

Sev's parents

The Urth list — 3 messages, 3 voices, 08 Nov 1999

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/1935>

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Roy C. Lackey — 08 Nov 1999, 01:02

In defense of Jeremy Crampton's argument that Sev lied about "I have never known my father or mother", I offer this: In CLAW, third page of chapter XXVII, Sev does remember his mother, remembers being breast fed in a gray cell. Whether that constitutes "knowing" her or not is problematic. He can't raise his eyes to look into her face, yet can see the gray of her cell wall. He never spells out whether he ever equated "Katharine" with "Catherine" or not. Sometimes having a perfect memory has its drawbacks, so that you have to lie to yourself to keep your sanity. It wouldn't be pleasant to see your mother's face once a year, particularly when a child too young to distinguish between ritual and reality, on a bloody severed head.

Also, he met Ouen twice and on the second occasion, in CITADEL, figured out that Ouen was his father. If he didn't get to know Ouen any better after that, it was his own fault.

Jim Henley also wrote:

Is there anything to demonstrate that Sev knows the complete truth about the mausoleum before the events of URTH? This is a genuine rather than rhetorical question.<<

Chapter XXXVIII of CITADEL: "I know too in whose mausoleum I tarried as a child, that little building of stone with its rose, its fountain, and its flying ship all graven. I have disturbed my own tomb, and now I go to lie in it."

Roy

Jim Henley — 11 Nov 1999, 22:37 · follows Roy C. Lackey

-----Original Message-----

From: urth-errors at lists.best.com [mailto:urth-errors at lists.best.com]On Behalf Of Roy C. Lackey

Also, he met Ouen twice and on the second occasion, in CITADEL, figured out that Ouen was his father. If he didn't get to know Ouen any better after that, it was his own fault.

So it was his own fault. The question is whether Severian lies, not whether he has character flaws.

This is another case where someone seems to confuse the specific case (Sev lies) with the general (Sev is a Bad Guy). Evidence of the latter does not constitute evidence of the former. When people point this out it is suggested that they are somehow unwilling to see Sev as having flaws.

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Thank you. It's established. It doesn't make Sev a liar though, just shows that for a novice writer he has an instinctive sense of pacing. I mean, that would be a good book, wouldn't it? Chapter Two: "So there was this tomb I used to play in as a boy. It was my tomb, and I was some kind of time traveller. Not that I knew that right at that moment. See, time isn't like a river, it's like an ocean with ripples. That's what these space guys told me years later. Their names were . . . "

Note that over the course of the work as a whole, you get the complete truth about the tomb as Sev understands it.

Best,

Jim

"All God's children got a little bit of soul
but not that much . . . "

-- Graham Parker, "Obsessed with Aretha"

Jon Camfield — 01 Dec 1999, 23:09 · follows Jim Henley

From: "Roy C. Lackey" <rclackey at stic.net>
Subject: No lie?

"Having been reared among the torturers, I have never known my father or my mother. No more did my brother apprentices know theirs." . . . "Thus none of us knows our decent. Each would be an exultant if he could..." . . . "For my part, I had already adopted as my own the device graven in bronze..."

Sev boasts often of having a perfect memory. I have pointed out several instances (and there are more) where he contradicts himself. Either his claim to having a perfect memory is true or it isn't. If true he has, at times, given false testimony. If not true, then his claim to having a perfect memory is itself a lie, and anything he says is suspect.

May I offer a third possibility? Sev's memory is too perfect. As he meta-commented on a few times, he would oftentimes get lost in memories, and find himself crying or laughing in his Autarchial chambers. I propose that as he's churning these books out, he gets lost in his memories to do so--lost enough such that after he gets into the flow, he neglects to include facts which he knows, but does not treat at the time because he, for all he knows as he is writing, is back at the citadel as a boy. If you wanted to get really complicated, you could analyze Sev's initial meta-comments (when he speaks as the writer/as the adult) and if they get scarce around the times he speak erroneously, though this is a decidedly bad case to try that out on ;)

Jon "GriffJon" Camfield www.GriffJon.com Web R&D, Competitive Intelligence; eCertain.com

"A human being should be able to change a diaper, plan an invasion, butcher a hog, construct a

ship, design a building, write a sonnet, balance accounts, build a wall, set a bone, comfort the dying, take orders, give orders, cooperate, act alone, solve equations, analyze a new problem, pitch manure, program a computer, cook a tasty meal, fight efficiently, and die gallantly. Specialization is for insects."

--Robert A. Heinlein, The Notebooks of Lazarus Long