

Wolfe at Dragon*Con (AEG)

The Urth list — 66 messages, 15 voices, 09 Sep 2009

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5484>

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

James Wynn — 09 Sep 2009, 14:40

Here's some AEG grist for the mill. Wolfe talked about how much he enjoyed Cassie in "An Evil Guest". This is how he described the end of the novel: "Cassie loved Bill Riese and at the end of the novel she goes to Woldercon to look for him."

Look, maybe this has already been said, but don't recall it. I thought I'd surely get a reaction on this quote so I'm going up the ante. For reasons, that would be compelling only to me, the death of Bill Reise at the end of AEG really sat wrong with me. It struck me as totally random. But if the person killed on the island were Gideon Chase in disguise, it makes perfectly good sense. Also, Bill Reise avowing his love for Cassie at his death seemed so out-of-character.

So when Wolfe said this in the panel on Fictional Characters, a series of tumblers fell into place in my head. It was Bill Reise disguised as Gideon Chase who left for Woldercon at the end of AEG. Cassie didn't go to Woldercon merely to get her mojo back (although she would probably need to in order to win Reise).

I'm not prepared to prove it is so, but I really *really* makes sense that it would be that way.

J.

Allan Anderson — 09 Sep 2009, 14:47 · in reply to James Wynn

Ah, that *does* help me shed a bit of the "wtf" feeling that came over me at the end of my non-analytic reading of AEG. There are certainly other explanations, but this one is very interesting.

Much like the rest of your details of your con experience! Thank you for relating them to us.

On Sep 9, 2009, at 7:40 AM, James Wynn wrote:

Here's some AEG grist for the mill. Wolfe talked about how much he enjoyed Cassie in "An Evil Guest". This is how he described the end of the novel: "Cassie loved Bill Riese and at the end of the novel she goes to Woldercon to look for him."

Look, maybe this has already been said, but don't recall it. I thought I'd surely get a reaction on this quote so I'm going up the ante. For reasons, that would be compelling only to me, the death of Bill Reise at the end of AEG really sat wrong with me. It struck me as totally random. But if the person killed on the island were Gideon Chase in disguise, it makes perfectly good sense. Also, Bill Reise avowing his love for Cassie at his death seemed so out-of-character.

So when Wolfe said this in the panel on Fictional Characters, a series of tumblers fell into place in my head. It was Bill Reise disguised as Gideon Chase who left for Woldercon at the end of AEG.

Cassie didn't go to Woldercon merely to get her mojo back (although she would probably need to in order to win Reise).

I'm not prepared to prove it is so, but I really *really* makes sense that it would be that way.

J.

James Wynn — 09 Sep 2009, 16:41 · in reply to Allan Anderson

Wolfe said:

Here's some AEG grist for the mill. Wolfe talked about how much he enjoyed Cassie in "An Evil Guest". This is how he described the end of the novel: "Cassie loved Bill Reise and at the end of the novel she goes to Woldercon to look for him."

I said:

if the person killed on the island were Gideon Chase in disguise, it makes perfectly good sense.

[snip] It was Bill Reise disguised as Gideon Chase who left for Woldercon at the end of AEG. I'm not prepared to prove it is so, but I really *really* makes sense that it would be that way.

Allan Anderson said:

Ah, that *does* help me shed a bit of the "wtf" feeling that came over me at the end of my non-analytic reading of AEG. There are certainly other explanations, but this one is very interesting.

I'll have to re-read AEG with this in mind, but if Chase is running around disguised as Reise in order to earn his gold and to get close to Cassie, then it could be that this would help resolve some of the sense that Wally and Bill Reise are different people.

J.

Roy C. Lackey — 09 Sep 2009, 23:18 · in reply to James Wynn

James Wynn wrote:

Look, maybe this has already been said, but don't recall it. I thought I'd surely get a reaction on this quote so I'm going up the ante. For reasons, that would be compelling only to me, the death of Bill Reise at the end of AEG really sat wrong with me. It struck me as totally random. But if the person killed on the island were Gideon Chase in disguise, it makes perfectly good sense. Also, Bill Reise avowing his love for Cassie at his death seemed so out-of-character.

So when Wolfe said this in the panel on Fictional Characters, a series of tumblers fell into place in my head. It was Bill Reise disguised as Gideon Chase who left for Woldercon at the end of AEG. Cassie didn't go to Woldercon merely to get her mojo back (although she would probably need to in order to win Reise).

Reis was a big man; Gideon was not. A conventional disguise or one that involves a "glamour", to say nothing of shape shifting, would have to account for Gid's missing leg. Shape shifting involves a certain conservation of mass, such that the subject will weigh the same after the transformation as before.

Cassie told Klauser that Reis was dead, and at the end of the book, when there was no one to hear her and she was on the way to Woldercan, she bemoaned his death. Who was she fooling?

She had been in perfect position to see the body that had been clubbed to death, and she had been forced to watch. Shape-changers and glamour-casters lose control at death. Who did Cassie--and more importantly the islanders--see dead at her feet, if not Bill Reis? I don't think it is possible for it to have been one-legged Gideon Chase.

-Roy

Allan Anderson — 09 Sep 2009, 23:29 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

Hmm -- isn't there some stuff about time progressing at a different rate on Woldercan? Letters arriving before they're sent, etc. Maybe Wolfe meant she's trying to find a past Reis. Just a random idea.

On Wed, Sep 9, 2009 at 4:18 PM, Roy C. Lackey <rclackey at stic.net> wrote:
James Wynn wrote:

Look, maybe this has already been said, but don't recall it. I thought I'd surely get a reaction on this quote so I'm going up the ante. For reasons, that would be compelling only to me, the death of Bill Reise at the end of AEG really sat wrong with me. It struck me as totally random. But if the person killed on the island were Gideon Chase in disguise, it makes perfectly good sense. Also, Bill Reise avowing his love for Cassie at his death seemed so out-of-character.

So when Wolfe said this in the panel on Fictional Characters, a series of tumblers fell into place in my head. It was Bill Reise disguised as Gideon Chase who left for Woldercon at the end of AEG. Cassie didn't go to Woldercon merely to get her mojo back (although she would probably need to in order to win Reise).

Reis was a big man; Gideon was not. A conventional disguise or one that involves a "glamour", to say nothing of shape shifting, would have to account for Gid's missing leg. Shape shifting involves a certain conservation of mass, such that the subject will weigh the same after the transformation as before.

Cassie told Klauser that Reis was dead, and at the end of the book, when there was no one to hear her and she was on the way to Woldercan, she bemoaned his death. Who was she fooling?

She had been in perfect position to see the body that had been clubbed to death, and she had been forced to watch. Shape-changers and glamour-casters lose control at death. Who did Cassie--and more importantly the islanders--see dead at her feet, if not Bill Reis? I don't think it is possible for it to have been one-legged Gideon Chase.

-Roy

John Watkins — 10 Sep 2009, 00:32 · in reply to Allan Anderson

Good thing Wolfe didn't leave too many possible options, eh? Time travel, shapeshifters, "glamours" that alter appearances, gods who look like people, physical alteration by Cthulhu, and of course the old standby, clones.

I feel confident that there's something more than goofy pastiche fun going on with An Evil Guest, but I don't know what it is. It works as goofy pastiche fun anyway.

On Wed, Sep 9, 2009 at 7:29 PM, Allan Anderson <rubel at goosemoon.org> wrote:
Hmm -- isn't there some stuff about time progressing at a different rate on Woldercan? Letters arriving before they're sent, etc. Maybe Wolfe meant she's trying to find a past Reis. Just a random idea.

On Wed, Sep 9, 2009 at 4:18 PM, Roy C. Lackey <rclackey at stic.net> wrote:

James Wynn wrote:

Look, maybe this has already been said, but don't recall it. I thought I'd surely get a reaction on this quote so I'm going up the ante. For reasons, that would be compelling only to me, the death of Bill Reise at the end of AEG really sat wrong with me. It struck me as totally random. But if the person killed on the island were Gideon Chase in disguise, it makes perfectly good sense. Also, Bill Reise avowing his love for Cassie at his death seemed so out-of-character.

So when Wolfe said this in the panel on Fictional Characters, a series of tumblers fell into place in my head. It was Bill Reise disguised as Gideon Chase who left for Woldercon at the end of AEG. Cassie didn't go to Woldercon merely to get her mojo back (although she would probably need to in order to win Reise).

Reis was a big man; Gideon was not. A conventional disguise or one that involves a "glamour", to say nothing of shape shifting, would have to account for Gid's missing leg. Shape shifting involves a certain conservation of mass, such that the subject will weigh the same after the transformation as before.

Cassie told Klauser that Reis was dead, and at the end of the book, when there was no one to hear her and she was on the way to Woldercan, she bemoaned his death. Who was she fooling?

She had been in perfect position to see the body that had been clubbed to death, and she had been forced to watch. Shape-changers and glamour-casters lose control at death. Who did Cassie--and more importantly the islanders--see dead at her feet, if not Bill Reis? I don't think it is possible for it to have been one-legged Gideon Chase.

-Roy

James Wynn — 10 Sep 2009, 01:09 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

Roy says:

Reis was a big man; Gideon was not. A conventional disguise or one that involves a "glamour", to say nothing of shape shifting, would have to account for Gid's missing leg.

I haven't started re-reading so I don't know if anyone mentioned whether the Gideon Chase who went to Woldercon had one or two legs. Few people knew he had lost it.

Shape shifting involves a certain conservation of mass, such that the subject will weigh the same after the transformation as before.

You have me at a disadvantage. I'm not an expert on the limits of Gideon's nor Reis's ability to shape-shift. However, a prosthetic leg that looks realistic on a guy in pants is neither magic nor speculative fiction.

Cassie told Klauser that Reis was dead, and at the end of the book, when there was no one to hear her and she was on the way to Woldercan, she bemoaned his death. Who was she fooling?

It was you who first pointed out that Reis seemed to be more than one. Which Reis are we talking about? It's true she says "Bill...why did you have to die" but then she says "Come back to me Wally!"

She had been in perfect position to see the body that had been clubbed to death, and she had been forced to watch.
Shape-changers and glamour-casters
lose control at death.

Do they? I can't do it and so I don't know much about it. In any case, the natives did not have long to study the body before Cassie smoked the king, and was carried away by the bat things.

Who did Cassie--and more importantly the islanders--see dead at her feet, if not Bill Reis?

Wolfe said Cassie went to Woldercon to find Reis.

If he didn't die on the island, then obviously Cassie knew it. Why wouldn't she? Since Cassie was swept away immediately after killing the king, we cannot know what happened among the natives afterward.

I don't think it is possible for it to have been one-legged Gideon Chase.

You are freely conclusion jumping. I don't see how you found your way to be so emphatically sure about all this based on what you have offered here.

Look, Roy, Reis and Cassie were about to be married. But Bill Reis --who loved Cassie as much for the way she adorned himself as anything else-- could not arrange to have either his oldest friend there nor his own son to watch the big event. He was practically eloping with her. Does that seem likely? Why would he do that? The whole thing stinks. On the other hand, why would Chase disguised as Reis do that? Lots of reasons.

I guess there are other explanations too. But, remember how you mentioned that it is suspicious that we never meet Reis's son? Well how much weirder that we never see Chase

again either....the Pygmalion to Cassie's Galatea. By the way...Pygmalion *did* marry Galatea, no one else.

I'm sure there are plenty of adequate explanations for Wolfe's assertion that Cassie went to Woldercon to find Bill Reis. I'll have to re-read it. But it fits like much else does not.

Roy C. Lackey — 10 Sep 2009, 05:32 · in reply to James Wynn

James Wynn quoted and wrote:

Shape shifting involves a certain conservation of mass, such that the subject will weigh the same after the transformation as before.

