

Encapsulated Season 2 - Episode 3 of 9

FADE IN:

SUPER: One year later.

The only sound is from a classical song. Piano Concerto 2: Andante, by Dmitri Shostakovich. I know that's oddly specific, but the only noise in this episode is that song on a loop. Everything else is silent.

EXT. DOWNTOWN PLAZA - DAY

Young MALIK (6) is looking up in awe at the skyscrapers, which circle all around him. The pattern is awe-inspiring and entrancing. He gazes in wonder and traces their outline with his fingers.

He seems completely unfazed that he's alone. He just stands on the sidewalk staring at the buildings. He's also wearing headphones, which he's pressing against his head, and a superhero backpack.

One of the buildings in the distance stands out and catches Malik's eye - it has bright, reflective blue windows that look like the ocean.

He decides to walk towards it. He doesn't notice the people walking by him, the car honking as he crosses the street, the homeless man asking for money, the bus that screeches to a stop to avoid hitting him.

Ooh, birds in the park. He runs after them and laughs as they fly away. He looks around and sees a woman with a golden retriever. He goes over to pet the dog, but the woman leaves abruptly.

Malik is confused. The dog is gone. He starts screaming and curls up in a ball. He stares at the grass. It has a nice pattern to it. The blades look like skyscrapers up close. Suddenly he's calm. Oh yeah, the blue building.

He taps his headphones three times. All good. He stands up and walks through the park toward the blue building, which looms closer than ever, like a wave about to crash.

Somebody gently taps him on the shoulder. He turns and sees a kind female bus driver. His eyes light up, she smiles back at him. He's seen her before!

He thinks back to a time when he sat in a bus she was driving. Except she wasn't driving it. It was just sitting in a parking lot. He remembered because she let him play Angry Birds on her phone.

Or the time when he sat in the office where she worked. There was a big window where he could see all the empty buses in a parking garage. He got to count them all, that was a really good day.

Back to right now. She hands him a water bottle, he's not thirsty though. He needs to go to the blue building. That's funny that he saw somebody he knows!

Oh wait, she's blocking him. He's confused. She sits on the grass and motions for him to sit down next to her. What is she looking at? It's a ladybug! That's cool!

Malik crouches down and stares at the ladybug. He doesn't touch it though, but he gets as close as he can. This is really interesting. What else is in the grass?

Ooh, a face mask. He's seen a lot of those. He picks it up to put it on, but the bus driver lady takes it away and throws it behind her. She pulls out some hand sanitizer, puts it on her hands, then gives it to Malik.

But why does he need sanitizer? He wants to wear the mask, why did she take it away? He goes to find it, but she tries to stop him. He kicks her. There's the mask. He puts it on, oh no, that's not very comfortable.

Maybe she wanted to wear the mask? That must be it, he doesn't want her to feel left out. He takes it off and gives it to her. She takes it, she seems scared of it, and she doesn't want to wear it, which is confusing.

Oh look, the blue building. She tries to distract him again by showing him another bug, but he wants to see the building, so he leaves. She's blocking him again! Why won't she just let him see the building?

Wait a second. Is that his dad? What's he doing here?
Great, now he has to go home. He doesn't want to go home,
he wants to see the blue building. Why doesn't his dad
understand that?

What are his dad and the bus driver talking about? Maybe he
can see the building now! Nope, his dad and the bus driver
are running after him. Why won't they let him be??

He starts screaming and punches his dad, but his dad tries
to calm him down. He gives Malik his phone. Malik doesn't
want his phone. He chucks it at his dad.

His dad goes to their car. Malik decides to explore the
park some more, but the bus driver stops him. Oh wait, his
dad is bringing him a toy car.

Malik likes this car, it's one of his favorites because it
looks exactly like their big car. How cool is that?
Everything about it is the exact same, but it's like a
smaller model. Pretty neat, huh?

He runs over to their car and gets in his carseat, admiring
the toy car and how similar it is to the real one. Where is
his dad? Why is he still talking to the bus driver lady?

Finally, he's back, they're driving home. What's his dad
saying to him? He drives the toy car along the arm-rest of
his carseat. Back and forth, back and forth, he's really
tired, the buildings outside are starting to get fuzzy, the
blue building fades away. Nap time...

INT. MALIK'S BEDROOM - DAY

Malik wakes up in his bed. His bedroom is very organized
and tidy. All his toys are on their shelves, the superhero
pictures on the wall make a grid, and the floor is clean.
Malik stares at the ceiling fan and smiles as the blades
spin precisely and routinely around and around.

