

Gideon

The Urth list — 40 messages, 10 voices, 07 Jan 2009

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5303>

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Dave Tallman — 07 Jan 2009, 23:44

Roy C. Lackey wrote:

Gid knew from the start how Reis was able to breach government security. Reis "walks unseen", as the note to Cassie on the back of the photo showed. What I am suggesting is that Gid set Reis up. He recruited Cassie as bait, and Reis took the bait. When Reis acted to make Cassie his island queen, and since he had already pissed off the Squid God by killing off a thousand of the god's international recruits on the islands, he knew he had to act to insure his queen's safety. The island natives were too afraid of the Squid God to be of any help. So he hired Gid as a consultant, knowing Gid had the ear of the president and the backing of the U.S. government. Gid told Reis how to set the bait for the Squid God and got the president to send in the Navy. The island natives killed Reis to placate the Squid God. Problem solved. The president's commission was satisfied. Gid got his reward, the ambassadorship to Woldercan he said he wanted (222), where he could learn how to make gold, just as Reis had done.

Earlier in our discussion, I thought you agreed with me that Reis brought his troubles on himself. It was certainly reckless to stash Cassie alone in a place so near the center of the Storm King's power, and then to provoke a naval battle with Chthulhu. Even if Chase advised this course of action it was Reis who chose to do it. He ought to be smarter than that. Of course, Cassie was also in danger back in Kingsport and the kidnappers might have been after her when she went to Springfield. But couldn't Reis find somewhere safer for her than the monster's backyard? I feel more comfortable thinking that this part of the scheme was from Reis' meglomania rather than from Chase. It's too dumb a plan for him to take from somebody else.

There may be other connections we aren't seeing yet. Reis said he didn't control the winged Death's Visitors, but he wanted to. Gideon seemed to have an alliance with them, and they promised Cassie their protection. Maybe the consultation involved supernatural protection for Cassie by the Visitors. They did the job, to a certain extent.

Roy C. Lackey — 08 Jan 2009, 07:11 · in reply to Dave Tallman

Dave Tallman quoted and wrote:

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God to be of any help. So he hired Gid as a consultant, knowing Gid had the ear of the president and the backing of the U.S. government. Gid told Reis how to set the bait for the Squid God and got the president to send in the Navy. The island natives killed Reis to placate the Squid God. Problem solved. The president's commission was satisfied. Gid got his reward, the ambassadorship to Woldercan he said he wanted (222), where he could learn how to make gold, just as Reis had done.

Earlier in our discussion, I thought you agreed with me that Reis brought his troubles on himself.

I did and I do.

It was certainly reckless to stash Cassie alone in a place so near the center of the Storm King's power, and then to provoke a naval battle with Chthulhu. Even if Chase advised this course of action it was Reis who chose to do it. He ought to be smarter than that.

I agree. But . . .

Of course, Cassie was also in danger back in Kingsport and the kidnappers might have been after her when she went to Springfield. But couldn't Reis find somewhere safer for her than the monster's backyard? I feel more comfortable thinking that this part of the scheme was from Reis' megalomania rather than from Chase. It's too dumb a plan for him to take from somebody else.

I agree that it was a dumb thing to do, but he did it anyway! That's a character flaw that comes from being a megalomaniac. Reis was used to getting whatever he wanted, all the time, at whatever the cost. He had dreams of being an island king as soon as he got back from being ambassador to Woldercan, as the photo the president showed Gid indicated. And he made it so, though a thousand people died to make his little paradise. He made himself a benevolent, well-loved king, funded by poison gold. Then he wanted another trophy wife to be his queen. He got her. He bought the natives' loyalty, and they stayed loyal until he crossed the monster.

Gid used Reis' ego to engineer his downfall. That's the beauty of it. Reis would set himself up to fail, with a little nudge from Gid and help from Gid's friends in high places.

If Gid was aware of Reis's scheme to get the Navy to do the dirty work, then that would be a very good reason not to come to the island to pick up Cassie. The tempest might strike at any time, as it did. When Gid delivered Cassie to the island, he told her the secret of his success: "Never set yourself up to fail. Never!" (223)

-Roy

Dave Tallman — 08 Jan 2009, 14:00 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

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that would be a very good reason not to come to the island to pick up Cassie. The tempest might strike at any time, as it did. When Gid delivered Cassie to the island, he told her the secret of his success: "Never set yourself up to fail. Never!" (223)

If Chase was aware of Reis' scheme (whether or not he suggested it), and did nothing for Cassie other than possibly give her the eleventh-hour airlift by Death's Visitors, he appears in a far more sinister light than I've been seeing him. It's plausible, and there are a couple of other hints. "Give me some time to blow the man down" (p. 101) fits as an ironic pun, since Reis perished as the result of high winds. "The devil's son is born tonight," could mean Gideon is the devil and the son is his plan come to fruition.

In an interview, Wolfe said the book was about freedom, and Gideon was the most free character. That could mean the one most unconstrained by morality. Queen Cassiopeia was the least free, eventually becoming a literal puppet for the will of her people.

Adam Thornton — 08 Jan 2009, 17:01 · in reply to Dave Tallman

On Jan 8, 2009, at 8:00 AM, Dave Tallman wrote:

In an interview, Wolfe said the book was about freedom, and Gideon was the most free character. That could mean the one most unconstrained by morality. Queen Cassiopeia was the least free, eventually becoming a literal puppet for the will of her people.

He **is** described as a Guest on Earth on the very first page, and we **do** have a title for the book, you know.

Now: if we take "Freedom" to be a stand-in for "Evil"--what does that tell us about the **previous** novel?

Adam

John Watkins — 08 Jan 2009, 17:08 · in reply to Adam Thornton

He **is** described as a Guest on Earth on the very first page, and we **do** have a title for the book, you know.

Now: if we take "Freedom" to be a stand-in for "Evil"--what does that tell us about the **previous** novel?

Nothing we didn't already know, really. The freedom of the pirates is pretty clearly used for evil.

I am wondering, however, what place An Evil Guest has in Wolfe's body of work. I think it's fair to consider *Pirate Freedom* and *The Wizard Knight* as paired novels in a sense--boys' adventure stories featuring protagonists from what is basically our world heading into a world of genre, both of whom are heavily shaped by the moral choices they make (in contrasting manners.) Both stories also has sort of parallel pieces in Wolfe's short fiction--*Golden City Far* and *A Cabin on the Coast*.

An Evil Guest is different. I probably need to read *Memorare stat* to understand exactly what relationship it has with Wolfe's other works.

Adam

Jeffrey Brent McBeth — 08 Jan 2009, 17:27 · in reply to Adam Thornton

On Jan 8, 2009, at 8:00 AM, Dave Tallman wrote:

In an interview, Wolfe said the book was about freedom, and Gideon was the most free character. That could mean the one most unconstrained by morality. Queen Cassiopeia was the least free, eventually becoming a literal puppet for the will of her people.

Freedom being equated to being unconstrained by morality seems a bit antithetical to the Christian belief that morality is what sets you free.

