

Encapsulated Season 5 - Episode 6

FADE IN:

INT. SET OF 'WHO WANTS TO BE A DEITY' - DAY

The lights are up, and the room is nearly empty, except... There's a lone woman, XENIA (51), standing in the center.

She looks around at the smashed monitor and the chairs - the aftermath of Gabriel's outburst - and sighs slowly.

INT. GREEN ROOM - DAY

The four contestants and Pearl are sitting in the room, which has several large couches, a table with snacks and water bottles, and landscape paintings on the wall.

The group is silent, as they all process what happened. Eventually, Pearl speaks up.

PEARL

Just between us... I'm glad you said something. Sometimes Gabriel is a bit-

HELENA

Of a psychopath?

PEARL

Legalistic. But yes, also a psychopath.
(they all chuckle quietly)
So, thank you.

NATE

Was this secretly the test all along? To see how we'd react to child abuse?

PEARL

No, it wasn't staged. In fact, I'm not sure what we're even doing next, to be honest... I was told to wait here with all of you, and somebody would come by soon.

NATE

So is this all thrown off now? Now that we
'derailed the process?'

(they chuckle)

Sorry God, you're gonna have to reschedule your
tee time for another hundred years.

(they chuckle again)

But seriously, did we screw it all up?

Pearl shrugs - she's not sure herself. Another pause.
Finally, Savitri picks up a bottle of water and quietly
takes a sip. More silence.

Suddenly the door opens. In walks Xenia - she's a poised,
commanding presence, but in a friendly way (not in a
terrifying way).

The humans all stand up out of instinctive respect, but
Xenia just smiles warmly and motions for them to sit down.

XENIA

Please, you can stay seated. My name is Xenia,
head of the council of elders. I'm aware that
there was an incident on the previous round.
And I would like to personally apologize for the
discomfort and pain that Gabriel caused.

(she pauses)

However, we do need to keep the process moving.
I'm sure you can appreciate how important this
transition is, and the-

MIKE

Wait, sorry - Xenia, is it? Quick question.

(Xenia motions for him to proceed)

I just made the connection, you said the council
of elders? Is that from Revelation, I think it's
chapter 4? The 24 elders on 24 thrones?

XENIA

Very good, Mike. However, they don't sit on
thrones anymore, sorry to disappoint you.

(they chuckle)

But yes, it's the same council. And some of you
will be meeting them soon.

Mike's eyes light up as Xenia continues.

XENIA

Now, a few changes going forward. One: you will not be working with Gabriel anymore, he has-

NATE

He's been cancelled?

XENIA

(chuckles)

In a sense, yes. We don't want to jeopardize or impede the selection process, so if that means removing him from it, we will take that step.

(she pauses)

Second, we will dispense with the gimmick of simulating an episode of reality TV. This was the last round where we would have done that, however, I don't think it would be appropriate. And you all seem to be intelligent, self-aware... It seems unnecessary at this point.

NATE

Fine with me. Kinda stupid to begin with.

SAVITRI

It DOES seem frivolous now.

XENIA

Exactly. That said, you will still be completing the same task, which is the following:

(she pauses)

You all must decide on who is eliminated next, using whatever criteria you think is fair.

(pause again)

Pearl and myself will not be present, and we won't have anybody eavesdropping. So please, allow yourselves to be candid. And while there isn't a time limit per se, we would ask that you deliberate relatively quickly, so we can proceed to the subsequent tests.

MIKE

Makes sense to me. So just... Eliminate someone?

XENIA

Correct. Preferably unanimously, but three votes will be sufficient.

(she and Pearl head for the door)

Once you've made your choice, come notify us. We will be in the room across the hall.

PEARL

Good luck, guys.

HELENA

Wait, sorry - random question.

(Xenia and Pearl pause)

What WOULD have been the reality show?

NATE

Oooh, yes. What are we missing? Not that I care.

XENIA

(chuckles)

It would have been The Bachelor. You would have had three roses to divide among you.

NATE

(sarcastically)

Ah! Darn! I LOVE the Bachelor!

SAVITRI

Did I say frivolous? I meant FUN.

They all laugh, including Xenia.

XENIA

Regrettably, I am no Chris Harrison.

NATE

Speaking of being cancelled...

XENIA

Oh? I hadn't heard that. I need to brush up on my Earth culture.

(they laugh)

Alright, we'll leave you to it.

She and Pearl exit the room. The four humans look around, and there's an awkward pause.

MIKE

Well, I think this is an easy choice, given that one of us doesn't even believe in the job which we're applying for.

NATE

That's hysterical, because, what, you're somehow MORE qualified because you're a pastor?

MIKE

Is that even a question?

NATE

I mean, organized religion doesn't have the best track record, I think you'd agree.

MIKE

I don't agree, Nate. That's my point. I think being religious would be the best qualification, and you are defiantly NOT religious. So...

NATE

At least I'm not a predator.

MIKE

Woah, woah woah woah. That's a bit-

NATE

A bit real? I mean, come on, you gravitated towards the YOUNG BOY from the moment we started this whole process. How is that NOT-

MIKE

I. Would. Never. I HAVE never. I am mortified that you'd even SUGGEST that.

NATE

No, no you're right. You probably did it for strategic reasons. Because if it came down to you and him, you'd win easily, right?

