

The Tomb of the Unknown Severian

The Urth list — 33 messages, 15 voices, 29 Nov 2007

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/4941>

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Tony Ellis — 29 Nov 2007, 18:31

Mathew wrote:

"I know too in whose mausoleum I tarried as a child, that little building of stone with its rose, its fountain and its flying ship all graven. I have disturbed my own tomb, and now I go to lie in it." Citadel XXXVIII

This bugs me. Which Dead Kennedy, sorry, Severian would it have been built for?

One we never meet, I think. At the end of UotNS Severian is free to revisit Urth whenever he pleases, and if he died there he'd just self-resurrect. So there could be Severian tombs all over the place.

Joel Sieh — 18 Dec 2007, 21:35 · in reply to Tony Ellis

It could also be a tomb fashioned by the "original" Severian, the Severian who failed the test in UotNS, went back in time, and modified events (e.g. sending Juturna to rescue his boyhood self after falling in the river IIRC) so that he would later succeed at the test instead of failing. Sev goes on a bit about this at the end of UotNS.

--Joel

On Nov 29, 2007 1:31 PM, Tony Ellis <tonyellis69 at btopenworld.com> wrote:
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Roy C. Lackey — 19 Dec 2007, 04:57 · follows Joel Sieh

Joel Sieh wrote:

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I don't care about the mausoleum stuff, but the Juturna part intrigues me. The problem with the above is that it was Sev2 (our narrator Severian) who spoke with Juturna in the throne room near the end of Book V about the boyhood near-drowning incident. Near the end of Book IV is where Sev2 spoke of Sev1 (the "first Severian"). There, Sev2 said that Sev1 hadn't drowned

either, because someone was already messing around in his (their) life by that point. So, when Sev2 spoke to Juturna about her having saved his life when he was a boy (though she had not yet saved him in her own backward personal timeline, but never mind), he was referring to the incident at the beginning of Book I when he shot out of the river propelled by her hand, obviously. Yet, if Sev1 didn't drown either -- and he obviously didn't, since he went on to become autarch -- who saved *him*? You can't say that time-walking Sev1 saved himself as a boy -- he wouldn't have been alive to become a time walker. Care to speculate?

-Roy

stoneox17 at aol.com — 19 Dec 2007, 05:17 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

Roy C. Lackey <rlackey at stic.net> wrote

Joel Sieh wrote:

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The green man is wandering through the corridors of time looking for a situation where Sev is captive so that he can free him. He seems to save him from Hethor's monster in the Antechamber, although he doesn't free him then -- Thecla does that. Could the green man have freed Sev1 here?

-Peter S.

gwern0 at gmail.com — 20 Dec 2007, 04:07 · in reply to stoneox17 at aol.com

On 2007.12.19 00:17:57 -0500, stoneox17 at aol.com scribbled 1.8K characters:

Roy C. Lackey <rlackey at stic.net> wrote

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-Peter S.

But doesn't that present the same problem? Yes, perhaps Sev1 and Sev2 both saved the Green Man and so he helps them out - but isn't the issue that if Sev1 hadn't been saved, he wouldn't've gone on to do any of the things which would cause various time travelers to go back and save him?

Or another way: without rescue, Sev1 would've drowned and never freed the Green Man, and so the Green Man would never have been grateful to him and sought out a time where he could save Sev1. The initial rescue has to come from a non-Sev-caused source, I think. We need to be looking for someone who before the drowning incident would have the desire to see him live and go on to become Severian. So who would know of his potential and be in the position to save him? Inire, maybe.

gwern

picking FID DES Mole Cap-Stun timers Z7 NAAP 2.6.2. ARC

Roy C. Lackey — 20 Dec 2007, 06:00 · follows gwern0 at gmail.com

Peter S. wrote:

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I don't think that the Green Man was involved in the Antechamber episode, but in any event it is far from certain that Sev1 ever even met the Green Man. Though the general outline of the life of Sev1 was the same as Sev2's between the time of the near drowning and becoming autarch, the details varied considerably. Sev1 didn't have the Claw, so everything associated with it, including the burning of the tent-cathedral and the Pelerines' flight from the city, didn't happen the same way for him. No Dorcas, no excuse for Jonas to intrude himself on the theater troupe, no blue-light special for the man-apes, etc. And the Green Man came from a sunny future -- Ushas -- that Sev1 did not bring.

Any other candidates?

-Roy

Jeff Wilson — 20 Dec 2007, 06:57 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

Roy C. Lackey wrote:

Peter S. wrote:

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Any other candidates?

