

ESCAPISM

Episode 1

by

Pascoe Foxell

pfoxell@gmail.com

EXT. STREET - DAY

A BUSINESSMAN sprints down the street, panicked. Ragged breaths. Head WHIPPING back to look over his shoulder. He forces himself to speed up.

From somewhere up above, a striking, noirish 25-year-old WOMAN, all in black, looks down on him. She's keeping track of every movement. Excited.

Her gaze flicks behind the Businessman, where a TRACKSUIT-WEARING MAN is coming fast. He's gaining with ease, a wide grin stretched across his face.

The Tracksuit gets closer. Closer again.

The Businessman pushes hard. No good though. Closer again.

The woman savours the moment. Tensing up, ready for the climax.

Here it comes.

But now we get a better, wider view of the street scene. A SMALL BUS passes the Businessman and slows down at a stop just ahead of him. He runs to get on.

The Tracksuit breezes on by, not even glancing at the Businessman.

Up above, the woman still looks down. Lifts a TOOTHBRUSH to her mouth, starts brushing. We now see that her black clothes are PYJAMAS, that she's looking out her bedroom window - a view which encompasses not just the street, but also the rolling, farm-strewn countryside just beyond.

This is ZOE.

INT. ZOE'S BEDROOM - DAY [CONTINUOUS]

Zoe spits the toothpaste into a flowerpot on her windowsill, then steps back into the small room. Starts rifling through the mess everywhere, looking for some clothes, in the process pushing aside a CAMERA and a FILM SCRIPT titled 'DEADSCAPE'.

The walls of her room are lined with POSTERS, all for POST-APOCALYPTIC FILMS, niche and not-so-niche classics of the genre: 'The World, the Flesh and the Devil', 'The Day The Earth Caught Fire' '28 Days Later' etc.

We hear a child SCREAM OUT.

INT. FOYER - DAY

A LITTLE BOY lies back on the floor, wailing away in DEEP ANGUISH. Louder and louder.

Over him crouches a RED-ROBED FIGURE. Just about audible, through the screams, is a NASTY SLURPING sound.

With each slurp, the boy's legs and arms *jerk* upwards, his screams intensifying.

Out the other end of the foyer, just outside the building, stands Zoe. Smoking. Watching all this, fascinated.

Her cigarette finished, she stubs it out, then comes inside. Walks past the scene, which we can now see with the proper context:

An ICE-CREAM lies fallen on the ground, a LITTLE DOG slurping away at it. The boy is watching all this and having a tantrum, while his MOTHER crouches over him, trying to comfort him. She wears a red coat.

Zoe pulls off her own coat, revealing a polo-neck underneath with the words *The Rex: Your Local Nellford Cinema* on the back.

The Rex has clearly seen better days. The foyer is a small place, all frayed carpets and suspicious stains, lingering bits of paint that used to extend over what are now unadorned concrete walls. A LIFT has an OUT-OF-ORDER sign on it.

At the other end of the foyer is a BOX-OFFICE WINDOW. A bored looking sixteen-year-old, CALLUM, sits inside. He perks up when he sees Zoe, gives her a flustered little half-wave and smile. Zoe just raises her eyebrows at him, glancing back at the wailing child.

She pushes through an EMPLOYEES ONLY door.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

An UNDULATING EXPANSE of brownish-yellow dunes extend out in front of us. In the extreme foreground, ZOE looks out over all this, her face turned away.

Then - in the sky! A BRIGHT FIERY ORB OF LIGHT sears in, down and down towards the earth below.

Just as it is about to hit, we hear a COUGH and FOOTSTEPS.

WIDER VIEW - DESK

Zoe holds a LIT MATCH over a several mass piles of BROWN SUGAR. Or, as we knew them a second ago: the fiery orb and the desert plains.

A similarly sized pile of SUGAR PACKETS sits to one side.

For we're in:

INT. BOX OFFICE, THE REX FOYER - DAY

Zoe quickly blows out the match, then grabs a BIN and brushes the bulk of the sugar into it.

Moments later, ARJUN (40s), the cinema manager, comes up a staircase into the foyer. A small-minded, tightly coiled man, Arjun's stretched smiles always seem insincere.

ARJUN
Toilet check on the lower floor
please, Zoe.

He sees the desk, still littered with a good amount of sugar. Stares at it, then up at Zoe, disgusted.

Taking a flyer from the counter, Zoe sweeps up the rest of the remaining sugar, knocking it into the bin.

ZOE
All gone.

ARJUN
Hoover.

Zoe rolls her eyes.

ARJUN
What is it I always say, Zoe?

ZOE
I don't know.

ARJUN
'Laziness is just *self-hatred* in
disguise.'

ZOE
Never heard you say that before.

Arjun licks his finger, places it on the counter, holds it up in her face - a mass of sugar grains on it.

ARJUN
Hoover. And you'll need a mop for
downstairs.

Zoe's face falls.

ZOE
Again?

Arjun shrugs, giving her a not-quite-sympathetic smile. Pops his finger in his mouth and sucks off the sugar.