

Encapsulated Season 2 - Episode 5 of 9

FADE IN:

SUPER: One year later.

EXT. SCENIC WESTERN VISTA - DAY

Framed against a picturesque sunrise are rolling mountains, craggy canyons, a lush valley, and unspoiled wilderness. It's tranquil, save for the sound of birds and crickets.

SIMON (64), the sheriff, tries not to disturb the peace as he hikes his way up a rocky overlook. It's a steep climb - he grunts as he treks along, using his walking stick to keep his balance.

Finally he reaches the top, takes off his stereotypical cowboy hat, sets it down on a nearby boulder, and gazes wistfully at the natural splendor.

A nearby lizard watches him curiously, then darts off into the brush - Simon chuckles to himself.

SIMON

Good mornin' to you too.

He stands there for a bit, admiring the sunrise. But as his eyes survey the area, he spots something down below, at the base of the outcropping. Somebody is down there - it looks like they fell off.

Simon grabs his hat and slowly, cautiously maneuvers down the face of the rock. It's even more treacherous than the hike up, but he manages to reach the bottom in one piece.

He realizes that the man he saw is bloodied and dead from the fall. Simon rolls him over with his walking stick so he can see his face.

He recognizes the man immediately. He sighs and shakes his head somberly.

SIMON

Shit...

EXT. SMALL TOWN CEMETERY - DAY

A few hundred people are gathered for a funeral. The town PASTOR (49) is giving the eulogy from a makeshift podium. There are literally dozens of grieving widows - most of them over 70, sobbing profusely in the front three rows.

Everybody else looks like normal town folk. And while they're sad and somber too, the little old ladies are clearly the most shaken up.

Standing at the back is Simon, who's scanning the crowd for anything suspicious. Nothing so far.

PASTOR

We are gathered here today in memory of our beloved friend Jeremiah. He was kind, honest, gentle, always made you feel welcome. He-

(the old ladies are wailing)

He took good care of us. He got us through some hard times, that's for sure. But he always had a smile on his face. He was a glass half-full kind of guy, even when the glass was completely empty.

He taught us a lot about how to live. He loved to be out in nature. Just loved it. But he was also very modern, you know? I remember, he was the first person in town to have a computer, or a smart-phone, or a Mind-Scape. I mean, he always helped us keep up without making us feel dumb.

(the audience chuckles)

And he was selfless too. He helped anyone who needed it - I'll never forget, we had our heat go out in the middle of the night, and he shows up like it's Christmas day. Big smile on his face, toolbox at the ready, making sure we're taken care of even though it's 2 in the morning. And I was just thinking 'where's your off switch??'

(they laugh again)

But he... he never was 'off'. He was always there, never took a sick day, never complained. He's the guy you don't really appreciate until he's gone.

(wipes away his tears)

We'll miss you, Jeremiah. The world could use more people like you.

The pastor steps away from the podium. One of the widows gives him a bouquet of flowers, which he places tenderly on the casket. He re-approaches the podium briefly.

PASTOR

At this time, if you have any words you'd like to say or any fond stories you'd like to share, please feel free.

He steps away. One of the little old ladies shakily walks to the podium to recount a memory of him.

Simon is tuning her out though. There's a man a few yards away from him, also at the back of the crowd. He's dressed like all the other funeral-goers, doesn't seem abnormal, but Simon is still watching him skeptically.

The man finally notices Simon, makes eye contact, and nods at him politely. Simon nods back, then pretends to be looking at something else.

But once the man's attention is back on the funeral, Simon keeps watching him, scrutinizing him, trying to get a read on him, waiting for him to slip up..

In fact, the funeral whizzes by almost like a time-lapse. It's as if Simon is the only one moving in 'real' time. Several old ladies tell their stories, the pastor finally makes his closing remarks, and everybody starts lining up to walk past the casket one last time..

It all goes by in a blur to Simon. He keeps coming back to that lone, suspicious onlooker. The man quickly realizes that Simon is monitoring him. When the time comes for them to line up, the man tries to leave discreetly. It's as if time suddenly goes back to normal speed.

Simon approaches him and briefly blocks his exit. Several other funeral-goers have also started to leave, though most are still lining up. Simon glares ominously at the man, flashes a fake smile, then steps aside.

The mystery man, visibly unsettled, still smiles and nods at Simon politely. Then he walks over to his car and drives off quietly. Simon watches until he's out of sight.

