

Black Mechanics

The Whorl list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 15 Jan 1997

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David_Lebling — 15 Jan 1997, 10:05

From: Peter Cash <cash at convex.convex.com>

In this connection, I thought it odd that while the talus factory can fix the hydraulics, the optical fibers that control Marble's hand can only be repaired by a "black mechanic" like Incus. Who were these "black mechanics"? Where did they get their skills? What were they all about?

I got the impression that the taluses did not use optical fibers. There are many references to the decline in the chem population over time, and it may be that the skills and materials to build/conceive chem children are nearly lost. (There's also a comment at some point about how few chem females are left.)

I thought the interlude at the talus factory was excellent; a sort of essay on the morality of _constructing_ intelligent beings. The factory puts a lot of money and effort into building a talus, so it's generally an indentured servant until that debt is paid off. Parents put a lot of money and effort into raising children, so... The whole set piece can be read as an ironic commentary on the economics of parenting and child rearing.

Taluses, though intelligent, seem to be a lower order of being than a chem like Marble. That may be because we never really get to know one, of course.

The "black mechanics" seem to be a melding of voodoo priests and hackers. They are researching the programming of chems, but the one specific thing we are told they use that knowledge for is subverting the chems' will (recall the reference to one of them making his butler(?) more obedient). I assumed from the start that the reason the chem soldier (sorry, name escapes me) in the tunnels was so loyal to Incus is that while fixing him, Incus had reprogrammed him for loyalty and obedience. Incus is an interesting character; he develops from a sort of nasty, smarmy underling to a pretty good person by the end of the series.

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Questions or problems to whorl-owner at lists.best.com