Jeff

Dave Tallman — 08 Jan 2009, 17:46 · follows Jeffrey Brent McBeth

John Watkins wrote:

I am wondering, however, what place *An Evil Guest* has in Wolfe's body of work. I think it's fair to consider *Pirate Freedom* and *The Wizard Knight* as paired novels in a sense--boys' adventure stories featuring protagonists from what is basically our world heading into a world of genre, both of whom are heavily shaped by the moral choices they make (in contrasting manners.) Both stories also has sort of parallel pieces in Wolfe's short fiction--*Golden City Far* and *A Cabin on the Coast*.

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I found the interview I mentioned here: <http://www.scifi.com/scifiwire/index.php?id=40135> It sheds some light on how Wolfe sees the freedom connections in the following two quotes.

"March's hopper [spacecraft] is a 21st-century version of Chris' pirate ship in **Pirate Freedom*."

"Cassie Casey becomes a queen and discovers that she can no longer buy anything," he said. "Each dress, each pair of shoes she wants, is given to her. William Reis can make gold and become invisible; one of his employees is a werewolf who will gladly kill (and eat) anyone Reis wants killed (and eaten). Gideon Chase is, well, Gideon Chase. A wizard, almost human, and so slick he can slide up a flagpole. Laws and societal restraints mean little to him. He loses a leg, but in a way he is freest of all."

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 08 Jan 2009, 18:11 · in reply to Jeffrey Brent McBeth

On Thu, Jan 8, 2009 at 9:27 AM, Jeffrey Brent McBeth <mcbeth at broggs.org> wrote:
Freedom being equated to being unconstrained by morality seems a bit antithetical to the Christian belief that morality is what sets you free.

That's not the Christian belief. The Christian belief is that **Christ** is what (who) sets us free.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes, writer, trainer, bon vivant

<http://www.livejournal.com/users/sturgeonslawyer>
<http://www.danehyoakes.com>

I once absend-mindedly ordered Three Mile Island dressing in a restaurant and, with great presence of mind, they brought Thousand Island Dressing and a bottle of chili sauce. -- T. Pratchett

Jeffrey Brent McBeth — 08 Jan 2009, 18:27 · in reply to Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

On Thu, Jan 08, 2009 at 10:11:43AM -0800, Dan'l Danehy-Oakes wrote:

On Thu, Jan 8, 2009 at 9:27 AM, Jeffrey Brent McBeth <mcbeth at broggs.org> wrote:

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That's not the Christian belief. The Christian belief is that *Christ* is what (who) sets us free.

Who requires you to be moral to receive His grace. We cannot ignore the mechanism for the freedom (Him), but it is the morality that is the part that is in our control, not Him.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 08 Jan 2009, 18:39 · in reply to Jeffrey Brent McBeth

On Thu, Jan 8, 2009 at 10:27 AM, Jeffrey Brent McBeth <mcbeth at broggs.org> wrote:

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Who requires you to be moral to receive His grace. We cannot ignore the mechanism for the freedom (Him), but it is the morality that is the part that is in our control, not Him.

I don't want to start a whole theological argument, but I think you've reversed cause and effect here. It is not that acting morally allows us to receive Christ's grace; rather, it is that Christ's grace allows us to act morally. Unregenerate humanity, the "old creation," is conceived of as corrupt and fallen, and incapable of doing any real good. "In Christ I am a new creation," and capable of doing real good.

But this is only the ancient dogmatic question of faith v. works, which led ultimately to the great Western schism.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes, writer, trainer, bon vivant

<http://www.livejournal.com/users/sturgeonslawyer>

<http://www.danehyoakes.com>

I once absend-mindedly ordered Three Mile Island dressing in a restaurant and, with great presence of mind, they brought Thousand Island Dressing and a bottle of chili sauce. -- T. Pratchett

John Watkins — 08 Jan 2009, 18:45 · in reply to Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

I don't want to start a whole theological argument, but I think you've reversed cause and effect here. It is not that acting morally allows us to receive Christ's grace; rather, it is that Christ's grace allows us to act morally. Unregenerate humanity, the "old creation," is conceived of as corrupt and fallen, and incapable of doing any real good. "In Christ I am a new creation," and capable of doing real good.

As Mr. Beaver puts it in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, "There may be two schools of thought" on this question. It's possibly best to leave it at that.

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Dan'l Danehy-Oakes, writer, trainer, bon vivant

<http://www.livejournal.com/users/sturgeonslawyer>

<http://www.danehyoakes.com>

I once absend-mindedly ordered Three Mile Island dressing in a restaurant and, with great presence of mind, they brought Thousand Island Dressing and a bottle of chili sauce. -- T. Pratchett

brunians at brunians.org — 08 Jan 2009, 18:48 · in reply to Jeffrey Brent McBeth

The Christian belief is that *Christ*
is what (who) sets us free.

Who requires you to be moral to receive His grace.

No He doesn't. Where are you getting this idea?

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Dave Tallman — 08 Jan 2009, 18:52 · follows brunians at brunians.org

Mythic patterns from the *The Golden Bough* seem to recur in many Wolfe works. There is a conflict between a man representing Spring and a man representing Winter over a woman/Goddess. One man causes the death of the other, but there is a cycle of resurrection in view. This is like the mythic pattern of Venus and Adonis, among many others. (Graves elaborates on this a great deal in *The White Goddess*, but Wolfe is known to consider that a crackpot theory).

In *An Evil Guest*, I associate Reis with Spring because he calls Cassie a green goddess and rules a tropical island. Chase is Winter because of his association with the darkness and cold of space (which is linked to the Frost Giants and Old Night in *The Wizard Knight*). In most of these books, the winning side can be predicted by the season. In *An Evil Guest* the year is turning to winter, and Winter wins. But Cassie, like Venus, seems to be on a quest to bring Wally back.

*Work**Spring**Winter**Goddess**Winner**Cycle* *New Sun*Severianold Autarch
TheclaSpringSeverian loops back in time *Short Sun/Long Sun*HornSilk
Hyacinth/SeawrackWinterSilk seeks new worlds *Castlevew*Shields/Green Man
Madadh/GeimreadhViviane MorganWinterWrangler/sleeping Shields *There are
Doors*GreenNorthLaraSpringGreen goes west *Wizard Knight*AbleArnthorMorcaine SpringAble
taken away *Pirate Freedom*ChrisIgnacioNoviaWinterTime cycle repeats *An Evil Guest*Bill
ReisGideon ChaseCassie CaseyWinterRian/Cassie's quest

Dave Tallman — 08 Jan 2009, 18:55 · follows Dave Tallman

Oops, my table didn't come out well. You can see it better on the WolfeWiki:
<http://www.wolfewiki.com/pmwiki/pmwiki.php?n=Articles.Gods>

Roy C. Lackey — 08 Jan 2009, 20:09 · in reply to Dave Tallman

Dave Tallman quoted and wrote:

Gid used Reis' ego to engineer his downfall. That's the beauty of it.

Reis

would set himself up to fail, with a little nudge from Gid and help from Gid's friends in high places.

