

Encapsulated - Episode 8 of 10

FADE IN:

EXT. PARKING LOT, HEAVY SNOW - GRAY

ASHLEY (46) is bundled up, the wind howling, the snow getting in her face. She slams her car door and presses the lock button on the remote. Nothing. She presses it again, still nothing. She pounds on the hood angrily. In the distance, MR. SPEAKER (53) hollers out.

MR. SPEAKER

Any luck?

ASHLEY

Storm's a bitch!

MR. SPEAKER

Leave it. Nobody's gonna take it.

ASHLEY

Damn remote...

She kicks the car door, then trudges over to Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER

You my new hire?

ASHLEY

Is this border patrol?

MR. SPEAKER

Sure is. You picked a hell of a day to start.

The two of them march across the parking lot - there are a few blinking red lights in the distance, but otherwise they can't see more than a few feet away.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

The blizzard is raging. TRISTAN (21) enters the house, closing the door quickly. The living room is cozy and warm. NAOMI (70) is polishing her camera lens; SOLOMON (66) is asleep on the couch. Tristan takes off his shoes.

NAOMI

You can leave them by the door. Are you Tristan?

TRISTAN

Yeah. Sorry, did I wake him up?

NAOMI

Solomon? No, he's just napping. Sol!

Solomon stirs awake; Naomi continues polishing the lens.

TRISTAN

That's nice. Do you take a lot of photos?

Naomi gestures to the rest of the living room, highlighting the various pictures: family portraits, landscapes, etc.

SOLOMON

Damn headache...

He slowly raises himself up and goes into the kitchen. Naomi reattaches the lens, puts away the cleaning kit, and puts the camera on the shelf.

TRISTAN

Did I come at a bad time?

NAOMI

Never. We're happy to meet somebody new. We haven't had much interest lately.

Naomi settles on the couch, Tristan sits across from her.

TRISTAN

So, what's the plan? What have you two got?

NAOMI

A lot. Our work is almost complete. Now for you. What do you know about drones?

TRISTAN

Only that the government uses them to target innocent civilians, and PURPOSELY classifies anybody hit by the impact as a civilian so that-

NAOMI

No dear, hobby drones. Can you fly one?

SOLOMON

(making his way to the couch)

Oy vey... Of COURSE he can fly one, he's young.

TRISTAN

I can learn, I've done flight simulators.

(leans in)

Will we be dropping bombs across the barrier?

SOLOMON

No.

TRISTAN

Oh. So.. are we testing with animals or bacteria, to see how far the barriers actually-

SOLOMON

No.

TRISTAN

So we're doing it for surveillance then?

SOLOMON

Mm-hmm.

TRISTAN

That's IT?? I thought this was like, I dunno, terrorist stuff? Blowing up the border station, hacking their files, destroying shit?

(he pulls out a flyer)

Right here. 'Calling all skeptics! Government conspiracies! Widespread cover-up about the barrier! Join the FIGHT to EXPOSE the truth!'

SOLOMON

Would you have reached out if we had said, 'please help us, the government might be up to something, but who's to say?'

NAOMI

It is deceptive though, I should print a new one..

SOLOMON

Son, we like to play the long game. Blowing up a border patrol station - short term delay. Taking time for data collection, surveillance, building up our case, that's where we hit them hardest.

TRISTAN

But it's so BORING. I guarantee that flying the drone won't do ANY good, like, seriously, WHAT are you planning to find?

NAOMI

How would we know? That's why we do surveillance in the first place.

TRISTAN

Are you two for real?

(Naomi smiles sincerely; Solomon shrugs)

This is bullshit. Have fun not doing anything that makes a difference.

(he angrily stands up and puts on his shoes)

What a waste of time...

EXT. BORDER PATROL - DAY

It's clear and sunny outside, several inches of snow are on the ground. There's an invisible wall stretching for miles in both directions, marked every ten feet by massive poles.

