

BEFORWARDS

by

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Episode 1

30 minute TV comedy-drama pilot

NOTE: Scenes marked (NOW) are set in the present.
Those marked (THEN) are set in the past.

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INT. FLAT - HALLWAY - EVENING (NOW)

We're staring at a front door from the inside. Nothing's happening. It's like watching paint dr--

-- oh, the door flies open and a YOUNG WOMAN (who we only see from the chest down) bursts into the hallway, draped in a WEDDING DRESS; brilliant white lace soiled by disturbing blotches of crimson. Oh, is that blood? It is! WTF?

She slams the door shut. Props her back against the wood. We move upwards to see the tear-stained face of twenty-something ALICE. She's wearing black lipstick and Frankenstein "stitches" transfers on both cheeks. Oh, thank God, she hasn't murdered somebody, this is a Halloween costume.

She's upset, trying her hardest to suppress her emotion, but she can't help herself, she lets it all out, full-on boo-hoing, oh, God, this girl is devastated.

EXT. BUSY PEDESTRIANISED STREET - AFTERNOON (THEN)

A happier, carefree ALICE sails through herds of shoppers in a care assistant's uniform. Her hair is different. Shorter.

CAPTION: "THEN."

Ah, we work it out. This is a PAST timeline.

Then argh, from nowhere, KYLE leaps in front of her.

KYLE

Helloooooo!!! Spare me a minute of your time?

KYLE is a twenty-something CHARITY MUGGER, clipboard in hand.

ALICE

God, you scared the life out of me. Your intro needs serious work.

ALICE, although a tad shaken up, sees the funny side.

KYLE

Yeah, sorry, my bad. First day on the job. Bit clueless... so I'm following the advice my flatmate Cam gave me this morning. "Don't dither, don't hesitate, leap into action."

ALICE

I have a feeling he meant figuratively.

KYLE

Well, yeah, but people take one look at a charity mugger and leg it in the opposite direction. This way, I'm using the element of surprise... which isn't exactly working either. One woman threatened to have me arrested.

She's endeared by his... what is it about him? Ah, his almost child-like naivety, yes, that.

ALICE

I'd hate to think what else this Cam advised you to do.

INT. FLAT - KITCHEN - MORNING (THEN)

Earlier. KYLE in his charity mugger gear is preparing two coffees whilst listening to advice from twenty-something CAM, suit and tie, "sharp salesman" written all over him.

CAM

Engage with your lead. Introduce yourself.

EXT. BUSY PEDESTRIANISED STREET - AFTERNOON (THEN)

KYLE

By the way... I'm Kyle.

ALICE

Alice.

INT. FLAT - KITCHEN - MORNING (THEN)

CAM

Get straight in there with your sales pitch.

EXT. BUSY PEDESTRIANISED STREET - AFTERNOON (THEN)

KYLE

Want to sign up? It's for a good cause.

INT. FLAT - KITCHEN - MORNING (THEN)

CAM

You have rehearsed it, right?

It's obvious that KYLE hasn't, but --

KYLE

Yeah, course. Word for word.

EXT. BUSY PEDESTRIANISED STREET - AFTERNOON (THEN)

KYLE

It's something about rainforests...
palm oil... stuff.

ALICE laughs. She likes this guy, but --

ALICE

Oh, Kyle, you have to be the worst
charity mugger ever. Good luck with
your sign-ups.

And she begins to walk away.

INT. FLAT - KITCHEN - MORNING (THEN)

CAM

If you feel you're losing this lead,
step up your campaign.

EXT. BUSY PEDESTRIANISED STREET - AFTERNOON (THEN)

KYLE

No, no, no, don't go. At least give me
something.

ALICE stops and turns around, intrigued.

ALICE

Like what?

INT. FLAT - KITCHEN - MORNING (THEN)

CAM

Be bold. Be brave. Take that risk.

EXT. BUSY PEDESTRIANISED STREET - AFTERNOON (THEN)

KYLE

Your phone number? So we can maybe...
arrange to go out for a drink. And talk
about rainforests... palm oil... stuff.

ALICE

For all I know, you could be an axe
murderer.

KYLE

I promise I'm not. And even if I was,
it would be so ungentlemanly of me to
bludgeon you to death on the first
date.

ALICE is tempted, but --

ALICE
I'm not sure. I've not long got out of
a nightmare relationship.

KYLE
How nightmare?

