

Encapsulated Season 4 Episode 8

EXT. ANCIENT EGYPT - DAY

Houses are crumbling. Fields are battered. The aftermath of the hailstorm is widespread. The city is devastated.

Few Egyptians are out and about. Most of the houses are shuttered and boarded up. An old man is walking down the dusty road. There are piles of melting hail on either side.

EXT. PHARAOH'S HIGH-RISE - DAY

Meanwhile, outside Pharaoh's fifty-story glass and stone corporate high-rise, a mob has gathered to protest.

They're chanting angrily, holding hand-made signs, and throwing hail at the windows. The revolving doors on the ground floor are barricaded shut, and they're flanked on both sides by two giant golden Sphinxes.

The Sphinxes have been graffitied and defaced (literally), and dozens of the ground-level and second-story windows are either broken or covered in plywood.

The mob's anger is steady and relentless, even under the watchful eye of several guards, who are standing on the fifth floor balcony with sniper rifles.

INT. PHARAOH'S OFFICE - DAY

On the fiftieth floor, Pharaoh is staring blankly ahead at the modern paintings on his wall. He's reclining in his leather ergonomic chair, oblivious to the chanting crowd.

Suddenly, something hits the window. He snaps out of it. Another hit, and within seconds, a steady barrage and an eerie humming that builds to a deafening roar.

He walks over angrily and sees a swarm of locusts, like a thick cloud bombarding the glass (though not breaking it). The protestors are undeterred. He glares at them, gazes out at the distant skyline of temples and pyramids, then sighs in frustration and resignation.

EXT. COLE'S STUDIO - NIGHT

Cole and Murray are sitting on the sidewalk, still on fire. Hundreds of others are also outside, waiting impatiently for the flames to go away.

Some of the buildings have burned down, although many are still standing (like Cole's studio). People are venting, having private conversations, pacing, arguing... Kids are running around restlessly, their parents exhausted.

Finally, the flames stop. There's a half-hearted cheer from the crowd as they all make their way back inside.

INT. COLE'S STUDIO - NIGHT

Cole is inflating an air mattress, while Murray paces.

MURRAY

You're absolutely sure about this?

COLE

For the hundredth time, yes. I'm happy to.

MURRAY

Because I know myself. It always starts with 'it'll only be one day', then a day turns into a week, then that turns into a month...

COLE

And like I said, I will cut you off tomorrow, if you're really that concerned about it.

(he chuckles)

But tonight, I got you covered.

MURRAY

Okay... I really do appreciate it, man.

COLE

Of course! We're apocalypse friends, right?

(they chuckle; Cole stands up)

Alright. Mattress is all set. I've got clothes, we're probably the same size...

MURRAY

Nah. You're doing plenty already.

COLE

I feel like I'm hardly doing anything... And I'll gladly do more.

Murray smiles and waves the offer away dismissively.

MURRAY

So, you think the hotels are gonna be overrun?

COLE

I can't even imagine... Yeah...

MURRAY

At least the newer buildings are fine... Maybe the offices will let people stay there, now that most people are remote... Got all that space...

COLE

Oh, yeah that's true... Not a bad idea...

(pauses)

And you're sure you want to do a hotel tomorrow? Because you're welcome to stay here for-

MURRAY

Nope. I will fight the crowd.

COLE

I mean, the crowd isn't the issue, I'm thinking it'll be WAY overpriced... With all the demand...

MURRAY

Good thing I'm a banker...

(he laughs)

But again, thank you for the offer.

COLE

For sure. We're all in this together, right? Or, whatever feel-good slogan is trending.

They laugh, then Murray settles onto the mattress, while Cole turns off the light and gets in his own bed.

BEGIN SEQUENCE - THE ONLY SOUND IS OF A MAN INHALING AND EXHALING SLOWLY

In Ancient Egypt, the Egyptian equivalent of the family is huddled together in their living room. Outside, the swarm of locusts is so thick that the sky is blocked out.

At the studio the next morning, Murray thanks Cole, then leaves and trudges down the sidewalk, avoiding eye contact with the hundreds of displaced families and individuals who spent the night on the streets.

Back in Egypt, the mob is getting more frantic, and it's becoming harder for the guards to monitor them through the dense cloud of locusts.

Murray is waiting in a line with fifty others at a hotel, rolling his neck and tapping his foot impatiently.

Pharaoh is pacing furiously in his office. Two guards are standing at the door vigilantly. Pharaoh glares at them, then shouts angrily until they leave.

Murray finally gets into a hotel room, although he's sharing it with another random guy. They make small talk, while Murray locks the door behind them. They decide who's getting which bed, then Murray lays down for a nap.

The Egyptian mob is dispersing - the figures are barely visible from the guards' viewpoint, but the crowd seems to be thinning out.

Suddenly, there's an explosion! A thick plume of red and orange billows in the dark cloud. The guards immediately open fire, shooting blindly at the ground.

