

Encapsulated Season 4 Episode 3

FADE IN:

EXT. ANCIENT EGYPTIAN VILLAGE - DAY

Through the dusty streets, back alleys, and brick houses, thousands of dead frogs are gathered in piles.

Meanwhile, a tinny but determined voice is audible, as if it's being broadcast on the radio.

CHARLTON HESTON (VOICE)

Pharaoh of Egypt! You have not yet obeyed the Lord. Let my people-

The broadcast turns to static; the camera is still cutting between shots of dead frogs. The radio switches stations to the Plagues song from *The Prince of Egypt*.

SONG LYRICS

*I send the pestilence and plague into your house  
into your bed into your-*

Static again as it switches to another station.

PAULINE (VOICE)

And I would say to Ms. Duvall, that this is NOT how meaningful change comes about.

Switch to scenes of a family: a father, mother, and son. While they're not the same actors as the generic family in previous episodes, there are some undeniable similarities (the son has glasses, the mom has the same hairstyle).

First scene is the father carrying a plastic tub, filled with dead frogs, and dumping it on a pile near their home. The only sound is from the radio broadcast.

PAULINE (VOICE)

I empathize with her, and with the struggles of everyday working Americans. But this is nothing short of terrorism, holding the country hostage, terrorizing innocent people with unprecedented and deadly methods, and we refuse to indulge her.

Next scene is the son, who kept one of the frogs as a pet in a glass terrarium. The frog has died, and the son is distraught as he shows the mother.

LYNN (VOICE)

And I would say to you, Pauline, how callous and hardened is your heart, that after seeing what harm and chaos YOU allowed to happen, you still refuse to accept ANY responsibility!

Switch back to the father, pouring lighter fluid onto the pile of frogs, tossing a match, and watching despondently while it burns.

PAULINE (VOICE)

With all respect, Lynn, YOU caused this, and I certainly played no part in it. I didn't ALLOW any of these... EVENTS... to happen. And I certainly don't condone them. They're tragic, but I'm not the guilty party here.

Switch back to the mother and son, digging a little grave in their small back lot, and burying the pet frog. The son is crying, and the mom embraces him.

LYNN (VOICE)

First of all - you can call them PLAGUES, that's what they are. Plagues. Judgments. Punishments. LESSONS. That you are not LEARNING. They are not the problem, they are the REACTION to the deep, long-standing problems that make them NECESSARY.

Switch back to the father, trudging back home. He passes one neighbor who's sitting outside and smoking a cigarette. They wave politely to each other. He passes another house where the family is boarding up their windows, but when the father waves to them, they ignore him.

PAULINE (VOICE)

But this isn't, see, Lynn, this isn't how it works anymore. We don't threaten, and we don't play power games. We don't throw tantrums when we don't get our way. If you want to have a civilized discussion, you know where to find me.

The father returns to the house, turns off the radio that's setting on their windowsill, and goes to the backyard.

Everything is silent. The three of them stand together, comforting the son as he shovels dirt onto the grave.

For a moment, everything is peaceful. A somber melody, Gnossienne No. 1 by Satie, starts playing. After a bit, the mother and father return into the house.

The son stays in the backyard. He sits on the dirt and sifts through it, tossing bits of it onto the grave, then makes a little headstone with leaves and rocks.

Suddenly though, the dirt starts moving, like it's alive. The boy picks up a handful, holds it up close, and sees that it's no longer dirt, but hundreds of tiny lice.

Meanwhile, in the house, the mother and father are arguing (their dialogue is inaudible). At one point, the father stops and scratches his leg - then recoils once he sees that a swarm of lice are crawling up it.

They immediately panic. The lice are starting to crawl up the mother's legs too, and the entire floor of their house is like a layer of bugs.

Back outside, the son seems delighted with all the bugs, but the mother rushes out anxiously, grabs his hand, and hurries through the house and onto the main road.

The three of them run down the dirt path, which is also teeming with bugs. Several of their neighbors are panicked, and a few of them run with the family toward the river.

A few blocks away, they finally reach the riverbank, and everyone plunges into the water for relief. More and more neighbors get the same idea, and soon, hundreds of the Egyptians are cleaning themselves in the river.

While they all try to wash away the bugs, the mother looks across to the other side, and notices that the Israelites are also in the water. She makes eye contact with a woman about her age. They have the same look of helplessness...

