DARKEST NIGHT

SEASON 3

EPISODE 1: Safari Valley

CHARACTERS

<u>Katie Reed:</u> Mid 20s. Impulsive and spontaneous. Quick learner who isn't afraid to speak her mind. Knows she's wrapped up in a larger conspiracy now, but has to keep that from Ricketts. Vivian Lobdow just told Katie that she needs her help.

Han Ziggler: Mid 40s. He is an agent for the NTK and Katie's
new partner.

<u>Matt:</u> 7 years old. He is an excited kid going to a theme park to meet his favorite character, Ernie the Elephant.

Emily: Late 30s. She is Dylan's mother.

Dylan: Late 30s. He is Dylan's father.

Park Announcer: Ominous voice of the Park.

LOCATIONS

- 1. Morgan's Mansion
- 2. NTK Nest
- 3. Safari Valley Theme Park
- 4. Safari Valley Control Room

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Efx: Distinctive flash noise

[Pickup at the end of 210]

SAVANNAH

(over megaphone)

Vivian, you have until sunrise to surrender... My demands are quite simple. One -- I want you to confess to all of the murders you've committed. All of them. Two -- I want you to step down as the head of The Roth-Lobdow Center for Advanced Research. And three -- I want my Father's head.

KATIE

(Frantic)

Vivian!!!! Vivian!!! What is going.....

EFX: Warped Slow Explosion like something out of this world fading into a slow pulsating background noise.

HAN ZIGGLER

(Ominous and whispering in left ear)

Katie, wake up.

KATIE

(Groggy)

What?

HAN ZIGGLER

(Ominous in right ear and no longer whispering)

How are you feeling?

KATIE

Who are you and Where am I?

HAN ZIGGLER

(Assuring)

Don't worry... you're safe. My name is Agent Han Ziggler and I am with the NTK division of Homeland Security.

KATIE

NTK?

HAN ZIGGLER

We handle the country's most sensitive matters.

(MORE)

HAN ZIGGLER (CONT'D)

Hence all NTK operations, personal and intelligence are revealed on a Need to Know basis.

KATIE

(Perplexed)

But I was at Morgan's Mansion with Vivian? How did I end up here?

HAN ZIGGLER

Unfortunately, Katie that is not something you Need to Know.

KATIE

(heavy breathing)

Ok..

HAN ZIGGLER

NTK is well aware of what you been through, Vivian Lobdow's entire operation, and all of your Project Cyclops findings.

Efx: Music tension building

Efx: Footsteps

HAN ZIGGLER

(Whispering around the mic)

I know you are scared right now, Katie. But I assure you, you are not under arrest. Your uncle's treatment has even been taken care of and your family is safe.

Efx: Katie sigh

HAN ZIGGLER

(Continued)

Though... the world is a very different place than when you left it.

Efx: Bass hit and ominous music

HAN ZIGGLER

With the rise in technology and shift in power, not only is anyone a threat...but everyone is a target.

Efx: Katie Gasp

HAN ZIGGLER

To keep Americans safe is a more difficult and daunting task than ever before... Especially..when going up against enemies we never even knew existed.

KATIE

Agent Ziggler, I am sorry but what do you need from me?

HAN ZIGGLER

(Reassuring)

Katie, we recovered Project Cyclops from Site 288. As one of the foremost experts with the device, you have an opportunity to be an invaluable asset to your country. The United States government is offering you a senior role in NTK.

KATIE

(nervously)

But what about my studies? My work?

HAN ZIGGLER

If you choose to accept we have arranged for your university to grant you your diploma. You will be paid a senior level salary and your previous crimes will be pardoned.

KATIE

(Dubious)

So I don't really have a choice do I?

HAN ZIGGLER

You do...

Efx: Han walking up to Katie

HAN ZIGGLER

(Left Ear)

But the other option involves...

HAN ZIGGLER

(Whispering in Right Ear) Being tried for the murder of Lionel Rickets....

Beat.

KATIE

(fake excitement)

So when do we get started?

HAN ZIGGLER

If you choose to accept, your first assignment starts right now.

EFX: Cart being rolled over

KATIE

Oh my god! It smells like it's been...

HAN ZIGGLER

I will tell you we most certainly didn't hire you for your inane commentary, Agent Reed.

KATIE

Fine!

