

Encapsulated - Episode 2 of 10

FADE IN:

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

SUNNY (35) has a cart filled with a healthy assortment of fruits, vegetables, and water. The CASHIER (50) is wearing her pajamas and looks completely disinterested.

CASHIER

I know you're wonderin' - they can't FIRE me, because Lord knows I'm the BEST cashier in this zone - ain't that right, Rich?

Her manager passes by on his phone and gives the cashier the middle finger. The cashier starts ringing Sunny up.

CASHIER

(to nobody in particular)

You don't like it here? Too bad! Cause we're STUCK, ain't that PEACHY? And thank God the MegaClub is two zones over, so for now, it's the Food frickin' Palace for you cretins!

(to Sunny)

Somebody's tryin' to... lose weight? There won't be anythin' left on you, doll! And still no booze?

SUNNY

No alcohol. I'm on a cleanse.

CASHIER

I recognize your face, one of the only ones that doesn't drink, that's impressive. Oughta give you a prize or somethin'.

SUNNY

Don't worry about it, I don't need a prize.

CASHIER

I was kiddin', there's not actually- Never mind.

SUNNY

Oh I see, it was a joke, sorry I didn't get it.

CASHIER

Why are you sorry? Geez.

SUNNY

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

CASHIER

Okay... so are you just not a drinker? You're definitely old enough. You sure you don't even want like a rosé or somethin'?

SUNNY

I don't really need it, but I can get some if you want, I'm sorry.

CASHIER

Jesus Christ, stop apologizin', I don't care if you get alcohol, I'm just CURIOUS, you do whatever the hell you want. Seriously...

SUNNY

Oh.. I'm sorry, I didn't mean to upset you.

CASHIER

(suddenly it clicks)

Shit, it really did a number on you? I'm sorry sweetie, I shouldn't have snapped, just that most folks have been so hostile since it happened. Was it somebody in your family, husband, kids, your job, your house?

SUNNY

I don't know what you mean, sorry.

CASHIER

On the 20th, been almost a month now.

(Sunny looks confused)

You know - force fields, the zones, people bein' cut off. How hard did it hit you?

Sunny freezes. She mechanically reaches into her purse, pulls out her wallet, swipes her card, then pushes the cart outside silently. The cashier watches her, a bit worried.

INT. MAKESHIFT GREENHOUSE - DAY

PARKER (72) is in a split greenhouse - it was deliberately constructed next to the invisible barrier, so it looks like it's only half built. It stretches several hundred feet across, but only twelve feet deep.

Inside are a number of plants - the living ones are all positioned along the wall, the dead ones are spread out on tarps and tables. Parker is dictating notes into his phone.

PAKER

The results from the potato plants have confirmed my hypothesis, which is that the roots of the plants are also affected by the barriers: of the six sample plants, zero were able to breach the other side.

He glances at a bin of potato plants, which have roots that radiate in every direction except one, where it looks like they were pressed against a wall.

PARKER

As of now, I have been unable to find any counter-examples to suggest that a plant can pass through the barrier, but I will continue research on a wide range of species.

Parker takes a picture of the potatoes, then tosses them onto one of the tarps. He walks through a door to another section of the greenhouse, which is filled with animals.

Most of them are rodents, birds, and insects, though there are a few frogs and snakes. Some are sitting in half-built cages against the barrier, others are further back, waiting to be tested.

A few birds are flying about freely, and one flies into the wall. Parker picks up the bird, calms her down, and puts her in a cage. He looks around the room, trying to decide what to work on.

PARKER

Alright. New entry, March 19th, 2:25 PM. Animal studies. Commencing rodent test number 31.

He gingerly pulls a white lab rat out of a cage, and sets it in a wooden box. He attaches a few metal clips and wires to the rat, then straps it in place with a belt.

PARKER

As usual, my.. my condolences.

He gently strokes the frightened rat, then carries the box to the edge of the force field. Straddling the field are thirty similar boxes - each with the same setup, each with a dead rat on the other side.

