

Still More Infrequently Asked Questions

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 31 Dec 1999

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/2058>

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Talarican — 31 Dec 1999, 09:57

I:V Adolescent Sev asks Rundesind, whom he just met in the pinakotheken, regarding the class of armigers: "What possible help can they give the world?". Rundesind replies "Why, what help was they to begin? Do you know?". (There is the obvious facile answer that armigers are a legacy of an ancient militaristic equestrian class, but why was this question brought up and just left hanging if there isn't more to it than that? Or was Wolfe's point merely to have Rundesind chide young Sev about presuming to criticize social structures he does not understand?)

I:V Why is the "room maintained [by the librarians]... against the return of the Autarch Sulpicius" with its "great ebony [book]case"? Was this added for texture, or is there some significance to it? What is the story behind that? Do the librarians seriously expect Sulpicius to return? And what is he supposed to do with that room when he does? Or, as is more likely, he issued an edict during his reign reserving the room, which his successors never got around to rescinding or following up on? Was he a benefactor of the library, or perhaps an antagonist? Is the bookcase indeed empty, as Mantis and others presume? (I don't see much support for that in the text, except to explain why "no one ever goes" into the room.) Or else what is meant by "maintain"? If there are books being saved for him, of what sort are they? (the lost archives evidently have a pretty liberal "reserve" policy, at least for autarchs <g>). (come to think of it, as one of Severian the Great's predecessors, Sulpicius did indeed eventually return to the Library)

I:XI The child Severian once speculated that the mysterious young woman who plays Katherine annually at the Feast might be a witch, but by the following year he learned "such disrespect would not be tolerated." What does that statement mean? Who is being dissed here: Holy Katherine, the young woman, or the witches?

I:XV when Severian and Dr. Talos first meet in the inn, Talos remarks, upon learning Sev is a torturer, "You're a tall fellow - that's a shame - ...". What did he mean by that? Is there some reason torturers should be short? (low ceilings in the oubliette? <g> Or perhaps Talos is already sizing Sev up as a possible actor, as Talos is disposed to view everyone he meets in terms of their potential immediate usefulness to him and his master)

mark millman — 04 Jan 2000, 10:28 · follows Talarican

At 9:57 AM 31 December 1999, "Talarican" <chemmie at mindspring.com> wrote:
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mediate usefulness to him and his master)

"Tall" can also mean proud, brave, or handsome, as in "tall ships" and "tall in the saddle". I suspect that you're right, and Dr. Talos was assessing Severian's usefulness as an actor, but not simply in terms of his height.

Mark Millman