

Encapsulated Season 5 - Episode 8

FADE IN:

SUPER: Three Years Earlier.

Helena is in a hospital with her husband, LUIS, and her 5-year-old son, MATEO, who's lying motionless in bed.

The EKG monitor has flatlined. Helena is sobbing while Luis consoles her.

INT. HELENA'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - DAY

Helena jolts back into reality. She looks around and sighs with relief.

HELENA

Luis? Luis! Are you home?

After a few seconds, Luis rushes in, his eyes wide, and immediately embraces her.

LUIS

Oh my goodness... You're back, thank God.

(he holds her tightly)

I was so worried. Where were you- how did you get in, did you go through the- Are you okay? Are you injured, were you abducted, were-

HELENA

I'm okay, I promise. I'll explain everything.

LUIS

Okay, okay... I'm just so glad you're back.

They continue to embrace, then Helena chuckles.

HELENA

You would not BELIEVE what I've been through.

LUIS

Oh? Try me.

Hard cut to the two of them sitting across from each other at their kitchen table. Luis is speechless.

LUIS

Well... That's...

HELENA

Like I said. It's hard to believe.

LUIS

It is hard to believe. I don't-

(he chuckles)

I DON'T believe it, and I'm struggling to understand why you would make that up...

HELENA

I'm not making it up, Luis, it happened. And now I need to go back and-

LUIS

And replace God?

(she nods)

Because he's retiring.

HELENA

Exactly.

Luis is still stunned.

LUIS

So what will you do? As God?

HELENA

Well, first thing, is I will ask him why he took Mateo from us.

LUIS

Oh, ohhh... Okay... That makes sense...

HELENA

See? Now you see why I have to do this?

LUIS

No, Helena, I don't. I don't see.

HELENA

But you said it made sense.

LUIS

Look, I miss him every day too. Honestly.

(he leans in closer)

But this won't bring him back.

HELENA

I'm not TRYING to bring him BACK. I just want to have CLOSURE.

LUIS

And this won't give you closure.

HELENA

Yes it WILL! This ACTUALLY WILL!

LUIS

But nothing else has, Helena. Because it may-

(he sighs)

There may never BE closure. And that's AWFUL, and frustrating, I get it. But... Coming up with this convoluted, insane story about how you're meeting with God? To ask him? That's-

HELENA

I am NOT making this up!

LUIS

Look, if this is what you need to do to move on - and I'm not suggesting that we forget him, that's NOT what I'm saying. But if this will bring you closure, then fine. Do it. But-

HELENA

No, Luis, I'm trying to tell you. After this, I'll be God permanently. I won't come back.

LUIS

(he gives up)

Okay. Okay, Helena. Whatever.

He gets up and heads for the door.

HELENA

Where are you going?

LUIS

I'm going to pick up the kids from school.

(he pauses at the door)

Will you be here when we get back?

HELENA

No, I told you, I'm not coming back. Why won't you believe me? Why would I make this up??

LUIS

I don't know. I'm actually very confused why you'd make this up. You tell me.

HELENA

I'm not. Lying. Luis, I HAVE to do this.

LUIS

No you don't, Helena. You don't HAVE to.

(he scoffs in disbelief)

You WANT to. But you don't HAVE to.

HELENA

Don't you want to know why?

LUIS

Yes, but I've made my peace with the fact that I'll never be ABLE to know. And I don't-

(he sighs)

I don't pretend to understand your grief, I- Please don't think that I'm patronizing you.

(Helena rolls her eyes)

Look, I don't care if you need to take a week, drive around, stay in a hotel, cry, drink, imagine this scenario in your head... Fine. I'll- I'll give you space.

(he opens the door)

Just, please... Promise you'll come back.

HELENA

Luis, I, I won't be- Why don't you understand?? I'm doing this for US.

Luis looks at her dejectedly for a few seconds, then he leaves without responding.

Helena sighs. She hears the sound of Luis starting the car and driving away. She looks around the apartment slowly, calmly, mournfully. After a bit of reflection, she looks at the ceiling and braces herself.

HELENA

Alright, I'm ready to come back.

She suddenly disappears. The apartment is silent.

INT. BLANK WHITE ROOM

Helena appears in the middle of the room. Pearl is waiting expectantly for her.

PEARL

Welcome back.

HELENA

Thanks, that was fast. How did you know to-

Pearl shows Helena her watch, which has a video feed of Helena's apartment.

