

Encapsulated Season 2 - Episode 7 of 9

FADE IN:

SUPER: One year later.

INT. DINING ROOM - EVENING

By all accounts, it's a quaint middle class dinner scene. The table is set with chicken, biscuits and green beans. The decor and furniture are showy and elegant, like something you'd see in a Better Homes and Gardens catalog.

There are three people at the table: ALLISON (42), the hostess and chef. WILL (43), her charming gentleman-friend. And CAMERON (16), her angst-ridden, sarcastic son.

ALLISON
Shall we say grace?

She and Will hold hands. Cameron stares incredulously and refuses to indulge her. She glares at him before closing her eyes. Will closes his too. Cameron's are wide open.

ALLISON
Lord, we want to thank you for this day and for this meal. May it nourish and strengthen us, and remind us to always be thankful. In your precious name we pray, amen.

WILL
Amen.

They open their eyes. Everyone starts eating.

ALLISON
Cameron, I'd like you to meet Will.

WILL
Nice to meet you, sport.

Cameron stares at him skeptically.

ALLISON
He and I met at the ecumenical fair last week.

CAMERON

Oh wow, one whole week. You're really taking it slow with him.

(to Will)

Usually she has them over the same day. But don't beat yourself up over it.

WILL

Okay...

ALLISON

He's always like this. Why can't you show our guest a little more respect?

CAMERON

Because then he wouldn't have anything to remember me by.

He takes a big bite of chicken, then switches to being in an insulting, exaggerated good mood.

CAMERON

(with food in his mouth)

So, Will, old buddy old sport old WASP. What line of work are you in?

(Allison glares at him again)

What?? I'm being polite, MOTHER.

WILL

He's fine, teens will be teens. I actually work in insurance.

ALLISON

Will is a mind-reader, isn't that something?

WILL

Not THAT kind of mind-reader. No, I do audits for people's Mind-Scapes. So I am READING their mind, technically, which is fun to tell people.

CAMERON

Oh nice. So you're a racist?

ALLISON

Cameron!

WILL

No it's okay, I wanna hear this. Why does that make me a racist, Cameron?

CAMERON

Because studies show that, when it comes to checking for fraudulent claims, insurance companies are 60% more likely to do a Mind-Scape audit on people of color than white people. Because apparently there's a stereotype that you can't trust minorities, so if they file a claim, they MUST be lying, and the good insurance agents - which, are statistically white men - are just doing their due diligence to mitigate risk.

He stuffs a whole biscuit into his mouth. Will and Allison are speechless.

CAMERON

(still chewing the biscuit)

Then there's the connections with the police, which I'm sure you're aware of.

WILL

I am. I'm not in that department, but I know some guys who are.

CAMERON

Well! Isn't that peachy!

(to Allison)

Quick overview. About three years ago, insurance companies had a breakthrough realization: if they could just look at your Mind-Scape, they would save billions in fraudulent payouts because they would know for certain what your motives were and whether you were filing a false claim or not.

ALLISON

Why don't we talk about something more-

WILL

No no, keep going. This is good stuff.

ALLISON

Don't test him, it never ends well.

WILL

I'm sure he's capable of having a grown-up conversation. Go on.

Allison huffs. Cameron and Will ignore her, both of them fired up for the debate.

CAMERON

So the insurers invested HEAVILY in their Mind-Scape assessment divisions. Training thousands of foot soldiers - sorry, analysts - how to understand and 'read' a Mind-Scape.

And then they had ANOTHER realization: they had mastered the art of analyzing the mind so WELL in such a short time, they could make money simply by outsourcing their mind readers. Even if it had NOTHING to do with insurance.

So now, anytime a company needs to have somebody 'analyzed', whether for a background check, or employee evaluation, or worker's comp... If they have ANY situation where they need to screen somebody for ANY reason, just call the insurer, and they'll send over a 'certified analyst' to do the evaluation. Which also includes-

WILL

(talking over him)

And that includes doing police interrogations. That's where you were going, right?

(Cameron nods)

Those are optional, first of all. Nobody HAS to consent to a Mind-Scape audit. It's just an easier option than in-person, because the suspect doesn't need to be physically present.

CAMERON

And yet, black people are three times more likely than white people to have their Mind-Scapes audited, isn't that peculiar?

WILL

It's because real interrogations are much more expensive compared to a mind audit.

CAMERON

So you admit that black people are more poor?
And, I'm sorry, WHY are we making people PAY to
be interrogated?

WILL

Why do we make them pay bail? It's a disincentive
to commit crimes.

