

Encapsulated Season 5 - Episode 2

FADE IN:

INT. GAME SHOW SET - DAY

The set looks like the floor of a department store, with bright racks of clothing and shelves of accessories spread out over the stage.

The eight humans are all working quickly and diligently, and there's a palpable buzz of activity.

Each human has two accompanying angels (who look like humans themselves). One of the angels has a tablet and is taking notes while the human dictates. The other one is working with the human on choosing clothes/accessories.

Each human also has their own workstation on the side of the stage, with a mannequin that they're dressing and decorating in the clothes they've chosen.

Behind them is a large countdown timer, which is currently at 5 minutes. The humans all seem very focused on the task (except for Nate, who occasionally glances at the cameras as if to say, 'this is ridiculous').

Switch focus to the front of the stage.

Gabriel is talking to the crowd, while the humans and their assistant angels work in the background.

GABRIEL

Welcome back to an exciting premiere episode of The Godition! For this first task, the humans will have to design their own messiah. They have one hour to come up with the persona: the name, outfit, backstory, theology, and so on.

Once they have their design, they will pitch their messiah to our guest judge, who we'll be meeting momentarily. And I hate to say it, but at the end of the round, one of the contestants... Will be sent home to Earth...

The audience 'awww's' sympathetically.

GABRIEL

I know, I know. We'd love to keep them all. But...  
Ultimately, there can only be one God.

(dramatic pause)

Unless you're a polytheist!

The crowd laughs hysterically. Switch to Pearl, who is watching from backstage. She rolls her eyes at his 'joke'.

Back to Gabriel, who's getting a kick out of himself.

GABRIEL

But hey, I don't write the rules, so for now, we're only allowed to have one winner. Which, honestly, makes for great TV! Who doesn't love to see a good old fashioned eliminated-based reality competition? Right?

(the audience cheers)

Now, while we wait for the humans to finish designing their messiahs, I'd like to give a quick shout-out to our lady behind the scenes. She's sort of a chaperone for the humans-

(Pearls sighs to herself)

But we couldn't have the show without her.  
Please welcome - the fantabulous PEARL!

Pearl puts on a fake smile and joins Gabriel onstage, waving politely to the crowd as they cheer wildly.

GABRIEL

Come on up, Pearl!

(Pearl joins him, the applause dies down)

Now tell me something, Pearl. Is your last name...  
'of great price'?

The audience laughs with Gabriel - Pearl 'laughs' too.

PEARL

Never gets old, Gabriel. Never gets old...

GABRIEL

Sort of like us! Am I right??

More laughter - Pearl goes along politely.

PEARL

That is correct. We do not age...

GABRIEL

(chuckles)

No we don't! So, on to this crop of contestants.  
Randomly selected, correct?

(Pearl nods)

Any standouts? Front-runners? Dark horses?

PEARL

Well, Gabriel, I think it's a little early to  
make any predictions. I think-

(she pauses and smiles politely)

I think we'll have a much better idea after  
this first round is over.

GABRIEL

Come on - not even a hint? You won't give us  
any dirt on them?

(he lowers his voice)

Are there any ATHEISTS in the group?

The audience 'oooo's' dramatically. Pearl just smiles.

PEARL

I think we shouldn't jump to conclusions, and...  
Let's just see how the competition plays out.

GABRIEL

Tight-lipped as always, like a clam!

(he pauses)

Is that why they call you Pearl?

PEARL

(talking over him)

That's why they call me Pearl? Ha-HA. That's a  
good one, as always...

They all laugh - nobody seems to pick up on her sarcasm or  
frustration, least of all Gabriel.

GABRIEL

Well, I'll give you credit - it certainly makes for a tense show, not knowing what to expect from the candidates. We like to be surprised!

(the audience cheers in agreement)

Thank you, Pearl! Keep up the good work!

She smiles politely while the crowd applauds, then she quickly retreats backstage. Switch to the countdown timer, which is at 2 minutes. Also focus briefly on the humans scrambling to make last-minute changes.

GABRIEL

Now, we're almost at the end of the hour, and it looks like everyone is starting to wrap up on their designs. So, without further delay...

