

TBOTLS: the long parking orbit of the Whorl

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 19 Nov 2002

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Michael Andre-Driussi — 19 Nov 2002, 16:41

Roy C. Lackey quoted Charles Reed and 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.

Maybe it will help things to expand the timeframe a bit. As Roy has mentioned not too long ago, the end of Pas's planned time came 100 years prior to events in TBOTLS (hc II, 235). FWIW this is also the period when hydromancy was discontinued (II, 172). Scylla last appeared in a sacred window 50 years ago (I don't have the citation for this one, alas).

This 50 year period (from 100 to 50 years ago) would seem to be the point where the Whorl arrives and the rebellion in Mainframe begins. Yet it seems unlikely that the Plan would run out before the colonists had been sent out -- indeed, with this in mind, "100 years ago" (or mission year

232) might be the latest point for the Whorl to arrive.

Roy wrote:

1) How could an inhum 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 inhum 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 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. The convenient death of the sitting Prolocutor would present no difficulty for an inhum. After that, the inhum 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.

Issues related to time are greatly eased if the Whorl arrived in system at least 100 years prior to TBOTLS. Beyond that, in addition to the "doppelganger" ideas that Roy listed above, it becomes the game of beating the big, bloated, bureaucratic system: forgery ("I got an A in P.E."), transfers from distant regions, etc.

2) Who was Quetzal's mama? That is, where and how did an inhum 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 inhum can't just fly through the hull of the ship like the atmosphere of Blue.

IIRC this was covered somewhere in TBOTSS, but I couldn't say where (could it be in that "explaining Quetzal" part?): there were exploratory landers sent, with colonists. Long ago. How the information may or may not have influenced the rebellion remains completely unknown, and since the rebellion happened on Urth, too, it seems likely that it springs from the same family-dynamic source (rather than being a product of external influence).

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