

Cassie's Mobile Home (AEG spoilers)

The Urth list — 9 messages, 5 voices, 24 Oct 2008

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5193>

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Dave Tallman — 24 Oct 2008, 15:38

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She didn't just move to a fancier place with her success. She had the same upstairs neighbor, Brian Pickins (pp. 85, 250). The hole Gideon Chase made to break into her apartment also connects the places (p. 76, 87).

After she goes to the South Sea island, the assassin gives her address as 181 East Arbor Boulevard, apartment 301 and Cassie confirms it (p. 249). The fact that it is back on the third floor suggests that it's reverting to a lower level since she is not there to maintain focus on it. The doorman may also be gone, since the cultists have managed to kill a tenant and take over his apartment undetected.

In the end, she seems to have lost her power and she is prematurely aged, possibly from burn-out as well as her harrowing experiences. Her apartment has gone back to the west side of town ("Best of all it was on the east side of Kingsport, across town from her old one." p. 293).

This transition was rougher than the others and it seems that in the process all of her possessions were lost (p. 292).

There are several other instances of reality-warping in the rest of the story.

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In the end, "Fiona" was hoping to bring Cassie Casey back (p. 296). She was going to Woldercan to see Gideon Chase. I doubt he would be able to perform the same trick twice, but he will love her anyway ("As soon as he spoke, he knew that for him no reversal would have the least effect." p. 81). There's a chance for a bittersweet happy ending, but Cassie was still deep in grief over Bill/Wally. She may have had a sense of Bill's presence because of the last fading traces of her power which she lost when she got far enough away from Earth. That would account for her sudden desperate cry: "Please, oh, please, Wally! Come back to me!"

Reis had good intentions, but he had a "touch of megalomania" (p. 304) and wanted to rule the world ("I have that island now, but I've seen a better one. A blue isle in a sea of black. I fight for it every day, and I'll win." p. 125). He did far more harm with his good intentions than the amoral Dr. Chase, especially when he provoked a fight between the Navy and Chtulhu. I would say that the power of his alchemical wealth was the "evil guest" in this story which destroyed both him and Cassie.

Dan — 25 Oct 2008, 02:35 · follows Dave Tallman

At 12:28 PM 10/24/2008, you wrote:

Message: 3

Date: Fri, 24 Oct 2008 09:38:57 -0600

From: "Dave Tallman" <davetallman at msn.com>

Subject: (urth) Cassie's Mobile Home (AEG spoilers)

To: urth at lists.urth.net

Message-ID:

<1bf4dd40810240838m48105531j8e02c373b3f7db03 at mail.gmail.com>

Content-Type: text/plain; charset="iso-8859-1"

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Mr Thalassocrat — 25 Oct 2008, 07:48 · in reply to Dave Tallman

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On other time things: If Kololahi is a fictionalised Tonga and Kingsport is in MA then the time difference in fall would be about 18 hours, or 6 hours with a day shift (GMT+13 versus GMT-5). This fits with Cassie's observation after being dropped off by Gid at the airport (p225) - in the evening back home, a little after lunch here. If she's having an early breakfast and Sharon is coming up to lunch-time when they speak, that fits also: her comment about getting up at 11am earlier doesn't mean much (she's playing prima donna, I think, and anyway apart from late-night encounters with alien bat-people it's likely enough she's getting to bed early in Kololahi).

I wonder if Cassie is hoping Gid can bring Bill back to life, at the end. I think she's hoping he can bring back her mojo, but maybe that as well. Is it possible that Bill can astral travel in some way? His appearance as talking-head to Cassie in his limo may not have been just a holo-projection. Gid seems to have ghosts or spirits of some kind in his hopper; he says somewhere that he's talked with ghosts; maybe he can bring Bill's, somehow.

Dave Tallman — 25 Oct 2008, 12:06 · in reply to Mr Thalassocrat

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I suppose most of these things could have natural explanations if we really pushed it. The apartment building could have a bizarre numbering scheme such that apartment 301 is on the fifth floor and the twin apartment next to it is numbered 3B. Maybe the assassin got the address wrong and Cassie went along with it because she was afraid to contradict someone who was pointing a gun at her. Wolfe is normally so careful with details that I tend to believe such things are clues. He has done characters with reality-warping powers before -- for example when Horn turned a different ring into Seawrack's ring over time.

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Cassie seems to wake up late whenever she has a chance to, all through the book. I think she would continue this habit when she was treated as pampered royalty. When Cassie asks for her breakfast after her call to Sharon, there is a pause as if the hotel staff is confused. Afterwards they say that King Kanoa and his men have been given something to eat, but they don't call it breakfast for them (p. 237-238). I get the sense that her breakfast is not at a normal early hour.

The phone call went through a dedicated satellite in Clarke orbit (p. 227). Reis may have installed strange technology from Woldercan to allow him send calls through time, which would help to explain how he can keep one jump ahead of his enemies. The other people on the island who make cell phone calls are Australian tourists who would be close to the same time zone when they called home.

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That's an interesting possibility. I doubt she will get her mojo back, but possibly Gid can get her in touch with Bill's spirit again. (I say again because I think she just lost contact at the end when she calls out to him).

Dave Tallman — 25 Oct 2008, 17:27 · in reply to Dan

Dan wrote:

I agree. But I'm not sure Cassie was doing all this by herself. I seem to have the recollection that Margaret was present during some of these events. In fact, with the safe episode, it almost seems as if she's directing it. I am rereading now and will keep this in mind.

