

Rajan and Food

The Urth list — 16 messages, 7 voices, 28 Apr 2009

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5416>

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Brian Lovely — 28 Apr 2009, 10:58

He's a tree, he's a tree! Neighbors are trees, Inhumis are parasitic vines. .or something. Not sure what the Neighbor-version of Inhumis are-maybe the vine with a face that is cut for Incanto's staff. Except that seems so quiescent. You'd think the Neighbor-Inhumis would be a bit more active. The Inhumis are somehow about sacrifice and one race raising up another. The Neighbors infected humans with Inhumis to see what human-Inhumis would be like. not sure where I'm going with this, but there's something here about being willing to suffer for the betterment of the Inhumis. So, a) the crossbreed would be a "higher" being than the pure Inhumis, and b) you'd rid yourself of them by being so passive. they'd take on your Christ-like willingness to sacrifice yourself.

"James Wynn" crushtv at gmail.com wrote:

Granted, but when it is combined with the onset of ravenous hunger in the Spring, we know more is going on here (incidentally, this is more of that Tree-Neighbor connection that I still don't understand). I do not recall an instance of LS Silk pretending to eat food set before him. He fasts, but when there is not a lot of food available anyway, it is easy to be holy in that way. Not the same thing as what happens in SS, I think.

--Brian Lovely

James Wynn — 28 Apr 2009, 12:04 · in reply to Brian Lovely

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Brian, let's posit that the Neighbors are dryads--that their steady physical form is one of the "sleepy trees" in the forests of Blue. How do the inhumis make the jump to become vines? Or how do they transform back to winged/clawed vampiric reptiles? That is the fundamental problem with any "tree/vine theory" regarding the Neighbors and inhumis.

J.

Jordon Flato — 28 Apr 2009, 18:00 · in reply to James Wynn

I've wondered if the strange creature (not the leatherskin) that jumps on the ship with Horn when he first sets out, which is described much like a neighbor but faaaar scarier isn't maybe a nieghbor/inhumis remnant. That is what occurred to me.

I can't get behind the neighbors as trees/inhumis as vines theory at all. It seems like such a stretch. There is no denying a connection of some sort between trees and neighbors. I'm not certain it is a literal connection. In New Sun, there are instances of Wolfe anthropomorphising trees and such. With human qualities. Why wouldn't the same be true on another planet, but

echoing the essence of the 'original' inhabitants, the neighbors.

And I think, in terms of the Neighbors infecting the inhumani on the Whorl, it was primarily to get a sense of what the souls of the humans were like. When they saw the result, they made their decision that they could give the world to Humans, as they had confidence that the humans would have a chance, that the neighbors did not, to end the cycle of inhumani/host extinction, due to the possible qualities of the human soul. I think, in Horn/Silk in particular (keeping in mind that when the neighbors gave Blue to humans through Horn, he was still Horn and not Silk at all), they saw something in humanity (in my opinion, not his being a neighbor doppelganger) that convinced them that they might be able, at some point, to make a peace with the inhumani. They wouldn't have known that if they had not first infected the Whorl with inhumani.

What is much more controversial to me is that the neighbors say they also spent time on the whorl, and befriended some there. What are the implications of this? Who did they befriend? We have an inhumani character in Long Sun. Is there a as yet unidentified Neighbor?

On Tue, Apr 28, 2009 at 5:04 AM, James Wynn <crushtv at gmail.com> wrote:
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Jordon Flato — 28 Apr 2009, 18:03 · in reply to Jordon Flato

Also, it seems like the Neighbors choose to enslave the inhumani, much like humans were doing to each other. They were wiped out because of it. I see no evidence of the neighbors having "rid yourself of them by being so passive they'd take on your Christ-like willingness to sacrifice yourself." They failed in that regard spectacularly, apparently. However, Silk/Horn taking one as a son, and maybe being the first being to actually LOVE another inhumani, is the christlike action, that 'changes the rules' as hide says at the end of the Whorl.

It is the Love for the inhumani that gives the possibility of their redemption and the ending of the cycle. At least it seems so to me.

Brian Lovely — 28 Apr 2009, 22:11 · follows Jordon Flato

Well, whatever the Neighbors are to trees, the Inhumani are to vines. Maybe their base form is the slug-like thing that drops out of a tree on green, kind of an amphibian that lays its eggs in water. But if their base form is just a vine, then feeding on something higher pulls them up from vine to amphibian. It's all up. The uncrossed Inhumani are still vines, those who have managed to move up a level are slugs, those who have fed on humans are bat-winged devils.