INT. TOWN DINER - DAY

SUPER: Two days later.

The diner is slow, but it's still early in the morning. There's one waiter, RUSSELL (38), and one cook on duty, with only a half dozen customers so far. It has a bright 60's ambience, complete with checkered floors, red chairs, white tables, neon lighting, and a jukebox.

Among the patrons are MIKE (55), BUCK (58), and JACK (59). They're sitting at the counter with their morning coffee and their newspapers.

Without even meaning to be funny, it's comical watching how synchronized they are. They sip their coffee the same way at the same time, read the newspapers in sync, flip the pages simultaneously... When Simon walks in, they greet him in unison with the same monotonous voice.

MIKE/BUCK/JACK
Morning, Sheriff.

Simon tips his hat courteously.

SIMON
Mike, Buck, Jack.
(he tips his hat to the waiter)
Russell.

RUSSELL
The usual, sheriff?

SIMON
You got it.

RUSSELL
Comin' right up.

Simon approaches SAUL (66), a disheveled man sitting at a booth by himself. Simon sits across from him. Saul is twitching and doesn't make eye contact with Simon.

SIMON
Howdy, Saul. What's the latest scoop?

SAUL

You hear about China? Oh boy, big news in China there is, big news, big news.

SIMON

Do tell.

SAUL

See, they got all their citizens - all of 'em, all of 'em - they spy on their Mind-Scapes, that's right, they're spyin' on 'em, all of 'em.

SIMON

I thought they was interrogatin' them?

SAUL

Oh that too, that too. Nooooo, that never stopped you better believe it. But now everyone has to do a register, they register them, once a month.

Russell brings over a cup of coffee for Simon.

SIMON

Thank you kindly.

(takes a sip, redirects to Saul)

Now this registry - is that voluntary?

Saul laughs hysterically to himself. Simon chuckles.

SAUL

Voluntary he asks. Is it voluntary. That's - that's a good one sheriff, good one.

SIMON

But how do they scan everything? I'm no computer guy you know, but ain't that a lot of gigabytes?

SAUL

Two words: big data. Lets you look at ALL of them and find all the patterns, the patterns - it's all about the patterns encrypted in your, in your brainwaves you know?

SIMON

Lord help us.

SAUL

He gave up on us decades ago, sure did.

SIMON

Nah, he's just on break. He'll be back.

(takes another sip, then stands up)

Let me know what else you find out, make sure I'm in the loop, you hear?

SAUL

On break, please... oh yeah, yeah, sure thing sheriff I'll keep my ear to the ground, keep it to the ground, you know?

SIMON

I do.

Saul starts mumbling to himself, still twitching. Simon goes over to the men at the bar.

SIMON

Howdy, fellas! Beautiful day, ain't it?

MIKE/BUCK/JACK

Sure is.

SIMON

Hate to pry, but any of you notice a fella who's new in town? Kinda stocky, 40's, looks like Bart but with a goatee.

MIKE/BUCK/JACK

Which Bart?

SIMON

Hardware store Bart.

MIKE/BUCK/JACK

Ohhh. Yeah, we seen him. He's at Irma's.

SIMON

Irma's?? You mean right now??

The men all nod in unison, apparently unconcerned. Simon pays Russell, then hastens outside.

INT. IRMA'S HOUSE - DAY

It's an adorable sight: packed in the living room are over a dozen little old ladies wearing bulky VR headsets and wandering about. IRMA, EDNA, BARBARA, DARLA, AGATHA...

And also AMOS (43), the man from the funeral that Simon is searching for. He's wearing a headset too and having a friendly chat with the women.

IRMA

And this was when we had the winter ball, you ladies remember that?

EDNA

My stars, that was so precious.

BARBARA

He did a slow dance with every last one of us!

They all giggle with delight. Amos is amused.

AMOS

Was that recently?

IRMA

Shoot, when was that, Darla? Two years?

DARLA

It was three, remember? The legion hall had a leak that year, so we used the diner.

IRMA

Right, right. Golly.

AGATHA

What a gentleman. He did the decorations and lights and music all himself.

EDNA

(squeals excitedly)

Ladies, ladies! Do you remember the picnic!

They all murmur and giggle excitedly. Which, again, is made all the funnier given that they're all in VR.

In fact, they don't notice when Simon steps in. He quietly closes the door, tiptoes inside, then yells loudly to deliberately startle them.

SIMON
HELP! We're being ROBBED!