PEARL

(dramatically)

We've been SPYING on you.

(she chuckles)

I'm sorry, that was... Bad joke...

HELENA

No, no it's okay.

(they chuckle)

So. When do we-

PEARL

Yes, if you'll follow me.

She leads Helena out of the transfer room (the one with the gray door), and down the white hallway.

PEARL

We just need to take care of a few last-minute preparations and whatnot, shouldn't take long.

They stop in front of a faded pink door. Pearl opens it and leads them both inside.

INT. PEARL'S OFFICE

The room is warmly decorated with flowers, paintings, plush carpeting, and a modern desk.

Pearl sits at the desk, Helena sits opposite her.

HELENA

This is cute. You decorate it yourself?

PEARL

Mm-hmm. I've had centuries to work on it...

(they chuckle)

Okay. Let me get this out quick...

She rummages through her drawer for a few seconds, then pulls out a single sheet of paper and a pen.

PEARL

So, before we get to the contract.

(she looks at Helena sincerely)

I overheard your conversation with your husband, and I'm sorry about your son... How old was he, if you don't mind my asking?

HELENA

He was only 5. It was brain cancer.

PEARL

Mmmm. I'm so sorry.

(she tries to be tactful)

I don't want to... I know everyone grieves in their own way, in their own time. I understand the need for closure. But... I'm not... I'm not sure that you'll get a satisfying answer as to why God allowed it to happen...

HELENA

Just having an answer will be satisfying.

PEARL

And I understand that.

(she thinks it over)

I guess, I just want to be sure you're prepared that it may not be what you expect.

HELENA

That's fine. It just needs to be the truth.

PEARL

And it will be, but the truth isn't always what we hope... I also just want to make sure that this isn't your only motivation, and that-

HELENA

No, no no, I want to be able to help others and, you know, prevent these tragedies. No, it's not- it's not just about my son. If I can help save even one other person's son, it'll be worth it.

PEARL

Okay - and I assumed as much, just making sure.

(she looks over the paper)

Well, there's not a lot to cover. We try to keep things simple. So, essentially, the agreement is that you'll be God. For starters, you'll be able to hear prayers in real-time.

HELENA

Everyone's prayers?

PEARL

Mm-hmm. And you'll also have a console with a real-time projection of Earth, which you can zoom in on, focus on specific people or places, do miracles, answer prayers, bring judgments, etcetera...

(Helena nods understandingly)

Oh, you'll also be 'upgraded', so you won't need to eat, drink, sleep, you won't age - you can work 24/7 without interruptions.

HELENA

And I won't get tired?

PEARL

Nope - it'll be a lot to process, but your body won't wear down or feel fatigued.

(Helena nods)

Now, the downsides. You will be working alone, since there's only one God... And your contract doesn't have an official end date. It's good for as long as you want. So if you feel at any point that you want to retire, you simply let us know, and we will find a replacement.

HELENA

Okay... Wait, why would that be a downside?

PEARL

Well, because...

(she pauses)

So, IF you decide you want to end the contract - and again, you can do this as long as you're willing and able - but if you decide to end it, and we have to replace you... Once we replace you, you will... You will die...

HELENA

You mean, I wouldn't go back to Earth?

PEARL

No. No, unfortunately we wouldn't be able to send you back at that point.

HELENA

Wait, but this is Heaven. So when I die, then, wouldn't I just go here?

Once again, Pearl tries to find the best explanation.

PEARL

So... Humans don't actually go here when they die. It's not an afterlife, it's just a... It's like an alternate plane for the angels, but not the 'Heaven' you're used to thinking about.

HELENA

Then- sorry, so what happens to us when we- or,  
if I 'retired', when I die?

PEARL

... Nothing... You just... That's it. You're gone.

There's a long pause.

PEARL

So, if you eventually decide that being God is...  
If you need to pass the baton... Then, you die...  
And, I would completely understand if that's  
a deal-breaker, or too intense, or-

HELENA

No, no it's fine. I don't see myself ever-  
(she chuckles)  
I don't see why I'd need to retire, so-

PEARL

Well, because it could go on for eternity...  
That's a long time...  
(Helena thinks it over)  
And if you're really not comfortable with-

HELENA

No. No, it'll be okay. I've come this far, and  
I'm actually - I think I could do a good job,  
not to sound arrogant, but- I'm ready for it.