Crossbreeding. The corn that Horn seeks on the Whorl. The underwater greenhouses, the strange doubling of limbs that many creatures on Blue exhibit. I read somewhere in the list a theory about polyploidy something or other--some biology that I don't know anything about--but the upshot was that you can cross corn in such a way that the genetic pattern is

doubled...something like that. More to the point, like beasts with eight legs. Who was crossbreeding who, and why? Did the Neighbors have to change themselves in order to survive? Were the 8-legged animals experiments, to perfect the technique?

Message: 2

Date: Tue, 28 Apr 2009 07:04:11 -0500

From: "James Wynn" <crushtv at gmail.com>

Subject: Re: (urth) Rajan and Food

To: "The Urth Mailing List" <urth at lists.urth.net>

Message-ID: <AC78EFE1A7F440FFB9604C769FE6EB1D at eMachinePC>

Content-Type: text/plain; format=flowed; charset="iso-8859-1";
reply-type=original

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Message: 3

Date: Tue, 28 Apr 2009 11:00:10 -0700

From: Jordon Flato <jordonflato at gmail.com>

Subject: Re: (urth) Rajan and Food

To: The Urth Mailing List <urth at lists.urth.net>

Message-ID:

<273409710904281100p29971f87s893b7b7aff2a2e5b at mail.gmail.com>

Content-Type: text/plain; charset="iso-8859-1"

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J.

David Stockhoff — 29 Apr 2009, 01:37 · follows Brian Lovely

I have no idea where it was, but I recall a fairly clear hint dropped that the inhum evolved from parasitic vines. There is certainly no evidence that they are reptilian---merely reptile-like. And I agree that the Neighbors are somehow tree-related. Wolfe never wastes a clue, so there must be something to that.

I don't see any problem with transformations from one form to another, although I wouldn't propose that the inhum can change into vines and back any more than humans can change into monkeys and back. But they do have the capacity to winter underground just like plants. The inhum plainly are highly changeable, and do not need to conform to 20th-century notions of what a species is---especially since those notions are wrong. They change when they feed on sentient life; they change with the availability of food.

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J.

Matthew Groves — 29 Apr 2009, 02:51 · in reply to David Stockhoff

It is equally possible that the inhum on Green are vine-like, not because they evolved from vines, but because they feed on the trees on Green, thus becoming more like them.

Jerry Friedman — 29 Apr 2009, 03:07 · in reply to Brian Lovely

--- On Tue, 4/28/09, Brian Lovely <brian at studiobl.com> wrote: ...

Crossbreeding. The corn that Horn seeks on the Whorl. The underwater greenhouses, the strange doubling of limbs that many creatures on Blue exhibit. I read somewhere in the list a theory about polyploidy something or other--some biology that I don't know anything about--but the upshot was that you can cross corn in such a way that the genetic pattern is doubled...something like that. More to the point, like beasts with eight legs.

...

I hope you read my response, pointing out that polyploid animals don't have double the usual number of limbs.

<http://www.urth.net/urth/archives/v0203/382.txt.shtml>

Jerry Friedman

Matthew Groves — 29 Apr 2009, 03:40 · in reply to Jerry Friedman

Yeah, for me, the take-away from the argument about corn polyploidy (or whatever it's called) is not that the Neighbors have double the normal chromosomes and therefore double the number of arms and legs. That's silly. The point (IMO), or the suggestion, is that the corn hybridization business is, among other things, a *cue* that the Neighbors are (in some sense I don't quite understand) a hybridized or somehow immanently corrupted species. Or maybe they're just fading away like successive generations of corn crops, and like the enigmatic ghosts of Mars in Bradbury's Martian Chronicles (not John Carpenter). And the colonists represent a necessary pure strain for the rebirth of civilization. At any rate, I think the case is very strong that Wolfe is constructing an analogy between the Neighbors and the diminishing corn crop,

and the colonists and the new seeds. In TBotNS, the primary decay/rebirth image was seasonal; in TBotSS it's this corn generation thing. I believe it's Marc who deserves credit for this insight.

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<http://www.urth.net/urth/archives/v0203/382.txt.shtml>

Jerry Friedman

O'Donnell, Tim BOSI — 29 Apr 2009, 10:43 · follows Matthew Groves

From: "James Wynn" <crushtv at gmail.com>
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J.

James, I wonder if the transformation Inhumi undergo when interred for long periods of time points to what happens to them?
Perhaps given a long enough period without prey they simply shrivel down to the form of a vine?

From: Jordon Flato <jordonflato at gmail.com>

What is much more controversial to me is that the neighbors say they also spent time on the whorl, and befriended some there. What are the implications of this? Who did they befriend? We have an inhumi character in Long Sun. Is there a as yet unidentified Neighbor?

For my money Mucor is the most likely candidate for someone to have befriended a Neighbour. She takes it in her stride when she meets Horn/Silk in the one body and seems to be pretty comfortable (though she doesn't like them much) with inhumi on the Whorl. I am sure a Neighbour would have made a good companion for her in her room pre-Silk's arrival. They could have chatted in whatever way their mysterious soul-travel powers worked. In fact, it may have been possible for Mucor to have communicated from the Whorl with the Neighbour (essences?) on the planets below.