INT. COLE'S ART GALLERY, DOWNTOWN L.A. - DAY

The studio is nestled among high-rises and apartments, and it's entirely glass. The windows and ceilings are clear, with a gallery space in the front. Currently, the gallery just has a few miscellaneous paintings and sculptures.

Cole and Murray each have several large bags of groceries, and are carrying them through the gallery, then through a door leading to the actual studio/apartment.

MURRAY

Wow, you weren't kidding, I thought you meant that you live ABOVE it, or NEXT to it.

COLE

Nope. It's everything in one. I like to say that I was working from home before everyone else.

MURRAY

You mean, 'before it was cool'?

COLE

That too, yeah. But it literally is before everyone else, so it's not wrong.

MURRAY

It's just not what normal humans say. Got it.  
(they laugh)  
Then again, you are not normal humans.

Cole chuckles while they unload the groceries. His small fridge barely has room for everything, and Murray is struggling to cram it all in.

COLE

You don't- it's okay if it doesn't all fit.

MURRAY

I was about to say. You might have to throw out some of this, or eat it today.

(he stands up)

Or, I could take it off your hands...

COLE  
(chuckles)  
What, you don't have enough of your own?

MURRAY  
Oh yeah...  
(they laugh)  
But see, I also have a fridge that can HOLD my  
excess impulse purchases, so...

COLE  
We got pretty close. It's only like, two extra  
bags of stuff.

MURRAY  
Fair. Really though, nice place. You must throw  
some crazy shindigs...

COLE  
No, surprisingly, I'm not quite part of the  
drug-addicted Bohemian crowd.  
(they chuckle)  
Anyways. I don't want to keep you, especially  
with all the groceries, and especially because  
you've been BEYOND generous. Thank you again,  
sincerely, for everything. Actually...  
(he walks over to his bookshelf)  
How much for the rental? And the motel?

Murray waves it off, while Cole opens up one of his books,  
which has a hidden compartment filled with cash.

MURRAY  
Don't worry about it, man, happy to do it.

COLE  
I know, and I appreciate it, but I prefer to not  
have debts hanging over me. How much?

MURRAY  
We'll call it a hundred.

Cole counts out the bills, puts the book back, and returns  
to Murray, who reluctantly takes the cash.

COLE

Twenty, forty, sixty, eighty, a hundred.

MURRAY

Hey man, you sure? Really, it was-

COLE

I feel like a hundred is getting off easy, given everything we went through.

MURRAY

Did I say a hundred? I meant one-fifty.

(laughs)

Kidding, this is perfect.

COLE

(he starts to go to the bookshelf again)

You sure? I've got it...

MURRAY

No, I said 'kidding'. Plus, my grocery bill is covered for like a MONTH, so I'm good.

(Cole returns, they chuckle)

Seriously man, great getting to know you.

COLE

Same. Let's keep in touch, Oh, and thank you for the inspiration - the modern Moses thing.

MURRAY

Oh yeah! Let me look up his channel quick...

COLE

Text me. I don't want your groceries to go bad.

MURRAY

Sounds good, man.

(takes one last look at the studio)

Why is it so CLEAN?

COLE

Because I'm in between projects. Give it a week.

They laugh, then Cole escorts him out.

EXT. COLE'S ART GALLERY - DAY

The entire back seat of the rental car is packed full with bags of groceries. The guys shake hands, then Murray gets in the car.

MURRAY

Welp, back to reality. I'm gonna call this one the 'new and improved normal'.

COLE

I like it. It'll be good to have some chaos that ISN'T because of Covid.

(they chuckle)

You sure you don't want help?

MURRAY

I think I'll survive.

(they chuckle again)

Later, man.

COLE

Drive safe.

They wave goodbye, then Murray honks twice and drives off.

Cole, relieved to be home, looks around and breathes in the familiar city air. The street is fairly busy, with a steady flow of traffic.

Everything seems normal, except for the end of the block. There's a convenience store which has literally overflowed with food and supplies.

Nobody is taking anything, and it's not expanding outward. It's just a motionless hill of boxes, bottles, candy and cigarettes, but it's blocking an entire lane of the road.

COLE

Yikes...

(he chuckles and walks back inside)

Only in America...

INT. COLE'S ART GALLERY - NIGHT

Cole is in the studio/apartment area, laying on the bed, browsing articles on his phone.

-- *What caused the 'day of plenty'? Experts weigh in*  
-- *Scientists puzzled by mass EDS, still no explanation.*  
-- *5 reasons to suspect a link between the unprecedented phenomena of the last 72 hours*  
-- *Mass hallucinations? Or modern plagues? You decide!*

The last headline prompts Cole to search Youtube for the 'modern Moses'. He finds several channels, but one is significantly more popular, and there are several uploads in the last week. It's literally called 'Modern Moses'.

