

# Hari Mau's Mission

The Whorl list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 08 Jun 2000

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Nigel Price — 08 Jun 2000, 20:15

Timothy Reilly asks:

one point of detail - how do we know Hari Mau was searching for Silk on the Whorl? - my impression is that he was doing so on Blue only.

Goodness, what was it I said? Oh, yes:

The people of New Viron recognise the need for a ruler to lead their town, and commission Horn to travel to the Whorl to find Patera Silk, the Calde of old Viron, so that he can become the Calde of New Viron too. Although we do not know the full circumstances, it is clear that Hari Mau and some other men from Gaon have also returned to the Whorl in search of Silk, so that they can install him as their Rajan. Mistaking Horn for Silk, they kidnap him, and return to Blue and make him their prince. But the real irony is not so much that Horn's mission is frustrated by those carrying out an apparently identical mission on behalf of another settlement, so much as the fact that Horn has indeed become like Silk, and may even be Silk in some way which has not yet been fully explained.

Yes, you're right, I should have provided some references and justifications for those assertions. When I read Timothy's comment, I started reading backwards through OBW, jotting down the page numbers where Horn refers to the circumstances of his kidnap from the Whorl. I got about half way through the book, and it was late, and I was tired, and I thought, "I wonder if anyone else has already answered this query?", so I logged on to have a look.

Ah, I might have guessed! Thank you, Mantis! Yes, I agree entirely about the five time frames, and make reference to the different strands in my review, though not in such a clear and systematic fashion as your description.

Yes, that's the sort of answer I would have given, along with quotations from the passages where the narrator refers to the fact that the people of Gaon believe that they really do have Silk as their ruler, and tell everyone else about it too. Have a look at...

P308: 'Because I could not leave Pig blind, these people were able to bring me here, and so ended any chance of success I might have had.'

P40: 'If it had not been for our book, Marrow and the rest would have chosen someone else, beyond argument. As it was, our book - The Book of Silk, or as others would have it, The Book of

the Long Sun - spread over this whorl more rapidly than Nettle and I had dared hope. Silk -

"Silk has become an almost mythic figure," I began to write. The truth is that he has become a mythic figure. I hear rumours of altars and sacrifices. Disciples who have never seen him promulgate his teachings. If it had not been for our book, Hari Mau and the rest would have chosen someone else, or no one.'

So: Silk is widely revered on Blue. The last sentence I quote could mean that Hari Mau and co chose the narrator because he was the \*author\* of the book, but other passages suggest that it really was because they thought that he was Silk. Compare...

P309: 'When I came here I was a prisoner - a prisoner who was respected, true. I was treated with great kindness and even reverence by Hari Mau and his friends, but I was a prisoner just the same. I knew it, and so did they.'

Presumably, Hari Mau and friends treated Horn "with great kindness" because they thought he was Silk.

P234: 'Hari Mau and the rest will not even believe that I am who I am, and I have known that I would not be believed ever since I wrote about the leatherskin.'

I interpret this to mean that Horn has told Hari Mau that he is Horn, but that Hari Mau persists in believing that he is really Silk.

Compare p1721: 'Nor would the people allow me to leave if they knew who I really am.'

And on the same page: 'Silk (I mean the real Silk)...'

P146: 'Ambassadors from a distant town arrived today. It is called Skany...They had been told that Silk was here, "ruling Gaon," and wished to invite me to rule Skany as well.'

It's not that they heard that the author of The Book of Silk was the ruler, but that Silk himself was.

There's another passage - I can't find the page - where Horn refers to the fact that he's the only person in Gaon who doesn't know where Silk is, and I interpret this as a reference to the fact that the populace think that Horn is Silk, and, knowing where Horn is, think that they know where Silk is, whereas Horn, who knows he is not Silk, doesn't know where the real Silk is.

Or something like that!

The clues seemed to add up, although I admit that the details of Horn's abduction are still vague. There are those references to Horn clearing the dead bodies out of the sewer on the Whorl as well. I guess we'll have to wait for "Return to the Whorl" to find out what that was all about.

(As for the mythic "Nick Price", Potto and I seem to have been equally horrified by the conflation. Jonathan called it "Frankensteinian" and shivered at the thought. To make matters worse, Nick Gevers tells me that there really is a "Nick Price", and that he's a Zimbabwean golfer. Perish the thought! It's like trying to imagine Baldanders striding out onto the links...)

Nigel Price

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