(dramatic pause)

Introducing our judge! He's a renowned author, fitness guru, former lieutenant, AND above all an eligible bachelor! Give it up for...

(another dramatic pause)

No, it's not Michael - we tried to book him, but his fee these days is just OBSCENELY high. That happens when you're famous, apparently.

(the audience laughs)

But give it up for his replacement: MAXIMILIAN!

The audience gasps and cheers wildly, as MAXIMILIAN walks confidently on stage. He's a chiseled, muscular, striking young man. He flexes for the audience, and the women all squeal with delight.

GABRIEL

Welcome to the gun show, apparently.

(they all laugh)

Great to have you, Maximilian!

MAXIMILIAN

Great to have me too, Gabriel.

(he turns to the audience)

Michael's got nothin' on this.

He flexes again and winks at the crowd. More swooning, but eventually it settles down.

Meanwhile, a few technicians wheel in a judge's table to the front of the stage. Gabriel and Maximilian walk over to the table and sit down, so they're facing the stage.

Note: the show is being live-streamed on two large screens on either side of the stage, so the audience can still see Gabriel and Maximilian's faces, even though their backs are to the crowd.

GABRIEL

So, first of all, thank you for your service. We're always honored to have a veteran.

MAXIMILIAN

Appreciate it. Although I haven't seen combat in almost 2000 years, thankfully.

GABRIEL

Thankfully indeed. And you've been working as a fitness instructor since then, correct?

MAXIMILIAN

Mm-hmm. Immortality isn't an automatic cure for being in good shape.

(he gestures to Gabriel)

Case in point.

The audience laughs, then settles down.

GABRIEL

That was BRUTAL, my friend! Bru-TAL!

(more laughter)

Now, for this first challenge, the contestants are making a messiah. So tell me: what sort of qualities are you looking for in a messiah?

MAXIMILIAN

Well Gabriel, there are a lot of variables that you have to consider, but in the end, it all comes down to the intangibles. I like to call it the 'mmmph' factor.

He does a fist pump, the audience laughs.

GABRIEL

The 'mmmph' factor?

MAXIMILIAN

The 'mmmph' factor. It's just a gut-level thing. Do they stand out? Are they iconic? Are they- Is there a magnetism to them? Are they the sort of figure that people will flock to? And do they bring out the best in humanity?

GABRIEL

Okay, okay - so, the 'mmmph' factor, I think I've got it now.

(they both chuckle)

And it looks like we are wrapping up soon!

The countdown-timer is at 15 seconds. As it reaches 10, the audience starts counting out loud.

AUDIENCE

10... 9... 8... 7... 6...

(the humans are scrambling to finish)

5! 4! 3! 2! 1!

GABRIEL

Alright, humans, time is UP! Please stop working and step away from your mannequins!

The crowd cheers wildly as the humans all step back from their workstations. They look stressed but relieved.

As the applause dies down, the curtain goes down on the main set, so it's just Gabriel and Maximilian onstage.

GABRIEL

Down to the wire, what a premiere! Am I right??

(applause)

Now, in just a second, we'll begin the pitches, where each human will present their messiah. Based on the outfits they selected and the description they provided, our talented team of visual artists will create promotional graphics, which the humans can talk us through. In fact, let's give it up for our VFX team!

Everyone claps and cheers, as do Gabriel and Maximilian. As the cheering subsides, a giant projection screen lowers in front of the curtain.

Meanwhile, Gabriel presses his earpiece closer to his ear, listens for a few seconds, then nods. While he does that, a technician quickly rushes onstage with a piece of paper - he hands it to Gabriel, then runs off just as quickly.

Gabriel gives him the thumbs-up, smiles, and turns back to the cameras.

GABRIEL

Alright, we are all set! We just got the list with the order of the presentations, which has been randomized. So! Kicking us off is...

(he reads off the paper)

From Kalaburagi, India, please welcome: Savitri!

Savitri glides onstage proudly. The video behind her shows a middle-aged Indian woman wearing traditional, colorful Indian robes, a head scarf, and opulent jewelry.

