

Hethor's Slug Revisited

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 30 Sep 1999

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Greene, Carlton — 30 Sep 1999, 16:40

Robert Borski wrote:

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.

I think it unlikely that Hethor's slug and the former Mother Pyrexia are the same creature. When Severian finally encounters the snuffling slime creature in person, he describes it as a brown, pudding like mass nearly the size of a destrier -- presumably much larger than an old woman. More importantly, there is no indication that Hethor's pudding monster had reason to fear fire; instead, when Severian was faced with the monster in the wooden long house (during the battle of the magicians) the monster appears to be able to snuff out the torches remotely --

in came "what had been the bottom of some fetid marsh. It flowed around the doorposts blindly and softly, and as it did, another torch went out." III at 147.

later in the same scene, the creature has melted Decuman and is advancing on Severian:

"The creature was turning, blindly but purposefully ... To get one of the two remaining torches, I had to run toward the creature. I did and seized the torch, but it went out as I took it from its bracket." III at 148.

In light of the exceptional size of the creature and its ability to douse fires, it seems to be a far different creature from the nocturnal, fire-fearing ex-Mother Pyrexia -- Hethor's slug would have just doused any torches carried by Saltus villagers, and slurped them up in its destrier sized bulk. :)