

AEG: Margaret

The Urth list — 22 messages, 6 voices, 16 Jan 2009

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5313>

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Roy C. Lackey — 16 Jan 2009, 06:34

Speaking of Cassie as Margaret . . .

After Gideon aided Cassie to bring out her "star" power, it is implied that she was then elevated, transformed "up", to a state higher than normal for humans. The text even suggests that her heightened state was somewhat angelic, though not, I believe, angelic in the usual religious sense. Cassie was certainly no angel.

So if Margaret is really an over-the-hill Cassie who wants to give her younger self a second chance at a happier life, who went to Woldercan seeking something she apparently didn't find, what did she accomplish there? If, as Dave Tallman has suggested, Margaret is now a shape-changer, whether or not an actual werewolf, when and where did she acquire that ability, and was it her choice?

I mean, only humans can transform themselves; Wolders can't do it, and Gid said he (personally) couldn't do it. (99-100) So it doesn't seem likely that Cassie learned how to transform on Woldercan.

-Roy

Dave Tallman — 16 Jan 2009, 08:37 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

Roy C. Lackey wrote:

So if Margaret is really an over-the-hill Cassie who wants to give her younger self a second chance at a happier life, who went to Woldercan seeking something she apparently didn't find, what did she accomplish there? If, as Dave Tallman has suggested, Margaret is now a shape-changer, whether or not an actual werewolf, when and where did she acquire that ability, and was it her choice?

I mean, only humans can transform themselves; Wolders can't do it, and Gid said he (personally) couldn't do it. (99-100) So it doesn't seem likely that Cassie learned how to transform on Woldercan.

There's another place where Cassie could have begun to learn this. Chase said that werewolves "want the wild and a liberation from human morality" (207). When the Volcano God danced with her, "It freed something that had been bound before; after it she danced as he did..." (286). The Volcano God was something of a shape-changer himself; he chose to appear to her as Vince. This may have been the start of her own ability.

Roy C. Lackey — 17 Jan 2009, 22:06 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

I wrote:

After Gideon aided Cassie to bring out her "star" power, it is implied that she was then elevated, transformed "up", to a state higher than normal for

humans. The text even suggests that her heightened state was somewhat angelic, though not, I believe, angelic in the usual religious sense.

Cassie

was certainly no angel.

That's not right. What Gid did for Cassie to bring out her star quality was to enhance what was already there. That is not the same thing as shape-shifting as defined by Gid. (99-100) Cassie still looked like Cassie, only better and more charming. To shape-shift is to morph into another physical form that is different from the original.

It is true that Cassie is no angel; there are none in the story. The only person in the story to be called an angel is Wally Rosenquist, and that usage by India is a theater term for a financial backer with deep pockets. Still, one has to account for Gid's warning to Cassie about how hard it is for humans to transform up and how easy it is for shape-shifters to transform down. There should be someone in the story who has been transformed up (probably with "expert assistance").

Gid may be talking to Cassie in oblique terms about Margaret-as-werewolf, if he believes that she is one, but even then, he cannot mean Margaret as an example of a human who has transformed up. As Gid explains it, "It is so easy to go down that werewolves have trouble maintaining their human forms at times." (100) That statement suggests that the animal state is the normal state for a werewolf, the state that they will revert to when they lose control. In the only example we see in the book, the large wolf that accosted Scott was all animal, not some hairy-man form like we see in movies that looks neither quite like a man nor a wolf.

Cassie asked about humans who have transformed up, "Do they become angels? Or--or . . ." Whatever she meant by "or", who in the story has been transformed up?

-Roy

Dave Tallman — 18 Jan 2009, 00:09 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

Roy C. Lackey wrote:

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I have to disagree. Cassie was told "It is easy, terribly easy, for someone who has transformed up to slip back down; and it wouldn't be right for me to die without having warned you" (p. 100). Why would Cassie need a warning about someone else slipping down? She was transformed up, and needs to know that she could lose it. You say that it cannot be transformation if she doesn't look different. I say at least her voice was different. Sharon asked her a test question about her mother's name in order to be sure it wasn't someone else tricking her over the phone (45).

What Chase calls a "higher form" for Cassie even appeared spontaneously at times in her performances before he did anything for her. She clearly didn't grow angel wings or something -- she manifested "an indescribable something that electrified me" (p. 207). He must use the words "form" and "transform" rather loosely and metaphorically.

Could a plainer woman with a more subdued voice be a lower form? I think so. Chase admits the possibility of a "man-man" (p. 100), at least in jest. The main differences are probably internal, manifested as a loss

of human qualities. After years as Margaret she might have difficulty getting herself to look as good and be as good as Cassie (even gray Cassie).

