

Was Jonas a Chem?

The Urth list — 8 messages, 7 voices, 06 Sep 2002

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3444>

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Andrew Reeves — 06 Sep 2002, 05:01

The recent discussion on chems and their nature has caused me to weigh in with a few brief thoughts. The first of these is that though there are a lot of technological questions involving the chems and their function, we ought to remember that this is getting on 50k to a million years hence, at which point Clarke's Law ought to be in full effect. So I think that Wolfe can engage in just about any sort of handwaving in that regard.

Something else that may or may not have come up in years past, but which I haven't noticed, is the question as to whether or not Jonas is not a chem who (like Marble) was repaired partially with human parts. Indeed, there is a lot of weirdness going on with his personality that rather reminds me of what happened when Marble merged with Rose (not in the particulars, just that things are... odd). Still, these are just random thoughts, and _New Sun_, having been written before _Long Sun_ would not take a future work into account.

Still, what do others think?

Andrew

Roy C. Lackey — 06 Sep 2002, 08:10 · follows Andrew Reeves

Andrew Reeves wrote:

Something else that may or may not have come up in years past, but which I haven't noticed, is the question as to whether or not Jonas is not a chem who (like Marble) was repaired partially with human parts. Indeed, there is a lot of weirdness going on with his personality that rather reminds me of what happened when Marble merged with Rose (not in the particulars, just that things are... odd). Still, these are just random thoughts, and _New Sun_, having been written before _Long Sun_ would not take a future work into account.

Yes, Jonas's nature has been discussed before, and I'm still waiting for an answer to my question of just what the hell he thought he was going to do with Jolenta, even if she was willing. <g>

But, no, Jonas wasn't a chem, at least not one like those on the _Whorl_. Jonas was very light weight, as Sev noticed when he picked him up in the Antechamber. Male chems are _much_ heavier than humans. Even female chems are heavier than same-sized humans. Rose was a human with some man-made replacement parts, including human-looking hands. It was some of those man-made parts that Marble appropriated for herself. So far as I am aware, _none_ of Rose's biological parts were taken. Marble ran test routines for each part she tried, rejecting some. For one thing, Rose's biological parts were pretty much spent, due to her age. Even if it were possible, which I doubt, I don't think there is any instance of biological parts being used by a chem in the LS/SS books.

-Roy

matthew.malthouse — 06 Sep 2002, 08:35 · follows Roy C. Lackey

On 06/09/2002 06:01:11 Andrew Reeves wrote:

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My view is that Jonas' nature, be it robot / android / chem, cannot be simply determined, if at all.

The impression I have is that the Chems were the product of Typhon/Pas' relatively limited technology. Their concept may have been based on the much more sophisticated created persons such as Jonas but nowhere near matches it in execution.

Matthew

Michael Andre-Driussi — 06 Sep 2002, 16:26 · follows matthew.malthouse

Andrew asked if Jonas was a chem.

Something else that may or may not have come up in years past, but which I haven't noticed, is the question as to whether or not Jonas is not a chem who (like Marble) was repaired partially with human parts. Indeed, there is a lot of weirdness going on with his personality that rather reminds me of what happened when Marble merged with Rose (not in the particulars, just that things are... odd).

I will add my voice with those saying that Jonas is not a chem. Yes, he is a robot, but of a different evolutionary line of descent: he is a "hollow man" type, which developed from pressure suits and powered exoskeletons. Because he is of smaller size than the "iron man" class represented by Sidero (who is big enough that a man like Severian can climb inside him and wear him like the hard suit that he is), Jonas is presumably of the silvery command class seen in passing on the starship Tzadkiel.

From another angle: Jonas is a sailor, not a soldier.

Having writ that, still I agree (most others will too) that Jonas has been repaired with biological parts. And yes, this is a very Oz-like bit of magic which is not like the Rose/Marble situation (where robotic hardware is recycled from a dead bio to a living chem).

Half-facetiously Roy asks what Jonas would do with Jolenta if he could find her; which relates to robotic love (rather than sexual congress--I believe the text makes it clear Jonas has no external male reproductive organ), if I read it right. That is, Roy questions Jonas's love, because Jonas is a robot (Roy does not question the love of a man who has no external male reproductive organ; nor the possibility of Platonic Love).

My sense is that Jonas's prosthetics have actually made him part-human in software (as mirror to how a cyborg is "part machine" in hardware), making him capable of loving (if robot sailors cannot love) or loving a human (if robots can love robots but not love humans). And every man loves/desires Jolenta! (So in this sense I agree that the exchange of parts has had a corresponding software effect as might happen in the Rose/Marble case, even though the parts are of different categories.)

In addition, Jonas might well love Jolenta for the things they have in common: both are part artificial (her cosmetic implants, his prosthetics); both are part robot (she is Talos's hypnotic slave); and both have pseudonyms (that begin with "Jo-," hinting at twinning or alike-ness) they received after their traumatic reinventions.

Jonas steps into the mirrors after speaking of being repaired. When next we see him, he is fully biological. I have often speculated that in Yesod his biological prosthetics were expanded into a full biological body into which the Jonas-software was integrated . . . along with the biological software that was present-yet-dormant in the prosthetics, now full-blown in the reconstructed bio body.

(A somewhat cleaner version is that the Jonas-spirit was drawn from Yesod by the Claw to ride the body of the anonymous dead soldier.)

In any event, two personalities in one body.

So I agree as to possible software weirdness in both Marble and Jonas being a result of their use of external hardware replacements; that the weirdness involves a degree of personality transfer ranging from "dilute" to "potentially overpowering." OTOH Jonas is not a chem of the Whorl.

Side note: re chem power systems, iirc the talus had a fusion power plant, not a chemical power plant.

=mantis=

Gene Wolfe at WorldCon report coming soon!

Michael Straight — 07 Sep 2002, 03:22 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

On Fri, 6 Sep 2002, Michael Andre-Driussi wrote:

Side note: re chem power systems, iirc the talus had a fusion power plant, not a chemical power plant.

Also, iirc, Hammerstone makes some comment about using water or water vapor as fuel - which I took to be short hand for the standard SF fusion plant: water in; hydrogen, oxygen, and power out.

-Rostrum

Filipe Silva — 07 Sep 2002, 23:03 · follows Michael Straight

I've given some thought on this thread, and even knowing I'm certainly not the most versed person in GW's works (since I only read The Book of the New Sun) - I insist on presenting my two cents of contribution: The prefix "Jo" found in Jonas and Jolenta could be understood or read as "IO". Well I-O suggests automation or programmed reflex action - (like the one we find when we press a letter on the keyboard and it appears on the screen).

Any thoughts?

Humbly,
Filipe Silva

Jerry Friedman — 09 Sep 2002, 17:58 · follows Filipe Silva

--- Michael Andre-Driussi <mantis at siriusfiction.com> wrote: ...

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...

I suspect the same things as you about why Jonas is attracted to Jolenta, but I still want to know why you say "Jonas" and "Jolenta" are pseudonyms.

Jerry Friedman

Filipe Silva — 07 Sep 2002, 23:03 · follows Jerry Friedman

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