In the middle is the border patrol hub: two small buildings and a parking lot. A few yards away is the interstate. On both sides of the road is a line of trucks, with the pinch point at the barrier.

Mr. Speaker is giving Ashley a tour, walking along the edge of the invisible wall; both are in uniform.

MR. SPEAKER

Now, elephant in the snow - we aren't at the BORDER, you're right. But the barriers are LIKE borders, so they figured, who better to stand guard than BORDER patrol.

ASHLEY

(writing in her notebook)

Makes sense.

MR. SPEAKER

Can I see that?

(Ashley hands him the notebook; he throws it across the barrier)

I'm gonna call you 'Notes'. You're the first one who's taken any, now you know better.

NOTES (ASHLEY)

Fine by me. And you're really going to start calling me 'Notes'?

MR. SPEAKER

Yes ma'am, that's how we roll. I'm Mr. Speaker because every time these losers want somebody to talk, I'm the one they go to.

NOTES

Meaning...

MR. SPEAKER

Meaning most of 'em are quiet, so if we got an inspection, or phone calls - or a new recruit - I get to explain everything.

NOTES

I see.

MR. SPEAKER

Now that over there, that's what we call a dead zone. Means that nothing's there but trucks and highway as far as the eye can see.

NOTES

How big is it?

MR. SPEAKER

Can't say. No sense charting it, wouldn't do us much good anyhow.

They approach the interstate, where all the trucks are backed up. In the middle of the road is a stoplight. The light is red on both sides. One of the trucks pulls right up to the barrier. The driver gets out into the middle of the road and hands some papers to one of the guards.

MR. SPEAKER

That there is Cliff. He's the edge, can't go past him alive. Howdy Cliff!

The guard waves back. He verifies that the papers are in order, then presses a button on the stoplight to turn it green - one truck from each side passes through (one going out to the dead zone, one coming in from the dead zone). Neither truck has a driver at the wheel, which catches Notes a little off guard.

Once both trucks are through, Cliff presses the button and the lights turn red again. The outgoing truck revs up and chugs along the highway through the dead zone. The incoming truck idles while the driver gets in. As he switches it to manual, Cliff helps the next outbound truck driver. And so the flow continues in the background of the whole scene.

MR. SPEAKER

Quite the spectacle, ain't it? Thing of beauty, gatekeepers of hell.

NOTES

How long did it take to get up and running? I thought driverless was still a few years off.

MR. SPEAKER

About two months, not even. I guess engineers CAN solve problems, they just don't until they have to. Hey, speaking of which... you ever hear the one about the programmers who fall off a building?

NOTES

Nope.

MR. SPEAKER

Alright, you got four programmers who fall off the Empire State Building. One works on Wall Street, one works for a big tech company, one works in healthcare, and one works for the government. Now, if they all fall at the same time, who hits the ground first?

NOTES

I'm not sure.

MR. SPEAKER

Who fucking cares?

They both burst out laughing. They keep walking along the wall. Up ahead, there are two guards patrolling - their guns are holstered, but they're a bit suspicious of Notes. Mr. Speaker waves at them, they wave back and ease up.

MR. SPEAKER

That there is Reaper, and that one's Trick Shot. Not the basketball type of shot, you know, the killing people type of shot.

NOTES

Oh? Does that happen often?

MR. SPEAKER

(looks at her incredulously for a moment)  
You sure this is the job you want?

NOTES

Yeah. Just curious.

(he's still not convinced)  
Seriously, I'm okay with it. I'm ex-military so I know how... NECESSARY it can be.

MR. SPEAKER

Just checking. Yeah, we try not to, obviously, but can't be helped sometimes.

NOTES

I hear ya.

(she points out two more guards behind them, who are patrolling the queue of trucks)  
What about them?

MR. SPEAKER

That would be... Mastiff and Spike.

NOTES

You weren't kidding. About the names.

MR. SPEAKER

No ma'am. Mastiff kinda looks like one, not his fault that he's got a sad face. And Spike came up with the tire traps.