In short, I see no reason not to accept Cassie as a person who transformed up, and Margaret as a person who transformed down. There is a parallel with morals and aspirations, which is also rendered in physical terms in the Wizard Knight. Don't they say the same thing about it being easier to go down than up when they talk about the universe levels?

Roy C. Lackey — 18 Jan 2009, 02:08 · in reply to Dave Tallman

Dave Tallman quoted and wrote:

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I have to disagree. Cassie was told "It is easy, terribly easy, for someone who has transformed up to slip back down; and it wouldn't be right for me to die without having warned you" (p. 100). Why would Cassie need a warning about someone else slipping down?

Because there may be others who have transformed that she should be careful of--even if he only meant Margaret.

She was transformed up, and needs to know that she could lose it. You say that it cannot be transformation if she doesn't look different. I say at least her voice was different.

That's not enough. It's not the radical transformation Gid spoke of, such as human to animal form, as different as Carlos and the wolf that got Scott.

What Chase calls a "higher form" for Cassie even appeared spontaneously at times in her performances before he did anything for her.

Right. He only enhanced what she already had.

[snip]

In short, I see no reason not to accept Cassie as a person who transformed up, and Margaret as a person who transformed down.

I disagree for reasons stated previously. But even if you are right, that doesn't satisfy the question Cassie asked about humans who have transformed up, "Do they become angels? Or--or . . ." By your own account, the transformation of Margaret to werewolf is down, not up. Angels or what? I'm sure you will agree that a werebeast is not a step up on the moral and aspirational level.

-Roy

John Watkins — 18 Jan 2009, 02:34 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

Roy wrote:

I disagree for reasons stated previously. But even if you are right, that

doesn't satisfy the question Cassie asked about humans who have transformed up, "Do they become angels? Or--or . . ." By your own account, the transformation of Margaret to werewolf is down, not up. Angels or what?

"or gods."

Dave Tallman — 18 Jan 2009, 02:55 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

Roy C. Lackey wrote:

That's not enough. It's not the radical transformation Gid spoke of, such as human to animal form, as different as Carlos and the wolf that got Scott.

We seem to be talking past each other, and I'm not sure how to resolve it. I believe Cassie's transformation up to star/goddess and Margaret's to possibly immoral shapechanger are sufficient. Since you do not, the burden of proof is on you to find better candidates.

Here are some we could look at:

- 1) Hanga -- a human who went down to shark level, or a shark that went up?
 - 2) The Volcano God -- possibly a human who transformed up.
 - 3) The assassin and the detective -- possibly transformed down
-

Tom Foster — 18 Jan 2009, 09:12 · follows Dave Tallman

Roy C. Lackey wrote:

Gid may be talking to Cassie in oblique terms about Margaret-as-werewolf, if he believes that she is one, but even then, he cannot mean Margaret as an example of a human who has transformed up. As Gid explains it, "It is so easy to go down that werewolves have trouble maintaining their human forms at times." (100) That statement suggests that the animal state is the normal state for a werewolf, the state that they will revert to when they lose control. In the only example we see in the book, the large wolf that accosted Scott was all animal, not some hairy-man form like we see in movies that looks neither quite like a man nor a wolf.

My impression from this scene was that the man leading the wolf on a 'ludicrously thin leash' (I'm paraphrasing as I don't have the book with me) was the human element of the werewolf, and that Cassie was seeing through the werewolf's 'charm', or whatever. Presumably the other diners just saw a man walk up to Scott, but Cassie can somehow see the true dual nature of the werewolf, perhaps because she has been 'raised up' herself.

If this is the case, then surely she'd also be able to identify other werewolves, i.e. Margaret, if indeed she were one (heh, heh).

I've only just finished the book, and have been enjoying going back through the past few months' postings on the book, which I had avoided reading up until now.

I also wanted to mention a quick snippet from a previous post:

*****On Wed Oct 29th, Nigel Price wrote:

?In the context of allegorical interpretations of AEG and the significance of gold in the story, Matthew Henry's use of the proverb is interesting. In his "Concise Commentary", he writes

concerning the Parable of the Pearl of Great Price in Matthew 13.44-52:

A man may buy gold too dear, but not this
Pearl of great price. *****

I thought that this was an interesting quote, given the alchemy theme in AEG; the philosopher's stone is often referred to in medieval alchemical tracts as "the pearl of great price".

Tom

Dave Tallman — 18 Jan 2009, 09:51 · in reply to Tom Foster

My impression from this scene was that the man leading the wolf on a 'ludicrously thin leash' (I'm paraphrasing as I don't have the book with me) was the human element of the werewolf, and that Cassie was seeing through the werewolf's 'charm', or whatever. Presumably the other diners just saw a man walk up to Scott, but Cassie can somehow see the true dual nature of the werewolf, perhaps because she has been 'raised up' herself.