PARKER

I will now be transferring the specimen across the barrier, which should cause all cellular activity to cease.

He puts the box on the ground and gently slides it across, using his other hand to brace against the force field for leverage. The rat squirms and twitches violently as it passes through, then stops moving.

PARKER

I will - doesn't get easier, I'm really sorry about this - I will now run 155 volts through the specimen, up from 150.

He flips a switch on the side of the box closest to him; once again, the rat squirms and twitches violently as the current surges through. Parker watches, painfully, then his eyes go wide.

EXT. CITY BLOCK - DAY

Sunny is walking down the street with her chihuahua Tia. The city seems muted. A few people are out and about, but otherwise no activity.

SUNNY

Oh oh, careful girl!

The dog almost runs into one of the barriers, which is outlined with bright green paint - the paint runs in both directions on the sidewalk, clearly marking the edges.

SUNNY

You ready to go home?

(the dog barks)

So am I. Let's get you something to celebrate, you've had such a long day!

INT. PET SHOP - DAY

Sunny is talking to the STORE CLERK; there are a few other customers browsing with their pets

STORE CLERK

How's she doing? How ARE you today Tia?

SUNNY

She's tired - I told her we'd get a treat though  
- this was the first day I left her at the house  
while I went shopping.

STORE CLERK

Wow! Who's a good girl? Who's a good girl?  
(she gives Tia a biscuit)  
So she didn't act up when you finally got home?

SUNNY

Nope. I think she's doing much better.

STORE CLERK

I'm glad to hear it.  
(as Sunny reaches into her purse)  
On the house, you two always put a smile on my  
face, that has to count for something.

SUNNY

(genuinely surprised)  
Oh, wow, thank you so much! Did you hear that  
Tia? Really, thank you!

STORE CLERK

Of course. Say, did I already try and get you to  
buy the fly-detector? Can't remember who I've  
given the spiel to.

SUNNY

Mm, no, I don't think so.

STORE CLERK

Okay - well, here's how it works, if you don't  
want one no problem.

The STORE CLERK pulls out a plastic container with two  
flies buzzing around. The container is split into two  
sections, the flies are both on the same side.

STORE CLERK

So, what you do is you put this up against the barrier, so it runs through the middle. Doesn't have to be perfect, just try to center it as best as you can. When you do, pull the divider out.

(she demonstrates - Sunny is giving a blank stare, but the clerk doesn't notice)

You might want to tape it down beforehand just to be safe. Now on this side, the walls are coated in rosin, like what you use in flypaper. So if the barrier ever disappears - the flies will be stuck on the other side. That way- Sunny? Sunny?

Sunny is startled and is suddenly herself again.

SUNNY

I'm sorry, I don't think I'll need one. We'll see you tomorrow after her walk.

STORE CLERK

You need to go to the doctor? We managed to keep most of them, I thank God every day that there was a hospital in our zone.

SUNNY

No, it's fine. Come on Tia.

The store clerk watches with concern as they leave.

EXT. RUNDOWN APARTMENT COMPLEX - DAY

Sunny walks across the parking lot, then freezes. A man named BRUCE (48) is yelling in the distance.

BRUCE

What'd you bring me, bitch? That's right, talking to you, Tia - that dumb fucking animal behind you can't fucking understand English.

Sunny slowly walks to her unit.

BRUCE

Sooner or later you'll have to talk, I ain't going nowhere.

(he bangs his hands on the barrier)

You still want me, I know it you little bitch - wouldn't still keep living here if you didn't, no, you're just fucking pathetic - even Tia knows it, isn't that right girl?

Tia barks at the man and veers towards him; Sunny yanks the leash and walks ahead, not acknowledging Bruce.

FLASHBACK TO THE APARTMENT COMPLEX - BLACK AND WHITE.

Sunny is slowly walking through the parking lot with two grocery bags. Her face and arms are covered with bruises. Tia is trailing behind her. Sunny's head barely moves when she hears a shout of terror.

WOMAN

Jimmy! JIMMY!!