Given that Sev1 succeeded in becoming Autarch but failed in Yesod, a pro-New Sun agent may have arranged for a change in history to drown him, clearing the way for another candidate to become Autarch and win Yesod. Then Juturna has a justifiable reason to save Sev2, hoping to restore the timeline and serve Abaia by preventing the New Sun.

This would mean that the Green Man may have been lurking about, hoping to kill or otherwise derail Sev2, rather than save him. His greenness is pond scum after all, making him likewise adapted to lurking camouflaged under yucky Gyll water. This also explains his exceptional change of mood at being given a whetstone by Sev2; touching his hand, he is able to feel that presence extending through time into Ushas, affirming the arrival of the New Sun.

Jeff Wilson - [jwilson at io.com](mailto:jwilson@io.com)

< <http://www.io.com/~jwilson> >

Roy C. Lackey — 20 Dec 2007, 09:02 · follows Jeff Wilson

Jeff Wilson quoted and wrote:

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But neither version of Severian drowned in either historical timeline. At the time Juturna promised to save Sev2 in his past, Nessus had been underwater for two days and the House Absolute was minutes away from inundation. The white fountain was at most hours away from rendezvous with the Red Sun and it was unstoppable. Sev2 was near the peak of his god-like powers when she spoke. She knew for a fact that Sev2 had succeeded in bringing the New Sun. Saving Sev2's life when he was a boy would not be the way to stop him.

This would mean that the Green Man may have been lurking about, hoping to kill or otherwise derail Sev2, rather than save him. His greenness is pond scum after all, making him likewise adapted to lurking camouflaged under yucky Gyll water. This also explains his exceptional change of mood at being given a whetstone by Sev2; touching his hand, he is able to feel that presence extending through time into Ushas, affirming the arrival of the New Sun.

The Green Man helped to rescue Sev2 from the Ascians in the northern jungle. He didn't want Sev2 dead. He came from the far future where mankind had evolved to make use of sunlight more directly than using the medium of the usual food chain. He owed his very existence to the New Sun. As he told Severian in chapter XXX of CITADEL, speaking of his kind, "We are your children . . ."

-Roy

Tony Ellis — 20 Dec 2007, 22:45 · follows Roy C. Lackey

Joel wrote:

It could also be a tomb fashioned by the "original" Severian, the Severian who failed the test in UotNS, went back in time, and...

and Jeff Wilson:

Given that Sev1 succeeded in becoming Autarch but failed in Yesod...

Where does this idea come from that 'the first Severian' failed the test in Yesod? I've always understood that he passed.

Severian doesn't tell us either way, but surely the fact that the first Severian ended up with the power to walk the corridors of time is a pretty big hint?

Jeff Wilson — 21 Dec 2007, 04:00 · in reply to Tony Ellis

Tony Ellis wrote:

Joel wrote:

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Did he? Can you point out the relevant text?

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com

< <http://www.io.com/~jwilson> >

Recursive Loop — 21 Dec 2007, 04:09 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

Greetings:

Is "New Sun" or any other Wolfe out on (legal) eBooks?

I'm hoping that Baen and Tor (or Tor's corporate parent and their lawyers) eventually come to a deal and Baen distributes Tor's product again. It'll be DRM-free, multiple format, etc., but in the meantime, I'd buy copies from another source if that is the only way to get them.

(I'm figuring I'll get through them faster and be able to annotate them if I have eBooks. Easier to carry around, since I'm already carrying the PDA all the time.)

FPK3

thalassocrat at nym.hush.com — 21 Dec 2007, 05:15 · follows Recursive Loop

On Fri, 21 Dec 2007 15:09:08 +1100 Recursive Loop

<recursive_loop at yahoo.com> wrote:

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There are Kindle editions of PF and WK, for what it's worth.

Does anybody here have a Kindle? I kind of want one, but they're not for sale outside the US.

Roy C. Lackey — 21 Dec 2007, 05:16 · follows Jeff Wilson

Jeff Wilson quoted and wrote:

Tony Ellis wrote:

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Did he? Can you point out the relevant text?

Tony is right about Sev1 walking in time, if that's what you're asking (CITADEL, last chapter). But it still seems almost axiomatic to me that Sev1 did not do whatever was necessary in Yesod to win a new sun. We are told that only two other autarchs, Ymar and the Old Autarch, even made the attempt before our narrator of URTH, Sev2, went there and succeeded.

If Sev1, sans Claw, had succeeded, why would agents of Yesod have gone back in time to change anything? Why mess with success? They could only screw it up.

Not to mention the paradoxes. Had Sev1 succeeded, then the white fountain, a white hole whose light first reached Urth in Apu's era, would have covered a minimum of 99.9% of its journey to the Red Sun by the time our narrator was born. There would be no need for Sev2 to do what had already been done.