If this is the case, then surely she'd also be able to identify other werewolves, i.e. Margaret, if indeed she were one (heh, heh).

No, Ebony said "A woman tried to pet it. Did you see that?" (p. 190). The petting woman must have seen a wolf or dog, and so did Ebony. Cassie didn't see anything different than the others.

The werewolf was smart enough to carry out Wally's orders by himself. He was to come in, tell Scott he was wolf food, and lead him out. The other man with the thin leash was window dressing. A huge wolf coming into a restaurant by itself would cause a panic. The leash would allow people to tell themselves "Oh, it's just a dog."

I thought that this was an interesting quote, given the alchemy theme in AEG; the philosopher's stone is often referred to in medieval alchemical tracts as "the pearl of great price".

And in the Matthew context, the Pearl is the Gospel.

Tom Foster — 18 Jan 2009, 14:07 · follows Dave Tallman

I wrote:

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If this is the case, then surely she'd also be able to identify other werewolves, i.e. Margaret, if indeed she were one (heh, heh).

Dave Tallman corrected me:

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That's what you get for relying on memory alone, I guess. You're quite right about the woman trying to pet it; I had forgotten that bit. I guess I was thinking of the Short Sun books, and the way different characters manifest their real natures in their appearances at times.

Has anyone commented on the various notes Cassie receives throughout the novel from Gid and Wally? They all seem gushingly, embarrassingly OTT and somewhat out of character for the senders. Are they just supposed to signify her amazing magnetism? I must admit that I didn't find Cassie to be an especially sympathetic character.

Did it strike anyone else as slightly suspicious that Cassie insisted on going for a walk on the beach with Wallace, then making out half in the sea, after being asked by the Storm God's emissary to do just that? I know Wallace had explained that there were lots of beaches in the area, and the Storm God couldn't watch them all, but it still seems almost like tempting fate... As others have commented, the way Cassie is transformed by Prof Chase seems very reminiscent of the Dr Talos/Jolenta thaumaturgy (love that word!) and the idea of going up/down a level seems very similar to 'The Wizard Knight', not to mention sea monsters and werewolves! Wolfe certainly has his recurring tropes.

As a great Lovecraft fan, I agree with an earlier post that AEG shouldn't be sold as a Lovecraftian novel - the few Lovecraftian elements seemed a bit tacked on, and the book wouldn't really suffer if the Storm God was just the plain old Storm God.

Apologies for rambling - I'm still thinking my way through it, and could do with re-reading it soon, I suspect. I wish I'd brought it to work with me today!

Tom

Dave Tallman — 18 Jan 2009, 21:38 · in reply to Tom Foster

Has anyone commented on the various notes Cassie receives throughout the novel from Gid and Wally? They all seem gushingly, embarrassingly OTT and somewhat out of character for the senders. Are they just supposed to signify her amazing magnetism? I must admit that I didn't find Cassie to be an especially sympathetic character.

Chase's note (p. 216) doesn't seem OTT or OOC to me. Other than the first and last paragraphs, the rest gets down to the business of delivering her to Kololahi for Reis. The love parts seem barely sincere. If he "loved her for years" (presumably from watching her performances) why did he never make a move until she could be useful as bait in a scheme?

Wally's notes are a bit OTT, but he talks about love that way in person, too. "...I'll win. With a green goddess at my side" (125). That's about as flowery as his note on p. 175.

The note from Wally that feels completely wrong is the one on p. 254. "...Did you feel my kiss? I'm hungry for yours!" Pretty corny, and there's not one word about the danger she was in. It almost feels like it was written at a different time and delivered out-of-context -- is this another hint of time-travel for Reis?

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They weren't in the Takanga group at the time, but on some other island Reis chose for the private conversation. He didn't even want to say the name out loud, in case they were bugged (268). Perhaps the Volcano God provided some protection as well. By the way, I notice that everyone worries about minaturized bugs, but nobody seems to be afraid of GPS (for example, Gideon's actions on p. 21 make no sense if there could be GPS chips in the photos). Have all the GPS satellites been taken down?

As others have commented, the way Cassie is transformed by Prof Chase seems very reminiscent of the Dr Talos/Jolenta thaumaturgy (love that word!) and the idea of going up/down a level seems very similar to 'The Wizard Knight', not to mention sea monsters and werewolves! Wolfe certainly has his recurring tropes.

Talos didn't care at all about Jolenta; he only wished to use her for Baldander's purposes. That seems to shed some light on Gideon's feeling for Cassie.

