

Encapsulated Season 5 - Episode 3

FADE IN:

INT. COOKING SHOW SET - DAY

Once again, the humans are all working feverishly, but now they're in a giant kitchen. They each have a workstation with an accompanying angel, and they're running around frantically getting ingredients and preparing 'meals' (more on that shortly).

Note: it's virtually identical to the set of *Chopped*, and Gabriel is clearly imitating Ted Allen.

GABRIEL

Welcome back to *Judged*, where our humans are putting the final touches on their judgments. Let's do a quick recap.

Flashback to earlier. The contestants are all lined up in front of mystery baskets, with a timer set for 1 hour.

GABRIEL

Chefs - please open your baskets.

The humans curiously open them, and are puzzled as they remove the 'ingredients'.

GABRIEL

And we have... Killer locusts.

(close-up of a jar of locusts)

Snow and ice.

(close-up of densely packed snow)

A trumpet.

(close-up of a trumpet)

And PEANUT BUTTER.

Close-up of a jar of peanut butter. The humans are all understandably puzzled.

NATE

This can't be real. What a load of sh-

Jump back to the present, where Gabriel is calmly pacing while he narrates. The timer is now down to 3 minutes.

GABRIEL

One of the job requirements of being God is passing judgment on the wicked. For this task, teams must create an original judgment, a plague that will punish the wicked for their deeds.

Now, it's not within the purview of this contest to DETERMINE who the wicked are. Although that's another requirement of the job. This is merely testing their creativity. How well can they incorporate the mystery ingredients into an original, intense, and effective punishment?

He approaches the judge's table off to the side, where a smartly-dressed woman (34) is seated.

GABRIEL

Joining us in the kitchen today - the author of the Revelation cookbook, renowned biologist, special effects artist, and the first one to coin the term 'Hell's Kitchen' - Apollyon.

APOLLYON

Thank you for having me, Gabriel.

GABRIEL

My pleasure. Now tell us, Apollyon. Which of the mystery ingredients do you think will give them the most trouble?

APOLLYON

Well, you'd think it's the peanut butter, but peanut butter is surprisingly versatile.

GABRIEL

That's a good point. Plus, it is very messy. Certainly not something that you'd want to have raining down on you.

APOLLYON

Exactly. So I'd say... The trumpet.

GABRIEL

Now, of course, it's fairly common for judgments to be heralded by a trumpet, correct?

APOLLYON

It is, and I won't fault anybody if they use it for that purpose. But I'd like- I'd like to see somebody use the trumpet IN the plague, not just as the harbinger of the plague.

GABRIEL

Mmm. We'll see how creative they get.

Switch focus back to the humans, running frantically as they rush to complete their plagues.

GABRIEL

Alright chefs, you have one minute left. This is your one minute warning.

(he turns back to Apollyon)

Now, just to reiterate - it's not a requirement that they decide WHO receives the judgment.

APOLLYON

That's true. However, they do have to consider the collateral damage. Some judgments can impact larger population groups instead of individuals. So the more they can minimize the fallout on innocent lives, the better.

GABRIEL

Well stated. And again, we're happy to have you. Thank you for taking the time out to be here.

APOLLYON

Glad to be of service.

They smile politely at each other, then look intensely at the countdown timer.

GABRIEL

10 seconds. 9... 8... 7... 6... 5... 4... 3... 2... 1...
Time's up. Please step away from your judgments.

The humans all step back, exhaling with relief, and then admiring their outputs.

The assistant angels quickly cart away their plagues, and Gabriel motions for all the humans to step up front near the judge's table.

GABRIEL

Congratulations. You've just completed your second task. How are you all feeling?

MIKE

Hungry!

HAOXUAN

Yes, it made me hungry!

NATE

Made me feel like a psychopath...

Several of them chuckle and murmur in agreement, and Gabriel nods understandingly.

GABRIEL

It is a departure from your last challenge, shifting gears from inspiring good people to judging bad ones. But that's part of the job, and we need to make sure you have a balance of benevolence and justice if you're to be God.

(most of them not in agreement)

So, with that. We'll turn it over to Apollyon, our celebrity 'chef' and judge. And we will go in reverse order from the last challenge. So... Jorge. You're up first.

He motions for Jorge to step forward. One of the angels wheels out a platter with a snowball on it, and sets it in front of Apollyon.

APOLLYON

Alright Jorge, tell me about your plague.

