

My take on The Secret

The Whorl list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 23 Apr 2001

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/1397>

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Joel T. Sieh — 23 Apr 2001, 16:25

Hello All,

I just recently got on the list, and have been reading the ideas posted on the secret of the inhum. Well, I'm pretty sure an idea akin to mine has been posted on here already. However, in the case one hasn't, I'm posting my idea. I don't think the spirit-travel (I don't like to call it astral travel for some reason) really had anything to do with it. At least not as far as Krait was concerned. I think the main idea behind the secret was that the inhum need humans to be sentient. In my opinion, this fits with the "weapon too big to wield" description, because in order to really change the inhum, humanity as it existed on Blue and Green would need to do one of two things:

1. Fundamentally change. I think this has interesting ramifications, because this change could mean physically, by genetic alteration, or psychologically/spiritually. If humans were changed genetically so that their blood or DNA somehow became undigestable, poisonous, or incompatible with their biological systems, the inhum would be reduced to mere animals. If the humans on the two planets were to change on a spiritual or ethical basis, becoming more altruistic, kind, selfless, etc., it's possible the inhum would change in similar ways. However, it's easy to see that both of these alternatives are pretty hard "weapons to wield". For the first one, the technology level isn't high enough (and to Silk or other whorlers, such a thing might be considered magic). For the second one, you can't really change humanity. Traits such as greed, selfishness, lust, etc., are inescapable for humans, but the inhum don't necessarily know that. Personally, I like the second idea better. It seems to fit more with the general feeling of the series. I think the second idea is also more interesting, because it means the inhum's fear is imaginary.

Oh, and if you're wondering why the inhum would fear becoming better people.... Well, that question isn't easy for me to answer. It would create a greater emotional conflict for each inhum to pursue his own survival and that of his species. However, this might not be a good enough reason, and it's debatable whether increased morality would be able to overrule survival and reproductive instincts.

2. Leave, like the Neighbors did. This is an easy one. If the humans inhabiting the two whorls left, or died, or some combination of the two (and no inhum could sneak along with them), the inhum would again lose their source for sentience. This one might also be a difficult "weapon to wield", because the settlers would have to round everyone up and either kill them or put them on ships, and weed out the inhum in the process of getting people ready to transport.

Anyway, that's basically all I had to say. I'm not particularly fond of the ideas that dealt with physically wiping out the inhum or using the weapon in an active sense. They just didn't seem to fit the style and feeling of the series. Just some thoughts. I apologize if I'm accidentally reiterating ideas that have already been posted. The archives are daunting and I'm too lazy for my own good. :)

--Joel

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