The ladies all jump and yank off their headsets, then immediately tease Simon. Amos also takes his headset off, but watches Simon hesitantly from across the room.

IRMA
SIMON!

EDNA
Honestly, Simon! What are ya doin'? Tryin' to give us a heart attack?

AGATHA
You big oaf!

Simon chuckles, it's all in good fun.

SIMON
Just want to make sure you're awake, Edna. You all been Mind-Scapin'? Kinda early, ain't it?

DARLA
We were just giving Mr. Amos here the tour.

BARBARA
He's gonna help us build a memorial!

SIMON
Is he now?
(approaches Amos)
I don't believe Mr. Amos and I have met.
(they shake hands firmly)
Name's Simon, pleasure.

AMOS
Nice to meet you, sheriff.

Amos and Simon exchange knowing looks, but both agree to pretend they've never met, so as not to alarm the women.

SIMON

How'd you meet Mr. Amos?

IRMA

Oh, he showed up yesterday to offer his sympathies for Jeremiah.

DARLA

Said he's tryin' to find a place, just been driftin' like a tumbleweed.

SIMON

Is that so, Mr. Amos?

AMOS

Well, yes, I just - I suppose wherever the wind takes me, and it dropped me off here, I guess.

SIMON

Ain't that somethin'. And what were you sayin' Barbara about a memorial?

BARBARA

He's gonna help us make a REAL-size copy of Jeremiah's Mind-Scape.

AGATHA

We're buyin' the old house on Eagle Ave. Gonna redo it to look like inside Jeremiah's mind!

IRMA

So that we don't have to wear these gosh-darned headsets all the time!

EDNA

It'll be for the whole town!

Simon is intrigued.

SIMON

And this was your idea, Amos?

AMOS

Well, technically, but I couldn't do it without their help.

IRMA

You're too modest!

BARBARA

Oh, I wanna scoop him up!

DARLA

You take credit where it's due, young man.

Amos is embarrassed as they all clamor to support him. Simon seems genuinely impressed.

SIMON

I must say Mr. Amos, certainly a unique way to honor his memory.

(pats him on the back)

Say, ladies, did you tell Mr. Amos any of our town history?

IRMA

Of course we did! Been gabbin' all night!

SIMON

Did ya now? In that case, I think I might give him a little pop quiz.

EDNA

Don't be like that, Simon!

AGATHA

It's too early for a quiz!

SIMON

Never too early around here, Agatha. But don't you worry, I promise I'll go easy.

They all chuckle. Amos is nervous, but hides it well and sits down on the couch. Simon starts pacing, circling Amos like a vulture.

SIMON

You know why we have so many widows here?

IRMA

Simon! Be nice!

AMOS

No no, it's okay. Well, there was a tragic accident at the pool hall, which was where all the husbands were... yeah, an explosion, awful.

SIMON

It was. You ever hear about that in the news?

AMOS

No, I didn't know about it.

SIMON

Well that's cause it was right around when they got the vaccine. Whole world was so busy with their celebratin', didn't want to run a story 'bout some rural explosion.

BARBARA

That's enough, Simon!

SIMON

I just wanna make sure Mr. Amos knows what he's gettin' into, if he's here to stay.

(smugly to Amos)

Now, speakin' of the vaccine - you know how many cases we had here?

(Amos shakes his head 'no')

Zero. None. Nobody sick, no deaths. Betcha didn't hear THAT story neither.

AMOS

I didn't, but that's a miracle!

SIMON

Perks of being isolated I suppose. It's like, whenever we got good news, the rest of the country's got bad news, and vice versa.

AMOS

Murphy's Law.

SIMON

Ain't it funny how he works?

(sits next to Amos)

So how does Jeremiah fit into all this?

Amos gulps. Simon's facade is harmless, but he's clearly making Amos uncomfortable.

EDNA

Who wants tea?

BARBARA

Maybe we should go Mind-Scapin'.

IRMA

Alright Simon, I think he's-

SIMON

Almost done Irma, I promise.

(looks intently at Amos)

What do you know about Jeremiah?

AMOS

Well... Jeremiah, I sadly never had the privilege of knowing him, but from what they told me: he filled the void, I guess, and looked after the gals after the accident. I mean, he did a lot of other stuff too, like charity and helping out and just being a friendly neighbor, he made quite the impression on you all. Left a good legacy.

SIMON

He sure did. He was that sorta fella.