You have me at a disadvantage. I'm not an expert on the limits of Gideon's nor Reis's ability to shape-shift. However, a prosthetic leg that looks realistic on a guy in pants is neither magic nor speculative fiction.

Gid claimed not to be able either to shape-shift or do the "vanishing" trick. (Yeah, yeah, he could have lied.) It was he who explained to Cassie why the wolf that got Scott was so big: the man who became the wolf was a big man. It was also he who said that when a human transformed into an animal, the animal would have the same weight as the human. That's why it matters that Reis was a big man and Gid was not, and Gid was a leg shy of his normal weight.

When Reis was clubbed to death, he kept trying the vanishing trick.

Cassie told Klauser that Reis was dead, and at the end of the book, when there was no one to hear her and she was on the way to Woldercan, she bemoaned his death. Who was she fooling?

It was you who first pointed out that Reis seemed to be more than one.

Which

Reis are we talking about? It's true she says "Bill...why did you have to die" but then she says "Come back to me Wally!"

I mean the Reis who was clubbed to death at her feet.

She had been in perfect position to see the body that had been clubbed to death, and she had been forced to watch. Shape-changers and glamour-casters lose control at death.

Do they? I can't do it and so I don't know much about it. In any case, the natives did not have long to study the body before Cassie smoked the king, and was carried away by the bat things.

In every werewolf movie I have seen, when the wolf shape dies, the body reverts to the man shape.

Who did Cassie--and more importantly the islanders--see dead at her feet, if not Bill Reis?

Wolfe said Cassie went to Woldercon to find Reis. If he didn't die on the island, then obviously Cassie knew it. Why wouldn't she? Since Cassie was swept away immediately after killing the king, we cannot know what happened among the natives afterward.

I don't think it is possible for it to have been one-legged Gideon Chase.

You are freely conclusion jumping. I don't see how you found your way to be so emphatically sure about all this based on what you have offered here.

I jump to conclusions?

Look, Roy, Reis and Cassie were about to be married. But Bill Reis --who loved Cassie as much for the way she adorned himself as anything else-- could not arrange to have either his oldest friend there nor his own son to watch the big event.

Huh? Where did you get that idea? Reis told Cassie that he wanted Rian there (p-276-77). Klauser received a wedding invitation (295), but was too ill to attend (278).

He was practically eloping with her. Does that seem likely? Why would he do that? The whole thing stinks.

Cassie is the one who wanted a simple ceremony (275). Even so, it was to be held on the grounds of the New Zealand consulate (278), with her friends flown in and "hundreds" of islanders in attendance (276).

On the other hand, why would Chase disguised as Reis do that? Lots of reasons.

I don't think he did.

-Roy

James Wynn — 10 Sep 2009, 13:30 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

the man who became the wolf was a big man.

[snip]

That's why it matters that Reis was a big man and Gid was not, and Gid was a leg shy of his normal weight.

Making yourself look bigger and making yourself smaller are not the same problem. Nor is glamour the same as shape-shifting. I don't see how this is going to be key to determining whether someone had supplanted Reis.

You are freely conclusion jumping. I don't see how you found your way to be so emphatically sure about all this based on what you have offered here.

I jump to conclusions?

You do it as much as anyone (including me) when attempting to explain a discrepancy...in other words, when it suits you. But let's give jumping to conclusions its due. It's better than ad hominem responses.

Look, Roy, Reis and Cassie were about to be married. But Bill Reis --who loved Cassie as much for the way she adorned himself as anything else-- could not arrange to have either his oldest friend there nor his own son to watch the big event.

Huh? Where did you get that idea? Reis told Cassie that he wanted Rian there (p-276-77). Klauser received a wedding invitation (295), but was too ill to attend (278).

Yes. He SAID he wanted Rian there. He SAID he wanted his life-long best friend there. But this man with all his money and power couldn't arrange to have the ceremony when and where those close to him could attend?

He was practically eloping with her. Does that seem likely? Why would he do that? The whole thing stinks.

Cassie is the one who wanted a simple ceremony (275).

But they weren't going to have one were they?

Even so, it was to be held on the grounds of the New Zealand consulate (278), with her friends flown in and "hundreds" of islanders in attendance (276).

Yes. HER friends and hundreds of islanders.

Even with page number references, this is averting my point. I have never said there is a problem with CASSIE'S behavior regarding the wedding. MY goal is not to out-maneuver a debate-opponent. I'm merely pointing out things that seemed off to me about the end. Some of which you have pointed out yourself as I said in my last response.

J.

Roy C. Lackey — 10 Sep 2009, 18:38 · in reply to James Wynn

James Wynn wrote:

Look, Roy, Reis and Cassie were about to be married. But Bill Reis --who loved Cassie as much for the way she adorned himself as anything else-- could not arrange to have either his oldest friend there nor his own son to watch the big event.

Huh? Where did you get that idea? Reis told Cassie that he wanted Rian there (p-276-77). Klauser received a wedding invitation (295), but was too ill to attend (278).

Yes. He SAID he wanted Rian there. He SAID he wanted his life-long best friend there. But this man with all his money and power couldn't arrange to have the ceremony when and where those close to him could attend?

Rian planned to attend (277). Klauser could not have attended, no matter where the wedding was held, for health reasons. Reis could not have had the ceremony just anywhere, not if he wanted the wedding to conform to his dream of making Cassie his island queen. That is what the play was all about.

For some reason, you want Reis *not* to have died on the island. I can only assume that you suggest Gideon died in his stead because Gid is the only viable alternative. I don't think it was even possible for Gid to have taken Reis' place, even if he had wanted to, for the reasons I have given. All this stuff about the wedding is just your attempt to make it seem that the man Cassie was about to marry was not Bill Reis.

Neither do I think it likely that Reis, posing as Gideon Chase, was appointed by the sitting president as U.S. ambassador to Woldercan. No matter how good Reis may have been at shape-shifting, there is still the mass-conversion angle to account for. As for just altering one's appearance, as Gid did to become Gil Corby, it doesn't fool mirrors (196) or cameras (189, 194). The wedding invitation Klauser received came with pictures to be displayed on a computer that

showed Cassie and Reis kissing (295). I dare say Klauser knew Reis when he saw him.

-Roy

James Wynn — 10 Sep 2009, 21:11 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

Rian planned to attend (277).

Well, we'll see. I'm beginning to find the existence of Rian (as an actual son anyway) to be pretty suspect. As we agree, there is a serious problem with his failure to make an actual entrance in the story. This is especially true for a Wolfe novel.

Klauser could not have attended, no matter where the wedding was held, for health reasons.

Um...that's what Reis says. If it **was** Reis. If it wasn't Reis then it was just a convenient excuse.

Reis could not have had the ceremony just anywhere, not if he wanted the wedding to conform to his dream of making Cassie his island queen. That is what the play was all about.

Obviously, this is not true. Cassie was not married to Reis when the islanders killed him, but they were happy to have her be queen afterwards with any suitor she chose. [p 284]

For some reason, you want Reis **not** to have died on the island.

That's absurd. Well, now that I think about it, I did hear the author of the story very strongly imply that he didn't die on the island. I'd like to believe the author, so maybe I do. Also, I do find the ending to be pretty weird, narratively, so I'd like to see that resolved. I guess you are right indirectly, but these are my mysterious reasons.

Cassie **does** confirm to Klauser that Reis is dead. [p 296] On the other hand, she confirms that she is dead at the same time.

I can only assume that you suggest Gideon died in his stead because Gid is the only viable alternative.

Not at all. It could have been Rian, right? We've had Reis claim not be places where he was unmistakably seen. It could have been one of those imposters. If Reis were being impersonated at his execution, the wizard is a logical candidate for many, many reasons of theme and foreshadowing; one of which I have already mentioned. But most compellingly, Chase is a logical candidate because he is one of the three central characters --the character whose POV started the novel-- and he precipitously dropped off the pages after Cassie went to Takanga. She has a conversation with him on the phone, and then he's just someone the characters talk about. Finally, after everything we know about his feelings for Cassie, is it credible that he would just finagle an appointment to Woldercon and leave her behind? Chase is a very large part that is still sitting on the concrete after the engine has been put back together. He's not the only viable candidate, but he's a logical one.

Incidentally, I've never heard Wolfe use the name Gideon Chase when he talks about AEG. He always refers to him as "a wizard". I don't know what that means if anything.

All this stuff about the wedding is just your attempt to make it seem that the man Cassie was about to marry was not Bill Reis.

It's almost the opposite. In fact, though, the truth is on an entirely different plane and trajectory. Perhaps if you could get it out of your head that I'm running some scam with a hidden agenda, you could address these issues in a more objective, less knee-jerk hostile

fashion. Paranoia will destroya.

Neither do I think it likely that Reis, posing as Gideon Chase, was appointed by the sitting president as U.S. ambassador to Woldercan. No matter how good Reis may have been at shape-shifting, there is still the mass-conversion angle to account for. As for just altering one's appearance, as Gid did to become Gil Corby, it doesn't fool mirrors (196) or cameras (189, 194). The wedding invitation Klauser received came with pictures to be displayed on a computer that showed Cassie and Reis kissing (295). I dare say Klauser knew Reis when he saw him.

Shape-shifting is unnecessary, but a perfect impersonation is also unnecessary. The Woldercon appointment was probably in lieu of the \$50 million Chase was owed. I saw nothing in the President's face-to-face with Chase that made me think he would want to repeat it. The wedding invitation Klauser received was not of the wedding. It might well have been sent by the "real Reis" (whatever that means).

Any magic trick requires controlling what the audience sees. Gil Corby worked with scores of actors for weeks in tight quarters without anyone getting wise. Having anyone, anyone at all, impersonate Chase and go to Woldercon given the available tools is so easy that it wouldn't even make interesting story-telling. It'd be like explaining how VRT convinced everyone he was Marsch and got to St. Croix, or how Quetzel become prolocutor.

J.

Matthew Keeley — 10 Sep 2009, 21:32 · in reply to James Wynn

On Thu, Sep 10, 2009 at 5:11 PM, James Wynn <crushtv at gmail.com> wrote:

Incidentally, I've never heard Wolfe use the name Gideon Chase when he talks about AEG. He always refers to him as "a wizard". I don't know what that means if anything.

I've heard Wolfe call him Gideon Chase. He may have said he was a hero at the same time - he certainly said Reis was, for all his good points, a villain.

-Matt

James Wynn — 11 Sep 2009, 15:43 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

Wolfe said that "Shadow of the Torturer" had a really good cover because the publisher didn't expect much from it. As more success was expected from each volume, the art director got more and more involved and, therefore, the covers got worse and worse.

Before Wolfe's first panel on Saturday, I stepped up and re-introduced myself from WindyCon (I ate lunch with him and, as a friend reminds me, gave him my ice). He said "Oh! I remember you. I remember that grin. You have a very memorable grin." Then I got him to sign my copy of "Innocents Aboard". I told him that I *loved* that collection (which is absolutely true). I asked him about the ending to "The Sailor That Followed the Sun". In the story, he claimed that the "ordinary looking star" was the only one in the Book of Am Tuat but the pictures in W.A. Budge's explanation of that book have them all over the place. I told him I thought he was absolutely right to have the star be the sun since it probably designates astronomical entities that are on the ecliptic. But I didn't understand why he said it was the only one in the book. His reaction was "Hmmm...I thought it was the only one there."

Roy C. Lackey — 11 Sep 2009, 16:19 · in reply to James Wynn

James Wynn quoted and wrote:
Rian planned to attend (277).

Well, we'll see. I'm beginning to find the existence of Rian (as an actual son anyway) to be pretty suspect. As we agree, there is a serious problem with his failure to make an actual entrance in the story. This is especially true for a Wolfe novel.

Months after Reis was killed, Cassie had to call Rian to tell him his father was dead (296).