Roy C. Lackey — 18 Jan 2009, 21:53 · in reply to Dave Tallman

Dave Tallman quoted and wrote:

That's not enough. It's not the radical transformation Gid spoke of, such as human to animal form, as different as Carlos and the wolf that got Scott.

We seem to be talking past each other, and I'm not sure how to resolve it. I believe Cassie's transformation up to star/goddess and Margaret's to possibly immoral shapechanger are sufficient. Since you do not, the burden of proof is on you to find better candidates.

I should have said Al, not Carlos as the wolf.

You evidently believe that Cassie was elevated by Gid to the level of a goddess. I have trouble seeing Cassie as a goddess in any meaningful sense of the word, either by traditional or Lupine standards. The Old World goddesses in, say, the Latro books, have supernatural powers that they exercise to intervene in human lives and on the objective world. Cassie demonstrates no such powers. She was powerless to prevent her lover's death or to get herself off that island, for example. She became an object of desire with the requisite mien of a Hollywood star, but that is as far as it went. And her comportment was by no stretch angelic.

Here are some we could look at:

- 1) Hanga -- a human who went down to shark level, or a shark that went up?
- 2) The Volcano God -- possibly a human who transformed up.

That is the possibility that I was getting at. I mentioned before how, at times, in Cassie's mind, it almost seems as if she regards Bill and Wally as two different people. Then consider the "angel or what" bit and India's "angel", the only person so called in the book. How different is India's angel, the man Cassie came to profess love for, from the man the president said was the most "evil man in the world"?

I don't think Gid ever refers to Reis as Wally Rosenquist, and when Cassie first spoke that name to him he reacted as if he had never heard the name. Thereafter he remains noncommittal about her usage. In the islands, Wally sets Cassie up as the "green goddess", with himself as her consort and fit companion for a "goddess".

If there is a moral component to transforming up, did bad Bill become the somewhat

benevolent Wally, who hoped to fight the aliens and make the world a better place? If there is no moral component to transformation, might a spirit or nature god be the "or what"?

-Roy

Dave Tallman — 19 Jan 2009, 00:07 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

Roy C. Lackey wrote:

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I do think so, because strange things are going on around her other than her new attractiveness. Addresses are shifting, etc. Her power seems not to be under conscious control, and it may be blocked (perhaps by Gid's post-hypnotic suggestions). Something gets unblocked when she dances with the Volcano God, but it's too late.

/ 2) The Volcano God -- possibly a human who transformed up.

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That is the possibility that I was getting at. I mentioned before how, at times, in Cassie's mind, it almost seems as if she regards Bill and Wally as two different people. Then consider the "angel or what" bit and India's "angel", the only person so called in the book. How different is India's angel, the man Cassie came to profess love for, from the man the president said was the most "evil man in the world"?

Ok, suppose Reis has transformed up. He would probably require expert assistance, and by your previous arguments he couldn't learn that on Woldercan. Is that a consulting service he got from Gid? It's doubtful that was the original deal, because Gid never refers to such a thing when brainstorming with Cassie when Reis is an enemy. It could be part of the second deal with Gid.

If there is a moral component to transforming up, did bad Bill become the somewhat benevolent Wally, who hoped to fight the aliens and make the world a better place? If there is no moral component to transformation, might a spirit or nature god be the "or what"?

To have these aspects co-exist in time, we need time-travel for him, too. Call the old Reis Bill -- he's an evil, murderous, blackmailer. He came around backstage that night and possibly rubbed out Jimmy. Then he met Cassie and got charmed. He made arrangements with Chase to get raised to a higher level himself. The new and better man, Wally, came back in time after transformation to do a nicer job of wooing Cassie. His powers are less blocked than hers, so he can exist in some form after death. He chose to appear to Cassie as Vince Palma's Volcano God (maybe to spare her pain) and gave her a little help by starting a fire, etc.

That's not a bad theory (I'm not sure how much of it corresponds with yours), though it leaves lots of open questions.

1) Would Gid help a half-enemy to such a degree?

2) Why ask Cassie to "leave flowers"?

3) What does Cassie think is possible regarding Wally in the end? If she wants him to come back, why not go back to the island instead of out to Woldercan?

4) Is Wally an established alias? It seems to be known to the business community already, and Reis much less so. You'd think it would be the other way around.

5) In the book, which appearances are Bill and which are Wally?

Is this the sort of theory you have in mind?

David Duffy — 19 Jan 2009, 00:23 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

On Sun, 18 Jan 2009, Roy C. Lackey wrote:

If there is a moral component to transforming up, did bad Bill become the somewhat benevolent Wally, who hoped to fight the aliens and make the world a better place?

My take on Bill/Wally is that he become a "superhero", specifically the the Shadow . That character fights evil, but uses violent methods, and is distrusted by most of the authorities, although he does have links with a few police.

