

the phial, Severian's mother, and also Urth of the new Sun

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 12 Jul 2010

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5660>

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Cliff Judge — 12 Jul 2010, 14:13

The phial that the Autarch wears around his neck containing the high-powered alzado gland extract - the Autarch pulled that out of his robe and showed it to Severian when, as an apprentice, he was leaving the house Azure.

Aside from the fact that the phial was shaped like a penis, which is an amusing fact that is not reinforced when Severian is passed the reigns, I think the act of waving this at the young Sev, combined with a look of honest friendliness, was meant to show that Severian's visit to the House Azure was something of a test to see if he was really to be the next Autarch. Though that is a strange test. Anyway, this was something I came up with when trying to figure out how and why Severian was selected to be the next Autarch and New Sun.

After re-reading the conversation with Ouen at the end, when he asks if Ouen once screwed a tall, dark, girl, and Ouen owned that he did and her name was Catherine, I think that Severian's mother was the apparently ageless lady who came every year to play the part of Holy Katherine at the Feast. I started to think about how there was another girl who was called out as being dark - the other khaibits at the House Azure.

That might be a good explanation for why this lady never seemed to get any older to the young Severian - it was a different khaibits every year. Or, perhaps, it was the exultant herself, who was kept young by the blood of her khaibits. Anybody else think this way?

Finally, a question: I am halfway through Urth of the New Sun and I cannot figure out what is going on in the scene where Severian is captured by the jibbers. They bring him into a room where a holographic projection of himself waves and walks forward, and they command him to do the same or else they will kill him. What is going on here? Are they trying to identify him as the Autarch? I am not aware of any clues to suggest that this would require him mimicking the gestures of the hologram. Are they trying to dupe his likeness or something?

Thanks all.

Lee Berman — 12 Jul 2010, 19:44 · follows Cliff Judge

Cliff Judge: I

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I don't think the old Autarch is involved in picking Severian. He is a failed New Sun-bringer

himself. I think he is old and wants to glean just a bit of glory or recognition or one-upsmanship as his era ends and Severian begins "heh, heh, I know you are next, but you don't!"

If the House Azure was a test I think it was passed by Severian in that he could not be diverted from his adoration for Thecla by a cheap imitation.

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Yes, it has been discussed before. But only by the craziest, most speculative nutjobs willing to take ridiculous leaps of faith to interpret this story.

Anyway, I had a discussion with Dave Tallman about it a few years ago. He thinks Catherine and her clones are referenced in Dr. Talos' play. Surely the Contessa Carina in that play is associated with Catherine in some way. Dave noted that the Contessa's three maids, Lybe, Solange and Kyneburga, were all named for saints who had been beheaded. His theory is that Severian (and perhaps others in the past) have been tricked into thinking that, at elevation, the sword is fake (why is it so unexpectedly heavy to Severian?) and that the maid is really beheaded. A new clone each year?

I dunno. But I do think the dark haired corpse in the coffin that Vodalus and his crew exhume is also a version of Catherine (because of the hair and the pale gown). Perhaps killed by Allowin's Necklace (livid face). I also think severian seeing her face in Ultan's is significant.

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I can't figure it out either. Surely one of the most mysterious sequences in the story. But perhaps one day some light will be shed by some insightful soul. Maybe you are on the right track. Maybe that scene was fake and it was really some sort of scan to allow the hiero-types to be able to copy Severian into an eidolon later.

I think it must be significant that a guy who looks like (a younger version of?) Hethor is participating. Perhaps it is a malevolent rite after all? Or perhaps Hethor is really a benign person in disguise? A little, twisted alien being who carries mirrors and has an attraction to pretty, young human girls...never mind, never mind.