

Quetzal in orbit

The Urth list — 10 messages, 7 voices, 19 Nov 2002

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Roy C. Lackey — 19 Nov 2002, 06:24

Charles Reed wrote:

At the time Silk was enlightened, the whorl had been in orbit around the "short sun" for about thirty years, and therefore could not have been going faster than light at any time during Silk's life which, at the beginning of NIGHTSIDE, was 23 years long.

Good point. I, too, recall that the ship had been in orbit for several decades, but can't remember where in the text that information is found. In any event, we are given that Quetzal had been Prolocutor for 33 years. This raises two questions I don't recall having been addressed.

1) How could an inhumu have attained that position? From comments Quetzal made to Gulo, it seems that high positions in the Chapter were more a matter of politics than merit. It's hard to imagine an inhumu rising through the ranks as an ordinary augur. Six years in the schola for augurs would present too many opportunities for discovery (athletics, showers, dormitories). It's easier to imagine an inhumu assuming the human guise of an older man, perhaps even the identity of the heir apparent to the position, on the eve of his replacement. The convenient death of the sitting Prolocutor would present no difficulty for an inhumu. After that, the inhumu could use the power of his office to limit access by the public, minimizing chances of exposure. The second question follows close on the first.

2) Who was Quetzal's mama? That is, where and how did an inhuma get the human blood needed to pass human intelligence to her offspring? From information in the SS books, it seems that the mother would have to have spawned her offspring on Green. Did she get the blood from a human on Green or a human on the _Whorl_? If the former, who was he and what was he doing there? If the latter, how did she get aboard, then go back to Green, then get her child back to the ship? An inhumu can't just fly through the hull of the ship like the atmosphere of Blue.

Scylla-in-Chenille told Auk that Pas was dead, had been wiped "out of core thirty years ago" (LS2; ch. 11). If true, this means that Quetzal was on the ship *at least* three years before Pas' demise in Mainframe. Given that Mainframe was the hub of intelligence on the ship, and that Pas was the ruling entity there, it's hard to believe that a lander could have either launched from or returned to the ship without his knowledge. Even if Pas had somehow been kept in the dark, Mainframe itself should have been aware of the comings and goings of landers. That seems to be what the Plan of Pas was all about. *Someone* in Mainframe had to know what was going on. Who? Why was there no announcement to the cities that the voyage was over? Why, for thirty years after Pas was dead, did the ship stay idly in orbit? Was the familial rebellion related to, as either cause or effect, the _Whorl's_ inactivity?

-Roy

Chris — 19 Nov 2002, 06:46 · follows Roy C. Lackey

I don't recall it (the Whorl being in orbit for 30+ years) being mentioned explicitly in the text at all, but I could be mistaken. However, I think Wolfe came out and said it in an interview/Q&A, if that counts. And of course it can be inferred from other things, like Quetzal's presence.

Your answer to question 1 seems eminently sensible to me; question 2 is tough, but I can think of a couple of things to at least suggest. One possibility is that he got into the ship through the cooling system. It's mentioned in one passage that many of the tunnels have gone dry that are supposed to have been carrying water/coolant, which would be quite convenient for the purpose if you could just get into them (which doesn't strike me as impossible). Another possibility, not connected with this, is that he came in through a segment of the ship where the monitors were more or less non-functional, due to the removal of precious cards.

I thought, though I can't prove of course, that it was implied that the familial rebellion was what brought the Plan of Pas to a pause (say that 3 times fast). Oreb was used as a comparison at one point; Pas wanted to force them out of the cage that they considered a shelter, whereas Echidna & Co. wanted to keep them in the cage.

Chris

Good point. I, too, recall that the ship had been in orbit for several decades, but can't remember where in the text that information is found. In any event, we are given that Quetzal had been Prolocutor for 33 years. This raises two questions I don't recall having been addressed.

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of politics than merit. It's hard to imagine an inhumani rising through the ranks as an ordinary augur. Six years in the schola for augurs would present

too many opportunities for discovery (athletics, showers, dormitories).

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easier to imagine an inhumani assuming the human guise of an older man, perhaps even the identity of the heir apparent to the position, on the eve of his replacement. The convenient death of the sitting Prolocutor would present no difficulty for an inhumani. After that, the inhumani could use the power of his office to limit access by the public, minimizing chances of exposure. The second question follows close on the first.

