

Encapsulated - Episode 7 of 10

FADE IN:

INT. LIVING ROOM, MANSION - DAY

Two sisters, LAUREN (28) and TASHA (23) are in one of the many rooms of their house, sitting on a plush couch and browsing on Tasha's phone.

TASHA

You remember this one? It was, like, the BEST sunset I had EVER seen.

LAUREN

Looks familiar.. where was that again?

TASHA

At Zion! Remember?? So like, we didn't hike suuuper far. I mean, like, YOU did, but I was like, 'girl, I'ma chill on this comfy-ass bench', which was the GROSSEST thing, and then you made me walk like HALF a mile, but it was totes worth it cuz of that sunset.

LAUREN

It WAS a good sunset. It's coming back now.

TASHA

I know right? Like, I had TOTALLY forgotten about it and then I saw the picture and was like, 'oh yeah, we did that' - O! M! G! Shut UP! Okay, PLEASE tell me you remember this??

LAUREN

(looks closely at Tasha's phone)

Is that.. It's a tree, or a rock? Do I need to zoom in?

TASHA

Look right here.

(she zooms in on the image)

That was when we saw the ELK, and I had, like, literally NEVER been so scared before.

LAUREN

I'm trying to remember, was that at Zion too?

TASHA

Hold up.

Tasha zooms out and reads the comments on the photo, which are as shallow as you might expect (#WildLife #WTFNature #Sisterhood #Blessed...). At the bottom, it says where the photo was taken.

LAUREN

Yellowstone. Right, that was freaky.

TASHA

Wasn't it though? I was like about to cry, and then I was like, 'Lauren does this all the time, Lauren don't give a shit'. And you were all, 'what up elk?' and I was like 'SLAY girl'.

LAUREN

I have seen a lot of elk. It's scary the first time, but you get used to it.

TASHA

But they're like, so BIG - I thought it would be like a horse, but damn, that thing was like an SUV, but I was all 'my sister got this'. And then you went up to it all empowered, and there were like fifty people behind us, gramming it, and I was all, 'she with me, we good.' And you did some elk-whispering or shit and then you dropped the mic. Sooooo lit.

LAUREN

It was pretty lit.

TASHA

But like, what did you tell it, like how'd you make it go away?

LAUREN

I told him, 'Elk, you're cool and all, but we've got a hike to go on'. Then I threw some beef jerky off the path, and he went after it.

TASHA

Lit. Isn't that, like, cannibalism though, isn't jerky, like, made of elk?

LAUREN

Fun fact - it's made of beef.

TASHA

Wut?? Hold up, so like, you straight up murder cows when you go on your hikes??

LAUREN

I mean, I don't murder them. And I'm actually switching to all-vegetarian trail snacks.

TASHA

And THAT'S why you're the best sister, because you're not just like 'I'm in love with nature but fuck the cows,' you're all, 'I actually LIVE this shit, and y'all should too.'

LAUREN

I do what I can.

Suddenly, Tasha has an idea. She drops her phone on the couch, skips over to a massive writing desk, and grabs a bright pink laptop.

TASHA

So. Guess what WE haven't played in SOOOO long, like, literally forever?

LAUREN

Is it what I think it is?

TASHA

Oh HELL yes, girl. It's time for 'cover that cause with mom's credit card.'

They both giggle with delight. Tasha goes to a site that hosts crowd-funded medical requests. People can post their stories, users can offer to donate.

TASHA

Okay, like, I know we just started, but how can you NOT love that child??

LAUREN

(reading the post to herself)

Little Gus suffers from a rare form of...

TASHA

(while Lauren reads)

It just.. It just breaks my heart, that these kids have to go through that.

(she starts crying)

And they aren't even asking for like a trip to Disneyland you know? They literally just can't pay his bills. So precious.

She presses the 'donate' button, and agrees to pay the outstanding bill (several thousand dollars).

LAUREN

And that's why YOU'RE the best sister, because you're not just like 'I want world peace', but you actually do things to make the world better.

TASHA

(sniffling)

I try. Mom used to HATE it when we first started doing this, but I was like, 'Mom, these people have NOTHING', and we have SOOOO much more than we need, so why not help them, you know?

LAUREN

I do. You inspire me.

TASHA

You too, nature girl!

(they giggle)

Hmm - Oh noooooo, they can't afford her therapy, my heart can't even.

LAUREN

Please help the Leone family as they...

TASHA

Look at this, she hasn't been able to get a job in three years.

(tearing up)

Hang on, girl, we got this.

Once again, she presses 'donate' and pays the full amount, which is over ten thousand dollars.

TASHA

Oh, look at this one! Poor Eddie!

LAUREN

When he was at work on the 20th, Eddie was in the wrong place, and his arm got...

TASHA

Oh my gosh! Look at that, I wonder who attacked him, like, who would do that to somebody?