Margaret is probably a werewolf and a spy (I'll post all my reasons in another entry) but I doubt she has extensive magical powers. She does know enough about hotel security that she was able to guess that Cassie might use the hotel safe without resetting the combination. Easter

Sinclair may have done this also -- remember that she had jewelry stolen while Margaret was in her employ (p. 140). Margaret may have been the thief.

So I wonder what has happened to the personal fortunes of her neighbors. They must have improved for them to continue to live in a swank upscale apartment. A rising tide lifts all boats?

Either that or they found themselves with rents they could no longer afford.

I know the bank kept her safety deposit box by automatically charging her account, but wouldn't her apt have been re-rented and her possessions liquidated after her extended absence?

I can believe she lost the apartment by not being there to pay rent, but it says that her possessions "mysteriously disappeared" (p. 292). I take that to mean that the landlords didn't have a good explanation when Cassie talked to them. I suppose the Squid God cultists who took over the apartment upstairs could have made off with them.

I know they said Woldercon was really far away, but outside the galaxy? When I read that, I got the sinking impression she really wasn't going there and was perhaps committing suicide.

She sent an ethermail to Gid telling him she was coming there. I see no reason for such an expensive way to commit suicide as buying a hopper and taking off for galaxies unknown. If Woldercon was outside the galaxy one has to wonder how it was ever found. There's a lot of space out there between galaxies...

Plus I don't understand why he just gave up and surrendered to the islanders or devise some way to rescue her. I need to reread that section again.

As king Bill may have felt he had to take personal responsibility for the terrible unexpected collateral damage to the islands he ruled. He has some moral feelings, even though he normally justifies everything he does for the greater good.

Adam Thornton — 25 Oct 2008, 17:37 · in reply to Dave Tallman

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Hm.

I took that as an ironic "mysterious disappearance." As in, "the landlord took everything, sold it on eBay, and then lied about it and said he had no idea, none whatsoever."

Perhaps my view of landlords is jaundiced.

Adam

Bryan Alexander — 25 Oct 2008, 18:47 · in reply to Dave Tallman

I can join this discussion at last, now that a library copy of the novel is in my hands. And that I've finished Anathem.

On Sat, Oct 25, 2008 at 1:27 PM, Dave Tallman <davetallman at msn.com> wrote:
Dan wrote:

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Mr Thalassocrat — 25 Oct 2008, 21:52 · in reply to Dave Tallman

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Another explanation might be that Sharon is in California. Under the Kololahi = fictionalised Tonga assumption, that would put her 3 hours ahead of Cassie (with a day shift). Sharon connected with the California cult somehow?

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Perth would be 5 hours behind Kololahi, so not really much difference to the shift versus MA (except the other way, and without the day shift).

Dave Tallman — 27 Oct 2008, 16:21 · follows Mr Thalassocrat

I wrote:

Even with different laws of physics I doubt Gil would think they could resurrect the dead. But if she got far enough away and could send an ethermail she might be able to send Bill messages back in time, and might hope to change the past. From the point of view of an object moving relative to us a long distance away, events that are in the past to us can be present or future to it. The paradoxes involved are one reason that relativity does not allow FTL travel or messages. Wolfe instead allows FTL and the time paradoxes.

I'd like to expand on this theory, which I think may be a key to the book. When Cassie asks to drive Gid's hopper, she says "I want to be -- I want to matter. I want to be somebody, not because I'm Wallace Rosenquist's woman or because I'm Gideon Chase's woman. Because I'm Cassie Casey."

On a superficial reading Cassie is a poor protagonist. She's dragged along from event to event and she seems to have very little control of the outcome. But what if she were able to use a hopper to send a message though time to warn Reis away from his fatal mistake? Then she's the heroine after all. It's a self-sacrificing move because she will wipe out herself as she is, but if it works she and Bill will be together again, and happy.

Can the past be changed? Cassie gets a clue that it could be possible when she receives the response ethermail from Chase in Woldercan. She realizes she could either send or not send the ethermail being responded to. "If I don't send mine, his will have to be accounted for in some other way and it's liable to get complicated." (p. 298). Her message could warn Reis that even if he changes his actions in response to the warning the ethermail must still be sent. She may

have consulted with Chase on Woldercan and determined that she had to travel far out in space in order to have a chance to get a message back in time to make a difference.

It would be a violation of "Chekov's gun" principle to allow a powerful story element like time paradoxes without giving them a more important role in the plot than an early birth announcement (p. 19) and an early response to a travel message (p. 298). Perhaps the many subtle continuity errors I found were the result of Cassie's message attempts as she tried to hit the range. She had to be careful what she wrote, since Bill's enemies could monitor ethermail (p. 18). It might be much easier to produce subtle changes that make no ultimate difference, like changes of address, the existence of hotel safes, and the careers of fellow actresses, than big changes that completely alter one's own past. Cassie, with her enhanced powers and her connection to her future self, may sometimes be able to dimly remember a different version of how things happened when everyone else cannot. This would explain why things often seem dreamlike to her, and why she can spot the waitress who was once the actress Alexis Cabana.

By the end of the book she has not succeeded in saving Bill. But if she keeps it up she may eventually win. That's what I'm going to hope, because it turns the whole book around. Brava, Casey! Oh, brava!