

Crocagators

The Whorl list — 12 messages, 7 voices, 25 Apr 2001

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/1403>

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Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 25 Apr 2001, 12:58

The Kitchen Staff Wombat wrote:

My understanding is that the number of human attacks from crocodilians is very low. They're much like wolves that way--feared as human predators all out of proportion to the actual danger they present. Which isn't to say that they can't sometimes be very dangerous, indeed.

Which was pretty much my point. Assuming per argumentum the "Golden Rule" theory of the Secret, _and_ that the human colonists somehow manage to implement it, then the inhum become "something we can live with," either as benevolent sentients or as dangerous but mindless giant leeches.

In fact, there's some doubt in my mind as to how many people are actually killed by the inhum in the situation which actually holds on Blue at the time of Horn's journey

-- I don't recall many examples of someone actually dying from inhum attacks [excepting the attack on the wedding, as a very special special case]. Do the inhum, like wolves, bears, sharks, snakes, crocodilians... suffer from exaggerated human fears as to the extent of the danger they pose?

I somewhat doubt it, on the grounds that the inhum (at least in the form we know) are far smarter than wolves, bears, etc., and able to "pass" as humans: a combination that makes one inhum potentially far more dangerous in the long term than a good-sized pack of wolves. But the Bluvian scenes in SHORT simply don't seem to reflect a people in imminent danger of being wiped out by predators.

I dunno. There's _something_ weird missing here, what it is ain't exactly clear...

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

mark millman — 25 Apr 2001, 17:30 · follows Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

At 12:58 PM 25-04-01 -0700, Dan'l Danehy-Oakes wrote:

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--Blattid

At the risk of being obvious, allow me to point out that, unlike the inhumis, wolves, bears, sharks, snakes, crocodilians, and the like do not preferentially target humans as their prey.

Also, as I recall (and I'm afraid that I don't have the book here for reference, so we'll have to depend on my recollection), Fava had to be very careful not to kill Salica when she fed from the old woman. If Fava hadn't been living with the family at the time, she very likely would have been less careful. (If anyone is likely to die from the inhumis' depredations, it would be the old, the very young, and the sick; curiously, though, even the baby Sinew was not killed when he was attacked. I wonder whether this may be a clue; thank you for bringing it up, Dan'I.) I do have to agree with Dan'I, though; the inhumis aren't going to kill off Blue's human population any time soon.

Nacre

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

William Ansley — 25 Apr 2001, 22:31 · follows mark millman

At 5:30 PM -0400 4/25/01, mark millman wrote:

At the risk of being obvious, allow me to point out that, unlike the inhumis, wolves, bears, sharks, snakes, crocodilians, and the like do not preferentially target humans as their prey.

I don't think that "dumb" inhumis would preferentially target humans as their host. As I read the text, it was just an accident that the inhumis first fed upon the Neighbors and became sentient.

At 11:03 AM -0700 4/25/01, Dan'l Danehy-Oakes wrote:
(As a side note, how many people are actually attacked by alligators and the like in a given year? I presume that proper precautions could make the threat from non-sentient inhumis no greater than that from crocodilians.)

At 12:58 PM -0700 4/25/01, Dan'l Danehy-Oakes wrote:
Which was pretty much my point. Assuming per argumentum the "Golden Rule" theory of the Secret, and that the human colonists somehow manage to implement it, then the inhumis become "something we can live with," either as benevolent sentients or as dangerous but mindless giant leeches.

I think "mindless giant leeches" **that can fly** would be a much greater threat than crocodiles. It is easy to stay away from crocodiles, you just don't go near the river/lake they live in. (Unless, of course, it is your only source of drinking water.)

Inhumis, on the other hand, can fly so you can't avoid them. I would think, although I can't recall a specific example of this, that they could also squeeze through very small openings, since they have no bones.

Certainly, dumb inhumis would be orders of magnitude easier to defend against than smart ones, but I think it would be more difficult than you suggest.

William Ansley

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

Robert Borski — 26 Apr 2001, 01:18 · follows William Ansley

Nacre has written:

<Also, as I recall (and I'm afraid that I don't have the book here for reference, so we'll have to depend on my recollection), Fava had to be very careful not to kill Salica when she fed from the old woman. If Fava hadn't been living with the family at the time, she very likely would have been less careful. (If anyone is likely to die from the inhumis' depredations, it would be the old, the very young, and the sick; curiously, though, even the baby Sinew was not killed when he was attacked. I wonder whether this may be a clue; thank you for bringing it up, Dan'l.) I do have to agree with Dan'l, though; the inhumis aren't going to kill off Blue's human population any time soon.>

Or even at all, for as Jahlee tells Horn in IGJ p. 377, "I drink blood. Human blood mostly. We don't kill you though. At least very often."