-Roy

James Crossley — 21 Dec 2007, 05:36 · in reply to thalassocrat at nym.hush.com

On 12/20/07 9:15 PM, "thalassocrat at nym.hush.com" <thalassocrat at nym.hush.com> wrote:

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I used to work at Amazon, and I still have a friend there who's had one for a while. It's better than other electronic readers I've seen, and I can see real early adopter types wanting one now, but I think it needs some tweaking before I'd be interested. It's a nice size and weight, but some of the buttons aren't quite where they should be to make use fluid. Page turning seemed a hair too slow for me to feel perfectly comfortable. The visual quality of the text is good enough to prevent eye strain, but not on par with actual print. The system for acquiring books is really easy and effective.

The main problem, though, is the pricing. Simply speaking, they either need to lower the cost of the reader or of the books. I hope book publishers figure out a viable model for buying, storing and sharing texts electronically more quickly than the record companies have for music.

James

thalassocrat at nym.hush.com — 21 Dec 2007, 05:51 · follows James Crossley

On Fri, 21 Dec 2007 16:36:40 +1100 James Crossley
<ishmael at drizzle.com> wrote:

I used to work at Amazon, and I still have a friend there who's had one for a while. It's better than other electronic readers I've seen, and I can see real early adopter types wanting one now, but I think it needs some tweaking before I'd be interested. It's a nice size and weight, but some of the buttons aren't quite where they should be to make use fluid. Page turning seemed a hair too slow for me to feel perfectly comfortable. The visual quality of the text is good enough to prevent eye strain, but not on par with actual print. The system for acquiring books is really easy and effective.

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Thanks for that. All the other readers I've seen are crap. I think I'm the perfect target given that I carry a book everywhere. A Kindle wouldn't make me any less geeky but at least I'd feel like an up-to-the-minute geek.

Hopefully AMZN will have sorted out the usability and the pricing model by the time you can get them down here.

Adam Thornton — 21 Dec 2007, 05:54 · in reply to James Crossley

On Dec 20, 2007, at 11:36 PM, James Crossley wrote:
On 12/20/07 9:15 PM, "thalassocrat at nym.hush.com" <thalassocrat at nym.hush.com> wrote:

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For \$400, I got an XO laptop, and some kid in some Third World country got one too. That's
what a Kindle costs, only no happy child in some other country.

It makes a **fantastic** e-reader for PDF, text, or HTML. It **also** happens to be a perfectly good
(if somewhat pokey) Linux laptop with
802.11b.

With the backlight off, so it gives you a 200 dpi screen, the print quality is about as good as
1980s mass-market paperbacks: the "paper" is kinda gray, and the print is a little bit blurry, but
it's nothing you can't live with. It's actually better than most of my 1980s paperbacks, really,
but not on a par with a modern trade paper edition.

It weighs more than a paperback but a hell of a lot less than *_Against the Day_*. About as much
as a normal modern 400-page mass-market hardback, maybe a little more. You can rotate the
screen when it's in Tablet mode and it's just about the same page size as a trade paperback.

Of course, you can't read DRMmed books on it. But if you can get what you want in PDF, ASCII
text, or HTML, you're golden. PDF rendering is slow, so turning pages can entail a wait. Still:
damn impressive.

Adam

Recursive Loop — 21 Dec 2007, 14:42 · in reply to thalassocrat at nym.hush.com
Greetings:

"Does anybody here have a Kindle?"

Heavens, no. Ugly, lousy design, stupid design and way overpriced for a "unitasker".

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years and years. Amazon got it amazingly wrong.

FPK3

Tony Ellis — 22 Dec 2007, 15:27 · follows Roy C. Lackey

Roy wrote:

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(CITADEL, last chapter). But it still seems almost axiomatic to me that Sev1

did not do whatever was necessary in Yesod to win a new sun. We are told that only two other autarchs, Ymar and the Old Autarch, even made the attempt before our narrator of URTH, Sev2, went there and succeeded.

...Yet Sev1 had the chutzpah to try, just like Sev2. If they're both men-in-a-million in that respect, why not in another?

If Sev1, sans Claw, had succeeded, why would agents of Yesod have gone back in time to change anything? Why mess with success? They could only screw it up.

I'm not sure I know what you mean by the agents of Yesod going back in time to change things - isn't that rather what the agents of Abaia do? But in any case, simply to bring the New Sun isn't a perfect outcome that can't be improved upon. There could be a thousand possible New Sun futures, some better than others. If, for example, Sev1 brought the New Sun but failed to create a future humanity with a high probability of one day creating the Hierogrammates, that would be an excellent reason for them to go back and have another roll of the dice.