AMOS

Yeah, he sure sounds like quite a town hero, certainly was well-liked.

SIMON

That he was.

(puts his hand on Amos's shoulder)

I'd hate to see you do wrong by him or these ladies with this... memorial idea. You read me?

AMOS

Loud and clear.

Simon smiles, stands up, tips his hat, and leaves. The ladies all tease him on his way out. Once he's outside, Amos catches his breath and tries to calm his nerves.

EXT. SCENIC WESTERN VISTA - DAY

Simon is sitting at the same rocky outcropping again, watching the sun rise. The same lizard as last time stares at him for a second, then darts away.

Simon chuckles. He glances down where he had found Jeremiah's body. There's a wooden cross and a pile of rocks adorned with flower bouquets. He breathes deeply, admiring the view while contemplating life and its brevity.

INT. JEREMIAH'S MIND-SCAPE MEMORIAL - DAY

SUPER: One Week Later.

The same gaggle of ladies is bustling to and fro as they renovate the previously abandoned house. While they still have a lot of work to do, they've made progress. Several of them are repainting the walls, others are helping Amos lay down new carpet.

As they toil and gossip, Barbara and Agatha walk in with a bundle of rope.

BARBARA

Where do you want this?

EDNA

What are those for?

IRMA

We've been over this Edna, those are the Threads, remember? We're gonna label 'em and paint 'em and snake 'em through the house.

EDNA

Oh, right. My stars.

IRMA

They can go in the back right now. You got the paint too?

AGATHA

Not yet, Bart's still mixin' it.

IRMA

That's okay. Oh, shoot.

BARBARA

What?

IRMA

Well, I'm wonderin' how we're gonna write on 'em. Like in the Mind-Scape they got his goals and opinions and what not, but how are we gonna put that on rope?

AGATHA

Good question... we'll think on it.

Agatha and Barbara haul the rope to the back room. Irma is puzzled and determined to come up with a solution.

IRMA

Ideas, ladies, how're we gonna label the Threads?

DARLA

We could put duct tape around 'em, then write on the duct tape.

EDNA

Ooh, or we could attach little paper signs, like with cable ties, space 'em out every ten feet.

IRMA

I like it. Hey, Mr. Amos!

Amos was on the ground laying the carpet, but he pauses and stands up to discuss with them.

AMOS

I think it's great, good thinking Edna.

EDNA

Stop it! You're my muse.

DARLA

Your MUSE? What in tarnation...?

They giggle, Amos sighs modestly.

IRMA
Alright, cable ties it is.
(to Amos)
You mind pickin' some up?

AMOS
Be back in a flash. Bart's, right?

IRMA
Mm-hmm, he should have plenty.

AMOS
You got it.

Amos leaves. The women continue their work and chatter, although he's barely gone ten seconds before he steps back inside and hands Irma a letter.

AMOS
Somebody left this on the door.

He leaves again. Irma opens the letter casually, then her face drops and she shrieks.

INT. TOWN DINER - DAY

The diner is a little busier for lunch, but the regulars are still there. Russell is waiting tables. Simon is eating a hamburger by himself. Saul is at the same table, off in his own world. Mike, Buck and Jack are eating steak and potatoes in unison.

Suddenly, Irma bursts in, out of breath.

IRMA
Simon! You gotta help us!

MIKE/BUCK/JACK
Howdy, Irma.

IRMA
Not now, fellas.
(runs over to Simon)
We're in trouble!

SIMON

Calm down, deep breaths. What's goin' on?

IRMA

(hands him the letter)

I can't believe it, I just can't!

Simon skims the letter. As he does, his face contorts into anger and confusion.

SIMON

Yadda yadda, bein' SUED for third-party illegal possession of a deceased Mind-Scape, yadda yadda, OFFICIAL notice from Mind-Scape Inc. Let's see... \$50,000 FINE, cease and desist IMMEDIATELY.

(to Irma)

Where'd you find this?

IRMA

Somebody dropped it off at the house. I mean, the new house, where we got the memorial.

SIMON

Somebody dropped it off? You see who?

IRMA

No, we were all busy, then Amos comes in and says he found it.

SIMON

(it clicks)

So you didn't actually SEE anybody bring it by?

IRMA

No, but they must've- Oh, come now.

SIMON

Where's Amos?

IRMA

He's going to Bart's, but - be nice, Simon, don't shoot the messenger!

Simon leaves a twenty on the table, ignores Irma, and goes out to find Amos with a fierce determination.