He taps his headphones three times, all good. He goes
downstairs to get some food. Where is his dad? He finds him
sitting in front of his computer at the kitchen counter, he
must be working.

Malik wanders around the kitchen and looks for some food. Oh good, he found a pack of fruit snacks. He dumps them on the floor, counts them, groups them by color, then eats them one at a time.

Alright, now to go outside. He runs upstairs, grabs his backpack, checks three times to make sure the zippers are all closed tightly, then runs back downstairs.

What is his dad saying? Who knows. He sprints outside and down the sidewalk. It's nice and sunny out. He can see the big city in the distance.

But this time Malik isn't going to the city. After running for a few blocks, he finally reaches the big red mansion. He loves this house - the angles on the roof, the patterns on the window frames, the way the bricks alternate.

He sits in the front lawn and stares at the house, a huge grin on his face. Like with the buildings, he traces the outline contentedly with his finger. That's done, now he starts counting the bricks.

Who is that old man opening the door? Oh wait, he looks familiar, right, he lives there. Malik flashes back to a few dozen memories where the same man is yelling at him.

Back to the present. Malik tunes him out, oh no, he lost count of the bricks. He starts over. The man is getting louder, so he presses his headphones tighter to mute him.

Oh no, the man is coming toward him and picking him up! STOP! What's going on?? What's he doing?? Why is he carrying him away??

Malik tries to break free from his grip. This guy is really strong, where is he taking him? Malik bites him - the man lets go. Malik runs back to the lawn and sits down. Time to count the bricks again.

STOP IT! The old man is picking him up again, Malik starts crying because he's confused. The man puts him down on the sidewalk and starts yelling at him! Malik tries to run around him to go back to the house, but the old man blocks his path. Malik punches at him, but the man won't budge.

Oh good, his dad is here. He starts arguing with the old man about something. Good, the man is distracted. Malik seizes the opportunity to sit back on the lawn.

Only this time, his DAD is the one who picks him up and takes him away. Much more gently than the old man, but Malik still doesn't like being carried. He kicks and bites at his dad, but his dad won't let go.

They leave and go back home. The old man is yelling angrily at them, but they're getting further away. Malik's dad tries to calm him down, but Malik is crying. His dad carries him all the way to their house.

Once they get back, he locks the door so Malik can't leave. Malik screams at him, then runs upstairs and locks himself in his bedroom. His dad doesn't come after him.

Malik paces around his room in a circle. That eventually calms him down. He presses his headphones closer and taps them three times. All good now.

INT. CHILD COUNSELOR'S OFFICE - DAY

The room is brightly lit and colorful - there are posters, toys, pillows, bookshelves, a big table, big windows, and plenty of open space. It's very inviting.

Malik is sitting in the corner with his headphones on, playing with his superhero action figures. Well, more like he's sorting them all by color and type (cape vs. no cape, mask vs. no mask, and so on).

At the other side of the room, his dad and his counselor are talking at the table. Malik doesn't really pay attention to them or hear what they're saying.

He does know the counselor though. He thinks back to being in his office, showing the counselor his superheroes, exploring the room to see what toys there are, looking at pictures of shapes and saying what each one is.

Back to reality though. His dad looks like he's sad, what is he sad about? Malik doesn't like when his dad is upset.

EXT. DOWNTOWN PARK - DAY

Malik is at the park from earlier, but his dad is with him this time. Malik spends some time running in circles, then chasing birds, then counting the trees, then sitting by himself on the playground.

After a while, he decides that he's seen enough of the park, and it's time to check out the buildings. Malik shows his dad the skyscrapers - look, he can see the bright blue one again! He wants to go see it closer.

His dad wants him to stay nearby though. His dad seems distracted by his phone. Malik decides to check out the blue building by himself.

Oh no, his dad is coming after him, he doesn't want Malik to leave the park. Why won't he let him see the building, what's the problem? He tries to get Malik to go to the car, but Malik resists.

Wait, what is his dad pointing at? There's something in the grass nearby. Hmm, what is it? Malik runs over to see, his dad seems really excited.

Woah! It's a superhero action figure! How did he not see that there before? Awesome! His dad is really happy that he found it. Malik opens his backpack, adds the figure to his collection, closes it, and checks the zippers three times.