{big snip}

Neither do I think it likely that Reis, posing as Gideon Chase, was appointed by the sitting president as U.S. ambassador to Woldercan. No matter how good Reis may have been at shape-shifting, there is still the mass-conversion angle to account for. As for just altering one's appearance, as Gid did to become Gil Corby, it doesn't fool mirrors (196) or cameras (189, 194). The wedding invitation Klauser received came with pictures to be displayed on a computer that showed Cassie and Reis kissing (295). I dare say Klauser knew Reis when he saw him.

Shape-shifting is unnecessary, but a perfect impersonation is also unnecessary. The Woldercon appointment was probably in lieu of the \$50 million Chase was owed. I saw nothing in the President's face-to-face with Chase that made me think he would want to repeat it. The wedding invitation Klauser received was not of the wedding. It might well have been sent by the "real Reis" (whatever that means).

You are missing the point. I have given you text-based reasons why the man who was killed at Cassie's feet was probably not Gideon, and practical reasons why it is **very** unlikely that Bill Reis could have impersonated Gid well enough to usurp the appointment as ambassador to Woldercan. Ambassador to Woldercan is a high-profile position in a digital age. There would have been pictures and video in the media, both of which would have penetrated a magical disguise. Ambassadorships don't happen in a vacuum. Reis would have to have been a fool to even try such a ruse.

More to the point, Reis would have had no need to seek Gideon's post as ambassador. He was more than wealthy enough to go to Woldercan on his own dime, even if he had any reason to go there, just as Cassie did.

Cassie knew for a fact that the man who kept vanishing and reappearing at her feet before being clubbed to death was Bill Reis, and she said so. She also knew that he wasn't Gideon Chase. We know that because, months later, shortly after she got back to the States, she tried to contact him by calling the university where he was employed. It was then that she learned, to her surprise, that he had been appointed the new ambassador to Woldercan (293).

Now back to your original jumping-off point: If Wolfe said that Cassie was going to Woldercan to find Reis, and if he wasn't pulling your leg (I would like to have the full context of his remark), that doesn't preclude Reis having died on the island, just as the text has it.

Any theory that seeks to reconcile these two seemingly contrary points must do so within the bounds of the text, and cannot ignore such text-based facts as we are afforded, however inconvenient those facts may be to said theory.

-Roy

James Wynn — 11 Sep 2009, 18:04 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

Any theory that seeks to reconcile these two seemingly contrary points must do so within the bounds of the text, and cannot ignore such text-based facts as we are afforded, however inconvenient those facts may be to said theory.

I absolutely agree with this. I made no definitive declarations about Reis's death or Chase being the impersonator. The last sentence in my first post on this subject stated "I'm not prepared to prove it is so." I truly appreciate you taking time to take pot-shots at my theory but 1) I don't have much of a theory yet to shoot at, and 2) keep your bead on the theory/hypothesis and not at me.

The text based refutations you've offered are not as compelling as you seem to think they are. This is especially true for your "practical", non-text based refutations. I've explained why, but I don't seem to be getting across. As you know, anyone who believes that all the answers in a Wolfe novel are in the text in any emphatic, unequivocal sense is deluding himself. De-looooooding. Even if the explanation is there, it is typically surrounded by 3 or 4 other reasonable interpretations of the explanation, and someone can probably point to an expert character to say it couldn't possibly be true. Every Wolfe novel and plenty of short stories requires that the reader take a jump over an abyss at some point and then look back to see if he has landed safely. It's nice when, as now, Wolfe gives us a direction to jump for.

Everything Cassie said to Klauser has be read with the same suspicion that one reads in what the President and Chase said to each other. She's deliberately not telling Klauser the straight story. She's not even coming to him as Reis's bride. You should assume that everything she says is only half-true or sort-of true. If it seems that something she says was the whole truth, clearly stated, that should bother you. That conversation is a really bad well to draw from to prove anything. It can only confirm what you've proven elsewhere.

Now back to your original jumping-off point: If Wolfe said that Cassie was going to Woldercan to find Reis, and if he wasn't pulling your leg (I would like to have the full context of his remark)

His quote doesn't require a lot of context for anyone who has read the book. He wasn't talking to me directly. He was speaking on a panel. He was talking about one of his characters that he truly loved: Cassie. In doing so, summarized AEG in terms that were not especially revealing to anyone who had read the book. Then he got to the end of the story which he described exactly as I have recorded it: "Cassie loved Bill Reis and at the end of the novel she goes to Woldercon to look for him." At last he summarized the last paragraph as being heartbreaking for him since he was saying goodbye to Cassie.

There was no camera in the room, so this is the best I can do. I don't understand why you are so adamant to imply I'm an idiot or that Wolfe was trying to pull something. I was as perplexed by the statement as you seem to be. Deal with it. I'm trying to.

that doesn't preclude
Reis having died on the island, just as the text has it.

Sure. But the hypothesis I've offered requires the least nuance and clears up certain other problems I've had with the ending, just as I've stated.

Ambassador

to Woldercan is a high-profile position in a digital age. There would have been pictures and video in the media, both of which would have penetrated a magical disguise. Ambassadorships don't happen in a vacuum. Reis would have to have been a fool to even try such a ruse.

This is a ridiculous assertion. When is the last time you saw media coverage of the ambassador to England leaving for his post? Mind, the universe of AEG is not our own.

More to the point, Reis would have had no need to seek Gideon's post as ambassador. He was more than wealthy enough to go to Woldercan on his own dime, even if he had any reason to go there, just as Cassie did.

Why do you assume that's the reason he would have assumed Gideon's identity? The US government wasn't going to let him leave without revealing his secret. The aliens of Takanga seemed to have a beef with him. He might have used his manufactured gold to get to Woldercon, but eventually it would have shown up as radioactive and the government would have followed him there.

J.

Allan Anderson — 11 Sep 2009, 18:07 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

On Fri, Sep 11, 2009 at 9:19 AM, Roy C. Lackey <rclackey at stic.net> wrote:

Now back to your original jumping-off point: If Wolfe said that Cassie was going to Woldercan to find Reis, and if he wasn't pulling your leg (I would like to have the full context of his remark), that doesn't preclude Reis having died on the island, just as the text has it.

Some options: Cassie is crazy. Woldercan is where you go when you die. Cassie is dead. Woldercan's time disjunction with Earth allows her to find Reis, maybe. CLONES

Roy C. Lackey — 12 Sep 2009, 02:24 · in reply to James Wynn

James Wynn wrote:

I truly appreciate you taking time to take pot-shots at my theory but 1) I don't have much of a theory yet to shoot at, and 2) keep your bead on the theory/hypothesis and not at me.

You would do well to heed your own advice. In my first response to you, I simply gave my objections to your theory of identity switching. You responded with your comment about me "freely conclusion jumping". I have let most of your other . . . comments pass since then.

In your first post in this AEG-tagged thread, you wrote: "So when Wolfe said this in the panel on Fictional Characters, a series of tumblers fell into place in my head. It was Bill Reise disguised as Gideon Chase who left for Woldercon at the end of AEG."

That sounds like conclusion jumping to me. And you offer no means, plausible or otherwise, by which Reis might have disguised himself as Gideon and gotten away with it.

The text based refutations you've offered are not as compelling as you seem

to think they are.

Well, I will agree that I find them compelling.

[snip]

Ambassador
to Woldercan is a high-profile position in a digital age. There would
have
been pictures and video in the media, both of which would have
penetrated
a
magical disguise. Ambassadorships don't happen in a vacuum. Reis would
have
to have been a fool to even try such a ruse.

This is a ridiculous assertion.

There you go again.

When is the last time you saw media coverage
of the ambassador to England leaving for his post? Mind, the universe of
AEG is not our own.

Since you quoted from the second page of the book earlier today, I assume you read it. Right on that fraking page, the president showed Gideon a talking picture, one that, from the words spoken, was evidently just such a media picture as I have postulated. The occasion was Ambassador Reis' return to Earth from Woldercan.

Another reason for the media to be covering the story of a new ambassador is the fact that the person who was ambassador at the start of the story would have to be recalled and replaced by Gideon. The replacement of a sitting ambassador is unusual and would be sufficient occasion for media coverage.

More to the point, Reis would have had no need to seek Gideon's post as
ambassador. He was more than wealthy enough to go to Woldercan on his
own
dime, even if he had any reason to go there, just as Cassie did.

Why do you assume that's the reason he would have assumed Gideon's
identity?

I really don't care why Reis might have assumed Gideon's identity: I'm saying that it didn't happen, that Reis did not go to Woldercan disguised as Ambassador Gideon Chase. I have already given my text-based objections to any such disguise being workable.

The US government wasn't going to let him leave without revealing his
secret. The aliens of Takanga seemed to have a beef with him. He might
have
used his manufactured gold to get to Woldercon, but eventually it would
have
shown up as radioactive and the government would have followed him there.

Reis had ample wealth to get to Woldercan without resorting to bad gold, as evidenced by the diamonds he gave Cassie, the sale of which gave her the money for the big hopper. He wasn't stupid. Besides, he was presumed dead, which he was, and his body missing, as was the case for many of the thousands who died in the storm.

-Roy

Bruce Hayles — 12 Sep 2009, 16:54 · in reply to James Wynn

Isn't it possible that "going to Woldercan to find Reis" wasn't meant to be taken literally? It seems pretty easy to read that as Cassie was going to Woldercan to find love.

On Fri, Sep 11, 2009 at 2:04 PM, James Wynn <crushtv at gmail.com> wrote:
Any theory that seeks to reconcile these two seemingly contrary points must do so within the bounds of the text, and cannot ignore such text-based facts
as we are afforded, however inconvenient those facts may be to said theory.

I absolutely agree with this. I made no definitive declarations about Reis's death or Chase being the impersonator. The last sentence in my first post on this subject stated "I'm not prepared to prove it is so." I truly appreciate you taking time to take pot-shots at my theory but 1) I don't have much of a theory yet to shoot at, and 2) keep your bead on the theory/hypothesis and not at me.

The text based refutations you've offered are not as compelling as you seem to think they are. This is especially true for your "practical", non-text based refutations. I've explained why, but I don't seem to be getting across. As you know, anyone who believes that all the answers in a Wolfe novel are in the text in any emphatic, unequivocal sense is deluding himself. De-looooooading. Even if the explanation is there, it is typically surrounded by 3 or 4 other reasonable interpretations of the explanation, and someone can probably point to an expert character to say it couldn't possibly be true. Every Wolfe novel and plenty of short stories requires that the reader take a jump over an abyss at some point and then look back to see if he has landed safely. It's nice when, as now, Wolfe gives us a direction to jump for.

Everything Cassie said to Klauser has be read with the same suspicion that one reads in what the President and Chase said to each other. She's deliberately not telling Klauser the straight story. She's not even coming to him as Reis's bride. You should assume that everything she says is only half-true or sort-of true. If it seems that something she says was the whole truth, clearly stated, that should bother you. That conversation is a really bad well to draw from to prove anything. It can only confirm what you've proven elsewhere.

Now back to your original jumping-off point: If Wolfe said that Cassie was going to Woldercan to find Reis, and if he wasn't pulling your leg (I would like to have the full context of his remark)

His quote doesn't require a lot of context for anyone who has read the book. He wasn't talking to me directly. He was speaking on a panel. He was talking about one of his characters that he truly loved: Cassie. In doing so, summarized AEG in terms that were not especially revealing to anyone who had read the book. Then he got to the end of the story which he described exactly as I have recorded it: "Cassie loved Bill Reis and at the end of the novel she goes to Woldercon to look for him."
At last he summarized the last paragraph as being heartbreaking for him since he was saying goodbye to Cassie.

There was no camera in the room, so this is the best I can do. I don't understand why you are so adamant to imply I'm an idiot or that Wolfe was trying to pull something. I was as perplexed by the statement as you seem to be. Deal with it. I'm trying to.

that doesn't preclude
Reis having died on the island, just as the text has it.