MAN

What the-

WOMAN

Somebody help us! Please!

MAN

Where is it? I can't

In the distance, a husband and wife have stopped - the wall split them apart and they're both in shock. In the distance, a car crashes, several start honking, but Sunny just keeps walking.

END FLASHBACK

INT. SUNNY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Sunny sets the keys on the counter, locks the door, and exhales with relief. She presses her back against the door and tries to stay calm. We hear Tia's barking getting louder and louder.

FLASHBACK TO HER APARTMENT - BLACK AND WHITE.

Tia is barking. Sunny empties the grocery bags which only have six-packs of beer. She pulls out a box of dog food and drops it on the ground.

WOMAN (outside)

Don't worry, we're going to be fine!

MAN (outside)

I can't...

WOMAN (outside)

We need an ambulance! Does anyone know CPR?

The panic from outside continues, but Sunny doesn't seem bothered - she barely seems to notice. Tia eats from the pile of food that spilled out; Sunny sits on the couch, numb, exhausted. Her phone rings - it's Bruce. She answers as fast as she can.

BRUCE (phone)

You better not be at the apartment, you fucking bitch, or I'll-

SUNNY

I just got back. I have your beer, did you want me to get-

BRUCE

You fucking blind? Didn't you see it?!

SUNNY

See what? I'm sorry, I don't know what you're-

BRUCE

They said there's fucking walls everywhere! God you're an idiot, open your fucking eyes for once you worthless shit!

SUNNY

Walls?

BRUCE

I'm coming over- *DAMN! Move it asshole!*- I'm gonna be there, you better not fucking move!

He hangs up. Sunny pauses, goes outside, and walks up to the barrier. She waits fearfully, and then sees Bruce running in the distance. He's furious, and he runs right at her, shouting at the top of his lungs.

BRUCE

What the FUCK? Let me out! You little BITCH!

Sunny's heart quickens. Bruce runs to the side, trying to find a way in. Sunny just stands there, frozen.

That night, Sunny is alone in the apartment. The door is wide open, and Tia is asleep on the couch.

SUNNY

I hope he found a way through. You'll get to see him tomorrow, don't worry.

She pets Tia and turns on the TV.

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)

...over 40 zones in Chicago alone. Again, if you go to the webpage listed below, you can see an initial map of all known borders.

Sunny immediately pulls out her phone and goes to the website. It takes a minute for it to generate after she enters her zip code. She zooms in to her neighborhood, and based on the placement of the red lines, realizes that she and Bruce are in two separate, unconnected zones.

Suddenly she bursts into tears.

END FLASHBACK

In the present, Sunny is also crying. She can hear Bruce's muffled insults, and it only makes her more emotional.

BRUCE (outside)

They'll be gone soon, and then I'll be back where you want me, because I know you miss me you bitch - and you're gonna fucking get it!

SUNNY

(to herself)

I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

INT. PARKER'S MANSION - DAY

Parker is on the phone; his house is mostly empty, what few belongings he has are decorative and non-essential.

PARKER

I'm telling you, I'm on to something.

WOMAN (phone)

I'm sorry, mister-

PARKER

Hansen. Parker Hansen.

WOMAN

I'm sorry Mr. Hansen, but we'll need at least-

PARKER

I think I found a way through.

There's a pause. While he waits, he looks through his email. Some of the top messages are:

- Constructures Custom Greenhouses values your feedback
- New inquiry on your listing
- Congratulations, you've sold: 'Like-New Armoire'
- Invoice from Constructures Custom Greenhouses
- We KNOW what caused the FORCE FIELDS

He deletes the last message.

PARKER

Like hell you do...

WOMAN

Mr. Hansen? One moment please, I'm going to connect you to our PR manager.

On hold again. Parker goes to a real estate website and checks the listing for his house; he glances outside and sighs at the 'For Sale' sign.

PARKER

Never did like the neighborhood...

STEVE (phone)

St. Jacob's Medical, my name is Steve, how can I assist you?

