

Encapsulated - Episode 4 of 10

BLACK SCREEN - VOICES ONLY, TALKING ON THE PHONE

YOLANDA

It's slow, just catching up on one of my novels.
How about you, anything interesting at work?

BARRY

They're letting us off a half hour early.

YOLANDA

Perfect - hate to ask, but could you get the kids
from the birthday party? Save me a trip?

BARRY

But of course, lamb chop.

YOLANDA

Mm. Actually, that reminds me, I gotta unthaw the
roast for dinner tonight. I should also-

(a baby starts crying)

Shoot, Liam's awake, he just went to sleep,
whoever said this got easier, I swear...

BARRY

He misses you already.

YOLANDA

Yeah, yeah, I'll bet- oh my God, oh God, Barry
what's happening? BARRY? LIAM!!

BARRY

What's going-

YOLANDA

I'm stuck, I can't get through, oh God, somebody
please - Liam! Liam!! LIAM!!!

FADE IN:

INT. DEPARTMENT OF SURVEYING - DAY

SAM (30) is working diligently at his desk, which happens to overlook a park. He takes a break and looks out for a moment - there's an old woman standing in the grass and screaming at the sky - then he returns promptly to work.

JONATHAN

How's Rachel?

Sam is easily startled by his manager JONATHAN (40).

SAM

Who's Rachel?

JONATHAN

Her, the shouter - I thought you overheard that discussion. Didn't you?

SAM

No, I don't recall...

JONATHAN

You know, Rachel weeps because her children are no more? Not ringing a bell?

SAM

No. So she's separated from her kids?

JONATHAN

That's our best guess - I mean, nobody knows, and she won't talk about it, but she seems the type.

(Sam nods, then gets back to work)

Ahem. Ahem!

SAM

It's where it should be.

Jonathan rolls his eyes and walks across the hallway to where the inbox and outbox are. There's one piece of paper in the outbox, none in the inbox. Jonathan dramatically grabs the lone paper and brings it to Sam.

JONATHAN

You know, the rest of your colleagues just tell me, 'hey Jonathan I got most of my shit done today, you look upset, let me buy a round of drinks', and then the waitresses come out and next thing we know it's the weekend.

SAM

But the bins are there for a reason.

JONATHAN

Look, I give you PERMISSION to just TELL me what you accomplished instead of adding it to the-

Sam, concentrating on his computer, points to a poster above his desk that has the workplace guidelines.

JONATHAN

Ay caramba.

(looking over the paper)

Why the hell isn't this done?

SAM

I didn't have time for the top floor.

JONATHAN

Didn't get to- Sam, we've been over this, you don't need to check EVERY floor. Just like you don't need to leave little SPACES on the map every time you hit a brick wall! Nobody is going to tear down a building just to check.

SAM

But that would be lying.

JONATHAN

It's not lying, it's extrapolating - serious question, how many times have you found a gap?

SAM

But the one time we don't check-

JONATHAN

Zero. Never. It's statistically impossible.

(Jonathan puts the paper on the desk, grabs a black pen, and makes a few marks)

There, your work is done.

SAM

Not yet. It'll be my first stop of the day.

JONATHAN

I'm not paying you overtime. You still have deadlines to meet, you know.

(Sam points to the guidelines poster)

Don't push it.

SAM

You're welcome to do the job yourself.

JONATHAN

Yeah, yeah...

INT. UNIVERSITY LABORATORY - DAY

Sam is tracing along an invisible barrier that runs through the room. A PROFESSOR is watching him while he works.

PROFESSOR

You need anything to drink?

SAM

No, but I will need rooftop access after this.

PROFESSOR

Sure thing.

Sam has walked the length of the room, proving that the barrier stretches all the way across. He makes some notes.

SAM

Are you aware of any additional barriers parallel or perpendicular to this one?

PROFESSOR

I hope not, that would be quite the-

SAM

Are you aware of any holes, gaps, or cracks in the barrier?

PROFESSOR

Wouldn't that be something..

SAM

So is that a no?

PROFESSOR

No - I mean, correct, it's a no.

SAM

And have you noticed the barrier shift at all since the 20th?

PROFESSOR

I don't- Hm, I would assume not, I suppose I never really thought of it.

Sam makes notes - more than he needs for so few questions.

PROFESSOR

People must love it when you pay them a visit, you're so personable.

SAM

(still taking notes)

Mm. That's new. Actually most of them hate me.

(makes one final jot)

And we're all set. Rooftop?

PROFESSOR

Oh, right. This way.

(she leads him to the stairwell)

What's that? Glad you asked. Our students are conducting tests to see how high the wall goes. So far they've proven it at points as high as sixty-thousand feet, but we're still checking.