CAMERON

So you're okay with this? With black people being
targeted by THE most invasive procedure the
modern world has ever invented?

WILL

The police are not racist anymore, if that's what
you're implying - we fixed all that back with the
protests back... shoot, ten years ago I think?

CAMERON

Wow. No you're right, clearly we've eliminated
systemic racism. That's why an audit of a black
suspect's Mind-Scape is 72% more likely to reveal
'criminal intent' compared to an audit for a
white person. Because black people are CLEARLY
72% more likely to be criminal, is that it?

WILL

Where do you get these numbers?

CAMERON

The ACLU.

WILL

Mm. Well, they're basically a terrorist group at
this point, so that makes sense.

CAMERON

What the actual fuck...

ALLISON

Language!

CAMERON

Oh hey, you're still here.

ALLISON

That's enough, both of you!

WILL

I'm sorry love, we both got carried away.

(takes a bite, chews for a second)

Now, I don't deny people are racist. If anything, I'm actually FIGHTING racism with my job.

CAMERON

Oh? This oughta be good.

WILL

Mm-hmm. See, my team specializes in customer complaints at retail stores and restaurants. Basically, a customer has a problem with an employee, they send one of us to do an audit and make sure the employee acted in good faith.

Here's the thing: it didn't used to be that way. Before your time, the customer was always right, and employees would get fired for no reason other than the customer didn't like them. The way we do it now, we're helping innocent people prove they were innocent. If an employee was genuinely in the right, we can back that up.

Guess what? Most of the time, employees are in the right. You know why most customers complain? Because they're racist. So I get to be in their corner and say 'hold up, wait a minute they didn't do anything wrong, and I can prove it'. I'm not out to expose people - I exonerate them.

CAMERON

You're a saint. And I'm sure the minority workers LOVE that every month they have to do a new audit just to make sure they're still 'in the right'. Or do you only audit people once?

(Will is silent)

I'll take that as a 'no'.

WILL

What do you want me to do about it? I can't choose who gets audited.

CAMERON

You could cap the number of audits per employee per year. Or tell the company you'll only do an audit if multiple customers complain, and their complaints clearly aren't racially motivated.

WILL

Did you come up with that all on your own? Or is that verbatim from the ACLU website?

Now Cameron is silent. Will chuckles triumphantly. Allison seizes the opportunity to jump in.

ALLISON

All of this got me thinking: stop me if I've told you this yet-

CAMERON

Stop.

ALLISON

Very funny. Our church has been doing a new series called 'in the world'. It's about how we can be part of the world, but still not be 'OF the world'. So the other week, we talked about how to use tools and technology in a way that's Christ-centered while not consuming. And one of the things Pastor Skip challenged us to do was to try unravelling.

CAMERON

You certainly know a lot about that...

WILL

I think she means the Mind-Scape program.

CAMERON

I know, Will. That's why I said it. Because the word has a double meaning. It's called comedy.

WILL

My bad, I was trying to give you the benefit of the doubt and assume you weren't insulting her.

(looks smugly at Cameron)

Go ahead, dear.

ALLISON

Thank you. I've found the process to be quite enlightening, if I do say so myself. And why it reminded me of this - I didn't realize just how many preconceived notions and stereotypes I had built up over the years. Unravelling has helped identify my harmful perceptions and break down my implicit biases. I feel like God has just been speaking to me about so many racist sins that I'd swept under the rug for so long.

Cameron blurts out laughing. Allison isn't amused.

ALLISON

I guess I can't say anything around here...

CAMERON

Don't let ME stop you. I'm so glad that God is helping you be woke, who am I to hinder the Lord's work?

He keeps laughing. Allison sighs with exasperation. Finally he settles down. Will looks concerned.

WILL

So you're just giving in then?

ALLISON

Me?

(he nods)

Oh, so YOU'RE turning on me too?

WILL

No no no, I didn't mean to sound hostile - I just find unravelling - I don't know, hokey?

ALLISON

Hokey?

WILL

Mm, how do I say it... it's like a, like one of those as-seen-on-TV products, you know? It looks really good, and you try it the first time and it seems legit, but... does it really last? I mean, is it really THAT effective?

ALLISON

It is! Like I said, it revealed how prejudiced my heart was. But it also showed that it wasn't all my fault. It was a mix of bad encounters I had in school and college, my parents, things I was taught at my old church... I'd never fully grasped just how intertwined those factors are, but being able to visualize it, and having a program that hones in on the negative thoughts so I can get to the root of them...