In the hotel room, it's evening already. Murray and his new roommate are watching news coverage, which highlights the destruction and aftermath of the plague of fire.

In Egypt, the old man who was walking down the road is now dead on the side. He's almost unrecognizable as the bugs envelop and devour him.

END SEQUENCE, EXCEPT FOR THE BREATHING.

INT. TRAILER HOME, FOREST - NIGHT

The Modern Moses is in the messy, cramped trailer alone, breathing in and out, meditating on the floor.

The main living space is cluttered with cables, computers, trash, books, and a camera pointed at a blue backdrop.

Finally, he takes one last deep breath, then turns on the wall-mounted TV. He flips through the channels calmly, methodically, but not expectantly.

He's a bit surprised to see his face on CNN. He turns up the volume and watches curiously.

NEWS ANCHOR

...about an online user, who calls himself the 'Modern Moses'. His videos have gone viral, and the name of his channel alone has convinced a growing number of Americans that he is partially to blame for the recent unexplained anomalies.

MODERN MOSES

(chuckles to himself)

Partially...

NEWS ANCHOR

While experts don't believe that he himself is directly causing the events, the timing and content of his online videos indicate that he's AWARE of what will happen next, and may in fact have some influence over the anomalies.

(Moses rolls his eyes)

The White House released a statement today, saying that, while they still believe that the anomalies are part of a bio-neurological, mass-hallucinatory Russian attack, it now seems increasingly likely that this online Moses figure is the mouthpiece for Putin's agenda.

MODERN MOSES

What??

NEWS ANCHOR

Putin continues to deny his involvement, and is standing by his claims that these attacks are American in origin, possibly from the same group that led the Capitol insurrection last year.

MODERN MOSES

Give me a break...

NEWS ANCHOR

However, the White House has stressed that the anomalies are from abroad, and that now is not the time for more division, but for solidarity. President Biden recently signed the \$1.3-trillion relief bill to aid in recovery, and Congress is expected to draft ANOTHER bill in light of the nationwide destruction from the fire.

MODERN MOSES

Why can't you just say 'from people bursting into flames'? Jesus Christ...

NEWS ANCHOR

Meanwhile, the FBI has been unable to identify the user from the Modern Moses channel, and is asking anybody with information to come forward. If you have seen this man-

(his face fills the screen)

-or have any connection to him, please contact the number below. Again, it's believed that he may have ties to the Kremlin.

(pauses)

We'd now like to show the newest video clip from his channel, since it may provide a warning for whatever anomaly comes next.

They play his latest video. He watches disinterestedly.

MODERN MOSES (TV)

Vanity! Vanity! All is vanity, says the teacher!  
We are a nation obsessed with appearances,  
saturated with unrealistic depictions of-

He turns off the TV, closes his eyes, and laughs softly.

EXT. DOWNTOWN L.A. - DAY

The city is eerily quiet. No cars are out driving, and no planes are flying overhead. It's quiet... Too quiet...

INT. COLE'S STUDIO - DAY

Cole wakes up, as usual, to the beeping from his alarm.

He has no face.

His eyes, eyebrows, nose and mouth are gone.

He still has his head, his ears, his neck, and the rest of his body.

But he's faceless. He repeatedly touches his blank face to confirm that it's gone.

Finally, he looks around curiously. Though it's difficult to gauge his mood without his face.

He stands up, slowly, and tentatively feels his way across the room. He steps carefully, using the wall on his right to help orient himself.

He eventually finds his camera on a shelf, and carefully removes the lens cap. He turns it on and takes several pictures of himself.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Murray's roommate is nudging him, but Murray pretends he's still asleep. Both of them are also missing their faces.

Finally, the roommate gives up, heads to the door, and cautiously enters the hallway. There are a dozen others just like him, roaming silently, facelessly, aimlessly.

The door slams behind him. Murray sits up, realizes that his face is gone, then lays back down and buries his head under the pillows.

INT. COLE'S STUDIO - DAY

Cole has progressed to the gallery now. He's waving his arms in front of him and stepping slowly to the front.

Finally, he reaches the front window. He walks along it until he feels the door. It was already locked, but Cole repeatedly turns the lock, just to be safe.

Meanwhile, several homeless people are wandering outside in the middle of the road. A few are huddled together in the alleys or on the sidewalk.

Cole presses his ear against the window. He can't hear the sounds of the people outside.

But at least the door's locked. As he walks back through the gallery, a homeless man starts coming straight towards the window (without realizing it).

Suddenly, he runs into it, and starts pounding angrily.

Cole freezes and turns toward the sound. It's frightening, the image of a faceless person trying to break in.

What's even more terrifying is that Cole can't see him. He can only hear the pounding.

Cole gets on the floor, facing the window, then quietly, anxiously crawls backwards to the studio area.

