

CLAUDIA'S TRUTH CUTSCENE (PEACEFUL INTERACTION WITH NTAMU):

The screen ripples out of gameplay and into a cemetery. The sky is gray, threatening to rain, and only the barest streaks of sunlight peak through the clouds. Among rows and rows of headstones, two figures, dressed in funeral black, stand by a grave labelled:

ARIA DELACROIX

Loving mother and wife.

Her smile was brighter than the sun.

June 15th, 1988 – September 24th, 2019

The “camera,” pans up to the figures in black: CLAUDIA DELACROIX, holding a bouquet of flowers, and XAVIER CROMWELL, holding a closed umbrella, with fresh tear tracks on both their faces. There are matching wedding bands on their fingers.

Claudia

Do you think this would have happened if it hadn't been raining?

Xavier

I don't know. Some drivers are careless, no matter what the weather looks like.

A long spell of silence. Then:

Claudia

She should still be here.

Xavier

I know.

Claudia places the bouquet on the ground, resting against the headstone. She covers her mouth as tears begin to spill over her eyes. Xavier helps up his wife, gently tugging on her shoulders to bring her back to a standing position.

Xavier

She deserves a second chance. We can give her one.

Claudia sniffs, then looks up at her husband curiously.

Claudia

You don't think...?

Xavier

I'm not sure. But we have to try.

They both stare at the grave. Fat raindrops start to fall, and thunder rumbles in the distance. Xavier opens his umbrella, but otherwise, neither of them move.

The screen fades to black.

It fades back up to a large room with a fireplace, a large desk pushed against one wall, a small couch against the other, a bookshelf crammed with tomes and journals, a cauldron, an alchemy set on a rickety table, and a series of glass cabinets full of multicolored potions.

Claudia sits at the desk, reading and frantically taking notes. Xavier stands at the alchemy set, dropping different ingredients into a bubbling mixture. He wafts it toward his nose, and grimaces.

Xavier
Ugh, that's terrible.

Claudia
Did you add the eye of a newt?

Xavier
We're out

Claudia
Already?

Xavier sighs, and leans on the table, defeated.

Xavier
We've been trying to come up with a solution for six days. Maybe...maybe this is hopeless.

Claudia
Nonsense. I think I've found something.

She turns around and holds open a sinister looking book to a picture of a diagram. It shows a human body above a symbol shaped like nine-pointed star, swirling patterns and runes decorating the inside. Xavier squints at it.

Xavier
Necromancy?

Claudia
There's nothing on time travel, there's nothing on changing fate, there's nothing on preventing past events. This is our best shot, Xavier.

Xavier
Well. If you say so.

The screen fades out.

It fades back up to Aria's grave, with Claudia, Xavier, and MAY DELACROIX.

May and Xavier hold buckets full of sand. They shape the nine-pointed star, pouring the sand into place.

A large bag of sand lays off to the side. Claudia holds a piece of paper, mouthing words like she's rehearsing a play.

May
And you're *sure* this is going to work?

Xavier
We're as sure as we can be. No one knows you're here, right?

May
I told the sitter I was going to a dinner party in Aria's memory.

Xavier
Good.

May stops pouring sand, and turns to look at the headstone. She's visibly pained. Xavier walks over to stand at her side, putting an arm around her shoulder.

Xavier
I know it's been hard, but after tonight you can forget all about it. She'll be home with you, Caelin, and Elena. Everything will be set right.

May clutches the bucket of sand with shaking hands.

May
I don't know what I'm going to do. If...this doesn't work, I...

May quickly wipes away unshed tears. Xavier kisses her forehead.

Xavier
It *will* work. I promise.

He steps back and looks at the sand drawing. He nods.

Xavier
I think we're ready to go. Claudia?

Claudia holds up the sheet of paper and smiles.

Claudia

I'm ready.

Xavier

Let's get this show on the road.

Xavier and May step out of the symbol and stand next to Claudia. Claudia raises her hands and begins to chant in a strange language.

Claudia

Fir Sitses

Fir Oses

Fir Sefrix

The symbol on the grave begins to glow a bright blue. Claudia's hands are crackling with energy.