SAM

Have you taken advantage of a Localized Disruption subsidy?

PROFESSOR

For--

SAM

For your research. Since you've got one running through the building, you - well, the whole lab actually - you can apply for a subsidy to help the cost of research. And you may be able to get more since your research concerns the barriers.

They're on the roof. Sam starts tracing along the barrier.

PROFESSOR

You mean a BRI grant? Yeah, we know a thing or two about asking for money. I'll have to look into the - what was it - disruption subsidy?

SAM

Localized Disruption Subsidy. Here-

(he pulls out a form from his briefcase)

You can scan it and upload to the website listed below, shouldn't take more than five minutes.

PROFESSOR

Thanks. I can't be much help with your questions, I haven't been up here before.

SAM

No problem. I'll just do a quick check.

(he begins zigzagging, so that he can walk across every square inch of the roof)

Are the walls in the building made of brick?

PROFESSOR

I think so, why?

SAM

Is there a way to verify that the barrier runs through them?

PROFESSOR

I don't think so, but I'm sure it does.

(Sam looks at her, disappointed)

Do you actually check the walls??

SAM

If we can. Otherwise we mark it as a gap.

PROFESSOR

Oh? I've never seen gaps that small. Actually...

(she pulls out her phone and opens a map approved by the Department of Surveying, and zooms in on an area where the highlighted green barrier runs through a building)

See? No blips, clean line through the walls.

SAM

But he- but I TOLD him that I didn't check the walls there. Can't believe it, can't believe it...

INT. YOLANDA AND BARRY'S HOME - DAY

YOLANDA (31) and BARRY (30) open the door for their two children, OLIVIA and JORDAN, both elementary school age.

BARRY

You made it!

OLIVIA

Hi mommy hi daddy I'm hungry.

YOLANDA

Lunch is on the counter.

Olivia runs into the kitchen. Jordan pulls out a crumpled piece of paper and hands it to Barry.

BARRY

What's this?

JORDAN

I dunno, Miss Marcy said to have it.

YOLANDA

Go wash your hands.

OLIVIA

I want mac and cheese!

BARRY

Field trip? Ooh neat, I heard about this - they're turning airplanes and hangars into jungle gyms. I kinda want to go myself...

YOLANDA

Doesn't sound safe.

OLIVIA

I want mac and cheese!

BARRY

They'll be supervised, besides where are they gonna go, right?

(Yolanda glares at him)

Kidding, kidding.

OLIVIA

I want mac and cheese!

Yolanda goes into the kitchen while Barry looks for a pen; Jordan is scarfing down a sandwich, Olivia is whining.

OLIVIA

I HATE peanut butter!

YOLANDA

They still don't have mac and cheese right now, remember? So you can have PB and J, or you can have fruit, or you can have nothing.

BARRY

You're okay with them getting on a bus? Are we 'concerned about more barriers appearing'?

YOLANDA

Is that really on there??

JORDAN

All done. Can I see Liam?

YOLANDA

Wipe your mouth off.

Jordan runs down the hall. Yolanda grabs the permission slip from Barry, who's still looking for a pen; she pulls a pen out of a drawer and signs it herself.

OLIVIA

I wanna see Liam too!

BARRY

I can do things, you know.

YOLANDA

Finish your sandwich first!

Olivia runs down the hall without eating, giggling excitedly and repeating Liam's name.

BARRY

They'll be fine, it'll be good for them to get out and do something for a change.

YOLANDA

I'm not- wait, do you think I'm actually concerned? Seriously? You always ASSUME that I can't handle anything.

BARRY

Is this about me working fewer hours? Because we've talked about this, they're still planning projects, so I haven't had as many shifts.

YOLANDA

Have you mentioned your work before?

BARRY

Yeah, lots of times.

YOLANDA

Then why on EARTH do you think that's what I meant? Or are you assuming I don't listen, too!

BARRY

You're right, I'm sorry, I shouldn't have-

YOLANDA

Kids, time's up, back to recess!

(Jordan and Olivia run outside)

I'm just trying to understand why you think I'm a helicopter parent all of a sudden.

BARRY

Because of-.. You know...

YOLANDA

That's only with Liam though. Jordan and Olivia are different. I can look out the window and see them at school and hug them when they get home. I know they'll be fine, because they're with me, so I don't need to worry as much.

BARRY

No, you're right, I'm sorry for making it- sorry if I over-generalized.

YOLANDA

Well now you know.

(smiles at him and lightly kisses his cheek)

INT. PIZZERIA - DAY

Sam is checking the barrier that runs through the middle of the restaurant. The OWNER is watching impatiently. There are a few amused customers.

OWNER

You gonna be much longer? You're scaring the customers, look like a fucking spiritual whack-job the way you're staring at it.

