

The Inhumi-Destroying Secret

The Whorl list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 20 Jan 2000

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/756>

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Josh Levitan — 20 Jan 2000, 21:05

David Wells wrote:

a) I agree with several posters that the "you are what you eat" theory is by far the most morally/philosophically interesting candidate for the inhumi secret, and also the most consistent with what I would expect from Wolfe. But it doesn't seem to fit with Horn's description of the secret, as has also been pointed out. (And let's assume that this isn't just because Horn is far from the brightest bulb in the chandelier, and is also a somewhat incoherent and inconsistent narrator).

A much more boring variation, but one which might fit the known facts better, is a bit more physical/literal. Suppose that it's _particular chemicals_ - e.g. adrenaline - which make the inhumi more intelligent/humanlike. So if the humans organise themselves to stay a bit calmer and be a little less afraid of the inhumi, the latter would become gradually less intelligent (and maybe eventually even our heroic narrator would be able to outsmart them ;-).

I know this sounds like an old Star Trek script, and I rather hope it's _not_ the secret, but it seems to work a little better with respect to Horn's description of the secret. It allows the humans to continue to be intrinsically sinful creatures, but encourages them to try not to _act out_ their sins, because this would fill their bloodstreams with inhumi-stimulating chemicals. Hmmm...

The problem with this is, it doesn't work any better than either the "you-are-what-you-eat" theory or the do-unto-others theory. Trying to control involuntary glandular secretions (which are secreted as a reaction to dangerous creatures) on a society-wide scale is not workable (and probably not possible, with the technology the Blue colonists possess). Nice thought, though.

And then Alga wrote:

Look, you guys, you're all familiar with the author--what on earth makes you think that Wolfe is going to give you the secret before Book III (if then)? Would that be in character? Of course not! Not that it isn't fun to speculate in advance, but (IMO) the speculations have been spectacularly un-Wolfean to date. Sweetness and Light is hardly his game.

As I said before, I think the sheer number of references made to the secret in the text sort of hint at its solution. This seems, knowing Wolfe's favorite authors, like a deliberate reference to Borges' "The Sect of the Phoenix." I'm sure the secret will be made abundantly clear at some point, perhaps in "Green," but I think we've got enough info to figure it out now, although nobody has yet.

To reiterate, in the hopes somebody will crack this:

We've got a secret that Krait imparts to Horn, mainly because of the close, father-son bond the two developed. It's a secret that is extremely dangerous to the inhumi, and can return them to the level of ignorant predators. It's obviously something that can be acted on fairly quickly, something relatively simple (i.e., it doesn't require a high level of technology), and, if the

Rajan/Horn (whomever) spreads the secret, that will pretty much enable everyone to act on it. This rules out things like preventing the inhumans from biting humans or changing society into a textbook Christian one, because these are not workable, and one person who doesn't follow these "cures" would screw the whole thing up for everybody.

Narwhal (my new Vironese name -- thanks Alga, for your input on this)

Jim Henley — 21 Jan 2000, 09:21 · follows Josh Levitan

-----Original Message-----

From: Josh Levitan [mailto:josh_levitan at hotmail.com]

Sent: Thursday, January 20, 2000 4:06 PM

This rules out things like
preventing the inhumans from biting humans or changing society
into a textbook
Christian one, because these are not workable, and one person
who doesn't
follow these "cures" would screw the whole thing up for everybody.

Anent the "prevent any human from being bitten" theory, this doesn't just fall afoul of the problem of getting every human to care about protecting every other human. It falls afoul of Nobody can go outside except in groups of three, Nobody can explore new territory, Nobody can live in the country etc.

Narwhal (my new Vironese name -- thanks Alga, for your input on this)

Cool name!

Best,

Plas

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