

The Secret: a new theory

The Whorl list — 4 messages, 4 voices, 20 Apr 2001

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/1379>

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Nicholas Gevers — 20 Apr 2001, 10:50

Following recent discussions of the Secret of the Inhumani, including reactions to my own theorisings, I'd like to propose a new and more comprehensive hypothesis as to what the Secret really is, and how, as many people have reasonably questioned, knowledge of it can be used as an offensive weapon against the inhumani.

The resolution to the problem, I now argue, is another much-questioned feature of TBSS's plot: astral travel. Why can Horn travel astrally when in the company of an inhumu? Surely because the Neighbors bestowed a strictly passive astral travel capability on the inhumani (we know that when the Neighbors left Blue for parts unknown, they took inhumani with them; so the inhumani must be able to travel astrally WHEN WITH Neighbors; Horn has the Neighbors' favour, shares some of their power, and so can travel astrally when the inhumani component of the partnership is available.) So: if the humans of Blue behave benevolently towards each other, they will retain the Neighbors' favour; when they have inhumani captive, they will thus be able to travel at will to Green; they now know how and where the inhumani breed; and so they will be able to annihilate the following generations of inhumani in the cradle. That is how the Secret can be used immediately and aggressively, as Horn demonstrated in attacking the City of the Inhumani in IGJ; safeguarding the poor and helpless from the inhumani is also important, but is a secondary and defensive weapon.

If we accept this, the presence of astral travel in TBSS acquires justification; and a further point comes to mind: an explanation of why the Gaonese bury the inhumani instead of killing them outright. Practically, the Gaonese are worshippers of Echidna, the reptilian Goddess who carries snakes in her hands; the inhumani are snakelike; therefore, just as the Gaonese have a taboo against killing cattle, they cannot kill inhumani, only imprison them. However, Wolfe is making another point here, one very instructive as to how the Secret should be used: humans should keep captive inhumani

alive, for use as astral travel guides...

--Nick Gevers.

James Jordan — 20 Apr 2001, 10:17 · follows Nicholas Gevers

At 11:50 AM 4/20/2001 +0100, Nick G. wrote:

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If this attractive theory be correct, it seems to me that it should connect to the question of how the inhumu travel from Green to Blue. Since they can't tolerate cold, we know that the inhumu don't fly from Green to Blue. But perhaps they employ this astral travel ability to do so. Of course, it would be a different kind of use of the ability, since they don't leave their bodies behind. At the same time, astral travellers seem to have some kind of physical body with them, even though their ur-body is asleep back home. Astral travel with inhumu lies between full teleportation on the one hand and mere spirit-travel on the other. I think that's a clew. I think the inhumu are capable of teleportation.

"We get our intelligence from you." Hmmm. Try this out: Animal-inhumu are just tools for astral travel. But when an inhumu gets Neighbor or human blood, then both of the necessary factors are present INSIDE him/her: inhumu astral ability + human intelligence. In that case, Smart-inhumu do not need another human to travel astrally, and perhaps the super-close connection of human blood and inhumu genes enables the Smart-inhumu to teleport, not just travel astrally. (That is, a mixture of human blood and inhumu genes is stronger than a human holding hands with an inhumu/a.)

It seems you cannot go anywhere that nobody in the group has ever been to. But if only one smart-inhumu/a makes the trip, then others can make the trip with him/her, and that will expand until millions are making the trip.

Since this hypothetical ability is linked to conjunction, it would seem that they can teleport between Green and Blue when the two are close to each other. It appears that distance plays a part in the ability of Smart-inhumu to teleport -- an SF aspect of this seemingly fantasy element. Travelling greater distances would not be possible by teleportation, but only by astral travel. Also, travelling with a human must be astral and not teleportation, since the human lacks the inhumu ability. That is, when you add a teleporting inhumu with a wholly non-teleporting human, you get something in between.