He immediately runs to the car so he can go home and reorganize his collection. His dad gladly buckles him in and drives them back home. Once in the car, Malik pulls out the new superhero and starts analyzing it.

INT. MALIK'S BEDROOM - DAY (cont.)

Like at the counselor's office, Malik has all his action figures spread out on the floor. He finds the right group for the newest character, then starts counting them.

His dad is watching him from the door. Malik excitedly invites him into his room and shows him how they're all organized, and where the newest character fits in. His dad seems impressed. Today is turning out to be a good day.

INT. MALIK'S KITCHEN - DAY

The next morning is a school day. Malik eats his pancakes calmly while his headphones are on. There are four pancakes each cut into four exact pieces. He has them all organized on his plate, and only eats one piece at a time.

His dad is also eating. He's talking to Malik about something, but Malik isn't paying attention. He's just keeping track of his pancakes. Eleven pieces left.

INT. MALIK'S CAR - DAY

His dad drives him to school. He counts the houses as they drive by. Oh look, there's the red mansion! He taps his dad and shows him.

Why is his dad ignoring him? He seems mad that Malik is showing him the house. Weird. Malik has a quick flashback to the old man carrying him away. He thinks back to all the times that the old man yelled at his dad.

Back to reality - Malik suddenly understands why his dad doesn't like the house. He stops tapping him and goes back to counting houses.

INT. KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOM - DAY

School goes by like a blur. Malik spends most of his time sitting by himself, still wearing his headphones, still with his superhero backpack on. Even when all the kids are sitting in a circle, Malik is a few feet away from them.

His teacher is nice though, and she doesn't mind that he's not part of the group. There's a class aide who sits close to Malik. He likes her. She sits with him at lunch, which is really loud and crowded. And she gives him a sticker and a high five whenever he finishes an assignment.

In the afternoon, they do art. Malik draws a picture of his newest action figure (which looks like a photograph, the level of detail is shocking for a 6-year old). The teacher and aide are really proud of him, which makes Malik happy.

INT. MALIK'S CAR - DAY

On the drive back from school, Malik shows his dad the picture he drew. His dad is impressed with it too! Why is everybody so amazed by this picture? Weird... Oh well.

INT. MALIK'S BEDROOM - DAY

Malik's dad hangs his picture on the wall, adding to the incomplete grid of superhero pictures that Malik has already drawn. All of them are equally high-caliber and extraordinary for somebody his age. His dad stares in awe at the wall of pictures.

Malik still doesn't understand what the fuss is about, and he doesn't like that his dad is hanging the picture up. First Malik has to make sure it's accurate. He shouts at his dad to stop, and his dad apologetically takes the picture down and hands it to him.

Malik sits down, pulls out the action figure, and sets it on the floor side-by-side with the drawing. He looks over each part to make sure they match. Head, mask, torso, the color scheme, the logo, arms, hands, gloves, belt, pants, legs, boots, cape.

Perfect, they match exactly. NOW his dad can hang the picture up. Malik hands it to him. His dad mounts it on the wall again, checking carefully to make sure it's not crooked or at an angle. Malik gives him the thumbs-up, then decides it's time for a nap.

INT. MALIK'S BEDROOM - EVENING

He wakes up. For the first time in the episode, the music has stopped. He starts shouting and crying.

His dad bursts through the door. Malik points at his headphones and screams, tears running down his face.

His dad immediately runs back downstairs. Malik rocks back and forth on the bed, tapping the headphones over and over and over and over, but still no music.

Finally his dad is back. He unplugs the MP3 player that's attached to the headphones, pops open the back, takes out the battery, replaces it with a new one, puts the back cover on, and plugs it into the headphone jack.

Still crying, Malik immediately presses the power button and waits eagerly for it to turn on. It loads for a second, then starts playing his song again.

He immediately calms down. His dad waits to make sure he's all okay - three headphone taps, Malik smiles, all good.

His dad leaves. Malik paces for a while, then counts his action figures, then finally goes downstairs.

There's somebody else in the house - the bus driver lady! She greets Malik warmly. He's happy to see somebody he recognizes, but why is she at the house, and why is she eating dinner with his dad? Weird...

He doesn't want to third-wheel though, so he goes upstairs, grabs his backpack, checks three times to make sure the zippers are all closed tightly, then runs back downstairs and out the front door.