Having just returned my copy of AEG to the library, I can't point to the exact reference where Gideon? suggests that Reis is similar to Cassie in being elevated in some way.

David Duffy.

Roy C. Lackey — 20 Jan 2009, 05:44 · in reply to Dave Tallman

Dave Tallman quoted and wrote:

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of the word, either by traditional or Lupine standards. The Old World goddesses in, say, the Latro books, have supernatural powers that they exercise to intervene in human lives and on the objective world. Cassie demonstrates no such powers. She was powerless to prevent her lover's death

or to get herself off that island, for example. She became an object of desire with the requisite mien of a Hollywood star, but that is as far as it

went. And her comportment was by no stretch angelic.

I do think so, because strange things are going on around her other than her new attractiveness. Addresses are shifting, etc. Her power seems not to be under conscious control, and it may be blocked (perhaps by Gid's post-hypnotic suggestions). Something gets unblocked when she dances with the Volcano God, but it's too late.

I'm still not sold on the reality-warping bit, partly because no one, not even Cassie, seems to notice the discrepancies you have mentioned.

/ 2) The Volcano God -- possibly a human who transformed up.

/

That is the possibility that I was getting at. I mentioned before how, at

times, in Cassie's mind, it almost seems as if she regards Bill and Wally as

two different people. Then consider the "angel or what" bit and India's "angel", the only person so called in the book. How different is India's angel, the man Cassie came to profess love for, from the man the president

said was the most "evil man in the world"?

Ok, suppose Reis has transformed up. He would probably require expert assistance, and by your previous arguments he couldn't learn that on Woldercan. Is that a consulting service he got from Gid? It's doubtful that was the original deal, because Gid never refers to such a thing when brainstorming with Cassie when Reis is an enemy. It could be part of the second deal with Gid.

Gid is the only known expert in the book, so he would almost have to be the one who assisted any theoretical transformation up. Gid admits to not telling the whole truth and told Cassie never to volunteer information when he was instructing her how best to lie (94), so I'm sure he wasn't telling her all his business.

If there is a moral component to transforming up, did bad Bill become the somewhat benevolent Wally, who hoped to fight the aliens and make the world a better place? If there is no moral component to transformation, might a spirit or nature god be the "or what"?

To have these aspects co-exist in time, we need time-travel for him, too. Call the old Reis Bill -- he's an evil, murderous, blackmailer. He came around backstage that night and possibly rubbed out Jimmy. Then he met Cassie and got charmed. He made arrangements with Chase to get raised to a higher level himself. The new and better man, Wally, came back in time after transformation to do a nicer job of wooing Cassie.

If it happened that way, there would be no need for him to go back in time. Bill just becomes Wally. Time travel by hopper seems too iffy to exercise fine control.

His powers are less blocked than hers, so he can exist in some form after death. He chose to appear to Cassie as Vince Palma's Volcano God (maybe to spare her pain) and gave her a little help by starting a fire, etc.

That's not a bad theory (I'm not sure how much of it corresponds with yours), though it leaves lots of open questions.

1) Would Gid help a half-enemy to such a degree?

Gid is playing everyone involved to one degree or another to suit his own ends.

2) Why ask Cassie to "leave flowers"?

I don't know. Why did Pat Gomez do the same, particularly since it seems so bizarre in the circumstances? But it seems to be why Cassie had just come from Oakland before speaking to Klauser. Best I can tell, Pat somehow assisted, or at least tried, to keep Cassie from dying the night of the storm, when both Cassie and Reis were supposed to die. As indicated by Pat saying to Cassie, "You will live.", contradicting the dead assassin. (280) The two "leave flowers" bits must be related somehow.

3) What does Cassie think is possible regarding Wally in the end? If she wants him to come back, why not go back to the island instead of out to Woldercan?

4) Is Wally an established alias? It seems to be known to the business community already, and Reis much less so. You'd think it would be the other way around.

5) In the book, which appearances are Bill and which are Wally?

I don't know. But when Reis and Cassie had their walk on that island, he is referred to as Reis, she calls him Bill, then calls him Wally and asks him if it is okay to call him Wally sometimes. (270) Odd.

Is this the sort of theory you have in mind?

I don't know yet what I have in mind; I've hardly begun to connect all the dots. It would help if I knew why the Volcano God chose to appear to Cassie as Vince instead of Bill/Wally, and why *he* thought she might see him again. How? Why would he think that? The fire she built was as much a ritual fire as a rescue beacon.

-Roy

Dave Tallman — 20 Jan 2009, 13:01 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

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/>/ back in time after transformation to do a nicer job of wooing Cassie.

/

If it happened that way, there would be no need for him to go back in time.
Bill just becomes Wally. Time travel by hopper seems too iffy to exercise
fine control.