Not to mention the paradoxes. Had Sev1 succeeded, then the white fountain, a white hole whose light first reached Urth in Apu's era, would have covered a minimum of 99.9% of its journey to the Red Sun by the time our narrator was born. There would be no need for Sev2 to do what had already been done.

Ah, but Sev1 doesn't exist in the universe this narrative is set in - young Severian became Sev2 instead. So his New Sun doesn't exist in this universe either. There presumably *is* a white fountain 99.9% of its way to the Red Sun by the time our narrator is born - but it's Sev2's white fountain, the one he will later go to fetch.

But all this is by-the-by. The bottom line is this: Sev2 went to Yesod, passed the test, and as a result acquired the power to travel time. The Old Autarch went to Yesod, failed the test, and as a result was sent back to Urth a eunuch. Sev1 went to Yesod, and acquired the power to travel time. What is a reasonable conclusion to make as to whether or not he passed the test?

Roy C. Lackey — 23 Dec 2007, 05:05 · follows Tony Ellis

Tony wrote:

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There is still a paradox there, no matter whose white fountain it is. It had to be 90% of the way home by Typhon's era, before there was even a need for it! But that's an old argument that can't be resolved.

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Sure, it's a reasonable conclusion; it's the time-walking part that bothers me. If Sev1 doesn't exist in Sev2's universe, as you put it, what is the relevance of his stipulated ability to walk in time? Yesod's agents presumably put Sev1 in Typhon's era, just as they did with Sev2. From there, Sev2 walked the Corridors back to the future to the last day of Urth and the arrival of the New Sun. Where (or to when) did Sev1 walk from Typhon's era, and for what purpose? Do any actions he took while time walking manifest themselves in Sev2's timeline where he (Sev1)

does not exist?

-Roy

Joel Sieh — 23 Dec 2007, 13:51 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

I think Roy and Tony covered everything pretty well. I went searching through the books a little while ago to try to find support some of the things we've been talking about, and have some specific quotes and a little more speculation.

Most of this stuff is covered in the last chapter of Citadel, as Roy pointed out. Here are the relevant quotes that I could find:

"Two things are clear to me. The first is that I am not the first Severian. Those who walk the corridors of Time saw him gain the Phoenix Throne, and thus it was that the Autarch, having been told of me, smiled in the House Azure, and the undine thrust me up when it seemed I must drown. (Yet surely the first Severian did not; something had already begun to reshape my life.) Let me guess now, though it is only a guess, at the story of the first Severian.

He too was reared by the torturers, I think. He too was sent forth to Thrax. He too fled Thrax, and though he did not carry the Claw of the Conciliator, he must have been drawn to the fighting in the north--no doubt he hoped to escape the archon by hiding himself among the army. How he encountered the Autarch there I cannot say; but encounter him he did, and so, even as I, he (who in the final sense was and is myself) became Autarch in turn and sailed beyond the candles of night.

Then those who walk the corridors walked back to the time when he was young, and my own story--as I have given it here in so many pages--began.

The second thing is this. He was not returned to his own time but became himself a walker of the corridors. I know now the identity of the man called the Head of Day, and why Hildegryn, who was too near, perished when we met, and why the witches fled. I know too in whose mausoleum I tarried as a child, that little building of stone with its rose, its fountain and its flying ship all graven. I have disturbed my own tomb, and now I go to lie in it."

One thing that I find interesting about these paragraphs is the talk about Hildegryn's death. Sev's talking about the meeting with Apu Panchau here, which he later writes about becoming (or creating via resurrected clone) in Urth (the original tetralogy being written before his trip on the Tzadkiel). So, in Urth, we get to see him acting out some of the parts of Sev 1.

I could not find any direct quotes to support the fact that Sev 1 failed the test. After reading some more and thinking some more, I come up with two options. The first is that Sev's right in his analysis and Sev 1 did indeed fail. I think there is some implied support for this in the text, although you should feel free to discount it if you want; it's "subtle," and therefore possibly false.

XXXI, when Severian is talking to the Master Malrubius and Triskele aquastors:

,

"But if I fail?"

"If you fail, your manhood will be taken from you, so that you cannot bequeath the Phoenix Throne to your descendants. Your predecessor also accepted the challenge."

"And failed. That is clear from what you said."

"Yes. Still, he was braver than many who are called heroes, the first to go in many reigns. Ymar, of whom you may have heard, was the last before him."

"Yet Ymar too must have been judged unfit. Are we going now. I can see only stars beyond the rail."

