

ESCORTED

Episode One

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

Mid-afternoon. Low cloud hangs over the high street. Beyond the rooftops, the faint outline of the Dales. MAX TAYLOR (54), sweeps outside his shoe shop. More habit than purpose.

Across the road, a clearance shoe shop screams **50% OFF**. Customers drift in and out. A couple pause outside Max's shop. Glance in. Then drift across the road, into the clearance shop. MAX watches them in silence. He looks back into his own shop. Empty.

A flash of pink 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 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 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 own. Empty. He locks up.

CUT TO:

EXT. TAYLORS HOUSE. - MOMENTS LATER

A neat cul-de-sac of new builds. Aspirational rather than flashy. The road still unfinished. MAX walks up his drive. He spots a smudge on his BMW. Rubs it away with his sleeve. Then heads inside.

CUT TO:

INT. TAYLORS HOUSE. KITCHEN. - LATER

HANNAH (55) clears away dinner. MAX opens the post. An electricity bill. Another reminder. Then — **FINAL DEMAND**. Red across an envelope. He glances at Hannah. Still at the sink. He slips 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.

He shrugs.

MAX
Wish I saw more of them.

HANNAH
I know. It'll pick up.

MAX
It's more than a shop, Hannah.
(then, dejected)
I thought Jake would take over...

He stops. 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 smiles.

MAX
Me neither.

CUT TO:

INT. LOUNGE - LATER

The radio plays 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 fades.

CUT TO:

INT. THE KINGS ARMS PUB. SKIPTON - LATER

A proper Yorkshire pub. Warm, busy, slightly worn around the edges. MAX sits alone at the bar with a pint. A DARTS TEAM argue over a score nobody can remember. A YOUNG COUPLE whisper in the corner. Nearby, a table of ELDERLY REGULARS play dominoes in complete silence, taking no prisoners.

MAX'S phone pings.

CHUB (TEXT)

*Sorry mate, crisis at work. Can you
do next week? I'll buy the beers.*

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 – similar age, similar build. From a distance, they could almost be brothers.

The MAN leaves. MAX watches him then looks back at his phone.

The pub door bursts open. CHRISSIE (58) enters. Stylish. Slightly flustered. The sort of woman used to being in control, and irritated when she isn't.

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*...?

She visibly relaxes.

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. Not a state she enjoys.

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

MAX
Booked?

CHRISSIE
Yes. Online. We confirmed on the
phone.

She rifles through her bag, still completely unaware of 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 studies 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. 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 it clicks.

CHRISSIE

Oh God.

They sit in silence. Awkward. The noise of the pub filling the gap. MAX stares at the envelope. Clears his throat.

MAX

Can I get you a drink?

She hesitates.

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?

CHRISSIE looks away. Turns back.

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 pub goes quiet. A few heads turn. ROB (25), mid-darts game, doesn't even bother to pretend he's not listening.

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 looks horrified.

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

CHRISSIE jumps to her feet. Lunges for the envelope. MAX grabs it first. Instinctive. They're both surprised.

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

She lunges again. He holds on. They briefly wrestle for the envelope. Suddenly spot the BARTENDER staring at them. They let go at exactly the same moment.

Awkward silence.

MAX clears his throat, about to say something.

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

He gestures for her to sit.

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

CHRISSIE
Yes you did.

She sits back down. More perched than seated.

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

CHRISSIE
What's that supposed to mean?

MAX
You seem...Normal.

She softens - slightly. A smile threatens to appear.

CHRISSIE
I am.

She composes herself, the warmth vanishing as quickly as it came.

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

MAX
Nothing. I just didn't think people
did that round here.
(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.
(serious)
You're to make me look normal.

MAX
Men like me.

She nods. Acknowledging her mistake.

MAX (CONT'D)
...I'm married.

CHRISSIE
So? You're not my companion, are
you?

MAX looks at the envelope.

MAX
That's a week's takings...

CHRISSIE
I'm not apologising for having
money.

He nods respectfully. Eyes still fixed on the envelope.

 MAX (CONT'D)
I need a whizz.

 CHRISSIE
 (disgust)
I beg your pardon?

MAX looks like a man who'd quite like a second attempt.

 MAX
...Sorry. I meant the gents.

He heads to the toilets. CHRISSIE watches him. Curious.

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. Still curious. He leans against the bar, takes a deep breath, then downs his pint in one.

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

 MAX
No...I don't get it, that's all.

He looks at the envelope. 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?