

End of Book One

The Urth list — 4 messages, 4 voices, 05 May 1998

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Tony Ellis — 05 May 1998, 09:25

05/05/98

10:15

End of Book One

FunkMonkey wrote:

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 appearance. My theory is that he has loosed some sort of creature that is causing quite a commotion.

No monsters. The disturbance is caused by five armed soldiers on destriers. The soldiers are there because it is illegal to travel on the commonwealth's roads.

J. Schultz — 05 May 1998, 17:55 · follows Tony Ellis

I don't agree.

While I agree that the solidiers are present by Severian's dream account. They do not apear to attacking anyone or anything. They are mearly standing at the head of the road and keeping people from using it. The disturbance IN the wall has created a panic and people are pouring out of the gate in fear, being pressed against the wall of soldiers, and thus being scattered. Much like the bouncers at a general admission concert, the soldiers are forming a wall which is holding back a sea of frenzied humanity. "On these riders, the tide of travelers broke as a wave on rock, some turning left, some right."

However, I do think their may be another hint as to what happened at the wall. FunkMonkey Theory Two:

Dr. Talos on the creatures inside the wall: "I do not doubt that there are among them many who search fo some particular miscreant, and that if they were to see the one they seek, they would sally out and lay hold of him." Hethor, as noted by Sev., is hanging his head. Sev. thinks its due to the opression of the great wall's enormity and weight felt when passing through it. Sev's been wrong before, esp about people's motives. Could it be that Hethor is wanted for some crime? The creatures in the wall, while it's mentioned that they are engineered humans, some could definitely be cacogens. Hethor, afraid of being recognized is hanging his head. Some sort of interstellar outlaw. The creatures in the wall see him and "sally out" to "lay hold of him." Obviously they don't get him as he shows up in Saltus.

What would Hethor's crime be? WARNING:Quantum leap in logic... He hints at the fact that he may of been the CAPTAIN of the -quazar-. "I the old captain, the old lieutenant, the old c-c-cook in his old kitchen, cooking soup, cooking broth for the dying pets!" he has obviously been unbalanced by the crew stealing his 'doll.' He claims death (Sev) is his master and uses the afformentioned line as justification. Could it be that after finding his living doll missing (Maybe it

showed up with the phantom cat in another story) Hethor, captain of the -quazar- poisons his crew and kills them all (cooking soup for the dying pets). Steals some mirrors, jumps ship and lives out his days as a fugitive. Cacogen's and the Autarch brand him a criminal and are on the look out for him.

Just another leap in logic that I'm good for. Food for discussion. FunkMonkey

William H. Ansley — 06 May 1998, 00:15 · follows J. Schultz

FunkMonkey Theory Two:

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I *like* this theory! It seems to explain everything quite well, except why no one mentions the cacogens coming out of the wall later on. (Maybe the cacogens had those little MIB flashbulb amnesia tubes!) I can certainly believe that Hethor was a wanted man.

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Severian does say this when talking about the wall: "Cacogens, I think, were there, beings to whom the avern was but what a marigold or marguerite is to us." (very near the end of _Shadow_, p. 208 of the Orb ed. While this isn't a guarantee, it certainly makes cacogens in the wall a possibility.

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While I wouldn't rule out that Hethor killed off everyone else on the Quasar, I always took that "cooking soup for the dying pets" line to mean that he was trying to keep some of his alien creatures alive, since he didn't know what to feed them and they were starving.

William Ansley

Peter Stephenson — 06 May 1998, 08:52 · follows William H. Ansley

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by the crew stealing his 'doll.'

Ever on the look out for tenuous links: there's a late nineteenth century humorous poem by W.S. Gilbert, about an old sailor the narrator met, wandering around the coast. It turns out he's the last survivor of a shipwreck, and has actually eaten his way through the rest of the crew to survive --- the last person he ate being the cook, if I remember right; there's a debate at some point about who is competent to cook whom.

Anyway, what triggered the association with the quotation above was the verse, repeated several times as the reader gradually works out what has happened, which I quote from ancient memory:

`Oh, I am the cook, and the captain bold,
And the mate of the Nancy Brig,
And the bosun tight, and the midshipmite,
And the crew of the captain's gig.'

Is it just possible that Hethor has eaten his shipmates to survive, and that is his crime???

The poem is called 'The Yarn[?] of the Nancy Bell', and although I can't point to a copy it's in lots of anthologies, particularly for children.

pws

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