2) Who was Quetzal's mama? That is, where and how did an inhumani get the human blood needed to pass human intelligence to her offspring? From information in the SS books, it seems that the mother would have to have spawned her offspring on Green. Did she get the blood from a human on Green or a human on the _Whorl_? If the former, who was he and what was he doing there? If the latter, how did she get aboard, then go back to Green, then get her child back to the ship? An inhumani can't just fly through the hull of the ship like the atmosphere of Blue.

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ship *at least* three years before Pas' demise in Mainframe. Given that Mainframe was the hub of intelligence on the ship, and that Pas was the ruling entity there, it's hard to believe that a lander could have either launched from or returned to the ship without his knowledge. Even if Pas had

somehow been kept in the dark, Mainframe itself should have been aware of the comings and goings of landers. That seems to be what the Plan of Pas was all about. *Someone* in Mainframe had to know what was going on. Who? Why was there no announcement to the cities that the voyage was over? Why, for thirty years after Pas was dead, did the ship stay idly in orbit? Was the familial rebellion related to, as either cause or effect, the _Whorl's_ inactivity?

-Roy

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Charles Reed — 19 Nov 2002, 15:23 · follows Chris

Roy, I always like your posts because you always ask interesting, meaty questions. Let me see how well I can address them.

Good point. I, too, recall that the ship had been in orbit for several decades, but can't remember where in the text that information is found. In any event, we are given that Quetzal had been Prolocutor for 33 years.

Before I really get started, here are some quotes related to time on board the Whorl, the first of which has already been cited in Roy's previous post:

From LAKE OF THE LONG SUN, Chapter 11 (Some Summations): Scylla-in-Chenille speaking: "[Pas is] dead now, though. We wiped him out of core thirty years ago."

From CALDE OF THE LONG SUN (Gods, Persons, and Animals Mentioned in the Text): "Patera QUETZAL, the ranking augur in Viron and for thirty-three years the head of its chapter."

From CALDE, Chapter 1 (The Slaves of Scylla):

"For some while he [Quetzal] remained before the window, motionless, cosmetics streaming from his face in rivulets of pink and buff, while he contemplated the tamarind he had caused to be planted there twenty years previously. It was taller already than many buildings called lofty; its glossy, rain-washed leaves brushed the windowframe and now even, by the width of a child's hand, sidled into his bedchamber like so many timid sibyls, confident of welcome yet habitually shy. Their parent tree, nourished by his own efforts, was of more than sufficient size now, and a fount of joy to him: a sheltering presence, a memorial of home, the highroad to freedom."

From CALDE, Chapter 4 (The Plan of Pas):

Silk speaking with Quetzal

" 'You've been Prolocutor for many years, Your Cognizance. Since long before I was born. You were Prolocutor in the days of the last calde.' "

Quetzal nodded. 'I knew him well. I intend to know you better, Patera Calde.' "

...

Quetzal speaking

"...Before Kypris manifested here on Scylsday, the Windows of our city had been empty for decades. I can't take credit for that, it wasn't my doing. But I've done everything in my power to prevent theophanies. It hasn't been much, but I've done what I could. I proscribed human sacrifice, and got it made law, for one thing. I admit I'm proud of that." ... Quetzal speaking "...I'm mocking you, Patera Calde, of course I am. But not idly. My question's perfectly serious. Echidna told you Pas is dead, and you can't help believing her. I've

known it for thirty years, since shortly after his death, in fact."

Note that we have from two independent sources that Pas has been dead for 30 years -- from Scylla herself, and from Patera Quetzal.

This raises two questions I don't recall having been addressed.

1) How could an inhumus have attained that position? From comments Quetzal made to Gulo, it seems that high positions in the Chapter were more a matter of politics than merit. It's hard to imagine an inhumus rising through the ranks as an ordinary augur. Six years in the schola for augurs would present too many opportunities for discovery (athletics, showers, dormitories). It's easier to imagine an inhumus assuming the human guise of an older man, perhaps even the identity of the heir apparent to the position, on the eve of his replacement. The convenient death of the sitting Prolocutor would present no difficulty for an inhumus. After that, the inhumus could use the power of his office to limit access by the public, minimizing chances of exposure. The second question follows close on the first.

I think these speculations are on the mark, and that Quetzal probably assumed the identity of an already-existing or soon-to-be confirmed Prolocutor. Further, I think Quetzal the inhumus has held the office for at least twenty years, if not the full thirty-three (see the quote above about planting the tamarind tree).