INT. HOUSE - ALICE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT (THEN)

ALICE in bed, tired, irritated, phone pressed against ear.

ALICE
It's three o'clock in the morning and
you are hopelessly bladdered. I don't
care how horny you're feeling, you are
not coming over.

She listens further, then sits bolt upright, goggle-eyed.

ALICE
What do you mean you're standing naked
in my front garden?

EXT. BUSY PEDESTRIANISED STREET - AFTERNOON (THEN)

KYLE
Woh. On a nutter scale of one to ten,
your ex has got to be an eleven.

INT. FLAT - KITCHEN - MORNING (THEN)

CAM
Finally, seal the deal with something
deep. Something profound. The kind of
big speech you'd find in a movie.

EXT. BUSY PEDESTRIANISED STREET - AFTERNOON (THEN)

KYLE
See this face? Does it look like it's
attached to an idiot who stands naked
in your front garden at 3AM?

A passing OLD LADY gives him a funny look. He calls to her --

KYLE
No, no, I wasn't talking about myself.

Trotting quickly away, the OLD LADY doesn't believe him. In
response, ALICE giggles. KYLE, shrugging it off and returning to
a somewhat overly performed profound tone, says --

KYLE

Alice. Take a chance on me. What's the worst that could happen?

INT. FLAT - HALLWAY - EVENING (NOW)

ALICE. Still in that blood-stained wedding dress. In one hand, a set of keys. In the other, a packed suitcase. She places the keys on a nearby table. She won't be needing them any more.

CAPTION: "NOW."

Out comes her phone. Floating in the air beside her, an animation of her contacts list shows us what she's doing in real-time. She selects KYLE from the list and hits delete. Delete contact? Are you sure? Yes. Contact deleted.

The girl offers the flat one final farewell glance --

ALICE

Yeah. What's the worst that could happen?

-- and, beginning to choke up again, she leaves.

BLACK

TITLE CARD: "BEFORWARDS."

INT. PUB - EVENING (THEN)

KYLE, smart shirt and jeans, watches as CAM, dressed similar but sharper, feeds coinage to an ever-hungry fruit machine.

CAPTION: "THEN."

CAM

I can't believe you asked her out. In broad daylight. Weren't you scared?

KYLE

Terrified. But it seemed... right.

CAM

Oh, mate. Chatting up girls in the real world is so last century. You seriously need to embrace the modern age and download a --

KYLE

A dating app, yeah, so you keep telling me. Personally, I'd rather take my chances old-school.

CAM

Get the frog out of here. A dating app is perfect for a shy guy like you. Zero face-to-face awkwardness. Equally zero poorly executed chat-up lines. Instead, win the girl over with perfectly composed text messages. And if there's sod all chemistry when you do finally meet, not to worry. You've got hundreds of replacements at your fingertips.

KYLE

I only want one.

CAM

Kyle. Listen to me. If God meant for us blokes to stick with one girl at a time, why give us two testicles?

KYLE

That... doesn't even make sense.

CAM

Check out my latest. Fit or what?

CAM pulls out his phone. A floating animation shows us that he's selecting a photo of a GIRL we will soon know as MEGAN. He shows KYLE the piccie. KYLE frowns.

KYLE

What happened to Danielle?

CAM

Deleted.

KYLE

Oh, Cam. She was nice. That stupid app has turned you into a cliché bastard. You never used to be so cold.

CAM

Mate. Danielle spoke about baby names. On the second date! If that's not a warning sign, I don't know what is. I mean, can you seriously picture me ever settling down and having a kid?

INT. HOUSE - CAM AND MEGAN'S BEDROOM - EVENING (NOW)

CAM, fully clothed, is fast asleep on top of a double bed. In his arms is a YOUNG BABY BOY, gooing and gurgling. A half-consumed bottle of formula milk lays redundant beside them.

INT. HOUSE - HALLWAY - EVENING (NOW)

CAPTION: "NOW."

CAM'S live-in girlfriend MEGAN arrives home, early 20s, the GIRL in the photo on CAM'S phone, different hairstyle. She peels off her trenchcoat to reveal a strip-a-gram outfit underneath.

MEGAN

Cam?

No answer. So she begins to climb the stairs.

INT. HOUSE - CAM AND MEGAN'S BEDROOM - EVENING (NOW)

MEGAN enters the bedroom and grins at the discovery of a zonked out father of their child. She can't resist it, she creeps over to him, puts her mouth close to his ear and --

MEGAN

Wakey, wakey!