MIKE

You are a piece of work, my friend.

SAVITRI

Okay, both of you - Nate, for the love of god, Mike's not a predator. Maybe it was strategic, I'm not denying that. But let's not resort to calling people criminals without proof.

NATE

Whatever... Anybody who's a cult-leader - sorry, a PASTOR - automatically loses in my book. I am waaaaay more reasonable and... SANE... Than him.

HELENA

I mean, at least you WANT to be here.

(she turns to Savitri)

You don't even want the job.

SAVITRI

I told you that in confidence.

NATE

Ohhhhh snap.

MIKE

I'm sorry, told what in confidence?

HELENA

She doesn't want to be here.

SAVITRI

I said I didn't want to be GOD. But I do-

HELENA

Oh, that's right. You just want to freeload and enjoy the competition, but then you'll drop out at the last second.

NATE

Wait, so she's telling the truth? You don't even want the job?

(Savitri glares at Helena)

Well, that makes it an easy choice.

HELENA

I agree. I think that-

MIKE

Well, hold up, holllld up. This is me thinking about this 'strategically'. Bear with me.

(he collects his thoughts)

So, Savitri. You don't want the role, right?

SAVITRI

I do want to stay in the competition for as long as possible, and I-

MIKE

But if you make it to the final two, you would willingly drop out?

SAVITRI

... Yes, I would prefer to be with my family.

NATE

Okay... So... Easy choice. Especially if we have a repeat of last round, where they won't let us just quit. What if they FORCE her to stay?

MIKE

Actually, Nate, they DID let us just quit. They- They seem very keen on making sure SOMEBODY is chosen for the role, even if it means bypassing the rules they have. So - we'll assume for now that she'd be able to quit.

SAVITRI

And I would. I don't want the pressure or burden of being God.

MIKE

Understandable. However... We have no idea what the remaining tests are. This might be the only opportunity we have to give OUR input as to who we think should be eliminated.

(he gestures to Savitri)

And we already know that YOU will drop out, so, if we select somebody ELSE...

It clicks for Helena.

HELENA

We would be killing two birds with one stone.

MIKE

Exactly. Getting rid of Savitri is pointless, because she'll eliminate herself. We should use this chance to pick somebody ELSE as well.

HELENA

Makes sense to me.

NATE

Totally disagree, but whatever. Who asked me?

HELENA

I mean, we do only need three votes, so, if we eliminate you... Right? I'm okay to eliminate you. Anybody else?

MIKE

I second that.

SAVITRI

I don't. I think we should be more reasonable about this. And not judge from our impulses.

NATE

Thank you. I still think you should go home, but I appreciate the support.

(pause)

So... How do we decide?

SAVITRI

How about we each come up with a quality that we think the ideal God should have.

(they all nod in agreement)

I can start. I would say... Trustworthy. Honest. Not duplicitous. Somebody who won't reveal your confidential secrets.

(she looks at Helena)

Not to name names.

HELENA

No, of course not.

(she rolls her eyes)

This coming from the person who HAD a secret.

SAVITRI

Which I am acknowledging now.

NATE

But only because she outed you. Right?

(Savitri is silent)

I'm an open book. You all know my motives.

HELENA

And I don't trust you any further than I could throw you, so...

NATE

Ouch. Okay. Well, at least I'm not infatuated with little boys like most pastors.

HELENA

That's enough! Nate, you clearly have baggage, and I'm sorry for whatever religion did to you, but this is just- You're projecting, and it's honestly pathetic.

SAVITRI

Agreed. Your mind is a gutter.

NATE

Aww... Thank you...

HELENA

(rolls her eyes)

I think Mike is probably the most trustworthy person in this group, myself included. However... Another quality God should have, I think, is a love for humanity. Not yourself. And for me, seeing Mike choose himself as the Messiah was... Off-putting, and frankly offensive.

MIKE

Well, my theology was-

HELENA

Your theology was arrogance.

(Mike is silent)

Personally, I think it's clear that I have a genuine, sincere love for humanity, and that's one of the most essential, perhaps THE most essential part of being God.

NATE

I actually agree with you, on both counts. It is an important quality, and I think you have it.

(he turns to Savitri)

You, on the other hand, aren't interested. In. The. Actual. Role. You are ONLY here because you're selfishly trying to see what's next.

SAVITRI

And I will drop out for that reason.

NATE

Or, we could eliminate you now.

(he throws his hands up)

Why is this even a question?

MIKE

Let's, let's go back to Helena's criteria... Because I think that you, Nate - you don't pass the criteria either. You're even LESS qualified than Savitri.

NATE

Because I'm an atheist? Wow.

MIKE

No, because you don't like PEOPLE. Your whole mentality is: people need to grow up, move on, shake off religion, not be sheep, and it's a- It's an insulting view of humanity.

SAVITRI

He has a point.

NATE

What?? I want what's BEST for them.