If Gid was aware of Reis's scheme to get the Navy to do the dirty work, then that would be a very good reason not to come to the island to pick up Cassie. The tempest might strike at any time, as it did. When Gid delivered Cassie to the island, he told her the secret of his success: "Never set yourself up to fail. Never!" (223)

If Chase was aware of Reis' scheme (whether or not he suggested it),

I would think it very probable that Chase was aware of a fleet of Navy ships in the area, since he was in contact with the president's advisor, John.

and did nothing for Cassie other than possibly give her the eleventh-hour airlift by Death's Visitors, he appears in a far more sinister light than I've been seeing him.

At the start of the novel, Gid seems to be a pulp hero, but he faded out of the last quarter of the story. Reis started out as an old-time villain, but by the end of the story he seemed to be fighting the good fight, even though tainted by personal aggrandizement.

[snip]

In an interview, Wolfe said the book was about freedom, and Gideon was the most free character. That could mean the one most unconstrained by morality.

Exactly. But I wouldn't call him immoral; amoral is closer. He has a personal code of honor that he lives by. (He won't take what he thinks he hasn't earned, which is why, even as Gil Corby, he bristled at the idea of accepting "charity" from Cassie. [157]) So he is not amoral in the sense that a fairy is said to be amoral. His personal ethics are closer to human, but they are not congruent.

-Roy

Roy C. Lackey — 08 Jan 2009, 20:12 · in reply to Dave Tallman

Dave Tallman, quoting Wolfe interview:

"Gideon Chase is, well, Gideon Chase. A wizard, almost human, and so slick he can slide up a flagpole. Laws and societal restraints mean little to him. He loses a leg, but in a way he is freest of all."

Not incidentally, that quote all but cements the earlier assumption that one of Gid's biological parents, probably the father, was not human.

-Roy

Dave Tallman — 11 Jan 2009, 13:44 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

Roy C. Lackey wrote:

At the start of the novel, Gid seems to be a pulp hero, but he faded out of the last quarter of the story. Reis started out as an old-time villain, but by the end of the story he seemed to be fighting the good fight, even though tainted by personal aggrandizement.

Gideon's character, and Cassie's understanding of it, seem to be critical in understanding the end of the book. What is she hoping to achieve by visiting Woldercan? How much help does she expect from Gideon? How much will he give her?

Here are some hints:

- 1) Before Reis died, Cassie thought of Chase as a "good, good man" (p. 202). (Gideon doesn't believe in telling people such things, but he chose not to contradict her).
- 2) After her return from exile, Cassie seems much more cautious and hostile concerning Chase. She "rehearsed a thousand times" (p. 293) her request for information from Miskatonic University.
- 3) Cassie received an welcoming ethermail from Chase, but it seems she might not have notified him she was coming if it hadn't been for the time paradox (p. 298).
- 4) She seeks independent advice on Woldercan from Klauser instead of relying on Chase.
- 5) Her final outbursts are focussed exclusively on Bill/Wally (p. 301).

I would say that her former trust in Gideon is gone. She will use him, if he lets her, to get back her mojo. Whether Chase helps or not, she will try to regain her power and the associated reality-warping abilities (documented in the "Cassie's mobile home" thread) to bring Reis back. She will be Venus to his Adonis if she can.

Roy C. Lackey — 12 Jan 2009, 03:22 · in reply to Dave Tallman

Dave Tallman wrote:

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[snip]

I would say that her former trust in Gideon is gone. She will use him, if he lets her, to get back her mojo.

I agree with that much.

Whether Chase helps or not, she will try to regain her power and the associated reality-warping abilities (documented in the "Cassie's mobile home" thread) to bring Reis back. She will be Venus to his Adonis if she can.

I'm not sold on the "reality warping" bit. Anyway, bringing on Cassie's glamour had been but a night's work. Yet she told Klauser that she hoped to be on Woldercan for a long time. (299) Why hope? What was her hope contingent upon? I think she wanted Gid to restore her mojo, but the length of her stay would depended on whether or not Gid wanted her, with or without the mojo.

Would Reis have wanted her without the mojo? I doubt it, given his track record with women. But Gid would, as he acknowledged to himself when no one was around to hear. (81) Cassie was a female with issues--always a bad combination. <g> She wanted to be someone in her own right, "to matter" as she put it. (211) Gid said that she already was someone. For Reis, she was just an ego prop. That is what was behind his remark about her not being executive material, that it was not what she was "cut out for." (269) For Reis, she was a heavenly body, not a person. She may have been the Moon to him, but he would always outshine her as the Sun.

However reluctantly, Gid let her drive his car. In Cassie's mind, that was a test, a test that Reis almost certainly would have failed. Her last words to Gid were, "I love you, Gid. Thanks for letting me drive your car." (228)

As for the book's ending, and clone issues aside, it almost seems as if Bill and Wally are two different people in Cassie's mind. The former is the sinister, greedy billionaire, the latter the patron and philanthropist she came to love. Perhaps the photo of a young Reis suggests to her that, by the time Gid's ambassadorship is over, young Rian will have grown up to look much like the young Bill in the photo. He will be rich, and her restored mojo will work on him. And Klauser's question about nepotism and the Chase ambassadors is a pointer to Rian's future. But this is speculation.

What else could she do on Woldercan? She could learn the arts that humans were capable of learning, those that Reis had picked up. But both she and Gid were wealthy, and I doubt either would stoop to making bad gold for gain.

-Roy

Dave Tallman — 12 Jan 2009, 13:06 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

Roy C. Lackey wrote:

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I'd rather not call Cassie's change a glamour. It was a magnification of her natural star-power. (If it were a glamour like the one Gid used to be Gib it wouldn't show up in pictures). It's true that it only required a single night on Earth, but that was with the help of a magical living mountain. Gideon compared it to operating in a hospital (41). For all Cassie knows it might take much longer on Woldercan, if it's even possible. There's another reason for spending time on Woldercan which I will expand on below.

Would Reis have wanted her without the mojo? I doubt it, given his track record with women. But Gid would, as he acknowledged to himself when no one was around to hear. (81) ...

Cassie is probably counting on Gid continuing to love her, but it seems that on her side her heart belongs to Wally alone. She will use Gid as a means to an end.

As for the book's ending, and clone issues aside, it almost seems as if Bill and Wally are two different people in Cassie's mind. The former is the sinister, greedy billionaire, the latter the patron and philanthropist she came to love. Perhaps the photo of a young Reis suggests to her that, by the time Gid's ambassadorship is over, young Rian will have grown up to look much like the young Bill in the photo. He will be rich, and her restored mojo will work on him. And Klauser's question about nepotism and the Chase ambassadors is a pointer to Rian's future. But this is speculation.

I find the idea that Cassie would try to get Rian as a substitute for the man she loves quite repulsive. I hope that isn't the answer. I find a better solution with time-travel clones. They are hinted at, particularly in Klauser's analogy of a bird fighting its reflection (298). Wally and Reis may be temporal clones, if Reis returned from Woldercan in a time overlap with his stay there. That would give him time to set up his financial and royal empires under aliases, including the name Wally Rosenquist.

If Cassie spends some time on Woldercan and learns how to make the proper hops back, she also should be able to return back before she left, and she may hope to change the past and save Bill's life. Suppose she isn't able to recover her appearance, and returns still older and

grayer. Her attempts to warn Bill could make her a Cassandra, whose prophecies were true but not believed. It would make her like a banshee warning of death, a Gray Neighbor (64). Margaret? Is that you?