In almost every variation of this I can think of, Cassie saw both the "before" and "after" version of Bill. But there is no mention of her seeing anything different about him. I really doubt he was transformed.

/ 2) Why ask Cassie to "leave flowers"?

/

I don't know. Why did Pat Gomez do the same, particularly since it seems so bizarre in the circumstances? But it seems to be why Cassie had just come from Oakland before speaking to Klauser. Best I can tell, Pat somehow assisted, or at least tried, to keep Cassie from dying the night of the storm, when both Cassie and Reis were supposed to die. As indicated by Pat saying to Cassie, "You will live.", contradicting the dead assassin. (280)
The two "leave flowers" bits must be related somehow.

I was thinking along those lines, too. Pat Gomez was dead, a zombie, and she wanted someone to lay flowers on her grave, even though her body was not there. Likewise, Bill's body was not on the Volcano God's island, but the black coral image was a gravestone of sorts, associated with the place they first made love. Cassie honored both requests for flowers.

Did Pat help save Cassie, or just predict her escape? Some say the dead are outside of time, able to see the future. Or Pat might have helped by calling the bat-creatures. They called Death's Visitors. Most of their appearances to Cassie are right after a violent death.

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/

I don't know. But when Reis and Cassie had their walk on that island, he is referred to as Reis, she calls him Bill, then calls him Wally and asks him if it is okay to call him Wally sometimes. (270) Odd.

I never saw the distinction you made, with Bill and Wally as separate people in Cassie's mind. Wally is like a pet name she chooses after she has come to love him. Cassie explains this on p. 288: "My husband's name wasn't Wally. Not really. It was Bill. I called him Wally a-- a lot. It was a little private joke we had."

I don't know yet what I have in mind; I've hardly begun to connect all the dots. It would help if I knew why the Volcano God chose to appear to Cassie as Vince instead of Bill/Wally, and why *he* thought she might see him again. How? Why would he think that? The fire she built was as much a ritual fire as a rescue beacon.

Vince is still an unknown in my mind. He's an established actor, having done TV or movie work (westerns, p. 65), voiceovers (Memorare), and the stage. His voice makes everything he says sound important (285). Was he transformed up? It's troublesome to explain how Vince ended up in a play close to Cassie before she became involved in Chase's plot. Is a time traveler setting things up?

How might Cassie see Wally again? If Cassie goes back in time as Margaret, she will see him again, not very happily. Or he could mean in the life to come.

Roy C. Lackey — 21 Jan 2009, 07:05 · in reply to Dave Tallman

Dave Tallman wrote:

I never saw the distinction you made, with Bill and Wally as separate people in Cassie's mind. Wally is like a pet name she chooses after she has come to love him. Cassie explains this on p. 288: "My husband's name wasn't Wally. Not really. It was Bill. I called him Wally a-- a lot. It was a little private joke we had."

Otoh, that whole account of how she came to be stranded is a tissue of half-truths and evasions, a fine example of Gid's lecture about how best to mislead people.

Cassie was told contradictory versions of the gold bracelet's origins. There is the green-dress business and Wally being/not being in the audience. In the beach conversation, she called him a wizard (making gold, vanishing), just after he had told her that a wizard (meaning Chase) could never be trusted. (269-270)

She reminded him that he had once told her he (Reis) could be trusted and his word was always good. He reacted as if he didn't remember saying that. (270) He hadn't had that many conversations with her. How could he have forgotten something like that, particularly when his original point in saying it was to gain her trust? Three pages later, it comes out how he deceived her (and Kanoa) about using depth charges on the Storm King.

Vince is still an unknown in my mind. He's an established actor, having done TV or movie work (westerns, p. 65), voiceovers (Memorare), and the stage. His voice makes everything he says sound important (285). Was he transformed up?

I don't think so. She told the Vince-figure that he wasn't really Vince and that she had never liked Vince anyway. But she liked this entity, "whoever you are." Yet earlier, when noting the correspondences between real-life people in the islands with characters in the play, she told herself, "I only hope I never meet Vince.", meaning, of course, the Volcano God. Too bad we don't know how Wally's play ended; it might shed some light.

It's troublesome to explain how Vince ended up in a play close to Cassie before she became involved in Chase's plot. Is a time traveler setting things up?

I don't see any good reason to suppose that Vince is anything more than he appears to be, an actor.

How might Cassie see Wally again? If Cassie goes back in time as Margaret, she will see him again, not very happily. Or he could mean in the life to come.

I think W.R. was too alpha to be that passive, unless the life to come means something other than what it means for most people. I have no idea whatsoever what it means for a human to be in any sense a volcano god.

