

STEW

The Urth list — 13 messages, 10 voices, 21 Aug 2003

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/4179>

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.

Alice K. Turner — 21 Aug 2003, 04:30

I have just finished reading (in small doses) Dianna Wynne Jones's -Tough Guide to Fantasyland- which should probably be required for anyone who wishes to set a book there. A lot of it made me smile but one thing that made me LOL nearly every time was her frequent references to STEW (always in small caps, but I'll spare you from here on). I can't actually remember anything that people in the Sun books ate, except for the fishes Mucor charms up, but I suppose there are the usual numbers of hapless small animals spitted over campfires. And I really don't want to go back to check. Has anyone been obsesssive enough to remember meals?

(To amuse you from DWJ: "The thoughtful Tourist might like to pause here and consider, since Animals are so rare, what exactly is the meat that the Management puts in its Stew.")

-alga

Lisa Schaffer-Doggett — 21 Aug 2003, 04:45 · follows Alice K. Turner

On Wednesday, August 20, 2003, at 09:30 PM, Alice K. Turner wrote:

I have just finished reading (in small doses) Dianna Wynne Jones's

-Tough

Guide to Fantasyland- which should probably be required for anyone who wishes to set a book there. A lot of it made me smile but one thing that

made me LOL nearly every time was her frequent references to STEW (always in

small caps, but I'll spare you from here on). I can't actually remember anything that people in the Sun books ate, except for the fishes Mucor charms up, but I suppose there are the usual numbers of hapless small animals spitted over campfires. And I really don't want to go back to check.

Has anyone been obsesssive enough to remember meals?

As I recall, Severian goes hungry quite a lot, a small touch I found quite impressive.

Don

Michael Andre-Driussi — 21 Aug 2003, 16:23 · follows Lisa Schaffer-Doggett

alga wrote:

Has anyone been obsesssive enough to remember meals?

Ahem.

In Long Sun I remember the fried green tomatoes (Silk salivating over) and watercress sandwiches (that Hyacinth would never eat, remembering the drudgery of harvesting watercress).

In New Sun, which I happen to be reading now, there is the feast of Saint Katharine (big list of showy foodstuffs); the leeks, lentils, and bread given to Thecla; the seasonal mutton; the fish Severian demands at the inn on his first night out; the meal ordered at Inn of Lost Loves (roast fowl); pomegranate, grapes, apple, etc., at Ctesiphon's Cross; Saltus breakfast (warm bread, fresh butter, pickled duck's eggs, peppered chocolate beaten to a froth); Vodalarii lunch (thrushes); antechamber meals (coffee and pastries, twice a day); Casdoe's meal (boiled vegetables without salt or butter, coarse bread, a little meat); strips of dried meat on the trail; snow on Mount Typhon; fresh fish, water fowl, wild rice, honey, new bread, butter, vegetables, salad (Severian orders of the hetman); duck (quartered and grilled), fish, fried cakes (clams and cattail flour), baked potatoes, salad of mushrooms and greens (what he gets); cooked fish and root vegetables among the lake people . . .

I will note, however, that the word "stew" is used in URTN (ch. 30, "Ceryx") as the common term for a public bath house.

=mantis=

maa32 — 21 Aug 2003, 17:28 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

Well, there ARE a few important details about food in New Sun. The pomegranate that drips from the eater's mouth, and Dr. Talos' lack of appetite, etc. Meals are important in Wolfe, but what they eat is not necessarily emphasized EXCEPT in Long Sun for those stupid tomatoes that Silk and Maytera Rose have a disgusting battle of wills over. I've always thought that that scene was far more important than I understood ... why else would we talk about slices of food forever?

Also, it is important that Silk from Book of the Short Sun never eats and gets sick in winter. So, yes, I think it is worthwhile to pay attention to the meals in Wolfe books, but I spend countless pages skimming over the banquet scenes in other fantasy books. Who cares what they ate if I can't learn anything from it? (Unless it's weird, original food, like in Jack Vance's "The Face") Can Severian use the Claw to eliminate his excrement if someone is following him? Are fantasy people immune from parasites when they pee in a stream? Does Robinson Crusoe have any sexual urges while he's trapped on the island? Some things are better left unexplored in a fantasy world ... I think.

Marc Aramini

James Wynn — 21 Aug 2003, 18:21 · follows maa32

Does mate' qualify as a stew?

Some things are better left unexplored in a fantasy world ... I think.

We must be satisfied with the soup that is set before us, and not desire to see the bones of the ox out of which it has been boiled. G.W. Dasent, Popular Tales from the Norse

cilluff1 at optonline.net — 21 Aug 2003, 18:42 · follows James Wynn

<<<Well, there ARE a few important details about food in New Sun. The pomegranate that drips from the eater's mouth, and Dr. Talos' lack of appetite, etc. Meals are important in Wolfe, but what they eat is not necessarily emphasized EXCEPT in Long Sun for those stupid tomatoes that Silk and Maytera Rose have a disgusting battle of wills over. I've always thought that that scene was far more important than I understood ... why else would we talk about slices of food

forever?>>>

This isn't specifically in response to Marc's email but is on the "meals that were eaten in BOTNS/LS/SS" theme. I don't think anyone mentioned this meal yet (I didn't see it in Mantis' list), but of course one of the most important meals is when Sev eats Thecla (and his predecessor Autarch). Also (although this is stretching it a touch) when the alzabo eats little Sev's father.