Dave Tallman — 12 Jan 2009, 20:53 · in reply to Dave Tallman

I'd like to expand on the possibility of temporal clones. It seems probable that Bill Reis came back from his trip to Woldercan while he was "still there" from the point-of-view of Earth time. This gives him more time to set up his financial empire and have his gigantic palace constructed as king. It also makes his multiple identities more confusing for his enemies. Temporal clones are hinted at when Klauser talks of a robin fighting its reflection (p. 298).

At the end of /An Evil Guest/ Cassie is heading to Woldercan with a strong desire to bring Wally back. Suppose she learns the secret of how to properly execute hops from there which will take her back in time, so that she arrives before she started. Suppose also that she cannot restore her enhanced star power. She might attempt to get close to her original self in order to have a chance to warn Reis and save his life. She may have become a werewolf as a disguise.

Here are some indications:

1. Werewolves redistribute their mass (p. 99). Margaret is a small woman (54). Cassie in the end is thinner than she used to be (p. 299).
2. Other forms than wolves, dogs, and leopards are possible (p. 99). How about a different-looking human?
3. Coming back to the part she wouldn't have access to much money, other than selling the hopper without a legitimate registration. Margaret was poor.
4. Margaret gets Cassie's sandwich too fast (pp. 54-57). There's only a little dialog and no wait time before she appears with the white bag. If she knew in advance what the order would be she could get it before they spoke.
5. She also found Chase too fast, getting answering machines at both his apartments in almost no time (pp 63-64). Again, it seems like she was prepared ahead of time.
6. She exaggerates her truthfulness, playing a role that differs from Cassie (pp. 82-83).
7. She knows Cassie can sing. Saying she can tell from how Cassie talks seems a bit silly (p. 83).
8. Her churchgoing persona (p. 84) may be derived from the role of Mariah Brownlea. She has kept those initials in the name Margaret Briggs.
9. "Have you ever wanted to help out somebody you loved, and known the only thing you could do for him was some tiny stupid thing that was a lot of trouble? And done it anyway? Any of you?" Margaret nodded. (p. 112).

There is contrary evidence in her standard breakfast of yougurt and fruit (p. 186), since Cassie said she never wanted to eat fruit again (p. 288). However, she might endure that as part of her role and to keep her weight and expenses down.

Cassie's hope to change the past seems to have been defeated by time paradoxes. If she warned Reis she wasn't believed. Chase seems to have spotted her for a werewolf and gotten the FBI to arrest her, keeping her from doing more at a critical time. At least she got the chance

to see Wally one more time, when he came to retrieve the gold bracelet. She got to try the "tiny stupid thing" that was "a lot of trouble."

Roy C. Lackey — 13 Jan 2009, 05:22 · in reply to Dave Tallman

Dave Tallman wrote:

I'd rather not call Cassie's change a glamour. It was a magnification of her natural star-power. (If it were a glamour like the one Gid used to be Gib it wouldn't show up in pictures).

I understand the distinction you mean, and we can call Cassie's change mojo or whatever if you like, but it still amounts to a glamour. It may not wash off, like Gil's, but the change wrought by Gid on her was not permanent and was never going to be permanent, even if she had not gotten herself stranded in harsh conditions on that island. And Gid had the power to reverse it. (81) What he did for her was much like what Talos had done with Jolenta, only the loss of the mojo left Cassie in a much worse physical state than she would have been in had she never had it. In other words, there was a price to be paid for the mojo that she didn't know about.

[snip]

I find the idea that Cassie would try to get Rian as a substitute for the man she loves quite repulsive. I hope that isn't the answer. I find a better solution with time-travel clones.

I understand your revulsion and share it. But I also find the time-travel "clone" theory fraught with problems.

-Roy

Roy C. Lackey — 13 Jan 2009, 06:36 · in reply to Dave Tallman

Dave Tallman wrote:

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A hopper is worth a lot of money, even on the black market.

4. Margaret gets Cassie's sandwich too fast (pp. 54-57). There's only a little dialog and no wait time before she appears with the white bag. If she knew in advance what the order would be she could get it before they spoke.

The sandwich was a *hot* pastrami. The coffee would have been hot, too. And why wouldn't she have known about the extra dressing and straw?

[snip]

There is contrary evidence in her standard breakfast of yougurt and fruit (p. 186), since Cassie said she never wanted to eat fruit again (p. 288). However, she might endure that as part of her role and to keep her weight and expenses down.

Reis had looked into Margaret's background (122), and he had the best sources money could buy.

Cassie's hope to change the past seems to have been defeated by time paradoxes. If she warned Reis she wasn't believed. Chase seems to have spotted her for a werewolf and gotten the FBI to arrest her, keeping her from doing more at a critical time.

I think you're probably right about Chase getting her out of the way, but I think he did that because he thought she was a spy for Reis. (171)

At least she got the chance to see Wally one more time, when he came to retrieve the gold bracelet. She got to try the "tiny stupid thing" that was "a lot of trouble."

If Margaret had tried to tell Reis that she was really Cassie, she could have mentioned Rian and Klauser and King Kanoa and the coming diamond bracelet and many other things that should have given him pause to believe her, particularly since he was checking up on her past anyway.

-Roy

Dave Tallman — 13 Jan 2009, 12:58 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

Roy C. Lackey quoted andwrote:

/ 3. Coming back to the part she wouldn't have access to much money,
/>/ other than selling the hopper without a legitimate registration.

/>/ Margaret was poor.

/

A hopper is worth a lot of money, even on the black market.

Thank you for challenging my theory. I think most of the objections can be answered, making it stronger. I believe Cassie hopped back several years and established a real background as a dresser. For example, she gives Easter Sinclair as a reference (54) and I take that as true. If so, she would have trouble selling in 2070 a hopper she bought new in 2080 without raising all kinds of questions.

The sandwich was a *hot* pastrami. The coffee would have been hot, too. And why wouldn't she have known about the extra dressing and straw?

The dialog on the pages between the order and the return only takes a minute or so to read aloud. This is a weak piece of evidence, since this sort of time-compression is an accepted convention in books and movies. The phone calls to Chase are more obviously too fast. As for the dressing and straw, her memories may have faded over the years.

Reis had looked into Margaret's background (122), and he had the best sources money could buy.

He only investigated whether she would be likely to steal the bracelet. She had built up enough of a reputation for honesty that this could be quickly settled. (This also goes to the question of the theft of Easter Sinclair's jewelry (140) -- this probably establishes that Margaret didn't do it).

/ Cassie's hope to change the past seems to have been defeated by time
/>/ paradoxes. If she warned Reis she wasn't believed. Chase seems to have
/>/ spotted her for a werewolf and gotten the FBI to arrest her, keeping her
/>/ from doing more at a critical time.

/

I think you're probably right about Chase getting her out of the way, but I think he did that because he thought she was a spy for Reis. (171)

It's not mutually exclusive. If he spotted her as a werewolf he might also think she was a spy for Reis, since Reis employed werewolves.

