

hello, anyone want to talk BOTNS? If so - Jolenta and her Guild?

The Urth list — 4 messages, 3 voices, 30 May 2010

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5614>

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Jane Delawney — 30 May 2010, 01:42

Hello? Is there anybody out there?

Just about a third of the way through my fifth or sixth rereading of BOTNS and wondering if anyone has any insights to offer on a few things I never noticed before (there are always things one didn't notice before!).

On this occasion - when Severian meets up with Dr. Talos's Players at Ctesiphon's Cross (even tho' he meant to do no such thing!) Jolenta at one point remarks to him regarding the Wall of Nessus that she could see it as a line of black on the northern horizon 'from the glass-roofed room *at the top of our tower*'.

Now I've read a little more I am aware of the interpretation placed upon this by Robert Borski who extrapolates that Jolenta, whose original name we are never told, was possibly raised amongst the Witches and may indeed be Severian's lost twin sister. Whatever the truth of this, it's certainly clear that Jolenta has known a life where she dwelt in a tower high enough to view the Wall even from the midst of Nessus, and that in addition, like Severian himself, she once knew a fellowship close enough that even after some time, during which she has either left voluntarily or been ejected for some infraction, she (like Severian, again) still refers to her former comrades as 'us'; it is 'OUR tower'.

However this does not afford proof that she was ever apprenticed to the Witches; whilst the Witches' Guild is the only one we are told of which is exclusively female, Severian is careful to tell us that most guilds (saving his own, that of the Beast-Masters and that of the Witches) do admit both sexes. So even if Jolenta does remember a childhood in a Guild Tower within the Citadel (and there's no suggestion that all Guilds have their headquarters in this area, whether within ship/Towers or not, so she could have been raised in a Tower outside the citadel, or even within some entirely different kind of structure which could none the less have qualified as a 'tower' and sported a glass roof of a different sort) there's no certainty that this was the tower of the Witches. She could have been an upholsterers' apprentice perhaps; or an apothecaries'.

I wonder if anyone on the list has any views on the subject? Asking, because as someone who has read BOTNS several times it was really striking to me really to notice this phrase for the first time (I'm sure I've read it many times without taking in the possible implications).

Apologies to all if this is a simple beginner's question and merely betrays that I haven't been following the fandom for some years - this is quite true, and I'm currently trying to catch up.

cheers and thanks

JD

brunians at brunians.org — 30 May 2010, 02:00 · in reply to Jane Delawney

That's a real interesting idea.

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Jack Smith — 30 May 2010, 02:51 · in reply to Jane Delawney

Isn't it Severian who makes this statement about "the top of our tower"? Is this the passage you're referring to?

"Even Jolenta shook her head, and I said, "No. I've spent my life so near the middle of the city that the wall was no more than a dark line on the northern horizon when we looked from the glass-roofed room at the top of our tower."" (Shadow, XXXV)

Best wishes,

Jack

On Sat, May 29, 2010 at 9:42 PM, Jane Delawney <jane_delawney at sky.com> wrote:
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Jane Delawney — 30 May 2010, 23:23 · in reply to Jack Smith

Well Jack you are so right and I am so embarrassed!

Nothing to do to 'fess up and say that I plain didn't see that 'I' in there ... back to the Work after some 15 years I have to admit and may be reading in stuff that isn't there for sure.

It's the case though isn't it - every time you come back to this book, you see something different. Even though, on occasion, it may be something that isn't there at all :) Possibly wishful thinking I have to say - perhaps, or perhaps not, occasioned by reading Borski before going back to BOTNS itself.

Would be interested to hear others' opinions of Borski by the way, he's quite the Kabalist isn't he?

peace

JD

btw all - now half way through book 2 as I mentioned after quite a number of years, and there are several things that stand out now. Never before quite noticed that the phrase that gets the "old Autarch" so twitched is 'Then you can show me where the garden is'.

In context that should be Garden, nu? The Autarch only at that moment realises that his greeting of a couple of pages earlier ('Welcome, Death') was all too appropriate. He still knows that Severian is the one, his later small sense of relief is only that of one who has a temporary reprieve, not that of one who has been pardoned entirely.

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