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The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 26 Sep 2010

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5755>

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Andrew Mason — 26 Sep 2010, 19:42

David Stockhoff wrote:

Another fantastical theory to explain this could be based on ?Dorcas having a basket ("not small yet not large either") with her as she mourns the boatman. Perhaps Severian impregnated her with himself, and some time travel trick ensued.

I think Dorcas's basket is meant to make you think of babies, but if you do the maths, it turns out it can't contain one. (Unless she has already done a time travel act, jumping back just a few months from her child's birth - but what would be the point of that?) If I remember rightly, the length of Severian's journey is still very vague at the time he sees Dorcas with the basket, and it's only later specified that it has taken only a few months.

It does look, when we link this with the Mandragora's words and with the fact that Frog and Fish were carried in a basket, that there is meant to be some link between babies and baskets, but like you I don't know what to make of it.

Also regarding the screaming baby memory, Severian says he remembers being "encircled by brown walls".

I think the Matachin Tower cells have walls of gray. Typhon's room is circular but has shiny metal walls.

Not only does the Matachin tower have grey walls, but Severian specifically mentions this in his other infant memory, of breastfeeding. Those brown walls mean something. (There is a boring solution - that the memory is Thecla's, or, perhaps more plausibly, the Old Autarch's - but I guess it's more complicated than that.)

I agree that the Mandragora did not in fact ask specifically about Severian being in a basket - it just made a comparison - but this somehow stirred up Severian's memory.