

Marble

The Urth list — 8 messages, 3 voices, 21 Nov 2002

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3596>

Exported from an unofficial mirror of a public mailing list. Copyright in each message remains with the person who wrote it. Email addresses are obscured as `user at host`, the form the original archive published. This file was rebuilt from parsed fields rather than retained headers, so it is faithful in content but not byte-exact.

Roy C. Lackey — 21 Nov 2002, 09:22

Chris wrote:

The easiest and most coherent explanation of what happens with Marble and Rose is exactly as you describe, that some of the attributes/personality of Rose came over with her parts when Marble scavenged them. This is what I intuited, at any event, even before Silk realizes what's going on. *But* then I got thrown a loop which I find disturbing. There's a passage where Rose/Marble is speaking as Rose, which basically implies that she was present in Marble *before* the parts came over. I this is the same passage where she uses the phrase "reclaim" (in reference to the prosthetics) which has led some people here to theorize that it was Marble speaking, and that Rose had originally taken those parts from Marble long ago. However, the sense of it was that Rose was explaining why she had to take back the parts from her old body, and it makes no sense for her to go through this thought process (even as a rationalization) unless she was present in Marble just beforehand.

Of course, Rose/Marble could just be very confused by what she's gone through. I am uncomfortable dismissing it so easily, though.

I don't understand the confusion. The only passage I can find where Marble/Rose speaks of "reclaimed" parts is in CALDE, chapter 10, where she is speaking to Blood. Each "me", "I" and "my" in the passage refers to Marble. Though the Rose personality dominates her private conversation with Blood, the last two sentences of the quoted text clearly come from Marble. The worn parts Marble exchanged were placed in Rose's coffin and burned.

"It's hard to change hands yourself, Bloody, because you have to do it one-handed. It was particularly hard for me, because by then I already had a great many new parts. Or rather, I had reclaimed a great many old ones. They worked better, that was why I wanted them, but I wasn't used to the new assembly yet, which made changing hands harder. It would have been wasteful to burn them, though. They were in much better condition than my old ones."

Marble began her salvage operation by opening Rose's chest, then removing and testing each part she took, before switching out those that were in better condition. The "new parts" and "old ones" are the same parts. The sentence "Or rather, I had reclaimed a great many old ones.", is a refinement of the sentence before. The "new parts" are new to Marble, but they are in fact "old ones", having previously been used by Rose. The mixture of Rose's "new parts" with the worn parts retained by Marble made her a bit clumsy, compounding the difficulties of changing hands with only one hand to work with at a time. The passage makes clear that the hands were changed only *after* many other parts had been changed, those parts having come from Rose's torso.

The choice of the verb "reclaimed" is, I presume, what leads to the confusion. But if you take the second and third sentences, together, as referring to the difficulties Marble had with

changing hands because she hadn't yet learned to integrate the functionality of her old and new hardware, and look at the larger context of the quoted text (Blood had asked if that was the same hand he had first seen when he was a boy), then it becomes clear that the personality speaking is Marble. "Reclaimed" in this passage means something like "brought back into a state of productivity". It does not refer to a prior claim of ownership, either by Marble or Rose. Marble had her own parts; some of them just didn't work well anymore, so she was hardly reclaiming parts she had surrendered to Rose in the past. Rose had had her own prosthetic parts for less than fifty years; as a bio she was hardly reclaiming them when she first got them.

Further, the passage refers to the act of changing hands. Marble could do that, because she was a chem. Rose couldn't, because she was a bio. She certainly didn't amputate a hand herself, then stick a prosthetic one on. Besides, Blood mentions that she had gotten a whole new arm, not just a hand. Given all her prosthetics, Rose would have to have had major-league medical services in her day.

And, just to head off Crush, those hands Marble took from Rose **never** belonged to any hypothetical martyred chem maid. Chem maids were made to look like young female bios. The prosthetic hands Marble took from Rose are specifically described as looking like "the bony blue-veined hands of an elderly bio".

-Roy

James Wynn — 21 Nov 2002, 15:39 · follows Roy C. Lackey

And, just to head off Crush, those hands Marble took from Rose **never** belonged to any hypothetical martyred chem maid. Chem maids were made to look like young female bios. The prosthetic hands Marble took from Rose are specifically described as looking like "the bony blue-veined hands of an elderly bio".

