

Palaemon isn't Polonius; Memory; The Wall

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 06 May 1998

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David_Lebling — 06 May 1998, 09:27

From: Dan Parmenter <dan at lec.com>

Incidentally, Palaemon's behavior and words when he sends Severian on his way are very odd. First he claims that Thrax is by the sea. Then he tells Severian to pay attention to his good advice but remarks that Severian would probably forget it all. Palaemon, who we are told elsewhere was fond of Severian for his perfect memory.

I don't have a good explanation for why he first thinks Thrax is by the sea, but I think I can nail the other. Palaemon probably knows Severian as well as anyone, and has figured out (as we eventually do) that while he has an exceptional memory, he doesn't have terribly awesome analytical faculties. Again and again we see him _missing the point_, so Palaemon realizes that Severian won't get it, regardless of what he says, but he won't insult Severian by saying so.

Severian's memory of Thecla:

But Severian¹ presumably had the total recall. And besides, Severian does eventually get the picture that he doesn't need the claw to do what he does.

We've been around and around on this issue before; I'm in the camp that believes there was something different about Severian's memories of Thecla. Somewhere (where?) he states that the Claw brought her to life in his mind, and somewhere else it is stated that the analeptic alzabo's memory effects don't last (this may be when the Old Autarch is explaining _his_ potion in Book IV). Severian's total recall isn't enough.

BTW, there's at least one passage that suggests that the first Severian may not have even been a torturer:

Book IV, Ch. 36:

"He too was reared by the torturers, I think."

This refers back to the scene where the masters ask Severian if he wishes to become a journeyman. They want him to understand that if he quits before becoming a journeyman, people who meet him will say "He was reared by the torturers," but if he accepts elevation and then quits, people will say "He was a torturer." Perhaps Severian means that both he and Sev¹ left the guild?

FunkMonkey Theory Two (Hethor as Interstellar Most-Wanted):

Dr. Talos on the creatures inside the wall: "I do not doubt that there are among them many who search for 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.

I think this is half the explanation. Hethor is worried that he will be seen and captured, so he releases one of his little pets to create a diversion. However, if a cacogen or two had come out after him, that probably would have had an equivalent effect on the crowd, so you may be right.

--viz
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