Cole starts watching one of the videos. It features an intense, bearded man in a blue room, yelling and ranting about social problems. Cole skims through the video, only catching snippets of audio.

MODERN MOSES (VIDEO)

...Reaches all the way to the top, and God forbid somebody try to ban LOBBYING, because then the politicians would need to LOOK FOR WORK...

...Of signing a petition? If you have to ASK your ELECTED OFFICIALS to act a certain way, doesn't that speak VOLUMES about how out of touch they...

...Voting was REALLY effective, they wouldn't let you DO it in the FIRST PLACE! After all, we're stuck with a two-party...

Cole gets the gist. He scrolls through the recent uploads, and sees that they reference 'Judgments'. He watches one, titled, 'The First Judgment: Give us a Break'.

MODERN MOSES (VIDEO)

I'm sick and tired of making these videos and NOBODY DOING ANYTHING DIFFERENT! I'm SICK of it! I'm also sick of feeling EXHAUSTED, of being worked to the bone eight, ten, twelve hours, toiling in service of MAMMON! I'm DONE!

Cole sits up, intrigued. He checks the date on the video: it was from Sunday, just before the wave of sleep.

MODERN MOSES (VIDEO)

It's about time we RESET. Time to take a day, just ONE day, and show that the world won't COLLAPSE if we don't do anything. And trust me, it'll be the most effective wake-up call that corporate America has EVER received.

More than protests, petitions, and publicity, THIS will shake people out of their complacency. THIS will shake up the system. THIS will be the start of your freedom. THIS will make waves. THIS will start a fire. And for all who are weary and heavy-laden, THIS will give you REST.

Cole pauses it, then looks at the next video, which was posted Tuesday morning, before the excess of food: 'The Second Judgment: Never Enough'

COLE

No way...

He immediately gets up, starts pacing, and calls Murray. After a few rings, Murray answers.

MURRAY (PHONE)

Sup.

COLE

Hey, that Moses guy, I think he-

MURRAY (PHONE)

Shoot, man, I forgot to send you the channel, let me find it quick...

COLE

No it's okay, I found it.

MURRAY (PHONE)

Oh neat. Pretty great stuff, huh?

COLE

I think he's causing everything. The, the sleep, and the stores having too much food.

MURRAY (PHONE)

Yeah, I'm sure he'll take credit. Hey, I read that there's over, they think there's more than a hundred million pounds of food waste that we're gonna have to throw out? They said it stopped, but geez, they can't give it away fast enough... And we STILL have too much...

COLE

Yeah, it's insane. But really, I think it's him. He posted videos BEFORE everyone fell asleep, saying that we need rest. And then the afternoon before the overflow, he posts another one, and he's calling them 'judgments', and he-

MURRAY (PHONE)

Wait a sec, let me look it up.

Cole paces, and he can hear Murray typing.

MURRAY (PHONE)

Oh damn... That's a, that's too much coincidence for my taste... Can you hack the upload date?

COLE

I don't think so... It's him, he's causing it...

MURRAY (PHONE)

Yeah, looks like it... Why is nobody covering it?

COLE

Because it's the internet? Because he's crazy, because he's anti the system? He has videos criticizing news outlets too.

MURRAY (PHONE)

Prophet without honor, man... Okay, well, now what?

COLE

Now we need to discuss his newest video.

Cole looks at his phone. Just an hour ago, the user posted another video: 'The Third Judgment: Drown It Out.'

MURRAY (PHONE)

Shoot, man... What's it about?

COLE

I don't know. I wanted to tell you first, I'm-  
(pauses)  
Okay, real talk?

MURRAY (PHONE)

Go for it.

COLE

Is it terrible that I'm actually... Excited...?

MURRAY (PHONE)

As in...?

COLE

As in, I'm getting, it's like a high from this modern apocalypse he's causing, and I'm weirdly looking forward to what's next...

MURRAY (PHONE)

Nah man, that's your survival brain. I tell ya, we're too domesticated now, we need this sort of raw primal shit to get our blood pumping.

COLE

Yeah, it's such an odd high... I hate to say it, because, I get that there's a human cost, like, I'm not heartless. But I also... I'm with him, I'm ready for things to change. Like with Covid.

MURRAY (PHONE)

Preaching to the choir, man. No shame.