I agree with your explanation of the use of the word "reclaimed" and I must say it's nice to be thought of.

Question: Are you saying that Rose's prosthetics were custom made and did not come from any chem originally? Do you really believe that technology existed? Then why did Marble take such care to retain even the fluids of the hand Blood cut off?

Or do you assert that there were chems that were "old" in appearance?

-- Crush

Roy C. Lackey — 22 Nov 2002, 00:18 · follows James Wynn

Crush asks:

Question: Are you saying that Rose's prosthetics were custom made and did not come from any chem originally?

Exactly. She was in her mid-to-late forties when she got that hand and arm. (Blood was born when she was forty; she lost touch with the foster mother when Blood was nine.) She wasn't going to get any younger and she aged badly. ("I was an old woman before you found out who I was, and I think I must have looked older." [LS3: 10]) The hand was custom made to look like that of an old woman, in anticipation of the need; she couldn't afford to get new hands for every stage of aging.

Do you really believe that technology existed?

Absolutely. Tarsier made custom chem bodies for the Ayuntamiento, plus, see quote below.

Then why did Marble take such care to retain even the fluids of the hand Blood cut off?

Replacements were hard to find by that stage of the _Whorl's_ decline. See quote below.

"Digital arms and legs? That sort of thing?" Blood leaned forward, interested. "There aren't too many of those around any more."

"She got them some years ago; before I was born, really. There was some disease requiring amputations." It occurred to Silk that he should know more about Maytera Rose's history--about the histories of all three sibyls--than he did. "They were still easily found then, from what she says." (LS1: 7)

Or do you assert that there were chems that were "old" in appearance?

No. There's no evidence of that in the text, nor would there have been any real need to have artificially aged chem servants for aesthetic reasons.

-Roy

James Wynn — 22 Nov 2002, 18:09 · follows Roy C. Lackey

Roy asserts:

The hand was custom made to look like

that of an old woman, in anticipation of the need; she couldn't afford to get new hands for every stage of aging:

Crush responds:

I'm amazed that a mantaeon that could barely afford to feed its staff could afford prosthetics for its sibs at all. Furthermore, you run with a very self-confident and spiritually-minded crowd if most the women you know would prefer to have "old hands" even when they're ninety.

In response to Crush's query, "Do you really believe that technology existed?," Roy answers: Absolutely. Tarsier made custom chem bodies for the Ayuntamiento, plus, see quote below.

"Digital arms and legs? That sort of thing?" Blood leaned forward, interested. "There aren't too many of those around any more."

"She got them some years ago; before I was born, really. There was some disease requiring amputations." It occurred to Silk that he should know more about Maytera Rose's history--about the histories of all three sibyls--than he did. "They were still easily found then, from what she says." (LS1: 7)

Crush responds:

Oh, no. Not at all. Potto says in LS4:1

"As we aged, Cousin Tarsier made us new bodies *out of chems*."

This statement horrifies Mint who asks, "What became of the chems?" To their minds?" and then, "You got this body from another person. And-and changed it to look like you? You must have. Did he consent to any of that?"

So Tarsier *customIZED* chem bodies but he had no ability to build them from scratch. If he didn't, I doubt Rose could.

The quote you offer does not stipulate *where* the digital arms and legs came from, but

Xiphias' came from chems and so did the Ayuntamiento's. Blood's comment causes Silk to realize how unlikely it was that Rose would have digital prosthetics, and that there must be an interesting tale there.

So the reason replacement parts for Marble were hard to find was that *female chems* were hard to find. And, of course, the chem parts that were available were snatched up by bios.

For these reasons and others, if find the passage you originally quoted troubling. Do you remember where you read it?

Since you mentioned my own theory, I'd better provide a link to them to so they can be readily dissected: <http://gene-wolfe.tripod.com/molybdenum.htm>

-- Crush

Roy C. Lackey — 23 Nov 2002, 04:56 · follows James Wynn

Crush quotes and writes:

Roy asserts:

The hand was custom made to look like that of an old woman, in anticipation of the need; she couldn't afford to get new hands for every stage of aging:

Crush responds:

I'm amazed that a mantaeon that could barely afford to feed its staff could afford prosthetics for its sibs at all. Furthermore, you run with a very self-confident and spiritually-minded crowd if most the women you know would prefer to have "old hands" even when they're ninety.