If I'm right, then the precise ability of the inhumu is not astral travel but teleportation. The Neighbors gave Animal-inhumu the ability to teleport, but no ability to use it. Standing with a Neighbor, who cannot teleport, the inhumu can enable astral travel but not full teleportation. It enables the Neighbor to "phone home" or phone anywhere else he has ever been. Aha! But inhumu are vampires and when one generation of Animal-inhumu get some Neighbor blood, the next generation turns out to be Smart-inhumu. Smart-inhumu can use their ability to teleport. One S-I can get with another S-I and go wherever that second S-I has ever been, and not just by astral travel: the two can teleport there.

Well, one speculation calls for another. So, Gevers, does this advance your theory, or it is poppycock?

JBJordan

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

Kevin J. Maroney — 20 Apr 2001, 13:32 · follows James Jordan

At 11:50 AM 4/20/01 +0100, Nick Gevers wrote:

The resolution to the problem, I now argue, is another much-questioned feature of TBSS's plot: astral travel.

An interesting theory, all in all, but with potentially fatal problems:

Krait tells The Secret to Horn, and the narrator refers to The Secret in Blue. But the narrator does not discover that he can astrally travel until partway through the frame events of Green, and is surprised by it, which implies that he was not told about it by Krait and thus it is not part of The Secret.

Also, the astral travel surprises even the inhumis who participate in it, which makes it even more unlikely that Krait told Horn about it.

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Adam Stephanides — 21 Apr 2001, 13:01 · follows Kevin J. Maroney

on 4/20/01 5:50 AM, Nicholas Gevers at vermoulian at yahoo.com wrote:

Following recent discussions of the Secret of the Inhumis, including reactions to my own theorisings, I'd like to propose a new and more comprehensive hypothesis as to what the Secret really is, and how, as many people have reasonably questioned, knowledge of it can be used as an offensive weapon against the inhumis.

The resolution to the problem, I now argue, is another much-questioned feature of TBSS's plot: astral travel. Why can Horn travel astrally when in the company of an inhumis? Surely because the Neighbors bestowed a strictly passive astral travel capability on the inhumis (we know that when the Neighbors left Blue for parts unknown, they took inhumis with them; so the inhumis must be able to travel astrally WHEN WITH Neighbors; Horn has the Neighbors' favour, shares some of their power, and so can travel astrally when the inhumis component of the partnership is available.) So: if the humans of Blue behave benevolently towards each other, they will retain the Neighbors' favour; when they have inhumis captive, they will thus be able to travel at will to Green; they now know how and where the inhumis breed; and so they will be able to annihilate the following generations of inhumis in the cradle. That is how the Secret can be used immediately and aggressively, as Horn demonstrated in attacking the City of the Inhumis in IGJ; safeguarding the poor and helpless from the inhumis is also important, but is a secondary and defensive weapon.

Against this theory:

1) There is no evidence that any humans can travel astrally except in Horn's presence.

2) There is no evidence that the Neighbors will grant humans the power of astral travel if they love one another.

3) Both Fava nor Juganu talk freely about where the inhumis breed. If this knowledge could be used to annihilate the inhumis, it's not likely they would do this.

4) Horn said that the Secret could (if it were feasible) be used to reduce the inhumis to vermin, not to wipe them out altogether.

5) The idea of astrally travelling to Green and killing the inhumis children has no real connection with Krait's secret (which, as a later post of yours makes clear, you accept is the real Secret). Even without Krait's secret, it would be clear that killing all the inhumis children would wipe out the inhumis, and the Secret doesn't tell the humans how to do this.

6) Horn says that the Neighbors knew the Secret, but could not use it. If the Neighbors, who were physically on Green, couldn't kill all the inhumis children, it's doubtful that humans could.

If we accept this, the presence of astral travel in TBSS acquires justification; and a further point comes to mind: an explanation of why the Gaonese bury the inhumis instead of killing them outright.

I had thought that the Gaonese believed that by burying inhumis alive, they were killing them outright. But I don't have OBW with me.

--Adam

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