

Girl Power

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 04 Oct 1999

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Alice Turner — 04 Oct 1999, 19:41

----- MESSAGE urth.v028.n047.1 -----

From: Alex David Groce <Alex_Groce at gs246.sp.cs.cmu.edu>

Subject: Re: (urth) Jolenta and Dorcas

Well, it's possible the relationship between Jolenta and Dorcas is intended to strain our credulity--it seems unlikely that Severian has _witnessed_ anything, and I think there's a good chance this is just Sev.'s jealous imagination at work (and possibly a hint of Proust's Marcel's obsessive probing of Albertine's relations with women--although Severian is much more matter-of-fact about it and in Proust the suspicion is justified, while here it may not be).

That's exactly the way I took it. Dorcas's distaste for Jolenta is quite clear and J's lazy disdain for D just as clear.

From: "Jonathan Laidlow" <LAIDLOJM at hhs.bham.ac.uk>

Subject: Dorcas' death in childbirth

[snip]

Now Urth does have hi-tech resources, but they are not available to everyone, and I doubt very much that they were available to Dorcas and Caron. I presume that medical knowledge for the masses was at best at a pre-20th century level, and thus if Dorcas did indeed have a difficult pregnancy, then she would likely not have survived.

I'd only half agree here. It seems to me that low-tech precautions and training would certainly survive. They would know about cleanliness and handwashing (as the 18th and early 19th c's did not), and a simple Caesarian is possible with a skilled midwife and sterile needles---fire will sterilize a needle and so will boiling water (can't you junkies boil water?!). This is sort of important, since we know that the Torturer's Guild "opens up" its pregnant clients. They are trained and precise with their own sophisticated tools; why couldn't they perform a successful Caesarian where the client recovered? Farmers have done it with cows.

-alga