Efx: Wet popping noise.

EFX: Sound of scalpel cutting flesh, beeps.

KATIE

Withdrawing blood from the optic nerve and depositing it into the box.

Efx: Wet popping noises

KATIE

(Continued)

Project Cyclops.

HAN ZIGGLER

NTK Assignment 001

KATIE

Time stamp is registering

correctly. Initiating playback in

3...

2...

1...

Initiate.

Efx: Project Cyclops Transition noise

Efx: Car driving through desert

MATT

And you promise we'll get to see Ernie, right? I'll get to meet him?

EFX: Sounds of a theme park: roller coasters, laughing, music, etc.

EMILY

(exasperated, telling him
 for the hundredth time)
Yes, sweetie, you'll get to meet
Ernie the Elephant.

TTAM

But you said that last time we went to Safari Valley and then Dad got that call and-

DYLAN

(interrupting)

No calls today, buddy, I promise.

TTAM

Look, the gates are opening!

PARK LOUDSPEAKER (IN BACKGROUND) Welcome to Safari Valley, where everyday is an adventure.

EFX: Sound of big doors swinging open as park opens. People scream and rush inside.

TTAM

Hurry, hurry, let's get in line!

NARRATOR

Matt was only seven but his adorable yet persuasive charm had twice gotten him into Safari Valley, a local theme park his parents hated. Matt knew it, and even felt guilty for dragging them there, but he <u>needed</u> to meet Ernie. The toothy-smiled elephant was his favorite character on Safari Friends.

TTAM

Look! There he is! Come on, hurry!

EFX: Trumpeting Elephant.

The little family hurried toward the end of the promenade where a line has started to form around the park's most popular mascot. By the time they reached the end of it, the line had grown all the way back to the park's entrance.

PARK LOUDSPEAKER (IN BACKGROUND) Did you know that elephants are the largest land animals in the world?

EMILY

Baby, this line is really long.

DYLAN

At least 40 minutes.

EMILY

Why don't we do some rides first and meet Ernie after lunch.

TTAM

Mom, I wanna meet Ernie, now!

PARK LOUDSPEAKER (IN BACKGROUND) Did you know that an elephant's skin is over an inch thick?

DYLAN

Your mom's right, buddy, rides first. How about the tilt-a-whirl?

 \mathtt{MATT}

But you said-

NARRATOR

Emily bent down to Matt's level and addressed her son.

EMILY

I promise you, you will not leave this park until you've meant Ernie the Elephant. Do you believe me?

MATT

(sighing)

Yeah, I guess.

PARK LOUDSPEAKER (IN BACKGROUND) Did you know that elephants can live to be over 70 years old?

DYLAN

Matt, you're tall enough to do the Cheetah Chase this year!

MATT

I am?!

NARRATOR

The day passed quickly and morning turned to midday which turned to afternoon. Matt pointed out Ernie every time he saw him but his parents were reluctant since the line never slowed down. Each Ernie that went unmet only frustrated Matt more.

DYLAN

Look! There's Rambo the Rhino! Want to meet him?

EFX: Rhinoceros bellow.

TTAM

No, Dad, Rambo's lame! I want to meet Ernie!

PARK LOUDSPEAKER (IN BACKGROUND) Did you know that a group of rhinos is called a crash?

DYLAN

It has to be Ernie, huh?

EMILY

(Aside to Dylan)

Let's just get in line for the next Ernie we see. He's not going to be happy until he meets that damn elephant.

TTAM

Don't say mean things about Ernie, Mom!

EMILY

(exhausted)

You're right, you're right. I'm sorry.

PARK LOUDSPEAKER (IN BACKGROUND) Did you know that rhinos can run up to 40 miles an hour?

The tired family continued around the park, re-riding rides and searching out Ernie the Elephant. Matt's parents were weary, sunburned, and looking for an out.

EMILY

I don't see Ernie anywhere, sweetie, how about Jenny the Giraffe?

PARK LOUDSPEAKER (IN BACKGROUND) Did you know giraffes sleep standing up?

TTAM

No! I don't want to meet Jenny! Or Gordy or Whinny or Rambo! I want to meet Ernie! Please, Mom, you promised!

EMILY

(sigh)

I did.

