

Home Fires and Chelle

The Urth list — 4 messages, 3 voices, 25 Jan 2011

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Dave Tallman — 25 Jan 2011, 21:26

I have just read "Home Fires" and I was wondering what others thought of it. Much is explained, but there are several points left as mysteries. One is the true relationship between Chelle Blue and Jane Sims. Another is Charlie. In the last few lines we have:

"I'm going on Charlie's picnic, out of the smoke and the dirt, away from Mick and the bottles behind the bar, and all the gray faces. I'm going away, and I'm not coming back.

They'll tell me when you do, and I'll be there."

What does it mean that she's going on Charlie's picnic and not coming back? Charlie apparently has plenty of pull and is above the law. Another name Charlie uses is Coleman Baum. Baum clearly comes from Lyman Frank Baum, author of "The Wizard of Oz." This suggests he, like the Wizard, is "the man behind the curtain," secretly running things. (There's even a connection between Coleman and Lyman. Artificial coal can be made from sulfite lye.)

Acceptance of Charlie and Vanessa may allow Chelle to find a better life. (Why is she living in such a dump? I thought she had a big pension.) She's not going to void the contract with Skip, so she will be notified when he comes back. But will she go into space again? Do espionage ops for Charlie? Or resume physics/military research, if she really has that much of Jane's mind?

Jane's personality clearly comes through at times, especially her love for Don. She wrote the note "I am Jane Sims" and one time she asks Don how he knew she was "in here" (in Chelle). Chelle herself seems unaware of these lapses.

There are several possibilities.

1) Chelle has more of Jane than she knows: perhaps part of her brain, perhaps an uploaded scan. Against this possibility is the fact that expert spies (Rick for the Os, Ortiz and his men for the EU) tried very hard to bring back Jane and her memories and got nothing.

2) Perhaps there was once a deeper relationship between Jane and Chelle than Chelle now admits, and she now carries Jane's persona as a symptom of post-traumatic stress. Possibly they were lovers at one time. Susan's story of a Jane Simmons who contracted with a woman in the rapeseed oil business may be significant. (Contracting has solved the gay marriage issue with the social consequence that marriage has become a virtually forgotten religious institution). Jane Simmons could have changed her last name to Sims for professional reasons, just as Susan changed her last name to Clerkin to help her get a job. Physicists often run simulations, or "sims."

3) There could be a supernatural aspect. Perhaps the spirit of Jane haunts her arm and the body connected to it. Tante ?lize seems to count Chelle as two people; she is associated with supernatural creatures like zombies.

The name Chelle, which Wolfe emphatically tells us is pronounced "Shell" must be significant. Somehow she is two persons in a single shell.

Andrew Mason — 28 Jan 2011, 00:43 · follows Dave Tallman

Dave Tallman wrote:

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Is there a character called Green?

Dave Tallman — 28 Jan 2011, 03:15 · follows Andrew Mason

Andrew Mason wrote:

Is there a character called Green?

No, but there's a character called White. As Skip says, there's someone who "likes to play games with colors."

Matthew Keeley — 29 Jan 2011, 02:04 · in reply to Dave Tallman

No, but there's a character called White. As Skip says, there's someone who "likes to play games with colors."

Sounds like Wolfe to me. The Blue family brought to mind Pandora by Holly Hollander, and I couldn't help but mentally compare the Blues in this novel with Aladdin Blue in Pandora. Though I think this is probably an interpretive dead end.

-Matt