

AEG: a Wolder on Earth

The Urth list — 20 messages, 8 voices, 17 Dec 2008

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5281>

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Roy C. Lackey — 17 Dec 2008, 08:22

Both Gideon and Klauser mentioned that Wolder males could hybridize with lower animals. Klauser also said that they sometimes try to seduce human women. Both of these points should have a bearing on the story, otherwise they are idle curiosities.

Woldercan is supposed to be more advanced than Earth in biology, but exactly how is not specified. Gid healed a boy's bad heart, when the best medical care that could be bought on Earth couldn't do it. He has other exotic talents as well.

Gid is the only character in the story known to have been born on Woldercan. His father is barely mentioned and his mother not at all. Gid doesn't look anything like Bob Chase. (16) Both the president and Klauser thought his eyes were freakish. I propose that Gid is a hybrid, and his mother was the human half.

Earth antibiotics did not keep his leg from getting infected, and I think he avoided medical doctors because he knew they would have discovered that he wasn't entirely human.

-Roy

David Duffy — 23 Dec 2008, 07:37 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

On Wed, 17 Dec 2008, Roy C. Lackey wrote:
Woldercan is supposed to be more advanced than Earth in biology, but exactly how is not specified. Gid healed a boy's bad heart, when the best medical care that could be bought on Earth couldn't do it. He has other exotic talents as well.

Catching up with the list now I have read AEG. His "bad heart" is pretty obviously not physical. I thought it likely that he was a changeling, viz the description of incipient followers of Mr Squid. And I presume his mother (who is wealthy) might well own "a thousand million" and a yacht. She must have been the Ambassadors that lived with BR on Woldercan. And Shirley Bench knew an awful lot about her and Rian, including the fact that he was too brave.

Cheers, David Duffy.

Dave Tallman — 23 Dec 2008, 13:16 · in reply to David Duffy

Catching up with the list now I have read AEG. His "bad heart" is pretty obviously not physical. I thought it likely that he was a changeling, viz the description of incipient followers of Mr Squid.

The idea that it was a spiritual malady is interesting. Reis said "A defective heart valve is what they said, although I think it was really something else" (p. 277). Whatever it was, it caused physical weakness, since Reis talked about Rian's ability to play football after the healing. The connection to Squiddie is a bit of a stretch, though. Our best guide to Squid-God transformations are the assassin and the zombie Pat Gomez. Rian's case doesn't seem anything

like those.

And I presume his mother (who is wealthy) might well own "a thousand million" and a yacht. She must have been the Ambassadors that lived with BR on Woldercan. And Shirley Bench knew an awful lot about her and Rian, including the fact that he was too brave.

According to the timelines that Roy Lackey and I worked out, the mother is more likely Bill's first wife and the one who went to Woldercan with him is the second. The photo from Klauser said "... all the kindness and hospitality he and his family have shown to my wife and me" (p. 301). Ten or so years back, Rian would be six or less. If he were with them, it would be more natural to say "...he and his family have shown to me and my family."

Sharon's knowledge of Reis' ex-wife and Rian suggests to me that they are local to Springfield. Her warning not to "brace them with it" (p. 25) tells me it's someone Cassie also knows. I think Norma is a good candidate for Rian's mother. Rian's mother named him (p. 277), and Rian and Norma are both Gaelic names. Norma says she "used to be married to the volcano god" but leaves it open whether she means Vince Palma or Bill Reis. I think it's the latter.

John Watkins — 23 Dec 2008, 13:45 · in reply to Dave Tallman

On Tue, Dec 23, 2008 at 8:16 AM, Dave Tallman <davetallman at msn.com> wrote:

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An echo of Golden City Far?

Dave Tallman — 23 Dec 2008, 17:41 · in reply to John Watkins

John Watkins wrote:
An echo of Golden City Far?

Not to mention Sir Able of the High Heart, healed and performance-enhanced with fey intervention.

stoneox17 at aol.com — 23 Dec 2008, 20:38 · in reply to Dave Tallman

Dave Tallman <davetallman at msn.com> says

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Just one comment: Springfield is the city where the first production of "Dating the Volcano God" was held; it's around 100 miles (I'd have to check my copy for the exact distance, if it's given) from the unnamed city where Cassie and Sharon live, and where Gideon Chase is a Professor. Since he teaches at Miskatonic University, this city is very probably Arkham, Mass, although I believe there was some comment somewhere in the book that implies that it's closer to Providence than the actual fictional Arkham, Mass (which Wikipedia informs me is in Essex County, Massachusetts).