DYLAN

(aside to Emily)

Em, it's thirty minutes to close. I know you promised, but you can't work miracles and I haven't seen an Ernie in at least an hour.

MATT

What do you mean? What do you mean "an" Ernie? There's just one Ernie, Dad.

DYLAN

You're right, I'm sorry, buddy. I'm just tired.

EMILY

We promised him Ernie, Dylan, that's the only thing he cared about coming here. I'll ask one of the park staff.

DYLAN

Why don't we just slowly make our way toward the entrance and get in line when we see him?

MATT

But would if we don't see him? Would we just leave before I met him? Please, Dad!

EMILY

We can't leave like this.

DYLAN

Em, it's been a long fucking day-

EMILY

Don't swear in front of Matty!

DYLAN

Oh yeah, like you're a bastion of purity around the kid.

EMILY

Don't you <u>dare</u> start with me, I wanted...

EFX: Fight between Emily and Dylan fades out.

NARRATOR

Matt blinked the tears from his eyes and turned away. It wasn't the first time his parent's had fought in public and he was embarrassed. All he'd wanted, all he'd asked for was the meet Ernie the Elephant and now it looked like that would never be.

EFX: Elephant trumpets nearby.

NARRATOR

Matt whipped his head up. Was that... yes, that was a trumpeting elephant! Ernie was nearby! Matt jumped up and down trying to see over the heads of the crowd. Where did it come from? Where was Ernie? If only he could get close enough...

EFX: Elephant trumpets.

NARRATOR

There! In between the buildings of the midway games, Matt could see Ernie walking. His green loungecoat was flapping behind him and his tail was twitching.

(MORE)

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Ernie was getting further away!
Matt looked back at his parents.
They grew louder and more animated in their argument.

EMILY

We gotta figure this out or he is going to throw another tantrum!

DYLAN

We can't change time!

PARK LOUDSPEAKER

Did you know elephants never forget? They remember every insult and rejection.

NARRATOR

Matt took one last look at his parents and then bolted through the crowd after Ernie. He wouldn't miss him this time, he wouldn't! As Matt grew closer to the strip of midway games, he caught sight of Ernie between the buildings. Tripping a tired father of two, Matt bolted down the alleyway, leaving the arcade and guests behind him.

MATT

Ernie? Ernie!

NARRATOR

The park's PA system chimed in above.

PARK LOUDSPEAKER

Did you know elephants are born blind? Play a fun game with Ernie by finding him before he finds you.

EFX: Elephant trumpets (sounds different - perhaps sickly or otherwise "off")

MATT

Ernie?

NARRATOR

Matt emerged from the alley to the quieter area behind the buildings. He looked left and right, searching for Ernie among the generators and long cords striping the pavement in front of him.

EFX: Elephant trumpets (sounds "off).

MATT

Ernie!

NARRATOR

He watched as one of the long shadows began to move. It was Ernie! And he was walking <u>away</u> from Matt!

MATT

Wait! Wait for me!

NARRATOR

Matt ran to catch up with Ernie dodging cords and littered soda cans.

PARK LOUDSPEAKER

Did you know elephants can run at speeds of up to 40 miles an hour? Better keep up!

MATT

Er-

EFX: Matt slips and slams to the ground.

NARRATOR

Matt thought about crying over his fall but there was no one around to hear him except for Ernie - and Ernie was almost to a small brown building nearby already. The elephant was headed for the door!

MATT

No, wait!

NARRATOR

Ernie opened the door and disappeared inside. Matt stopped in front of it, contemplating. He knew he shouldn't follow Ernie inside. Though, that didn't stop him.

EFX: Door opens, Matt steps inside, door closes.

PARK LOUDSPEAKER

Did you know elephants make friends for life? Once you befriend an elephant, you'll have a pal forever.

Matt looked down a set of service steps lit by orange, utilitarian wall sconces.

TTAM

Hey! Are you down there?

EFX: Elephant trumpets (sounds off).

NARRATOR

Matt descended the stairs quickly hoping to catch Ernie. At the bottom, he saw a long, wide hallway that split off in two different directions at the end. The underground area was filled with long, singing pipes and copper engines powering the park rides above his head.

EFX: The hum buzz of running machinery.

MATT

Ernie, where are you?

EFX: Elephant trumpets (sounds off) echoing, as if from far away.