2) Who was Quetzal's mama? That is, where and how did an inhuma get the human blood needed to pass human intelligence to her offspring? From information in the SS books, it seems that the mother would have to have spawned her offspring on Green.

That's true. Not only does it need to be warm enough (and there might well have been places in the Whorl that were warm enough for them to spawn, especially since the Whorl has been getting hotter and hotter over the last few decades), but there also need to be the right kind of microorganisms in the water.

Did she get the blood from a human on Green or a human on the _Whorl_? If the former, who was he and what was he doing there? If the latter, how did she get aboard, then go back to Green, then get her child back to the ship? An inhumus can't just fly through the hull of the ship like the atmosphere of Blue.

No, they can't fly through the hull, but remember what the Neighbor told Horn in RETURN TO THE WHORL (my apologies for not being able to quote the passage directly, but I don't have my copy of RttW with me). Horn was told that the Neighbors had infected the Whorl with inhumus to act as a kind of mirror, so that the human race could be judged as to their worthiness of "inheriting" Blue. That is, the Neighbors are the ones responsible for the inhumus in the Whorl. Either the Neighbors made it possible for the inhumus to get aboard a lander that had found its way to Green, or made the journey possible by some other means that is not specified in the text.

My guess would be that when the Whorl entered the Blue/Green system some 33+ years ago, the Plan of Pas began to be carried out in at least a few cities, though clearly not in Viron since there would be people who remembered such an event and we have no indication of such people. That is, landers were boarded in some other city, made the trip to Blue and Green, which got the Neighbors' attention. In order to check out humanity, they somehow got a whole bunch of inhumus into one or more of the landers before they re-launched back to the Whorl, sat back and watched the results.

As to who the human was that served as the "model" upon which Quetzal was built, I feel fairly confident that it was some kind of augur or "holy man." See below for an explanation.

Scylla-in-Chenille told Auk that Pas was dead, had been wiped "out of core thirty years ago" (LS2; ch. 11). If true, this means that Quetzal was on the ship *at least* three years before Pas' demise in Mainframe. Given that Mainframe was the hub of intelligence on the ship, and that Pas was the ruling entity there, it's hard to believe that a lander could have either launched from or returned to the ship without his knowledge.

It needn't have been without his knowledge. Just the opposite. Pas wanted the landers to be launching and carrying people down to the planet(s). In fact, that's what the "Plan of Pas" was. It was only after the initial launchings (again, in cities other than Viron) that things began to go awry. It's not clear to me if the other gods rebelled against the Plan of Pas on their own, or if they were somehow encouraged to rebel by the infiltrating inhumis. My guess would be the former.

Even if Pas had somehow been kept in the dark, Mainframe itself should have been aware of the comings and goings of landers. That seems to be what the Plan of Pas was all about.

Exactly.

Someone in Mainframe had to know what was going on. Who?

Pas. Until he was "killed."

Why was there no announcement to the cities that the voyage was over?

My guess is that Pas actually did have a plan for the orderly evacuation of the Whorl. He had gone to the trouble of separating the cities to ensure they wouldn't destroy one another during the voyage (and perhaps for other reasons as well), so it stands to reason that he wouldn't want all the landers everywhere to be blasting off at the same time. That would just be utter chaos. There probably was an announcement in certain cities that the voyage was over and that the Plan of Pas was now to be fulfilled. In fact, the more I think about it, the more sense it makes for the first landers to be peopled with his own priests -- those who would be responsible for setting up the hardware that would allow him to descend and continue his godhood on the planet. One such lander (in my imagined scenario) landed on Green, and one its occupants served as the "parent" of Quetzal.

Why, for thirty years after Pas was dead, did the ship stay idly in orbit?

Well, because Pas was dead and was no longer able to carry out his plan. Those responsible for killing him didn't want (for some reason) to continue carrying it out.

Was the familial rebellion related to, as either cause or effect, the _Whorl's_ inactivity?

Yes, I believe so.