If Margaret had tried to tell Reis that she was really Cassie, she could have mentioned Rian and Klauser and King Kanoa and the coming diamond bracelet and many other things that should have given him pause to believe her, particularly since he was checking up on her past anyway.

This is your strongest objection IMHO, and I don't have a complete answer. It is known to be difficult to change the past. "If I don't send mine, his will have to be accounted for in some other way and it's liable to get complicated" (298). It must be even harder to deliver a message that will falsify one's own past if acted upon. Margaret herself and her message would have to be "accounted for in some other way." Unlike Ignacio, she was fighting against destiny.

Reis might not be impressed by inside knowledge that she might have gained from people spying on him. She can make herself look like an old, washed-out version of Cassie, but he knows what werewolves can do to change their appearance. He might react to warnings with stubborn megalomania, more set on his plans than ever.

Dave Tallman — 13 Jan 2009, 14:58 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

Roy C. Lackey wrote:

I understand the distinction you mean, and we can call Cassie's change mojo or whatever if you like, but it still amounts to a glamour. It may not wash off, like Gil's, but the change wrought by Gid on her was not permanent and was never going to be permanent, even if she had not gotten herself stranded in harsh conditions on that island. And Gid had the power to reverse it. (81) What he did for her was much like what Talos had done with Jolenta, only the loss of the mojo left Cassie in a much worse physical state than she would have been in had she never had it. In other words, there was a price to be paid for the mojo that she didn't know about.

The burnout problem gives us reason to think that the mojo trick will only work once. That was a creepy thing to do to a woman Gid professed to love, but he was never one to let love trump financial self-interest. If Cassie can't power up again, the Rian solution is out. That leaves the possibility of going "down" to werewolf level.

If my theory is correct, there should be literary clues as well as "real-life" clues. Here are a few I have found:

1. Cassie/Margaret has a prophecy of doom that is not believed, making her a Cassandra, as Palma said (p. 64).
2. Margaret is also like a banshee, predicting death. She is a Gray Neighbor (p. 64).
3. The Klauser quote about temporal doubles is "The robin another robin fights in a clean window seems terribly real to him, too" (p. 298).
4. Cassie is identified with Batman's Robin. She is a sidekick to a dark detective with a high-tech car. There are countless jokes

about Robin wanting to drive the Batmobile.

5. The "manbat" Visitors call Cassie their cub (p. 235).

6. One food Cassie will eat on Woldercan looks like worms (p. 299).

7. There is a character in Memorare named Robin Redd, who seems almost a prototype for Cassie. She is twice-divorced, and one of her exes is a criminal type. She also has an alliterative name and works in show business.

8. The match from "Mariah Brownlea" to "Margaret Briggs" is more than just initials. It has the same first three letters in the first name and the same first two letters in the second.

It's possible that Margaret avoided a direct warning to Reis. I'm looking for other things she might have done to sabotage the plan to take Cassie to the Takanga islands. She may have taken the picture that revealed Gib as Gideon to the ATF. She had a camera and was present at dress rehearsals. She also warned Cassie that she was getting in too deep (p. 141).

The cycle may not be stabilized. On the next iteration, Cassie/Margaret can avoid repeating actions that didn't work the last time (like the picture, leading to the death of Scott). She may even succeed in the long run. I hope she does.

John Watkins — 13 Jan 2009, 15:04 · in reply to Dave Tallman

I like the Cassie = Margaret theory a lot more than I like the "two Bills" theory. This comic book stuff with "Robin" has basically convinced me.

Note that the first female Robin in the comics was Carrie Kelly.

On 1/13/09, Dave Tallman <davetallman at msn.com> wrote:
Roy C. Lackey wrote:

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of going "down" to werewolf level.

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The cycle may not be stabilized. On the next iteration, Cassie/Margaret can avoid repeating actions that didn't work the last time (like the picture, leading to the death of Scott). She may even succeed in the long run. I hope she does.

Dave Tallman — 13 Jan 2009, 19:24 · follows John Watkins

John Watkins wrote:

I like the Cassie = Margaret theory a lot more than I like the "two Bills" theory. This comic book stuff with "Robin" has basically convinced me.

Note that the first female Robin in the comics was Carrie Kelly.

Thanks, I'm glad someone else finds this convincing. I didn't know about Carrie Kelly -- the name sounds a lot like Cassie Casey, doesn't it?

Here are a couple more references I picked up:

1) "A mountain whose wife washed clothes?" (pp. 41-42, 83). This needs a meaning in the book's context, besides the reference to the Cory Doctorow novel "Someone Comes to Town, Someone Leaves Town." Reis is associated with the Volcano God, so he is the mountain. His wife (common-law) was Cassie. Margaret described herself as an "expert seamstress and laundress." It's interesting that Margaret is the only person Cassie asks about this strange washerwoman. The reference is forced into the conversation a bit awkwardly, and all Margaret can do is respond "A dream?" (83). It was indeed Cassie's dream that got her to this state.

2) Klauser suggests that the younger Cassie was the clone child of the now-older Cassie. This foreshadows the relationship of Cassie and Margaret as temporal clones. Also, "Cassiopeia weeps for her children" -- both the children she didn't have with Bill, and her lost younger self. Cassie will try to "get her back," and one way to do that would be to go back in time and try to

fix things.

David Duffy — 14 Jan 2009, 02:00 · in reply to Dave Tallman

On Tue, 13 Jan 2009, Dave Tallman wrote:

- SNIPPING much on Margeret as Cassie -

Margaret herself and her message would have to be "accounted for in some other way." Unlike Ignacio, she was fighting against destiny.

I have reread Margaret's lines, and haven't spotted any dead giveaways. I might push my barrow, with Cassie as Guinevere. Wikipedia has:

When Arthur goes to France to fight Lancelot, he leaves Guinevere in the care of Mordred [King Kanoa], who plots to marry the queen himself and take Arthur's throne. In some versions Guinevere assents to Mordred's proposal, but in others, she hides in the Tower of London and then takes refuge in a convent. Hearing of the treachery, Arthur returns to Britain and slays Mordred at Camlann [Oh all right, doesn't quite work here], but his wounds are so severe that he is taken to the isle of Avalon. Guinevere meets Lancelot one last time, then returns to the convent where she spends the remainder of her life [As MB, she now attends church and sings in the choir].

We're told that Reis is also raised in the same way Cassie is. I have a feeling that the only problem with becoming a mythic figure is that you become particularly prone to reenacting traditional stories.

David Duffy.

PS Does anyone think that Rays might own the Sun-Tribunal?

| David Duffy (MBBS PhD) ,_-|\n
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Dave Tallman — 14 Jan 2009, 09:28 · in reply to David Duffy

David Duffy wrote:

I have reread Margaret's lines, and haven't spotted any dead giveaways. <snip>

Margaret plays her role very low-key, so it is hard to find a smoking gun in her words. Here are some more emotional indications based on Cassie's reaction to her.

"I have no secrets from my dresser, Agent Martin," (132). This seems to be true. Cassie trusts Margaret immediately and completely. She trusts Margaret to call Chase for help the first night (63). She asks Margaret about the "mountain whose wife washed clothes" (83). She admits the truth about a phone call: "It was really Gideon Chase" (138). Cassie seems to know instinctively that Margaret is a twin soul.