NARRATOR

Ernie's trumpet came from the end of the hallway, though from which direction was impossible to tell. Matt ran as fast as he could, stopping at the fork and calling down both.

МАТТ

Ernie? Can I just have a hug?

EFX: Elephant trumpets (sounds off).

NARRATOR

He studied the corridor the sound came from. It was darker than the other one but the hum of machinery was louder.

TTAM

Um...

PARK LOUDSPEAKER

(loud - scaring Matt)
Did you know elephants give the
best hugs? Ernie has more than
40,000 muscles in his trunk to
squeeze you with.

EFX: Squeak of sneakers on linoleum.

MATT

I'm coming, Ernie!

EFX: Sneakers start running.

NARRATOR

Matt ran after Ernie. Every time he came to a fork in the passageway, he would call to his favorite friend, and Ernie would answer.

EFX: Elephant trumpets (sounds off).

NARRATOR

Matt followed until he was hopelessly lost, but that was okay. Ernie would show him the way out. He came to yet another intersection and before he could even call, Ernie bellowed nearby.

EFX: Elephant trumpets (sounds off). It's much louder - Ernie is nearby!

NARRATOR

Matt spun toward the sound and turned the corner only to find a dead-end. The humming lights on the wall popped and sizzled.

EFX: Light fizzing out.

NARRATOR

One went out. Then two. Until only three bulbs were left to light the now darkened hallway.

MATT

(frightened, unsure)

Ernie?

NARRATOR

At his name, the elephant stepped out of the shadows.

(MORE)

NARRATOR (CONT'D) He stood underneath one of the

remaining bulbs and froze.

EFX: heavy beathing

TTAM

I just wanted an autograph but my mom has my book. Can I... oh! Do you want a piece of candy? I have some skittles in my pocket we could share!

NARRATOR

Ernie opened his mouth until his jaw gaped open and Matt saw into the black nothingness behind his small, square teeth. There was nothing beyond them but a dense, consuming void.

PARK LOUDSPEAKER
Did you know elephants have large
appetites and can consume up to 600
lbs of food?

NARRATOR

Matt stepped forward and stood on his tippy-toes. He poured half the bag of skittles down Ernie's throat, careful not to reach past his teeth.

EFX: Skittles dumped into costume

PARK LOUDSPEAKER

How much do you weigh?

NARRATOR

Matt stumbled back and looked up at the ceiling - searching for the speaker. He was starting to feel scared.

МАТТ

(whispering)

Are you talking to me?

Beat.

PARK LOUDSPEAKER

Did you know elephants have large appetites and can consume up to 600 lbs of food?

Ernie hadn't moved. He stood still against the wall with his mouth open. The light above him began to pop. Matt was afraid. This Ernie was different, not like his friend on TV. He suddenly wanted very much to find his mom and dad.

MATT

Um, okay, bye.

NARRATOR

Matt turned away, leaving Ernie standing there, motionless, still gaping. As he turned the corner Matt heard the pop of the bulb going out above Ernie. The sudden darkness pushed him forward like a wave in the ocean.

EFX: Lightbulb pops and fizzles out. Sneakers running.

NARRATOR

Matt didn't remember his way to the stairs but he ran anyway.

Occasionally he heard the pop and fizzle of bulbs going out behind him. But still he ran, the labyrinth of corridors becoming more intricate and confusing as we went.

EFX: Sneakers running, humming machinery getting louder and quieter due to doppler effect as he runs past.

He turned a corner and stopped short. Ernie stood against the wall at the very end of the hallway. He was facing Matt. A lightbulb popped behind him.

EFX: Lightbulb pops and fizzles out.

MATT

(scared)

Go away, Ernie. I want to go home.

NARRATOR

Matt backed up and ran back down the dark corridor. There was little light and long shadows moved alongside the chugging machinery. PARK LOUDSPEAKER

Did you know elephants have excellent hearing? They can hear the quietest footstep from up to 3 miles away.

EFX: Elephant trumpets (sounds off). Matt whimpers.

TTAM

Go away!

EFX: We hear the loud, thumping steps of Ernie join Matt's squeaking sneakers.

NARRATOR

Matt could hear Ernie's steps behind him. His heart was pounding, he was afraid to turn around, afraid to see...but he just couldn't help himself from looking back.