NOTES

What traps?

Mr. Speaker gestures behind them, on their side of the barrier. Notes strains her eyes but can't see anything.

MR. SPEAKER

You can't see 'em because of the snow, but a few hundred feet from here, we've got a line of tire spikes in the field.

NOTES

What for? There's no road.

MR. SPEAKER

That doesn't stop some nutjobs from hauling ass and trying to crash through the other side. No way to convince 'em it's suicide, so we put those up for their own safety.

NOTES

But are people allowed up close? Is most of this private property?

MR. SPEAKER

Nope, open to the public. Free country and all, I suppose. We just don't want 'em doing anything dangerous, that's all. But yeah, folks are free to be up close, we usually get a few dozen a day, mostly to make sure it's still there. Not much else out this way, let's show you the other side.

INT. HARDWARE STORE - DAY

Tristan is in the garden section of the store, his shopping cart full of fertilizer. He's talking to himself.

TRISTAN

*'Son, we like to play the long game'. What the hell is the point of the long game if they're lying to people right now, I mean, thank God not EVERY-one is blind as they are. Of course there's not even a barrier there, but how convenient, telling people that you can't pass this INVISIBLE WALL, because the government says so. And how do we even know it's there, how can you prove it? Just trust us, because we're with the government, and we say it's there. Man, people just need to get out of their-*

He's interrupted by an EMPLOYEE.

EMPLOYEE

Building a bomb?

(Tristan freezes)

I'm just yankin' your chain. Which we sell, aisle four. You need a hand? I've got a register open.

TRISTAN

Register. Yes. Thank you.

(the employee jogs over to the register;

Tristan purposely lags behind)

*We're gonna get them, Tristan, and you'll be one of the heroes who found the crack in the system, and fifty years from now they'll write about-*

EMPLOYEE

Ready when you are.

TRISTAN

*And THERE'S my catchphrase.*

EXT. BORDER PATROL - DAY

Notes and Mr. Speaker are on the other side of the station, once again walking parallel to the barrier. Mr. Speaker points out a sniper, standing on the roof of the building, scanning the dead zone vigilantly.

MR. SPEAKER

Doing great, Scope!

(he and the sniper wave)

Most laid-back marksman you'll ever meet.

NOTES

But he's aiming at the other side... So is he just for show?

MR. SPEAKER

Just for show? He's got the best aim this side of the Rio Grande. He's looking for ANIMALS - some deer runs out on the road, truck doesn't stop in time... One hell of a mess to clean up from a distance. Whole operation gets shut down. So he takes 'em out if they get too close.

NOTES

What if a truck breaks down - not like it hits an animal, it just runs out of gas or something? They don't make them non-stop, do they?

MR. SPEAKER

I wish. No, we've got some pass-through towns they fuel up in. Think the nearest one is, shoot, I wanna say - twenty-six miles out? They fuel 'em up, check the fluids, brakes, engines, make sure they're running smooth.

NOTES

So is that where they load and unload? Or are they just pit stops.

MR. SPEAKER

Just pit stops. Thank God, too - can't wait for the day when we can cut clear through some of those shitholes. At least they'll all die off in a hundred years, Lord willing. And when that happens, I reckon we'll have trucks that can go DAYS without stopping.

NOTES

And I'll bet the national IQ is gonna double once they're gone. Calling it now.

MR. SPEAKER

(chuckles)

And people say the barriers will ruin us. Please..

They keep walking. A few hundred feet off, Solomon and Naomi are blissfully standing at the edge. Naomi is taking photos; Solomon is piloting a drone on the other side.

MR. SPEAKER

How many times, Sol?

SOLOMON

I'm not causing any trouble - you can see that the drone is at a safe distance from the road.

MR. SPEAKER

Can't say I didn't warn you.

Naomi waves at them politely. Mr. Speaker directs Solomon's gaze to RAGER (39), a female guard who's sprinting toward them from the other direction, her gun drawn.