We have this from the Volcano God play, p. 145:

"It's only when I'm quite alone
That I can see my soul."

Her vidimage stood beside her and seemed about to speak.

"It's then that I am Woman
the one thing God made whole."

She clasped hands with her soul, and the two began to dance.

When Cassie is with Margaret she is "alone" and she can "see her soul." The closest real-life analog is when Margaret gets Cassie to sing "Walk in the Reign." This is a powerful moment between them. Perhaps Margaret is hoping that by opening up Cassie's spiritual side she will receive guidance to avoid danger.

Cassie's strong feelings for Margaret continue after the kidnapping. Cassie even eats breakfast like her because she misses her so much (186).

Then comes the night of the dinner at the Silent Woman. Chase gives Cassie a painstaking description of the signs of a werewolf (206-207). He didn't need to spell out that he meant Margaret, but he did say "There's often a swift, loping walk, even in women."

It seems to have worked. After that, Cassie calls everyone from Takanga except Margaret. After the dinner at the Silent Woman, Margaret has been silenced. With her trust broken Cassie doubts everything that happened with Margaret. Cut off from her "soul," Cassie falls into the trap.

We're told that Reis is also raised in the same way Cassie is. I have a feeling that the only problem with becoming a mythic figure is that you become particularly prone to reenacting traditional stories.

There are many classic stories and love triangles echoed in this one (I see Venus/Adonis and My Fair Lady, for example). I like your Guinevere analogy because there aren't too many love triangles where an evil fourth party tries to use the triangle for his own benefit (King Kanoa as Modred).

I don't see that we are told explicitly that Reis has been "raised" like Cassie. People treat him with deference, mainly because of the power of his wealth, but I don't get a sense of "star-power" from him. Do you have a reference? The name itself, pronounced as in German, would sound like "rice," but it's an anagram of "rise," as in the invocation Cassie gives at the end for Wally to return to her.

Dave Tallman — 14 Jan 2009, 18:13 · follows Dave Tallman

I feel pretty confident now that Margaret was Cassie, back in time as a werewolf to try to help Cassie avoid her fate. The next issue is: what did she do? Chase appeared to be her adversary, since he got Margaret arrested by the F.B.I. and told Cassie enough details on how to recognize a werewolf to make her lose her trust. Was Margaret also Chase's enemy, carrying out the revenge scenario some predicted for Cassie on Woldercan, but in the past where it could do Cassie and Bill some good?

I think it's possible that Margaret could be Chase's shooter, based on several things:

- 1) It's never explicitly stated in the book, but traditionally werewolves can rapidly heal damage unless it is done by silver weapons. The mass-shifting trick could probably fix wounds.
- 2) In support of this: Cassie armed herself with silver-tipped bullets (180) after being told that werewolves were real (99).
- 3) A normal human assassin would have been felled by the cleaver attack; this attacker just staggered, covered his face, and fled the scene (82).

- 4) Chase saw his attacker was a man, but I believe Margaret is capable of alternate human faces.
- 5) The body type of the attacker was not like John (p. 203), John is starting to get fat (p. 15), so the attacker was probably thin.
- 6) Right after Chase was shot, the book says "Margaret was fifteen minutes late" (p. 82). The excuse she gave was a phone call, which she could have gotten earlier.

There's little motive for the ATF or the Squiddies to be active against Gideon this early. Their enemy is Reis, and at this point Gideon was Reis' enemy, too. Scott said "We're after a man you've probably never heard of, and the key to our finding and killing that man is a man seen with you not long ago." (188) That is, the ATF wants to find Chase only so they can find and kill Reis. The Cthulhuoids would have similar motivations. So why would either of these factions send an assassin to just gun Chase down?

Margaret, on the other hand, wants to keep Bill alive. She would have a strong motive to get Chase out of the picture. Unfortunately it wasn't that easy to fight destiny or someone as capable as Gideon Chase.

Dave Tallman — 14 Jan 2009, 19:52 · follows Dave Tallman

Roy C. Lackey wrote:

If Margaret had tried to tell Reis that she was really Cassie, she could have mentioned Rian and Klauser and King Kanoa and the coming diamond bracelet and many other things that should have given him pause to believe her, particularly since he was checking up on her past anyway.

There's a good reason that Margaret wouldn't do this. She not only wants to save Wally's life but she wants him back with her. Here's how it might go.

"You've got to listen to me! I'm Cassie from the future. If you take me to Takanga Ha'i you'll end up dying for me!"

"You're not Cassie. The Cassie I love would never end up looking like that."

"Well, you see, I got this magical enhancement from Gideon Chase, but it wore off..."

"In that case, don't worry about my dying for you. We're finished."

I'm convinced that Cassie/Margaret would have thought this through. She would have to try other ways of saving Reis without revealing her identity.

Roy C. Lackey — 14 Jan 2009, 21:01 · in reply to Dave Tallman

Dave Tallman wrote:

The burnout problem gives us reason to think that the mojo trick will only work once.

Okay, assume that to be true and see where it leads. To trouble. I *hate* time travel stories. <g>

An older, wiser, grayer Cassie, unable to get her mojo back, comes back from Woldercan some years before she left. Presumably she is bitter, heartbroken and determined to try to change the future for the better. What does she want? Her mojo, love, and possibly wealth. The Margaret we know had none of that.

She learns to sew and all the other things needed to get a job on the fringe of theater, as an assistant to a series of actresses, leading up to Cassie, her younger self. She knows about Gideon and Reis and poison gold and Wally and a big musical and diamonds and Takanga. If any of these things do not happen pretty much as they played out the first time, she will not exist. If Reis does not die, Gid will not become ambassador to Woldercan. Gid will not be able to send the ethermail that prompted her to buy the hopper. She will not have the diamonds to sell to buy the hopper. If she does not buy the hopper and go to Woldercan, she cannot go back in time. Etc.

So what **can** she do to change things that will allow her younger self to retain what she lost the first time?

Nothing, that I can see. If she kills Gid (post mojo), as you have proposed, Gid will not become ambassador, not send the ethermail, etc. What did she expect would happen to herself if she succeeded? That she would pop out of existence? If Cassie loved Wally, she would still end up in the islands and the ongoing battle with the Storm King would still probably result in the fatal uprising against Wally. I could go on with this sort of stuff, but there's no point. All time travel stories involve unavoidable paradoxes.

When gray Cassie passed Margaret on the street near the bank, she should have known right there that any attempt she made to change her own past was doomed to failure. If Cassie had never seen or heard of Margaret after getting back to the States, there might have been some hope of changing things for the better. But she did. I suspect that is why Wolfe had them pass on the street.

This in no way refutes your theory that Margaret is Cassie, which looks good. Which means the time travel angle must be true, also.

[snip]

The cycle may not be stabilized. On the next iteration, Cassie/Margaret can avoid repeating actions that didn't work the last time (like the picture, leading to the death of Scott). She may even succeed in the long run. I hope she does.

I don't think she **can** escape her fate, and that is the way Wolfe intended it to be.

