

Slug Fest

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 02 Oct 1999

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Greene, Carlton — 02 Oct 1999, 13:20

Mr. Borski

Re: Hethor's Slug

Given the relatively few facts about Hethor's creature, and Mother Pyrexia, its certainly difficult to reach a firm conclusion, but a few thoughts

* It's also quite possible the slug has grown since taking to the Saltus backwoods; remember, eighteen years have

Agreed, although it did not really have time to make a proper meal of Decuman -- it was too busy trying to get Sev.

But it raises some important questions for which the text supplies us no answers -- if Mother Pyrexia was a happy slug creature frolicking in the woods around Saltus (for 18 years without being noticed), how did Hethor find her and impress her into service in the first place? That would be a fairly unusual event, on par with Hethor's use of mirrors, but we are never told of it. This is a particularly important fact to expect from the text because recruiting a creature found along the way does not fit the pattern found elsewhere in the books -- ie. extraterrestrial summoning.

* never meant to imply the slug was afraid of fire. Certainly, Wolfe never

says this. Rather, the alcalde says, "It didn't like the light, or the fire either." Nocturnal creatures, of course, shun daylight, and other than domesticated pets, all animals generally avoid fire--nocturnals even more so for the light it generates.

Unlike Mother Pyrexia, we have no firm indication that Hethor's slug is nocturnal or afraid of the light -- it attacks in the antechamber, but Hethor may have chosen a night attack simply because the rather large creature would have been difficult to see. If it was nocturnal, why did it attack Sev during the day in a longhouse lined with torches, instead of getting him at night out on the open road, or better yet oozing down into the tunnels in the magic academy and getting him in the pitch black?

One fact that doesn't really cut either way -- why doesn't Jonas notice or remark on the fact that he's been slimed? And why didn't contact with the creature burn him the way it burned Decuman?

Another thought -- the Alcalde went back for torches when he discovered the transmogrified Mother P., and she was still hanging out in the house when he got back, which suggests to me that they kept it contained in the interim. Are we to believe then, that they simply released it once they had fire and had cornered it? Or that it oozed past a crowd of men armed with fire? If

its the same creature as Hethor's why didn't the Alcalde mention its ability to put out their torches -- remember it seems to put Sev's torch out without touching it -- and if it had the ability but didn't use it back then, why not? Would they really let something like that get away unless they had to? The alcalde's tale does not suggest that it overwhelmed them and might still be out there somewhere -- it sounds more like he's bragging about he and his men besting it.

One question for you, Carlton: if you don't think Mother Pyrexia has been turned into the slug, how do you explain the alcalde's remark about how "a woman sealed in the dark long enough can become something very strange, *just like the strange things you find in rotten wood, back among the trees*"? If he's not talking about a slug/grub/worm/larva here, what's left?

I agree with you that this comment is very interesting! The Alcalde's use of "just like" suggests a fair degree of identity, and he seems to assume that Sev knows the kind of creatures he is talking about -- grubs, worms, larvae, whatever -- so I agree with you that Mother P. has probably changed into some kind of grub or worm or maybe even a slug.

However, Sev I don't believe that Sev ever suggests that Hethor's "slug" actually looks like a slug -- it leaves a trail all right, but Sevs describes the creature as a muddy, pudding - like mass, the "bottom of a marsh," with no description of eyestalks, spots, wrinkles etc. Furthermore, if Sev knew what the Alcalde was referring to when he talked about "you know, those things that live in rotting wood," why doesn't Sev note this resemblance and refer back to the Alcalde's comment when he sees the creature? In the alternative, if Sev had no idea what the Alcalde was talking about when he mentioned things that live in rotting wood, why didn't he ask for clarification "what kind of strange things are you talking about, Alcalde?" In short, I think Mother P. was turned into some nasty creature, just not the same nasty that tried to eat Sev.

Anyway, this is all just a long way of saying that Occam's razor seems to me to favor the idea that Hethor just pulled it out of his pocket book space mirror -- he's done that before, and it requires us to assume fewer facts than the Mother P. theory. Hence, I am inclined to go with Mantis' conjecture in the Lexicon that the Saltus Posse probably put Mother P. to death. (For one thing, if people bricked up like that change into weird worm things, and the worm things were more than they could handle, you'd think they would stop the practice of entombing!)

C/

PS -- the happy munching of mulch comment had me LOL!