Since Lovecraft lived in Providence (in actual life), this all fits together. Sorry, I don't have my copy here so I can't dig up these references.

Peter

Roy C. Lackey — 23 Dec 2008, 21:45 · in reply to Dave Tallman

Dave Tallman quoted David Duffy and wrote:

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I agree with Dave T. on both counts.

And I presume his mother (who is wealthy) might well own "a thousand million" and a yacht. She must have been the Ambassadors that lived with BR on Woldercan.

And

Shirley Bench knew an awful lot about her and Rian, including the fact that he was too brave.

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Naturally I agree with Dave T. that Rian's mother was Bill's first wife. But I think David D. is right about the rich yacht owner being Rian's mother. It makes perfect sense that Bill's first wife was rich, and she has to be someone of importance or she wouldn't be listed in the cast of characters. She was a former beauty, which fits Reis' known predilection for the type. And wealthy men are often known to dump trophy wives when they start to lose their shine. She showed broken Cassie her motherly instinct, which is in consonance with a mother who had cared for a sickly child.

-Roy

Roy C. Lackey — 23 Dec 2008, 21:57 · in reply to stoneox17 at aol.com

Peter quoted and wrote:

Dave Tallman <davetallman at msn.com> says

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Sorry, I don't have my copy here so I can't dig up these references.

Dave meant Kingsport, not Springfield. The name of the city is mentioned several times in the text, including the "Cast" list at the end.

-Roy

David Duffy — 23 Dec 2008, 22:58 · in reply to Dave Tallman

On Tue, 23 Dec 2008, Dave Tallman wrote:

According to the timelines that Roy Lackey and I worked out...

WRT the timeline, I can't remember if you included

"A hundred and fifty-odd years ago there was a man called Cranston..." puts the present day at "The Shadow debuted on July 31, 1930" [Wikipedia] + 150 = 2080

Knowing nothing about the Shadow, that article through up a lot of features to look for, most of which others have already noted. But, apropos clones

"One of these identities was Lamont Cranston, a 'wealthy young man about town.' In the pulps, Cranston was a separate character; Allard frequently disguised himself as Cranston and adopted his identity. While Cranston traveled the world, Allard assumed his identity in New York. Apparently, the disguise worked well because Allard and Cranston bore something of a resemblance to each other.

"His other disguises included businessman Henry Arnaud, elderly gentleman Isaac Twambley, and Fritz, a doddering old janitor who works at Police Headquarters in order to listen in on conversations."

He had 'the mysterious power to cloud men's minds, so they could not see him', a master of

hypnotism, dresses in dark clothes, is violent against criminals, but is fighting for good.

David Duffy.

Dave Tallman — 23 Dec 2008, 23:13 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

Roy C. Lackey wrote:

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You may have something here. The "comforted her like a mother" is very telling. It bothers me that Pavlatos seems like a Greek name and Rian is Irish/Gaelic, but the "Madame" suggests a remarriage, like Jackie Kennedy to Aristotle Onassis (note the yacht connection).

I'm not completely giving up on Norma, however. If she's not the first wife she may be the second. Sharon had to learn of Rian from someone, and Reis would have told his second wife about him, just as he told Cassie.

Dave meant Kingsport, not Springfield. The name of the city is mentioned several times in the text, including the "Cast" list at the end.

I did indeed mean Kingsport, thanks.

David Duffy — 23 Dec 2008, 23:19 · in reply to Dave Tallman

Or is that a subliminal message?

Cassie: Oh Lord! Yes, I remember.

Assassin: Well, you should Cassie dear, since he died for you...

| David Duffy (MBBS PhD) ,_-|\n
| email: davidD at qimr.edu.au ph: INT+61+7+3362-0217 fax: -0101 / *\n
| Epidemiology Unit, Queensland Institute of Medical Research _-._/\n
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Mo Holkar / UKG — 24 Dec 2008, 18:03 · in reply to David Duffy

At 07:37 23/12/2008, David wrote:

And I presume his mother (who is wealthy) might well own "a thousand million" and a yacht.

