ESCORTED

Episode One

Written by

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EXT. SHOOBY SHOO SHOP, SKIPTON - DAY

Mid-afternoon. Low clouds drape themselves over the high street. Beyond the rooftops, the faint outline of the Dales.

MAX TAYLOR (54) sweeps outside his shoe shop but his heart's not really in it. Across the road, a clearance shoe shop with **50% OFF** banners everywhere. Customers stroll in and out.

A couple pause outside Max's shop. They glance through the window, then walk across the road, into the clearance shop. MAX watches them. 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 shawl. She's all energy.

She spots Max.

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

He 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. Boisterous. Blows him an exaggerated kiss.

MANDY (CONT'D)
You closing up?

He 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 at the Arms tonight.

She waves, then hurries back inside as quickly as she appeared. MAX lingers a moment. He stares at the clearance shop. Locks up.

CUT TO:

EXT. MAX'S HOUSE, SKIPTON - MOMENTS LATER

A neat cul-de-sac of new builds. They are aspirational rather than flashy. MAX walks up the unfinished road and on to his drive. He spots a smudge on his BMW. He gently rubs it away with his sleeve, then heads inside.

CUT TO:

INT. MAX'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - LATER

HANNAH (55) clears away dinner while MAX sifts through the post. Several invoices, assorted junk mail. Then — a **FINAL DEMAND**. Bold red across the envelope. He glances at Hannah, still tidying up. He quickly puts it into his pocket.

HANNAH
How was today?

MAX
You know.

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.

MAX
It's more than a shop, Hannah.
(then, dejected)
I thought Jake would be running it...

He stops. She passes behind him and rests a hand on his shoulder. Gentle. Familiar.

HANNAH
Hey. Not tonight. Brenda says Chub can’t wait to see you.

He smiles.

MAX
Ditto. It's been ages.

CUT TO:

INT. MAX'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - LATER

The radio plays from the kitchen. MAX stands at the mirror, adjusting his shirt. He checks his jacket. HANNAH appears behind him.

HANNAH
(proud)
Look at you.

MAX
A bit much?

HANNAH
No. You look just reight.

She adjusts his lapel and brushes away stray hairs — hers. From the kitchen — **Enrique Iglesias, “Hero”** begins to play.

HANNAH (CONT'D)
(enthusiastic)
Come here you, it's our song!

She grabs him and pulls him into the middle of the room. They attempt to dance — not quite in sync, bumping into the sofa. Then, she trips. He manages to hold on to her. They laugh.

MAX begins to edge towards the front door.

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

She holds on a beat. Then lets go.

HANNAH
Spoil sport! Go on then, off you go.

They continue to laugh. She kisses his cheek and watches him walk down the drive. Her smile fades as he disappears.

CUT TO:

INT. BAR, KINGS ARMS PUB, SKIPTON - LATER

A proper Yorkshire pub. Warm, busy, but 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 and cuddle in the corner. Nearby, a table of ELDERLY REGULARS play dominoes in complete silence, deadly serious.

MAX'S phone pings.

CHUB (TEXT)
Sorry mate, crisis at work. Can you do next week? I'll buy the beers.

He replies.

MAX (TEXT)
No problem, hope all okay.

He drops the phone onto the bar in disappointment. He looks around. A MAN exits the toilets — similar age, similar build. From a distance, they could be twins.

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

A beat.

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

She scans the room and spots Max. She 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.

He 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 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.

He 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
The photo's a bit blurry on your website.
(squints at his face)
It 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.

Silence. The noise of the pub fills the awkwardness. MAX stares at the envelope, then coughs nervously.

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?

She 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.

He gives her a knowing smile. She looks horrified.

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

She jumps to her feet and lunges for the envelope. MAX grabs it first. Instinctive. They're both shocked.

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

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

Another awkward silence.

Eventually, MAX opens his mouth, ready to say something.

CHRISSIE (CONT'D)
Don't you dare 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 tiny smile appears.

CHRISSIE
I am.

The smile vanishes 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. Sorry. I shouldn’t have judged you.

CHRISSIE
No. You shouldn't.

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

She laughs.

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

MAX
You mean men like me.

She nods, acknowledging her mistake.

MAX (CONT'D)
... I’m married.

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

He looks at the envelope.

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

CHRISSIE
I'm not apologising for having money.

He nods respectfully, his eyes still fixed on the envelope.

MAX
I need a whizz.

CHRISSIE
(disgust)
I beg your pardon?

He wishes he'd phrased that differently.

MAX
... Sorry. I meant the gents.

He heads to the toilets. She watches him, curious.

CUT TO:

INT. TOILETS, KINGS ARMS PUB - CONTINUOUS

MAX stares at himself. He takes a deep breath, then another. He grips the sink tightly and stares at his wedding ring. He takes it off. Washes his face. He puts the ring back on and fiddles with it. He looks in the mirror, staring at himself. He takes another deep breath, fiddles with his ring again.

CUT TO:

INT. BAR, KINGS ARMS PUB - CONTINUOUS

MAX exits the toilets, walks slowly. 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.