Here, it's like attending a meeting for AA, or talking to a counselor, or having a swear jar. It's another way of dealing with sin. I know that only Jesus FREES us from sin, but he also gives us everyday tools to stay free, because it's an uphill battle until we die.

CAMERON

(snickers)

Amen hallelujah!

ALLISON

(another exasperated sigh)

That's been my experience with it. Have you tried it before?

WILL

No, I don't really see the need, personally, but to each their own. The Lord has put us all on different paths.

ALLISON

He has. I used to think it was secular, or 'hokey' like you said. But God laid it on my heart to try it, and I took the leap of faith.

(pecks him on the cheek)

Maybe someday you can give it a whirl, see what all the fuss is about.

WILL

Well, I wouldn't do that for just ANYBODY, but for you, I could make an exception.

He kisses her back. Cameron interrupts them, naturally.

CAMERON

So, where in the Bible does it say 'thou shalt unravel, lest ye be racist?'

ALLISON

Well, obviously they didn't have the technology back then, so there's not a verse that explicitly mentions it, but there are several-

CAMERON

But how can you do something if the Bible doesn't explicitly tell you to do it?

ALLISON

The idea behind unravelling is very-

CAMERON

But it's not EXPLICITLY in the Bible!

ALLISON

The IDEA behind it is very-

CAMERON

Wait, I got it. Pastor Skip gets a cut every time you buy the program, THAT must be why he's promoting it. Now it makes sense.

ALLISON

Enough! He uses that money for the church.

CAMERON

Wait, what? I was joking, holy shit he actually makes money off this??

ALLISON

Language!

CAMERON

That just made my night!

ALLISON

Enough!

Cameron just chuckles to himself, genuinely amused. Allison takes a few deep breaths to calm down.

WILL

If I may... and I promise I'm not trying to argue.

CAMERON

You? No, of course not, Will. Go right ahead.

WILL

I mean, if I'm being honest, I guess I don't see the Biblical precedent for it. Our elder board has talked about this considerably. We believe that only God should know our thoughts, and only with HIS help should we try to unravel them.

CAMERON

But your job is - wait, how does that work?

WILL

I'm not opposed to Mind-Scaping in moderation. But I don't think it should be public. And I'm very careful to protect the confidentiality and privacy of the people we audit. I don't look at anything unless it has to do with the actual incident that caused the complaint.

CAMERON

Sure.

WILL

Honest. You can have MY Mind-Scape audited if you don't believe me. I'd get fired if I just dug around out of curiosity. You know, contrary to what you think about my job, there are a LOT of controls to make sure we don't violate other people's privacy.

At the end of the day - whether you believe me on this or not - it's my opinion that whatever's in your mind is between you and God. You shouldn't be forced to expose it, and you shouldn't be pressured to change it.

ALLISON

I agree, that should be a choice between you and the Lord. He laid it on my heart, but he doesn't for everybody.

WILL

Right. Plus, keep in mind that, like you pointed out earlier, this technology hasn't existed for most of human history. I try to exercise caution and not just rush headfirst into the latest craze or buy the latest gadgets. That crosses the line between being in the world and being of it.

CAMERON

So you have no problem using it on other people. But if YOU are a racist, or sex offender, or you're stealing money from the congregation, then you definitely shouldn't let people find out, and you shouldn't let YOURSELF be audited. You just keep it locked away and let God fix you. Got it.

WILL

What is your problem?! Do you know how difficult it is to be a white man in this country today?? All it takes is one slip-up, one 'racist' tweet, one unfounded accusation, and literally your entire life can be ruined!!

CAMERON

But wouldn't your Mind-Scape EXONERATE you?

WILL

You little shit...

ALLISON

Language! Stop it!!

(they settle down)

Can I bring up a verse? Since you asked, I'm also not trying to argue, just a verse that the Spirit has used to speak to me lately?

WILL

Absolutely. I'm sorry for my outburst.

ALLISON

Apology accepted. All is forgiven.

(looks judgmentally at Cameron)

There's a verse in 2 Corinthians, Paul says that we are to take every thought captive. For me, unravelling is a way to take my thoughts captive.

CAMERON

That's not the only thing she takes captive...

ALLISON

Now what?

CAMERON

Oh, well, I don't know if she told you this Will, but she stalks my Mind-Scape.

ALLISON

Here we go...

CAMERON

So even though she's not a certified mind-reader like you, she goes in at least once a day to stalk me. Because apparently I'm 'suspicious'.