PARKER

Hi, my name is Parker-

STEVE

Hansen, right? Yes, our secretary - what's that?  
- just a moment Mr. Hansen.

Parker sighs again and rolls his head from side to side.

STEVE

Alright, Mr. Hansen. I'm told you've found a way through, but I'm wondering why you're reaching out to us, and not to a news outlet?

PARKER

They don't have the equipment I would need.

STEVE

Equipment? I don't follow.

PARKER

One of the borders runs clean through the hospital, right?

STEVE

That's correct - but I'm still-

PARKER

Perfect.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Sunny is in line again, same cashier.

CASHIER

Mornin' love. You're back quick, feelin' better?

SUNNY

Yes, thanks. I just forgot to buy paper towels - I can be so stupid and forgetful sometimes, I'm just an idiot when it comes to keeping track of-

CASHIER

Hey - darlin'. Look at me. You are NOT an idiot, you're LUCKY. I'd kill to have a bad memory, especially after all the- you know, all the unpleasantness as of late.

SUNNY

I'm sorry, I didn't mean to make you feel bad, I should have known better.

CASHIER

No harm no foul. I shouldn't have lost my wits yesterday, not fair takin' it out on a precious thing like you - believe you me, plenty of these assholes are cruisin for a bruise. You sure you're feelin' alright?

SUNNY

Mm, yes, I'm okay.

CASHIER

Good. Good.. say, did you hear 'bout that scientist in Dallas, says he found a way through - they're showin' it at noon.

(Sunny's world starts to get blurrier)

I know they've had people CLAIM that... this time it seems like the real... are you, love, is everythin'... medic, we need to get her to a hospital... stay with us darlin', stay with...

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)

...activity at St. Jacob's Medical Center in Dallas, where scientist PARKER HANSEN will be demonstrating...

INT. ST. JACOB'S MEDICAL CENTER - DAY

Parker is being trailed by a cacophony of media on both sides of the green line that runs down the hallway.

JOURNALIST 1

Mr. Hansen, there have been hundreds of failed resuscitation attempts since the 20th - why are we to believe this one will work?

PARKER

Those 'attempts' have just been publicity stunts, designed for tabloid parasites who know they don't have a real story - like that one cancer patient in Detroit, poor man, that procedure was as organized as a Jackson Pollock. Aside from having a doctorate in BIOLOGY, my research is fundamentally rooted in this novel concept called the SCIENTIFIC METHOD.

JOURNALIST 2

What evidence do you have to support your claim, what documentation can you provide?

PARKER

I've been conducting research on a broad range of plants and animals, testing the hypothesis that dead cells can be reanimated once they pass through the barrier. Based on a series of tests performed on *rattus norvegicus domesticus* - what you all know as the common lab rat - I've found the optimal voltage-to-mass ratio for an electric resuscitatory burst. My notes need not be made public until the hypothesis is verified.

JOURNALIST 3

Have you tried it on any human subjects?

PARKER

Honestly?? What do you think THIS is all for?? And to think some of you went to 'school'.

JOURNALIST 4

Who will they be testing the procedure on? Isn't it unfair of you to get a patient's hopes up over an unproven hypothesis?

PARKER

Who said I'd be testing it on a patient?

INT. DIFFERENT HOSPITAL - DAY

Sunny slowly opens her eyes. The TV is on in her room.

JOURNALIST (TV)

... live with Dr. Hansen. Doctor - you've staked your life on this procedure, you must be confident that it works.

PARKER (TV)

Obviously.

SUNNY

Excuse me, what's going on?

On screen, Parker is being strapped onto a cot with an IV in his arm. The first-person footage is streaming side by side with a news anchor.

NEWS ANCHOR (TV)

Once the toxins are released, Dr. Hansen will be medically dead. At that point, he will be moved immediately across the barrier, where a team of doctors will shock his heart.

SUNNY

I'm sorry, I'm not supposed to be here, I shouldn't have said anything.

While she tries to make sense of things, a NURSE walks in.