Granted, it's in Jahlee's best interests to fudge the truth a bit, but does anyone that we know of in either the Long or Short books actually succumb fatally to an inhumis' bite? I don't recollect a single person. Therefore the comparison with leeches--who only kill those with hereditary or spontaneous idiopathic coagulopathies--is probably dead on.

Robert Borski

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

Adam Stephanides — 26 Apr 2001, 09:58 · follows Robert Borski

on 4/26/01 1:18 AM, Robert Borski at rborski at charter.net wrote:
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the comparison with leeches--who only kill those with hereditary or
spontaneous idiopathic coagulopathies--is probably dead on.

There are the thousand of dead bodies in the sewer on Green, whom Horn says have "bled to
death" (IGJ, 380); and elsewhere, iirc, Horn says or implies that the inhumu on Green drain the
bodies of their slaves when they get too old to work or fight. And Horn, who should know, thinks
that Juganu might kill him by drinking his fill; and that if Juganu brought companions he "would
certainly die" (but this, as Horn anticipates it, would be premeditated murder by Juganu, not the
typical opportunistic inhumu attack) (RttW, 403). But I agree that inhumu attacks do seem to be
rarely fatal on Blue, perhaps because on Blue they rarely have the chance to drink their fill
without being disturbed. And the inhumu are not going to wipe out the humans of Blue: aside
from anything else, in doing so they would be eliminating their main source of human blood. A
more realistic danger is that the inhumu would gain control over the humans on Blue, as they
have over the Pajarocans and most of those on Green.

--Adam

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

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 26 Apr 2001, 08:48 · follows Adam Stephanides

Mark Millman wrote:

At the risk of being obvious, allow me to point out that,
unlike the inhumu, wolves, bears, sharks, snakes, crocodilians,
and the like do not preferentially target humans as their prey.

At the risk of being contentious, let me observe that only the sentient inhumu do so. But in the
universe-of-discourse where humans have come to "love one another," the sentient inhumu will
very specifically not target humans; and the non-sentient inhumu, well, won't.

a) Special case: Given that the sentient inhumu have
developed "human souls," it is possible and even
somewhat likely that at least some humans will choose
to voluntarily give blood to sentient inhumu so that
their children will also have "human souls." This,
of course, is not a "danger" situation at all; in
fact, this may represent the ideal state of society
on the Short Sun whorls: humans deliberately giving
blood voluntarily to all inhumu, so the nextgen of
inhumi (and thereafter) will be non-threatening,
sentient inhumu, who will continue to take blood given
voluntarily by humans, etc. (Consider also in this
context Octavia Estelle Butler's horrendously effective

story "Bloodchild.")

Also, as I recall (and I'm afraid that I don't have the book here for reference, so we'll have to depend on my recollection), Fava had to be very careful not to kill Salica when she fed from the old woman.

My recollection also.

If Fava hadn't been living with the family at the time, she very likely would have been less careful.

Are you sure? I'm not. Again, death-by-inhumi-attack seems to be exceedingly rare.

--Dan'l

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

Kevin J. Maroney — 26 Apr 2001, 12:44 · follows Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

At 09:58 AM 4/26/01 -0500, Adam wrote:
But I agree that inhumi attacks do seem to be rarely fatal on Blue, perhaps because on Blue they rarely have the chance to drink their fill without being disturbed.

Though it is worth noting that though Quetzal does not kill Teazel (I think that's her name), he has fed off her more than once and she is near death when Silk treats her. Quetzal was also very smart for an inhumu.

Wombat, a.k.a. Kevin Maroney kmaroney at ungames.com
Kitchen Staff Supervisor, New York Review of Science Fiction
<http://www.nyrsf.com>

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

mark millman — 27 Apr 2001, 11:25 · follows Kevin J. Maroney

At 08:48 AM 26-04-01 -0700, Dan'l Danehy-Oakes wrote:
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--Dan'I

Contention welcomed, Dan'I. It's true that only the sentient inhumi specifically target humans; but then it's equally true that these are exactly the inhumi that the human population of Blue fears; and I'd be surprised if there were many non-sentient inhumi loose on Blue. The sentient inhumi are as much a source of fear as the (much less common) man-eating shark or tiger or wolf-pack is on Earth, and are the ones that humans would have to bring themselves to accept in an agape-driven world (though the entire humanization-of-the-inhumi-by-voluntary-blood-donation scenario is now discredited).