It's almost dark out, the street lights are turning on. Malik runs giddily down the sidewalk. Ooh look, a dog! Should he pet the dog? No, maybe next time. First things first, he needs to visit the red mansion.

At last, he arrives at the mansion. He sits in the lawn and starts tracing the outline. Done. Now he starts counting the bricks. This is nice and quiet, he hasn't seen the angry old man yet.

Oh no, his dad and the bus driver found him. They're asking him to come back home, but he ignores them and keeps counting the bricks. His dad tries to pick him up, but Malik fights to stay in the grass.

Suddenly, some flashing red and blue lights appear. Malik doesn't mind - he likes the way the light bounces off the windows and illuminates the brick wall. But also, now the old man is on the porch. He lost count, guess he has to start over again.

Behind him, his dad and the bus driver are arguing with two police officers. Malik doesn't notice until suddenly his dad picks him up and tries to carry him away.

Until now, Malik didn't realize just how much commotion he had caused. There are neighbors watching, the old man is yelling loudly, his dad and the bus driver are trying to take him back home.

It starts to be overwhelming. His headphones accidentally fall off and he starts screaming. The world is so loud and deafening and confusing. Luckily, the bus driver picks up his headphones and puts them back on.

He finally breaks free from his dad and runs home as fast as he can, crying and shouting, desperate to escape from all the noise and conflict. Finally he makes it and runs upstairs to his bedroom. He slams the door and curls up on his bed, tapping his headphones and rocking back and forth, back and forth, back and forth...

INT. MALIK'S KITCHEN - DAY

Even with his music playing, the world seems quieter the following morning. His dad looks really tired, Malik is tired too. Twelve pieces of pancake left.

INT. KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOM - DAY

Malik is even more reclusive than usual today. His teacher and his aide both give him space, they even let him draw instead of doing the class activity.

At one point during class he just starts bawling. The aide takes him for a walk around the school playground. He lays in the grass and tries to fall asleep.

INT. MALIK'S CAR - DAY

On the drive back, Malik counts houses, but he starts to panic when they pass by the red mansion. He taps his headphones three times to calm down.

INT. MALIK'S BEDROOM - DAY

After spending some time organizing his superheroes, he goes downstairs to get some food. His dad is sitting on the couch like he's numb. Weird.

Somebody knocks at the door. It's the bus driver lady. That seems to give his dad some energy. It looks like they're going on a trip! Malik runs upstairs excitedly and grabs his backpack, checks the zippers three times, taps his headphones three times, then rejoins them downstairs.

EXT. DOWNTOWN PLAZA - DAY

The three of them walk by the buildings - the bus driver is holding Malik's hand, but he doesn't mind. He gladly points out all the skyscrapers to her.

But where's the bright blue one? He can't see it from where they are, odd. Oh well. They keep walking. Malik doesn't notice what his dad and the bus driver are talking about, he just keeps showing them the buildings.

EXT. DOWNTOWN PARK - DAY

When they arrive at the park, Malik immediately runs to the spot where he found the action figure last time - it's only reasonable to think there might be another one, after all.

Rats, nothing. That's okay. At least now he can see the bright blue building in the background. Where is his dad? He wants to show him. There he is, sitting on a bench with the bus driver. He looks more energetic and happy than he did at breakfast.

Malik wants to show them the building, but then he sees a woman with a puppy. It's his class aide!! What is she doing in the park? Doesn't she live in school?

He runs over and gives her a big hug! She lets him pet her puppy and play catch with him! Malik is on cloud nine! Today is going so much better now! He plays with the dog for what seems like an eternity.

Finally, it's time to leave. Malik wonders if they can take the dog home with them. Unfortunately they can't. Malik starts to get upset and scream.

While the aide and the bus driver try to calm him down, his dad brings him the model of their car. Oh yeah, the one that looks just like the big car.

Malik happily shows it to the aide. She seems as fascinated as him by how perfectly it looks like the big car. He says goodbye, then runs to the car, buckles himself into his carseat, and drives the toy car along the arm-rest, back and forth, back and forth.

Finally they leave - the bus driver sits in the front next to his dad. Malik doesn't pay attention to them, he just drives the toy car back and forth. They have one more stop to make before they go home.

INT. CHILD COUNSELOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Malik is in the corner with his superheroes. The counselor talks to his dad for a bit, but not for very long before something different happens, something out of the routine.