SAM

Are you aware of any additional barriers parallel or perpendicular to this one?

OWNER

What was that? PerpenDICular? Jesus... NO!

SAM

Are you aware of any holes, gaps, or cracks in the barrier?

OWNER

Yes - right there, up by the light fixture.

Sam gropes around by the spot and doesn't find a hole - a few of the customers laugh, as does the owner.

SAM

Please let me do my job. Have you noticed-

OWNER

YOUR job? What about MY job? Shit, haven't HAD much of a job to do while Border Patrol sits on their ass and isn't doing SHIT to help trucks get through - 'tax dollars at work', gimme a break...

SAM

Have you noticed the barrier shift at all since the 20th?

OWNER

What kind of a-? NO! Here I am on a gold mine, got a spot in two zones, double the customers.. fuck me! I spend half my time sitting on my ass collecting my god-damned disruption check...

SAM

(to himself)

Do you know what the walls of the building- oh wait, somebody doesn't care, *Jonathan*.

OWNER

What am I gonna buy, huh? More tomatoes, more dough? Who's gonna bring it to me, huh? Least now I know why shit ain't getting done, when they got red-tape fucks like YOU running the operation.

INT. YOLANDA AND BARRY'S HOUSE - DAY

Yolanda and Barry are in baby Liam's room, which was split by the barrier. On the other side, the back wall has been taken out and there's an add-on room that's still under construction. A young NURSE is on the other side, rocking Liam back and forth.

NURSE

(quietly in the background)

There you go. Everything's gonna be okay.

Yolanda is watching Liam tenderly; Barry is scrolling through email messages on his phone.

BARRY

(softly to Yolanda)

So apparently I'll be working tomorrow. They're clearing out a big neighborhood, it's all summer getaway houses.

YOLANDA

But not for people who still live here, right?

BARRY

Right, the ones who have like two or three places that they never actually visit.

YOLANDA

What about all their furniture?

BARRY

They already shipped everything to whatever zones the owners are in, it's just empty houses now, they finally got city approval.

YOLANDA

Figures, they get priority shipping.

(looks at Liam with a smile)

You know, if we had that kind of money, we could move into a split-center. I hear some of the zones have them, it's like a big apartment along the barrier. And we'd probably get in, seeing that we - you know, given our situation.

BARRY

Wonder if we would lose our disruption check...

YOLANDA

Disruption check?

BARRY

Yeah, I thought- because it runs through the house? We get a few hundred a month, I've just been putting it into an emergency fund.

YOLANDA

Thanks for telling me. Do you get it in the mail? I've never seen anything.

BARRY

Yeah, it's the letters from the Department of Barrier Maintenance. You usually throw them out because you think they're not 'emotionally satisfying solutions to the deeper social problems the barriers have created.'

YOLANDA

Oops. I mean they're NOT, but an emergency fund sounds pretty nice. Thank you.

NURSE

(quietly, Liam is nearly asleep)

There you go. Everything's gonna be okay.

Yolanda starts crying softly as she watches Liam, moving her arms as if she's holding him. Barry tries to embrace her, but she pushes him away; he leaves her to herself.

EXT, SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Sam is driving to his next stop; Jonathan is on the phone.

SAM

Why didn't you tell me you were leaving out the gaps where the building walls are?

JONATHAN

(phone)

Sam, for the love of- don't worry about it.

SAM

People will think there are holes in the barrier.

JONATHAN

I guarantee nobody will think that - if we left them blank, people would assume there IS a hole, right? But let's be real, there isn't. So then they drive all the way out to where their map says there's a hole in the wall, only to find a REAL wall AND a building in the way-

SAM

But it's technically-

JONATHAN

At which point they'll say, 'what dumbass in the department of surveying decided to get my hopes up because, if we're being TECHNICAL-'

SAM

I just.. Our job is to VERIFY, not GUESS.

He parks the car.

JONATHAN

Sam, level with me. Why does it matter so much? I mean, to YOU? Why can't you let this go?

SAM

Because nothing changed for me.

JONATHAN

Meaning?

SAM

Meaning, my life stayed the same. I didn't lose anyone, because I never HAD anyone - and I like the city, I don't travel. So I - I really wasn't affected by it. Every day, I feel like I'm taking a nice walk through a cemetery, and I can't enjoy it, so I find ways to not think about it.

JONATHAN

I get it man. My wife left me a year ago, so I was used to being split up before it was cool.

SAM

I- I don't know if I should laugh at that.

JONATHAN

Go for it, that's how I've coped. Truth is, you're right, you're not what most people need right now - you're a 'facts don't care about your feelings' kinda guy, and I respect that. Makes the job much easier, believe me. I'd go crazy having so many people hate me for bringing up the one thing they wished never happened. But nobody wants to have a robot come visit them either. So just, you know, try to relate to them a little more - and I'll try and stop giving you grief about following the rules. Deal?