SAVITRI

Hello everyone. I present to you: Lakshmi. Lakshmi is the goddess of wealth, prosperity, good fortune, and success. I have not altered the actual character of Lakshmi-

MAXIMILIAN

I was wondering that, she's already part of the- what is it, the Tridevi, correct?

SAVITRI

You know your goddesses. Yes, Lakshmi is part of the Tridevi. I have created a slightly modern, yet still traditional take on the goddess, but otherwise you are correct - she is not a new or original icon.

MAXIMILIAN

Interesting choice. Tell me, why did you choose Lakshmi instead of Parvati or... Or...

SAVITRI

Saraswati?

(Maximilian nods)

I grew up in a poor farming community, and thus, was never exposed to real-world examples of the wealth associated with a woman like Lakshmi. However, I did have my mother as an example of Parvati, a symbol of motherhood and power, and my teachers reflected Saraswati, her wisdom.

MAXIMILIAN

I'm tracking now. So Lakshmi was the one who wasn't represented in your everyday life, hence, she filled the representation gap?

SAVITRI

Precisely. She was a symbol of success, and she encouraged me to look beyond my upbringing and imagine a better life for me and my family.

MAXIMILIAN

Understood. But why not create a new messiah, from scratch?

Savitri shrugs and smiles.

SAVITRI

Why reinvent the wheel? Just modernize it.

The audience chuckles and gives her a round of applause. Maximilian nods and jots down a few notes, while Savitri smiles and walks offstage.

GABRIEL

Thank you, Savitri! Next up:  
(he reads off the paper)  
Haoxuan, from Lijiang, China!

Haoxuan runs excitedly on-stage - the audience cheers, and he hypes them up. His enthusiasm is contagious.

HAOXUAN

Hello everyone! I'm very excited to share my messiah with you today! Drumroll, please!

The audience gives him a drumroll. He pauses dramatically, then points at the screen.

Dwayne Johnson's image appears. The audience laughs.

HAOXUAN

Now, you may all be thinking - this man looks very familiar.

(the audience laughs again)

Like Savitri, who did an excellent job, I didn't want to reinvent the messiah. Instead, I wanted to select somebody who already had kindness, charm, POWER, and universal recognition.

(he pauses dramatically)

And I believe 'The Rock' is that somebody.

MAXIMILIAN

But what if he doesn't want to be the messiah?

Haoxuan smiles blankly.

HAOXUAN

I don't understand.

MAXIMILIAN

I mean, with Savitri's messiah, she's utilizing an established theological icon, not based on a real-life person. But Dwayne Johnson is a real, living, breathing person.

(Haoxuan is confused)

So... What if he doesn't want to be the messiah?

HAOXUAN

Well, he could- Why wouldn't he want that? Wouldn't everybody want to be the messiah?

(he chuckles)

I still don't understand.

MAXIMILIAN

He might not want that. He's his own person. Maybe it would be too much pressure. What if he declined to be the messiah?

(Haoxuan stares blankly)

Who would be your back-up?

HAOXUAN

I don't- my apologies, I didn't...

MAXIMILIAN

No no, you're okay. I'm just trying to get you to think outside the box. It's a good start! Dwayne is messiah material, no doubt

(they all chuckle)

Maybe for the future - use his features, or his messianic qualities, but then develop your own original character?

HAOXUAN

Ah, I understand now. Okay. Thank you.

He nods politely, a bit embarrassed, but the audience claps supportively as he goes offstage.

GABRIEL

Great job, Haoxuan! Great job!

(the applause subsides)

Next up is... Mike, from Gary, USA!

Mike walks onstage proudly, brimming with confidence.

MIKE

Howdy everyone. I'm Mike, glad to be here, and hoping to impress you with my messiah.

(he starts pacing)

Now, one of the key qualities of the messiah is that they're a reflection of God. Right? Can we agree on that?

(the audience murmurs in agreement)

I mean, Jesus, he was Emmanuel - God with us. The divine made flesh, a human representation of God's innate character. So... At the risk of being overconfident in how this competition will end...

He pauses dramatically, then looks at the screen. It shows a picture of... Himself!