-Roy

Dave Tallman — 14 Jan 2009, 23:03 · follows Roy C. Lackey

Roy C. Lackey wrote:

Okay, assume that to be true and see where it leads. To trouble. I **hate** time travel stories. <g>

I'm sorry you feel that way, because so many Wolfe novels have some. In a way that's good, because it gives us some background on how Wolfe handles the paradoxes. He usually provides a way to change the past without destroying the character involved.

1) The "Free Live Free" model is mostly out, because Cassie would merge into Margaret for as long as she was there. However, its model of accumulating knowledge from the future to the past is an interesting one, especially the way Whitten's original mission becomes unnecessary. We are left with a Whitten who remembers going to the future in a world where that didn't happen, a world changed as a result of a trip he will no longer take. He doesn't pop out of

existence even though he has invalidated his past. (However, the merge gave him a stable anchor-point Margaret doesn't have).

2) The Talos play, based on its own description by Severian as the Conciliator in "Urth of the New Sun" looks like a fixed-universe loop, but there might be ways to build it up with overridden Whitten-like trips. There had better be, because rewriting Sev's life has happened at least once.

3) "Pirate Freedom" could be a fixed-universe loop, but Ignacio plays only a little part in Chris' experience of the past. Chris could still go sailing, leaving his wife and child alone or with someone less trustworthy, and decide to go back and join them when that became possible. (The hidden time loop with Bram Burt as Chris' father is much more problematic).

4) Cassie's idea is that if she fails to send her message it will be "accounted for in some other way," sort of a self-repairing time stream that supplies new causes. It would turn out that either some enemy sent a message in her name, or Chase decided to lure her to Woldercan by pretending to reply to a message, etc. Most of the options would be less desirable for her than simply sending the message.

I don't know how Margaret and all her memories could be accounted for in some other way, so I'll assume the Whitten way first. Let's say she manages to kill Chase. Like Whitten, she remains around with memories of events that never happened. The universe could live with one crazy person. Or she does disappear, but one or more people get brainstorms and fill in her roles in life, up to and including killing Chase.

Meeting Margaret at the end could actually be of benefit to Cassie in an accumulating knowledge scenario. Margaret could pass on tips on what she did, what didn't work, and so on from multiple cycles. That doesn't seem to have happened in this novel, though Cassie could be lying to Klauser.

It might not save Cassie. As you said, Reis will still take her to the island, and the conflict with the Storm King must still come to a climax in some way. I don't know if there could eventually be a happy ending, but it's a little bit more possible with no Chase working against them.

Roy C. Lackey — 15 Jan 2009, 06:36 · in reply to Dave Tallman

Dave Tallman quoted and wrote:

Okay, assume that to be true and see where it leads. To trouble. I

hate

time travel stories. <g>

I'm sorry you feel that way, because so many Wolfe novels have some. In a way that's good, because it gives us some background on how Wolfe handles the paradoxes. He usually provides a way to change the past without destroying the character involved.

He makes attempts to minimize the paradoxes, but they are still there.

1) The "Free Live Free" model is mostly out, because Cassie would merge into Margaret for as long as she was there.

Right. In FLF, no two versions of Whitten are in the same "present" at the same time.

However, its model of accumulating knowledge from the future to the past is an interesting one, especially the way Whitten's original mission becomes unnecessary. We are left with a Whitten who remembers going to the future in a world where that didn't

happen, a world changed as a result of a trip he will no longer take. He doesn't pop out of existence even though he has invalidated his past. (However, the merge gave him a stable anchor-point Margaret doesn't have).

Right. So long as Margaret exists, she is living testimonial to her failure. Cassie doesn't need Margaret for anything. Margaret's role could have been played by anyone. But Cassie is everything to Margaret.

2) The Talos play, based on its own description by Severian as the Conciliator in "Urth of the New Sun" looks like a fixed-universe loop, but there might be ways to build it up with overridden Whitten-like trips.

There

had better be, because rewriting Sev's life has happened at least once.

Even in a "fixed-universe loop" such as in the Urth Cycle, there is still a paradox.

(I don't want to get diverted on a tangent, so I'm not going to ask if an astronomer on Urth would have seen a white hole approaching on the day Sev left for Yesod.)

[snip]

Meeting Margaret at the end could actually be of benefit to Cassie in an accumulating knowledge scenario. Margaret could pass on tips on what she did, what didn't work, and so on from multiple cycles. That doesn't seem to have happened in this novel, though Cassie could be lying to Klauser.

I still say that meeting Margaret at the end is the proof that whatever she does will fail, otherwise Margaret couldn't/wouldn't be there. On a side note, why **didn't** Margaret recognize herself on the street near the bank? Presumably, Margaret had lived through Cassie's trip to the bank and should have been expecting her to be there.

-Roy

Dave Tallman — 15 Jan 2009, 08:12 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

Roy C. Lackey wrote:

I don't think she **can** escape her fate, and that is the way Wolfe intended it to be.

In spite of all the time-changing ideas I put in my previous post, I think you're absolutely right. In a Lovecraftian world there are no do-overs.

The repeat will be stable... but Margaret isn't sure of that at first. She could tell herself, "I have free will -- the last time the shot missed a vital spot, but I have a chance to kill Gideon Chase."

Remember that scene in the living room, where Cassie and Margaret are watching the news together (pp. 86-89). Margaret controls the MUTE button. In "MUTE" two children struggle to escape the grounds of the house where their father died, and there is a moment of horror when we realize there is no way out -- that all their work has brought them back to the exact same place. The two copies of Cassie wait for the news, each hoping for a different outcome. Margaret hears the exact same thing has happened as before, and she has lost.

A robin fighting its reflection is a picture of futility. When Cassie asks "Have you ever wanted to help out somebody you loved, and known that the only thing you could do for him was some tiny stupid thing that was a lot of trouble? And done it anyway? Any of you?" (p. 112), we can

now see a world of pain in the two-word sentence: "Margaret nodded."

There's one more scene that takes on new meaning. On the hopper flight with Gib, Margaret pretends she has never hopped before and fakes a great fear of flying (pp. 154-156). It's an excuse to keep her eyes closed for the whole trip. She doesn't want Gib to see in her eyes how much she hates him, and to see the triumph in his look back at her.

With this reading, many of the objections to the book fall apart. Is it disjointed, with no connection from the madcap beginning to the dark horror ending? No, it's all horror, tied together by Cassie and Margaret. Does it end abruptly, giving no idea what will happen to Cassie? No, as Paul Harvey says: "Now we know... the rest of the story."

Thomas Bitterman — 16 Jan 2009, 03:41 · in reply to Dave Tallman

On Mon, Jan 12, 2009 at 3:53 PM, Dave Tallman <davetallman at msn.com> wrote:
Other forms than wolves, dogs, and leopards are possible (p. 99). How about
a different-looking human?

Maybe Cassie is actually every female character in the book. If we just looked hard enough we could find evidence. Maybe she's actually every character in the book, including the men, the flying-things, and the voices in the car. In the original take it was her that was killed by the islanders. She's had some success - this time it was Reis. but she's going to keep coming back as other characters until she gets a happy ending.

I mean, our protagonist is a time-traveling, shape-shifting actress. What timeline could describe her story? What list of characters could be accurate? What assignment of motives could be trusted?