Master Malrubius shook his head. "You are not looking as carefully as you think. We are already near our destination." '

When Malrubius says, "You are not looking as carefully as you think," I think this is a clue to say that Severian is not recognizing that his previous self (ambiguous "predecessor" Sev 1) accepted the challenge (and failed, although Severian says this, not Malrubius).

On the next page, Malrubius says, "The old Autarch told you the truth--we will not go to the stars again until we go as a divinity, but that time may not be far off now. In you all the divergent tendencies of our race may have achieved synthesis." Severian has inside him all of the other autarchs' memories, and Thecla as well. This quote may also reference his experiences. However, I think it could also point out that he is different from Sev 1 (maybe because of Thecla, or his different experiences). It doesn't have to, but it could.

Another paragraph that ties into this in an interesting way (perhaps hinting at how Sev 2's life was altered):

"Triskele laid his scarred head against my knee, the ambassador of all crippled things, of the Autarch who had carried a tray in the House Absolute and lain paralyzed in the palanquin waiting to pass to me the humming voices in his skull, of Thecla writhing under the Revolutionary, and of the woman even I, who had boasted I could forget nothing, had nearly forgotten, bleeding and dying beneath our tower. Perhaps after all it was my discovery of Triskelee, which I have said changed nothing, that in the end changed everything. [...]"

This paragraph could be a clue to one of the changes that was made to create Sev 2. Triskele could have inspired the compassion in Sev 2 to give Thecla the knife, and everything snowballs from there. Of course, I need to completely reread the books to be sure this fits, although from memory, Triskele's appearance does seem kind of random. The later reappearance of little Sev and Triskele in Short Sun might be Wolfe pointing a big finger at him, too.

The end of XXXIV also has some of Sev's speculation that ties into this discussion.

In the end, the way I've decided it happened is Sev 1 changed his past to create Sev 2, and Sev 2 later filled in for Sev 1 (during Urth) to make sure his own timeline is consistent. This is a pretty standard time travel mechanic, and has probably been talked about already in the archives.

On Dec 21, 2007 12:16 AM, Roy C. Lackey <rlackey at stic.net> wrote:
Jeff Wilson quoted and wrote:

Tony Ellis wrote:

Where does this idea come from that 'the first Severian' failed the test in Yesod? I've always understood that he passed.

Severian doesn't tell us either way, but surely the fact that the first Severian ended up with the power to walk the corridors of time is a pretty big hint?

Did he? Can you point out the relevant text?

Tony is right about Sev1 walking in time, if that's what you're asking (CITADEL, last chapter). But it still seems almost axiomatic to me that Sev1 did not do whatever was necessary in Yesod to win a new sun. We are told that only two other autarchs, Ymar and the Old Autarch, even made the attempt before our narrator of URTH, Sev2, went there and succeeded.

If Sev1, sans Claw, had succeeded, why would agents of Yesod have gone back in time to change anything? Why mess with success? They could only screw it up.

Not to mention the paradoxes. Had Sev1 succeeded, then the white fountain, a white hole whose light first reached Urth in Apu's era, would have covered a minimum of 99.9% of its journey to the Red Sun by the time our narrator was born. There would be no need for Sev2 to do what had already been done.

-Roy

Tony Ellis — 23 Dec 2007, 19:45 · follows Joel Sieh

Roy wrote:

Sure, it's a reasonable conclusion; it's the time-walking part that bothers me. If Sev1 doesn't exist in Sev2's universe, as you put it, what is the relevance of his stipulated ability to walk in time?

I think the stuff about Sev1 has to be read in the context in which it was written, that is, as part of the final words in a tetralogy that was intended to make sense by itself, without any fifth volume.

The relevance of Sev1's time-travel ability, in this context, is that it tells us we can expect Sev2 to gain the power to walk in time too, as he is following in Sev1's footsteps. And *that* has some major implications.

"I know now the identity of the man called the Head of Day." TCotA, XXXVIII

Paradoxes notwithstanding, the fact that Severian will one day become a magical man called The Head of Day is a pretty huge hint that he is going to be successful in bringing the New Sun - something that we don't actually know at that point (although we've had some other pretty big hints).

More than that, as I realised on about my third read-through of the tetralogy, if the power of time travel makes it possible for Severian to be Apu-Punchau, it also makes it possible for him to be another long-ago magic man: the Conciliator. Revelation!

All this is confirmed in UotNS, obviously, but UotNS wasn't written then.

