

# Paradise Re-Lost

## Nocturnum Season 4 Episode 21

The cast is transported back to the year 2025 with the four Keys: Zarathustra (Matthew), Moses (John), Christ (Anita), and Danu (Klaus). A beautiful Egyptian woman named Nena meets them and says Michele sent her to help guide them on the next stage of their journey. She is a daughter of Isis. She explains that the Alliance has a safe house here in Riyadh where they've got a set of scrolls that might help the Cast figure out what they need to do with the Keys, now that they have them. Saudi Arabia, Nena explains, is still free, though war is only a few hours away, at the borders, and occasionally bombings do take place here. Local Muslim extremists haven't taken well to working with ancient so-called "False gods," and terrorism is as unfortunately rampant as ever. Sometimes, Nena says, she wonders if humankind really deserves to win this war.

The cast suddenly detects the swell of Taint, and a loud explosion sounds from just a few blocks over. As a black plume of smoke reaches into the air, Nena gasps and runs towards it, the Cast in tow. As they run, they notice a small group of U.N. soldiers moving away from the explosion, and they sense Taint amongst them. The Cast springs into action and engages them, managing to not only defeat them handily, but reveal them as undercover agents of the AoR...servants of Leviathan.

They continue their run through the streets, and arrive at the safe house, which as Nena feared, was the source of the explosion. Inside, everyone is dead, burned to ash. But the Cast notes that there's far more damage here than a single explosion. Indeed, in some areas the bodies are charred black, but there is no structural damage whatsoever, nor is anything but the human beings burned. Matthew grimly confirms that this looks like the mark of an angel's celestial fire. But why would a Seraphim, even one of Semyaza's Fallen, do this?

Klaus uses his ability to see into the Truth of things to discover that the angel who did this was, in fact, Tainted, and the horrors he witnesses cause Klaus momentarily to doubt his own sanity. One thing is certain; the angel came here for a distinct purpose. Nena is horrified, but dashes through the complex to a wall safe, which has been torn from its housing and emptied. She explains that within that safe was the scrolls the Cast needed.

The Cast are equally horrified, and Matthew in particular is disturbed at the notion of a Tainted Seraphim.

Once Nena calms down, she explains that all she knew of the scrolls was that they spoke of a perfect place, from where creation sprang, and of a grail of some sort that was the solution to joining the Keys. But the details were in the scrolls.

The Cast decides that the scrolls must have been talking about Eden. Anita grins and says, "there's more than one way to Paradise," and produces her copy of the *Necronomicon*, which, she says, explains how to find the place. Between her *Necronomicon* and Matthew's knowledge of biblical lore, they determine that they're looking for a specific cliff side near a tributary of the Tigris and Euphrates, about fifty miles south of Baghdad, which unfortunately is the very heart of Church of Revelation territory, from where the Dark Imam rules.

The Saudi/Iraqi border is a war zone, and heavily patrolled and militarized. The Cast will have to sneak through, which they accomplish through Anita recruiting the spirits of a couple of angry, recently killed U.N. troops who are happy to get one last chance to wreak havoc amongst the AoR. Just to back things up, John sets up several pounds of C-4, which Matthew steals along the lines and plants with a radio remote. When chaos erupts, the Cast slip through. Once in Iraq, Klaus “requisitions” a taxi cab and twenty gallons of gasoline (“just in case,”) and they set off into the desert, Matthew driving.

Eventually they encounter an AoR roadblock manned by ten soldiers and an Adept. One of the soldiers comes to the car and demands to know what they’re doing here, as civilians aren’t allowed in this area. Klaus stutters in Arabic for a few moments, then says, “oh, to Hell with it,” and springs a four foot claw through the throat of the soldier. Matthew then yells, “Hang on!” and jams his foot down on the gas, straight towards the roadblock. A moment later, he yells, “Okay, everyone out, now!” and the Cast leap from the car. Matthew wrenches the wheel left, then right, sending the car into an aerial spin like a massive missile. He leaps out of the car and rolls just in time for Anita to come up from her own rib-cracking roll, gun in hand, and shoot the gas tank, turning the car into a massive fireball that takes out all ten remaining enemies.

