

Kate Finn and Ted Griffin (Sorcerer's House spoilers)

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 05 Apr 2010

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John Watkins — 05 Apr 2010, 13:46

(spoiler space)

I haven't seen any discussion of this, and I honestly think that it's a thin reed at best, but I think there's some suggestion in the text that Ted Griffin/Ambrosius is Kate Finn's father. I want this theory to be true, because otherwise I don't see much point to the Kate and Biddy Finn subplot. But I'm having trouble with the timeline.

Kate, we're told, has to accompany Bax into the house to retrieve George. While their in the house, Bax shows Kate Goldwurm's spire, opens a window, which we've been told may have magical significance, and they chat about Ambrosius. After that conversation, they go downstairs and learn almost immediately that George has been found. I have no idea why this would happen or what it would mean, but it suggests a connection, and about the only material connection we have to Ambrosius is the suggestion that he and Ted are the same guy. I also kind of like the idea that the bloodlines of both Ambrosius and Black were needed to retrieve George.

Then there's the names. "Finn" is pretty close to "Griffin," almost as though Ted Griffin were hiding behind a slight alteration of his former name to conceal his lack of aging, exactly as Martha Murray becomes Martha Murrey. It's also apparently Griffin's MO to fake his own death and abandon his spouse--he shows up alive in Doris's letter, after all, and I don't really buy the cliched "cop dies two years before retirement" bit that gets a throwaway reference in the conversation with Biddy. Or rather, it seems like it might as well have been Ambrosius invoking the cliché as Wolfe. Or possibly he doesn't have an MO but moved on to a younger woman, and then got bumped off by Goldwurm in a manner that seemed to be a strikingly nasty illness.

Anyway, I like this theory, but I don't think the timelines match-up exactly. Biddy doesn't say when her husband died, but Kate is 24--putting Biddy at a highest likely age of about 64. I think she's a lot younger, though--Kate is the only kid we hear about a pretty Irish family having, so maybe Biddy is 50. (She can't be too young by my theory, though--she has to be somewhat older than Doris.) A cop can usually retire at half-pay after 20 years of service, so conceivably he was as young as forty when he supposedly died, having served 18 years in the force, starting at 22. If Biddy is about his age, then he could've died ten years before the story started. Or if he's about 10 years older than Biddy (not inconceivable if he's in fact an ageless sorcerer who looked to be in his 40s or so), he could've been allegedly 2 years out of retirement at 2/3rds pay and died about 20 years before the story began, when Kate was very young.

That's a bunch of maybes that I can't recall being supported in the text, but that's what more or less needs to have happened to give Griffin time to set up a new identity, court and marry Doris, have a life with her, and die "ten years" before the story begins, which is what Doris tells us happened. (Or maybe Kate was 9 and Doris only had 5 years with Ted--that may make more sense, as I'm not sure that a 4 year old girl whose dad was a cop would be as likely to become one herself as maybe a 9 year old tomboy who idolized her father when he died would). I'd just

like this theory more if we had a time or approximate time for Kate's dad's death. There's also the issue of the women's relative age--if Biddy is 50 during the story and Ambrosius left her 15 or 20 years earlier, she would've been 30 or 35, a little early for Ambrosius to start looking for a younger woman (unless he's just really, really shallow). And Doris doesn't seem especially young--maybe in her mid-30s?

Alternately, Bax is lying about all of this stuff and the tension in the timelines is evidence that he got confused. But I don't like that reading very much. I don't think Wolfe wants to reward reasoning that disregards the fantastic as implausible and I don't think he went through the trouble of creating mysteries about the supernatural elements of the story just to have the right answer being that a frauster is making everything up, so there is no answer.