

Cabin on the Coast question

The Urth list — 12 messages, 4 voices, 26 May 2008

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5033>

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Dave Tallman — 26 May 2008, 22:53

I was rereading some stories in "Endangered Species" and I had a question: what is Tim wearing in the final scene?

There are two possible answers:

1) Swimming trunks.

He swam out to the black freighter in his trunks, so it would make sense for him to return in them, if they still fit...

2) Nothing.

If things will "stand so again" as on the day Lissy vanished, Tim started that day naked in bed.

In either case, especially the latter, Lissy's reaction to "Big Tim" is disturbing. She doesn't scream at a naked or almost-naked man barging in on her. She talks to him casually. Are we to infer that she has also been the lover of "Big Tim?"

Roy C. Lackey — 28 May 2008, 08:09 · follows Dave Tallman

Dave Tallman wrote:

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No. She had never met Tim's father; she had seen him only in pictures. In the pictures, he was very gaunt. Though the fairy King had promised things would be just as they were for Lissy "and all the country round" on the morning she disappeared, that didn't apply equally for Tim. The King had promised that Tim would remember his time in the otherworld, but that didn't turn out to be true. Neither did the King mention that Tim would be at least twenty years older when he was released from service, but that is what happened. Fairies lie and otherwise deceive.

When Tim returned to the cabin and opened the door, Lissy saw an older, thinner man who looked just like the man in the pictures she had seen. Tim had earlier told her that he would come to look just like his father, because he then looked just as his father had looked when his

father was the same age. She mistook Tim for his father. I don't think she spoke to him "casually". She was trying to make the best of a compromising situation by blurting out to "Big Tim" that she and his "son" were planning to get married.

After all, regardless of whatever the man she thought was "Big Tim" was wearing, or not wearing, she was herself conspicuously naked in Big Tim's bed. She was in no position to say anything about the other's wardrobe, or lack thereof.

-Roy

Dave Tallman — 28 May 2008, 12:09 · follows Roy C. Lackey

Roy C. Lackey wrote:

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I think you are right. I prefer that ending, anyway. It would lessen the tragedy if Tim found out that Lissy was lying about never having met his father. The fairy King didn't really lie, because Tim does retain some memories of his years of service (he plans to tell Lissy about them but pretend they are just stories). Having those memories means he has an older brain, and with that goes an older body. The King just didn't spell out the implications.

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After all, regardless of whatever the man she thought was "Big Tim" was wearing, or not wearing, she was herself conspicuously naked in Big Tim's bed. She was in no position to say anything about the other's wardrobe, or lack thereof.

I would have thought she'd be a little more formal, but it does make sense for her to blurt out things when she is caught in a compromising situation. She first tries a friendly approach. Then, mistaking his look of horror for concern about scandal, she tells him that she and Tim will be married.

What will Tim do next? If he tries to explain she'll never believe him. The best thing to spare her feelings would be to pretend to be his father and say something like "Get out! I sent him away and you'll never see him again." He could follow that up with a letter to get her to move on. Life isn't going to be easy for Tim. He's lost not only his love but his identity.

Roy C. Lackey — 28 May 2008, 18:14 · follows Dave Tallman

Dave Tallman wrote:

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I should probably just leave this alone, but there is one nagging detail that I can't explain or ignore. It's that damn "already damp and a trifle sandy" towel Tim used after he showered upon returning from his early-morning swim on the morning *before* Lissy disappeared, on the second page of the story. Who had used the towel before Tim?

-Roy

Dave Tallman — 28 May 2008, 19:44 · follows Roy C. Lackey

Roy C. Lackey wrote:

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It's that damn "already damp and a trifle sandy" towel Tim used after he showered upon returning from his early-morning swim on the morning *before* Lissy disappeared, on the second page of the story. Who had used the towel before Tim?

Good clue-spotting. All right, let's pursue this. There are some other interesting details:

- 1) Lissy was awake and sitting up when Tim entered on the day of the damp towel.
- 2) There are five wooden steps leading up to the beach cottage, and they creak.
- 3) The cottage has two windows, opposite each other (early morning light from one enters the other).
- 4) Tim and Lissy apparently went straight to bed the night before without a swim. Lissy's clothes were kicked under the bed. No bags were unpacked from the car.
- 5) Lissy didn't swim herself that morning. Her swimsuit was still in the car.