Sure. But the hypothesis I've offered requires the least nuance and clears up certain other problems I've had with the ending, just as I've stated.

Ambassador
to Woldercan is a high-profile position in a digital age. There would have been pictures and video in the media, both of which would have penetrated a magical disguise. Ambassadorships don't happen in a vacuum. Reis would have to have been a fool to even try such a ruse.

This is a ridiculous assertion. When is the last time you saw media coverage of the ambassador to England leaving for his post? Mind, the universe of AEG is not our own.

More to the point, Reis would have had no need to seek Gideon's post as ambassador. He was more than wealthy enough to go to Woldercan on his own dime, even if he had any reason to go there, just as Cassie did.

Why do you assume that's the reason he would have assumed Gideon's identity? The US government wasn't going to let him leave without revealing his secret. The aliens of Takanga seemed to have a beef with him. He might have used his manufactured gold to get to Woldercon, but eventually it would have shown up as radioactive and the government would have followed him there.

J.

James Wynn — 14 Sep 2009, 14:07 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

You responded with your comment about me
"freely conclusion jumping".

[snip]

"This is a ridiculous assertion."

There you go again.

Both of these are examples of me addressing your assertions. They don't involve me psychoanalyzing your motives for offering them. That's an important difference that I guess I'm surprised I need to delineate. I admit I *have* done the other in this thread out of a bit of tit-for-tat when you've done it to me.

In your first post in this AEG-tagged thread, you wrote: "So when Wolfe said this in the panel on Fictional Characters, a series of tumblers fell into place in my head. It was Bill Reise disguised as Gideon Chase who left for Woldercon at the end of AEG."

Okay. I call it "posing a hypothesis", but if you want to characterize it as "jumping to a conclusion" I won't fight over it. But, in the same post, I admitted I had no evidence to back this up. So maybe "conclusion" is not the right word. You, however, grasping fairly trivial (as I see it) assumptions asserted that it *couldn't* have been Gideon that was killed in the cave. Since you admit you are not all that clear on a *lot* of what *is* going on in this story, I doubt you are prepared state emphatically about what is *not* going on. It's your instant certainty (as well as the evidence you presented) that made me

think that not a lot of "turning over" had gone into your conclusion (and it **was** a "conclusion").

Since you quoted from the second page of the book earlier today, I assume you read it. Right on that fraking page, the president showed Gideon a talking picture, one that, from the words spoken, was evidently just such a media picture as I have postulated. The occasion was Ambassador Reis' return to Earth from Woldercan.

You are too careful a reader to make a mistake like this. 1) The occasion is NOT declared. 2) The speech sounds to me like it was made on Woldercon, not upon a return to Earth. 3) The new ambassador is NOT in the picture. 4) If I were to hazard a guess (which would be jumping to conclusions) I'd say it was an official recording made by the State Department at the going-away party. There's no reason to assume that the new ambassador could not have arranged to get around having such a picture made if he was motivated to.

Another reason for the media to be covering the story of a new ambassador is the fact that the person who was ambassador at the start of the story would have to be recalled and replaced by Gideon. The replacement of a sitting ambassador is unusual and would be sufficient occasion for media coverage.

This sort of thing is not covered by the media unless there is a precipitating scandal. In any event, this is hardly a significant obstacle for any writer. It is entirely a non-impediment that would not even require justifying text.

I really don't care why Reis might have assumed Gideon's identity: I'm saying that it didn't happen,

I know. But you should bother to come up with glaring evidence that it didn't happen or be able to explain what **is** going on in the story that makes it happening unnecessary. You can't. Reis-imposters are running around throughout this story, but you're soooo positive that this isn't happening here. I don't see why. You immediately staked out such a van guard position that it will be very difficult for you to back away from it, no matter what evidences are presented later. And given the flimsy obstacles you have presented so far, I imagine that you always will be able to find ample proof to back up your doubts.

Reis had ample wealth to get to Woldercan without resorting to bad gold, as evidenced by the diamonds he gave Cassie, the sale of which gave her the money for the big hopper.

What???? You don't KNOW this. Reis's bad gold is repeatedly presented as the foundation of his fortune. I could just as well assume that he was so leveraged that his empire could not survive a month without it.

Besides, he was presumed dead, which he was, and his body missing, as was the case for many of the thousands who died in the storm.

So what? You don't think the government checks out the background of people who go to Woldercon? However, let me say this flatly: IF Wolfe had Reis go to Woldercon as Chase (and if Reis is on Woldercon that **is** a very likely explanation since he's the only other character presented as going there), THEN Wolfe did it for one reason -- Good story construction. It was simply more interesting at that point in the story than having Reis create a brand new identity that the reader was not familiar with.

J.

James Wynn — 14 Sep 2009, 14:35 · in reply to Bruce Hayles

Isn't it possible that "going to Woldercan to find Reis" wasn't meant to be taken literally? It seems pretty easy to read that as Cassie was going to Woldercan to find love.

Umm...well, anything is possible, but it would be a pretty vague metaphor in any case. And it would be especially obscure in this case because "love" was not the point of the panel or Wolfe's statement and since he seemed to be presuming that most of the audience had not read AEG. In every other point in this particular discourse, he summarized AEG flatly, without poetic flourish. I failed to detect any poetic flourish in any of his statements on the panels I sat in on.

J.

Craig Brewer — 14 Sep 2009, 14:40 · in reply to James Wynn

Has it ever been noted before that Woldercon/Woldercan is the name of the mythical city to be summoned in Finney's Circus of Dr. Lao?

Gwern Branwen — 14 Sep 2009, 16:00 · in reply to Craig Brewer

On Mon, Sep 14, 2009 at 10:40 AM, Craig Brewer <cnbrewer at yahoo.com> wrote:
Has it ever been noted before that Woldercon/Woldercan is the name of the mythical city to be summoned in Finney's Circus of Dr. Lao?

A google of the list doesn't show anything:

<http://www.google.com/search?num=100&q=Circus+of+Dr.+Lao+site%3Awww.urth.net>

But a more generic google shows someone has indeed identified that connection before:

<http://lists.urth.net/pipermail/urth-urth.net/2008-October/010204.html>

I wonder what was wrong with my previous query?

gwern

David Duffy — 14 Sep 2009, 22:35 · in reply to Gwern Branwen

I have only just received my copy of the the August edition of the NYRSF, where Darrell Schweitzer reviews AEG. He comments that the President is "not recognizably a caricature of any specific president". But could he be based on LBJ?

Cheers, David Duffy.

| David Duffy (MBBS PhD) ,_-_\|
| email: davidD at qimr.edu.au ph: INT+61+7+3362-0217 fax: -0101 / *
| Epidemiology Unit, Queensland Institute of Medical Research _,-._/
| 300 Herston Rd, Brisbane, Queensland 4029, Australia GPG 4D0B994A v

Roy C. Lackey — 14 Sep 2009, 23:34 · in reply to James Wynn

James Wynn quoted and wrote:

I really don't care why Reis might have assumed Gideon's identity: I'm saying that it didn't happen,

I know. But you should bother to come up with glaring evidence that it didn't happen or be able explain what *is* going on in the story that makes

it happening unnecessary. You can't.

You've got me there: I concede that I cannot prove a negative.

Reis had ample wealth to get to Woldercan without resorting to bad gold, as evidenced by the diamonds he gave Cassie, the sale of which gave her the money for the big hopper.

What???? You don't KNOW this.

Yes, I do, and so should you.

Reis's bad gold is repeatedly presented as the foundation of his fortune. I could just as well assume that he was so leveraged that his empire could not survive a month without it.

Reis was a wealthy man before he ever went to Woldercan as President Ingstrup's ambassador. He was a contractor: "Become a contractor himself, an' was smart enough to see the big money went to them that had friends in high places." (14) "He was a major contributor to President Ingstrup's first campaign. Also to his second, though that doesn't really come into it. Major contributors are often given ambassadorships." (15-16)

The added wealth he acquired from bad gold after returning to Earth was icing on the cake. Anyway, the bad gold was converted to clean assets, such as diamonds and cash. My point stands: Reis did not need to resort to somehow taking Gideon's place as the new ambassador. He had the means to buy a hopper that would get to Woldercan, just as Cassie did -- provided he was alive to do it.

Besides, he was presumed dead, which he was, and his body missing, as was the case for many of the thousands who died in the storm.

So what? You don't think the government checks out the background of people who go to Woldercon?

Oh, I do believe the government makes such checks, particularly of State Department personnel. I am even naive enough to believe that the FBI and other government agencies involved were competent enough to distinguish between the big bad man they were looking for and the smaller man who was sent to find him, with or without an amputated leg.

However, let me say this flatly: IF Wolfe had Reis go to Woldercon as Chase (and if Reis is on Woldercon that *is* a very likely explanation since he's the only other character presented as going there), THEN Wolfe did it for one reason -- Good story construction. It was simply more interesting at that point in the story than having Reis create a brand new identity that the reader was not familiar with.

It is the Reis-as-Ambassador Gideon Chase part I balk at. There must be another explanation for Wolfe's comment.

And, since there seems to be some confusion, in Wolfe's book it is "Woldercan", not "Woldercon".

-Roy

Allan Anderson — 14 Sep 2009, 23:50 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

And, since there seems to be some confusion, in Wolfe's book it is "Woldercan", not "Woldercon".

Yes, I often make that slip, too. When I first read "Woldercan", the image of a spacestation "tin can" sprung to mind. But then I started reading "Woldercon", imagining a Wolfe-themed convention. Some of the descriptions in the book (fierce beasts, deep forests?) led me to wonder if "wolder" means "wild". But then the most obvious connotation would have to be the "Circus of Dr. Lao" reference people have pointed out. Still gotta read that.

To snip a perhaps apropos phrase from Dr. Lao's Wikipedia summary, "...the mythical city of 'Woldercan', populated by doubles of the townfolk..."

On Mon, Sep 14, 2009 at 4:34 PM, Roy C. Lackey <rclackey at stic.net> wrote:
James Wynn quoted and wrote:

I really don't care why Reis might have assumed Gideon's identity: I'm saying that it didn't happen,

I know. But you should bother to come up with glaring evidence that it didn't happen or be able explain what *is* going on in the story that makes it happening unnecessary. You can't.

You've got me there: I concede that I cannot prove a negative.

Reis had ample wealth to get to Woldercan without resorting to bad gold, as evidenced by the diamonds he gave Cassie, the sale of which gave her the money for the big hopper.

What???? You don't KNOW this.

Yes, I do, and so should you.

Reis's bad gold is repeatedly presented as the foundation of his fortune. I could just as well assume that he was so leveraged that his empire could not survive a month without it.

Reis was a wealthy man before he ever went to Woldercan as President Ingstrup's ambassador. He was a contractor: "Become a contractor himself, an' was smart enough to see the big money went to them that had friends in high places." (14) "He was a major contributor to President Ingstrup's first campaign. Also to his second, though that doesn't really come into it. Major contributors are often given ambassadorships." (15-16)

The added wealth he acquired from bad gold after returning to Earth was icing on the cake. Anyway, the bad gold was converted to clean assets, such as diamonds and cash. My point stands: Reis did not need to resort to somehow taking Gideon's place as the new ambassador. He had the means to buy a hopper that would get to Woldercan, just as Cassie did -- provided he was alive to do it.

Besides, he was presumed dead, which he was, and his body missing, as was the case for many of the thousands who died in the storm.

So what? You don't think the government checks out the background of people who go to Woldercon?

Oh, I do believe the government makes such checks, particularly of State Department personnel. I am even naive enough to believe that the FBI and

other government agencies involved were competent enough to distinguish between the big bad man they were looking for and the smaller man who was sent to find him, with or without an amputated leg.