EFX: Another bulb fizzles and pops.

NARRATOR

Matt could see him, in between the shadows. Ernie was following behind with large, confident, unhurried yet thunderous strides.

MATT

Leave me alone!

PARK LOUDSPEAKER

Did you know elephants kill over 500 people per year? That's more than sharks and spiders combined!

MATT

Stop talking to me!

PARK LOUDSPEAKER

I am not talking to you. I am just a recording.

EFX: A symphony of bulbs pop and fizzle out.

NARRATOR

The hallway was getting blacker, the machines pumped, the pipes hummed. Matt ran, Ernie followed. It grew so dark, Matt could not tell the moving parts from the limbs of the elephant.

EFX: Matt crying, sneakers stumbling.

MATT

Stop following me!

EFX: A light pops and fizzles close by, over Matt's head. Matt screams. He stumbles and falls.

NARRATOR

He couldn't bring himself to stand up again. Matt was frozen in fear, barely able to move.

EFX: Matt whimpers and sniffles.

NARRATOR

He felt around in the dark hallway, scooting up against the wall, squeezing himself in between two concrete pillars. The corridor was pitch black and he knew he was well hidden. Soon Ernie would walk right by - missing him.

And he would stay right here. His parents would surely find him or an employee would come by soon. The park should be closed by now and they were probably already looking for him.

EFX: The background noises start getting quieter as machinery/rides aboveground start shutting down. Matt gasps, afraid. Soon the entire underground is silent. All we hear is Matt's breathing. It's so quiet, it's tense. The moment feels long. It's suddenly broken with -

PARK LOUDSPEAKER

Did you know that while elephants are colorblind they can see in the dark?

A beat.

EFX: Matt exhales, trying to be very quiet. It's absolutely silent.

PARK LOUDSPEAKER
Did you know Ernie is right in
front of you? He's there in the
dark. He's waiting.

Matt buried his head in his hoodie. No, no, no. It was lying. The voice was lying.

PARK LOUDSPEAKER

Just reach out your arm and you can touch him.

MATT

(whispering - scared)
Don't talk to me. Go away.

Beat.

EFX: Silence other than Matt's labored breathing.

NARRATOR

Suddenly, a hand grabbed Matt's ankle and he was hauled out of his hiding place.

EFX: Matt screaming. Dragging sound.

NARRATOR

He was dragged down the hallway.

MATT

(screaming)

Let me go! Let me go!

EFX: Elephant trumpets (sounds off).

NARRATOR

Matt's body was jerked around a corner and into a room filled with dim light. A single wall sconce covered them in a orange hew. Ernie whipped Matt around until he could stare into the vacant glass eyes of the elephant costume.

MATT

I'll tell my mom!

NARRATOR

Ernie let go and Matt scrambled to his feet. The elephant stood silent and still, blocking the door, the only exit from the room.

МАТТ

(bawling)

Go away! Get out!

Ernie continued to stand - still as a statue. Unflinching.

MATT

I know what you are! You're just a guy in a suit! You're trying to scare me! I hate you!

NARRATOR

Nothing Matt said moved the elephant. Ernie continued to stand, arms at its side. Head staring straight forward.

MATT

I hate you, I hate you, I hate you!

NARRATOR

Anger overriding his fear, Matt ran up and knocked the head off of the Ernie costume.

There was nothing there. Where the wearers head should be was only empty space. Matt stumbled back and fell against the wall.

EFX: Matt gasping and falling against the wall.

NARRATOR

He couldn't take his eyes off of it. Ernie hadn't moved, only now he didn't have a head.

MATT

(whispering)
What are you?

Beat. Silence.

PARK LOUDSPEAKER

Did you know elephants are very intelligent and sometimes kill for pleasure?

EFX: Matt cries.

NARRATOR

Suddenly the headless Ernie costume fell into a pile of empty cloth on the threshold. Whatever had been wearing it was gone.

(MORE)

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Matt choked back his tears and launched himself out of the room.

EFX: Sneakers slapping linoleum.

NARRATOR

He ran in the darkness, arms out in front of him. Matt must have turned a corner because a soft light started to tickle to the periphery of his vision. He turned toward it. Yes! There it was, at the end of the silent hallway: muted light spilling down from the ceiling. A staircase. He ran toward it.