Claudia

Osao So

Osao Yia

Osao Foit

A pale hand reaches out of the symbol. Then a second hand. The hands hoist up a body. Xavier looks excited. Claudia keeps chanting.

Claudia

Exot Isi

Exot Rixo

Exot Riso

The top half of the body is out, up to its hips. A leg climbs out of the invisible pit, and pushes the rest of the body to stand. The body of ARIA DELACROIX.

Her head hangs low, a curtain of red hair obscuring her face. She stands completely still. May takes a step forward.

May

(wistful)

Aria? Honey? Is that you?

Aria's head snaps up and May reels back. Her eyes are completely white, her jaw is hanging slack. A strangled groan escapes her mouth. Parts of her skin have rotted and fallen off. She's paler than death. This is not Aria as she was in life.

Claudia and May are staring in horror, but Xavier is ecstatic.

Xavier

We did it! We did it!

Claudia
Something's wrong...

May
End the spell.

Xavier
What are you talking about? We did it!

May
Now.

Claudia
Xavier, this isn't right.

May
End the spell, goddammit!

Claudia snaps her fingers, and the living corpse of Aria drops back into the symbol, disappearing back into her grave. The sand sizzles, and glows white hot, before becoming dormant.

May is pacing back and forth, hands gripping her head, a mixture of panic, fear, and loathing.

May
I thought you said this would bring Aria back!

Claudia
Honey, I'm so sorry.

Xavier
It *did* bring her back.

May rounds on Xavier, jabbing a finger at the sand symbol.

May
That *thing* was not my wife, it was an abomination. If this is your idea of helping me, it is in *very* poor taste.

Xavier
So, it was a little wonky the first time around. If we try it again—

May

Try it again? Absolutely not. In fact, I don't want to even *hear* the word magic. Not from you, not from Mom, not from *anyone*. My kids are *not* going to grow up with – with this unnatural force of nature! If either of you want to be a part of my life, you'll leave magic where it belongs: in the *dirt*.

Claudia
May, listen—

May
No, I am *done* listening to you. Both of you. If it's about magic, I don't want to hear it. I'm going *home*.

May stalks away. Claudia reaches for her arm, but she shrugs it off. Xavier and Claudia watch their daughter go. Claudia sighs.

Claudia
She's right, Xavier. This was too far.

Xavier
No, we just have to try it again.

Claudia
What? You want to do that *again*?

Xavier
We can bring her back. I know we can.

Claudia
No. No, Aria is dead. She needs to stay dead.

Xavier
How could you say something like that? After how hard we tried to get here, you just want to give up?

Claudia
It's not giving up, it's moving on.

Xavier
This was your idea! You just want to give up on it? Give up on *her*?

Claudia
It was a *bad idea*. We owe it to May to stop trying after tonight. She doesn't want this, Xavier.

Xavier shakes his head emphatically.

Xavier

No, she *does* want this. She wants Aria back.

Claudia

She's *mourning*, Xavier, for pity's sake let her be.

Xavier

(angry)

Like you wanted to "let her be," when you suggested we bring her along?

Claudia takes a step back, dumbfounded expression quickly becoming guilt.

Claudia

I—

Xavier

You saw what happened. The dead can come back. There's a spell out there that can bring Aria back to us. I'm going to find it.

Claudia

Xavier—

Xavier

I'm *going* to find it.

Xavier stalks away, leaving Claudia alone in the night.

End cutscene.

Return to gameplay.

AFTER-CREDITS CUTSCENE (GOOD ENDING):

The screen stays black for several seconds, then fades up onto the inside of Xavier's tower, at the top level. The deep red walls are contrasted with rows of rich brown bookshelves. Cushy chairs are shoved against a wall. A children's book lies open on a loveseat – the book that Aria was reading to her children.

XAVIER CROMWELL is in the center of the room, appearing as the player last left him: distraught in his tower, collapsed on his knees in anguish. He slowly gets to his feet.

Xavier
There has to be a way. There *must be* a way.

He exits the room, and isn't one step down the staircase when there's a loud KNOCK-KNOCK-KNOCK at the door.

Xavier
Who...?

Xavier descends the staircase, and all the while the knocking at the door becomes louder and more insistent.

Xavier
(annoyed)
Stop banging at the door, I'm coming!

