

Colonel Terzo

The Whorl list — 3 messages, 3 voices, 01 Mar 2001

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Robert Borski — 01 Mar 2001, 22:08

Lots of little mysteries in the SHORT SUN books.

For instance: who is Colonel Terzo and why can he alone, of all the people that Horn encounters, hear Seawrack's distant singing?

We learn, of course, that he can perceive the siren during his second encounter with Incanto, when he attempts to warn our hero about an imminent attack. In the midst of this, however, Terzo falls silent and asks Incanto, "Can you hear something I don't?" Oreb subsequently says, "Sing song," and Incanto immediately breaks out singing, not only rendering one of Seawrack's little ditties in Neighborese, but translating it back into the Common Tongue. Incanto, in between one and the other, is then heard to remark: "He heard the music, I know; he stared at me with bulging eyes." But after translating the final line Terzo takes off running; if Incanto's been singing the song that caused him to rape Seawrack, small wonder.

Later, after Terzo is captured along with General Morello and the Duko, the latter tells Horn, "Terzo's terrified of you. He's in agony of every time you speak to him." (More fear of the song's consequences?) And still later, when Mora and Jahlee are present, he interrupts Incanto, exclaiming, "She's singing."

"I know," Horn tells him. "I've been trying to speak in spite of it." Later, when Jahlee asks who's singing, Incanto replies, "Someone only I and Colonel Terzo can hear. It doesn't really concern him, and it certainly doesn't concern the rest of you."

And then finally one last time, when Hide asks his reminiscing father who Seawrack is, Horn replies: "The woman that Colonel Terzo and I can hear."

So what's the deal here? Why can Colonel Terzo hear Seawrack singing? Is it merely the power of suggestion? Are we to assume he may also have encountered Seawrack sometime earlier in his life? If so, there seems a curious dearth of evidence.

And what are we to make of his rather startling claims of friendship? During their first encounter, Terzo tells Incanto--who's just let on that he has two friends more knowledgeable than he about the rules of war--"You have three [friends]. I am the third, and you need all of us more than you think." This may explain why Wolfe names him Terzo, since *terzo* is Italian for three.

The Colonel also tells Horn that "Someday you and I will speak of this afternoon over a bottle of wine," and later, when he comes to warn Horn about the aforementioned imminent attack, explains that "The Duko didn't send me out here. Neither did General Morello. I came out of friendship for you."

Are we simply meant to assume that Terzo's amity is merely part of the gamesmanship of war?

That by pretending to be a solicitous friend looking out for the welfare of the other he might encourage at least the idea of surrender?

Possibly. But of course I have another idea.

Namely: what if Colonel Terzo is an inhumu? It seems likely that Wolfe would have a few secret inhumu attempting to pass as humans in SS, just as there are more allegedly than Quetzal in the LS series. (Remind me some day to post my thoughts about Hossaan.)

Having Terzo imbibe Horn's memories of Seawrack and her haunting siren abilities would also explain why he alone of all others can hear her, just as the shared blood helps to explain the friendship bond. And perhaps "Terzo" is merely meant to mean that Terzo is the third passing inhumu in IGJ, along with Fava and Jahlee.

We never see him attempting to ride any animals, and he comes to his first two encounters with Incanto on foot. Oreb does not seem particularly disturbed by him, but perhaps his alien otherness has been somewhat mollified by the sanguine presence of Horn/Silk. No physical description of him is provided by Wolfe, so that's no help.

Still and all, is there any evidence that Horn/Incanto has indeed been bitten by an inhumu?

Well, yes.

Because shortly after Incanto takes up residence in the same little farmhouse where he re-encounters Jahlee, Horn notes the following:

"I have been ill. Perhaps I can begin there. A strange sort of sickness--no pain, just very tired. We brought the fourgoat back to camp, Hide going ahead to make sure no one fired. It was very welcome and was skinned and was eaten at once. I ate some of the meat. Much less than the others, but they were not sick.

"No matter. I was ill, I feel quite certain, before we reached the fire." (IGJ, 296)

Horn, who recognizes the symptoms, immediately suspects Jahlee:

"I asked whether she had been feeding from my veins. She denied it, but conceded that another might have, and examined me for the punctures of fangs, finding none.

"Or so she said.

""We don't bring all sickness. Besides, you have a fever. We don't do that.""

But wouldn't a tired, run-down individual be just the sort of victim an opportunistic virus would most likely infect? And Colonel Terzo, with or without Jahlee's cooperation, might easily have access to Horn in the formerly abandoned farmhouse.

So could he be an inhumu? And if so, is there any chance he's also Juganu?

Robert Borski

*This is WHORL, for discussion of Gene Wolfe's Book of the Long Sun.

On Thu, 1 Mar 2001, Robert Borski wrote:

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My reading of this scene:

1. Terzo notes that Horn's attention seems divided and asks what's up (note Terzo asks "Can you hear something I don't" not "Do you hear what I hear?").

2. Horn sings along for Terzo.

3. Horn's singing makes Terzo able to hear Seawrack for himself from that moment on. Perhaps it's a gestalt type of thing, such that anyone can hear Seawrack's song once it is pointed out and he knows what to listen for. Or perhaps it's that Horn shares some special link with Seawrack that he's able to mediate to others. In any case, from that moment, Terzo hears Seawrack's singing, and attributes what he hears to Horn's sorcery, making him fear Horn as an enemy and value him as a potential friend.

I don't think it's necessary to posit any previous relationship between Terzo and Seawrack, nor a hidden connection with Horn, such as sucking his blood. The moment where Horn sings for him is connection enough.

-Rostrum

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James Jordan — 03 Mar 2001, 11:02 · follows Michael Straight

At 12:23 AM 3/2/2001 -0500, Rostrum wrote:

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Etc.

Rostrum's argument seems sound enough, but Borski's other evidence is suggestive. Terzo seems to know Horn from the past. I suspect he is indeed Jugano. Very Lupine. Worth considering.

Pat. Nut.

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