

Jolenta the beautiful via Talos

The Urth list — 8 messages, 7 voices, 31 Oct 2006

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Scott K — 31 Oct 2006, 06:03

David Di Giacomo notes: Talos's surgical skill made Jolenta irresistably attractive to everyone, even Severian's dead grandmother.

I do like this idea, whatever the true source of Sev's notion of a tryst between Dorcas and Jolenta, or whether it happened or not. Jolenta was a walking aphrodesiac to many, including Jonas and the cash-holding members of any potential audience. Instant Marilyn Monroe treatment, anyone? Sure to increase your box office. However, I think it is wrong to attribute Jolenta's beauty to any surgical skills of Dr. Talos. That would be a case of explaining his abilities in terms of our own age, i.e., he is a doctor so it may have been a kind of plastic surgery as we know today, or something faster and more advanced. But the foxy doctor does say after meeting the thin waitress with straggling hair at breakfast, "I will make you beautiful because we require you as an actress. It is one of my powers," and more importantly, "...I must cast the glamour and teach you your lines, all in a day."

Though not in common usage today (raise the Woflean caution flag), the term glamour didn't always mean mere beauty or celebrity as it does to us, but it is a kind of illusory spell that the faeries of old might use to make a handful of flower petals seem like gold coins to a human, or as Zeus might use to look like a mortal woman's husband so he could gain her bed for a night. As we see later, the glamour rapidly fades from poor Jolenta, at a terrible cost to her mortal span. The hidden cost in the deal, she was made to burn more brightly, though more briefly. She did not have the basic muscular strength to carry her enhanced frame's fuller thighs and breasts etc., and tired much more easily than someone who'd developed them naturally. I believe the Doctor may have cast this glamour through some potion or advanced bio-mutagen related to Baldanders' weird experiments in his castle laboratory (the captive boy).

-Scott Kimball

b sharp — 31 Oct 2006, 13:47 · follows Scott K

Scott K writes: (snips)

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Some good points are raised. I'll mention that the scene with The Cumaean, at the end of Claw, spells out in rather specific detail what was done to Jolenta. As I remember, silk threads were sewn into her hair, her teeth ground down and capped, healthening broths cleared up her skin and metal wires and bands were attached to her skeleton. The potion (the effect of which is lost as she loses blood) redistributes her flesh. Perhaps her large eyes were achieved through a belladonna type poison, as it was for Thecla as a girl. Definitely a faster process than whatever we might have today- Jolenta was ready for the stage a few days after her treatment.

-bsharp

Bob Miller — 03 Nov 2006, 12:23 · in reply to b sharp

Scott K writes: (snips)

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Very interesting, thank you. I had remembered the "adornments" Talos had made to Jolenta. It had always seemed to me that a good deal of her attractiveness came from the confidence that she gained under Talos. Why? I well remember stories of a young and slightly mousy looking lady bundled up in loose clothes going up to people on the streets of New York City and asking, "Would you like to meet Marilyn Monroe?" And if the answer was yes, throwing back her hood and turning on her persona with a big smile. This was while Norma Jean was studying with Lee Strasberg.

With her Sun(Talos) leaving her, there was no energy left for her to "shower?" on the rest of the world.

David DiGiacomo — 03 Nov 2006, 17:47 · follows Bob Miller

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Severian sees "wires and bands of metal" that were placed under Jolenta's flesh. Why would Talos bother with that if he could make her beautiful with a "glamor" or by raising her self esteem?

What I have always wondered is where Talos took her to perform this invasive surgery, and how she recovered so quickly. I suppose it's possible that the flying saucer descended and Talos did the work in there, but it would have been conspicuous, to say the least.

Scott K — 04 Nov 2006, 12:11 · follows David DiGiacomo

I have to admit I forgot about the wires, metal and such- I'm just re-reading Conciliator now, first time in about 6 years. Recently finished Return To Whorl and Solar Labyrinth (and joined this group), so I'm plunging in from the beginning again, like that swim in fetid Gyoll, so long ago. I stand corrected by both of you who posted about the metal and hair implants. But surely it is more than just surgery at work (whatever passes for surgery in that far-flung time to those of a class to have access to Baldanders' or Hierodule level of technology), so that the overall effect is as a glamour in the old sense, an illusory or fast biochemical enhancement as if by magic.

I wonder if Talos could use the machine technology that made Jonas' original mech body, which was so much lighter than flesh. Or do I remember somewhere that Sev says Jolenta was rather heavy? Perhaps Talos' enhancement are not as refined as Jonas-tech, or uses more common iron parts or something. Not that there's as much metal used on Jolenta, much of it is clearly flesh.

-Scott Kimball

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Jack Redelfs — 05 Nov 2006, 03:04 · follows Scott K

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Perhaps, but I was always struck by how Talos treated the cacogens with familiarity in _Sword_, more like colleagues than patrons.

Adam Thornton — 05 Nov 2006, 04:29 · in reply to Jack Redelfs

First: _Sidon_ arrived today. Haven't opened it yet.

Second: Borski, _Long and Short_. One of the essays is atrociously edited: he keeps saying "Pendelton's" for the plural. His editor should have caught this. Also, he doesn't mention, that I noticed, one of the big hints in _5HC_ onomastics: "Phaedrus" means "Wolf"; "Phaedria" is therefore pretty obvious. I'm not all that far into it; I think he might be right about the werewolf thing.

Adam

Rex Lycanthrosaurus — 05 Nov 2006, 05:50 · in reply to Adam Thornton

On Sat, 4 Nov 2006 22:29:21 -0600, "Adam Thornton" <adam at io.com> said:

Second: Borski, _Long and Short_. One of the essays is atrociously edited: he keeps saying "Pendelton's" for the plural. His editor should have caught this.

Self-published books do not have editors--not that that makes much difference given the overall atrocious copyediting of Mr. Wolfe's works by alleged professionals. Remember the Garvaon/Garsecg confusion in TWK or the amphisbaena whose "one *hand* is dead" in _tBotNS_? If memory serves, _Soldier of Sidon_ was originally scheduled to be published on 10-17, but then had its release date pushed back by two weeks; was it, I wondered, because newly discovered typos needed to be corrected? (Kudos to the TOR design team at any rate -- this is easily Wolfe's best-looking book.)

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one of the big hints in _5HC_ onomastics: "Phaedrus" means "Wolf"; "Phaedria" is therefore pretty obvious.

Groan. Absolutely not true, and yet it's accepted by millions of readers because Robert Pirsig makes the claim in _Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance_. (An interesting parallel is Mark Twain's assertion that mummies were used for fuel in Egyptian trains -- a canard that is still accepted today as fact.) Pirsig corrects the mistake in his most recent introduction to

Zen; rather, if memory serves (since I can't find the book), Phaedrus means "light."

And while the subject of werewolves has been broached, I wonder if Gene Wolfe is fond of Warren Zevon's music, and especially his "Werewolves of London." The name 'Zevon' apparently derives from the Russian Zevotosky, "Son of the Wolf." Ahooooo!

Rex Lycanthrosaurus
lycanthrosaurus at fastmail.fm

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<http://www.fastmail.fm> - mmm... Fastmail...