MR. SPEAKER

You're all hers.

RAGER

Hands off the controls! NOW!

SOLOMON

Must we do this every-

RAGER

Drop it!!

Solomon reluctantly drops the controls, not willing to test Rager's thin patience.

SOLOMON

Oy vey...

RAGER

Shut it! You, away from the wall!

(Naomi obediently steps back)

Do you have any weapons on your person?

SOLOMON

No.

RAGER

Ma'am, what about you?

SOLOMON

No.

RAGER

I wasn't talking to you, SIR! Ma'am, do you have any weapons on you?

(Naomi shakes her head 'no')

You here for personal reasons?

SOLOMON

Mm-hmm.

MR. SPEAKER

That's enough, Rager.

Rager snarls at the couple, then walks away.

SOLOMON

Your dog needs a tighter leash.

MR. SPEAKER

(putting his hand on his gun)

Alright. I think you two have had enough time at the wailing wall today. Pack it up.

Solomon reluctantly lands the drone and turns it off, then he and Naomi walk despondently to their car.

INT. BORDER PATROL STATION - DAY

Mr. Speaker and Notes are taking off their heavy coats; one other guard is in the room, watching an array of computer monitors, each one showing various live feeds from around the station. There's also a monitor showing a real-time view of the highway, like a flight control map, with blinking red rectangles representing each truck.

MR. SPEAKER

How you holdin' up Glaze?

The guard grunts apathetically.

NOTES

Glaze? Oh, because he's glazed over. Clever.

MR. SPEAKER

You're quick. This job might be beneath you.

NOTES

I can play dumb, just say the word.

MR. SPEAKER

The word. So after lunch, I'll have you along the barrier, see how that goes, then switch to the queue after a few days. Keep things interesting.

NOTES

Sounds great.

MR. SPEAKER

Any other questions? You seem to be the 'figure it out as you go' type, not too worried.

NOTES

When can we shoot people?

MR. SPEAKER

Glad you asked.

(he pulls out a massive binder and drops it on the floor in front of her)

LEGALLY, hardly ever.

NOTES

Realistically?

MR. SPEAKER

Hardly ever. Self-defense, obstructing the flow of commerce, that's about it.

NOTES

Lovely. I'll just have Rager take care of them.

MR. SPEAKER

See? You learned something without taking notes.

EXT. BORDER PATROL - GRAY

SUPER: 'Two Weeks Later'

It's hazy and snowing - not a full storm though, and even with minimal sunlight, there's good visibility. Notes is patrolling the queue of semi-trucks, nodding at each of the drivers, checking the trucks for suspicious cargo. One of them is Tristan, whom she nods at unsuspectingly.

TRISTAN

(in his truck)

*Drop, click, brace. Drop, click, brace.*

Tristan glances at the passenger seat: there's a timer attached to a bundle of wires that lead into the main console; on the passenger-side floor is a sandbag.

TRISTAN

*Drop, click, brace. Drop, click, brace.*

The trucks inch forward. Cliff inspects the next driver's papers. Light changes to green: one truck going out, one truck coming in.

TRISTAN

*Drop, click, brace.*

The next one goes through. Tristan is second in line.

TRISTAN

*Drop, click, brace.*

Green light. One out, one in. Red light. Tristan pulls forward, trying to calm his breathing. Cliff knocks on his window impatiently.

TRISTAN

*Drop. Click. Brace.*

CLIFF

Ready when you are!

Tristan's adrenaline takes over. He hoists the sandbag up and drops it onto the gas pedal. He clicks a button on the timer, starting a 10 second countdown. And he braces himself as the truck accelerates through the barrier, crushing his body and killing him instantly.

CLIFF

(into his radio)

Kamikaze! Repeat, kamikaze!

NOTES

Shit!

The truck barrels through the dead zone, past the queue of incoming trucks. Six seconds left.

CLIFF

Code red! Stop him, NOW!

