

Horn as Silk

The Whorl list — 3 messages, 3 voices, 16 Nov 1999

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Alice Turner — 16 Nov 1999, 20:09

Hi John Roberson, and welcome,

Thanks for pitching right in. My take on your two points:

1. I don't detect a hint of Pas (as I see Pas, or as we all saw him as Typhon) in the "voice" of Horn. Of course we first met Silk filtered through Horn, but this narration is recognizably similar to that amalgam. Horn tried hard to do Silk justice and now that they really **are** an amalgam it's shiftier but not nearly as strange as a Pas addition would make it. So I think not, though it's an interesting idea. Also, the very title of the third book indicates to me that we really will be going back to the Whorl (hooray, we'll see what happens with those super-tall asses!)

2. There have been a lot of guesses about "the secret of the inhumis," and the front-runner for a while was that it was simply that they took on (or could take on) aspects of the prey along with the blood; when they encountered a sentient race for the first time, it revolutionized them. Another conjecture has to do with their obviously being able to survive a long time without sustenance in a mummified state. But later thinking is that it's more complicated than that--it's a secret that if known could destroy them--and that Wolfe just hasn't given it to us even in clue form yet.

Arguments invited.

-alga

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

Kevin J. Maroney — 16 Nov 1999, 20:27 · follows Alice Turner

At 08:09 PM 11/16/99 -0500, alga wrote:

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that it's more complicated than that--it's a secret that if known could destroy them--and that Wolfe just hasn't given it to us even in clue form yet.

I like the later observation (I'm pretty sure it was made here) to the effect that: If the inhumis only gain sentience from feeding on sentient prey, the humans could defeat them by methodically protecting each other from the inhumis during conjunction. But human divisiveness keeps them from protecting each other completely, and thus some humans fall, making the inhumis stronger.

But I agree that Wolfe almost certainly has something more subtle and clever in mind.

Wombat, a.k.a. Kevin Maroney [kmaroney at crossover.com](mailto:kmaroney@crossover.com) Kitchen Staff Supervisor, New York Review of Science Fiction <http://ebbs.english.vt.edu/olp/nyrsf/nyrsf.html>

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Jim Jordan — 24 Nov 1999, 00:58 · follows Kevin J. Maroney

At 08:09 PM 11/16/99 -0500, Slimina of the Green Goo wrote:

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It's Rat Time, Slimina!

To begin with, courtesy of Kieran:

Horn: "If only we cared about each other sufficiently. If only all of us loved all the others enough, they would go back to [mindless beasts]. We would still think them horrible creatures, and they would still be dangerous, as the crocodiles in this lower river water are. But they would be no worse." Evensong: "That is the secret, what you said?" Horn: "No, of course not." [p.375]

So, let's invert that. The inhumis take on our characteristics. We are not very nice people: enslaving others, raping wimmin, etc. What if we become good, "Green Man" types, like the forerunners of Blue? What would the inhumis become then? Good guys! Hey, is that why old Quetzal becomes a good guy, because of hanging around and being near Silk? Inhumis are animals, "underpeople" of Cordo Smith, but of a different sort. Their salvation depends on and proceeds from human salvation. My guess. It think the clues are there, but I may be taking them wrongly.

Slavering Nutria of the Dripping Jowl

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