Meanwhile, the man out front has stopped pounding, and is feeling his way along the window. Soon, he finds the door, and immediately starts trying to open it.

This makes Cole even more anxious. He crawls faster, and accidentally bumps into the wall. But he's only a few feet from the door to his room. He stands up, quickly goes into the apartment area, and locks that door too.

The homeless man is still trying to open the front door, and starts knocking aggressively. Several others outside are drawn to the noise, and when they reach the window, they also start banging on the glass intensely...

INT. PAULINE'S MANSION - EVENING

Lynn and Pauline are seated at the stately, opulent, hand-crafted wooden dining table. The house is decorated with both modern and antique art: paintings, sculptures, vases, statues...

There are also locusts everywhere. Pauline's maid sets up two fans on both ends of the table, to blow the bugs away. Lynn chuckles to herself.

LYNN

I'm surprised you don't have some high-tech locust-removal machine, stop them from even getting inside in the first place.

PAULINE

(chuckles)

Well I certainly wouldn't be a 'woman of the common people' if I did THAT, would I?

(they both laugh)

Joking aside... Hello. I feel like this is our first private conversation...

LYNN

I was about to say... It feels... Untelevised...

(they laugh again)

Well. You called me. Let's get to it.

PAULINE

Of course. I haven't met officially with the other members of the coalition, mind you. But... So far, they've been following my lead...

(pauses)

My company, and by extension, their companies, are willing to concede to your proposals.

LYNN

Really...

PAULINE

Mm-hmm. The PR nightmare from this has been...

(she chuckles)

Not that YOU'RE faring any better... Granted...

LYNN

Granted. But I'm not a CEO.

PAULINE

Exactly. And I'm just-

(she sighs)

I'm tired, Lynn. I really am.

(she laughs with relief)

This is just INSANE. I'm sorry, but, LOCUSTS??

Hail, frogs, blood? This is CRAZY.

(she sighs again)

And I've been playing RIGHT into your narrative, which doesn't HELP matters. I thought that the backlash against YOU would outweigh MINE.

(Lynn chuckles)

Anyways... This just needs to stop, and I will be the grownup - I still maintain that you are the childish one here.

LYNN

Agree to disagree.

PAULINE

And I suspected you'd say that. Fair enough.

Let's end this. And let's not let it escalate to murdering children.

LYNN

(chuckles)

I actually had something different in mind for the last one... But yes, point taken, we shouldn't drag this out.

PAULINE

Exactly. So. I will make a statement tonight, saying that we agree to your demands. And I will agree to ALL of them. No cutting corners or any word games. I'll concede, fair and square.

(pauses)

Again, I can't speak for the other CEOs. But I'm confident they'll make similar statements.

LYNN

Perfect. I appreciate you doing the right thing.

PAULINE

I'm doing the practical thing...

LYNN

(chuckles)

Well, I'm sure you'll pretend to be motivated by decency and sympathy.

(Pauline laughs)

And I won't tell anyone your secret.

PAULINE

Thank you. I really do care about people, I-

LYNN

Nope, nope, we're not getting into this...

PAULINE

But I do. You may not believe me, I know we have differing ideas of what that looks like, and I'm not PERFECT. I know that. But I do care about everyday workers and their families. I was born in an inner-city apartment.

LYNN

And I still LIVE in an inner-city apartment.

PAULINE

By choice. Right? Mmm?

(Lynn deflects her gaze)

And that's fine. I commend you. I get it.

LYNN

Please don't patronize me. Look... I'm happy that you're finally being reasonable. I am. I just-

(she looks at her again)

Just don't say that you 'get it'. Okay?

Pauline nods, and they exchange sympathetic glances. Finally, Lynn stands up, walks toward the door, opens it, turns to Pauline, and snaps her fingers.

The locusts suddenly swarm outside. Pauline marvels and watches through the window as the cloud lifts off the city. She turns to the door - Lynn is already gone.

INT. COLE'S STUDIO - NIGHT

Cole is still faceless, huddled in the corner, on his bed, holding his pillow to his chest.

Outside, he hears an occasional banging on the window, or somebody trying to open the door.

And each time, the noises push him further into the dark, holding the pillow tighter, fearing for his life.

While he cowers helplessly by himself, Pauline is making her announcement (audio only).

PAULINE (VOICE ONLY)

Good evening everyone. I spoke with Ms. Duvall just an hour ago. She has agreed to relent, and I'm thankful for her willingness to put aside this agenda of vengeance and hostility, for the sake of the American people.

Obviously, my position still stands. Our company is reviewing our options for change, and we're open to ideas. But we will not cave to terror. We won't give in to fear. I'm encouraged to see that Ms. Duvall is backing down. And I pray that she follows through on her promise, and finally puts an end to these attacks.

Suddenly, Cole's face comes back. He bursts into tears and clutches the pillow even closer.

FADE OUT.