The fact remains that, regardless of who paid for the parts, Rose was "largely prosthetic" when she died. All things feminine were deliberately and actively covered up by the Chapter--literally. Female vanity had absolutely no place in the life of a sibyl. It didn't matter if her hands looked old.

In response to Crush's query, "Do you really believe that technology existed?," Roy answers:

Absolutely. Tarsier made custom chem bodies for the Ayuntamiento, plus, see quote below.

"Digital arms and legs? That sort of thing?" Blood leaned forward, interested. "There aren't too many of those around any more."

"She got them some years ago; before I was born, really. There was some disease requiring amputations." It occurred to Silk that he should know more

about Maytera Rose's history--about the histories of all three sibyls--than he did. "They were still easily found then, from what she says." (LS1: 7)

Crush responds:

Oh, no. Not at all. Potto says in LS4:1

"As we aged, Cousin Tarsier made us new bodies *out of chems*."

This statement horrifies Mint who asks, "What became of the chems?" To their minds?" and then, "You got this body from another person. And-and changed it

to look like you? You must have. Did he consent to any of that?"

So Tarsier *customIZED* chem bodies but he had no ability to build them from scratch. If he didn't, I doubt Rose could.

I didn't say he built them from scratch--no need to reinvent the wheel. But he did extensive customization. Lemur's body could do everything from glow in the dark to making the skin of his arm crawl with moving magnetic fields. If Tarsier had the know-how to make chem bodies look like the original bio bodies, then obviously the technology existed to make a chem arm look like an old woman's, which was the question you asked. I don't think anyone has ever suggested that Rose made her own prosthetics.

The quote you offer does not stipulate *where* the digital arms and legs came from, but Xiphias' came from chems and so did the Ayuntamiento's. Blood's comment causes Silk to realize how unlikely it was that Rose would have digital prosthetics, and that there must be an interesting tale there.

The fact remains that the Ayuntamiento had no problem at all getting parts for chems. As Lemur told Crane and Silk: "We're nursed by devoted chems, and the machines that maintain us in life are maintained by chems. They love us, and we love them. We promise them immortality, and we will deliver it: a never-ending supply of replacement parts." (LS2: 12) It is only in recent decades that prosthetics became hard to find, just as Rose had told Silk; even when Silk was a boy, chem servants were much more common.

So the reason replacement parts for Marble were hard to find was that *female chems* were hard to find. And, of course, the chem parts that were available were snatched up by bios.

Blood evidently had no problem finding parts for female chems. He told Silk, just before Silk left his house, (LS1: 7): "You tell Maytera Rose that if she's interested in getting another leg or something, and can raise the gelt, I might be able to help her out."

For these reasons and others, if find the passage you originally quoted troubling. Do you remember where you read it?

Which passage? I gave textual citations for each passage I quoted in these "Marble" posts.

-Roy

Chris — 23 Nov 2002, 09:28 · follows Roy C. Lackey

I don't think he was referring to the same passage I am about to, but I thank you for citing the passage in _Calde_ I had been thinking of but couldn't quite place.

All in all, I am convinced by what you've said on the subject. In my defense (you asked what the source of the confusion was) all I can say is that I was left with that feeling (so frequent with Wolfe) that something was going on that I hadn't got my finger on yet. To be honest I still have that feeling. There's something about that passage that, taken in the narrative style of [Marble/Rose], seems discordant (at least with the easiest way of understanding [Marble/Rose]).

Seeing the passage I was thinking of in your post helped.

Which passage? I gave textual citations for each passage I quoted in these "Marble" posts.

-Roy

James Wynn — 25 Nov 2002, 16:13 · follows Chris

Roy asked:

Which passage? I gave textual citations for each passage I quoted in these "Marble" posts.

