

PARADISE: THE RETURN TO EDEN

Written by

Ernestia Fraser

242.437.1688
fraser.ernestia@gmail.com

FADE IN:

Title Card: Year 2198 after the Great Planetary Exodus.
Number of inhabitants left on earth after move to Mars:
UNKNOWN.

EXT. THE BURNT FOREST - LATE AFTERNOON

Earth has been scarred with fire and famine. CAMERA MOVES across a ravaged forest of bare trees, charred and hewn down for the most part. No greenery. In fact, these times are bleak and obsolete --

On foot, DR. AUGUSTUS WATERS, (32, African-American scientist) and GENERAL BRAWN(35, muscular soldier wearing all black uniform), treads through the abandoned area.

Brawn patrols the vicinity holding an futuristic electronic gun called the AX 2000 while Augustus kneels on the ground, rummaging and sorting the soil for some semblance of plant life. He picks up a tiny sapling and as soon as he raises it from the ground, it WITHERS across his fingertips.

BRAWN
(with slight hostility)
Let's go.

Augustus stands up, he and Brawn moving forward --

The two men move deeper into the DARK TERRAIN -- They mount up on a large dirt mound soon encountering a horse graveyard - the dry BONES of countless HORSES stretched across the miles ahead.

BRAWN (CONT'D)
Do you still believe in God, Dr.
Waters?

Augustus hangs back as Brawn descends upon the valley of bones.

EXT. EARTH CAMP 4901 - LATE AFTERNOON

Brawn and Augustus walk towards a small, walled-in city. It is an eclectic mix of architecture - rustic buildings with a futuristic additions - mainly neoclassical, renaissance and Spanish colonial in style. A few sleek, but run-down skyscrapers. Rusty, silver, orb-shaped, dome buildings. A broken-down, bullet-shaped train, at a stand still, levitating over magnetized tracks --

The two reach within the city walls -- Augustus is greeted by RICARA DWABES (32, black, pretty) while Brawn pushes forward alone.

RICARA

What happened out there?

AUGUSTUS

Nothing.

RICARA

Did you find anything?

Augustus shakes his head watching as Brawn joins a group of SOLDIERS like himself all heavily armed with black artillery.

AUGUSTUS

(solemnly)

No, we didn't.

RICARA

The seeds that were scattered months ago?

AUGUSTUS

Ricara, there's nothing there.

She starts to walk away, but stops, returning.

RICARA

What are we going to write in the reports? We've been researching that fertilizer for months...

AUGUSTUS

It's inconclusive right now. What can I say?

RICARA

It's conclusive, Augustus. We can't get a single plant to grow in these conditions and we haven't discovered any new life forms for years. We're going to die... Why don't you just admit that?

Augustus isn't sure how to respond. She walks off.

AUGUSTUS

Ricara? Wait.

INT. FOOD STORAGE UNIT - SAME

A tall room with thousands of small, plastic FOOD POUCHES. CLOSE ON a few pouches: Chicken Dinner, Lobster Bisque, Mixed Vegetables, and Spaghetti --

A SOLDIER, dressed in the protocol ALL-BLACK attire, holds a huge metal shovel to the pile and shovels up some packs, placing them in a metal container nearby. He shoves the container against the wall, closing it.

FEMALE SOLDIER (V.O.)
(shouting)
Whose next?

EXT. FOOD STORAGE UNIT - SAME

CLOSE ON a rustic well and pump. The TAP is dry and extremely rusted. An ELDERLY MAN, 70, sits nearby, seemingly dehydrated--

A long line of Camp 4901 Residents waiting on their weekly food ration. Most of their FACES are dusty and tired. They line up near the large, nondescript building --

A ruddy-looking MOTHER and DAUGHTER step up next in line to receive a handful of food packets. The mother opens up a metal conical container, placing the packets inside.

MOTHER
What about our water ration?

The female soldier pulls out four, tiny, clear, circular PACKETS out of a RED BARREL.

FEMALE SOLDIER
(hesitantly)
Try not to go through these so quickly.

She watches as the mother places a packet in her child's mouth. The soldier seems affected, but then looks away.

INT. MILITARY BASE - SAME - OPERATIONS ROOM

LIEUTENANT MATTHIAS COLE, (60, gray-hair) stands among his OFFICERS looking at a DIGITAL MAP of the newly formed EARTH. All of the earth's continents have been shifted together. Some continents are missing large areas of land but they are still distinguishable.

