

ESCORTED

Episode One

Written by

Roger Wilson-Crane

**EXT. SHOOPY SHOO SHOP. SKIPTON. WINTER. - DAY**

Mid-afternoon. Low clouds hang over the high street. Beyond the rooftops – the faint outline of the Dales. Below, the town is busy with people looking for a winter bargain.

MAX TAYLOR (54), decent, unassuming, sweeps outside his shop. More habit than purpose. He leans on the brush. Across the road – a clearance shoe shop. Windows plastered with **50% OFF**. It's busy with a steady stream of customers. A couple pause outside Max's shop. Glance in. Then drift across the road, into the clearance shop. Max watches them in silence.

A flicker of movement catches his eye.

MANDY (48) bursts out of the nail salon, wrestling with a bright pink towel. All energy. Impossible to ignore. She spots Max.

MANDY  
(shouting)  
You're the only fella in Skipton  
who makes sweeping look sexy.

MAX gives her a small, familiar wave.

MANDY (CONT'D)  
Should've have married you when I  
had the chance.

MAX  
We had one date, Mand.

MANDY  
Two.

She laughs. Raucous. Blows him an exaggerated kiss.

MANDY(CONT'D)  
You closing up?

MAX nods. Glances back at the clearance shop. Gives it a rude flick sign.

MANDY (CONT'D)  
Oi! Don't be mardy. You're out  
tonight, aren't you?

He gives a thumbs-up.

MANDY (CONT'D)  
You might bump into Rob. He's  
chucking spears tonight, at the  
Arms.

She waves – gone as quickly as she appeared. MAX lingers a moment. Looks again at the clearance shop. Busy. Then his. Empty. He turns. Locks up.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. TAYLORS HOUSE. - MOMENTS LATER**

A neat cul-de-sac of new builds. Aspirational without being flashy. The road is unfinished as the builds continue. MAX walks up his drive and pauses beside a gleaming BMW. He notices a smudge on the bonnet and rubs it carefully with his sleeve. Enters the house.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. TAYLORS HOUSE. KITCHEN. - LATER**

HANNAH (55), warm, thoughtful, clears away dinner. MAX sits at the table, opening the post. Junk. Another. Then – a FINAL DEMAND. Bold red. He glances at Hannah. Her back turned. He quickly folds it and puts it into his pocket.

HANNAH

How was today?

MAX

You know. Same as ever.

She waits patiently.

MAX (CONT'D)

One pair of Nike trainers...And some Ted Baker heels.

HANNAH

Heels? That's a result. A local lass?

MAX

No. She was a he.

HANNAH

A present?

MAX

They were for himself.

HANNAH

What happened?

MAX

Bit awkward at first. But once he realised I wasn't judging him, he relaxed.

HANNAH

You're so good with people, Max.

MAX shrugs.

MAX

Wish I saw more of them.

HANNAH

I know -

MAX

It's more than a shop, H.

(then)

I made a promise to Jake...

He stops. Unable to continue. HANNAH passes behind him and rests a hand on his shoulder. Gentle. Familiar.

HANNAH

Hey. Not tonight.

(soft)

Brenda says Chub can't wait to see you.

MAX finally smiles.

MAX

Me neither.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. LOUNGE - LATER**

The radio blares from the kitchen. MAX stands at the mirror, re-tucking his shirt. Checking his jacket. HANNAH appears behind him.

HANNAH

Look at you.

MAX

Too much?

HANNAH

No. You look just reight.

She leans in. Fixes his lapel. Brushes away stray hairs - hers. From the kitchen - **Enrique Iglesias, "Hero"**.

HANNAH (CONT'D)  
It's our song. Come here.

HANNAH grabs MAX and pulls him into the middle of the room. They dance – not quite in sync, bumping into a chair. She trips. He catches her. They laugh.

MAX edges towards the door.

MAX  
Get off me, Hannah! I'll be late.

She holds on a beat. Then lets go.

HANNAH  
Spoil sport! Go on, off you go.

She kisses his cheek. He leaves. She watches him go. Her smile lingers. Then – a hint of worry.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. THE KINGS ARMS PUB. SKIPTON - LATER**

Cosy, a bit tired. MAX sits at the bar with a pint as a DARTS GROUP argue loudly, a YOUNG COUPLE whisper in the corner, and a table of ELDERLY REGULARS play dominoes – silent, ruthless. MAX'S phone pings.

CHUB (TEXT)  
*Sorry mate, crisis at work. Need to take a rain check.*

MAX replies.

MAX (TEXT)  
*No problem, hope all okay.*

He drops the phone onto the bar. Disappointed. He looks around. Everyone else is with someone. A MAN exits the toilets – same build, same kind of face as Max. Could easily be mistaken for each other. The MAN leaves, MAX watches him then looks back at his phone.

The pub door bursts open. CHRISSIE (58) comes in – slightly flustered but composed, stylish. She scans the room. Spots Max and heads straight for him.

CHRISSIE  
Nathan...?

MAX looks up, startled.

MAX  
Sorry?

CHRISSIE  
Nathan Detroit?

MAX  
(confused)  
From *Guys and Dolls*...?

Her relief is palpable.

CHRISSIE  
Yes! Thank God. I thought I'd have  
to walk straight back out.

She offers her hand.

CHRISSIE (CONT'D)  
I'm Christine - Actually it's  
Chrissie. Sorry I'm late.