LAUREN

Maybe we should look at another-

TASHA

(reading to herself)

While his coworkers were simply stuck, Eddie lost much more that day. There aren't many options for surgery in his zone...

LAUREN

Seriously, this is- this is grossing me out.

TASHA

His zone? How were they stuck, was it a stabbing at the office or-

LAUREN

Tasha, please, let's watch dog videos, I need a break from this. Pretty please?

TASHA

You know I hate dog videos.

(Lauren closes the laptop)

Lauren! What's going on? Why are you being so salty?? I just want to read it!

Tasha opens the computer and moves to the other side of the room; Lauren is nervous, but doesn't do anything.

TASHA

Please help Eddie. Because his injury was barrier-related, his insurance refused to cover the cost of surgery, and now he's bankrupt.

LAUREN

Please don't read.

TASHA

Barrier-related? His zone? I'm so, so...

Tasha blacks out. Next thing she knows, she wakes up on the couch next to Lauren.

LAUREN

Do you want some green tea?

TASHA

What, what happened?

LAUREN

You passed out. Are you feeling alright?

TASHA

I don't- weird. Like, I remember us looking at the elk.

LAUREN

That was when you blacked out. You want to keep browsing, scroll down memory lane?

TASHA

I- I don't, I don't know what's happening, but like I really just-

(she bursts into tears and embraces Lauren)

It's like, so confusing sometimes, and I know I black out and the doctors don't know why, but I'm just so glad I have you.

LAUREN

Don't worry, you're fine.

TASHA

Promise you won't go?

LAUREN

Promise. I'm not going anywhere.

Lauren holds Tasha and consoles her, telling her everything will be okay.

INT. DINING ROOM, MANSION - DAY

The girls' mother, ELEANOR (54), is sitting at the table with her laptop, a muffin, and a glass of water, trying to make a call.

ELEANOR

Come on sweetie, please pick up... Drat!

MUFFLED VOICEMAIL MESSAGE

I'm probably in the middle of nowhere - I can tell you're jealous. Call me again in a week.

ELEANOR

(sighs)

Hi Lauren, sweetheart, it's mom. I'm still worried about you, and I know you're probably on one of your outings. And truthfully, I'd be glad if you were, that's where you've always been the happiest. But I just want to know that you're okay, that's my job. And I really really miss you, so please call me. Or text me. Love you a lot, and I pray for you every night.

She pauses, then reluctantly hangs up. She takes a sip of water from her glass, then goes into the kitchen to refill it. Noise from the other room is audible.

TASHA

O! M! G! Shut UP! Okay, PLEASE tell me you remember this??

LAUREN

Is that.. It's a tree, or a rock? Do I need to zoom in?

Eleanor smiles, squeezes some fresh lemon into her water, then sits back down at the table. She takes a sip of water, eats a bite of muffin, then makes another call.

ELEANOR

Now if YOU don't answer, I swear...

A casting agent, ANNE (49), answers.

ANNE

(phone)

Ms. Harrington's office.

ELEANOR

Anne? This is Eleanor Tucker, how ARE you? How are the babies doing?

ANNE

Well, Noah was throwing up again, so I had to take him to the vet. Molly is still depressed, but they said that at least a third of the cats are going through the same thing.

ELEANOR

I heard about that. And what was the other one that got hit hardest, the- it's on the tip of my tongue, what was it...

ANNE

I think it was the- maybe the sheep?

ELEANOR

Yes, sheep. Lord have mercy... Anywho, so I wanted to return your call about Margo's schedule. As it turns out, the contract stipulates that she will do what-EVER is necessary for little Tasha's mental health, which means working seven days a week, minimal breaks, as long as needed.

ANNE

I know you'll throw the contract at me, but let me remind you, AGAIN, that Ms. Harrington still has a career to pursue.

ELEANOR

Does she though? Are people really interested in movies now that everything is, you know..?

ANNE

If you doubt that she's so valuable, then you'd be willing to share her time. Truth is, Mrs. Tucker, we BOTH know how sought-after my client is, and like it or not, she isn't your daughter.

ELEANOR

I suppose not. I'll go and tell Tasha now, or would you like to?

ANNE

Here we go... Mrs. Tucker, I feel for your daughter, I do. Both of them. Speaking of which, have you heard back from Lauren yet?

ELEANOR

(sighs)

Alas, still no sign of her.

ANNE

I'm sorry to hear that. Believe me, I understand - most of my relatives are in Milwaukee, so I'm out here by myself. And I'm happy to work out a new arrangement so that Margo can continue to be available for Tasha. How would you feel about a one-week-per-month plan?

ELEANOR

What would I say to Tasha for the other three weeks, that Lauren doesn't want to see her?

ANNE

Just say that she's sightseeing - which isn't out of character for her, right?

