

Typhon's Mission

The Whorl list — 3 messages, 3 voices, 01 Jul 1999

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Josh Smith — 01 Jul 1999, 15:17

Hello All,

I'm new to the list, just finished Exodus last night, my heart is racing, and my mind is reeling about one issue: did Typhon send the ship to search for a new home (sort of the "default setting" for any big space exodus story), or did he sell out the humans to the inhumis (or literally sell them as food)? - By the way, I think that the act of springing a dilemma of that order on us in the last few pages constitutes one of the most startling scope-shifts in literary history.

I raced through the archives of the list and found this before my eyes just got too tired: (if you've spent more time on the "Cargo" issue, and solved everything by now, I apologize for the waste of time)

Alice Turner wrote:

"One more explanation: I'm of the opinion that the Whorl is a supply ship, that the Cargo, which consists of the dregs of Urth society, was sold to the inhumis by Pas/Typhon as a food supply. Q was in effect a "shepherd," but over time he turned into something of a Good Shepherd, against his own nature. I don't expect everyone to agree however (continued butting up against mantis has made me philosophical)."

(I hope that shows up okay onscreen, I'm on vacation and writing via yahoo mail).

If Typhon was just sending out humans to the nearest inhabitable (colonizable) planet(s) to find some new place to live, and that place happened to be teeming with vampiric inhumis, then Quetzal was either (a) a stowaway from Typhon's planet and there had already been Earth/Green commutes, or (b) a recent addition to the Whorl who came in from outside, which seems absurd since he's been the Prolocutor for decades.

The dilemma of (a) Quetzal is on the Whorl + (b) the Whorl is bound for the inhum planet + (c) the Whorl was built by Typhon/Pas seems like it can only resolve with Typhon having built the Whorl to sell to the inhum, who perhaps were running out of food. Again, you could suppose that Quetzal just redirected the Whorl toward his homeworld, but his very existence on the Whorl implies that the inhum were somehow involved in its origins.

I won't get into the complicated "knot" of Pas vs. his Children vs. the Prolocutor unless and until people show interest in the Typhon/Inhum complicity possibilities - i.e. a human Q would have tried to prevent theophanies because he feared a breakdown in power or even a revolution once the people of Viron heard about the inability to find the new calde, figured out that they were being ruled illegally, plus hearing of Pas' "death" would be disheartening to say the least. An inhum Quetzal however, is primarily motivated by getting the Cargo to Green. He therefore requires that the Plan of Pas be followed. So don't let anyone know Pas is dead lest they get other ideas in their heads and start listening to the other gods. Then again, it seemed that Tartaros was equally bent on seeing it through. Oops, I get I did get into it after all.

Maybe Tyhon himself was part of a legion of inhum scouts sent out millenia ago to conquer distant planets, form empires and ship sustainable "agriculture" back to Green. That would be quite an undertaking.

Sorry if these thoughts are less than cohesive. I'm still trembling from that incredible finish.

Michael Andre-Driussi — 01 Jul 1999, 16:04 · follows Josh Smith

Hello there Josh Smith, and welcome aboard!

FWIW (and that ain't much, since the new trilogy is about to begin and it will probably give some new information), I think that:

1) Typhon launched the ship to make a colony by, of, and for Typhon (the bright side of Typhon's egomania is the refusal to be pizza boy to a planet of vampire <g>).

2) The ship has been orbiting the target star for decades--maybe even 100 or 200 years.

3) Quetzal came onboard the ship =after= it arrived in his native star system, not before. (And he arrived by swimming through space--long ago, on the _Queen Mary_, Gene Wolfe said some things to me that made it seem likely that the inhum [I'm forgetting my conjugation here] actually swim through space, like the butterfly woman of TBOTNS, or like many of Lovecraft's

critters.) If the ship has been orbiting for 100 years (the end of Pas's planned time was one hundred years ago [II, p. 235]) then this gives plenty of time for Q to come aboard and have his long career; if it has only been orbiting for decades, then there are problems.

=mantis=

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

Michael Straight — 02 Jul 1999, 10:43 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

One problem with the cargo=cattle idea:

Even if you imagine that the cargo are being sent to set up a "real" colony which will then be harvested in a "sustainable" manner by the inhumani, you have the problem of why Typhon would go with them. Pas and his children seem to be set up to take on bodies via possession (probably those special embryos) upon arrival and rule. But I can't imagine Typhon being content to rule someone else's cattle.

Maybe the inhumani *think* they're getting a shipment of cattle, but Typhon sent a conquering army instead! All those robot soldiers sure aren't very edible.

Also, I don't think Tartaros is helping with the disembarkment effort because he's following the plan of Pas or because he wants to deliver cargo to the inhumani. I think he just knows that the Whorl is running down and if they stay they're all gonna die.

-Rostrum

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