Puzzled, Malik watches them closely. The counselor moves the table against the window, then he clears some of the toys away to make room for something. Meanwhile, Malik's dad pulls the chairs off to the side. Then for some reason, the counselor leaves the room.

Malik likes all the open space. He quickly packs up his superheroes, zips up the backpack, and checks the zippers three times to make sure they're secure. Then he starts wandering inquisitively around the room, thrilled to see it so open and uncluttered.

The counselor returns - what does he have with him though? It looks like a big mask, but also like a box. Wait, Malik has seen one of these before.

He thinks back to a time when he and his dad went to an arcade, and they put this box over his head. It was too loud and uncomfortable so he screamed and took it off.

Back to reality. Why is his dad putting this on his head? He looks funny with a box on his face. The counselor is helping him position it just right.

Oh look, it's the bus driver! She just came into the room. She offers to bring Malik into the waiting room while his dad uses the weird box. That's fine with him, the box is kind of weird anyways. Why is his dad wearing it?

In the waiting room, there's a big fish tank. Malik shows the bus driver all the different fish. He points out all the different groups, colors and types.

After a while, his dad is done. He and the counselor walk out of the room. Good, the box is gone. The counselor says goodbye to Malik, they talk to the man at the front desk about something, then they leave. Malik is tired, he's nearly asleep by the time he gets in his carseat.

INT. MALIK'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

That evening, Malik doesn't go outside. He thinks back to all the lights, the police, the neighbors, the noise... the memory starts to be overwhelming. He brings himself back to the present, and taps his headphones three times. All good.

Then he has a great idea to pass the time - he decides to draw the fishtank from earlier! He spends a while on the picture, recreating it as best he can remember, being sure to get every fish, every pebble, every bubble of water.

As with the superhero pictures, this one looks like a photo of the real thing. Once he's done drawing, he decides to show it to his dad.

He looks around everywhere for him - he isn't in the kitchen, isn't in the living room, isn't in the bathroom. The bedroom door is shut though, maybe he's in there.

Malik knocks excitedly. No response. His dad must be in there though. He knocks again. The bus driver lady opens the door, she's wearing a bathrobe. As she marvels at the picture, his dad emerges wearing boxers and a t-shirt. He seems annoyed with Malik, but not angry. Weird... oh well.

INT. MALIK'S KITCHEN - DAY

The next morning starts off really well. Malik's dad makes breakfast for him AND the bus driver lady. The two of them eat and talk together on their own. Malik is perfectly happy to have his pancakes uninterrupted. Ten pieces left.

INT. KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOM - DAY

Another normal day of school. Malik is happy to see the aide, as usual, and sits in the corner with her during the group lesson. She gives him a sticker and a high five once he finishes his assignment for the morning. Then she eats lunch with him like usual. Good day so far.

After lunch, while they're doing art, he shows her the drawing he made of the fishtank. Like usual, she and the teacher are very impressed. He makes another drawing, this time of the aide's puppy.

INT. MALIK'S CAR - DAY

As Malik's dad drives him home, he's prepared for when they inevitably drive by the red mansion. He tries not to think too hard about the incident, although the memory starts to play in his mind.

He taps his headphones three times to bring himself back into reality. But he also holds his headphones tightly, bracing himself.

Wait a minute. They don't pass it. Are they driving a different route home? He taps his dad on the shoulder. His dad seems proud of something. Maybe he didn't drive by the red house on purpose?

That's fine with Malik. Actually, he's really happy that they avoided it. He leans back, drives the toy car along the arm-rest, back and forth, and counts the houses.

His dad tries to talk to him. He still seems really proud and anxious about something, but Malik is focused on counting the houses, so he doesn't notice.

INT. MALIK'S HOUSE - DAY

As Malik runs upstairs to his room, his dad follows eagerly behind him. What is his dad so excited about?

Then he sees it. He's floored when he enters his room, he's grinning from ear to ear. He can't believe it!!

One of the walls, which used to be empty, now has pictures of skyscrapers!! But not just any skyscrapers, the ones that he sees whenever he goes downtown! That's awesome!! They look exactly the same as he remembers them!

And the best part? The bright blue one is right across from his bed. He jumps onto the bed and sits across from it, still grinning, overjoyed that he gets to see the buildings in his bedroom!!

His dad stands by the door, also grinning. How did his dad know what they looked like? This is awesome! He taps his headphones three times, then just sits on his bed and stares at the skyscraper.

Today was a really good day.

FADE OUT.