You are right to say that we hardly hear of any deaths from the inhumi's depredations in Short Sun (and of course this has now been discussed at greater length on the list), but there are examples in which victims have been left in a very bad way indeed. Kevin Maroney mentions Teazel in Long Sun, and I recall that General Oosik's son (is his name Muktuk?--again, I don't have the book for reference) is drained so badly that he loses consciousness, leaving him so weak that he cannot stand. These attacks may not be characteristic of the situation on Blue, but do demonstrate that inhumi can probably kill if they're so minded (or if they misjudge, etc.). Blue is also a colony world, and there seem to be enough dangers aside from the inhumi that one probably wouldn't want to go around in a condition of chronic weakness from blood loss.

Mark

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mark millman — 27 Apr 2001, 11:25 · follows mark millman

At 08:48 AM 26-04-01 -0700, Dan'I Danehy-Oakes wrote:

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Jason Ingram — 27 Apr 2001, 22:34 · follows mark millman

Kevin Maroney wrote:

Though it is worth noting that though Quetzal does not kill Teazel (I think that's her name), he has fed off her more than once and she is near death when Silk treats her. Quetzal was also very smart for an inhumu.

Quetzal may have been the descendant of inhumi who drank from Neighbors, thus possessing other-than-human intelligence (at least, as Dan'I Danehy-Oakes argues, prior to consuming human blood). That still leaves the question of how Quetzal got to the Loganstone.

Quetzal might have been the offspring of the hypothesized inhumi who were taken with the Neighbors. He might have been born on Green, however. If several generations of inhumi had

passed since the Neighbors left, this implies that the trait of augmented intelligence lasts--which has implications for the nature of the weapon too heavy to bear. Of course, inhumans might simply live a very long time.

There are other possibilities, of course. But it seems likely that Inhumans can travel through space (beyond the mesosphere, or the 'Green' equivalent), _or_ had access to craft that could allow space travel, _or_ had friends who dropped one or two off, _or_ I've forgotten something from the Long Sun series.

Jason

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

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 30 Apr 2001, 08:46 · follows Jason Ingram

Jason wrote:

Quetzal might have been the offspring of the hypothesized inhumans who were taken with the Neighbors.

They're not "hypothesized," dammit. The Neighbors _say_ so, in RETURN. (Don't ask me for a page cite, though; my copies of SHORT are out on loan and won't be back for a while.)

He might have been born on Green, however.

The word seems to be "must." It appears that the inhumans can only breed on Green.

If several generations of inhumans had passed since the Neighbors left,

There are implications that it has been only a short time -- I believe I first got that impression on the island with the not-very-ruined Neighbor-place in BLUE.

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

Jason Ingram — 01 May 2001, 19:47 · follows Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes wrote:

[re: inhumans taken along with the Neighbors]

They're not "hypothesized," dammit. The Neighbors _say_ so, in RETURN. (Don't ask me for a page cite, though; my copies of SHORT are out on loan and won't be back for a while.)

Fine; assume the Neighbors never lie and that the narrator is 100% trustworthy. That's a reasonable hypothesis, but nevertheless an assumption.

The important aspect of that assumption (or "fact," whatever) lies in the effects of the interaction of abilities that enables astral travel, or bilocation. Maybe the Neighbors can do some things by themselves, others only with the inhumans. Maybe thinking about the relation between Horn's ability to bilocate in terms of his movement _into_ Silk, as it were, and the presence of inhumans might shed some light on the pesky question of astral travel.

I'm also curious about Quetzal's lineage, but that seems to be a minor thread.

> He [Quetzal] might have been born on Green, however.

The word seems to be "must." It appears that the inhumans can only breed on Green.

We don't really know much about the abilities of the Neighbors. They might be able to replicate inhumani breeding conditions. They might not. Our access to the "truth" of these matters is so buffered that guarded terms are more appropriate. If "seems to be" and "appear" work better, use those words instead of "might."

Again, the question here is-- if Quetzal was born on Green, by what means did he make his way to the Loganstone. If by ship, whose, and to what end did they assist him? If by other means, which? (inhumi flying through space, randomly seeking out hosts? inhumani flying through space pursuing objects perceived with their incredibly superior perception?) The answer might prove interesting; I'm not sure.

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- > left,

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not-very-ruined Neighbor-place in BLUE.

Agreed. However, a short time could mean centuries, or decades, depending on the technology involved and the degree of ruin. Since we don't know (or, more precisely, since I can't recall any statements on this matter) the inhumani lifespan, this could involve generations. Still speculation, but pertinent for determining whether intelligence passes to grandchildren.

Jason

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