It looks like Lissy received another visitor while Tim was swimming. That person came from the sea and dried off, leaving the towel damp and sandy. He could have left by the back window when he heard the creaking steps.

That visitor was not Big Tim, because Lissy says "You did come" at the end.

Who else could it be? Why not Daniel O'Donoghue himself? He can take any form and might well have seduced Lissy, a preliminary move before her abduction. He's not immune to the urge if one of his forms is a satyr. The reference to "unwillin' girls" is deceptive.

Daniel of Domdaniel has a motive for what he did to Tim beyond mere fey trickiness. He's getting his rival out of the way.

Michael Straight — 28 May 2008, 21:32 · in reply to Dave Tallman

On Wed, May 28, 2008 at 6:09 AM, Dave Tallman <davetallman at msn.com> wrote:

The fairy King didn't really lie, because Tim does retain some memories of his years of service (he plans to tell Lissy about them but pretend they are just stories). Having those memories means he has an older

brain, and with that goes an older body. The King just didn't spell out the implications.

And Wolfe (and/or the King) is especially tricky because at first Tim is told "You'll serve for 100 years and then return" which makes it seem obvious that Tim would not age or would be magically made young again. So then when the term is lowered to 25 years, we have the same expectation.

Perhaps Tim would have been better off if he'd taken the original offer of 100 years?

Also, note the similar situation in Pirate Freedom.

-- Rostrum

Roy C. Lackey — 29 May 2008, 07:23 · follows Michael Straight

Dave Tallman wrote:

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That's possible, but there is a problem with the timeline. When the King said that things would be as they were before Lissy was taken, he didn't specify exactly how long before she was taken. Was it a minute? An hour? A day? And was the time the same for her as it was for Tim?

Lissy disappeared on their second morning at the cabin. The night before that, they had built a driftwood fire on the beach and emptied a bottle of wine. When Tim came back to the real world from the otherworld, the sun was just coming up. On the beach, he saw the tide-washed remnants of that fire and the empty wine bottle. So he came back to reality on the second morning they had been at the cabin, to find Lissy naked but safe in bed, and Tim himself had aged quite a bit.

Tim was told that Lissy would remember nothing of her abduction, because there would be nothing to remember; the abduction would never have happened, just as Tim would never have spoken to the cop. Tim lost a complete twenty-four hours, from the morning she disappeared to the morning he swam out to look for her. Was time turned back forty-eight hours for Lissy, to the first morning at the cabin?

If that is so, then there is no reason she should not remember her hypothetical fairy lover, because that would have happened a full day before her abduction. Will she go down to the water the next morning again to seek him? If the King had the power to turn back the clock for Lissy, why not turn it back to before his alleged seduction of her and avoid the problem? In which case he would have no need to leave a used towel behind.

-Roy

Dave Tallman — 29 May 2008, 08:47 · follows Roy C. Lackey

Roy C. Lackey wrote:

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For simplicity I'll assume that the clock was turned back to a single point in time. As you say, the evidence points to it being the morning after they built the driftwood fire on the beach. In the original time-line, Lissy woke up first and went out while Tim was still asleep. She was looking for her fairy lover (I think Tim failed a test when he didn't sleep with her on the beach as she asked). In this new time-line, Lissy finds Tim gone and assumes he has gone for a swim, therefore she remains in bed.

If that is so, then there is no reason she should not remember her hypothetical fairy lover, because that would have happened a full day before her abduction. Will she go down to the water the next morning again to seek him? If the King had the power to turn back the clock for Lissy, why not turn it back to before his alleged seduction of her and avoid the problem? In which case he would have no need to leave a used towel behind.

She probably does remember the King in whatever form he took and whatever story he told her the previous morning. She certainly wouldn't share that information with "Big Tim." The King only promised that things would stand as they were "before we took her." The devious being may be hoping to have it all, to get Lissy after Tim leaves in despair.

I'm not sure what you mean about turning the clock back before the seduction. In my theory, the King wants Lissy to remember that. I suppose he could have used magic to cover his tracks and leave the towel dry. He either didn't bother, or he might have thought it would make Lissy fearful if she noticed what he did.

Dave Tallman — 30 May 2008, 12:49 · follows Dave Tallman

So far, we've only talked about physical evidence for the Daniel/Lissy theory. If it's true, there should also be clues in the dialog that all is not well with the Tim/Lissy relationship.

1) The relationship has barely started and Tim is pushing for marriage.