Jorge looks around anxiously until he sees Mike. Mike just nods reassuringly, and that gives Jorge confidence.

JORGE

Okay, so it's a locust peanut-butter snowball, and so when you hear the trumpet, then it's the snowballs coming from the sky, and they have locusts and peanut butter inside, and so when they melt on your house it's sticky and the locusts get out and attack you.

Apollyon is mildly impressed as she examines the snowball.

APOLLYON

Not a bad concept. One question, but overall, it's very good. How do you stop the locusts from getting stuck in the peanut butter?

Jorge thinks it over for a second.

JORGE

You could, okay, you could put the locusts on the OUTSIDE of the snowball, so when it melts, they get out FIRST, and then the peanut butter is on the INSIDE.

APOLLYON

I was thinking the same thing. And what I also like about it is: as a snowball, it's easy to target individual people. Very good!

She smiles at him sincerely; he grins, then looks proudly at Mike, who gives him the thumbs-up.

GABRIEL

Looks like we've got some alliances forming.

MIKE

Just making sure the two best contestants have each others' back.

They all laugh, then they move on to Nate. He waits while an angel wheels out a life-sized sculpture of a boy made from snow, holding a trumpet.

GABRIEL

Next up, Nate, and it looks like a... Snow boy?

NATE

Yes and no. I call it - the ultimate snow job, which works on several levels.

(he chuckles to himself)

So, I know you said we didn't choose the victims for this, but I did design this with a specific group in mind: predator priests.

Apollyon stands up and examines the sculpture, while Nate explains how it works.

NATE

This is rudimentary, but in essence, this would be a fake altar boy. With clothes on, and more realistic makeup and what not, it could pass for an actual kid.

However... You take the clothes off, and the skin is made of peanut butter. So the priest would... He'd get stuck, and once he's stuck, then it would release the locusts, like a time bomb.

APOLLYON

And the trumpet is...

NATE

Decorative? A hobby? Again, this is rudimentary, like a prototype. You could have all varieties: musician, hockey player, gamer...

APOLLYON

Mmm... Well, mmm...

(she's fascinated)

That's actually quite clever in its simplicity... Because if the priest WASN'T a predator, then-

NATE

Then you send the 'boy' to another church, and keep moving it around until you catch someone who IS a predator.

APOLLYON

Mm-hmm. Like a dye-pack from the bank, and wait to see who triggers it.

She sits back at the table, thoroughly impressed.

APOLLYON

Excellent concept. Very well thought-out.

NATE

Thank you, judge. Chef. Ma'am?

(they all chuckle)

This is such a dumb format...

HELENA

Don't worry, it's just a dream.

(they laugh again)

I'm next, correct?

(Gabriel nods)

Perfect. So, for my 'plague'...

She waits for an angel to walk over with the plate. There's a scoop of ice cream inside the trumpet, with locusts sprinkled on top.

HELENA

I present... Peanut butter locust ice cream, served in a trumpet cone. I thought it would be a fun use of the trumpet.

APOLLYON

Okay. So how does it work?

HELENA

It's ice cream. Except the locusts have had their stingers removed, so they're harmless.

APOLLYON

Oh. Oh? Then- Then what's the... Is it poison?

HELENA

Nope.

(she grins slyly)

It's perfectly safe to eat. The reason is, if I were God, I'd use my creativity and all these 'judgment supplies' for good. To help people and cheer them up, not punish them. And who doesn't like ice cream?

Apollyon is stunned, and not in a good way.

APOLLYON

... But that's not what we asked you to do...

HELENA

I know. I'm taking a different approach.

APOLLYON

... But that's... That's stupid...

(Helena is offended)

So you think that rapists, murderers, warlords, dictators, criminals... They should just be given ice cream and butterflies?

HELENA

Well, I think you- yes, I think people deserve second chances and can be rehabilitated.

APOLLYON

... What if the only way to rehabilitate them is by punishing them?

(Helena is silent)

I think in some cases, the merciful approach is to spare suffering by putting an end to those who are CAUSING the suffering. And if you can't make those tough choices, then-

(she catches herself)

Sorry, I'm here to critique your plagues, not to shape your theology. But as a plague? This is- By design, it does not count as one.

She and Helena exchange looks of 'we're not going to be on the same page about this'. Gabriel awkwardly moves along.

GABRIEL

Alright, let's see what else we have. Ayano. You're next.