The audience roars with laughter. Even Gabriel and Maximilian can't help but laugh. Mike shrugs confidently, as if to say, 'it speaks for itself'.

MAXIMILIAN

Well, I'll give you points for your theology,  
if not your humility...

(they all laugh again)

I don't really have any- yeah. Very bold choice.

MIKE

Go big or go home, right? Thank you!

He bows proudly, and they applaud as he goes offstage.  
Gabriel is still chuckling as he reads the next name.

GABRIEL

Thank you, Mike, that was...

(chuckles again)

Alrighty. Next up: Ayano! From Esashi, Japan!

Ayano timidly walks onstage. Behind her, the screen shows  
an elderly homeless man, curled up in an alleyway.

Ayano freezes up onstage. But Maximilian smiles warmly and  
waits patiently until she's ready.

AYANO

Okay... So... My messiah doesn't have a name. He is-  
(she pauses)

In the, so Jesus said, if you offer a poor man  
a cup of water in my name, or a piece of bread,  
then you're offering it to him. Because you-  
(pause)

Because when you do those things, you are  
actually helping God himself. The idea is, God-  
God wants us to help the poor, the hungry-  
(pause)

And so if the messiah is poor, hungry, homeless,  
sick, dying - it reminds us to regard humanity  
and help others less fortunate. He may not be a  
warrior or king. But neither was Jesus.

(pause)

And the idea is, if you help the least of these,  
you may unknowingly be helping God himself.

Ayano bites her lip as the crowd cheers for her.  
Maximilian smiles proudly and even stands as he applauds.

Ayano is uncomfortable with the attention, and finally, the crowd settles down.

MAXIMILIAN

Wow, Ayano, that was... That was powerful. And a very subversive approach.

(Ayano blushes)

Now, I am going to push back on your theology just a little bit. You said that Jesus wasn't a king or a warrior - true, in his earthly form, he was weak and humble. But, in his resurrected, heavenly form, he was a king AND a warrior.

(Ayano shifts uncomfortably)

That said... The idea of having a lowly messiah who REMAINS lowly - I'm not sure that it's the sort of icon people would rally around, at least not at this stage in history.

(he tries to find the right words)

But I think it's exactly the sort of messiah that humanity needs, and I think it's admirable.

AYANO

Thank you.

Ayano smiles slightly, then hurries offstage nervously while they give her another round of applause.

GABRIEL

Very inspiring, Ayano. Thank you!

(the applause quiets down)

Next, we have: Helena, from La Serena, Chile.

Helena from La Serena! Come on out, Helena!

Helena strides onstage - the screen behind her shows a simply-dressed, thirty-year-old woman with two children and a determined gleam in her eye.

HELENA

Hello everyone. For my messiah, I present: Anna. Anna is a single mother of two. She works at a minimum wage job. She doesn't have the support of her friends or family. But she still manages to make ends meet, stand up for herself, and provide for her children.

MAXIMILIAN

Okay, great start. What was your motivation for crafting her this way?

HELENA

My motivation was - I wanted a woman who could serve as an inspiration for other women who are in similar situations, so that they know that they're not alone. And that they're capable of more than they realize.

MAXIMILIAN

I see. And that makes a lot of sense. However...  
(he thinks for a second)  
So, this is a deliberately NICHE messiah, right?

HELENA

Meaning...?

MAXIMILIAN

Meaning, she's created specifically to offer encouragement for lower-class single mothers. What about... Wealthy mothers? Married mothers? Women who don't have children? Men?

Helena chuckles, but then realizes Maximilian is serious.

HELENA

Wait, you're- okay, but you didn't make those- what about Savitri's messiah? That's niche and very culturally specific. But you didn't- sorry, I'm- I'm confused what you're judging us on.

MAXIMILIAN

I'm judging based on the overall impact, power, viability, motivation, story - the whole package of the character you've made. And in your case-  
(he gestures to the screen)  
You have SPECIFICALLY made a messiah for a very narrow segment of the population. I just want to better understand why.

Helena seems annoyed, even though Maximilian isn't trying to be rude or dismissive - he's simply curious.