EFX: Sneakers slapping linoleum.

PARK LOUDSPEAKER

Did you know it isn't going to let you go? You'll never come up the stairs. You'll be underneath this park forever.

MATT

Leave me alone! You're lying! You're a liar!

NARRATOR

Matt was halfway to the bottom of the staircase. His lungs hurt and his ankle throbbed where the thing had grabbed him. It was utterly silent except the sound of his sneakers slapping the linoleum. He was alone, he was sure of it. A few more steps and he was almost there.

EFX: Loud buzzing sound before all remaining lightbulbs pop.

NARRATOR

Matt was plunged into sudden darkness yet again.

MATT

(whimpering)

Let me go, I won't tell anybody.

EFX: Elephant trumpet (sounds off).

MATT

Please...

He felt his way forward blindly. Matt thought the only way to reach the stairs was just to keep going.

EMILY

Matthew!

NARRATOR

At the sound of his mother's voice, Matt stopped. It was coming from his left. From somewhere very far away.

EMILY

Where are you, sweetheart?

MATT

Mom?

EFX: Running sneakers.

NARRATOR

Matt turned and ran toward his mother, arms in front of him. Matt knew that if his mother was there everything was going to be okay.

DYLAN

Matthew, where are you? We can't find you!

TTAM

Mommy! Daddy! I'm coming!

EFX: SLAM! Matt hits something

MATT

Ouch!

NARRATOR

Hitting his head didn't stop him. Matt ran and ran as he followed His parents' voices down the hallways. As he began to see the light of the exit, he noticed something in the distance. Something not quite so dark.

EMILY

Matthew! How did you get down here!

MATT

I'm coming!

Underneath the last lightbulb on the hallway, a shadowed figure stood underneath it.

TTAM

Mom, I see you!

NARRATOR

The closer Matt got, the safer he felt. It was his mother, he recognized the blue jacket and red hair. She opened her arms to receive him and Matt flew into them. He was finally safe.

TTAM

I was so scared. There's something down here with us.

NARRATOR

He felt a hand on his shoulder.

DYLAN

We were scared too, kiddo. You're going to be now. We need to get back upstairs. We're not supposed to be down here.

MATT

Dad!

EFX: Matt begins to cry. The bulb above starts to buzz and flicker.

MATT

It's coming!

EMILY

Is that Ernie?.

DYLAN

Oh, look! There's an Ernie. Maybe he'll talk to us.

NARRATOR

Matt turned around to see what his father was pointing at. It was Ernie, of course. He was standing a few feet away. But there was something different about the costume this time. The face - the mouth - it was smiling.

MATT

No! We have to go!

NARRATOR

But they didn't listen. Ernie pulled out an elephant tusk from his costume and stabbed Emily in the throat.

EFX: Emily being stabbed.

EMILY

Holy shit! Dylan, get Matt of here.

EFx: Removing tusk from Emily

EFX: blood gurgling.

DYLAN

(aside to Matt)

Run, Matty. I won't let him touch you.

DYLAN

(screaming at Ernie)
Ernie, whatever you are stay away
from my son!

NARRATOR

Ernie stopped in its tracks. He dropped the bloody tusk and slowly sauntered up to Dylan. After a moment of pause, it smiled and licked Dylan's face.

EFX: Face licking

Efx: sigh of relief.

DYLAN

Matt, I think it's all going to be...argy

EFX: Decapitating

NARRATOR

Ernie opened his mouth and decapitated Dylan with one clean swoop.

Efx: Head dropping

MATT

Oh my god!

Efx: Ernie Approaching

NARRATOR

As he watched his father's detached head fall to the floor, Matt stood there in shock. Ernie slowly approached him and Matt turned to run. As he tried to escape, he tripped over his mother's lifeless corpse.

Efx: Matt falling

MATT

Owww!

PARK LOUDSPEAKER

Never leave your enemy or their kin alive.

NARRATOR

Ernie lifted his right foot up and stomped down on Matthew's helpless body.

EFX: Matthew Scream

EFX: Crunching of bones and flesh.

PARK LOUDSPEAKER
Thank you for visiting Safari
Valley. Have a great day.

Efx: Project Cyclops Transition noise

KATIE

What the fuck is that?

HAN ZIGGLER

Well buckle up cause we are about to find out.