-Roy

cilluff1 at optonline.net — 19 Nov 2002, 15:56 · follows Charles Reed

Charles Reed provided, among many other quotes and interesting observations, the following:

<<<Quetzal speaking

"...Before Kypris manifested here on Scylsday, the Windows of our city had been empty for decades. I can't take credit for that, it wasn't my doing. But I've done everything in my power to prevent theophanies. It hasn't been much, but I've done what I could. I proscribed human sacrifice, and got it made law, for one thing. I admit I'm proud of that." ...>>>

This is something that has puzzled me, although I have only just started reading Green so

perhaps it becomes clear. But, why did Quetzal try to prevent any more theophanies? I have no real answer, or even theory, but only some musings that touch upon the subject. Pas chose Blue and Green as the destinations for the Whorl -- clearly the Whorl didn't arrive there at random, and Pas (or Typhon, I should say) must have been familiar enough with them to know they would be habitable to humans. Presumably, then, he knew about the inhumis as well, yet he still chose Blue and Green as destinations. Why? Was he "in cahoots" with the inhumis (and is that how Quetzal got on board the Whorl)? After all, Quetzal speaks fondly of Pas (the type of person who loves a bird so much he sets them free) but not so nicely about the other "gods" (they are the type who cage those they love). The other "gods" of the Whorl stymied Pas' Plan to bring humanity to Blue and Green for years, perhaps because they knew of the inhumis -- is this why they killed Pas, to prevent the delivery of humanity into the hands of the inhumis, and is it also why Quetzal made such efforts to prevent theophanies?

James Wynn — 19 Nov 2002, 15:27 · follows cilluff1 at optonline.net

Roy ponders:

1) How could an inhumis have attained [the position of Prolocutor]?

2) Who was Quetzal's mama?

Crush offers:

1) It is extremely unlikely that Quetzal could have attained his position at all without the conscious assistance of persons in power. Imagine an old man suddenly appearing out of nowhere and being a candidate for Pope without extensive experience in the Church and without personal connections among the Cardinals. Quetzal was undoubtedly skulking around somewhere before he took up the baculus.

2) I have reasons to believe that this question is not important:

<http://gene-wolfe.tripod.com/midas.htm>

Charles Reed — 19 Nov 2002, 16:54 · follows James Wynn

cilluff1 at optonline.net wrote:

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"...Before Kypris manifested here on Scylsday, the Windows of our city had been empty for decades. I can't take credit for that, it wasn't my doing. But I've done everything in my power to prevent theophanies. It hasn't been much, but I've done what I could. I proscribed human sacrifice, and got it made law, for one thing. I admit I'm proud of that."
...>>>

This is something that has puzzled me, although I have only just started reading Green so perhaps it becomes clear. But, why did Quetzal try to prevent any more theophanies?

I think Quetzal wanted to prevent theophanies so that the populace wouldn't be informed that Pas was dead. (Of course, this is exactly what happened when Echidna appeared at the Sun Street Manteion during Rose's funeral rites, even though very few people actually heard what she said.) Quetzal wants the Plan of Pas carried out, and anything that could hinder that -- such as the other gods showing up in sacred windows and telling everybody that the Pas is dead -- is what he works against.

I have no real answer, or even theory, but only some musings that touch upon the subject. Pas chose Blue and Green as the destinations for the Whorl -- clearly the Whorl didn't arrive there at random, and Pas (or Typhon, I should say) must have been familiar enough

with them to know they would be habitable to humans.

OK so far.

Presumably, then, he knew about the inhumi as well, yet he still chose Blue and Green as destinations.

Not true. Here are Gene Wolfe's own words, which you can find in volume 6 of the Whorl archives: "Typhon did not know about the inhumi [and] would have done everything possible to keep them out of the Whorl if he had." And besides, even if he had known about the inhumi from his palaces on Urth, he would only have seen them as the beasts they were -- they could not have assumed human form until the Whorl, loaded with humans, actually arrived in their system and became food for them.

Why? Was he "in cahoots" with the inhumi (and is that how Quetzal got on board the Whorl)? After all, Quetzal speaks fondly of Pas (the type of person who loves a bird so much he sets them free) but not so nicely about the other "gods" (they are the type who cage those they love).

Quetzal speaks fondly of Pas because he agrees with Pas's plan. He wants the humans to come down to Green so that the other inhumi can be elevated above the bestial level they have been living at ever since the Neighbors departed.

The other "gods" of the Whorl stymied Pas' Plan to bring humanity to Blue and Green for years, perhaps because they knew of the inhumi -- is this why they killed Pas, to prevent the delivery of humanity into the hands of the inhumi?

I don't think so. I think Quetzal's assessment is accurate -- they cage what they love. They also love being gods, and know they wouldn't be gods if there were no people aboard the Whorl to worship them. It might be argued that they could have set themselves up as gods on Blue and Green as well, and I don't really have a could counter-argument for that, other than to guess that Pas kept his plans for transferring godhood planetside pretty close to the vest. That is, they didn't know how. Kind-of weak, I know, but it's the best I can come up with.

and is it also why Quetzal made such efforts to prevent theophanies?