However, let me say this flatly: IF Wolfe had Reis go to Woldercon as Chase (and if Reis is on Woldercon that **is** a very likely explanation since he's the only other character presented as going there), THEN Wolfe did it for one reason -- Good story construction. It was simply more interesting at that point in the story than having Reis create a brand new identity that the reader was not familiar with.

It is the Reis-as-Ambassador Gideon Chase part I balk at. There must be another explanation for Wolfe's comment.

And, since there seems to be some confusion, in Wolfe's book it is "Woldercan", not "Woldercon".

-Roy

James Wynn — 15 Sep 2009, 01:19 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

And, since there seems to be some confusion, in Wolfe's book it is "Woldercan", not "Woldercon".

Lest the minor difference in spelling lead to some confusion, Wolfe pronounces it "Wolder-kahn".

Charles Tallman — 15 Sep 2009, 01:41 · follows James Wynn

* Isn't it possible that "going to Woldercan to find Reis"

>> wasn't meant to be taken literally? It seems pretty easy to

>> read that as Cassie was going to Woldercan to find love.

*

I do think Wolfe is being tricky, and that Bill Reis isn't literally to be found alive on Woldercan of "the present." There are two possible explanations:

1) Cassie will somehow journey to the Woldercan of the past (during Bill's time there) and become the ambassador's wife we know so little about. Plausible, except that

a) She's no longer beautiful enough to win his heart.

b) If she tells him of the future that will cause major time paradoxes.

2) What Wolfe meant was that she will go to Woldercan as a first step on a journey to change the past, allowing her to attempt to save Bill's life. This fits perfectly with my old theory of Margaret Briggs as future Cassie, and it's the theory I'm sticking too now.

Dave Tallman — 15 Sep 2009, 03:48 · in reply to Charles Tallman

Now that I think about it, it's not so impossible that Cassie could get her ship-board computer to figure out how to travel to the Woldercan of the past, so as to become the Mrs. Reis of that time. Through the miracles of time-travel she could even be the mother of Rian. If so, the choice of the name "Rian" is time-looped (his mother named him, p. 277). It's also predictive, since it

means "little prince" at a time when Bill was not yet a king. Cassie mourned for her children (p. 295) that she could have had with Bill. This way, she will have one.

It then makes perfect sense that Cassie cannot meet Rian in person. He would recognize her. Rian is a "little too brave" (p. 26), and so is Cassie, sometimes. It would also make sense for him to have a birth defect only magic could cure, given the magic that has enhanced and un-enhanced Cassie's system.

Could she be beautiful enough again to win Bill? I think so. She knows that beauticians can do a lot for her (p. 292). Not enough to be a mega-star, but enough to woo Bill. She can tell him some sort of story, not the truth. She's a good liar. So there need not be time paradoxes.

She knows it will end in divorce, but she will have a son, a piece of a man she loved and lost (p. 26). This would be a fairly happy ending, and it doesn't exclude her going back again, later in life, to be Margaret Briggs as well.

The Norns, or Fates, were supposed to be a maiden, a mother, and a crone. Cassie could play all three roles in this story. In "Figures of Earth," James Branch Cabell calls them the Gray Three or the Gray Weavers. This ties in with Margaret as a Gray Neighbor (p. 64).

James Wynn — 15 Sep 2009, 14:01 · in reply to David Duffy

I have only just received my copy of the the August edition of the NYRSF, where Darrell Schweitzer reviews AEG. He comments that the President is "not recognizably a caricature of any specific president". But could he be based on LBJ?

I don't think it's a caricature but it's pretty obviously inspired by G.W. Bush. Since it's a NY publication, perhaps Schweitzer thought he was doing the book a favor not to highlight that.

J.

John Watkins — 15 Sep 2009, 14:03 · in reply to James Wynn

I thought the character's speech patterns were recognizably those of George W. Bush as well. I don't think anything of Wolfe's attitude toward the former president can or should be divined from the character, though--I think Wolfe, who very obviously enjoys characters with idiosyncratic speech, was just having fun.

On Tue, Sep 15, 2009 at 10:01 AM, James Wynn <crushtv at gmail.com> wrote:
I have only just received my copy of the the August edition of the NYRSF, where Darrell Schweitzer reviews AEG. He comments that the President is "not recognizably a caricature of any specific president". But could he be based on LBJ?

I don't think it's a caricature but it's pretty obviously inspired by G.W. Bush. Since it's a NY publication, perhaps Schweitzer thought he was doing the book a favor not to highlight that.

J.

James Wynn — 15 Sep 2009, 14:21 · in reply to Allan Anderson

To snip a perhaps apropos phrase from Dr. Lao's Wikipedia summary, "...the mythical city of 'Woldercan', populated by doubles of the townfolk..."

Which is another potential resolution to Cassie going to Woldercan to find Reis. This sounds a lot like the planet St. Anne where a kind of fairie race copies the human population (with hints of "The Book of the Short Sun").

If Reis and Chase were actually Woldercanlings, then Cassie could have been going there to find the original. Nice Platonic ring to it. Even if that isn't the case, Cassie might have divined that the Woldercan held duplicates of the Earthlings who had been there. Ironically, this strikes me as less likely than the first.

Unfortunately, this solution still leaves Chase as an unfired revolver on the table.

J.

Roy C. Lackey — 15 Sep 2009, 18:53 · in reply to Dave Tallman

Where the hell have you been, Dave? Or is it Charles? You were missed.

You wrote:

Now that I think about it, it's not so impossible that Cassie could get her ship-board computer to figure out how to travel to the Woldercan of the past, so as to become the Mrs. Reis of that time. Through the miracles of time-travel she could even be the mother of Rian.

Reis had a wife when he first got to Woldercan as Ingstrup's ambassador (301). Ingstrup served two terms, so Reis would have been on Woldercan for eight years. He had been back on Earth for something over two years, since that was how long ago he hired Gideon to fix some business deal (120). Rian is sixteen, so he should have been born before Reis ever went to Woldercan.

Reis seems not to have had a wife when he got back to Earth, judging from his comments about the South Seas in that other picture. So his Woldercan wife must have left him while he was still on Woldercan. She may be Madame Pavlatos, who is filthy rich.

If so, the choice of the name "Rian" is time-looped (his mother named him, p. 277). It's also predictive, since it means "little prince" at a time when Bill was not yet a king. Cassie mourned for her children (p. 295) that she could have had with Bill. This way, she will have one.

It then makes perfect sense that Cassie cannot meet Rian in person. He would recognize her. Rian is a "little too brave" (p. 26), and so is Cassie, sometimes. It would also make sense for him to have a birth defect only magic could cure, given the magic that has enhanced and un-enhanced Cassie's system.

To say nothing of exposure to radioactive gold, particularly for Reis.

Sharon said that Rian's mother "went to Chase, and her son's just fine." I don't know how old Rian was when Gideon fixed his heart, but I would think that in a matter so important to his mother, she and Gid would have met. If so, he gives no hint that he recognized her.

Could she be beautiful enough again to win Bill? I think so. She knows that beauticians can do a lot for her (p. 292). Not enough to be a mega-star, but enough to woo Bill. She can tell him some sort of story, not the truth. She's a good liar. So there need not be time paradoxes.

She knows it will end in divorce, but she will have a son, a piece of a man she loved and lost (p. 26). This would be a fairly happy ending, and it doesn't exclude her going back again, later in life, to be Margaret

Briggs as well.

After selling the diamonds, Cassie was the richest woman in the state. Rian's mother was rich and still alive. Pavlatos was filthy rich, whether or not she was also Rian's mother. Then there is poor Margaret. How did she come to be the only version not rich? Depending on Pavlatos's status, that makes three or four versions of the same woman running around on Earth at the same time. That makes any attempts to go back in time for a do-over problematic.

OTOH, the attempts might account for perceived differences among Reis, Rosenquist and (maybe) Rusterman. Things get very messy.

-Roy

Charles Tallman — 15 Sep 2009, 21:16 · follows Roy C. Lackey

Where the hell have you been, Dave? Or is it Charles? You were missed.

Officially I'm Charles David Tallman, but I usually go by my middle name. Some mailers have it one way, some the other. I unsubscribed for a while due to pressures of real life, then found I couldn't get re-subscribed for some reason. I put in a lot of Wolfe effort over on WolfeWiki, then yesterday I thought of re-subscribing with a different email address, and it worked.

Reis seems not to have had a wife when he got back to Earth, judging from his comments about the South Seas in that other picture. So his Woldercan wife must have left him while he was still on Woldercan. She may be Madame Pavlatos, who is filthy rich.

Yes, Madame Pavlatos is a good candidate for the Woldercan wife. I considered adding to the theory that this is Cassie also (rake-thin, brunette, once-beautiful) all fits but the hair, which she could have dyed. There is the lucky "coincidence" that she arrives to save Cassie from being marooned on the island. I distrust coincidences in a book with time-travel. She may have come there specifically to save her younger self. Going back in time to re-create a marriage is quite the Ignacio thing to do, and while she's at it she can rescue herself. The Pavlatos name may be a rebound marriage after Wally divorced her.

Sharon said that Rian's mother "went to Chase, and her son's just fine." I don't know how old Rian was when Gideon fixed his heart, but I would think that in a matter so important to his mother, she and Gid would have met. If so, he gives no hint that he recognized her.

Rian's age of sixteen may be part of the time-travel paradoxes of going to Woldercan and back. If Reis came back before he left -- I think he did, creating greater a greater confusion for his foes about the Reis/Rosenquist identities, then Cassie and Rian could have also. They dealt with Chase first, leading Reis to consult him. Chase plays a devious game throughout. He may have recognized Cassie and chosen to say nothing.

After selling the diamonds, Cassie was the richest woman in the state. Rian's mother was rich and still alive. Pavlatos was filthy rich, whether or not she was also Rian's mother. Then there is poor Margaret. How did she come to be the only version not rich? Depending on Pavlatos's status, that makes three or four versions of the same woman running around on Earth at the same time. That makes any attempts to go back in time for a do-over problematic.

Margaret may not be as poor as she appeared to be. She apparently never took valuables from her clients (Reis had this investigated). She needed to appear poor in order to play her role as a dresser and get close to Cassie. That's all that matters.

Yes, this makes three versions of Cassie running around. Reis is doing it also. No wonder there are confusions of all sorts, including shifting addresses.

James Wynn — 16 Sep 2009, 11:17 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

Depending on Pavlatos's status, that makes three or four versions of the same woman running around on Earth at the same time. That makes any attempts to go back in time for a do-over problematic. OTOH, the attempts might account for perceived differences among Reis, Rosenquist and (maybe) Rusterman. Things get very messy.

Aside from the mess, it would make hash of any timeline of ambassadors. If significant time-travel can be caused just by going to Woldercan, then Chase and Reis might well have returned to Earth as long ago or as recently as you please. The President never mentioned such a phenomenon.

Also, you can only get one extra copy per trip to Woldercan.

Finally, I don't recall any precedent for broad time variation in travelling to Woldercan. Sure, a missive congratulating Gideon's parents on their child's birth arrived before his birth, but surely not *years* before his birth...and certainly not beyond a single year.

I do like Pavlatos as another Cassie, and I want to see the time variation employed in the plot, but if Pavlatos-as-Cassie or the three evil Reis's are to be explained by time-travel, it would it not require a mad cognitive to best all leaps?

J.

Dave Tallman — 16 Sep 2009, 15:27 · in reply to James Wynn

Aside from the mess, it would make hash of any timeline of ambassadors. If significant time-travel can be caused just by going to Woldercan, then Chase and Reis might well have returned to Earth as long ago or as recently as you please. The President never mentioned such a phenomenon.

It must be a trick unknown to the President, perhaps only learned by those who go to Woldercan. One has to go a long way out into space, outside the galaxy (that's the reason the Milky Way looks like a little band of bright stars on p. 301). Perhaps the further one hops, the more time displacement is possible. Perhaps it's to get to a region where the laws of physics are even more different than they are on Woldercan (p. 300).

