

The Future's Still the Past

Nocturnum: The Pittsburgh Chronicles Season 4 Episode 17

CUT SCENE

"Dammit!" the woman muttered, brushing a strand of dark brown hair away from her forehead. She threw blankets aside, overturned chests, emptied bags, then stood, hands on hips, staring at the Eastern horizon.

"Dammit!" She said again, then spun and gave her snoring companion a kick.

"Bill," she said. "Bill, get up."

Bill curled up into a little ball and muttered, "Five more minutes, ma."

"Dammit, Bill, you ain't got no ma. And I ain't got time t' give you a proper wakin' this mornin'. We got trouble. Now git yer lazy ass up!"

"Shit, Becky," Bill moaned, adjusting his had to cover his face against the morning sun, "Just lemme sleep a spell. There'll be other stages to rob."

"I ain't talkin' about no stages, Bill. I'm talkin' about the artifact. Y'know, that purty gold thing? With the star? And magic?"

"Yeah," Bill muttered. "It's in my saddle bag. What about it?"

"What about it, ya durned buffoon, is that it *ain't* in yer saddle bag! Nor mine! Nor anywhere around this durned place. I'm tryin' ta tell ya, the key ain't here, Bill! It's gone! It done been stolen!"

Bill was on his feet in a second. "What in tarnation are you talking about? It's right..." He opened his saddlebag and rooted around, then stopped. "It's been stole."

"You know, Bill," Becky whispered, "I been seein' shadows move in the rocks late at night. Like Lizards, but as walk like men."

"Don't be talkin' nonsense, Becks," Bill said, strapping on his gun belt. "Ain't no such thing as Lizards that walk like men. It's the damned Chinamen, came took it out from under our noses. Sneaky bastards, they is."

"So what now?"

"Now we head back there, and start killin' people till they tell us where it is. I didn't murder twenty Chinamen to get that thing just to have 'em take it back from me whilst my guard was down. Let's ride!"

Bill swept Becky up in his arms and planted a long kiss, hard on lips. When she pulled apart, she ran her tongue over her lips with a coo. "Bill, baby," she said, "When we get that key back, we're gonna set the whole West ablaze!"

Sunset. The vampire sat at the mouth of the cave and watched the sun go down. Some part of him, deep down inside, tugged at heart strings he shouldn't have, and missed the burn of those yellow rays on his skin. But that wasn't to be. Ever again. He'd left that behind when he chose to walk the path of darkness.

Or had he chosen? It seemed so long ago, now, that he couldn't even remember clearly. All he knew is that after the first couple centuries it got too confusing to continue on, the drive to kill and destroy, and that voice in his head urging him the other way, tearing him apart. So he'd slept. He'd slept for so long, only coming out to feed every so often. This last time he'd decided Europe was played out and come here, to the New World. But hiding in caves during the day wasn't his thing. He'd heard of a town, a center of convergence somewhere out here, and had been tracking it. He'd get there tonight; of that he was sure, and then, just maybe he could use that power to set the world ablaze.

The sun was down. He untethered his horse, which was still uncomfortable at his very presence, mounted up, and headed for Apocalypse.

ΣΥΝΟΨΙΣ

The Morning After

Everyone wakes to the sun streaming in their windows. Anita wakes up next to Doc, who immediately takes a nip from his hip flask, lights a cigarette, and coughs up some blood. He informs Anita that he'll be leaving today, but would like to have breakfast with her before he heads for Tombstone.

Likewise, Billy wants to say good bye to Matthew, John, and Klaus, as he's heading for Old Fort Sumner to meet up with his pals Charlie Bowdry and Tommy O'Folliard at Pete Maxwell's place. Each of them can't help but feel a little swell of sadness knowing this fun-loving, lively kid is going to be dead within the year, shot unarmed and in the dark, at that same place. If it comes up, one (or both) of the two men could figure out that the Cast is out of their time.

The Cast bid Billy and Doc farewell; Billy gives one of his guns to John, saying, "I can always get another, and there's no better sign of a true pal, than to exchange shootin' irons." In exchange, John gives Billy one of the modified peacemakers he'd purchased and said, "With this you'll get a hell of a lot more than the half-second drop on the other guy that filing down the sight gives you."