Brawn stands among the closed group of military officials - about six officers. Another officer, GENERAL WALLACE, (40, well-built, handsome) stands by.

GENERAL WALLACE

Lieutenant Cole, we think we've detected movement in the South West. It could be another Earth Camp.

He points to a specific location on the map.

LIEUTENANT COLE

Could be a pack of wild animals for all we know.

BRAWN

All the animals are dead, Lieutenant, all due respect.

Brawn and Cole exchange a look.

LIEUTENANT COLE

And you think humans have survived the harsh conditions of the Tyrant Desert and the last floods?

GENERAL WALLACE

We've survived, why not others?

LIEUTENANT COLE

If there is more activity, be the first to let me know. Otherwise, I am not putting my men on a deadly goose hunt about Earth Camps that haven't been detected for over two decades.

The Lieutenant begins for the door.

LIEUTENANT COLE (CONT'D)

Sergeant Brawn, follow me. I need a report.

EXT. MILITARY BASE - SAME

Brawn and Cole stand side by side watching camp RESIDENTS walk through the streets and side corners.

BRAWN

The scientists have nothing substantial.

LIEUTENANT COLE

That's rather disappointing ,
Sergeant.

BRAWN

Sir, we can take another course of
action. If there are other camps
out there, General Wallace and I
can organize long-term raids, get a
few men --

LIEUTENANT COLE

Sergeant Brawn... You of all people
should know that our units are
organized to protect life, not
threaten it. So that's a 'no.'

Brawn watches as Cole walks off.

EXT. APARTMENT SKY RISE - NIGHT

A tall, sleek apartment building, fifty units high. LIGHTS on
in a few of them.

INT. AUGUSTUS' APARTMENT - SAME

It's a small studio-style apartment with a spectacular view
of the city lights against the night sky.

A large, silver CROSS hangs on the wall. A blue couch faces
the wide windows. Nearby is a sleeping cot --

Augustus stands over his kitchen sink, squeezing a dripper
filled with liquid into a petri dish. He pulls a seed out of
a container and places it in the dish. The seed begins to
rapidly sprout, taking the form of a sapling. It sits there
in the dish.

AUGUSTUS

There you are --

Augustus compares the very real sapling with one he sees in a
large textbook. It's the picture of a corn plant --

Augustus places the written label "corn" on the petri dish --
He sets the petri dish next to a few other plants that sits
on the window sill. All of them are wilted and dying. The new
one is a ray of hope, even if it's for a short while.

Augustus SIGHS as the same plant withers to black.

LATER

Augustus stands in his kitchen, opening up a box of fruit bars called MARS BARS. He unwraps one -- He places the bar on a tiny plate on the dining table. It's a set up for two.

It's actually a very dainty meal: a plate of two separate bars and two cups filled with a single water packets. This is not luxurious eating by any means --

Augustus is unsure about the impression he's trying to set as he rubs his head confused -- Augustus removes the two plates from the table, takes off the bars and places the dishes in the sink -- he then reaches for them and places them back to position. He rises at the sound of a subtle DOOR BELL --

Augustus and Ricara sit on the couch. He passes her a Mars bar and keeps one for himself.

RICARA
(referring to the bar)
This is ironic, isn't it?

AUGUSTUS
(smiling)
It is.

RICARA
Expiration?

AUGUSTUS
(looking at the date)
Let's see... May 18 of 3010.

RICARA
Amazing.

The two snigger briefly.

RICARA (CONT'D)
Science has come a long way to
preserve what we need.

AUGUSTUS
And of the things we want?

RICARA
My mother always say that this life
will never be about what we want
but rather about what we need.
Therefore, we mustn't learn to want
anything at all.

AUGUSTUS
Okay.
(a beat; smiling)
(MORE)

AUGUSTUS (CONT'D)
 So it's a bad time to ask if you
 want a beer? I made it myself.

RICARA
 (smiling and then
 shouting)
 I want a beer!
 (a beat)
 The perks of being a scientist --

Ricara stays on the couch while Augustus reaches for a silver
 bottle out of the fridge. He grabs two glasses and pours into
 one --

He doesn't even fill the cup half-way, but really only pours
 enough liquid to cover the base of the glass --

The two sit on the couch, sipping beer and viewing the
 evening sky.

