

Revealed at Last! What (Would Have) Killed the

The Whorl list — 4 messages, 2 voices, 11 Jan 2000

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Kevin J. Maroney — 11 Jan 2000, 16:29

At 04:18 PM 1/11/00 -0500, Jim wrote:

Very strange thought I can't shake: What if Horn just _sees_ these extra legs on everybody, because of his eye or something (esp. the Neighbors)? No, I can't point to a single thing that would "prove" this. I'm possessed!

The cover for _In Green's Jungles_ shows a Neighbor, many legs and all. That, of course, proves nothing.

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>

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

Jim Jordan — 15 Jan 2000, 17:40 · follows Kevin J. Maroney

I still say that the secret (probably) is that when humans learn to live with each other in love and charity (not enslaving one another, for instance), the inhumani will follow suit, being imitators of humanity. That's why Quetzal is ambiguous, because he learned from Patera Pike.

Nutria

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Jim Jordan — 19 Jan 2000, 12:52 · follows Jim Jordan

At 08:57 AM 1/18/00 -0500, you wrote:

But if this is the secret, then why doesn't Jahlee burst out laughing when threatened with it? At that very minute she is being presented with _deeds_ showing just how far humans are from accomplishing such - the Rajan is preparing to use the inhumani to prey on his human enemies.

No, whatever "the secret" is, it's got to be a darn sight more - _do-able_, as they say.

Good point. The "secret" does seem to be something that can be "done" on the spot. I have to agree that my suggestion as regards the "secret" seems to be in error.

Nutria

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Jim Jordan — 19 Jan 2000, 13:00 · follows Jim Jordan

At 11:17 PM 1/18/00 -0500, you wrote:

The threat contained in the secret that Horn uses to control the inhumans (Krait's secret) has to be something that they believe is possible to carry out. If the threat Horn is holding over them is, "I will tell people that they can defeat you by following the Golden Rule," I think they would have laughed in his face. The inhumans know human nature much too well to believe that, even with the survival of humanity at stake, all people, or even most of them will be able to do unto others only what they would have the others do unto them. While it seems possible to me that if all the people on Blue started to love one another then the inhumans would love them as well and no longer want to prey on them, I don't think that the precondition is possible. And, more importantly for my argument, I don't believe that the inhumans would believe it was possible, either.

I think that if we have enough information to know what the secret is already (and we may not) then it has to be something a good deal more specific than obeying the Golden Rule, although I don't think it's something entirely different. I think this quote is the key:

p 350: "If only we protected one another, they would all be idiots or worse. As it is, they always get enough to keep them going."

I think the secret is that ALL human beings must be protected from the bite of the inhumans. No one on Blue wants the inhumans to feed on themselves or their loved ones and they will usually go to great lengths to prevent it. But, even though most of them probably don't want the inhumans to feed on any human being, they won't risk themselves or even make much of an effort to protect anyone else. But, if everyone knew that if the inhumans were prevented from getting any human blood at all, they would become unintelligent and (more importantly) unable to pose as human, then they might be motivated to actually act on this knowledge.

I have to wonder how possible this complete protection would be, however. It doesn't seem entirely plausible to me, which makes me expect that there will turn out to be more than this to Krait's secret.

William Ansley

It seems to me that your proposal has the same problem as the "golden rule" notion that I've been forced to reject. Everybody has to do it. It's just a kind of negative side of the golden rule. Yet what Horn-dude (whoever he is) threatens seems to be something more immediate. Also, both the golden rule proposal and your proposal mean that as soon as one person falls out of the system, he can be used by the inhumans again, and the "defeat" is undone. I think that both the "golden rule" and the "universal protection" ideas are present and important in the book, but the "secret" would seem to be something that can be implemented without such universal cooperation.

Nutria

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