

Meanwhile, back at the gate

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 12 May 1998

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Tony Ellis — 12 May 1998, 14:09

12/05/98

11:07

Meanwhile, back at the gate

Mantis wrote:

Re: no monsters at the gate of Nessus, that this is standard operating procedure, firing military hardware into the crowd just to keep them off the road, when will they ever learn, setting the wagon on fire, after a few chiliads you'd think evolution would take hold, yawn, just another boring day for the bloodthirsty highway patrol at the Sanguinary Turnstile. Silly.

Wrong. This is standard operating procedure, as Gene Wolfe is careful to make Master Palaemon tell us: "...there is a redoubt, so I've heard, every fifty leagues... [the roads] are patrolled by uhlans under orders to kill anyone found on them, and since they have permission to loot the bodies of those they slay, they are not much inclined to ask excuses." Shadow, XIII

And no-one is suggesting that firing on the crowd has been going on for "chiliads" as you say. We are specifically told that the roads have only been closed in Master Palaemon's lifetime. Since the soldiers are mounted they are clearly one of Palaemon's patrols rather than a redoubt, and it is simply the travellers' misfortune to encounter them here.

I find far sillier the idea that

...the patrol/watchers at the gate have spotted Hethor and want him for questioning at the least

These watchers spend a lifetime watching for a familiar face, and yet when they see one they don't block-off the gate, or infiltrate the crowd, but station soldiers outside the gate with orders to fire indiscriminately? Hardly. As Dr Talos says "if they were to see the one they seek, they would sally out and lay hold of him."