ALLISON

You showed up at school with an assault rifle! You WERE suspicious!

CAMERON

Gee, I wonder who might possibly have driven me to that point?

ALLISON

Oh please, and I do NOT stalk you! I'm your mother, I love you! I'm trying to understand you and make sure you're not a threat!

CAMERON

Bullshit! Every time we have friends over, you always tell them what you found, like it's a twisted scavenger hunt. 'Guess what, Cameron thinks that church is a waste of time' or 'Cameron misses his dad - let me tell you about his favorite memory' or 'I can't believe Cameron masturbates to pictures of Emma Watson. Isn't that just disgusting??'

ALLISON

You ARE disgusting! And besides, it's almost a year old, who knows what's been going on since your last scan!

CAMERON

You poor thing, you have to wait a whole year to get your latest copy of your SON'S MIND!

WILL

Hold up!!
(they go quiet)
What is he talking about?

CAMERON

Tell him. Tell him what you do.

ALLISON

Well, a few years ago, we had an incident, and the judge thought it was best for me to have access to his Mind-Scape to monitor, and make sure it didn't happen again.

CAMERON

So now on my birthday we get to drive to the clinic and get a fresh copy for 'safety' reasons until I turn eighteen.

ALLISON

It's for your own good.

CAMERON

Because it wasn't enough for you to be in my business like a normal mom.

ALLISON

Oh, that reminds me, your annual appointment is next Tuesday, so I'll be picking you up early from school.

WILL

Happy early birthday!

CAMERON

Screw you! With your whole 'your mind is between you and God'! Are you not gonna defend me??

WILL

She IS your mother, and I certainly see the need to keep an eye on you.

There's an awkward pause.

WILL

Did you really try to shoot up a school?

CAMERON

Oh my fucking god...

ALLISON

Language!

CAMERON

WHO CARES?? YOU'RE INSANE!! BOTH OF YOU!!

ALLISON

Is this about your father?

CAMERON

(heavy sigh)

Yes. You figured me out. All that time you spent in my Mind-Scape REALLY paid off.

(he picks at what's left of his food, then laughs to himself)

You're gonna be in for a surprise next week...

ALLISON

What was that?

CAMERON

What?

ALLISON

What surprise?

CAMERON

Oh, that. I'll give you a hint - it starts with an 'i' and ends with 'nhibitor'.

ALLISON

An inhibitor? What's that?

Will rubs his temples and braces himself.

CAMERON

Will, why don't you enlighten her?

ALLISON

What's an inhibitor?

CAMERON

I know YOU know what they are, right?

Will nods painfully and takes a few seconds to answer.
Allison looks terribly confused.

WILL

It's... how to describe it... it's a thin metal plate that basically blocks the CT machine from getting a good read on the brain.

ALLISON

A metal plate? Where?

WILL

Inside your head. It's becoming a somewhat common workaround to avoid getting a brain scan.

ALLISON

What??

(to Cameron)

When did that happen?? Who even, is that legal??

WILL

Well, technically...

CAMERON

Oh it's legal, I checked.

WILL

Technically you can do whatever you want with your body, but...

CAMERON

Right to privacy, right to be left alone, freedom to not have somebody inside your head - it's all very complex legal theory.

(to Will)

Courtesy of the terrorists at the ACLU.

WILL

Go figure.

ALLISON

But you're a minor. This was a court-ordered mandate that you do this. Help me out here - isn't that breaking the law?

WILL

Mmm... I would certainly think so...

CAMERON

I got this one Will. See, that's what I thought at first too. But when I told CPS my mom was using it to stalk me and humiliate me and make me feel like I was living in a dystopia... let's just say they were pretty sympathetic to my plight.

ALLISON

So you lied to them?? What kind of racket are they running, they just believe every kid who walks in and says they're being 'abused'??

CAMERON

I wasn't lying. I actually let them see my Mind-Scape. And wouldn't you know it, they got to see all the memories I'd made of you talking to your friends about me. All the embarrassing, personal details you shared. I think what really got them was the one hundred and twenty six separate stories you told about me jerking off. And why do I have memories of you telling them? Because I was always IN THE OTHER ROOM. So yeah, they agreed that you're psychotic, and you should NOT be allowed to see what's in my head.

(he stands up and pushes his chair in)

Now if you'll excuse me, I'm gonna make some memories that you will NEVER have access to.

He storms upstairs. Allison and Will sit there awkwardly.

WILL

The chicken was delicious.

ALLISON

Go kill yourself.

FADE OUT.