Miraculously, one jeep is left unharmed in the fray, and the Cast commandeers it to continue their trip. In the aftermath of the battle, they spot several buzzards flying overhead, and to her disgust, Anita notes that they are, in fact, undead animals. Fearful that the creatures might be spies for the AoR, the Cast make haste.

When they are only a few minutes from their destination, approaching a series of crags and chasms in the rocky desert, a missile flies at them from behind. They look over their shoulder to see a gigantic, rusted machine lumbering after them which appears to be built of pieces of destroyed aircraft. Somehow, Anita marvels, though the thing is mechanical, it’s also undead. Matthew dubs it a “Deadcepticon.”

The monstrous “Deadcepticon” opens fire, and Matthew weaves and bobs the jeep to avoid the spray of deadly bullets. Then the thing launches two stinger missiles, which Matthew also manages to barely avoid, though the Cast takes a bit of shrapnel from those. Nena, inexplicably, is in her glory, laughing the whole way about how she hasn’t had this much fun in years.

Finally, Anita decides she’s had enough. She stands up in the Jeep, turns to face the monster, throws a ton of Essence at it, and screams, “ENOUGH! STOP!”

After launching one last missile, it stops dead in its tracks. Matthew guns the Jeep into a crevice between the rocks, and the missile hits just behind, collapsing the entry way behind them. They drive until the crevice gets too narrow, then get out and walk. Eventually, they reach a tall, solid wall of rock, though Matthew sees a doorway that is hidden by a powerful glamour. Nena says that she cannot enter, as she is not permitted there because of what she is, but offers that this probably means they are safe from their enemies in there as well. She assures them she’ll be okay to get back to Saudi Arabia and thanks them for a great adventure.

Matthew leads the Cast in, and they find themselves in a lush valley populated by a small, pygmy-like race of people who seem to have no conception of violence, save for the killing of wild pigs for food. Though they don’t speak or recognize the language of the people, the Cast manage to communicate through sign language and scratching drawings in the dirt with sticks. They are made welcome as guests, and in the morning, the chief of the tribe offers to guide the Cast to their holy place. The Cast

accompany him, until they reach a fork in the path and they need to go left, but he insists they go right. He is terrified of the left-hand path, which leads to a long, obsidian enclosure identified by the *Necronomicon* as the entry to the Garden of Eden. They pretend to acquiesce to his demands, but when they camp and he, utterly unafraid, simply lays down and goes to sleep, they slip off.

Later that night, they hear him shouting for them. Matthew steps out of hiding to face him, and the little man screams at Matthew in the pygmies' alien, sing-songy tongue, making it clear through gestures that the Cast are no longer welcome in their village, being somehow tainted by having taken this fork. The little man then leaves.

The Cast manages to gain entrance to the garden by swimming through a stream under the wall. There they encounter the Tree of Life, now petrified and dead (because, Matthew explains, when Adam and Eve were expelled, they took their souls with them) and the Tree of Knowledge, which is now rife with venomous serpents and cannot be approached. Each tree stands upon a hill, connected by a stone bridge with a strange east-facing throne in the center, constructed of smooth stone, with a gold disk in the center which has a gleaming ruby in the center of that. They camp out beneath the Tree of Life, and according to the instructions in the *Necronomicon*, Anita volunteers to sit in the throne at sunrise the next day. When she does so, and the first rays of the rising sun strike the ruby, Anita sees all of creation, from the beginning to the end, in its entirety. She sees its beauty and its sheer horror, and screams as her mind is blasted away. Finally, she is expelled from the throne and Matthew helps her to her feet as her senses gradually return.