EXT. TOWN STREETS - DAY

Amos is about to enter Bart's hardware store, when Simon spots him and beelines straight toward him.

AMOS

Morning, sheriff, how are you-
(he sees the letter)
Oh, I- is something wrong?

SIMON

You tell me. Let's take a walk.

He coerces a trembling Amos into walking with him through the town. Amos plays innocent, but not very well.

AMOS

So, what do you have there?

SIMON

Just a bunch of legal mumbo-jumbo, some con man tryin' to swindle a bunch of poor widows for a supposed COPYRIGHT violation. You wouldn't know anythin' about that, would you?

AMOS

Copyright violation? I don't really, I mean-

SIMON

Seems funny that a rep from the Mind-Scape corporate offices would drive all the way out to the middle of nowhere over \$50,000.

AMOS

I don't - well, some people are, it's actually the strangest thing. There was a man in a business suit, I saw him lurking around the house this morning, THAT must have been-

SIMON

You can cut the act. I'm in a good mood today, so I won't be arrestin' you.

(Amos exhales with relief)

You should be glad Irma told me before they paid, otherwise you might not still be alive.

AMOS

I'm really really really sorry.

SIMON

I reckon. And that's okay, no harm no foul.

(puts his arm around Amos)

You also have Jeremiah to thank. See he taught me a thing or two about dealin' with men like you.

Always said you gotta look past the surface, that you gotta fill the unmet needs. I'm guessin' your needs are cash, place to stay, another meal.

(Amos is silent)

Unfortunately, you won't find that here - I'm not in THAT good of a mood. But I'll do somethin' that Jeremiah taught me called redirectin'.

AMOS

I promise, I'll apologize, I, I feel terrible, it's just been such a rough few years...

SIMON

Hey, I get it, man's gotta eat. Here's what I'm thinkin': your idea about turnin' a Mind-Scape into a real place? Genius. I actually googled it, looks like you're the first.

(Amos chuckles)

So why don't you take that to the big cities, get yourself a patent, maybe team up with the bigwigs at Mind-Scape, and make a livin' of it?

AMOS

Wait, so you're not mad?

SIMON

Oh I'm furious. If you're not outta here by the time the sun sets, you're in for a whirlwind of my wrath. But I don't want you to keep peddlin' your scheme for other Irmes. If you're gonna rob somebody, rob the CEOs or city folk, not us.

(they both laugh)

Now go apologize, tell 'em the letter is fake, and scram. You read me?

Amos nods and dashes back to the house immediately. Simon watches contentedly as he disappears.

INT. JEREMIAH'S MIND-SCAPE MEMORIAL - EVENING

SUPER: One month later.

Simon is inside the house with almost a hundred others, all of them admiring and exploring the setup. There are ropes on the ground as the Threads, pictures printed out for Jeremiah's memories, books, trinkets, labels.

Instead of avatars, the widows are seated around the house telling stories about Jeremiah.

EXT. JEREMIAH'S MIND-SCAPE MEMORIAL - NIGHT (cont.)

Outside, there's a big banner that reads: 'Grand Opening!' Irma and Edna are at a table by the front door. Hundreds of townspeople are lined up, chatting and socializing as they wait for their turn to go inside.

At the front is Amos - Irma and Edna give him a big hug when they see him.

IRMA

We're so glad you could make it. We missed you!

EDNA

How's life in the big city?

AMOS

It's really great. Got me an apartment and a girlfriend and everything.

(they giggle)

And I started my own business, doing memorials like this, people up there love it!

IRMA

Glad you landed on your feet!

AMOS

Say, I want to apologize again for what happened. I was still trying to get my act together, but I shouldn't have taken advantage, and I-

IRMA

Water under the bridge, dear.

EDNA

Wait til you see it!

IRMA

It turned out better than we imagined.

AMOS

I'm sure Jeremiah would be proud.

EDNA

You're too kind!

They all laugh - they barely notice Simon as he steps outside, tips his hat, and leaves.

IRMA

What'd you think, Simon?

SIMON

You ladies did a fine job, just the sort of thing Jeremiah would have wanted.

(he notices Amos and tips his hat to him)

You all have a good evening.

He nods amicably at Amos, who's wary, but nods back. Thankfully, Simon doesn't keep an eye on him this time. Instead, he strolls off into the distance. His silhouette stands out dramatically in front of the setting sun.

FADE OUT.