MAX hesitates, then shakes it.

MAX  
I think you've got the wrong  
person.

CHRISSIE  
I know it's not your real name.

She gestures to a stool - already sitting.

CHRISSIE (CONT'D)  
Shall I? We've time for a drink  
before we go.

MAX  
Go where?

She's still slightly flustered, but in control.

CHRISSIE  
The charity ball. I did say when I  
booked you.

MAX  
Booked?

CHRISSIE  
Yes. Online - We confirmed on the  
phone.

She searches her bag. Oblivious to his confusion.

CHRISSIE (CONT'D)  
Do you want paying now?

                  MAX  
Paying?

She places a thick envelope on the bar.

                  CHRISSIE  
Five hundred. As contracted.

MAX stares at it.

                  MAX  
You've definitely got the wrong  
person.

                  CHRISSIE  
You're Nathan.

                  MAX  
I'm not.

She looks at him. His face in particular.

                  CHRISSIE  
I know you're not. But you are...If  
you know what I mean.

                  MAX  
I really don't.

                  CHRISSIE  
My train was late...And the photo's  
a bit blurry on your website.  
                  (squints at his face)  
Looks like you.

                  MAX  
That explains it.

                  CHRISSIE  
Explains what?

                  MAX  
A bloke just left who could've been  
my twin.

A beat. Then - A sudden realisation.

                  CHRISSIE  
Oh God.

They sit, neither saying anything, the noise of the pub filling the gap. MAX clears his throat.

MAX  
Can I get you a drink?

A beat.

CHRISSIE  
Gin and tonic, please. Large.

He orders. She takes a large mouthful.

MAX  
Better?

She nods. Finishes it.

MAX (CONT'D)  
What was I meant to be doing?

CHRISSIE  
It doesn't matter now.

MAX  
You've just given me five hundred quid.

CHRISSIE  
I haven't though, have I?

A beat.

CHRISSIE (CONT'D)  
It's for five hours.

MAX  
Five hours of...?

CHRISSIE  
Being my companion.

MAX  
(louder than intended)  
You mean...An escort?

The noise in the pub drops. Some heads turn. ROB (25), mid-darts game, doesn't even pretend not to listen.

CHRISSIE  
I don't use that word.

MAX  
I'm not surprised.

CHRISSIE  
 Meaning?

                  MAX  
 We all know what an escort does...

                  CHRISSIE  
 Do we?

                  MAX  
 Of course we do.

MAX gives her a knowing smile. CHRISSIE'S repulsed.

                  CHRISSIE  
 My god...You actually think...

She stops. Tries to grab the envelope. MAX stops her. Instinctive. Even he's surprised. She stands.

                  CHRISSIE (CONT'D)  
 I'm paying for respectability. Not  
 a shag.

She tries again. He holds on to it. Tightly. Max looks at her, about to say something.

                  CHRISSIE (CONT'D)  
 Don't say another word.

MAX sees she's genuinely angry. He gestures for her to sit.

                  MAX  
 I'm sorry. I didn't mean...

                  CHRISSIE  
 Yes you did.

                  MAX  
 I just can't believe someone like  
 you needs...

                  CHRISSIE  
 What's that supposed to mean?

                  MAX  
 You seem...Normal.

She softens - slightly.

                  CHRISSIE  
 I am.

A beat.

CHRISSIE (CONT'D)  
So what's your issue with it?

                  MAX  
Nothing. I just don't know how it  
works...Not around here, anyway.  
                  (then, softer)  
Sorry. I shouldn't have judged you.

                  CHRISSIE  
No. You shouldn't.

                  MAX  
I thought it'd be young blokes  
you'd want - Need.

CHRISSIE laughs.

                  CHRISSIE  
They'd be for a shag.  
                  (then, serious)  
You're to make me look normal.

                  MAX  
Men like me.

She nods.

                  MAX (CONT'D)  
I'm married.

                  CHRISSIE  
So? You're not my companion.

MAX looks at the envelope.

                  MAX  
That's a weeks takings...

                  CHRISSIE  
I'm not apologising for having  
money.

He nods. Stares at the envelope. Then -

                  MAX (CONT'D)  
I need a whizz.

                  CHRISSIE  
                  (disgust)  
I beg your pardon?

                  MAX  
Sorry...I meant the gents.

He heads to the toilets.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. PUB TOILETS - CONTINUOUS**

MAX stares at himself, splashes water on his face, lets it drip. He takes a deep breath, then another. He grips the sink tightly and stares at his wedding ring. He slips it off. Washes his face again. Then puts it back on. Stares at it, then fiddles with it. He looks in the mirror, drying his hands slowly.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. THE KINGS ARMS PUB - CONTINUOUS**

MAX returns. CHRISSIE watches him. He leans against the bar, takes a deep breath. He grabs his pint, finishes it in one.

CHRISSIE

You think what I'm doing is repulsive, don't you?

MAX

No...I just don't understand it.

He looks at the envelope - At the door - Then his reflection behind the bar. He fiddles with his wedding ring.

MAX (CONT'D)

What would I need to do...Exactly?

CHRISSIE

What do you mean?

MAX

You know -

CHRISSIE

I don't.

A beat. Then - She suddenly realises.

CHRISSIE (CONT'D)

Oh my God...You want to be Nathan?

MAX

Maybe.

CHRISSIE

Why?