

brown "walls" a cradle make

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

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Michael Andre-Driussi — 08 Nov 1999, 16:09

Charles Dye — 08 Nov 1999, 21:44 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

Michael Andre-Driussi <mantis at sirius.com> writes:

brown "walls" a cradle make

Or, as the mandragora suggests, a basket...

raster at highfiber.com

Roy C. Lackey — 09 Nov 1999, 02:17 · follows Charles Dye

mantis,

Yes, that occurred to me, too. I wonder if Dorcas's basket was the same color. <g> It was just an aside, leading to this question: Where was Severian born? He states than none of the guild are born among the torturers and that new guild members come "solely from the children of those who fall into our hands." I take that to mean that only children orphaned by the guild's actions (or simply stolen from "clients" who survive their ordeals) are eligible. Only male children able to stand upright beneath a bar the height of a man's groin are taken. That means, presumably, that the male children have to be old enough to stand on their own, but no more than 2 or 3 years old. Male children of pregnant women who survive their mothers' being gutted are given a wet-nurse. Since there are no women in or otherwise employed by the guild, this means that the male babies are not raised in the Matachin tower. There is no nursery. Whether any of these new-made male orphans eventually become eligible to pass the height test for admission to the guild is uncertain from the text.

The above, coupled with the memory Sev has of being breast-fed by his mother while surrounded by the gray walls of a cell, suggest to me that he was not born there. His mother would not likely have survived being "opened up", and he would have been sent out to a wet-nurse in any event. He must have been born before his mother was "taken". The "brown wall" memory of when he was too young to crawl and was screaming came either before his mother's incarceration or, more likely, afterwards, when he was permanently separated from his mother because she was to be tortured (if she was), and/or killed (if she was). [Sev to Cyriaca (III, XII): "No woman is killed for being unfaithful, except by her husband."]

In any event, either Sev was weaned very early in his life yet was still raised in the Matachin tower and could stand beneath the bar when he was too young to crawl, or Sev doesn't have his facts straight. Even if we dismiss the height issue (an infant is below groin height), an infant too young to crawl is not much different from a new-born; he should have been sent to a wet-nurse. Yet Sev has no memory of a wet-nurse. But his "earliest memory" is of playing with pebbles in the Old Yard outside the Matachin tower. Where his hypothetical sister fits into this scenario, I don't even want to think about.

Well, was he born in the Matachin tower, or not?

Roy