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The Whorl list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 02 Aug 2000

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Josh Levitan — 02 Aug 2000, 01:07

Kevin J. Maroney wrote (quoting Alga):

At 10:46 PM 7/31/00 -0400, Alga wrote:

They are shapeshifters only to a degree and I don't think it's fully "telepathic." Remember three things: They cannot change their density; a careful upclose look, especially at their limbs and hair by someone who knows what to look for, will give them away; they are cold-blooded and cannot fake otherwise.

Casting back, I seem to remember something in Blue about the inhumis changing shape to travel between the worlds. So they probably do **really** shapeshift mildly. But I think the projective telepathy is real; Incanto's discussion of watching an inhumis die indicates that there's something more than just physical shapeshifting going on.

That said, the projective telepathy is far from perfect; that's obvious. They emulate their prey, but not well enough to fool someone who knows what to look for.

But it's a mostly physical change. Horn tells Mora (and again, my poor addled brain can't remember the exact passage, and I'm too lazy to dig out the book and get a cite) that the inhumis mold their faces like clay, and then use makeup and wigs to cap off the illusion. That's a big part of how she can recognize inhumis (especially if it's a kid or a man wearing makeup). And we get eyewitness descriptions of the inhumis changing their arms into wings as well, a definite physical change. The telepathy, or magic, or whatever you call it, probably just rounds out the physical stuff, and they can apply that at will (like when Krait let Horn see him like an inhumis, not as a boy).

No, you really can't say that. Horn had to clean the sewers, with thousands of people dead from inhumis greed. Unless that was a dream, and I don't think it was.

I don't think it was a dream, either. But I think that the inhumis of the City killed lots of humans not deliberately but out of exhaustion--they reflect the cruelty visited on them by the Vanished People and work (and drain) their humans to death, but do not necessarily set out to murder them.

I'd go a step further: If all the inhumis are treated as human by all humans, they will **become** human. But I think there's one more twist to the secret coming, and I don't know what it is. So far, Wolfe has overdelivered on every promise of the narrative; I'd like to think he's capable of overdelivering on the promise of the secret of the inhumis as well.

I don't quite follow.

I think that throughout the narrative of Long Sun and Short Sun, Wolfe has set up narrative expectations. He then, pretty consistently, has

fulfilled those expectations in ways that, I feel, surpassed expectations.

Wolfe has spent a tremendous amount of narrative energy building up the "secret of the inhumani". I have a hard time believing the secret is anything we could guess. Hence, I think that the secret encompasses the idea that humans can rid themselves of the threat of the inhumani by acts of loving kindness, but I have faith that it involves something much bigger.

I hope it is something much bigger. Besides, I don't see how being kind to one another or to the inhumani would be a weapon "too heavy to wield," as Horn puts it.

Narwhal