There is then a shining beam of light that comes down from Heaven, and the most beautiful woman any of them have ever seen floats to the ground. She smiles upon them and says that they are worthy of her prize, and she wishes them well on their Quest. She then instructs Anita on how to properly remove the plaque from the back of the throne, which she identifies as the Grail of Sophia. Klaus explains that originally the word "Grail" comes from the ancient Celtic word "Graal," which means "serving platter," not "cup."

The Grail can be worn as a buckler, and appears to have inserts on each side for the Keys, though Sophia warns that the Cast must now find their way to Yggdrasil and the center of Creation before the Keys can be joined. They ask how they can do this, and she tells them that Wisdom must guide them, and Wisdom cannot come easily. They may remain here for a year and a day, and absorb all of the knowledge that the throne has to offer, or they may make their way to the ruins of the Monastery of the Magi, where a great ancient library exists that may give them their answers. They opt for the second option and Anita shows them a way out, described in the *Necronomicon*, a path that carries them via a fast-running stream out of Eden and back into the desert.

## QUOTES AND GREAT MOMENTS

"Perhaps we should contact Odin? He may be able to help direct us...I remember a story about him hanging from Yggdrasil..."—Klaus

"Oh, he probably doesn't remember that."—Anita

"I think women should be flatulent all the time."—Mike (re: self-flagellation)

Klaus draws the fire of 5 AOR members disguised as UN soldiers when he calls them out.

"So what did they say?"

"She said there was something in the scrolls about a seat of great knowledge..."—Klaus

“Yeah...there’s a wisdom seat. It’s in Eden.”—Anita

“How do know this?”—Klaus

\*Pulls out Necronomicon\* “I keep telling you, never leave home without it. It’s like the fricking Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy of Disturbing Things and Obscure Places.”—Anita

(Re: Klaus)

“He’s making me mad. I might hit him. That’s bad, right?”—Anita

\*Nods\*--Matthew

The cast develops two plans to get across the border into Iraq: Ghostie plan A and Explosive plan B

“You don’t belong here.”—Spirit

“No...no I don’t.”—Anita

“I don’t think I get paid enough.”—Matthew

“Really?”—Anita

“I want a contract negotiation.”—Matthew

(Klaus begins to interject)

“No, I want to hear his thoughts on this, I really do. I didn’t realize that there was income to be had for saving the human race.”—Anita

“This from the woman who owns a supernatural detective agency!”—John

“Hey! It’s blown up now, okay?!”—Anita

“Now you’re wondering if I’m actually pissed off about the money thing.”—Matthew

“But Matthew, the joy that is my company is worth so much more than money could ever buy you.”—Anita

“Put it on her tab, she’s the one with a business expense account.”—Klaus

“Which, I may remind you, your paycheck comes out of.”—Anita

“He gets paid?!”—Matthew

\*Throws some pocket change at Matthew\*

“There, you happy now?!”—Anita

“I don’t want your charity.”—Matthew

(To Matthew)

“You know, everyone that sleeps with you ends up dead.”—Anita

“Tentacles...why does it always have to be tentacles?”—Anita

“Civilians aren’t allowed here, you know that.”—AOR soldier

“Yeah, well, about that...”—Klaus (as he decapitates him)

Matthew drives the car into a tainted sorcerer. The cast jumps out and Anita shoots the trunk, where Klaus stashed several extra canisters of gasoline.

“A zombie transformer?!”—Anita

“It’s a dead-cepticon.”—Matthew

(re: the heat mirage)

“Was I right?”—Anita

“...no...”—Matthew

“Is it little?”—Julie

“No, it’s antelope-sized.”—Jason

(Re: Pygmy warrior who insists on being the cast’s guide)

“Klaus...he’s not an Iraqi border guard.”—Matthew

“Can you do anything to make him sleep a little more...soundly?”—Matthew

“Knock him in the head with a big rock.”—Anita

“I kinda grew to like the little bastard.”—Matthew