I must have missed something here. Why do we postulate any connection between Mme Pavlatos and Reis's first wife? Other than general suspicion of Wolfean reluctance to create new characters when he can subtly re-use others referred to earlier, what is there to link them?

best wishes,

Mo

~ # ~

WolfeWiki now at:

<http://www.wolfewiki.com/pmwiki/>

Dave Tallman — 24 Dec 2008, 18:47 · follows Mo Holkar / UKG

Mo Holkar wrote:

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By the same logic, Dorcas was just a random woman Severian happened to pull out of a lake. We know Wolfe loves to do puzzles like this. The clues match up well:

- 1) Rich -- Rian's mother had to be rich to afford to consult Chase.
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- 6) Present in the vicinity of the islands soon after Reis' death. A mere pleasure-cruise in an area that had a recent hurricane? Or maybe inheritance issues concerning Rian?

Wolfe goes out of his way to say that Reis was married twice, which invites us to find his other wife, too. Who in the credits makes the best candidate?

- 1) India -- gay.
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- 3) Margaret -- not glamorous enough.
- 4) Alexis -- not much money from the divorce, if she wound up as a waitress.
- 5) Sharon -- has too little info about Reis.
- 6) Norma -- the only one who admits to a prior marriage with a strong Reis connection ("I used to be married to the volcano god").
- 7) Tabbi -- Took over the role of Reverend Brown's wife from Norma, so she's a possible.
- 8) Zelda -- her story of starting her own agency doesn't fit

Dave Tallman — 27 Dec 2008, 14:25 · in reply to Dave Tallman

At the post"Red Spot" party, Wolfe includes some interactions between Norma and Vince. I'd like to look at them for clues to see if they were ever married. That may help clarify whether she means Vince or Reis when she says "I used to be married to the volcano god."

Vince mentions "the Gray Neighbors" and Norma says "I'll be damned if I have the foggiest idea what that's supposed to mean" (p. 64). If they were married for two years, it's surprising that Norma never heard Vince speak of this before.

"You've made westerns. I know you have," Norma says to Vince on p. 65. The repetition "I know you have" weakens the assertion, as if she thinks he would doubt her knowledge. This is more evidence against the marriage.

Incidentally, the fact that Vince has made westerns indicates he isn't just Reis under a glamour. Westerns are typically movies or TV shows, not plays, and glammers can't fool cameras. Vince may be a "big name" actor who has come down in the world. (He was also used for voice-overs in "Memorare." The cult-trap seems to be one big glamour field itself, including the camera defect. Could there be a connection to Gideon Chase or his father?)

Eric Ortlund — 28 Dec 2008, 15:52 · in reply to Dave Tallman

Finished AEG this morning with that frustrating "interrupted" feeling I always get on a first read of a Wolfe Novel that I'd only been told half the story. I've been trolling the list and finding many helpful clues; these thoughts are just off-the-cuff throwaway attempts to resolve my own sense of reaching for resolution and not finding it.

1) In "The Tree is My Hat," Hanga is evil; in AEG, he appears at least friendly, and in Cassie's dream, he's protecting her from Squiddie god. But then he eats the tourist from Perth. Is some reconciliation needed concerning his character between these two works?

2) I vaguely remember from "Tree" that there's some part of the island where the main character (Baden [?]) can sense the presence of dead people - might that explain Cassie's smelling Reis' cologne, etc. Perhaps someone with a better knowledge of "Tree" can comment.

3) I can't get Gideon's statement that it is much harder to go up than down out of my head - it deepens and complicates the novel. Without it, one might assume Gideon stays immoral throughout the novel; his characterization is flat-out creepy in the first chapter, and he says things about good/evil which I'm sure Wolfe passionately disagrees with. Reis, for all his similarities to Gideon, seems morally opposite: before he dies, he tells Cassie he really tried to do as much good as he could, something Gideon could never really say (Gideon also keeps working for three or four groups, playing them off each other for his own advantage).

Anyway, Gideon is saying that it's much harder to go up in the context of biology on Woldercan, but then he talks about loving Cassie: the meaning seems to shift to Gideon's moral improvement/raising, and that Cassie's doing that. We get evidence that he's not flat-out evil later on in the book. But I wonder if his absence toward the end of the novel is meant as a kind of imprisonment within his own intellectual world: having denied any greater good beyond convenience or perspective, he simultaneously can tell Cassie he loves her but doesn't get the kind of connection with her which Reis does; their romance is much less fully realized. Perhaps that's how we're supposed to think of Gideon: a sly spy who can get what he wants, but is denied the intimacy which the good Reis does.