MIKE

Maybe religion is what's best. Even the judge for the messiah contest said himself, remember: humanity isn't ready to not need messiahs. They're not ready to move past religion.

NATE

And as God, I could change that.

MIKE

But you shouldn't. You would be taking away something that people value, and need, and find deep meaning in, just because you think you're 'enlightened' and you're so confident that anything spiritual is 'toxic'.

NATE

I mean, spiritual things ARE toxic..

MIKE

And that is why you are not ready for the role. Because the majority of humanity would disagree.

SAVITRI

Well-said - this whole contest is proof that religion is here to stay. Mike? You're next. What's your criteria?

NATE

Unbelievable...

MIKE

Well, it may surprise you, since this could potentially eliminate me, but I'd say... Chance.

NATE

Oh?

MIKE

Yessir. We were chosen randomly, and we should continue to choose randomly, because it'll counteract any biases we have.

There's a brief pause. Nate is stunned.

NATE

That is unironically the most atheist thing you've said this whole competition. Respect.

HELENA

I would STRONGLY disagree with that. Like you pointed out, they already used chance. So... Chance has already played a part in this.

SAVITRI

I'm with Helena. Let's use reason first, and chance as a last resort. But good idea, Mike.

(she turns to Nate)

What about you? How would you choose?

NATE

Well... Let's see, what can I come up with that would keep me in the running...

HELENA

That's very telling.

NATE

We're all thinking that way. Except Mike, in a shocking twist that I'm still not quite over...

(he thinks for a few seconds)

How about this: what if we worked backwards... Let's start with whoever we all think would be GOOD picks, and by process of elimination, narrow it down to the WORST pick.

SAVITRI

I like that approach. Let's start with Mike. Messiah complex aside, I think he's genuine, caring, very in touch with spirituality, yet he also has demonstrated a very practical decency. I'd have no problem with him as God.

HELENA

I would agree. He wouldn't be my first pick... But, I did admire how you stood up for Jorge and took him under your wing. And I agree that you care deeply about spirituality.

Mike nods humbly; Nate rolls his eyes.

NATE

Well, I can see I'm gonna be outvoted here, but, I've voiced my opinion, and it's not worth fighting it forever. See? This is me trying to respect the time limit, because I CARE about this process and won't let it be held up by me being petty.

SAVITRI

You're a saint. The first atheist saint.

(they all chuckle except Nate)

So, Mike is safe. And let's keep in mind that none of us will remember any of this.

MIKE

Except the person who's God. Which, Nate, if it ends up being you, please don't smite me.

NATE

Oh that'll be the FIRST thing I do.

HELENA

Didn't you say that your first act would be to kill YOURSELF?

(they chuckle again)

That's a great mentality for God, by the way...

NATE

At least I'm not-

SAVITRI

Okay, enough, let's stay on track. So. Two votes for Mike. Helena is next. I will admit, while I don't appreciate that she broke my confidence, she did it for the sake of transparency, and I'm impressed by how she stood up for Jorge.

NATE

Agreed. I'm fine with Helena.

MIKE

Same here.

Helena sighs with relief and nods thankfully.

SAVITRI

Now, the real dilemma... Me and Nate. Let's do a show of hands. Who wants Nate to STAY?

Helena raises her hand.

SAVITRI

Interesting. Because...

HELENA

I don't think he's IDEAL, but I'd prefer him to somebody who, by their own admission, isn't even interested in the job.

SAVITRI

Okay. Noted. And who wants ME to stay.

Mike raises his hand.

NATE

Right, because it's 'strategic'.

MIKE

I think it would be a missed opportunity if we took the easy pick, yes.

NATE

Oh my god...

MIKE

Are atheists allowed to say that? Isn't that cultural appropriation?

NATE

Wow.

HELENA

Lighten up, he's joking.

NATE

Oh, he's allowed to, being a white, Christian, American man. It's his prerogative to say whatever the hell he wants. It's only fitting that HE might be God someday.

MIKE

Come again? When has my race or nationality EVER been a factor? This was all random.

NATE

I'm just saying, you're basically God on Earth as it is. So...

MIKE

I'm not even- no, we're not going there.

NATE

Hitting too close to home?

HELENA

Nate, that's enough. You are such an arrogant little punk. Talk about having a God complex...
(she chuckles)
You know what? You don't get my vote anymore.

NATE

What??

HELENA

So, by my count, that's me, Savitri, and Mike - are we all okay to eliminate him?

SAVITRI

That's fine with me.

NATE

Wait, you can't be-

MIKE

I second that.

NATE

Wow. WOW.

(he scoffs at them)

Okay. Well, congratulations. The three of you just set humanity back a thousand years.

(he heads to the door angrily)

Idiots...

He storms out into the hallway and starts shouting.

NATE

Hey, Pearl! Anyone! We're DONE! It's official!
I'm a godless piece of SHIT!

The door closes behind him. They can still hear him shouting profanities in the hall, but there's also a palpable sense of relief.

SAVITRI

Well, I for one am looking forward to watching his limo ride home.

She and Helena laugh. Mike doesn't get the reference, but he chuckles along with them anyways.

FADE OUT.