CAM wakes with a start, realises where he is, who he's supposed to be feeding. He hastily grabs the bottle, the teat shoved into his own mouth, oops, clumsy correction, the BABY'S mouth.

CAM

Wasn't asleep, resting my eyes.

MEGAN gives a "yeah, right" look. Plonks her bum on the bed.

MEGAN

I am so glad to be home.

CAM

Tough gig?

MEGAN

Eightieth birthday party.

CAM

Oh, please tell me you didn't do the full strip.

MEGAN

Paid me double the going rate.

CAM

What if you'd given him a heart attack?

MEGAN

You'll be pleased to know, her heart is still ticking.

CAM. Stunned. Her? He's just about to comment when the doorbell bing-bongs. He clambers to his feet and passes MEGAN the BABY.

CAM
Oooh, trick-or-treaters. Time to offer them my chocolate-covered sprouts.

INT. HOUSE - HALLWAY - EVENING (NOW)

Platter of "chocolates" in hand, CAM opens the front door to... oh, it's ALICE; wedding dress, suitcase, all cried out.

ALICE
I've left him.

INT. BUSY PUB - EVENING (THEN)

KYLE and ALICE stand at the bar, drinks freshly purchased.

CAPTION: "THEN."

KYLE
I have to admit, Alice, I was worried you'd decided to no-show me.

ALICE
I very nearly did. But then I thought about what you said.

KYLE
Oh. Cool. -- Uh, which part exactly?

ALICE throws him a "like, duh" look as they both head for a vacant table at the far end of the pub.

ALICE
Taking a chance on you.

KYLE
Oh, yeah, yeah, I knew that. I was... just testing you.

ALICE
How's the charity mugging going?

KYLE
I jacked it in. So not me. I only took the job 'cause I thought it would be a giggle. It's cool though, I have enough money to see me through for a while. And I own my flat outright, so zero worries there.

They sit down at the table. ALICE is intrigued.

ALICE

Don't take this the wrong way, Kyle,
but you don't look the homeowner type.

KYLE

My parents bought it for me.

ALICE

Wow. Generous.

KYLE

Actually, it was their way of saying
sorry for giving me up as a baby.

ALICE

Oh, my God. You were adopted?

KYLE

I can't complain, I had a happy
childhood. But when I came of age, I
decided to track down my real folks.
When we were reunited, they couldn't be
any more apologetic. They've been
showering me with gifts ever since.

ALICE

Sounds like you've got it made.

KYLE grimaces, staring into space, thinking about --

INT. FLAT - LOUNGE - MORNING (THEN)

-- KYLE on his mobile, looking both distressed and incredulous,
holding a large rotary washing line upright by its pole.

KYLE

Dad. What were you thinking, buying me
a rotary washing line? This flat has no
garden. You know that.

INT. BUSY PUB - EVENING (THEN)

KYLE

Yeah. Lucky me. So. What about yours?
Devoted parents or family from Hell?

ALICE

I don't really want to talk about them.

KYLE

Spill. I want all the gory details.

ALICE

No, believe me, you don't.

KYLE

Try me.

She stiffens - well, he asked for it - then shoots through a rapid monologue, rush, rush, rush, not stopping for breath.

ALICE

Seven years ago, my dad did the dirty on my mum. Cue the messy divorce. My younger sister took Daddy Dearest's side and has lived with him ever since. We're not close. They only contact me when they feel like it. In contrast, my mother was amazing. Was being the operative word. She died just under two years ago. Car accident. In her Will, she left me her house. My sister has always resented that decision. Life's a bitch, death's a bastard, the end.

Awkward, uncomfortable silence. KYLE'S mouth hangs open. He doesn't know what to say. Until --

KYLE

Do you... fancy a packet of crisps?

Phew, the awkwardness is quashed by CAM and MEGAN marching over to the table, arm in arm.

ALICE and MEGAN'S mutual shocked recognition goes unnoticed.

CAM

Oh, bugger, you must be Alice. You turned up after all. Wager lost, twenty notes poorer. -- Oh, by the way, the lovely young lady on my arm is my date for this evening. Her name is --

ALICE

Megan.

CAM

Oh. You know each other?

ALICE/MEGAN

She's my sister.

KYLE and CAM display matching gawps. The sisters, eye-narrowed indifference.