At any rate, it's not possible that the location in the final paragraph, from which Cassie says "Come back to me, Wally!" is part of her original trip to Woldercan. It takes twenty-something hops to get there (p. 298). After five hops, she opens the package with the picture (p. 301). Sometime after this (at least five hops, probably more), "the sun was a yellow spark and the blue sphere of Earth less than nothing." So, about a quarter of the way to Woldercan, the sun is still a distinctly visible star. In fifteen or so more hops she gets outside the galaxy? Impossible. This is a new trip, with a lot more fuel. What is its purpose? I say it's the start of her trip back into time, to get Wally back again.

James Wynn — 16 Sep 2009, 15:37 · in reply to Dave Tallman

At any rate, it's not possible that the location in the final paragraph, from which Cassie says "Come back to me, Wally!" is part of her original trip to Woldercan. It takes twenty-something hops to get there (p. 298). After five hops, she opens the package with the picture (p. 301). Sometime after this (at least five hops, probably more), "the sun was a yellow spark and the blue sphere of Earth less than nothing." So, about a quarter of the way to Woldercan, the sun is still a distinctly visible star. In fifteen or so more hops she gets outside the galaxy? Impossible. This is a new trip, with a lot more fuel. What is its purpose? I say it's the start of her trip back into time, to get Wally back again.

That's an interesting take. But the hops could be gravitationally influenced. As one leaves the solar system and then the galaxy, the hops lengthen exponentially or as a ratio of the affecting gravity.

J.

Roy C. Lackey — 16 Sep 2009, 19:23 · in reply to Charles Tallman

Dave Tallman wrote:

Rian's age of sixteen may be part of the time-travel paradoxes of going to Woldercan and back. If Reis came back before he left -- I think he did, creating greater a greater confusion for his foes about the Reis/Rosenquist identities, then Cassie and Rian could have also. They dealt with Chase first, leading Reis to consult him. Chase plays a devious game throughout. He may have recognized Cassie and chosen to say nothing.

So Rian was born on Woldercan? This makes my head hurt.

Cassie was in her early-to-mid-thirties at the end of the book, despite looking like an old woman. She goes to Woldercan and arrives some years before Reis ever got there as Klauser's replacement? Then what? She looked like crap, and Gideon and Reis were still back on Earth. Gid wasn't there to fix her looks (if it was even possible), and Reis wasn't there to father Rian on her.

For Cassie to be Rian's mother (and Reis his father), she had to hook up with Reis at some point. She had her mojo for only a matter of months, and was too long stranded on that island for her to have been pregnant when she was rescued. So when did she conceive Rian? It didn't happen before the first day of the story or during the story; it had to be in her personal future.

Wait. Suppose she became the proverbial "other woman". She went to Woldercan to see Gideon but arrived too soon, while Reis was still ambassador. She gets her health and looks back enough to attract Reis (there cannot have been many human women on Woldercan), has a fling that breaks up his marriage, and gets pregnant. Maybe even married him. They have a falling out. She and Rian go back to Earth alone and arrive before page one.

That is wild speculation, and I don't like it. <g>

Cassie told Klauser that she hoped to be on Woldercan a long time. It *seems* as if she planned to go there to see Ambassador Gideon Chase, and she didn't talk to Klauser as if she *planned* to try to go back in time. The vagaries of ethermail suggest that time travel would be unpredictable, at best, if it is even possible. If it is possible, it seems like it would be common knowledge, or that the government at least would know of it and warn its off-world diplomats.

After selling the diamonds, Cassie was the richest woman in the state. Rian's mother was rich and still alive. Pavlatos was filthy rich, whether or not she was also Rian's mother. Then there is poor Margaret. How did she come to be the only version not rich? Depending on Pavlatos's status, that makes three or four versions of the same woman running around on Earth at the same time. That makes any attempts to go back in time for a do-over problematic.

Margaret may not be as poor as she appeared to be. She apparently never took valuables from her clients (Reis had this investigated). She needed to appear poor in order to play her role as a dresser and get close to Cassie. That's all that matters.

I still have doubts that she could have faked a past that would have stood up to serious inquiry. Anyway, she is supposed to be about sixty. That makes her older than Cassie and Rian's mother (hard to say about Pavlatos). If Margaret was ever the young Cassie who had loved and lost Wally/Bill, and who had gone to Woldercan and gone back in time to try to fix things, she was somewhere for at least two-dozen years that is in Cassie's future. That looks to me to be a bleak future, and her efforts failed. That is, one version of Cassie's life did not get overwritten by another one--at least not that I can see. Broken Cassie passed old Margaret in the street. That Margaret was still there is the proof of failure.

-Roy

Charles Tallman — 17 Sep 2009, 01:30 · follows Roy C. Lackey

Roy C. Lackey wrote:

So Rian was born on Woldercan? This makes my head hurt.

Cassie was in her early-to-mid-thirties at the end of the book, despite

looking like an old woman. She goes to Woldercan and arrives some years before Reis ever got there as Klauser's replacement? Then what? She looked like crap, and Gideon and Reis were still back on Earth. Gid wasn't there to fix her looks (if it was even possible), and Reis wasn't there to father Rian on her.

My reconstruction of the time travel would go more like this:

- 1) Cassie's original 20+ hop trip to Woldercan involved no time-travel. She met with Gideon Chase, as planned, but learned there was no way to restore her mojo. (She might shoot him at this point).
- 2) Using Woldercan resources (talking fish, Woldercan natives, etc.) she finds out how to do time travel. She takes big hopper with lots of fuel and uses it to go into the past, to Earth.
- 3) The time is before the appointment of Bill Reis as ambassador. She finds a way to court and marry Bill. Tricky, but she knows a lot about him and what he likes.
- 4) They travel to Woldercan together. She takes the picture (p. 301), which explains why she isn't in it. Bill says the old amabassador was kind to him and his wife (not family), so there is no son yet.
- 5) Rian is conceived. When the boy is born there are medical troubles. Cassie knows they can only be resolved on Earth, so she leaves. She uses the time-travel trick again. Rian will be the right age if she does this, and that may be the purpose (time-looped history reconstruction). Her time-travel will inspire Bill to learn to do the same trick.
- 6) She spends the next 18 or so years raising Rian. The boy is her life. If she's Pavlatos, she also remarries and does some boating, etc.

- 7) This gets her to about age 50. Rian is gone -- empty nest. Maybe he dies, killed by Bill's enemies.
- 8) She broods again on the past and decides to try to shake it up as Margaret. She gets the old ship back from where-ever she stashed it and does one more trip deeper into the past.
- 9) She uses another ten years to establish herself as Margaret the dresser. Now she's in her 60's.
- 10) Her attempt to change the past fails, so she ends up sad and alone. She knows her younger self will repeat the cycle.

Mo Holkar / UKG — 17 Sep 2009, 07:28 · in reply to Charles Tallman

At 02:30 17/09/2009, Davewrote:

My reconstruction of the time travel would go more like this:

- 1) Cassie's original 20+ hop trip to Woldercan involved no time-travel. She met with Gideon Chase, as planned, but learned there was no way to restore her mojo. (She might shoot him at this point).
- 2) Using Woldercan resources (talking fish, Woldercan natives, etc.) she finds out how to do time travel. She takes big hopper with lots of fuel and uses it to go into the past, to Earth.
- 3) The time is before the appointment of Bill Reis as ambassador. She finds a way to court and marry Bill. Tricky, but she knows a lot about him and what he likes.

This means, though, that she would have to court and marry Bill as haggard old Cassie -- she has had no opportunity to restore her looks inbetween? Unless you postulate there are also Woldercan resources for doing that.

Not necessarily impossible that he might still fall for her, but it seems to go against what we know of his showoffy nature.

best wishes,

Mo

~ # ~

WolfeWiki -- a wiki about Gene Wolfe
<http://www.wolfewiki.com/pmwiki/>

Adam Thornton — 17 Sep 2009, 11:13 · in reply to Mo Holkar / UKG

On Sep 17, 2009, at 3:28 AM, Mo Holkar / UKG wrote:

This means, though, that she would have to court and marry Bill as haggard old Cassie -- she has had no opportunity to restore her looks inbetween? Unless you postulate there are also Woldercan resources for doing that.

THAT part is easy. That'd be "fey glamour," and it'd be basically what Gideon Chase (who, in my opinion, is a Woldercan changeling) does. I think we have much firmer evidence of this than we do of manipulable time travel.

Note also that THIS would make some sense of that last weird conversation Cassie has with the former ambassador: he warns her about taking a sanitary napkin.

That made me go WTF for a while, but: what do the fey want from humans? What can Cassie trade them? Her womb, so they can beget more changelings, so it is in fact vital that she still be fertile.

In fact, if we want to throw in a time loop, then Cassie can be Gideon's mother. How you like THEM apples?

Adam

James Wynn — 17 Sep 2009, 14:07 · in reply to Adam Thornton

In fact, if we want to throw in a time loop, then Cassie can be Gideon's mother. How you like THEM apples?

Yeah, and then Gid healed himself.

I entertained this thought for two seconds until I considered that Chase and Cassie "did it". Ew.

I know Sev did it with his granma, but a line must be drawn.

J.

Dave Tallman — 17 Sep 2009, 15:02 · in reply to Adam Thornton

Adam Thornton writes:

THAT part is easy. That'd be "fey glamour," and it'd be basically what Gideon Chase (who, in my opinion, is a Woldercan changeling) does. I think we have much firmer evidence of this than we do of manipulable time travel.

That's a plausible idea, and something she could have learned there.

Bill's wife on Woldercan does not appear in the photo (only Reis and Klauser), so she could have a glamour (p. 301). It would make it more difficult for her to be Madame Pavlatos, who does appear in photos (p. 289).

In fact, if we want to throw in a time loop, then Cassie can be Gideon's mother. How you like THEM apples?

Gideon was the son of the previous ambassador Bob Chase, supposedly. Cassie has no reason to go back and marry him, too.

Dave Tallman — 17 Sep 2009, 21:00 · follows Dave Tallman

James Wynn wrote:

That's an interesting take. But the hops could be gravitationally influenced. As one leaves the solar system and then the galaxy, the hops lengthen exponentially or as a ratio of the affecting gravity.

The hop distances may not be so impossible. In Wolfe's "To the Seventh", FTL technology is transferred to Earth by a passing alien hopper ship. The ship in that story could do 500,000 light years on a single charge of fuel. That's about five times the distance across the Milky Way galaxy. Say Woldercan is in the nearest spiral galaxy, Andromeda (note the Cassiopeia connection), which is 2.7 million light-years from the Milky Way. At the "Seventh" rate that would be less than six full-out hops. Add ten on each end from maneuvering to and from solar systems, and you get 26 -- right on target for Cassie's fuel.

The "To the Seventh" story is probably not in the past of "An Evil Guest." New York was

destroyed in the former, and they are still putting on Broadway plays in the latter. But we could use this as a plausible measure for how fast FTL should be in a Wolfe world, and how much fuel it should take. It is likely that FTL tech was delivered by extraterrestrial explorers in "An Evil Guest" -- and that the secret of the location of Woldercan was delivered along with it.

Roy C. Lackey — 18 Sep 2009, 06:30 · in reply to Charles Tallman

Dave Tallman wrote:

My reconstruction of the time travel would go more like this:

1) Cassie's original 20+ hop trip to Woldercan involved no time-travel.

She

met with Gideon Chase, as planned, but learned there was no way to restore her mojo. (She might shoot him at this point).

2) Using Woldercan resources (talking fish, Woldercan natives, etc.) she finds out how to do time travel. She takes big hopper with lots of fuel and

uses it to go into the past, to Earth.

3) The time is before the appointment of Bill Reis as ambassador. She finds

a way to court and marry Bill. Tricky, but she knows a lot about him and what he likes.