Four seconds. Three gunshots ring out in rapid succession. The tires on the right side of the truck are hit; it veers off road into the snow-covered field. Two seconds. One.

BOOM! The back of the truck explodes in a fireball. The sound is deafening, but the blast is far enough from the road that none of the incoming trucks are hit.

MR. SPEAKER

(on radio)

Beautiful work, Scope.

CLIFF

I need all units down here, now!

RAGER

(on radio)

Copy that. Motherfucking terrorists...

NOTES

All right, everyone out, let's move!

Notes goes down the line and yells at the drivers to stop the trucks and wait outside, while the other guards arrive to secure the area.

INT. BORDER PATROL OFFICE - GRAY

GLAZE is sitting at his desk, watching the scene outside. The panic is over, and the drivers are getting back in their trucks. There are a dozen guards combing the area, still on high alert, but Cliff has started the flow again.

GLAZE

Frickin Rager...

He zooms in on one video, where Rager is beating the shit out of the snow. Mr. Speaker comes up behind her; she's startled and accidentally punches him in the face.

GLAZE

Alright, what've we got...

He turns his attention back to the cameras, looks at the aerial map, then does a double take.

BACK TO OUTSIDE

Mr. Speaker is massaging the bruise on his face.

GLAZE

(radio)

Mr. Speaker, do you copy, over?

MR. SPEAKER

Go ahead.

GLAZE

(radio)

They've stopped.

MR. SPEAKER

For the inspection, yeah, get your head out of your ass.

GLAZE

(radio)

Not here, upstream. I'm not seeing any activity  
in the dead zone.

MR. SPEAKER

None? Is the system offline.

BACK TO THE OFFICE

GLAZE

No sir, everything in the queue is still showing  
as active, but nothing new is coming in.

MR. SPEAKER

(radio)

Are we expecting downtime?

GLAZE

No sir. Should be at least twenty or thirty.

BACK TO OUTSIDE

MR. SPEAKER

Is there any other activity? Drones, animals,  
something blocking the road?

GLAZE

(radio)

No sir, the satellite isn't showing anything.

NOTES

Something wrong?

RAGER

Are there MORE of them??

MR. SPEAKER

What the hell...

EXT. SMALL TOWN - DAY

The sky has cleared up, a light snow is falling. There's a line of idling driverless trucks stretching more than a mile down main street. Two elderly ladies, all bundled up for the snow, are marvelling at the caravan.

At the end of the line is an old man, sitting inside a small, two-person inspection station. His feet are propped up, and he's watching a video on his phone. A makeshift roadblock is preventing the first truck from going forward.

The two women walk by the station. They smile and wave at the man. He waves back, then goes back to his video, which Solomon is narrating.

The title is: 'Border Patrol EXPOSED, over fifty hours of unedited footage.' The video is showing Mr. Speaker and Notes walking along the barrier. It was filmed by a hidden camera that Solomon was wearing.

NOTES

So is that where they load and unload? Or are they just pit stops.

MR. SPEAKER

Just pit stops. Thank God, too - can't wait for the day when we can cut clear through some of those shitholes. At least they'll all die off in a hundred years, Lord willing. And when that happens, we'll have trucks that can go DAYS without stopping.

NOTES

And I'll bet the national IQ is gonna double once they're gone. Calling it now.

The man at the inspection station chuckles. He looks out at the trucks, then back to the video.

MR. SPEAKER

How many times, Sol?

SOLOMON

I'm not causing any trouble - you can see that the drone is at a safe distance from the road.

MR. SPEAKER

Can't say I didn't warn you.

(he pauses. The camera turns, Rager is running towards Solomon)

You're all hers.

RAGER

Hands off the controls! NOW!

SOLOMON

Must we do this every-

RAGER

Drop it!!

The man watches in shock. The video is interrupted by a phone call from 'Border Patrol Office'. The man hangs up, sets his phone on the ground, closes his eyes and rests.

FADE OUT.