ELEANOR

I suppose, but Margo has worked so hard on getting her personality JUST right, and I don't want that to go to waste.

ANNE

But it won't. The hard part is over, right? She's seen enough videos, photos, and messages by this point to embody Lauren. It's been a month now, and Tasha still hasn't noticed, right?

ELEANOR

That's true..

ANNE

Exactly! So, just have her say that she's going on a wilderness cleanse, or a healing trek, whatever they call it. Then she can work on other projects, like she's SUPPOSED to, and Tasha can see her again the next month.

ELEANOR

I only fret for Tasha's sanity, but who am I to say what's best for her?

ANNE

Mrs. Tucker, pardon my being blunt, but you can can it. Seriously. I understand your concern, and I understand how valuable Margo is to you - believe me, I wouldn't have signed her at all were it not for your generosity. But you have to admit that this is a bit.. Unconventional.

ELEANOR

One more month, and then we'll start the new schedule. And she has to spend five hours of each off-week watching home videos. I can't have her breaking character when she's here.

ANNE

Two more weeks, and she watches four hours every weekend before she comes back. That way it'll be fresh in her mind.

ELEANOR

I suppose I can work with that. I hope that Molly perks up soon.

ANNE

Tell me about it. You have a great day Mrs. Tucker, glad we could reach an agreement.

ELEANOR

Likewise. Bye-bye.

(she hangs up)

'Glad we could reach an agreement'. 'I know you'll throw the contract at me again, but she still has a career to pursue'... We'll wait a few days, see if she doesn't soften up.

She takes another bite of muffin, then looks at her event reminder for the day. She pulls out a pen and paper, and jots down notes from the call. Suddenly, MARGO HARRINGTON runs in, panicked.

MARGO

I am so sorry. We were looking at charity cases online, and I wasn't even thinking, but some of them had to do with the barriers, which confused her. And then I mentioned watching dog videos, which apparently she doesn't like, and now she's passed out.

ELEANOR

Follow me.

She leads Margo into the kitchen and prepares a cup of green tea for Tasha.

MARGO

Again, I'm really sorry. It's hard to keep her away from the computer though.

ELEANOR

Don't stress about it. It wasn't the barriers that pushed her over the edge, it was losing Lauren. Now that Lauren is 'back', we can slowly start reminding her about what happened on the 20th, and as long as she has YOU, the shock should be much less severe this time around.

MARGO

So does that mean I'll still be working here full-time? My agent said she's trying to line up other opportunities.

ELEANOR

I just got off the phone with her, actually. We're still working out a new routine, and your work here MIGHT become part-time.

MARGO

But still ongoing?

ELEANOR

Yes, it's necessary for poor Tasha's well-being I'm afraid. We'll tell her that you're out of town, hiking, and then you'll come back every few weeks or so.

MARGO

But that- and I'm just thinking out loud here-

ELEANOR

Think away!

The tea is finished. They bring it into the living room, where Tasha is passed out on the floor.

MARGO

But if we tell her about the barriers, how will she believe that Lauren was hiking across the country, but somehow DIDN'T get cut off?

ELEANOR

That's true... We could say that you're going to nursing school, since medical care is so scarce. She would worship the ground you walk on.

MARGO

She already does. They must have been close.

They lift Tasha up and rest her on the couch.

ELEANOR

Which is why the loss took such a toll on her.
(she leans in closer to Margo)
I doubt she could survive losing Lauren twice.

MARGO

I- I'll do my best. Definitely won't bring up dog videos again.

ELEANOR

There we go. And don't panic if she learns about the barriers again. In fact, YOU would be the best person to tell her about them, don't you agree? Lord knows *I* don't matter to her.

MARGO

That's not true, she loves you both.

ELEANOR

(stroking Tasha's hair as she stirs awake)
What would I do without you girls?

Eleanor leaves, and Margo sits next to Tasha. The buzzing of a phone gets louder and louder.

EXT. SCENIC MOUNTAINSIDE - DAY

Silence. The mountains and trees are blanketed with snow, the valley is pristine and tranquil. Laruen's answering message is audible.

VOICEMAIL MESSAGE

I'm probably in the middle of nowhere - I can tell you're jealous. Call me again in a week.

EXT. PARK RANGER CABIN - DAY

The sign above the door says 'Donner House'. There's a framed photo of 20 adults, all in outdoor gear. SUSAN (67) is rocking back and forth on the porch. LAUREN (28) walks up with a full-sized backpack and hiking equipment.

SUSAN

I hear it's down to zero tonight.

LAUREN

Is that everywhere, or here at the house?

SUSAN

Average, everywhere. You staying in?

LAUREN

Depends. Can YOU handle the cold?

(Susan gives her a condescending look)

Alright, MOM, I'm sorry. I'll stay for dinner, then I'll leave for the night.