Chris — 23 Dec 2007, 20:12 · in reply to Tony Ellis

I am still working out how this fits with the theory currently being discussed, but with regard to Sev1 and Sev2 I always took that as Severian being a bit myopic in his thinking; my conjecture was that it's not solely or simply Severian that is being "revised", he is simply a focal point in the revision of the entire timeline (including our own history). And we in turn are manipulating Yesod's timeline/history - but because our own is being manipulated by them, we do it slightly

differently each time (and they in turn manipulate us slightly differently). It's paradoxical, but then again we're dealing with timewalking and you're going to get a paradox no matter what. But on this view one thing you don't have to worry about is Sev1 and Sev2 actually meeting each other - though you will get Sev1 meeting Sev1 and Sev2 meeting Sev2. Another consequence is that it becomes unproblematic to think that Sev1 actually succeeded. Severian himself thinks this is problematic, because he situates two Severians in the same timeline - and if Sev1 succeeded why would there need to be a Sev2?

Another odd possibility is that, all things considered, the differences between how Sev1 got to where he was going and how Sev2 got there may in fact be trivial, nearly meaningless - just the byproduct of the timelines themselves being slightly different, and with possible intervention to make everything work out OK with Severian's life given those changes.

"When small men begin to cast big shadows, it means that the sun is about to set." -- Lin Yutang

Date: Sun, 23 Dec 2007 19:45:47 +0000
From: tonyellis69 at btopenworld.com
To: urth at lists.urth.net
Subject: (urth) The Tomb of the Unknown Severian

Roy wrote:

Sure, it's a reasonable conclusion; it's the time-walking part that bothers me. If Sev1 doesn't exist in Sev2's universe, as you put it, what is the relevance of his stipulated ability to walk in time?

I think the stuff about Sev1 has to be read in the context in which it was written, that is, as part of the final words in a tetralogy that was intended to make sense by itself, without any fifth volume.

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All this is confirmed in UotNS, obviously, but UotNS wasn't written then.

Todd — 24 Dec 2007, 10:30 · in reply to Tony Ellis

I think that in one sense, there is only one Severian and this is his way of describing the paradoxes involved in passing into his own past.

On the other hand, it is an apt metaphor for the two divergent histories of Urth which are set up, where everyone experiences the alterations made by Sev1, thus everyone lives alternative existences.

If I may be excused for quoting a popular British Science Fiction program, "it is a big ball of wibbly-wobbly timey-wimey," in the sense that neither the future nor the past are set in stone.

When considering the world of Sev1, in his journey to the Phoenix Throne and eventual judgment, it would have been a world where the Conciliator never existed and he himself would have possessed no special abilities. If we remove both of these from his history (and other instances of Sev1 in the past), that should give us an idea as to his adventures. It should be obvious that he would never have rescued Triskele, found Dorcas, or acquired the Claw. On the other hand, short of giving up Terminus Est and fleeing, I do not see how he would have survived his duel with Agillus... To make a long story short, when he was eventually judged favorably, and acquires access to the power of the white fountain for the entire term of his life including retroactively. He then goes on to wander the corridors of time to be various important people such as Apu-Punchau, the Conciliator and, no doubt others who have not been named.

Sev2, whose story we are familiar with, thus lives in the world created to some degree by Sev1 including the power to occasionally access the power of the white fountain. Though, clearly the future is still not written and he can fail when his time comes to be judged. (This is evident by his meeting men from two disparate futures.)

As to why does Sev2 need to be judged when Sev1 was successful, perhaps it is to determine whether the initial judgment was correct, or as a fail-safe against Sev1 abusing such power as he was given.

Todd

On Sun, 2007-12-23 at 19:45 +0000, Tony Ellis wrote:

Roy wrote:

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All this is confirmed in UotNS, obviously, but UotNS wasn't written then.

Jeff Wilson — 24 Dec 2007, 15:05 · in reply to Todd

Todd wrote:

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On the other hand, it is an apt metaphor for the two divergent histories of Urth which are set up, where everyone experiences the alterations made by Sev1, thus everyone lives alternative existences.

If I may be excused for quoting a popular British Science Fiction program, "it is a big ball of wibbly-wobbly timey-wimey," in the sense that neither the future nor the past are set in stone.

...except that they are. As I recall, the good Doctor uses the phrase to describe when a moment in time is uncertain and resolves in favor of preventing a larger paradox by using information from "nowhere". Both recent uses involved him using information that ultimately came from an observation of himself using the information. The only time I can think of something like this happening in New Sun is Severian lifting one of his Conciliator speeches from Talos' play, which was ultimately informed by wossname's ancient account of the Conciliator's sermons.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
< <http://www.io.com/~jwilson> >

gwern0 at gmail.com — 08 Jan 2008, 02:10 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

On 2007.12.20 00:57:12 -0600, Jeff Wilson <jwilson at io.com> scribbled 1.9K characters:

Roy C. Lackey wrote:

Peter S. wrote:

The green man is wandering through the corridors of time looking for a situation where Sev is captive so that he can free him. He seems to save him from Hethor's monster in the Antechamber, although he doesn't free him then -- Thecla does that. Could the green man have freed Sev1 here?