(he chuckles)

Alright. Let's see what the next plague is...

COLE

You can play it on your side, I'll listen, just put the phone by your computer.

MURRAY (PHONE)

Got it. Ladies and gentlemen... Welcome to another exciting episode of Apocalypse Theater.

(they chuckle)

Please enjoy the unfortunate but necessary destruction of modern civilization.

He plays the video. Cole listens intently as he paces.

MODERN MOSES (VIDEO)

If you're watching this, you already know what the mainstream media will never admit, which is, these 'phenomena', these 'anomalies' as they refer to them, are not random. They are judgments to shake the elite from their high places, and they'll continue until we see real change.

Part of the problem is the NOISE. Everything is so god-damned LOUD all the time. It's your boss, your phone, your email, your landlord, the media, the politicians, the advertisers... Everybody wants your attention, even just for a second, so they can sell you something, get your vote, get your approval or your outrage.

And it's OVERWHELMING. It's HARROWING. You feel like you can't breathe, there's so much data you need to consume. But humans thrive in silence. We're not designed to be bombarded 24/7, we just assume that it's normal.

So, I'd like to send a message to those who hijack and monopolize our auditory space. Leave. Us. Alone. SHUT THE FUCK UP!

But of course, they won't, because then you wouldn't buy their products, or donate to their political causes, or absorb their messages.

Let's see how they like it. Let them experience the non-stop noise that we take as a given, and see if that makes a difference.

Spoilers: it won't. But it's worth a shot.

The video ends. Cole was getting into it, and he's smiling with anticipation. He almost forgets that Murray is still on the phone.

MURRAY (PHONE)

What a guy... Amen, man, let's bring it on.

COLE

Yeah. Dang... That was a rush...

MURRAY (PHONE)

So now what? Everything's just gonna be loud??

COLE

Maybe, or maybe it'll be like- oh, what if it's the tower of Babel, where we can't understand each other, and it's so... mentally, it's just an overload that, where we can't think straight because it's too much to process...

MURRAY (PHONE)

Interesting theory... Or MAYBE, it's ironic, and we'll all go deaf for a day.

(chuckles)

Well hey man, guess we can touch base again once whatever happens happens.

COLE

Yeah. Hey, thanks again, I feel like-

(he laughs with relief)

It's like, even though I know that something bad is about to happen, at least we know WHY...

MURRAY (PHONE)

Takes some of the edge off for sure.

COLE

Exactly. So thank you. I guess we'll just wait for the next showing at Apocalypse Theater.

They laugh, then say good night and hang up. Cole still feels exhilarated - he puts on his shoes, grabs his coat, and heads outside.

EXT. DOWNTOWN AREA - NIGHT

Cole is walking through the city. The convenience store food-pile has shrunk, and they've managed to push it onto the sidewalk and off the street. Several dozen homeless people are rummaging through it.

The sound of the city is calming. Cole notices the sound of his footsteps, then the traffic, then conversations, then his footsteps again. He's intentionally trying to absorb and appreciate the sound-scape around him.

Then he hears a song: Gnossienne No. 1 by Satie, the song from the first scene.

He looks around, puzzled. The sound is crystal clear, and it's as if it's right next to him. Even as he's walking, the melody is following him.

He smiles excitedly, plugs his ears, and smiles more when he realizes that the sound stays the same.

COLE

Son of a gun...

He looks around at the homeless people and other random pedestrians, and it's obvious that they're hearing it too, with no idea where it's coming from.

This makes Cole even giddier, being in on the secret. His phone buzzes: Murray is calling him. He answers.

MURRAY (PHONE)

This is fricking unacceptable. What is this hippie crap? Classical music?? Come on..

COLE

(chuckles)

Open your mind, man.

He hangs up, laughs harder, then continues walking and humming along with the music contentedly. He even waves to people as he passes, pretending like nothing's wrong. They're all too distracted to notice.

INT. COLE'S ART STUDIO - NIGHT

Cole is laying in bed, eyes open, the song still looping, even though he's wearing earplugs.

He looks at his phone: 3:03 AM. He groans and rolls over (which doesn't stop the song).

Outside, somebody shouts abruptly.

PEDESTRIAN  
SHUT UP! **THIS ISN'T FUNNY ANYMORE!!**

Cole rolls back over and hums along grudgingly. He checks his phone again: 3:04 AM. The song is still playing.

He gets a message from Murray: *Kill me now*. Cole chuckles, then braces himself for a long night...

FADE OUT.