HELENA

Because everyone else already has a messiah. Everywhere you look in society, we cater to men, the rich, the powerful, the well-off. They don't need another role model. Single mothers do.

MAXIMILIAN

Fair enough. That makes more sense now.  
(he smiles sincerely)  
Thank you.

He and the audience applaud, and Helena is annoyed as she walks offstage.

GABRIEL

So... Next up:  
(he reads the name)  
Nate! From Toronto, Canada!

The crowd cheers as Nate walks onstage. He looks amused and a bit dismissive as he starts his speech.

NATE

Well, this is an ironic spot for me to be in, pitching a messiah. I say that because I'm a devout atheist.  
(the audience gasps)  
I know, I know, dirty word..  
(scattered, awkward laughter)  
But then I thought, why not channel that?  
Atheists need messiahs too, right?

He gestures to the screen - it shows a montage of humans from various cultures and backgrounds, going about their everyday lives: driving, shopping, chatting, cooking..

NATE

Actually, we don't. Messiahs are merely the vestige of a bygone era when we heard voices in our heads. Authoritative voices, voices that dominated and controlled us. We still long for direction, guidance, permission - somebody who tells us how to think - because it's terrifying if we have to make our own choices.

He chuckles to himself and looks at the floor.

NATE

Now, obviously, most humans are so pathetic that it's not realistic to suddenly shift away from a messiah-centric mode of cognition. But...

(he looks back at the crowd)

Humanity needs to grow up sometime.

The audience isn't sure how to react, but Maximilian stands up and claps sincerely. Gabriel and the crowd quickly follow his example, which makes Nate laugh.

NATE

And this is EXACTLY what I'm talking about.

MAXIMILIAN

Guess angels aren't all that different, huh?

(he turns to the crowd)

No offense.

(back to Nate)

Well said, sir. Messiahs need to be phased out.

NATE

Right? We should be our own messiahs!

MAXIMILIAN

Couldn't agree more.

He finally sits down, and the applause subsides.

MAXIMILIAN

Course, like you said, that's not practical. Humans en masse still need that guiding voice, and providing it in the form of a religious or moral leader is better than a tyrant or some air-headed celebrity.

NATE

Oh, hundred percent. And yeah, I agree that it's not feasible right now.

MAXIMILIAN

Nope. But I like where your head's at.

He gives him another sincere round of applause, and the crowd joins in as Nate smiles and walks offstage.

Meanwhile, Gabriel turns to Maximilian curiously.

GABRIEL

That was... Borderline heretical...

MAXIMILIAN

Just keeping it real, Gabriel.

(he chuckles)

Who's next?

GABRIEL

Oh, right. Let's see. Thank you, Nate!

(he reads the next name)

We have Milly, from Bristol, UK!

Milly walks on stage casually, the audience cheers.

MILLY

Hello hello. You all look great I assume.

Can't actually see you with the lights, but...

(they laugh)

Alright, let's get this pulled up.

The screen shows an attractive, overly sexualized man with inhuman muscles, no shirt, and gym shorts. He's posing and grinning charmingly for the camera.

The audience claps uncertainly, but Milly seems proud of her character.

MILLY

This is Big Simon. He's a hunk, he's hung, and he's a heartthrob to women everywhere. And guys I guess too, because he encourages them to be active and healthy. Yeah. He's great.

The audience applauds tentatively. Maximilian just raises his eyebrows and looks at her incredulously.

MAXIMILIAN

Big Simon? That's his name?

MILLY

Mm-hmm. Big Simon. Or Simón for overseas.

Maximilian laughs in shock, and just applauds because he isn't sure what else to do.

MAXIMILIAN

Well, that is... VERY iconic...

MILLY

Thank you!

She curtsies and bumbles offstage. Maximilian still has a look of 'yikes...', as does Gabriel.

GABRIEL

Very... Very memorable, Milly.

(the audience laughs)

And finally. Our youngest member, a boy from Mexico City - Jorge! Come on up, Jorge!

Jorge tentatively goes onstage. He looks back at one of the angel technicians, who motions for him to keep going.

Finally, he's in the center of the stage, silently looking out at the audience, then at the judges.