Crush responds:

Perhaps I'm missing it -- the quote was:

"And, just to head off Crush, those hands Marble took from Rose **never** belonged to any hypothetical martyred chem maid. Chem maids were made to look like young female bios. ***The prosthetic hands Marble took from Rose are specifically described as looking like 'the bony blue-veined hands of an elderly bio' ***".

Of course the chem maid was hardly hypothetical. As I explain my linked article, Hammerstone would **never** have believed Marble's "impersonation" unless Moly had been a maid at the Sun St. cenoby. Right in front of him she (as Moly) claims to have worked at the cenoby since before humans came to the city. Hammerstone would have known if that were not true. So what happened to Moly?

I'm not sure now whether you are saying that Rose's prosthetics came from a chem originally and were customized or that they were built from scratch as they were. I think the following passage eliminates the possibility of the latter option. This takes place during a conversation between Silk and Horn. Note that Rose with her prosthetics is not 100 yards away while this conversation is taking place:

LS2:1

"This evening I was introduced to an elderly man who has a really extraordinary artificial leg, Horn. He had to buy up five broken or worn-out legs to build it, but it's an artificial leg such as the first settlers had----a leg that might have been brought from the Short Sun Whorl. When he showed it to me, I thought how marvelous it would be if we could only make things like that now for ***Maytera Rose and Maytera Marble***, and for all the beggars who are blind or crippled. It would be marvelous to fly, too, of course. I've always wanted to do it myself, and it may be that they are the same secret. If we could build wonderful legs like that for the people who need them, perhaps we could build wonderful wings as well for everyone who wanted to have them."

So, based on this statement, two things seem (to me) indisputable:

1. That Rose's prosthetics were not of originally made for bios (as Xiphias' were)
2. That Silk could no more have considered feasible building new bio prosthetics, than he would flying to the Sun

Since Rose's prosthetics must have come a chem originally, it **might** have come from a "chem maid" (and probably did) even if you still deny it came from Moly.

As to whether Rose's prosthetics were customIZED to look like that of a decrepit old woman, well, Roy also said: The fact remains that, regardless of who paid for the parts, Rose was "largely prosthetic" when she died. All things feminine were deliberately and actively covered up by the Chapter--literally. Female vanity had absolutely no place in the life of a sibyl. It didn't matter if her hands looked old....If Tarsier had the know-how to make chem bodies look like the original bio bodies, then obviously the technology existed to make a chem arm look like an old woman's, which was the question you asked.

Crush responds:

If "it didn't matter if her hand looked old", why did they go through the trouble (and surely the expense) of *making it look old* so it would match when she was ninety? Wouldn't it have been more economical to make it look generic, mannequinish (which is the way I've imagined it)? Regardless, the question remains as to why they didn't at least make it look like a 50 year old woman's hand rather than a ninety year old woman's.

If the sibyls acquired the parts from a readily available chem maid, it explains why the poorest mantaeon on Viron could "afford" prosthetics for a sibyl.

Roy goes on:

The fact remains that the Ayuntamiento had no problem at all getting parts for chems...It is only in recent decades that prosthetics became hard to find, just as Rose had told Silk; even when Silk was a boy, chem servants were much more common.

Crush responds:

Exactly. And the greater abundance of chems explains why there was a greater abundance of chem parts. The same rule for getting used replacement parts for cars. Even now they can be had for a price.

But to believe that the ability to construct chem parts or human prosthetics from scratch had been lost in the last 40 years suggests a technological catastrophe that is unsupported by any text I can think of.

--- Crush

Roy C. Lackey — 26 Nov 2002, 06:09 · follows James Wynn

Crush responds:

Perhaps I'm missing it -- the quote was:

"And, just to head off Crush, those hands Marble took from Rose *never* belonged to any hypothetical martyred chem maid. Chem maids were made to look like young female bios. **The prosthetic hands Marble took from Rose are specifically described as looking like 'the bony blue-veined hands of an elderly bio' **".

Ah. It's from when Marble was killing Musk, LS3: 3. "Her hands, the bony blue-veined hands of an elderly bio, glowed crimson in the flames."

As for the rest . . . I'll save it for another day. But do you really think that Hammerstone fell in 'love' with a chem "girl" he described as "pretty as a picture", who had hands that looked like the bony blue-veined hands of an elderly bio?

-Roy