4) They travel to Woldercan together. She takes the picture (p. 301), which

explains why she isn't in it. Bill says the old amabassador was kind to him

and his wife (not family), so there is no son yet.

That picture would have been just 11-12 years in the past for Klauser. He should have recognized the woman who came to his house to ask advice.

5) Rian is conceived. When the boy is born there are medical troubles.

Cassie knows they can only be resolved on Earth, so she leaves. She uses the

time-travel trick again. Rian will be the right age if she does this, and

that may be the purpose (time-looped history reconstruction). Her

time-travel will inspire Bill to learn to do the same trick.

If Cassie could travel back in time, why didn't she go back in time just far enough to do something to avoid Bill getting clubbed to death? All she had to do was to make sure they would not be on the island that night. That's so easy, and it would have spared them all their grief. Just go back about a year. She lands her big fancy new hopper on the beach on the island where she and Bill went to be alone, the one they were on when they decided to get married. Whip out a sales receipt for the diamonds and a few newscast clips of the coming storm. She could hardly be ignored.

Bill and Cassie need not make any big changes or take any chances. They could have used his hopper to hop over to Paris for dinner or something on the day he would have died. Problem solved.

6) She spends the next 18 or so years raising Rian. The boy is her life.

If

she's Pavlatos, she also remarries and does some boating, etc.

7) This gets her to about age 50. Rian is gone -- empty nest. Maybe he dies,

killed by Bill's enemies.

8) She broods again on the past and decides to try to shake it up as Margaret. She gets the old ship back from where-ever she stashed it and

does

one more trip deeper into the past.

9) She uses another ten years to establish herself as Margaret the dresser.

Now she's in her 60's.

Why didn't Reis recognize her as his ex-wife? Yeah, she's aged, but still.

10) Her attempt to change the past fails, so she ends up sad and alone.

She

knows her younger self will repeat the cycle.

Either the past can be changed or it can't. If Margaret was ever our Cassie, then she has Cassie's memories of Margaret, just as we have their interactions recorded in the book. If, from Margaret's perspective, she can change *anything*, even something as minor as what she ordered for breakfast on page 153, then the past can be changed. If not, she is stuck in a time loop.

My point is that Cassie/Margaret need not waste all that time and energy establishing a false identity just to get close to her younger self and figure out if she could change things. After all, Margaret exercised very little influence on Cassie, and was out of the picture half-way through the book. For example, Cassie/Margaret would know about the coming abduction of Margaret, since Cassie had lived it. All a future self would have to do is not get in Zelda's hopper that day, and Zelda didn't even want Margaret to come because the hopper only seated four. She had no freewill? She didn't know what was coming?

In the Urth Cycle and FREE LIVE FREE, Wolfe made provisions to avoid two versions of the same person being in the same place at the same time. To do otherwise leads to endless plot complications and paradoxes. Why would he make an exception in AEG?

-Roy

Jeff Wilson — 18 Sep 2009, 08:38 · in reply to Craig Brewer

Craig Brewer wrote:

Has it ever been noted before that Woldercon/Woldercan is the name of the mythical city to be summoned in Finney's Circus of Dr. Lao?

I believe Russell Wodell was the first to mention it here, just under a year ago.

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
IEEE Student Chapter Blog at
< <http://ieeetamut.org> >

John Watkins — 18 Sep 2009, 10:38 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

On Fri, Sep 18, 2009 at 2:30 AM, Roy C. Lackey <rclackey at stic.net> wrote:

In the Urth Cycle and FREE LIVE FREE, Wolfe made provisions to avoid two versions of the same person being in the same place at the same time. To do otherwise leads to endless plot complications and paradoxes. Why would he make an exception in AEG?

Not to go down the rabbit hole, but after Pirate Freedom, I have a tough time buying this particular point.

-Roy

Dave Tallman — 18 Sep 2009, 14:23 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

Roy C. Lackey wrote:

That picture would have been just 11-12 years in the past for Klauser. He should have recognized the woman who came to his house to ask advice.

Unless, as Adam Thornton suggested, she had learned to do a glamour by then (or some form of werewolf shape-shifting).

If Cassie could travel back in time, why didn't she go back in time just far enough to do something to avoid Bill getting clubbed to death? All she had to do was to make sure they would not be on the island that night. That's so easy, and it would have spared them all their grief. Just go back about a year. She lands her big fancy new hopper on the beach on the island where she and Bill went to be alone, the one they were on when they decided to get married. Whip out a sales receipt for the diamonds and a few newscast clips of the coming storm. She could hardly be ignored.

She could have considered doing that, but it might not have saved them from other dooms arranged by Gideon Chase. She seems to have decided that he needed to be eliminated very early on (after enhancing Cassie, of course). This is under the theory that Margaret was Chase's shooter.

Why didn't Reis recognize her as his ex-wife? Yeah, she's aged, but still.

Again I'll fall back on werewolf shape-shifting. I have no doubt that Margaret is a werewolf.

Either the past can be changed or it can't. If Margaret was ever our Cassie, then she has Cassie's memories of Margaret, just as we have their interactions recorded in the book. If, from Margaret's perspective, she can change **anything**, even something as minor as what she ordered for breakfast on page 153, then the past can be changed. If not, she is stuck in a time loop.

If the past cannot be changed there is no argument to be made. No matter if something else would have been more clever or worked better, Margaret will not be able to do it. Poor Cassie can't even think this over, decide it would be futile, and change her mind about going back as Margaret. She's trapped all the way through.

In the Urth Cycle and FREE LIVE FREE, Wolfe made provisions to avoid two versions of the same person being in the same place at the same time. To do otherwise leads to endless plot complications and paradoxes. Why would he make an exception in AEG?

The personal replacement in FREE LIVE FREE was a one-book experiment, allowing huge amounts of time-rewriting without hundreds of copies running into each other. Pirate Freedom does allow temporal copies to meet, and it does allow for changing the past (I think; Ignacio's part could be a thought of as a stable time-loop, but Bram Burt and Lesage probably did some active changing and re-iterating to get things just right).

Roy C. Lackey — 18 Sep 2009, 18:33 · in reply to John Watkins

John Watkins quoted and wrote:

In the Urth Cycle and FREE LIVE FREE, Wolfe made provisions to avoid two versions of the same person being in the same place at the same time. To do otherwise leads to endless plot complications and paradoxes. Why would he

make an exception in AEG?

Not to go down the rabbit hole, but after Pirate Freedom, I have a tough time buying this particular point.

Point taken.

-Roy

Roy C. Lackey — 18 Sep 2009, 18:35 · in reply to Dave Tallman

Dave Tallman wrote:

She could have considered doing that, but it might not have saved them from other dooms arranged by Gideon Chase. She seems to have decided that he needed to be eliminated very early on (after enhancing Cassie, of course). This is under the theory that Margaret was Chase's shooter.

I'm sure I've said this before, but Gid repeatedly referred to the shooter with masculine pronouns.

Why didn't Reis recognize her as his ex-wife? Yeah, she's aged, but still.

Again I'll fall back on werewolf shape-shifting. I have no doubt that Margaret is a werewolf.

Gid also said that it is easy for a shape-changer to slip back "down", so easy that "werewolves have trouble maintaining their human forms at times." (100) Getting hit in the face with a meat cleaver is pretty traumatic, quite enough so, it seems to me, to lose control. Besides, within a couple hours of the shooting, Margaret showed up at Cassie's place and had no visible wound.

-Roy

John Watkins — 18 Sep 2009, 18:36 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

I should have also said that I agree with you that Margaret is not an iteration of Cassie.

On Fri, Sep 18, 2009 at 2:33 PM, Roy C. Lackey <rclackey at stic.net> wrote:
John Watkins quoted and wrote:

In the Urth Cycle and FREE LIVE FREE, Wolfe made provisions to avoid two versions of the same person being in the same place at the same time.

To do otherwise leads to endless plot complications and paradoxes. Why would he make an exception in AEG?

Not to go down the rabbit hole, but after Pirate Freedom, I have a tough time buying this particular point.

Point taken.

-Roy

Dave Tallman — 19 Sep 2009, 01:33 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

Roy C. Lackey wrote:

/ She could have considered doing that, but it might not have saved them
/>/ from other dooms arranged by Gideon Chase. She seems to have decided
/>/ that he needed to be eliminated very early on (after enhancing Cassie,
/>/ of course). This is under the theory that Margaret was Chase's shooter.

/

I'm sure I've said this before, but Gid repeatedly referred to the shooter
with masculine pronouns.

I'm not sure how good a look Gid got. Also, isn't Wolfe of the old school on pronouns? He doesn't
go in for the "him or her" stuff much.

Gid also said that it is easy for a shape-changer to slip back "down", so
easy that "werewolves have trouble maintaining their human forms at times."
(100) Getting hit in the face with a meat cleaver is pretty traumatic, quite
enough so, it seems to me, to lose control. Besides, within a couple hours
of the shooting, Margaret showed up at Cassie's place and had no visible
wound.

If the shooter is anyone we know or see later (and it should be, to be a fair mystery), then they
should either have an injured face or be of a type of creature known to regenerate rapidly.
Werewolves in legend can heal rapidly from any wounds not made with silver weapons. We
never see anyone with an injured face. So the shooter is someone we never see again (unfair)
or Margaret.

Roy C. Lackey — 19 Sep 2009, 19:23 · in reply to Dave Tallman

Dave Tallman quoted and wrote:

I'm sure I've said this before, but Gid repeatedly referred to the
shooter
with masculine pronouns.

I'm not sure how good a look Gid got. Also, isn't Wolfe of the old
school on pronouns? He doesn't go in for the "him or her" stuff much.

I went to the same school of pronouns <g>, but that's not the case here. "I saw the man who
shot me. He didn't resemble John. It wasn't his face or his body type. As for it being a friend of
his, I doubt it very much. His friends are good shots, and this man wasn't" (203)

If the shooter is anyone we know or see later (and it should be, to be a
fair mystery), then they should either have an injured face or be of a
type of creature known to regenerate rapidly. Werewolves in legend can
heal rapidly from any wounds not made with silver weapons. We never see
anyone with an injured face. So the shooter is someone we never see
again (unfair) or Margaret.

I don't know what the answer is, but Gid said the shooter was a man. He could be lying, but
why? Transformation "up" or "down" is mentioned, but not sideways. That is, there is nothing to
indicate that a human could transform himself (see, old-school pronoun) to look like another
human, even of the same gender.

Margaret might be a werewolf but, shooter or not, if she is, where does it show up in the story?
The only demonstrable werewolf I know of is Al, the fake FBI agent.

-Roy

Dave Tallman — 19 Sep 2009, 20:16 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

Roy C. Lackey wrote:

I don't know what the answer is, but Gid said the shooter was a man. He could be lying, but why? Transformation "up" or "down" is mentioned, but not sideways. That is, there is nothing to indicate that a human could transform himself (see, old-school pronoun) to look like another human, even of the same gender.

On page 99 "Are you aware of shape-changers? Werewolves and their ilk?... Some human beings can transform themselves, Cassie. The cells of their bodies rearrange themselves... Wolves, dogs and leopards are the most common forms... The most common forms but not the only forms." It looks to me like Wolfe has given us some leeway to have other sorts of shape-changers, with possible multiple human forms.

Margaret might be a werewolf but, shooter or not, if she is, where does it show up in the story? The only demonstrable werewolf I know of is Al, the fake FBI agent.