"We've made a mistake," he said. "I was trying to fix it just now."

2) Tim says her dying in childbirth is "the risk I have to take."

3) Lissy hopes Tim won't end up looking like his father. Tim says he will.

4) Tim has no problem with the fact that his mother gave birth to him alone while his father went to a political convention.

5) He doesn't answer her challenge about "Traditional roles... The woman has the babies and keeps the home fires burning."

6) He offers her a giant hot dog the same size as his instead of asking her how much she wants.

7) He doesn't honor her wish to sleep on the beach. He carries her back inside when she falls asleep.

Tim may have started to look like an old-fashioned male chauvinist to Lissy. She might well consider other boyfriends, like the glamorous King Daniel. (I'm sure he could put out a lot of glamor in the old sense of the word).

I expect that nothing physical happened between her and the King on that first visit when he left a damp towel. He just made her an offer and got her thinking. She made her decision the next morning when she left Tim asleep and went out to find Daniel.

StoneOx17 at aol.com — 30 May 2008, 14:24 · follows Dave Tallman

In a message dated 5/30/2008 8:50:10 AM Eastern Daylight Time, davetallman at msn.com writes:

I expect that nothing physical happened between her and the King on that first visit when he left a damp towel. He just made her an offer and got her thinking. She made her decision the next morning when she left Tim asleep and went out to find Daniel.

This is a great discussion.

First, and a very minor point, I think Lissy used the towel and not the King. The King would have stayed outside.

Second, I think Tim was tricked. I think the fairies can only take people who are willing. This is a trait commonly attributed to the Fair Folk, and the King says "I'll have no unwillin' hands about me boat."

Was Lissy willing? She may have been thinking about it, but had she said "yes" yet? I expect not. The King says "We'd sooner have a broth of a girl like yer Lissy than a great hulk of a lad like yourself, but then too, we'd sooner be havin' one that's willin', for the unwillin' girls are everywhere - I don't doubt but ye've seen it yerself."

So here's a tentative timetable.

1. Tim and Lissy arrive at the cabin, make love, and fall asleep. Later that night she goes out for a swim, and meets the King, who makes her an offer.

2. Tim goes out for a morning swim, and when he comes back, Lissy admonishes him for going out without a suit. (Why? She did it earlier. But maybe it's different if there are fairies around.)

3. Tim and Lissy spend the day together and have the cookout on the beach. She realizes how much of a male chauvinist he is.

4. Lissy wakes up in the morning, and goes out to talk to the King and try to decide whether to accept his offer.

5. Tim wakes up, notices Lissy missing, and after talking to the police and calling his father, swims after the King's boat and trades himself for Lissy.

4'. Tim swims back from the ocean and twenty years service, and Lissy wakes up and mistakes him for Big Tim. Notice Tim sees the remains of their cookout fire when he reaches the beach, so this comes after 3 in the timeline. (So Tim would indeed be wearing his trunks.)

While writing this, I had another idea. I'm now inclined to believe the offer Lissy was entertaining (and had in this case quite possibly accepted) from the King was more along the lines of a one night stand than twenty years in Fairyland.

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Dave Tallman — 30 May 2008, 19:39 · follows StoneOx17 at aol.com

StoneOx17 said:

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I think it's often said that the Fair Folk cannot enter a human dwelling without an invitation, so you could be right. I still have bit of a problem with Lissy doing a secret midnight skinny-dip. The next morning she says to Tim, "I want a swimming lesson. What will people say if I tell them I came here and didn't go swimming?"

She could be lying because she wants to conceal that she met the King, but she could still mention her swim without telling that part.

Dave Tallman — 05 Jun 2008, 05:12 · follows Dave Tallman

Michael Straight wrote:

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expectation.

Perhaps Tim would have been better off if he'd taken the original offer of 100 years?

I don't think so. Unless he closed that loophole as part of the bargain, the King would be within his rights to leave Tim dying of old age at the end of his service.

I noticed that the ship-creatures laughed at Tim after he touched his forehead. They might have done this because touching one's forehead is the first step in crossing oneself and Tim didn't follow through with the rest. King Daniel and crew seem quite devilish to me. (They are linked to Domdaniel, an abode of evil spirits which also gets a mention in "Seven American Nights." The ship also reminds me of the ogre-ship which carried off young women in the Theseus/Minotaur-like story "The Student and his Son.")