This is Wolfe's masterpiece. It's a story that cannot be interpreted.
It's his own Garden of Forking Paths.

Enamel

Roy C. Lackey — 16 Jan 2009, 05:34 · in reply to Dave Tallman

Dave Tallman wrote:
There's one more scene that takes on new meaning. On the hopper flight with Gib, Margaret pretends she has never hopped before and fakes a great fear of flying (pp. 154-156). It's an excuse to keep her eyes closed for the whole trip. She doesn't want Gib to see in her eyes how much she hates him, and to see the triumph in his look back at her.

Gil Corby was in the cargo space behind the seats, so I don't think there was any danger of making eye contact. And I don't know that he knew then (or any time before she went to Woldercan) that Margaret was Cassie. I assume that any hop had the potential to warp time, and Margaret was afraid of what might happen when the craft warped.

With this reading, many of the objections to the book fall apart. Is it disjointed, with no connection from the madcap beginning to the dark horror ending? No, it's all horror, tied together by Cassie and Margaret. Does it end abruptly, giving no idea what will happen to Cassie? No, as Paul Harvey says: "Now we know... the rest of the story."

Sad, ain't it? But that's the way life really is--we don't get to do it over.

(I wonder how few Listers ever heard of Paul Harvey.)

-Roy

Craig Brewer — 16 Jan 2009, 06:11 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

Paul Harvey is strangely apropos for a Gene Wolfe list. For those who don't know, he told little-known stories and anecdotes about famous people, or sometimes told common stories about them in ways that made them sound unfamiliar. Then, in the last "reveal," you'd find out who the person was, and the whole thing would fall into place, seeming a bit like a completely different story on reflection. Remove the easy "reveal," and you have a very Wolfian type of storytelling.

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

From: Roy C. Lackey <rclackey at stic.net>

To: The Urth Mailing List <urth at lists.urth.net>

Sent: Thursday, January 15, 2009 11:34:24 PM

Subject: Re: (urth) Gideon

Dave Tallman wrote:

There's one more scene that takes on new meaning. On the hopper flight with Gib, Margaret pretends she has never hopped before and fakes a great fear of flying (pp. 154-156). It's an excuse to keep her eyes closed for the whole trip. She doesn't want Gib to see in her eyes how much she hates him, and to see the triumph in his look back at her.

Gil Corby was in the cargo space behind the seats, so I don't think there was any danger of making eye contact. And I don't know that he knew then (or any time before she went to Woldercan) that Margaret was Cassie. I assume that any hop had the potential to warp time, and Margaret was afraid of what might happen when the craft warped.

With this reading, many of the objections to the book fall apart. Is it disjointed, with no connection from the madcap beginning to the dark horror ending? No, it's all horror, tied together by Cassie and Margaret. Does it end abruptly, giving no idea what will happen to Cassie? No, as Paul Harvey says: "Now we know... the rest of the story."

Sad, ain't it? But that's the way life really is--we don't get to do it over.

(I wonder how few Listers ever heard of Paul Harvey.)

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Dave Tallman — 16 Jan 2009, 12:26 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

Roy C. Lackey wrote:

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It's true that the other riders "turned to speak with Corby" (155), so Margaret could have kept from eye contact without holding her eyes shut. It did give her an excuse not to look at him. She knew she was about to be arrested and that Gib was working for the FBI. She didn't want to risk giving him information that would make her interrogation more difficult.

The time-warping fear seems implausible, since there seems to be a connection between warping distance and the amount of time skipped. Messages to and from Woldercan seem to

time-shift only a few days or weeks. To go back further, one must traverse an even greater distance. I think this is the explanation for why the Milky Way looks like a "little band of bright stars" (301) at the end. Cassie has left Woldercan and gotten into position to make her run back into time.

Possibly Cassie and Margaret being in close proximity makes it more dangerous. I'm starting a new theory on the reality-shifts. They seem to happen only in places where the two are together. Perhaps the proximity of the two creates a paradox field. As Cassie says, "it's liable to get complicated" (298) when you mess with time paradoxes.

For example, look at what happened to Jimmy. He was sandwiched between Cassie in the tiny dressing room (backing away from her) and Margaret coming in (nearly bumping into her), on p. 56. Then "...Cassie suspected he would have run, had he still been capable of running" (57). Jimmy was in his sixties or seventies (52). Would age alone make him unable to run? Would he still be employed as a theater watchman if he couldn't?

A short time later, Jimmy was dead, apparently of natural causes. Cassie's assumption at the time was that Reis killed Jimmy somehow, but later we realize that isn't his style. Cassie half-heartedly asks Margaret to look into it for her (90), but nothing ever comes of this. They seem to mutually agree to let it drop. There is one more possible sign of an uneasy conscience on Cassie's part: when she buys a hopper she chooses a Jimmy Galactic (297).

More cases:

- 1) Cassie's apartment number, address, and floor seem to move. Cassie and Margaret are together there more than once.
- 2) When Cassie and Margaret are together at Rustermans, Margaret is identified as "Alexis's dresser" and Margaret says softly "I'm Miss Casey's dresser now, Miss White" (60). Soon Alexis has been converted into a waitress at Rusterman's.
- 3) When Cassie needs a safe in her hotel room, Margaret helps her find/create it.

This is a little better than my other theory where Cassie does all these changes alone, by pure angelic power.

John Watkins — 16 Jan 2009, 14:42 · in reply to Dave Tallman

About this angelic stuff.

I don't have the book at hand, but it's my recollection that, at Cassie's "raising," Cassie suggests that a "raised" human would be "like an angel, or..."

I think that the "or" is what we should be looking at--Cassie was clearly about to say "a god," and she's identified repeatedly as the "green goddess." Although traditionally an angel is "lower" than a god, I think here an angel would be higher--Cassie's on the plane of the Overcyns.

On 1/16/09, Dave Tallman <davetallman at msn.com> wrote:
Roy C. Lackey wrote:

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Dave Tallman — 16 Jan 2009, 18:01 · follows John Watkins

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clearly about to say "a god," and she's identified repeatedly as the

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the Overcyns.

That seems like a good analogy. She became as powerful in her own way as Able was in "The Wizard." Some people called him an Overcyn. Angels were on the next plane up, above Skai, and directly associated with the true God.

I'm also interested in what powers she retained, and new skills she gained, as Margaret. She may have learned to walk unseen. I say that because there was a doorman on guard at the Pine Crest Towers and the shooter seems to have gotten past him without trouble. Also, when Chase first looked toward his attacker, it only says he saw "the muzzle of the gun" (82).

If Margaret was the one, she had to have rapid healing. The shooter got a deep cut to the face, so that there was "gore everywhere" (87). The cleaver was covered with blood (88). Yet Margaret showed up only fifteen minutes late with no apparent damage. If she could dance like the Volcano God she was capable of great speed and leaps higher than a person's head (286).

She was also wilder inside, liberated from human morality. I have to wonder in what state she left Gideon back on Woldercan. She seems to have stolen a great deal of hopper fuel, if not Gideon's government hopper itself, in order to make the time hop. She had to kill him again in the past to get a happy ending, but why not get some vengeance right away?