He finally reaches the large, oak doors of his tower, and flings them open in a huff. He opens his mouth to say something angrily, but stops.

Standing in the doorway is DROM, the stone golem, KRATERIOS, the centaur, NTAMU, the sphinx, and a few SKELETONS from Xavier's army.

Kraterios
Budge up, old man. We know you've been working too hard.

Ntamu
You've been in a dreadful state for months, my friend.

Drom
We will not leave until you are happy. Even if you really want us to.

The Skeletons all chatter their teeth in agreement. Xavier looks dazed.

Xavier
I—I'm fine, I don't need –

Kraterios

Yes, you do. Come off it.

Ntamu

Well, we didn't come here to stand around.

Xavier shakes his head with an exasperated smile.

Xavier

It's...good to see you all.

Kraterios

Damn right it is!

One by one, the crowd outside the tower starts making their way past Xavier to the inside. Xavier himself doesn't move from the door, standing in the threshold for a few seconds, staring up at the twilight sky.

Xavier

Thank you, Claudia.

He turns around, and shuts the doors.

Exit cutscene.

INTRO CUTSCENE:

Screen starts black, then fades up onto the outside house, the walls painted a light blue. A multitude of different flowers burst from the front garden, a stepping-stone walkway marks the path up to the front door from the street, and a heart-shaped welcome sign is hung on the door.

A car pulls up on the street in front of the house, and three people get out: MAY, a tired but encouraging single mother of twins, ELENA, a spunky twelve-year-old girl, and CAELIN, a quiet twelve-year-old boy. May leads Elena and Caelin up to the front door.

May

(stern)

You're both going to be good at Grandma's house this weekend, right?

Elena

Duh.

Caelin

Yes, Momma.

May knocks on the door, and it flings open to reveal CLAUDIA DELACROIX (player), a spritely grandmother with energy to spare.

Claudia

Oh, it's my favorite grandchildren!

Elena

We're your only grandchildren.

Claudia

And that's why you're my favorites. Now come on in, I made cookies just for you.

Elena and Caelin

(together)

Cookies!

Elena and Caelin scurry inside. Claudia turns around to follow, but May stops her.

May

Mom, wait.

Claudia

What is it, dear?

May

Xavier doesn't know the kids are over, right?

Claudia
(conflicted)

I would never tell him that. I haven't spoken to him in...years.

They stand and stare at each other for a tense moment.

May
No magic?

Claudia
I promise you this every time, May.

May
Promise it again. No magic?

Claudia
No magic. I swear it.

May
Thank you.

Another moment. Then—

May
Have a good time, I'll be back to pick up the kids on Sunday night.

Claudia
Drive safe, dear.

May walks back to her car and Claudia watches her drive away. She turns back to the house, but before she can even open the door, she hears a loud *WHOOMP*.

Claudia
(worried)
Elena? Caelin? What's going on in there?

Claudia opens the door and rushes into the house to find XAVIER CROMWELL, a wizened man dressed in deep black robes. Three skeletal hounds sit at his heels, and a dark portal swirls behind him menacingly. Elena and Caelin are standing in front of him.

Elena
Grandpa? What are you doing here?

Claudia rushes to put herself between Xavier and her grandchildren.

Claudia
(to Elena and Caelin)
Get away from him!

Xavier
Is that any way to treat your husband?

Claudia
(angry, to Xavier)
My *ex*-husband. And I thought I told you never to set foot in this house again?

Xavier
You'll forgive me if I want to spend some time with my grandchildren after seven years of being *excluded* from the family.

Claudia
You chose necromancy over this family! You have no right to see them after what you've done.

Xavier
You seem to be forgetting that *you* were the one who gave me the tools of the trade.

Claudia
Why, you—!

Xavier
In any case,

Xavier snaps his fingers, and in a puff of smoke, the twins are at his side.

Caelin
What's going on?

Elena
Grandpa, what are you doing?

Claudia
Xavier—

Xavier
If you want them back, you'll have to *find them*.

Xavier disappears through the portal, pulling Elena and Caelin with him. The three skeletal dogs remain, hackles raised and growling at Claudia. She rolls up her sleeves.

Claudia

(determined)

An old witch never rests.

Exit intro cutscene.

Enter gameplay.