

Seven American Nights Time Gaps

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 08 May 2008

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Dave Tallman — 08 May 2008, 11:50

Since I proposed my own theory for the supposed "missing night" in SAN, I should address some of the other theories. They are full of excellent analyses, but in the end I decided that I couldn't agree with them.

Peter Cash (posting on August 22, 1997) finds eight nights or more. His gap point is almost the same as mine (the second day does not include the trip to the ruins and the theater), but he uses Nadan's emotional state to find more:

No. On the second day, he ambles around the North of the city, gradually coming to realize how deformed the Americans are. The crucial thing is that the "fear" passage cannot have been written any earlier than the third day. This is because he speaks of the fear as coming on him the previous day. This cannot have been on the first day--the day of his arrival--for his narrative of that day is clearly upbeat. It may have been on the second day, which ends with his realization that the Americans are more deformed than he had thought. There may even be one or more entire days missing here; there's no way to tell. But one thing is sure: the "fear" passage cannot have been written earlier than the third day. Everything follows from this.

Nadan is capable of concealing his feelings from the reader. "In recording these several pages I have managed to restrain my enthusiasm." How "upbeat" is that first chapter, really? By the end of it Nadan has made an enemy in Mr. Tallman, a man with local connections, wealthy enough to afford first-class travel. He has reason to begin to feel uneasy, along with whatever strange things he sees on arrival in the port. But he started writing with the idea that he would show the journal to his mother and Yasmine, so he's deliberately upbeat: "America! America! Dull days are no more!" By the next evening he's so fearful that he changes his mind about letting Yasmin read it and puts down his true feelings. If the arrival day was entirely happy, why does he imagine he was drugged on the ship, rather than by something he ate after getting to shore?

Robert Borski, writing on May 6, 2002 has a very clever theory about the missing day being caused by excision of pages. That could work for my theory too, because the account around evening 2 is very choppy, cutting from a description of going out from the hotel to the late-night fear passage. It would be reasonable for Nadan to have some material about his art-stealing mission early on in his journal.

Borski gives reasons for his later interpolation point:

Ardis, in turn, then asks Bobby, "Was it very bad?" To which the actor responds, "It was frightening, that's all. I thought I'd never get out." But if he was arrested late the night before, and released the following day, perhaps being confined, at the most, 16 hours, this hardly seems to warrant a comment about never getting out. In addition, when Bobby says, "I hear you missed me last night," Ardis responds, "God, yes." But if Bobby has actually been confined in jail for a day-and-a-half, Ardis may well be commenting on

the poor performance of his stand-in (the fact that Bobby has been missed by her is obviously communicated by someone else). A longer period of confinement also allows more time for Bobby to rue his imprisonment and recover from his beating, as well as for the police department to do the necessary papershuffling involved with his release. But because Nadan's journal is now missing his account of the Gallery visit--the second day of Bobby's confinement--he can never directly mention how long the actor has been incarcerated.

I think the dialog is well-explained by the original text. Sixteen hours under the harsh treatment of the police is more than enough for Bobby to worry that he would never get out. As for the "I hear you missed me last night" referring to the poor performance of a stand-in, that happened: "Bill -- someone you don't know -- tried to go on for him in the third act tonight. It was just ghastly."

The quick release of Bobby can be explained in my theory. The F.E.D. was already interested in Nadan when he went to their offices. They used the time he was tied up by the bureaucracy to search his room. No wonder it seemed like a "solemn ritual of deception" to Nadan. Once they had what they wanted they pulled the necessary strings to free Bobby.

There is one more theory of Robert Borski I'd like to address -- the idea that Ardis had a burn scar between her breasts, revealing that she was the werewolf Nadan tried to kill. If the description of that scene were real and not forged, I agree that would be the inescapable conclusion. But it's too neat. It would mean that Ardis was a full-fledged (or full-furred) morph-with-the-full-moon werewolf. The origin of such a creature could only be magical, not genetic damage caused by eating food laced with growth hormones.

I believe the creature that attacked Nadan was a mutated human; it always looked the way he saw it. The beggar in the ruins described them: "We sleep here, to be shut behind strong walls from the things that come at night."

The reader of the forged account is supposed to believe that Nadan, despondent over having loved a werewolf and possibly crazed by the drugged egg, has set out alone for the interior of America. I believe he was captured and killed by the F.E.D. instead.