

Did We Just Visit Hotel Purgatory?

1 message

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Warning: This newsletter contains spoilers for *The Leftovers* season 1 and up to the first eight episodes of season 2. Wondering why you're getting this? Catch up here with **Streaming TV Party's** previous newsletters.

Introduction: [Streaming TV Party: We're watching *The Leftovers*](#)

Season 1: ["Pilot" and "Penguin One, Us Zero"; "Two Boats and a Helicopter" and "B.J. and the A.C."; "Gladys" and "Guest"; "Solace for Tired Feet" and "Cairo"; "The Garveys at Their Best" and "The Prodigal Son Returns"; Season 1 Retrospective & Season 2 Preview](#)

Season 2: ["Axis Mundi" and "A Matter of Geography"; "Off Ramp" and "Orange Sticker"; "No Room at the Inn" and "Lens"](#)

A Trip Down to Kevin Garvey's *Inferno*

I rewatched [Palm Springs](#), which is easily one of my favorite movies of the year, the other night with a friend who hadn't seen it before. It's a great film in its own right, but it's also the perfect quarantine movie: It captures the extreme isolation and our collective lack of a grasp on time itself in ways it was never designed to do. "International Assassin" feels like it's in a similar vacuum despite airing in 2015.

We know that time passes in the real world between Kevin Garvey drinking the poisonous concoction that Virgil made him and Kevin waking up to Michael Murphy's shock, although it's unclear just how much time has passed. (If I had to wager, I'd say three days because of Erika's experience with the bird.) But until Kevin and a young Patti drive out to Jarden, time is at a standstill at the hotel. To harken to *Lost* terms, Kevin's hotel reminded me of the [flash-sideways](#) in that show's final season—except on *The Leftovers*, Kevin always knew he was dead.

[Speaking to Alan Sepinwall after the season 2 finale](#), *Leftovers* co-creator Damon Lindelof wouldn't define what the hotel was or whether it was more psychological or magical, although he did allude that it could be a place that wasn't just open to Kevin. I'd call it a kind of purgatory given that Kevin and some of the other guests in the hotel—which include Mary Jamison and Patti Levin's ex-husband Neil—are all caught in a place that's between life-and-death. But it was also a test for Kevin, whose task was to assassinate Patti.

The entire episode shouted Dante's *Inferno*, which was vindicated upon finding out that "International Assassin" was [Lindelof and company's take on Dante's *Inferno*](#). Kevin is in Limbo (aka the first Circle of

Hell) with a man named Virgil—an on-the-nose name in line with [Lost's many philosopher namesakes](#)—as his guide. The hotel wants to keep Kevin trapped forever by trying to talk him out of assassinating Patti and offering him water that Virgil specifically said not to drink, which reminded me a bit of the Pale Man's table of food in *Pan's Labyrinth*, although it's [far from the only story involving a strange realm](#) and food and drink you shouldn't consume. We're almost at the end of *The Leftovers*' second season and we're knee-deep in [Greek mythology](#), [deer lore](#), and [Biblical allegories](#). Why not *The Divine Comedy* too?

Fun fact: Lindelof acknowledged that the episode was in part [inspired](#) by Tony Soprano's coma-fueled dreams in which he believes he's a salesman named Kevin Finnerty early in *The Sopranos*' sixth season; I've not seen *The Sopranos*, but based on what a friend's told me about that subplot, it tracks. (I know, I know, I've already handed over my certified Jersey card for not having watched *The Sopranos*.)

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When Patti fell down the Orphan's Well

Kevin begins the episode emerging from the water, almost like a baptism. Once dried, he chose the outfit of an international assassin over a religious figure, a member of the Guilty Remnant, or a Mapleton police officer, and he had a simple task. While Virgil told him to use the gun taped to a toilet in her hotel suite (a la *The Godfather*), a tripped-out Kevin Sr. said he should bring Patti to the well instead. Kevin eventually gets to that well, but not before he kills a lot of people including a so-called decoy Patti, Holy Wayne, Gladys, and Neil.

Kevin and a young Patti end up on a road trip to Jarden to visit Orphan's Well, which, according to ancient legend (and a brochure Patti was reading from), "formed a conduit between the world of the living and the spirit world" and where people would "throw in whatever they want to unburden themselves of." That well's location looks very much like the same place where, thousands of years ago, a cavewoman [died from a snake bite](#) and another woman picked up her infant child—and I wouldn't be surprised if that's where the name originated. Patti and Kevin ultimately come to an understanding before he kills her in a scene that echoed Patti's season 1 death.

"Our cave collapsed, Kevin," Patti explained earlier in the episode. "Now, we can spend all our time digging through the rubble looking for signs of life, or we can transform."

Kevin didn't dig through the rubble that buried him; he emerged from his grave reborn yet again. But did he transform?

Recommended

[Muppets Now](#), the new series from Disney Plus, is absurdly big chaotic energy.

[The Umbrella Academy](#)'s second season is full of antics, great music drops, and it's a big improvement over season 1.

Video game design is a fascinating puzzle game all in itself. Will Wright, creator of *The Sims*, will [teach you](#) how to use it to your advantage.*

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Circling back to *National Geographic*

Remember that [48-year-old NatGeo issue](#) that Kevin Sr. *insisted* his son accept last season? I do too, and in the time since I wrote about that issue, I've [gotten my hands on a copy](#) and started to peruse it. And in "A Most Powerful Adversary," that issue came up again.

The most prominent is that Patti tells Kevin to go to Cairo (which is the subject of an article on the cover) to steal an artifact to do some NSFW actions with it, although she later reveals that she's joking. You can see [Japanese characters on a scroll](#) behind Virgil after he shoots himself that [refers](#) to an island located in Japan that's the subject of another cover article. Even one of the advertisements, which [features a bushbaby](#) shows up in Virgil's trailer in the form of a statue.

But if we zoom out to season 2 as a whole, we can point to another article that manifests itself. The main cover story is about the 100th anniversary of Yellowstone National Park, a fitting notion given that most of *The Leftovers*' second season takes place within a national park. Hmmm.

Discussion Questions

- Michael appears to know about Patti and adversaries. Does he have an adversary of his own? If he does, is that how he knows that Evie is "gone"?
- How soon do you think Kevin giving his handprint over to John Murphy will bite him in the ass?
- How much, if any, can we attribute Mary Jamison's current state to her presence in the hotel?

Next Week: Be sure to watch the final two episodes of season 2, "Ten Thirteen" and "I Live Here Now," respectively.

Now playing: [Guiseppe Verdi — "Va, Pensiero \(Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves\)"](#)

Thoughts? Contact me at newsletters@dailydot.com and drop me a reader's note: We just might include it next time.



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