

# Hethor's Slug

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 15 Jul 1999

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/1711>

Exported from an unofficial mirror of a public mailing list. Copyright in each message remains with the person who wrote it. Email addresses are obscured as `user at host`, the form the original archive published. This file was rebuilt from parsed fields rather than retained headers, so it is faithful in content but not byte-exact.

---

Robert Borski — 15 Jul 1999, 14:18

Shortly after Severian arrives in Saltus, he's taken to the house of Barnoch the bandit, the door and single window of which have been sealed with rough masonry. According to the alcalde who accompanies Severian, this form of punishment--entombing someone in his or her own house--is traditional in Saltus. The alcalde then relates a tale about another miscreant so entombed. "A woman. I've forgotten her name, but we called her Mother Pyrexia. The stones were put on her, just like what you see here, for it's largely the same ones doing it, and they did it in the same way." But when it comes time to unseal the house next year, the alcalde tells Sev, much to everyone's surprise, they do not find Mother Pyrexia dead. Explains the alcalde: "A woman sealed in the dark long enough can become something very strange, just like the strange things you find in rotted wood, back among the big trees. We're miners, mostly, here in Saltus, and used to things found underground, but we took to our heels and came back with torches. It didn't like the light, or the fire either." The alcalde never claims the creature is actually destroyed--hence I'd like to quibble with Mother Pyrexia's entry in LEX-URTH ("She had changed into something very strange when the house was opened, a nocturnal creature, and was quickly killed"), arguing that she may well have lived, taking to the woods about Salthus until Hethor arrives. (He's in the crowd at Morweena's execution.) Somehow, beastmaster Hethor is able to enlist/compell her aid and I believe it's the transmogrified Mother Pyrexia who attacks Severian in the antechamber and underground cell of the Magician's Academy (both places are dark)--not some giant interstellar slug.

It might also be possible that Mother Pyrexia's real name is Febronus. There's a saint by that name, and pyrex means "fever" in Greek the same way februs does in Latin.

And lastly, anyone interested in reading my theory about the mandragora should pick up the latest issue of THE NEW YORK REVIEW OF SCIENCE FICTION (July, 1999 #131), wherein I have an essay entitled, "Thinking about the Mandragora in Wolfe's CITADEL." Sometimes it's nice having your fan fiction published professionally, eh? <g>

Robert Borski