Upon seeing this, Doc looks embarrassed, realizing he's expected to give a token, and begins shuffling through his pockets. He hands Anita a gold pocket watch, which is engraved, "To Doc, the best gambling, fighting, bad boy partner a girl could ask for. All my love, Kate." Anita sarcastically thanks him for giving her a token given to him by another woman, to which he replies that Kate would probably beat him silly if she knew he'd given this to another woman, but that it's the best token of remembrance he has to give.

The group then heads in for breakfast and to talk about what they're going to do to find this Key. While they have breakfast, at some point, someone gets waved over by Jacob Weaver, who says, "I have a note for you people. Seems our town Madam has taken a fancy to y'all. Madame de Rais wants to speak with you."

Also at this time, a pretty young woman comes in wearing a proper dress, but carrying a Winchester repeating rifle over her shoulder and wearing a Stetson hat. She is Gifted. She walks up to the bar and asks Weaver for a room. He tells her "just had two open up, Miss...?"

"Mosey. Annie Mosey."

Klaus and John remember that Mosey was the birth name of Annie Oakley, and with this revelation the Cast notices that this young woman matches the photos and film they've all seen of Annie Oakley at various points. She brushes Weaver off when he offers "anything you could possibly need, just ask," saying, "Oh, Mr. Weaver, I think I'm quite capable of fending for myself, thank you very much."

She takes her key, looks around the room, fixes upon the Cast, and gives them a half-smile, nod, and tip of her hat. Matthew casts a look at Anita and goes to make the acquaintance of miss Oakley, who is amicable to his overtures. He succeeds in making a date for dinner later that night.

The Cast pokes around for information about Brigitte's and learning (not surprisingly) that nobody goes to Brigitte's for the coffee, which is lousy, but for the service, which is excellent. Aside from your typical \$2 treatments, Brigitte's features more refined and unusual services in the form of the Velvet Room, where the surroundings and girls are more sophisticated, the Silk Room, where all the employees are Asian (and opium and other Eastern delicacies can be had for the right price), and the Back Room, which caters to those with very unusual tastes. Many customers of Brigitte's wake up the next morning feeling rather weak-kneed and suffering from the symptoms of severe blood loss. A few check in but never come out, although those are rare. And there are rumors that not all of Brigitte's girls are there of their own free will.

Weaver is of the opinion that a recent string of disappearances in Apocalypse are the fault of Brigitte's girls getting a bit out of hand.

Klaus opts to remain behind, being loathe to enter a brothel given his sexually dysfunctional history.

Surprise Arrival

As the Cast heads for Brigitte's, a bright flash of light erupts in the desert, between the town and the Prayer Tree, and a humanoid-shaped body falls from the sky. As they rush to investigate, they find none other than Katherine, standing and brushing herself off! She wears an amulet very similar to John's; it seems that just as the battle in the future was starting to go badly, Nectanebus held up an amulet that seemed a clone of the one they'd made for John, and activated it, taking himself and several of his servants, even the gods didn't know where. Michele, Hanuman, and Ganesha then decided that Katherine's skills would be needed in the past. All three divine beings concentrated their power and created the amulet she now wears, which was designed to track the one John has. All she knows is that before she left, Michele bade her to help them succeed because "everything depends upon it."

The Cast now assumes that the twin amulet Nectanebus wields is the same as the one Katherine has, and has allowed him and his servants to follow the Cast through time. Katherine is surprised to learn that the Cast has already obtained the first Key in ancient Sumeria, as it's only been minutes since they left in her eyes, but they chalk it up to crossing mysticism with time and space, and move on. Anita leaves John and Matthew to go visit Brigitte, and takes Katherine to obtain period clothing and see Klaus. Katherine is shocked and confused by Anita and Klaus's appearance (as they now look like themselves from 2007) and the two do their best to explain all that's happened. Eventually, Anita agrees to take Katherine to Brigitte's so she can catch up with her father.