I don't think that the Green Man was involved in the Antechamber episode, but in any event it is far from certain that Sev1 ever even met the Green Man. Though the general outline of the life of Sev1 was the same as Sev2's between the time of the near drowning and becoming autarch, the details varied considerably. Sev1 didn't have the Claw, so everything associated with it, including the burning of the tent-cathedral and the Pelerines' flight from the city, didn't happen the same way for him. No Dorcas, no excuse for Jonas to intrude himself on the theater troupe, no blue-light special for the man-apes, etc. And the Green Man came from a sunny future -- Ushas -- that Sev1 did not bring.

Any other candidates?

Given that Sev1 succeeded in becoming Autarch but failed in Yesod, a pro-New Sun agent may have arranged for a change in history to drown him, clearing the way for another candidate to become Autarch and win Yesod. Then Juturna has a justifiable reason to save Sev2, hoping to restore the timeline and serve Abaia by preventing the New Sun.

Would that've been necessary? The New Sun was en route for an awful long time. Plenty long enough for many many Autarchs to have been tested. What made one particular failed non-time-travelling Autarch (Sev1) so crucial, so make-or-break that important players would've

expended effort on him? If he failed the test, I don't see how Sev1 would've been very important at all. Sev2 was important because of the Claw, his future/past paths and so on. Sev1? Not so much.

And what chance could the pro-New Sun agent have relied on that whoever was next would have been any better?

This would mean that the Green Man may have been lurking about, hoping to kill or otherwise derail Sev2, rather than save him. His greenness is pond scum after all, making him likewise adapted to lurking camouflaged under yucky Gyll water. This also explains his exceptional change of mood at being given a whetstone by Sev2; touching his hand, he is able to feel that presence extending through time into Ushas, affirming the arrival of the New Sun.

--

gwern
5926 Belknap VIA rail DSNET3 FSB erco imagery William BOP

gwern0 at gmail.com — 08 Jan 2008, 02:22 · in reply to Todd

On 2007.12.24 04:30:29 -0600, Todd <heliumhead at charter.net> scribbled 3.5K characters:

I think that in one sense, there is only one Severian and this is his way of describing the paradoxes involved in passing into his own past.

On the other hand, it is an apt metaphor for the two divergent histories of Urth which are set up, where everyone experiences the alterations made by Sev1, thus everyone lives alternative existences.

If I may be excused for quoting a popular British Science Fiction program, "it is a big ball of wibbly-wobbly timey-wimey," in the sense that neither the future nor the past are set in stone.

When considering the world of Sev1, in his journey to the Phoenix Throne and eventual judgment, it would have been a world where the Conciliator never existed and he himself would have possessed no special abilities. If we remove both of these from his history (and other instances of Sev1 in the past), that should give us an idea as to his adventures. It should be obvious that he would never have rescued Triskele, found Dorcas, or acquired the Claw. On the other hand, short of giving up Terminus Est and fleeing, I do not see how he would have survived his duel with Agillus... To make a long story short, when he was eventually judged favorably, and acquires access to the power of the white fountain for the entire term of his life including retroactively. He then goes on to wander the corridors of time to be various important people such as Apu-Punchau, the Conciliator and, no doubt others who have not been named.

Perhaps that was exactly it? Suppose he gave Agilus Terminus Est. He could hardly go to Thrax bereft of one of his tools, or perhaps without it, he was waylaid or otherwise delayed. The Guild would see this as betrayal of the deal, and would do its best to set the civil authorities against him. He would know this, and seek to elude them - which could lead him into the army as someone suggested and thence to the meeting with the Autarch, the brain-eating, etc.

Sev2, whose story we are familiar with, thus lives in the world created to some degree by Sev1 including the power to occasionally access the power of the white fountain. Though, clearly the future is still not written and he can fail when his time comes to be judged.

(This is evident by his meeting men from two disparate futures.)

As to why does Sev2 need to be judged when Sev1 was successful, perhaps it is to determine whether the initial judgment was correct, or as a fail-safe against Sev1 abusing such power as he was given.

Todd

gvern
5926 Belknap VIA rail DSNET3 FSB erco imagery William BOP

Jeff Wilson — 08 Jan 2008, 02:51 · in reply to gvern0 at gmail.com

gvern0 at gmail.com wrote:

On 2007.12.20 00:57:12 -0600, Jeff Wilson <jwilson at io.com> scribbled 1.9K characters:

Roy C. Lackey wrote:

Any other candidates?