True, but the detailed description of werewolf traits on p. 206 invites us to find another werewolf. Here are a few of the clues I found most convincing, drawn from one of my theory pages on the WolfeWiki ("Mysterious Margaret"):

1. There's the clue of the werewolf's "swift loping walk, even in women." (p. 206). Margaret bobs along (p. 59). Does any other female character have a unique walk described?
2. She is gray (p. 54) with a colorless face (p. 57). Werewolves "dress in wolf shades: gray, black, and white." (p. 206).
3. They are also insensitive to color (p. 206). Margaret fails to get a straw for Cassie's drink (p. 57), indicating she doesn't care much about lipstick. She describes a costume which shows skin in the middle as "spring-green" (p. 107), but the costume that is spring-green is the long missionary gown (p. 190). The costume that shows ten inches of bare waist features a faux-grass skirt (p. 131). This would be grass-green, not spring-green. Perhaps Margaret can't tell the difference.
4. She avoids an obvious word when misreporting the name of Sharon Bench as "Shirley Ladydog" (p. 86). As a werewolf female she might be extra-sensitive to this word.
5. Werewolves have a hard time avoiding slipping back to wolf form (p. 100). They also "want the wild and a liberation from human morality" (p. 207). Margaret's scrupulous morality may be an effort to avoid slipping back. Her elaborate trick with the napkin to avoid a direct lie is an example of this (pp. 82-83).
6. Margaret always has yogurt and fruit for breakfast (p. 186). She may avoid eating meat to keep from setting off her wolf nature.

Adam Thornton — 19 Sep 2009, 20:20 · in reply to Dave Tallman

On Sep 19, 2009, at 3:16 PM, Dave Tallman wrote:

Margaret always has yogurt and fruit for breakfast (p. 186). She may avoid eating meat to keep from setting off her wolf nature.

O GAWD MY WIFE IS A WEREWOLF!

Adam

Roy C. Lackey — 20 Sep 2009, 05:16 · in reply to Dave Tallman

Dave Tallman quoted and wrote:

Margaret might be a werewolf but, shooter or not, if she is, where does it show up in the story? The only demonstrable werewolf I know of is Al, the fake FBI agent.

True, but the detailed description of werewolf traits on p. 206 invites us to find another werewolf. Here are a few of the clues I found most convincing, drawn from one of my theory pages on the WolfeWiki ("Mysterious Margaret"):

1. There's the clue of the werewolf's "swift loping walk, even in women." (p. 206). Margaret bobs along (p. 59). Does any other female character have a unique walk described?

"Ebony bobbed like a cork in India's wake." (p. 143) That matches up nicely with your ". . . and Margaret bobbing in her wake" on p. 59.

2. She is gray (p. 54) with a colorless face (p. 57). Werewolves "dress in wolf shades: gray, black, and white." (p. 206).

3. They are also insensitive to color (p. 206). Margaret fails to get a straw for Cassie's drink (p. 57), indicating she doesn't care much about lipstick. She describes a costume which shows skin in the middle as "spring-green" (p. 107), but the costume that is spring-green is the long missionary gown (p. 190). The costume that shows ten inches of bare waist features a faux-grass skirt (p. 131). This would be grass-green, not spring-green. Perhaps Margaret can't tell the difference.

4. She avoids an obvious word when misreporting the name of Sharon Bench as "Shirley Ladydog" (p. 86). As a werewolf female she might be extra-sensitive to this word.

If Margaret is a future Cassie, then she knows perfectly well *both* of Sharon's names. Why stumble on Sharon? Like Mrs. Baker in FLF, she just gets things wrong. She called a safe-deposit box a "safety deposit." (153)

5. Werewolves have a hard time avoiding slipping back to wolf form (p. 100). They also "want the wild and a liberation from human morality" (p. 207). Margaret's scrupulous morality may be an effort to avoid slipping back. Her elaborate trick with the napkin to avoid a direct lie is an example of this (pp. 82-83).

The known werewolf, Al, had a very aggressive human personality. Margaret is meek and mild.

6. Margaret always has yogurt and fruit for breakfast (p. 186). She may avoid eating meat to keep from setting off her wolf nature.

Post-castaway Cassie said, "I don't think I'll ever eat fish or fruit again." (288) Margaret could have eaten cereal. And she at least nibbled on a ham and cheese sandwich. (141-42)

-Roy

Dave Tallman — 20 Sep 2009, 06:05 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

Roy C. Lackey wrote:

If Margaret is a future Cassie, then she knows perfectly well *both* of Sharon's names. Why stumble on Sharon? Like Mrs. Baker in FLF, she just gets things wrong. She called a safe-deposit box a "safety deposit." (153)

It's a little *too* wrong. Shirley and Sharon don't sound much alike. She's just pretending not to know Cassie's friend. And her averted choice of last name may indicate what she thinks of

Sharon at this point. There's nothing wrong with "safety deposit." That's an alternate name for the same thing, in common use today.

The known werewolf, Al, had a very aggressive human personality. Margaret is meek and mild.

And if this is Cassie, she's an actress. Margaret is a bit too meek, too scrupulously honest, and too good to be true.

Post-castaway Cassie said, "I don't think I'll ever eat fish or fruit again." (288) Margaret could have eaten cereal. And she at least nibbled on a ham and cheese sandwich. (141-42)

The fruit for breakfast is one point against Margaret being Cassie, but it's not a complete refutation. She could choose to do this for economy, to avoid gaining weight, or as a quirk chosen as part of her role.

Dave Tallman — 21 Sep 2009, 16:10 · in reply to Dave Tallman

I was puzzling over Cassie's statement that she didn't think she would ever eat fish or fruit again (288). It seemed inconsistent with my theory that she was Margaret, since Margaret had fruit and yogurt for breakfast every day.

But Cassie constantly changes her mind about what she will and won't eat. She accepts anchovy toast from Klauser, and seems to really enjoy it. So much for the fish resolution. It seems to be a red herring.

It would be interesting to track all the things Cassie eats. She declares she is watching her weight, and will eat nothing but "cooked veggies, raw veggies, bottled water, and maybe a little fruit" (p. 135). But all the way through the book she breaks this resolution. She orders double sherbet papaya delight (p. 27), a hot pastrami sandwich with lots of meat (p. 54), anchovy fritters (p. 61), cookies (p. 142), rock lobster in drawn butter (p. 228), and other fattening treats. Yet she does stay very thin, even while she thinks of herself as fat. It makes me think she might be bulimic.

In any case, she could easily get over her fruit aversion after a reasonable period of time (just as she is shown to have gotten over her fish aversion) so it's no bar to her being Margaret.

Adam Thornton — 21 Sep 2009, 16:49 · in reply to Dave Tallman

On Sep 21, 2009, at 11:10 AM, Dave Tallman wrote:

In any case, she could easily get over her fruit aversion after a reasonable period of time (just as she is shown to have gotten over her fish aversion) so it's no bar to her being Margaret.

Anyone else here read The Rise of Endymion ? Those of you who have will know why the time-loop is making me think of it.

Adam

Dave Tallman — 21 Sep 2009, 19:22 · in reply to Adam Thornton

Adam Thornton wrote:

Anyone else here read The Rise of Endymion ? Those of you who have will know why the time-loop is making me think of it.

Yes, I've read it. The protagonist, Raul, is jealous when his time-traveling girlfriend Aenea tells him she has been married and had a child. Later he realizes the husband must have been his future self. That's a good fit for the "Cassie as the Ambassador's wife" scenario.

Adam Thornton — 21 Sep 2009, 20:13 · in reply to Dave Tallman

On Sep 21, 2009, at 2:22 PM, Dave Tallman wrote:

Adam Thornton wrote:

Anyone else here read *The Rise of Endymion*? Those of you who have will know why the time-loop is making me think of it.

Yes, I've read it. The protagonist, Raul, is ...

Dude, SPOILER WARNING!

Adam

Stephen Hoy — 30 Sep 2009, 05:39 · follows John Watkins

A few days ago, John Watkins, agreeing with James Wyatt about a quality of the president in AEG, wrote:

< I thought the character's speech patterns were recognizably those of George W. Bush as well.
>

The speech pattern is recognizably Texan, but the one-on-one button-holing is much more LBJ's style than any recent US president. For me, the key discriminant is the President's assistant. I think I mentioned awhile ago that the aide likely has a link with MPAA president Jack Valenti who was LBJ's closest aide. Valenti passed away in 2007, possibly stimulating Wolfe to place an analog of LBJ/Valenti in AEG. Valenti's showbiz connection fits nicely with an idol of the theater allusion in the same chapter of AEG, when the president quotes the first line of Bacon's essay *On Truth*.

Dave Tallman — 30 Sep 2009, 14:28 · in reply to Stephen Hoy

I don't see the theatrical connection between the quote "What is truth? asked jesting Pilate..." and the presidential assistant John. Is it because of the Bacon/Shakespeare connection? This seems a big stretch.

Dave Tallman — 30 Sep 2009, 14:49 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

Roy C. Lackey wrote:

"Ebony bobbed like a cork in India's wake." (p. 143) That matches up nicely with your "... and Margaret bobbing in her wake" on p. 59.

It appears that Ebony White is another good werewolf candidate. Look at her name: werewolves are associated with the colors gray, black, and white (p. 206) and her name is as black-and-white as you can get. She bobs along like Margaret, so we have the loping walk. She never gets fat (p. 59), possibly a sign of a high animal metabolism. She eats terrine de lievre (terrine of hare) on that same page. Other food choices include a BLT (p. 141, has bacon), and a breakfast with a side of sausage and ham (p. 186, shades of the Three Little Pigs?). She spent extra time in jail before being released when Margaret was taken -- possibly they were deciding which of the two werewolves was the most dangerous one?

James Wynn — 30 Sep 2009, 14:50 · in reply to Stephen Hoy

A few days ago, John Watkins, agreeing with James Wy[nn] about a quality of the president in AEG, wrote:

I thought the character's speech patterns were recognizably those of George W. Bush as well.

The speech pattern is recognizably Texan, but the one-on-one button-holing is much more LBJ's style than any recent US president. For me, the key discriminant is the President's assistant. I think I mentioned awhile ago that the aide likely has a link with MPAA president Jack Valenti who was LBJ's closest aide.

Hmmm...."forty plus, and starting to get fat. The thick, round lenses of his glasses"... This does not make me think of Jack Valenti. But it did call to mind Karl Rove. Not a one-to-one comparison any more than the president was. But it was difficult not to imagine Rove while reading this scene.

I really didn't see the one-on-one conversation as excluding GWB or inclining more to LBJ. It's just the sort of thing any President would do.

J.

Roy C. Lackey — 01 Oct 2009, 05:54 · in reply to Dave Tallman

Dave Tallman wrote:

Roy C. Lackey wrote:

"Ebony bobbed like a cork in India's wake." (p. 143) That matches up nicely with your ". . . and Margaret bobbing in her wake" on p. 59.

It appears that Ebony White is another good werewolf candidate. Look at her name: werewolves are associated with the colors gray, black, and white (p. 206) and her name is as black-and-white as you can get. She bobs along like Margaret, so we have the loping walk. She never gets fat (p. 59), possibly a sign of a high animal metabolism. She eats terrine de lievre (terrine of hare) on that same page. Other food choices include a BLT (p. 141, has bacon), and a breakfast with a side of sausage and ham (p. 186, shades of the Three Little Pigs?).

She eats some form of pork at almost every meal mentioned, if not all. So how can she eat meat all the time, unlike Margaret, if they are both werewolves? You said before that werewolf Margaret didn't eat meat because she feared slipping to the animal state.

-Roy

Dave Tallman — 01 Oct 2009, 06:15 · in reply to Roy C. Lackey

Roy C. Lackey wrote:

She eats some form of pork at almost every meal mentioned, if not all. So how can she eat meat all the time, unlike Margaret, if they are both werewolves? You said before that werewolf Margaret didn't eat meat because she feared slipping to the animal state.

Yes, Ebony eats pork at almost every meal, except when she has hare, another wolf prey. I was wrong about Margaret never eating meat. She also consumes pork at times. At the same meal where Ebony had a BLT, Margaret had a Ham and Swiss sandwich. Margaret tempers her animal appetites with more milk proteins, I suppose.