-Roy

Dave Tallman — 21 Jan 2009, 10:54 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

Roy C. Lackey quoted and wrote:

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>/ people in Cassie's mind. Wally is like a pet name she choses after she
>/ has come to love him. Cassie explains this on p. 288: "My husband's name
>/ wasn't Wally. Not really. It was Bill. I called him Wally a-- a lot. It
>/ was a little private joke we had."

/

Otoh, that whole account of how she came to be stranded is a tissue of half-truths and evasions, a fine example of Gid's lecture about how best to mislead people.

There are half-truths and evasions, but no outright inventions I can see. It's interesting how she hesitates, though. Did she start to say something else, like, "I called him Wally as..."?

Cassie was told contradictory versions of the gold bracelet's origins. There is the green-dress business and Wally being/not being in the audience. In the beach conversation, she called him a wizard (making gold, vanishing), just after he had told her that a wizard (meaning Chase) could never be trusted. (269-270)

The contradictory versions of the gold bracelet show that Reis was lying, IMHO, not that there were two of him. During the stroll on the beach he finally admitted it was radioactive gold:

Reis: "The gold made you think of that first bracelet..."

Cassie: "...We've already talked a little about the gold. Radioactive gold."

Reis: "We have."

Giving her the bracelet was a criminal assault; it was natural for him to lie during the presentation. He changed his story at Rusterman's (121) because he wanted to explain why he took the bracelet back without giving the real reason. He thought she might be flattered and mollified if he told her he made it especially for her.

The green/brown dress and the being/not being in the audience I do take as evidence of clones. My favorite theory right now is that Reis doubled back in time to see the play he missed that night, after he became attracted to Cassie.

She reminded him that he had once told her he (Reis) could be trusted and his word was always good. He reacted as if he didn't remember saying that. (270) He hadn't had that many conversations with her. How could he have forgotten something like that, particularly when his original point in saying it was to gain her trust? Three pages later, it comes out how he deceived her (and Kanoa) about using depth charges on the Storm King.

I took the "You said your word was always good?"..."Did I? I probably did." to be a sign that Cassie made such a generalization of what he said that he hardly recognized it. What he really said was: "...in business matters I can be trusted absolutely. I do not cheat. Most particularly, I do not cheat my partners." He didn't say he never lied in matters of love.

Reis was vehement that he told no actual lie to Kanoa (273), and I think he was technically but not morally correct. He said, "I will not attack the Storm King, or his city, with depth charges. Or attack them at all without telling you what I plan" (254). He put a concentration of gold around the city, leading to Navy attack; he chose to consider that a gypsy trick rather than an attack in

itself.

I don't think so. She told the Vince-figure that he wasn't really Vince and that she had never liked Vince anyway. But she liked this entity, "whoever you are." Yet earlier, when noting the correspondences between real-life people in the islands with characters in the play, she told herself, "I only hope I never meet Vince.", meaning, of course, the Volcano God. Too bad we don't know how Wally's play ended; it might shed some light.

I think you're right that Vince was just an actor. But symbolically he was a representative of Reis in the play. Here are some things I deduce about the play:

1) The Volcano God was a dangerous villain in the play -- "I only hope I never meet Vince" (249).

2) "Remember the show? The banquet you made for me? The way you danced with Gil and me?" (285). It seems he was wooing Mariah in a love triangle with Mr. Sharpy. He offered her a banquet. This is a very close match to the Cassie/Gideon/Wally triangle, including dining out. The dance might have been a dream sequence, like the Laurey/Curly/Judd dance in "Oklahoma."

3) Vince had a speech about coconuts (107). This may relate to the banquet, but I suspect it was a double-entendre about Mariah's breasts.

4) Aunt Jane loved the Volcano God: "And how I love his boiling lava..." (138), suggesting she will betray Mariah in the play, and foreshadowing Norma's possible betrayal of Cassie. She has an unhappy role. since she is only supposed to smile once (131).

5) Like the gold bracelet, the play was designed for Cassie's destruction. I suggest there was a scene where she was thrown down a stage volcano; that would be a fine way to arrange an "accidental" death.

6) Cassie on Zelda trying to get her to sign up for the play: "She's sold me down the volcano..." (83).

7) As a musical, the play would normally have a happy ending of some sort. But there could be a twist. One would expect Mariah to end up with the sailor, but Reis named him "Mr. Sharpy" (a sharper, a confidence trickster). He was the parallel to Chase. Since the play was intended to send a message to Chase, Mariah probably ended up with the Volcano God.

I think W.R. was too alpha to be that passive, unless the life to come means something other than what it means for most people. I have no idea whatsoever what it means for a human to be in any sense a volcano god.