SUSAN

(chuckles)

You only come around for my cooking, DEAR - and I'm making green bean casserole.

LAUREN

Better than an energy bar.

SUSAN

Marginally. That's why I add the heroin.

(they both laugh)

Speaking of which, except not really, but that's alright... A package came for you yesterday.

LAUREN

(as they go inside)

And you didn't open it? You're not a very convincing mother, just saying.

SUSAN

That's fine by me.

INT. PARK RANGER CABIN - DAY

The inside of the cabin is a mix of supplies (food, equipment, electronics) and decor (photos, animal skins, hand-carved furniture). There are a few rooms (kitchen, main room, bedroom, bathroom), but it's only big enough for a few people to live in.

Lauren is opening a package with a color printer inside; Susan is tidying up some of the clutter.

SUSAN

There you are. Be grateful, they said it's not easy to procure them. Apparently there's a higher than normal demand this time of year. What with the holidays coming up.

LAUREN

Can you thank the delivery guy next time? How much do I owe you?

SUSAN

I keep telling you, don't worry about it. We hardly use our food stipend for... well, FOOD, so the money would go to waste otherwise.

LAUREN

Fair enough. How are we doing by the way?

SUSAN

(gesturing to the overflowing kitchen)

And the last person I saw was the Keegans, which was.. Two days ago? Three? We're set, trust me.

LAUREN

Just making sure.

(she's setting up the printer)

Outlet?

SUSAN

Behind the cot.

(the bell on the door rings)

Afternoon Fred.

FRED (46) trudges in with a backpack full of supplies, winter gear, and walking sticks. Susan gives him a dirty look for trailing in snow before wiping off his boots.

FRED

Happy to see you too, Susan. Lauren-

LAUREN

Not happening Fred.

FRED

Damn celibates...

LAUREN

You can say asexual, it won't kill you.

FRED

Yeah yeah. YOU open for business?

SUSAN

Do you honestly think the answer has changed?

FRED

Can't blame me for trying.

LAUREN

Oh yes we can. But your efforts to repopulate are well-noted, and generally consistent.

FRED

More like POPULATE at the rate we're going.

SUSAN

Just think of us as the encore. We're the last ones who will ever see this... vista... And then it'll be completely human-free.

LAUREN

As it should be.

FRED

Can't argue with that I suppose. You wouldn't happen to have any extra starters would you?

SUSAN

Got one right here with your name on it.

She pulls out a fire starter kit from the closet. Fred adds it to one of his backpack pockets.

FRED

Mind if I refuel?

SUSAN

(exaggerated sigh)

I'm not sure, I'll have to ask my daughter. Honey, can this nice man borrow our food?

LAUREN

I don't know, MOM, is he going to give it back when he's done?

FRED

You two are weird...

Fred goes into the kitchen and rummages through the drawers of food (energy bars, trail mix, dried fruit).

SUSAN

Did you hear that? Can you believe the way he talks to us, DARLING?

LAUREN

Don't worry.

(loudly, so Fred can hear)

I put peanut extract in the mangos!

FRED

(poking his head out)

Wait, don't joke about that - seriously??

LAUREN AND SUSAN

NO!

FRED

Yeesh...

Fred continues packing food, the printer is finally ready.

SUSAN

It's blinking. Must be happy.

LAUREN

But will it STAY happy? THAT'S the question.

Lauren goes into the bedroom, where there's a plastic bin with 20 smartphones. She grabs hers and notices that there are five new voice messages.

LAUREN

Here we go...

All the messages are from her mom. One by one she deletes them without listening. Then she accesses her photo gallery and scrolls through pictures of her and Tasha. While she's looking, she goes back into the main room and plugs the phone into the printer.

SUSAN

Casserole is almost ready. You want any Fred?

FRED

(on his way out)

Save me some, I'll be back Sunday.

SUSAN

You got it!

FRED

Stay warm ladies! I'll be... freezing, because it's like Fred, but with an... eezing, that sounded much stupider than I wanted...

Susan and Lauren wait until he's outside, then burst out laughing. The printer is whirring, spitting out photos of Lauren and Tasha on hikes, watching sunsets, etc.

SUSAN

We eating inside or out?

LAUREN

In, I just need to wrap this up.

SUSAN

Take your time.

The printer is finished. Lauren picks up the photos, a few dozen, and sets them on the table.

LAUREN

I'll hang those up. Be right back.

She grabs her phone and ventures outside, following the path towards the parking lot. There are a dozen cars; beyond them are bright red poles every twenty feet, marking the edge of the invisible barrier.

Lauren stomps through the snow, goes right up to the edge of the barrier, presses her hand against it to make sure it's there, then hurls her phone against the trees on the other side. She lets out an excited scream, which resonates through the forest.

FADE OUT.