Madame de Rais

At Brigitte's Coffee House, Matthew and John are ushered into the Common Room, where they are greeted by piano music, a cloud of tobacco smoke, and several smiling but steely-eyed girls of all shapes and colors. They can plainly see doorways to three rooms off the common room: one is obscured by a red velvet curtain, another by green silk, and a third by a heavy black curtain. In addition, there is a spiral staircase leading upstairs to the second floor. The Girl of Easy Virtue who escorts them in and seats them informs them that Madame de Rais is expecting them and will be with them shortly, and asks if there's anything she can do for them while they wait. She offers 'Anythin' you like, honey. Coffee, or maybe somethin' a bit more frisky.'

Eventually, Brigitte appears with a flourish at the top of the stair and bows deeply to the Cast (allowing them a view of her ample bosom as she does so). She then says, 'We should speak somewhere privately. Please, come. Step into my parlor,' and gestures up the stairs.

Just then, a voice in Matthew's ear says, 'Said the spider to the fly.' Turning, Matthew finds himself face-to-face with Semyaza again, who smiles pleasantly and says, 'Isn't this a conundrum? I'll tell you this much. She does have information for you, and useful information at that. But then, she is a vampire, and a very old one. Who knows what's up at the top of those stairs? But again still, she's not foolish enough to tell you what she's got in front of everyone here. Everyone in this town has ears upon ears, you see.'

Ignoring the demon as best he can, Matthew follows John upstairs. When they arrive, Brigitte is sitting on a divan, reclining, her legs sprawled out. Both Matthew and John sense another presence there after Semyaza warns them, and demand to know who she's keeping hidden. She calls to someone, and who walks out of the back room, but *Drake*. Both Matthew and John ask Drake what the hell he is doing here, and he in turn responds with, 'I'm sorry, but I don't believe we've met.'

The two then realize this is not their friend Drake, but Draco, the still quite evil vampire as he was in the 18th century. Brigitte and he, it seems, are old acquaintances, and she's providing him sanctuary while he's traveling across the plains. Eventually, the Cast are joined by Anita and Katherine, both of whom are shocked to see Drake alive (such as it were). Anita bursts into tears at the sight...but formulates a plan in her mind at the same time. John blatantly tells Drake who they are, who he is, and how they know him, before the rest of the Cast explain that John is clearly delusional, but mostly harmless. Still, when John calls Drake by his human birth name of Alexander, the vampire is immediately suspicious and decides these humans know far too much about him.

Despite Semyaza's teasing, Brigitte didn't bring the cast here to fight. Like everyone else in this hell-spawned town, she of course has her own reasons and motives, but she's noticed the Cast are capable and experienced demon fighters, and wants to offer them some information. If they ask her about the disappearances, she'll assume Jacob Weaver or Dale Cunningham made that claim, and ask which one it was. She'll then go on to explain that just like any other town, there are power struggles in Apocalypse, and she, Weaver, and Cunningham are the major players. She'll also say, however, that she had nothing to do with the disappearances, nor did Weaver. She believes, in fact, that Cunningham is behind it. While some of the disappearances were customers of hers, they all were drifters who worked for Cunningham on the railroad. For her part, she has no reason to kill off good customers. Not because she has a conscience, but because killing your customers makes for low repeat business.

She also says there's a rumor that a couple of Chinese laborers dug up a strange artifact in the hills while laying track, which gave them the power to escape from bondage, but nobody knows what happened to the artifact. As though in answer, John's medallion thrums with power at this declaration, as if to say, "it's in town somewhere."

She'll freely admit that she has her own reasons for wanting to see Cunningham brought down; if he goes, that leaves only her and Weaver, and she thinks Cunningham is the bigger threat right now. He's been leading strange rituals late at night, with more and more townsfolk attending, and a lot of those people end up walking around almost in a daze, no emotions, with a somewhat wooden bearing afterward. She's afraid that there's more to his cult than meets the naked eye, and she's certain it has something to do with that tree.

She goes on to mention that Cunningham is always willing to hire new drifters on for the railroad business. One or more of them getting a job there might yield some information. Looking Anita and Katherine up and down, she says, "He won't hire a woman on for hard labor. But you might get a job in the laundry. Or I'm sure I can find some employment for such talented girls as yourselves."

The Cast takes their leave of Brigitte. Draco is intrigued by their apparent knowledge of him, and has seen enough to know that the so-called delusional one may not be so crazed as they pretend.

