

About the secret of the inhum, again (RTTW spoilers)

The Whorl list — 4 messages, 2 voices, 19 Apr 2001

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/1375>

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Kevin J. Maroney — 19 Apr 2001, 14:52

In an earlier post, I pointed out this (in somewhat different words):

In `_Return to the Whorl_`, Jahlee tells Nettle a secret about the inhum, which, because of the structure of the story, we are led to believe is
the secret which has been sketched out in the first two volumes. The only detail new to her revelation is that it is the children of the inhum who gain intelligence from the blood rather than the predators themselves.

A. Am I correct that this detail was not present in any of the earlier open discussions of the secret?

B. If I am correct, it seems to me that this detail is supposed to be a major revelation about the nature of the secret, and key to understanding how the humans on Blue and Green could fight the inhum. But I keep failing to see how this detail transforms what we knew into "a weapon too big to wield".

What am I missing?

Any responses welcome.

Wombat, a.k.a. Kevin Maroney [kmaroney at ungames.com](mailto:kmaroney@ungames.com)
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*This is WHORL, for discussion of Gene Wolfe's Book of the Long Sun.

Adam Stephanides — 20 Apr 2001, 09:49 · follows Kevin J. Maroney

on 4/19/01 1:52 PM, Kevin J. Maroney at [kmaroney at ungames.com](mailto:kmaroney@ungames.com) wrote:
In `_Return to the Whorl_`, Jahlee tells Nettle a secret about the inhum,
which, because of the structure of the story, we are led to believe is
the secret which has been sketched out in the first two volumes. The only
detail new to her revelation is that it is the children of the inhum who
gain intelligence from the blood rather than the predators themselves.

A. Am I correct that this detail was not present in any of the earlier open
discussions of the secret?

I believe so. I don't recall it, in any case (though iirc a couple of passages can be seen in retrospect to hint at it); nor do I recall any of our discussions of the secret mentioning it.

B. If I am correct, it seems to me that this detail is supposed to be a
major revelation about the nature of the secret, and key to understanding
how the humans on Blue and Green could fight the inhum. But I keep failing
to see how this detail transforms what we knew into "a weapon too big to
wield".

What am I missing?

Whatever you're missing, I am too. The only thing I can think of is that perhaps it would be enough to keep inhumans about to spawn from drinking human blood, rather than all inhumans; but I don't see how this knowledge could be used in practice.

Any responses welcome.

I'm afraid mine wasn't too helpful.

--Adam

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Adam Stephanides — 22 Apr 2001, 21:59 · follows Adam Stephanides

on 4/19/01 1:52 PM, Kevin J. Maroney at kmaroney at ungames.com wrote:

B. If I am correct, it seems to me that this detail is supposed to be a major revelation about the nature of the secret, and key to understanding how the humans on Blue and Green could fight the inhumans. But I keep failing to see how this detail transforms what we knew into "a weapon too big to wield".

Since my first response, one potentiality has occurred to me. Assuming that there are not enough humans on Green to maintain the population of intelligent inhumans, the Secret implies that to have intelligent offspring, most female inhumans must first go to Blue, and then return to Green to spawn. So if it were somehow possible to prevent inhumans returning to Green, the population of intelligent inhumans would be set on a declining course. But I don't see how this would be possible, any more than stopping the inhumans from coming to Blue.

--Adam

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Adam Stephanides — 27 Apr 2001, 09:07 · follows Adam Stephanides

on 4/24/01 8:29 AM, Spectacled Bear at spectacled.bear at pobox.com wrote:

Have a look around August 2000 in the archives.

Adam, you drew attention there to the Neighbour who takes Horn to the sewer saying that the Neighbours wanted to wake humans up, not to their danger but to their safety. Horn only understands this after Krait tells him the Secret, though it doesn't appear that the Neighbour is talking about that directly, but about some other implication of the sewer. No idea what, though.

I actually think I know this now (it just came to me). There were thousands of human corpses in the sewer, all drained of blood. In combination with the Secret, this indicates the tremendous amount of human blood the inhumans need. If the supply on Blue is cut off, they will have to consume their slaves at a greater rate than they can reproduce or be replaced.

The fact that the inhumans do have a temporary "cushion" on Green indicates that it's not necessary to provide 100% protection on Blue, just to reduce the supply greatly. So my earlier concerns about the impossibility of protecting everyone are less applicable, though even providing 90% protection would still be a major task.

--Adam

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