4) I was struck by how the novel comes full circle by the end; Gideon is the evil guest at the beginning, but by the end, we know of a far more evil guest (Squiddie) who, so far as we know, is still there. And by the end, Gideon is an (evil?) ambassador/guest on Woldercan, a planet which is obviously dangerous too. I was also struck by how Cassie, leaving to meet him, longs for Reis; she doesn't think, Well, at least I'm getting back to sexy Gideon. I think the novel is supposed to leave us somewhere in the middle: gains have been made, the cosmos has been (partially) restored, but it is still deeply flawed. The storm wiped out many of Squiddie's worshippers, but Squiddie is apparently still there. Woldercan is dangerous, and Earth's ambassador ambiguous; but Cassie is going. Instead of Earth being invaded by guests, now Earth is sending her own. I guess I find myself a bit more resolved about things by the end of the novel.

5) What's up with Cassie screaming about the devil's son being born during the storm?

6) Totally agree that the novel is placing a Lovecraftian cosmology within a larger Christian framework, just as Wizard-Knight does with Norse mythology, etc.

7) Someone posted earlier about similarities between AEG and BOTNS; I think similarities like that span across all of Wolfe's works. A character dying in the sea and yet continuing to exist (Sev., Able, the detective from Oakland), sea monsters who are aliens, etc. Also, every major Wolfe character seems to hit bottom and flat out despair at some point; Cassie seems to on the island, and Silk, Horn, Able, and Latro all do. Perhaps recurrences within Wolfe's own

consciousness.

FWIW.

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Dave Tallman — 29 Dec 2008, 01:07 · in reply to Eric Ortlund

Eric Ortlund wrote:

1) In "The Tree is My Hat," Hanga is evil; in AEG, he appears at least friendly, and in Cassie's dream, he's protecting her from Squiddie god. But then he eats the tourist from Perth. Is some reconciliation needed concerning his character between these two works?

I think Hanga is amoral and hungry, like a shark. He pledged friendship to Baden, but couldn't be made to understand that he shouldn't eat Baden's family. As King Kanoa says, he's just a "bit peckish at times."

Florence McNair thought Cassie was crazy, and in Hanga's mind seemed to be annoying her. When Cassie overhears "She keeps talking and talking," Hanga asks Cassie "Would you wish the hotel guests gone, Cassie Casey? All save you?" (p. 230). In other words. "Are these people bothering you?" Hanga must have concluded that McNair was, and so he took care of her for Cassie.

3) I can't get Gideon's statement that it is much harder to go up than down out of my head - it deepens and complicates the novel. Without it, one might assume Gideon stays immoral throughout the novel; his characterization is flat-out creepy in the first chapter, and he says things about good/evil which I'm sure Wolfe passionately disagrees with. Reis, for all his similarities to Gideon, seems morally opposite: before he dies, he tells Cassie he really tried to do as much good as he could, something Gideon could never really say (Gideon also keeps working for three or four groups, playing them off each other for his own advantage).

In the context of p. 100, Gideon's statement about it being easy for someone who has been transformed up to slip back down is a warning to Casey -- she was transformed up to something like an angel, and she could lose that (she does). It could also refer to Gid, but he says he is unable to go either down or up. There is certainly a shift in moral perception of the characters; by the end we think much better of Reis and somewhat worse of Chase.

As for the "immoral" statement Gid makes, consider Cassie's interpretation on p. 179. "Gid says there's no good or evil, and it took me a long time to understand what he meant by it... Mariah believes in God, but we don't. Add nothing to God and you get good." In the absence of religious belief, statements about good and evil are often used loosely, for mere matters of personal convenience and preference, like the "bad dog" example Gid mentions. I'm not so sure Wolfe would reject Gid's philosophy, as far as it goes.

5) What's up with Cassie screaming about the devil's son being born during the storm?

It almost seems like a prophecy -- Cassie is sometimes called Cassandra. after all. There was a child with a "prophecy" about his birth -- Gideon Chase. He is a wizard like Merlin, and Merlin has been called the child of the devil. The "tonight" part is strange, but remember time is

different in Woldercan.

John Smith — 29 Dec 2008, 10:09 · in reply to Dave Tallman

--- On Sun, 12/28/08, Dave Tallman <davetallman at msn.com> wrote:

From: Dave Tallman <davetallman at msn.com>

Subject: Re: (urth) Random Semi-Literary Thoughts on AEG

As for the "immoral" statement Gid makes,
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Isn't this last sentence also a play on words? Take the word "God" and add 0 (zero = nothing) and you get "Go0d" or "good."

