

Of Guloes' Elevation, Severian's age, Drotte's captaincy, and so forth

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 26 Aug 2000

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/2376>

Exported from an unofficial mirror of a public mailing list. Copyright in each message remains with the person who wrote it. Email addresses are obscured as `user at host`, the form the original archive published. This file was rebuilt from parsed fields rather than retained headers, so it is faithful in content but not byte-exact.

Talarican — 26 Aug 2000, 14:24

Roy Lackey,

Thank you for your yeoman's work on the chronology. Our copy of Claw has unaccountably disappeared and I did so want to find and check the very incident you mention, but your previous missive gave me a sense of urgency about publishing my findings so far. So whenever the "iron phallus" incident took place, Gurloes was elevated twenty years prior to it.

One difficulty does present itself when one endeavors to make Severian much younger than nineteen or twenty at the time of his masking. Since he undeniably ascended to Autarch within two years, he was, at most, twenty-one at the time he ascended. A nineteen or twenty year old Autarch strains credulity somewhat. Truth be told, an eighteen or nineteen year old freelance carnifex, or Lictor of Thrax, strains credulity even more.

But, back to the "iron phallus" incident. It had to have occurred prior to the near-drowning incident, after which the narrative tracks Severian almost day-by-day.

In the previous discussion of the various divisions and offices of the guild, perhaps the post of captain of apprentices should have been dealt with. The impression with which we are left is that the most senior (and/or strongest and quickest) apprentice at any given time is the captain, and remains so until that age arrives at which he is masked or leaves the guild. When Severian was left in that situation, the masters did not say to him "Now you are captain", nor was he elected (except arguably through a process of duress). He was the most senior apprentice, and he asserted his right to that position. Severian was senior apprentice for only one year, therefore he spent only one year as captain. Possibly, as you imply, there had been a dry spell in the creation of new journeymen prior to Drottes' and Roche's time; Drotte probably had been captain a few years with Roche as his second. Unfortunately, I find no particular clue as to how long this period might have been, but it does leave open the possibility Severian could have been about fifteen or sixteen at the time of the "iron phallus" incident. As to the puberty argument, it is well known that children in undernourished, unhealthy (e.g. medieval) circumstances reach it later, so c. 5 p.s. for the "iron phallus" incident seems reasonable. So actually, it tends to confirm my near-wild guess of c. 25 p.s. for Gurloes' elevation.

And you say "If Palaemon was still "...a wanderer, then, perhaps ten years before I was born. And yet he had returned to the Citadel to become a master of the guild.", as Sev believes, then both Palaemon and Gurloes became masters during the decade before Sev's birth. Unless someone is lying, there's no way around that fact."

Or, unless someone unfamiliar with the facts was merely speculating. It cannot be established from the narrative as a matter of 'fact' that Palaemon was only elevated after his return from exile. That's the intrigue of writing from a character's viewpoint, especially when Wolfe is doing

it; the reader must allow for what the character could actually know, or otherwise deduces from evidence which might be incomplete or deceptive, or merely guesses, or even plays fast and loose with the truth. This statement comes from Severian, and Severian didn't even KNOW about Palaemon's exile until he met Winnoc (though there was that intriguing digression as P. started to tell Sev he was to go DOWN Gyoll, and Sev wondered how P. "knew so much of travel"(Shadow XIII)). Wolfe seems to be "engineering" in BNS. An engineer is a professional who attempts to apply mathematical ideals and pure physical laws to achieve objectives in the real world subject to its errors and tolerances, and so, I suppose, it must be with a first-person narrative. Errors, misjudgements, self-serving distortions, and even outright lies have to be allowed for as possibilities. I don't see that Sev could rule out Palaemon being exiled as a master incognito, having already taught Gurloes; he probably merely jumped to a conclusion without considering other possibilities. I sometimes have to wonder if the story of Palaemon's exile wasn't one of the things Autarch Sev and P discussed in their reunion, and why Sev did not deign to share it with us.(because it gives us something to speculate and argue about...)

Mantis:

Palaemon was the "silent man with the staff"? Now THAT is intriguing! I suppose this is based partly on a conjecture that the precious "staff" the man insisted on sleeping with was actually you-know-what with her hilt removed, a disguise Sev also used in his turn. There are of course some ramifications of this idea with which we have to deal, one being the fact that P could not have returned to the guild afterwards until after Sev's birth (therefore P. taught Gurloes BEFORE his exile). Another is that it follows that P obtained Terminus Est prior to this time. Another is that "the silent man" travelled as he did in response to the summons of the vivimancer Apu-Punchau, therefore we have to wonder what transpired at their meeting. The silent traveler evidently didn't need glasses, or the woman might have mentioned that fact as well; did the presumed subsequent encounter with Apu-Punchao, an avatar of Severian the timewalker, damage Palaemon's eyes?

Revised chronology of the 3 guild masters (Shannon Wilde's preferred version?)

c. 90? p.s. birth of Palaemon (& Malrubius?)

c. 70? p.s. Palaemon (and Malrubius?) masked.

c. 70? p.s. Autarch Maruthas closes the roads "that was when I [Palaemon] was your [Severian's, in 1 p.s., about 19 or 20] age"

c. 60 p.s. earliest probable date of Gurloes' birth

c.40? p.s. Scholarly Palaemon is elevated to master, accepts teaching post (perhaps master of apprentices?) Master Palaemon teaches senior apprentice Gurloes.

c. 42 p.s. as Gurloes remembers, "things were harder, much harder, forty years ago"; he is a senior apprentice at this time (as Severian is at the time Gurloes says this to him, about 1 p.s.) They have Gurloes cranking the generator.

c.40 p.s. Gurloes rises to journeyman, having been Palaemon's star pupil

c.35? p.s. Malrubius elevated to master

c. 32? p.s. Palaemon exiled for unspecified offences against the guild. He either was demoted or, as an incognito and/or out of a sense of remorse, chose voluntarily not to proclaim himself as more than a journeyman. Malrubius takes Palaemon's place as master of apprentices?

c. 30 p.s. "Journeyman" Palaemon flogs Winnoc, tells him he is exiled from the guild for an unspecified offense.

c. 25 p.s. spring All masters except Malrubius are dying. They decide to risk desperate unorthodox promotions to mastership to save the guild from extinction. Gurloes elevated to mastership twenty years prior to the "iron phallus" incident (Claw VII). He is in his mid to late thirties, has been a journeyman for roughly fifteen years. He becomes possibly the youngest master torturer in the guild's history. This may have been brought to pass by the deaths of all masters other than the (still exiled?) Palaemon and the ill Malrubius.

c. 20 p.s. Severian born.

(c. 19 p.s. the visit of the silent stranger to the stone town. About this time is the latest Palaemon could have returned to the Matachin Tower without the fact being remembered by toddler Severian.)

c. 11 p.s. Malrubius dies, after being bedridden with a long illness. Palaemon becomes master of apprentices (again?).

c. 5 p.s, winter the "iron phallus" incident with Master Gurloes. Drotte is captain of apprentices by this time.

2 p.s., summer and fall Severian nearly drowns, saves Vodalus in the necropolis, encounters Triskele, Valeria, Thecla, Rundesind, Ultan, etc

2 p.s. spring Drotte and Roche masked. Severian becomes captain of apprentices.

1 p.s. Severian masked, proceeds to screw up royally