The angel brings out Ayano's plague. She seems nervous. It's a wrought-iron bowl with a model of a snowy hill, complete with tiny trees, and locusts posing in various cute ways (skiing, sledding, making a snowman...)

Apollyon is intrigued by the bowl.

APOLLYON

Is this one of the bowls of wrath?

(Ayano nods)

Interesting choice... Okay, when you're ready.

Ayano is trembling, but finally speaks up.

AYANO

So, I also did not make a plague. I wanted to rewrite the narrative of the locusts so that they were no longer deadly, and similarly, rewrite the narrative of the bowl, and-

APOLLYON

Sorry, I'm confused, where's the peanut butter and the trumpet?

AYANO

The peanut butter is the base, it's edible. And, if you look closely...

(she goes over to the model)

I've used the pieces of the trumpet for sleds, skis, snowboards, and a streetlamp.

APOLLYON

Well, this is a phenomenal art project, and a TERRIBLE plague.

(she looks at Ayano disapprovingly)

You guys can't be nice about this. We're not-

(she groans)

We're not rewriting narratives, or repurposing or rehabilitating. We're JUDGING, and-

(she catches herself)

Again, not my place, but... This is not at all what we asked you to do. So. Who's next?

MIKE

That would be me.

Apollyon waits impatiently for an angel to clear away the bowl diorama. Then she waits as another angel comes out with a diagram on a posterboard.

APOLLYON

Please tell me you didn't-

MIKE

No, no I did do a plague. But mine is more of a high-concept, sort of- it would need a lot of resources to execute in reality. I can talk you through it if that's okay.

APOLLYON

Please do.

MIKE

The idea is: it's the winter of our discontent. We'd start with a snowstorm, which would be localized over the houses of people that we'd want to judge.

(Apollyon is following along with the pictures on the diagram)

Now, we'd also include the locusts in the storm, so if the person tried to leave their house, they'd either freeze or get stung to death.

(his eyes light up)

And here's the kicker. We would replace all of the food in their house with peanut butter. Oh, and a trumpet would usher it in.

APOLLYON

Okay. I see what you mean now, that is... Ambitious... And-

(she chuckles)

I like the idea of having to survive off of only peanut butter. That in itself is a great idea for a plague...

(she sighs)

I think it'd be... Tricky... And not necessarily cost-effective, not to mention, high risk of collateral damage... But I like the concept, and, I appreciate that it's an actual plague.

(she sighs again)

Like we asked. So, yeah. Good job.

MIKE

Thank you.

He exhales with relief. Next up is Haoxuan, who seems anxious and uncomfortable.

An angel brings out his creation - locusts frozen on popsicle sticks. Apollyon lets out an exasperated sigh.

APOLLYON

Let me guess. This is not an actual plague..

HAOXUAN

No ma'am, it is a cruelty-free locust pop, with peanut butter flavoring and-

APOLLYON

You didn't even use the trumpet.

HAOXUAN

I wasn't sure how to incorporate it, and I decided to be economical and-

Apollyon cuts him off, takes off her glasses, and starts cleaning them while she talks.

APOLLYON

I'd like to tell you all a story. There was once a cruel dictator who ruled his subjects with a literal iron fist. That's how he would kill anyone who disagreed with him - he would crush their windpipe with an iron fist.

(she puts her glasses back on)

But one day, God shows up. Presumably because he wants to judge this monster. And he enters the dictator's mansion - a luxurious palace that he's built on the backs of slaves. And God says, you're abusive, cruel, evil... But that's okay! Have a LOCUST pop!

She stares at Haoxuan dismissively. He avoids her gaze.

HAOXUAN

I am so sorry, I didn't think about that.

APOLLYON

No. You didn't think about it at all.

She turns her gaze to Ayano and Helena.

APOLLYON

At least you two used all the ingredients, so... That counts for something I guess. But if I were running the show, you would all be eliminated. This is unacceptable.

(she looks at Gabriel)

But I know we have RULES, and a PROCESS, so...

GABRIEL

And your concerns are noted, but we can't eliminate more than one person this round.

APOLLYON

Understood... Alright. One more?

Last up is Savitri. She doesn't seem nervous. An angel brings out her plague, which is a jar of peanut butter with a trumpet logo on the front.

Apollyon has just tapped out at this point, and she half-heartedly glances at the jar.

APOLLYON

What have we got?

