

Fav lines

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 02 May 1998

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/547>

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.

J. Schultz — 02 May 1998, 17:14

Sorry about the Html format, I didn't know any better. Problem solved.

I suddenly realized one of the great problems in determining the answers to so many riddles. Severian's reaction to said mysteries is usually one of complete indifference. We will never know if Severian thinks that the constellation of the Swan is of Urth's or not. Even when faced with the bizare, terrible, or strange Severian merely takes it in stride and moves on. There are times when he understands less than the reader and other times where we are surprised at the revelations he has just spoken to us. (I love it)

Along this train of thought, some of my favorite lines come from Wolfe's use of irony and scenes where Severian misunderstands what the reader has grasped. The lines in question come from Severian's childhood at the Matachin Tower.

When Severian is in the Atrium of Time, Valaria is trying to comfort S over the loss of his dog and says: "...he too may have found hospitality. You love him, so another may love him. You love him, so you may love another." Beautiful! ...and Severian's answer? "I agreed, but secretly thought that I would never have another dog." Ha!

Severian also seems to misunderstand the nature of Katherine during his elevation. She most certainly is an automaton who is brought out once a year to play her part and then returned to her box at the end of the feast. Yet S comes up with elaborate reasoning and trickery that would explain the beheading. In his naivete S has tried to explain what he has seen yet falls way short of the mark. The answer is much simpler, yet much stranger that S has imagined. There are many other times when S may be doing the exact same thing.

Now a question and an answer:

Why is Agilus wearing a death mask when Sev first sees him in the rag shop?

As a side note: I read the archives and someone wondered what the disturbance was at the gate of Nessus toward the end of book one. I don't think its a coincidence that the chapter is named Hethor and he makes his first appearence. My theory is that he has loosed some sort of creature that is causing quite a commotion.

FunkMonkey

m.driussi — 02 May 1998, 22:09 · follows J. Schultz

FunkMonkey,

That is a good sequence between Valeria and Severian, and yes, it is true that the knowledge gap shifts between Severian and the reader. One of Hethor's critters at the gate is one of the more likely explanations (though it still seems ominously silent that nobody even says, "What the hell happened at the gate back there?" To which the other character could say, "Who

knows, some kind of commotion." Just to acknowledge that hey, one doesn't always see a seven car pile up on the interstate highway). Still, if so, we wonder which one? The slug was used a couple times (slimed Jonas in the antechamber). When things get =that= quiet in a Wolfe story it usually means something very important.

I've never heard the notion that the maid who performs the role of Holy K on the feast days of the torturers is a machine. Personally I'm resistant to the idea, since I believe that the "maid" in question is the same dark haired lass named Catherine beloved by Ouen (son of Dorcas) so long ago, the disgraced monial who gave birth to twins in the Matachin Tower. (This Catherine was a Pelerine, and as such she was probably exultant or a released khaibit of an exultant.)

Re: Agilus wearing a death mask. Part of the bait and switch tactic; throwing the customer off-balance with a loud neck tie; jokingly responding in kind to what the A/A twins thought was an armiger in grim costume; buying time for Agia's quick change from "bait" to "soldier." Stuff like that. Those cunning A/A twins.

=mantis=