Again, I don't think so. Quetzal wants the humans to go to Green. He wants the Plan of Pas to succeed. He wants the inhumi to become "human" like he has become "human" because as Horn notes on at least a couple of occasions in Short Sun books, without humanity the inhumi would be nothing more than mindless beasts.

Charles

James Wynn — 19 Nov 2002, 17:05 · follows Charles Reed

Charles Reed quotes:

Here are Gene Wolfe's own words, which you can find in volume 6 of the Whorl archives: "Typhon did not know about the inhumi [and] would have done everything possible to keep them out of the Whorl if he had."

This puts a painful kink in my theories. Of course, even if Typhon did not know the target planets were full of blood-sucking monsters (and I never imagined he did) it does not mean he wasn't manipulated by Quetzal on Urth. And based on Quetzal's statements in LS3:1 (Slaves of Scylla) that still seems probable to me.

Still this hurts.

-- Crush

cilluff1 at optonline.net — 19 Nov 2002, 17:36 · follows James Wynn

Charles wrote:

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knew about the inhum as well, yet he still chose Blue and Green as destinations.

Not true. Here are Gene Wolfe's own words, which you can find in volume 6 of the Whorl archives: "Typhon did not know about the inhum [and] would have done everything possible to keep them out of the Whorl if he had.">>

Ah, straight from the horse's mouth! It's tough to argue with Gene Wolfe himself about what Typhon knew! :) I agreed with all your other points about Quetzal's motivation, my only speculation was to whether Pas was in the know with the inhum. Alas, apparently not! Too bad, though, I like the sinister Typhon much more than the benificent Pas....

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 19 Nov 2002, 17:41 · follows cilluff1 at optonline.net

Roy C. wrote...

1) How could an inhum have attained that position?

[...]

It's easier to imagine an inhum assuming the human guise of an older man, perhaps even the identity of the heir apparent to the position, on the eve of his replacement.

I like this, and the variations that have been suggested on it, but I perceive one hole that needs plugging ...

We repeatedly see an inhum[u|a] more-or-less successfully create for [him|her]self a human identity, and masquerade as a human who never existed before.

But can anyone cite a specific case where an inhum? successfully masqueraded as a specific, already-existing human person, in the presence of people who have known that human person for years? (The case of Jahlee in the farmhouse does not work for this...)

Lacking that, is there any reason to believe that an inhum? could carry on such a deception, over a period of years, among the people who knew the original best?

Jerry Friedman — 20 Nov 2002, 00:14 · follows Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

--- Charles Reed <cmreed at link.com> wrote:

...

From CALDE, Chapter 1 (The Slaves of Scylla):

"For some while he [Quetzal] remained before the window, motionless, cosmetics streaming from his face in rivulets of pink and buff, while he contemplated the tamarind he had caused to be planted there twenty years previously. It was taller already than many buildings called lofty; its glossy, rain-washed leaves brushed the windowframe and now even, by the width of a child's hand, sidled into his bedchamber like so many timid

sibyls, confident of welcome yet habitually shy. Their parent tree, nourished by his own efforts, was of more than sufficient size now, and a fount of joy to him: a sheltering presence, a memorial of home, the highroad to freedom."

...

Thanks for this quotation!

I see three striking things about it. One is that it seems to support Marc's contention that the trees are significant to the inhumis (as he just noted). And this is an Urthly tamarind tree, not a tree native to the Groon system! Unless... hard though I find it to believe... Ushas is Blue, tamarinds are native there, and a presumably Urth- descended tree can remind Quetzal of home. Or is it just that any sizable tree reminds him of Green?

The second striking thing is the questions it raises. Sufficient size for what? How the highroad to freedom? Quetzal can fly (right?); he doesn't need the tree for climbing out the window.

The third is that Horn made up this passage. I can hardly believe Quetzal ever told him these solitary thoughts. So what does Horn know about trees and inhumis, years before he sets out to look for Silk, and is he hiding his knowledge from us? Or are we supposed to forget that Horn is the narrator and take this as coming from the omniscient author, or believe that Horn is divinely inspired?

Unlike Marc, though I see "their parent tree" as just "the tree that is the parent of those leaves".

Jerry Friedman