Given that Sev1 succeeded in becoming Autarch but failed in Yesod, a pro-New Sun agent may have arranged for a change in history to drown him, clearing the way for another candidate to become Autarch and win Yesod. Then Juturna has a justifiable reason to save Sev2, hoping to restore the timeline and serve Abaia by preventing the New Sun.

Would that've been necessary? The New Sun was en route for an awful long time. Plenty long enough for many many Autarchs to have been tested. What made one particular failed non-time-travelling Autarch (Sev1) so crucial, so make-or-break that important players would've expended effort on him?

It may not be Sev1 so much as the lack of time remaining. With the White Fountain scheduled to arrive in 40-50 years, there may only be time for one or two more Autarchs, depending on how overt the various time traveling factions dare to be. Once Tzadkiel gets a "winner", she drops him off just in time to bring the New Sun by uniting the Old Sun and the White Fountain. If there is no winner, the Fountain just keeps going, and the New Sun never comes.

If he failed the test, I don't see how Sev1 would've been very important at all. Sev2 was important because of the

Claw, his future/past paths and so on. Sev1? Not so much.

I'm not sure Sev2's Claw ultimately makes a difference, since it is ultimately just an old thorn.

And what chance could the pro-New Sun agent have relied on that whoever was next would have been any better?

We don't know what selection process there is for choosing Autarchs, only that there appears to be one. The three who appear are all drawn from government service workers, some exceptional people to be sure but not necessarily unique.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
< <http://www.io.com/~jwilson> >

Adam Thornton — 08 Jan 2008, 02:58 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

On Jan 7, 2008, at 8:51 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

We don't know what selection process there is for choosing Autarchs, only that there appears to be one.

You don't call MUST...EAT...BRAINS!!! enough of a selection process?

I would have guessed it's along the lines of:

"Augh! Dying! Hey! You! Yeah, you over there in the tunic! Grab a chisel and a spoon, buddy! You're about to be the Autarch!"

Adam

Pedro Pereira — 08 Jan 2008, 11:54 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

I'm not sure Sev2's Claw ultimately makes a difference, since it is > ultimately just an old thorn.>

Jeff is right here (at least to me). The Claw means nothing, it's powerless, just a symbol. The true power was with Severian already, not the claw.

Pedro

matthew at calmeilles.co.uk — 08 Jan 2008, 13:20 · in reply to Pedro Pereira

domus_artemis at hotmail.com wrote:

I'm not sure Sev2's Claw ultimately makes a difference, since it is ultimately just an old thorn.

Jeff is right here (at least to me). The Claw means nothing, it's powerless, just a symbol. The true power was with Severian already, not the claw.

"Just" a symbol surely misses the point: the power of symbols.

For most of TBotNS Severian believes the claw has power and, if nothing else, that belief precludes any thought that the power might be within him.

Matthew

Steven — 08 Jan 2008, 17:38 · in reply to Adam Thornton

ROFLMAO!!!

On Jan 7, 2008, at 9:58 PM, Adam Thornton wrote:

"Augh! Dying! Hey! You! Yeah, you over there in the tunic! Grab a chisel and a spoon, buddy! You're about to be the Autarch!"

Steven

<http://bowenfineart.com/>

Pedro Pereira — 08 Jan 2008, 22:20 · in reply to matthew at calmeilles.co.uk

That which you say is certainly true, especially if we remember that famous paragraph about the power of symbols and I understand where you're hinting at. But if we accept that Triskele was brought from the dead then the question becomes mute because Severian by that time had not yet come into possession of the Claw.

He also, if I remember correctly, has no idea that he can bring the dead back to life with the Claw, but still he brings Dorcas. Only later does he connect those two events. Maybe it acted at an unconscious level in him, but still it doesn't explain triskele (again, if we accept that it was dead).

Pedro

Jeff Wilson — 10 Jan 2008, 03:58 · in reply to Adam Thornton

Adam Thornton wrote:

On Jan 7, 2008, at 8:51 PM, Jeff Wilson wrote:

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You don't call MUST...EAT...BRAINS!!! enough of a selection process?

I would have guessed it's along the lines of:

"Augh! Dying! Hey! You! Yeah, you over there in the tunic! Grab a chisel and a spoon, buddy! You're about to be the Autarch!"

Funny enough, but didn't we establish that the previous Autarch knew Severian was being lined up as his successor a minimum of several months before needing to offer the final brunch to him? It would be disastrous to wait until the moment of truth to discover the "successor" had no stomach for enkephalophagy.

Jeff Wilson - [jwilson at io.com](mailto:jwilson@io.com)

< <http://www.io.com/~jwilson> >