MAXIMILIAN

Whenever you're ready, Jorge.

Jorge grins, then looks back at the screen. It shows a man wearing a tight blue suit and a red cape, fighting crime and rescuing citizens.

JORGE

Okay, so this is, his name is Crime-Stopper! And he's super strong, and he's from space, but he landed on Earth and then grew up on a farm and then he moved to the city, and he can fly super fast and now he STOPS CRIME, and keeps people safe and, and he has laser eyes and everybody likes him because he's nice, but he has to fight DARK-SWORD, who controls the city and he's Crime-Stopper's arch-nemesis!

The screen shows Crime-Stopper having a showdown with a shadowy, ominous, sword-wielding villain

Jorge turns and watches the showdown unfold, and his eyes light up when Crime-Stopper blasts Dark-Sword with his laser vision. The audience cheers, and Jorge turns back excitedly to the judges.

Maximilian loved it - he's grinning from ear to ear.

MAXIMILIAN

Jorge? My dude? That was incredible! Great job!

They keep applauding. Jorge looks over at the technician, who nods and waves for him to come backstage. He looks out at the audience one more time, smiles, then runs off.

After a few seconds, all the contestants walk back out and line up in front of the curtain.

GABRIEL

Let's give it up for our contestants!

Everyone cheers, the humans all smile at the crowd, then finally they quiet down.

GABRIEL

(turns to Maximilian)

Alright, they're all yours.

MAXIMILIAN

Thank you. Great work, everyone. We had some really inspiring, innovative, iconic, and.. INTERESTING characters, to say the least.

(they all chuckle)

And I think, by and large, you all were very sincere in how you went about creating and pitching your messiahs. Even when they weren't necessarily practical, your hearts were MOSTLY in the right spot.

Everyone gives them a round of applause. Gabriel turns toward Maximilian dramatically.

GABRIEL

So, it sounds like it'll be a tough choice.

MAXIMILIAN

Oh, not at all.

(he points at Milly)

Yours was trash. Big Simon? Really? It was a straight-up sexual fantasy. You're eliminated.

(Milly is in shock)

But otherwise, great job everyone!

The audience applauds tentatively, thrown off by how abrupt Maximilian was. Milly especially is furious.

MILLY

Wait, are you, like - what?? But, but-

(she looks at Jorge)

Okay, his was just SUPERMAN.

(she looks at Haoxuan)

Or DWAYNE JOHNSON??

MAXIMILIAN

They had pure motives. You're just horny.

(he stands up to leave)

Thanks for having me, Gabriel!

GABRIEL

Sure, yeah, glad you could- Yes, yes, let's-  
Let's give it up for Maximilian.

Maximilian smiles at the contestants as he leaves.

MAXIMILIAN

Congratulations, everyone. Great work! Good luck  
on the rest of the competition!

He nonchalantly walks offstage. Milly is still furious as Pearl tries to escort her.

MILLY

Wait, wait! This isn't fair! This is like so  
completely rigged!

GABRIEL

Well, I guess we're done, folks. We'll be back with our next episode shortly.

The studio lights and cameras turn off, and the audience starts dispersing. Milly is violently resisting Pearl, refusing to leave, and Gabriel talks into his earpiece.

GABRIEL

Yeah, we're gonna need security onstage. Now.

Two muscular security guards arrive within seconds and drag Milly away. Pearl tries to calm the others.

PEARL

Everyone, if you'll follow me please...

She leads them to the backstage area. They can't help but notice Milly yelling profanities as she gets dragged off, but Pearl tries to ignore it.

PEARL

Okay, we'll have a quick ten-minute break in the green room, and then we'll start round two.

SAVITRI

What'll happen to Milly?

PEARL

Oh, she'll be fine. They'll send her to Earth, wipe her memory, she won't remember a thing.

(she does a quick head count)

Okay, we've got everyone. Follow me. And also, great job on passing round one!

There's a half-hearted cheer from the group as Pearl escorts them into the green room. Switch focus to Milly being dragged down a hallway, while Gabriel watches from the front of the stage.

GABRIEL

Sluuuuuuut...

FADE OUT.