SAM

I'll try it.

JONATHAN

You'll be great, promise.

INT. YOLANDA AND BARRY'S HOUSE - DAY

There's a knock at the door; Barry goes to answer it.

BARRY

We're not interested.

SAM

No, sorry - Mr. Collins? I'm not selling anything - I'm with the department of surveying. I'm checking on any properties that have a barrier running through them.

BARRY

Now's not a great time.

SAM

I promise I'll just be a minute. I- I just need to verify that the wall runs all the way through.

BARRY

It does. Trust me. Anything else.

SAM

Please, I really just need to check myself, and then I'll be gone.

YOLANDA

Who's that?

(she walks down the hall towards the door)

Is this about the kids?

BARRY

He's a surveyor, but I already told him he doesn't need to check.

YOLANDA

Check what?

SAM

Hi Mrs. Collins. I just need to personally verify that the barrier runs the length of your house.

YOLANDA

It doesn't. Only across my son's room.

SAM

Oh? But your husband said that-

BARRY

Honey, don't start..

YOLANDA

Start what? Come on in, I'll show you.

SAM

Thanks - I'll try not to take much of your time, just a few quick questions.

(Yolanda leads him down the hallway)

Are you aware of any additional barriers parallel or perpendicular to this one?

YOLANDA

Nope, just the one.

BARRY

Dear...

SAM

And are you aware of any holes, gaps, or cracks in the barrier?

YOLANDA

Well, like I said-

(they stop in front of Liam's room)

the barrier only goes across here, so yeah, there are gaps everywhere else.

BARRY

That isn't- sweetie...

SAM

I'm not sure I-

YOLANDA

See, Liam here get stuck, but being the awful mother I am, I didn't look for another way into his room. I figured, eh, he's my son, who gives a shit - it's not like I care if he's behind glass.

SAM

I'm, I'm sorry if I-

YOLANDA

Of course, any LOVING mother wouldn't have gotten over it, right? So the fact that I don't spend every waking minute bawling my eyes out means I must not love him, right??

SAM

I really didn't mean-

YOLANDA

How is this going to bring him back?

(she throws Sam's notes through the barrier)

Tell me! Did you find a way through? Did you find a way to make them go away? Wouldn't that be a better way to spend your time?? No, of course not, you just make sure it's still here, because why would you give a shit?!

BARRY

Yolanda, please-

Yolanda slams Sam against the barrier; he falls, then scrambles to his feet. Barry tries to hold Yolanda back, but she breaks free and chases Sam to the front door.

YOLANDA

You have NO RIGHT to come here unannounced and tell me that I can NEVER see my son! That I'm a TERRIBLE MOTHER for not being in the same room with him when it happened.

(she slams him against the barrier again then shoves him outside)

And I can't win! Because if I cry, then you tell me I can't bring him back, so get over it, and if I act normal, you think I'm a psychopath because apparently that means I've moved on! I will NEVER move on! I will live with this regret until the day I die, and the last thing I want is to look at the map and see that things are literally NEVER going to get better! Don't you DARE come back to this house, EVER AGAIN!

INT. DEPARTMENT OF SURVEYING - NIGHT

Sam is alone at the office. He pulls out a paper with a map on it, marks a few places with his pen, then drops his head on the desk.

SAM (V.O.)

Dear Mrs. Collins, I want to apologize for my insensitivity the other day, but more than that, I want to express how sorry I am about your separation from your son. I won't pretend to imagine how hard it must be or try to offer you a solution to 'feel better' or 'get over it'.

INT. YOLANDA AND BARRY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

BARRY

Something in the mail for you, looks personal.

He hands Yolanda a letter; she reads it to herself.

SAM (V.O.)

When the world changed on the 20th, my life didn't, and it made this job much harder than you can imagine. I'm probably the last person you would have wanted bothering you, and I'm sorry.

EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Yolanda is walking down the sidewalk, focused and confident, following a route on a piece of paper.

SAM (V.O.)

The barrier isn't going away. You probably won't hear that from your husband, or your friends, because nobody wants to admit it. Nobody wants to deal with it, everybody just wants to pretend like it could get better. Well, almost everyone.

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

Yolanda is still walking - she looks around, not sure what she's expecting to find.

SAM (V.O.)

I've included an address below - I'm sorry that I'm not the right person to share your pain. The least I can do is connect you with somebody who can. All the best, Sam.

Yolanda finally sees her: the old woman shouting and lamenting in the middle of the field. She walks over to her and joins her; they vent together, barely acknowledging each other, hoping the universe will hear them.

FADE OUT.