PEARL

Okay. And that's good to hear.  
(she smiles slightly)  
And that's everything.

HELENA

Oh. That's all?

PEARL

That's all. So, if you could sign here...  
(Helena signs the contract)  
And, we're all set.

INT. BLANK HALLWAY

The two of them emerge from the office. Gabriel is waiting by the door.

GABRIEL  
Everything in order?

PEARL  
Yep. All signed and ready.

GABRIEL  
Beautiful. On to the penthouse suite.

He chuckles, then leads them to an elevator at the end of the hallway.

GABRIEL  
First of all, congratulations. Sorry that I couldn't be at your coronation. But I was busy working on becoming a better version of myself.

Helena smiles and nods at him forgivingly, while Pearl covertly rolls her eyes.

HELENA  
It's water under the bridge. I promise I won't strike you down.

GABRIEL  
Not that you could, but thank you anyways.  
(they chuckle)  
It's the thought that counts, right?

PEARL  
Mm-hmm... And here we are...

GABRIEL  
Ladies first.  
(Pearl steps in, Gabriel turns to Helena)  
Your holiness.

She chuckles and steps inside. Gabriel joins them, and the door seals shut.

INT. UPPER FLOOR HALLWAY

The elevator dings open. Another blank hallway, but with a massive wooden door at the far end.

As the three of them walk silently from the elevator to the door, Helena begins mentally rehearsing.

HELENA (INNER MONOLOGUE)

Why did you take him? He was only five. He was completely innocent... How COULD you?

(they're getting closer)

How could you do this to us? To him? To ME?

They reach the door. Gabriel knocks at it loudly.

GABRIEL

Ethan? It's Gabriel! We're ready!

Helena is getting visibly enraged. A few seconds later, the door swings open and a disheveled teenager bursts out.

ETHAN

FINALLY!

Helena is taken aback. Ethan has a look of sheer relief, then he sees Helena, and it turns into a look of horror, like he's trying to warn her.

But before Helena can say anything, Pearl forces her into the room and starts closing the door.

GABRIEL

(to Ethan)

Alright, you know the rules.

ETHAN

Yes, PLEASE... Just make it STOP...

Helena watches in horror as Gabriel breaks Ethan's neck. The door slams shut, leaving Helena mortified and alone.

She looks around in confusion, and tries desperately to open the door. She bangs on it loudly.

HELENA

Pearl? PEARL! What's happening?? LET ME OUT!!

PEARL (MUFFLED VOICE)

I'm so sorry. Just - just let us know if you want to end the contract, but until then, sorry, it'll have to stay locked.

(pauses)

You can do this. I believe in you...

Helena is reeling, but she composes herself, takes a few deep breaths, and looks around the room.

She's in a dimly-lit tunnel, like an underground bunker. It's about a hundred feet long, with a light at the end.

There's also a steady murmuring of voices. Helena walks tentatively down the corridor, towards the light, and the voices start getting louder.

Finally, she reaches the main control room, and she's overwhelmed by how loud the voices are - it's like a relentless, overpowering flood of noise.

There's also a giant, slowly-rotating hologram of Earth in the center of the room. Surrounding it are all sorts of panels, buttons, keyboards, monitors...

She focuses on the hologram, and zooms in on live videos of humanity: people celebrating, dancing, being born, suffering, killing, grieving, dying...

It's too much to process by herself. She collapses onto the floor, covers her ears, and sobs with despair.

INT. PEARL'S OFFICE

Pearl is sitting despondently at her desk, while Gabriel leans against the doorframe.

GABRIEL

I give her... Six months? A year? Two at most?  
What are you thinking?

PEARL

Please don't- I'm not doing this.

GABRIEL

Come on, it's not like she's any different than  
all the others.

PEARL

That doesn't make it less painful.

GABRIEL

Yeah, yeah...

(he chuckles to himself)

You know, it's funny, you do this every time:  
'oh, poor humans, they don't know what they're  
getting into, I should help them'. EXCEPT-

(he chuckles again)

You DON'T help them. You COULD, which would be  
a waste of time, because they don't deserve it,  
but you COULD do something. But... You don't.

PEARL

Because that's not how it...

GABRIEL

Not how it works? Not the process?

(he scoffs at her)

I'm sorry, I thought you- Didn't you say that we  
don't have to follow the process? After all...  
We're the ones who BUILT it, so we can choose to  
IGNORE it, right?