A little affected by the drink:

RICARA (CONT'D)
 (contorting her face)
 This is strong.

AUGUSTUS
 (laughing)
 I know. You should see your face.

They laugh a little and Ricara slides closer to him on the
 couch. She slightly slurs her words.

RICARA
 I'm sorry about acting the way I
 did earlier. I just --

AUGUSTUS
 I know. It's okay... I wish things
 were different.

Ricara finished her beer.

RICARA
What's our expiration date, Dr.
Waters? Please, tell me.

AUGUSTUS
Ricara?

RICARA
Never mind, I don't want to think
about the end anymore.

Augustus watches as she leans against his chest, quickly falling asleep. He exhales soon looking at his watch.

He then shifts her on the coach, propping her head on a couch pillow. He exhales and looks at his watch, then tenderly looks at her.

AUGUSTUS

Expiration date: 784 days, 22
hours, 39 minutes and 44 seconds.

INT. CATHOLIC CATHEDRAL - MORNING

A group of RELIGIOUS PEOPLE assemble in the sanctuary. FATHER ETHAN KENT, (80, priest) stands before the SCANTY congregation, holding up a Bible.

ETHAN

We have faced the last days, the worse of our times... and yet there may be even greater trials to come. But shall the thought of this deter our faith? Shall we be torn down or destroyed in who we are and what we believe? I say 'not a chance,' for the trying times can only make us more of *who* we are - and we are strong and resilient and *alive*.

Ethan scans the faces in the pews, his eyes falling upon Augustus who stands in the back near the door.

EXT. EARTH CAMP 4901 - DAY

Ethan and Augustus walk the dusty streets. A group of BOYS kick a soccer ball around the rubble. There's no form of plant life, only dry, hard dirt.

ETHAN

I haven't seen you in the sanctuary for a while.

AUGUSTUS

I've been working a lot, Father.

ETHAN

What about your dreams? Are you still having them?

Augustus shakes his head. The two stop to watch the boys play.

AUGUSTUS

No. Not for a while.

ETHAN

Then God has yet to speak to us.

AUGUSTUS

Why are you so sure he speaks to me?

ETHAN

Because he spoke to your father just the same. And there's a lot of him in you.

A stray BALL soars and lands in front of Augustus, who soon kicks it back to the group of boys. The two men continue to walk the streets.

AUGUSTUS

I'm not so sure about that.

(ref: church)

In fact, I'm not so sure about all of this.

(a beat)

I mean look at the size of the congregation Father Ethan. Why would you even continue to preach?

ETHAN

Because I understood the power of faith.

Ethan stops in his path, causing Augustus to stop.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

The other day one of the younger mothers asked me to look around and tell her what good was there in all this. I told her that before the evacuation, there were rampant social ills and enduring acts of evil. There were disparities between the rich and poor. Black and white. Jew and Muslim. And that although we today face hunger and extinction, we have more peace and understanding of one another more than we ever did have in the history of the world. We are all united fighting for one cause: survival.

(MORE)

ETHAN (CONT'D)

I rather live in this world than of the world remembered, Augustus. I had faith to see a world like that and now I'm here.

AUGUSTUS

(with resignation)

Your faith is a bit lofty, Father; in five years, our food supply will be gone. In two, our water. Then there will be no more peace. No more unity. Just death.

ETHAN

God will provide our needs, Augustus. He has thus far.

AUGUSTUS

(sighing)

I hope so, Father. For that I want to have faith.

INT. HOSPITAL - SAME

DOCTOR EMILY COLE, (40, beautiful) walks through the emergency doors with her clipboard in hand --

An HISPANIC MOTHER holds her TEENAGER's hand as he lays in the hospital bed with a BROKEN ANKLE. The boy writhes in pain. It's one of the kids who were playing soccer. Emily begins to check the boy's vitals.

EMILY

What happened?

MOTHER

My son was playing in the streets with the other boys.

The boy bites down on his lip, trying to hold back the painful expressions. Emily pulls out a small black case and extracts a needle. She then proceeds to insert it into the boy's arm as he takes deep breaths.

She turns to an approaching MALE NURSE.

EMILY

Take him to room 94 and put a stint around it. Then use a spray cast.

(to the mother)

Your son will be fine. I promise.