NURSE

Just sit back and relax. You're safe here - you had a panic attack at the store, but you're going to be just fine.

SUNNY

Where's Tia? Is she okay? I'm so sorry, it's my fault, I shouldn't have-

NURSE

I'll see if anybody checked in at the lobby.

SUNNY

She's my dog, I need to see her.

NURSE

Let me ask around, I'll be right back.

NEWS ANCHOR (TV)

... discretion is advised for this, as Dr. Hansen begins the procedure.

PARKER (TV)

Thirty-one. Thirty-one. Thirty-one...

He passes out, dead. Sunny watches in horror, her hands gripping the side of the bed.

Suddenly her phone starts ringing - it's Bruce. She fights the urge to answer it, but readies her hand on the green 'answer' button.

NEWS ANCHOR (TV)

... being moved to the other side.

SUNNY

It's my fault, it's my fault.

NEWS ANCHOR (TV)

And now they will attempt to restart-

SUNNY

It's my fault, it's my fault.

NEWS ANCHOR (TV)

And this is the moment he should wake up.

Silence. They shock Parker; his body convulses.

SUNNY

It's my fault, it's my fault.

Nothing. They shock him again. Bruce is still calling.

SUNNY

It's my fault, it's my fault.

They shock him once more. His body is shaking violently.

SUNNY

I'm sorry Bruce.

Parker's body stops shaking.

NEWS ANCHOR (TV)

It appears the procedure has failed.

Gasps are heard all around. Sunny's phone keeps ringing, but she rejects the call and stares at the TV.

INTERCUT BETWEEN VARIOUS SCENES - EACH SCENE IS SILENT, BUT OVERLAYING THEM IS PARKER'S NARRATION

The media reacts to Parker's death. St. John's is abuzz with fury and despair, and people clamor and rage on both sides of the hallway against the barrier.

PARKER (V.O.)

One anomaly should never be the basis for your conclusion - I've lost track of the times my students have argued otherwise - and yet, I'm ashamed to admit that the principle had not truly taken root in my mind until now.

Sunny walks out of the hospital, where everyone but her is devastated that Parker's procedure failed. Sunny has a big grin on her face.

PARKER (V.O.)

Conclusion - there is no way through the barrier, not for any of us at least. The damage to living tissue appears to be - well, irreparable - and no amount of resuscitation, or prayer, or medical wizardry is of any use.

Parker's house is abandoned. Everything seems deliberately prepared though, put away in boxes and clearly labelled, and a copy of his will is on the table.

PARKER (V.O.)

We're not accustomed to being on the other side of the maze, and now that we are, we've been wasting all our time running into the walls instead of trying to find the center. We gnash our teeth and cry to the heavens because we don't know who put us here, but it's blindingly clear what their parameters are.

Sunny is walking down the street, jogging. She gets right up to the edge of the wall, marked in green. She runs along it, her hand tracing the outline, shouting ecstatically as she hurries along.

PARKER (V.O.)

It's one thing to TELL people the truth, that nothing they do can circumvent the will of the universe. It's another to DEMONSTRATE the truth; in true empirical fashion, to SHOW them the marks of the nails rather than bless them for believing without seeing.

The greenhouse has been emptied of the animals, the windows and doors are wide open. All that's left are the rats - all of them dead on the other side of the wall, including test subject 31, the last in the row.

PARKER (V.O.)

People WANT a solution, but what they NEED is certainty, and I'll give it to them. This - this whole phenomenon, it's like any other trauma - and so far, we've been bereft of closure.

Sunny runs across the parking lot to where Bruce is still standing, presses herself face to face with him, and unleashes the emotional torrent she had been holding back: rage, despair, regret, contempt, it all pours out.

PARKER (V.O.)

If you happen to find these videos, which I've no doubt you will - I should say, WHEN you find them - know that I was doing you a favor. I've just proven that everything you feared is true, so now you can move on with your lives.

Sunny is in her apartment with the door wide open, holding Tia, her eyes closed. She's finally at peace.

FADE OUT.