Pearl is silent. Gabriel puts his hands up in surrender  
and starts to leave the office.

GABRIEL

But what do I know? I'm just the host. And I've got another 'exciting season of the God-ition' to prep for, so... Peace.

He chuckles, shakes his head dismissively, and leaves her alone in the office.

Pearl is still processing everything. She cries quietly and rests her head on her desk. But after a few seconds, she suddenly sits up, with a determined look in her eyes.

INT. BLANK HALLWAY

Pearl is headed toward the elevator, and is nearly there, when she's intercepted by Xenia (who appears from a neighboring corridor at the last second).

XENIA

Pearl. Hello. How was the transition?

Pearl is caught off guard, but she smiles and quickly regains her resolve.

PEARL

You know, it went okay, but- I just, I think maybe Helena could use some help adjusting.

Xenia smiles at her patronizingly.

XENIA

Why would you think that?

PEARL

Well, it's- it's a lot. For a human. And... Obviously I wouldn't be doing her job for her, but maybe just... A little encouragement?

XENIA

Oh, Pearl, that is- That's very thoughtful.  
(she puts her arm around Pearl's shoulder)  
You have a good heart. But you know that that's not how the process works.

PEARL

No, yeah I know, but I was thinking... Maybe, possibly, we could change it?

XENIA

Change it? Ohh... Hmmm... Well, but it WORKS, so...

PEARL

I mean, yes, it is generally good, but it's- There's always room for improvement.

Xenia chuckles, then casually starts leading Pearl away from the elevator with her arm still around her shoulder.

XENIA

Do you know why we do things this way? It's not done arbitrarily.

PEARL

Well, I know it's to help humans progress, and have THEM be part of the solution, instead of depending on us for everything.

Xenia nods proudly.

XENIA

Exactly. And what message will we be sending if we come to their aid?

PEARL

But see, if they can't even do the job that's- Obviously we wouldn't do EVERYTHING for them, but if we could help Helena - or whoever is in the role - just get situated, then they'd be much better equipped to help everyone else.

XENIA

Perhaps. But you're missing the big picture. The goal of having one of them be 'god' is not to help them. The larger goal of the process is weaning them off of their dependence on the idea of an all-powerful 'god'. Encouraging them to look inward for their own survival, not outward.

PEARL

But then- wait, but we have the capability to- Okay, so that makes sense, and I agree with it that we should help them help each other. But... But we already have the room, and the tools to help them and intervene and... And, but-

(Xenia smiles patiently)

Why would we not use it? I mean, use it to its fullest potential?

XENIA

We used to. But it's become outdated and, well, too complicated and burdensome for one person. So, we collectively agreed to phase it out, until humanity no longer needs it at all.

(Pearl is silent)

So, by helping Helena, or the next one...

(she clasps Pearl's hands)

You'd be hurting the rest of them. Sometimes... Sometimes you need to let them drown so they can learn how to swim.

They finally stop walking. They're back at Pearl's office. Xenia looks at Pearl intensely.

XENIA

I understand your predicament. You are arguably the closest link we still have with humanity. It's only natural that you'd be attached.

(she looks at Pearl tenderly)

So, take some time to recover, and recuperate. Because you are a vital, VITAL part of making this transition a success. And you always do such an incredible job of making them feel comfortable, and welcome, and at ease.

(Pearl blushes, Xenia smiles)

Rest assured, you won't be doing this forever. There will come a day, very soon, when they will be entirely independent, and you'll never need to worry about them again.

Pearl nods and wipes away a few tears. Xenia brings her in for a warm embrace.

XENIA

Oh, Pearl... I know it's hard now. But the reward will be worth it in the end. Okay?

PEARL

Okay...

Xenia consoles her for a bit longer, then she smiles and leaves her be. Pearl quietly closes the door, lays down on the carpet, and stares up at the ceiling.

PEARL (VOICE ONLY)

Everyone? Everyone? If I could have your attention please.

Switch focus to the upper hallway. Two security guards are carrying a body-bag away. The giant wooden door is still sealed shut at the end of the hall.

PEARL (VOICE ONLY)

I know you're probably all very disoriented.

Switch to Pearl in a room filled with eight random humans, each of them confused and talking over each other.

Pearl has a look of compassion in her eyes as she tries to calm them down.

PEARL

But I promise this will all make sense.

FADE OUT.