The island of Takanga Ha'i seems to have two mountains, one for the palace and one an active volcano. Probably the King's mountain was also a volcano, now inactive. That gave Reis a strong association with the Volcano God. Perhaps he joined with the Volcano God's spirit after death. His appearance as Vince Palma rather than Wally suggests the being Cassie saw was not simply the ghost of Reis.

Dave Tallman — 23 Jan 2009, 14:12 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

Roy C. Lackey wrote:

I'm still not sold on the reality-warping bit, partly because no one, not even Cassie, seems to notice the discrepancies you have mentioned.

Another possibility (one I don't like as well) is that Kingsport is a haunted, Lovecraftian location where this kind of location and time shifting happens all the time. In "The Festival" a visitor to

Kingsport is shifted back in time without realizing it. In "The Dream Quest of the Unknown Kadath," Randolph Carter sees Kingsport as it used to be. I don't have a problem with people not noticing the shifts, since memories are probably shifted correspondingly. In "Dark City" this sort of thing is the norm -- the city shifts and memories are edited by the controlling beings of the place.

Here are a few more location puzzles:

1) Cassie lives within walking distance of a Baskin Robbins, on the corner of 15th and Madison (23). This suggests a part of the city with a grid layout, with numbered streets running N/S and streets named for Presidents running E/W. Arbor Street doesn't fit the pattern.

2) The eastern part of the city is older, dating from colonial times (294). The city probably grew west from the harbor. The eastern part has places with cheaper rents (293).

3) Ian Mersey comments on the shooting: "Hear 'bout the bloke who got shot in Pine Crest Towers?" (87), seeming to assume they would know the place. Is it a famous location, or perhaps close by? Both Cassie's building and the Towers have doormen.

4) Who is Mersey, anyway? He talks with an old-fashioned English style. Chase knows him, enough to trust him to smuggle him out of the building (100-101). Is he a time-traveler from a "Liverpool ship"? How did he just happen to end up working in the building where Cassie lives?

Dave Tallman — 23 Jan 2009, 22:54 · in reply to Dave Tallman

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One more thing about Ian Mersey: Liverpool is a major port on the Mersey River in England. Just after Ian smuggles him out of the building, Chase starts singing about a "Liverpool ship with a Liverpool crew" (p. 101).

It seems like Cassie attracts people into her life with mysterious secrets faster than the heroine of "The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya" (who does possess the power to warp reality). Does Cassie's latent talent have something to do with this?

Gideon Chase -- wizard, loved her for years.

Bill Reis -- instantly prepared to pull elaborate scheme involving bracelets and plays, falls for her. Ian Mersey -- Chase's friend/accomplice. Very strong. Possible time traveler. Vince Palma -- natural for playing the Volcano God, may have secret knowledge or powers. Norma -- possible ex-wife of Reis, but allows Cassie to think she means Vince. Donny -- possible Cthulhu cultist, possible assassin. Margaret -- time-traveler, temporal clone, werewolf (but this one is no coincidence).

Roy C. Lackey — 26 Jan 2009, 05:14 · in reply to Dave Tallman

Dave Tallman wrote:

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1) The Volcano God was a dangerous villain in the play -- "I only hope I never meet Vince" (249).

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[snip]

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The scene where Cassie is sitting in the back of Wally's car and he shows her a vid image of her in the play may foreshadow the dance in the beach scene near the end of the book. But I can't quite make sense of it and the quoted lines from the song just makes it more confusing. (145) (The vid was taken before Gid/Gil joined the cast.)

Right after the song quotes:

"She clasped hands with her soul, and the two began to dance. "Her images vanished." [To be replaced by Reis's face.]

In that scene from the play, which character was she dancing with, and is the real-life person that character represents somehow Mariah's (Cassie's) "soul" mate? We know the main male dancer was Sharpy, but she (or they) also danced with the play's Volcano God. So is there a scene in the play where Mariah dances with just the Volcano God?

Or is there a scene where Mariah dances alone, and the audience is meant to assume she is dancing with an unseen Volcano God? That vid bit is confusing, but I don't think that any vid was actually used in the play's presentation, such that Mariah is seen on the stage dancing with a hologram of herself.

Also, when Cassie asked the island Vince if he remembered the play's banquet and all, he said no.

-Roy

stoneox17 at aol.com — 26 Jan 2009, 21:07 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

Roy wrote

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herself.

Also, when Cassie asked the island Vince if he remembered the play's
banquet

and all, he said no.

When it says "Her images vanished," doesn't this mean she has to be dancing with herself
(probably a hologram, as Roy suggests). In real life, this has to correspond to Cassie and
Margaret. So this is a hint that Margaret is really the post-Woldercon Cassie. But does it mean
anything symbolically for Margaret to be Cassie's soul?

Any thoughts?

Peter