James Jordan — 21 Aug 2003, 19:37 · follows cilluff1 at optonline.net

Meals are important in Wolfe, but what they eat is not necessarily emphasized EXCEPT in Long Sun for those stupid tomatoes that Silk and Maytera Rose have a disgusting battle of wills over. I've always thought that that scene was far more important than I understood ... why else would we talk about slices of food forever?

Haven't lookt back at it, but remember thinking of tomatolike apple (identified in folklore only, of course) of the Garden of Eden, esp. since this happens early in the narrative, linked to garden, women eating first, etc.

Nutricious

Alice K. Turner — 22 Aug 2003, 01:14 · follows James Jordan

Highly amused by replies. Mantis, you are obsessive! Of course so is Nutricious. And how could I have forgotten, for even one moment, of Roast Thecla.

-alga

Michael Andre-Driussi — 22 Aug 2003, 02:17 · follows Alice K. Turner

Mantis, you are obsessive!

No, no -- I forgot to mention the corn meal gruel at the shepherd's shelter between Mount Typhon and Lake Diuturna.

Now I'm obsessive.

=mantis=

Roy C. Lackey — 22 Aug 2003, 06:35 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

Marc wrote:

Also, it is important that Silk from Book of the Short Sun never eats and gets sick in winter.<<

Tisk, tisk. You're letting your pet theories ride roughshod over what the text actually says--or, sometimes, doesn't say--again. _Of course_ Silk eats in SS. To wit:

"I had resolved to eat very little tonight, and look at this.' While we had been talking, I had practically cleaned my plate." (IGJ, 71)

That quote is from the first story-telling dinner at Inclito's; it was the first example to come to mind. True, Silk isn't a big eater in SS, but neither was he in LS. The point is, he _does_ eat in SS.

As for the Silk/Rose fried-tomato scene, the context of the above quote may shed some light. Silk had just declaimed against "strong emotions of any kind", among them "greed", which he specifically links with food. When he selfishly declined to share his tomatoes with Rose, he felt a great deal of guilt over it afterward, even though food is a necessary condition of life. His experience with the inhumis, to that point, had taught him that their quest for food--for blood--went beyond what was strictly necessary to maintain life: they wanted _human_ blood, to become like men. The irony is that, to become like men, to acquire the blood, they must kill (unless they take extraordinary care) what they most love. Their animal nature overrides their borrowed humanity. Remember those clogged sewers on Green. Should an inhumis have the misfortune to acquire a "conscience" (if such a thing is possible), its position becomes untenable. Silk has a conscience, therefore can take no joy in eating, an activity he must condemn in the inhumis.

-Roy

matthew.malthouse — 22 Aug 2003, 07:14 · follows Roy C. Lackey

On 21/08/2003 17:23:16 Michael Andre-Driussi wrote:

I will note, however, that the word "stew" is used in URTH (ch. 30, "Ceryx") as the common term for a public bath house.

From Middle English, *stewen*; to bathe in a steam bath. Hence informal modern usage; to suffer with oppressive heat. Thence also possibly to worry, be agitated.

By Early Modern English (c1400) *stew* as in bath-house had become synonymous with brothel, especially in the plural. Also by derivation a prostitute. Even when not directly meant the term suggested squalour, poverty and crime as in London's c16 theatres being in the stews of Southwark and Shorditch.

Matthew

Chris — 22 Aug 2003, 17:37 · follows matthew.malthouse

I think that this misses a very important point. It's not that the inhumis's "animal nature" overrides their humanity - it's that the "humanity" they're acquiring is not quite so humane as we'd hope for. Silkhorn says repeatedly that if we could get our *own* act together, we'd have nothing to fear from the inhumis. The clogged sewers of Green are merely the reflection of what people on Blue were doing to each other.

Without going too much into my personal interpretation of SS, it always seemed to me that Silkhorn's restraint w.r.t. his appetite was meant to be... well, I guess the best way to say it is "an example". And that he believed, at least, that it would result in one or more inhumis learning to control their own appetites. He may actually take this lesson a bit too far in a frenzy of guilt, but I think this is the principle he's trying to go by.

Civet

Roy said:

His experience with the inhumis, to that point, had taught him that their quest for food--for blood--went beyond what was strictly necessary to maintain life: they wanted _human_ blood, to become like men. The irony is that, to become like men, to acquire the blood, they must kill (unless they take extraordinary care) what they most love. Their animal nature overrides their borrowed humanity. Remember those clogged sewers on Green. Should an

inhumi have the misfortune to acquire a "conscience" (if such a thing is possible), its position becomes untenable. Silk has a conscience, therefore can take no joy in eating, an activity he must condemn in the inhum.

-Roy

--

Alice K. Turner — 23 Aug 2003, 08:21 · follows Chris

Again, thanks all for being so amusing and/or obsesssive! There's a waggish term paper for someone in this somewhere I'm sure. I blush, Pippen (shouldn't that be Pippin--but no, aren't you a guy?- you're not supposed to be veggie), not to have immediately remembered the coffee and pastries an the anteroom, for I have always thought that was a brilliant touch, well beyond the imagination of most writers.

-alga