Dave Tallman — 29 Dec 2008, 13:45 · in reply to John Smith

John Smith wrote:

Isn't this last sentence also a play on words? Take the word "God" and add 0 (zero = nothing) and you get "Go0d" or "good."

Yes. I thought that was so obvious it went without saying, but I've done a lot of cryptic crosswords.

Mo Holkar / UKG — 02 Jan 2009, 09:39 · in reply to Dave Tallman

At 18:47 24/12/2008, you wrote:

Mo Holkar wrote:

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subtly re-use others referred to earlier, what is there to link them?

By the same logic, Dorcas was just a random woman Severian happened to pull out of a lake. We know Wolfe loves to do puzzles like this.

Only if Dorcas had just wandered off immediately after being pulled out, never to be seen in the book again.

Wolfe does of course love such puzzles, but normally the results of said puzzles are meaningful. This one grates for me because if true, there's nothing significant about it for the story or themes -- just "oh." Mme Pavlatos is such a minor character in the book that relating her to Reis etc would be meaningless. I think it would be beneath Wolfe to throw away a puzzle on her.

The clues match up well:

- 1) Rich -- Rian's mother had to be rich to afford to consult Chase.
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maybe inheritance issues concerning Rian?

Hmm, I think these are mostly pretty vague or else disputable (was Jackie Onassis really notably Irish?) apart from the last one, which needs too much guesswork to be conclusive. I'm not dismissing them, just feeling that by Wolfe's standards there should be a clearer pointer than these, if the theory is true.

Wolfe goes out of his way to say that Reis was married twice, which invites us to find his other wife, too. Who in the credits makes the best candidate?

- 1) India -- gay.
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- 7) Tabbi -- Took over the role of Reverend Brown's wife from Norma, so she's a possible.
- 8) Zelda -- her story of starting her own agency doesn't fit

I think the successful candidate (if there is one) will be someone for whom the uncovered fact of the marriage sheds an interesting and significant light on her relationship with Cassie and the rest of the story. So Norma would be my favourite.

best wishes,

Mo

~ # ~

WolfeWiki now at:

<http://www.wolfewiki.com/pmwiki/>

Dave Tallman — 02 Jan 2009, 14:06 · in reply to Mo Holkar / UKG

Mo Holkar wrote:

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Jacqueline Lee Bouvier was her maiden name, and despite the French sound of that she was primarily of Irish, Scottish, and English ancestry. Kennedy is a well-known Irish name. The crew of the ship that rescued Cassie spoke a language that she was sure was not French (perhaps it was a language of the same family, like Greek). The captain was American (p. 287), which suggests that is the nationality of Madame Pavlatos as well.

The location clue is tricky. The island where Cassie ended up was outside the Takanga group (p. 268). Reis chose it to avoid being spied on by his enemies; he wouldn't tell even Cassie where it was specifically. It was uninhabited and remote; Cassie saw no other ships when she lived there for a year. It's not a place that anyone would come for business related to Reis. Other than Ries, the only character who knew the location seems to be the Volcano God.

There was also a volcano on Takanga Ha'i, the king's island (p. 249), and it's the only volcano mentioned in the Takanga group. The islanders have a Volcano God (associated with their local

volcano, but no doubt the same god as the one on Cassie's island). The islanders say the high king was chosen by the gods, or by certain gods (p. 266). The high queen's head was on fire (a reference to Cassie's red hair, but also literally true of the Volcano God as he appears to Cassie). Thus there is a strong connection between the Volcano God and Reis (not to mention that he included the god as a major character in the musical he wrote).

Could the Volcano God have communicated to someone to look on that island for a castaway? In "The Tree is My Hat," Hanga is able to fly and to follow his blood brother in an airplane a long distance from the island. It seems plausible that the Volcano God could fly and get a message to someone of Reis' blood, like Rian. He might be able to use Vince Palma for this, if the possession theory is true.

The Volcano God asked Cassie to "leave flowers," i.e. he expected her to be leaving there (p. 286). Besides the gift of fire, he might have provided this additional service. In conclusion, the arrival of the ship of Madame Pavlatos may be no coincidence at all. Her connection to Reis isn't a throw-away, but an essential part of the plot.