SAVITRI

This is a slow-release, sort of smoke grenade, disguised as a jar of peanut butter.

APOLLYON

And I see the trumpet is the brand?

SAVITRI

Yes. I didn't know how else to include it.

APOLLYON

Let me guess - you buy it at the store, and you think it's a regular jar of peanut butter, and once you get home, you realize there's locusts and an icy cloud of death inside.

Savitri nods and chuckles to herself.

SAVITRI

Essentially, yes. The chief dilemma, of course, is ensuring that only certain people purchase this particular brand.

APOLLYON

I was about to say, unless you marketed it specifically for a certain type of consumer... Somebody greedy, or vain...

(she clicks her tongue)

Eh. At least it's a plague. It's got potential. Sorry, I don't mean to be dismissive. Thank you.

(Savitri nods and smiles)

Well, at least four of you did what we ASKED...

She points to Savitri, Mike, Nate, and Jorge.

APOLLYON

I think best overall is the Snow Job - Nate, I'm inclined to actually make this sometime, if you don't mind. As one of my side projects.

NATE

That would be awesome.

APOLLYON

I agree. So you get a... Bonus... Or...

(she turns to Gabriel)

They don't get a bonus, do they?

(Gabriel shakes his head 'no')

RIP. Well, it'll get rid of sexual predators.

That's its own reward, right?

NATE

Amen.

APOLLYON

In any case - you four are safe.

Gabriel motions for the four of them to step back, and for Helena, Ayano, and Haoxuan to step forward.

Apollyon eyes them all with disappointment.

APOLLYON

You all need to rethink your theology, if I may be so blunt. And like I already said, I wish that I could eliminate you all. BUT.

(she turns to Haoxuan)

You did not use the trumpet. So for that reason, because I need some reason to separate the pathetic from the even more pathetic, you have been eliminated.

GABRIEL

I'm sorry, Haoxuan. You have been judged.

APOLLYON

Oh, right. There's a format. My bad.

She rolls her eyes, then gets up and heads to the exit.

APOLLYON

Good luck everyone - you'll need it!

She flips them off as she leaves.

There's an awkward silence. A few of them console Haoxuan, who's crying softly. Meanwhile, Pearl enters from the door that Apollyon just left through.

GABRIEL

Alright everyone... I know that was intense, but, let's keep this moving. Haoxuan - sorry to see you eliminated. Any last thoughts?

HAOXUAN

I just- This was an honor, and I will cherish and miss you all.

GABRIEL

Actually you won't. We'll be wiping your memory. Pearl already mentioned that, right? So, let's get you back to Earth ASAP. Pearl?

Pearl bites her tongue and escorts Haoxuan, who's still reeling from being eliminated. Gabriel moves along as if nothing happened.

GABRIEL

Well, congratulations to you six. You're already a fourth of the way done!

HELENA

Your people skills are unparalleled.

SAVITRI

Yeah, this is - Milly was one thing, but Haoxuan was actually-

NATE

Decent? Mm-hmm. Not that I'm complaining about not being eliminated, but that was messed up.

GABRIEL

Well, so is LIFE. Especially if you're God. More so, actually, because you'll be aware of everyone ELSE'S mess. Get the hell over it.

NATE

Woah, dude... Chill...

MIKE

Yeah, there's a kid here, come on.

GABRIEL

Why? Odds are 5 to 1 he won't remember anything.
(he rolls his eyes)

Hey, think of it this way. I'm HELPING you by creating a common enemy - ME - that you all can rally together against.

(he catches himself)

Don't actually rally against me. I promise I'm not the actual enemy. That title goes to the cruel, uncaring laws of the universe, which we are simply trying to manipulate for everyone's mutual benefit.

NATE

Amen. But also, screw you.

HELENA

If we get chosen as God, can we fire you?

GABRIEL

Nope! But if hatred motivates you, then sure!
Why not? Believe whatever you want.

MIKE

(to Jorge)

We could hit him with one of your snowballs.
(they chuckle, Jorge's eyes light up)
That sound like fun? Deadly snowball fight?

JORGE

Yeah!

They all laugh again.

GABRIEL

Perfect. Well, for this next challenge, it's a
TEAM challenge. So you'll each need a partner.
Now, only one person will be eliminated, but if
your team does well, you'll both be safe. So...

(he pauses dramatically)

Pick your partner wisely. And prepare yourselves
for a race around the world...

FADE OUT.