

Palaemon

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 16 Aug 2000

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Roy C. Lackey — 16 Aug 2000, 01:42

Judging from comments Gurloes made to Sev shortly after the trip to the library, Gurloes must then be about fifty years old. He refers to his own "...hard boyhood. For it was harder, much harder, forty years ago, I'll tell you." He is talking, of course, about his own time as an apprentice. Palaemon is older, but I don't know how much older--ten to twenty years would be my guess. Sev, it would seem, is about seventeen years old at this point, a year before he became journeyman. We know, from Roche's comment to Sev the night they went to the House Azure, "Eata's your second, isn't he? He won't make a journeyman for four years, so he'll be captain for three after you.", that apprenticeship in the guild ends at a fixed age. That age, I judge, to be about eighteen, if not younger, because Thecla, early on in the year she was imprisoned, can wound his young male ego with comments about his beard shooting up like the spring lilies and that he "...should be bluer of cheek than the run of common men,..."--the implication being that he was not yet a man. Also Sev noted that "...one was not firmly and finally a member of the guild until one consented as an adult to the connection." If the apprentice does not choose to leave the guild at that age, he automatically becomes a journeyman, that is, that rank is unearned--unless you count survival to that age as earned.

In chapter XIV, just before giving Sev Terminus Est, Palaemon remarks to him: "Since Master Gurloes rose to journeyman, I have had no better scholar."

In chapter XXXIII, when Sev is about to relate his visit by the aquastors Triskele and Malrubius, he writes: "I am not sure how old I was when Master Malrubius died. It was a number of years before I became captain, so I must have been quite a small boy. I remember very well, however, how it was when Master Palaemon succeeded him as master of apprentices; Master Malrubius had held that position ever since I had been aware that such a thing existed,...".

You see the problem, of course. If Palaemon became master of apprentices only during Sev's lifetime, how could he have ever been Gurloes' teacher? He couldn't, obviously, unless he had held the position twice. The guild is stagnant, tradition bound, resistant to change. I take the phrase "master of apprentices" to mean just what it says--that only someone of the guild rank of "Master" can hold the position. For both of the above quotes to be true, Palaemon would have to have relinquished his teaching position, voluntarily or not, and done so after he had achieved the rank of master. How and why did he lose that position? He regained it, presumably, because there was no one else to take the job when Malrubius became ill. Though senior (in age) to Gurloes, Palaemon does not have charge of the guild. What did he do to lose his guild status and, just as relevant, when and why did he return to the Matachin Tower?

The mystery is deepened by the fact that the Pelerine slave Winnoc, who was whipped by Palaemon thirty years before Sev became a journeyman, said that Palaemon called himself "Journeyman Palaemon". If Palaemon, like Sev, was exiled while a journeyman, when and how did he achieve the rank of master? We are told that elevations to master are "rarer than the decades", and requires the consent of "all the living masters". Whatever Palaemon's offence against the guild that got him exiled may have been, did the same masters who exiled him as a

journeyman then welcome him back into the fold and then vote him to the rank of master? I find that prospect hard to accept, considering that they wanted to kill Sev for _his_ offence. If Palaemon became a master _after_ his exile, his return to grace and elevation to master would have to have happened very soon after his whipping of Winnoc, in order for him to have been master of apprentices when Gurloes was an apprentice.

Did Palaemon's return from exile come about because of something he did while an exile, something so wonderful that it got him reinstated and promoted quickly to master? Did his replacement by Malrubius come about because he fell from grace a second time? There is no indication that the instruction of the young was taken by turns--certainly Gurloes never had the job. What would the guild do with a disgraced master?

Roy