make Horn automatically wrong, of course, though I'm sure he is just making all that up.

Peter.

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David DiGiacomo — 27 Apr 2001, 15:32 · follows Spectacled Bear

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Is the crab creature the entity that supplies fish to Mucor? (I still can't make any sense of that scene.)

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