Later that Night

John sets up a shooting competition with Annie Oakley for the next day, just so he can say he did it. Matthew keeps his date with the young woman, and it goes as well as he hoped it would, despite a glowering Anita stalking him during the course of the evening. John sets up a table with two shots of whiskey, and a table-tent sign reading, "Draco" just inside the tavern where it can be seen from the outside, then sits down to wait.

Klaus, for his part, heads outside and hides. All of the cast expect Draco to come looking for them, after what happened earlier in the day at Brigitte's. Anita eventually also heads outside to brood. Before long, the group sees Draco skulking about outside. Klaus makes his presence known, as does Anita, and Draco turns to run back to Brigitte's. Anita focuses her power—both her necromancy and the spirit mastery she has recently learned against demons—and succeeds in freezing the vampire dead in his tracks. He gnashes his teeth, hisses, and threatens, to no avail. Anita grits her teeth and tells Klaus to go get John, quickly.

John emerges, and Anita orders him to read the spell. He does so, and there's a vortex, a whirlwind of green light surrounding Draco, and when it subsides, the vampire is gone, replaced by Drake from 2007. The vampire lays, twitching and disoriented, overcome by the future memories that are not his, and the group tries to console him that it will pass soon. Leaping to his feet, Drake slams Anita to the ground, and tears her sleeve, searching for the symbol of Nyarlathotep. Seeing that it is not there, he stands and without another word, staggers into the bar, where he proceeds to shoot the whiskey that John had laid out for his vampire counterpart. Anita goes to the old church and cries until Klaus and Katherine go to comfort her.

Planning and Information

The Cast go to tell Matthew the good news, and recruit his assistance in finally making a plan to track down this Key. Matthew, unfortunately, is in the middle of coitus with Annie Oakley, and is none too happy with Katherine kicking the door in to demand his input.

In the end, John is adamantly against putting the group in the prisoner-like situation of working on the railroad. Klaus and he are in favor at first of simply killing Cunningham, until Anita and Katherine remind them that such an act will bring them no closer to getting the Key and may in fact make it harder for them to get it if it brings the retribution of his men down upon them. Klaus, at last, decides to sneak into the labor camp in the dead of night and talk to the Chinese workers. John remembers having seen a snake woman prostitute at Brigitte's, and opts to go talk to her. Anita stays behind with Katherine and Drake to bring the two of them up to speed.

Matthew gets laid.

Klaus uncovers the information that five of the Chinese immigrants unearthed the Key while digging a tunnel; the blood inside allowed them to escape their bonds, and split the mountain in two, like Moses parting the Red Sea, and they escaped through the crack. When their taskmasters tried to follow, the mountain snapped shut, killing the men. Klaus thanks the immigrants for their help, and makes his way back to the hotel after stealing a sack full of dynamite from the railroad camp for John.

For his part, John makes arrangements to talk with the snake-woman prostitute the next morning, agreeing that her time will be worth \$5 an hour.

When the Cast meets back up the next morning, and Klaus reveals his findings, John produces the Key of Zarathustra and they discover that it, too, is filled with blood. Anita posits that Zarathustra was the servant of Ormazd, who stood against Ahriman's forces of darkness in the final battle. If the Key of Moses has the power of Exodus in the blood within, might not the key of Zarathustra's blood have some destructive force against Sumerian demons like Deadites?

They decide to test the key on the Prayer Tree. But the tree is intelligent and aware of the Cast's meddling. The town finds itself under assault by zombie-like projections of the missing townsfolk, though made of wood! As the Cast fights off the tree-people (with Annie Oakley lending her considerable shooting skills to the mix), Drake demands the key from John. John turns it over, and Drake calls upon his Gifts, launching himself into the air and leaping the half-hour walk to the Prayer Tree in less than a minute. He pours a few drops of blood on the tree, which shudders and unleashes a screaming psychic assault on everyone in town. Fortunately, the assault turns out to be apparently the tree's death throes, as it goes silent and petrified, and the sense of Sadicas surrounding it vanishes. Likewise, all of the tree-things collapse to the ground, quite dead.

Drake rejoins the Cast and just as they're about to make another move towards finding the Key, a voice rings out behind them.

"What in the blazes of Hell is goin' on, here!"

They turn, and Anita and John find themselves face-to-face with almost mirror images of themselves. Beaumont Bill and Black Widow Becky Blake have returned.