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James Wynn — 29 Apr 2009, 13:39 · in reply to O'Donnell, Tim BOSI

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shrivel down to the form of a vine?

Well, there are references to the trees and vines being at war with each other. So it implies that inhum-as-vines are not inactive. And if they

were inactive as vines why would they say "Oh look! A human. I'll change to a reptilian winged clawed creature. And without humans and Neighbors they still have other animals to feed on, just not creatures that would give their children souls. I'm not trying to be obtuse here. I can clearly map how an inhum becomes human:

- 1) And inhum feeds on a human.
- 2) Her child is ensouled with humanity.
- 3) The ensouled inhum dream travels with a Neighbor and stays there.

David is wrong about his implication that inhum are not flatly asserted to be animal; Although, the assertion is by the Rajan and he is not biologist-expert on the life-forms of Green. Still. They give birth, and I seem to recall that they lay eggs. Nevertheless, he and I agree that there *is* some intended connection between Neighbor/Inhum and Trees/Vines (and it's not metaphorical). I just don't understand how we get there. Unless....

Suppose the trees are not the physical form of the Neighbors. Suppose they are the form of their souls? Then you have a Neighbor running around as a greenbuck or some other form, and an inhum bites him. The soul of the inhum child would be plant-like. Then a Neighbor dream-travels with the ensouled inhum to Blue and voila! Except, shouldn't the inhum's soul be a tree then?

J.

David Stockhoff — 29 Apr 2009, 13:46 · follows James Wynn

In diploidy, the number of genes is doubled. Sometimes the result is all-around greater viability, as with corn, and sometimes it is the opposite.

Either way, it doesn't mean doubling the limbs of animals---but then, if all life on Green and Blue is somehow plant-derived ... why not?

And of course diploidy is a metaphor for something here, and that possibility has been discussed.

***By the way, can you point me to the underwater greenhouses in the text? I may have missed them.

Message: 2

Date: Tue, 28 Apr 2009 18:11:49 -0400

From: "Brian Lovely" <brian at studiobl.com>

Subject: (urth) Rajan and Food

To: <urth at lists.urth.net>

Message-ID: <000c01c9c84e\$56304ca0\$0290e5e0\$@com>

Content-Type: text/plain; charset="us-ascii"

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David Stockhoff — 29 Apr 2009, 16:02 · follows David Stockhoff

I think part of the answer must include some loosening of our terms, especially soul vs body and plant vs animal. For example, if a soul can be a tree, then it won't be a tree as we know it, but some kind of soul-tree or tree-soul.

And if a creature runs around on legs eating other creatures, it may still have evolved from plants, and thus be an "animal" only from an ecological point of view. It may still be a plant on the genetic and cellular level. (The Rajan can be right and wrong at the same time.)

And if "vine" is merely a morphological term, it doesn't indicate lack of sentience or other qualities---merely that an alien creature grows very tall and skinny, lacks support structures, and feeds on the alien trees (which also provide support).

And so on ...

Message: 3

Date: Wed, 29 Apr 2009 08:39:50 -0500

From: "James Wynn" <crushtv at gmail.com>

Subject: Re: (urth) Rajan and Food
To: "The Urth Mailing List" <urth at lists.urth.net>
Message-ID: <9AD1435AF7FB42E993C2FE7140F986FC at eMachinePC>
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To some extent you are right and yet wrong. When Horn's son sees Jahlee during dream-travel, the Rajan admits that she is --in this state-- entirely human. But he warns him that they are also quite different and that a union between them would be wrong.

So if the soul form of the Neighbors is trees, then, yes, they won't be a tree as we know it, but the difference would be undetectable by the colonists (unless they started moving around which they did for the resurrected Horn).

J.

Jerry Friedman — 30 Apr 2009, 17:56 · in reply to David Stockhoff

Not to nitpick... okay, to nitpick. Diploidy is what we have (except sperm and egg cells) and I think most organisms have. Double the usual number of chromosomes is tetraploidy.

Jerry

--- On Wed, 4/29/09, David Stockhoff <dstockhoff at verizon.net> wrote:
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David Stockhoff — 30 Apr 2009, 21:39 · follows Jerry Friedman

You're right. And hybrid corn is tetraploid.

It's been a long time since college.

Message: 5
Date: Thu, 30 Apr 2009 10:56:39 -0700 (PDT)
From: Jerry Friedman <jerry_friedman at yahoo.com>
Subject: Re: (urth) Rajan and Food
To: The Urth Mailing List <urth at lists.urth.net>
Message-ID: <558036.88140.qm at web50710.mail.re2.yahoo.com>
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