QUOTES AND GREAT MOMENTS

"Now she's officially a hooker." Matthew (after Doc Holliday gives a pocket watch to Anita as a token of remembrance)

"Apparently it's easier to get her out of a dress than into one." Matthew (on Anita)

There's a flash of light in the desert, and something drops from the sky. It turns out to be Katherine, wearing an amulet very similar to John's. She tells John, Anita, and Matthew that William (Nectanebus) followed them and cloned the original amulet.

"The town's full of lizard men..." Klaus

"And women." Matthew

"So...is that bestiality?" Klaus

After getting her outfitted with period clothing, Anita takes Katherine to see Klaus, who is drinking in the bar. Katherine is confused by his and Anita's appearance (as they now appear as they did in the year 2007). He lets slip that Anita and he are no longer who they were and mentions Anita's mark of Nyarlathotep.

"Drink more, talk less!" Anita (to Klaus)

"So did I miss anything?" Katherine

"Let's see...well, your dad's Gilgamesh, and I slept with Doc Holliday. That about brings you up to speed." Anita

"My, aren't we just becoming a little whore?" Katherine (to Anita)

(Shocked) "Look who's talking!" Anita

"I'm just following family tradition." Katherine

"Well, if I'm a whore for, then Matthew's a whore too. He slept with some Sumerian slayer chick when we were in...Sumeria!" Anita

"Can we go see my dad now?" Katherine

"Sure, just a couple of whores going to the whorehouse!" Anita

"A fifty year old whore is kinda gross." Katherine

"Oh, so now I'm a gross, old whore!" Anita

"What did I do?" Matthew

"You're a big whore!" Anita

"Remember, he hasn't met us yet." Matthew

"Who?" Katherine

"You'll see." Matthew

Drake is sitting in the parlor of the brothel with Brigitte.

"You've been entertained by John Holliday?" Brigitte

"Yeah..." Anita

"He is very...talented." Brigitte.

Matthew asks Annie Oakley out to dinner.

"So it begins..." Anita

"Good bye, Miss. Thanks for watching us eat!" Annie

"That's Anita. She's another friend." Matthew

"Looks like she's more than a friend." Annie

"She's Doc Holliday's girlfriend." Matthew

"That's* Big-nosed Kate?!" Annie

Anita restrains Draco using her necromancy and John casts the spell to merge 2007 Drake with current-era Draco. After the spell is cast, Drake tackles Anita, and examines her looking for the Mark of Nyarlothotep.

Matthew and Annie share a big romantic kiss under the stars...and Anita sees them.

Anita, overcome with emotion by Drake's return, goes off by herself to the town church and weeps.

Matthew takes Annie to bed, and takes her virginity!

"Matthew's going to be awhile. He's sleeping with a prominent historical figure." Klaus

John puts his arm around Anita to comfort her after finding her in the church. Anita, completely shocked, looks at John dumbfounded and says, "Are you *touching* me?"

"You know what pisses me off the most? I was just sitting down to watch that rented copy of Steamboat Willy!"
Drake

Katherine gets shot looking for Matthew.

"I resume having coffee." John

"I resume having whiskey." Anita

"I resume having Annie!" Matthew

Matthew comes downstairs, not too happy with the group for interrupting him.

"We're having a meeting, which is a little more important than getting your rocks off." Katherine

"Since when did you guys give a damn what I think? Last time I checked, you all did whatever the hell you felt like doing, regardless of my opinion." Matthew

"Hands up" "I didn't do anything..." Anita

Drake goes to talk with Anita in her room (as Matthew is absent, being otherwise occupied) with a couple of bottles of whiskey.

"I find my faith in the universe has plummeted greatly." Drake

"So what did I miss?" Drake

"Well, among other things, you did miss another night of insane drunkenness on a train." Anita

"Considering the last time we did that you tried to get into my pants, I'm not that upset I wasn't there." Drake

"Yeah. This time I took a fully-clothed bath with Matthew and reanimated a frozen duck to make it dance." Anita
"...!" Drake

John and Anita are shocked when they go outside and find themselves face to face with two individuals who look (mostly) exactly like them...Black Widow Rebecca Blake and Beaumont Bill Forsythe!