

CONSTANT ESCAPEMENT

FADE IN:

EXT. LANDELL HOUSE - NIGHT

An old two-story building surrounded by forest. Sounds of cicadas and frogs. A lone light in an upstairs window switches off.

INT. LANDELL HOUSE - BASEMENT - NIGHT

Dark and large. Overhead lights switch on in sequence. On a bench four computer monitors flicker into life. A fly wanders over a keyboard.

A grayish metal box takes up one wall. A huge homemade machine - a mixture of steampunk and Anthony Gormley. Numerous pipes and cables snake from it into the floor.

A humming sound. It gets louder and deeper. The room shakes. Tools hanging on the wall fall.

The noise and shaking reaches a crescendo then... abruptly ceases. A moth flutters around one of the lights.

A hatch on the large metal box clicks open. Smoke whispers out. The hatch creaks open wide. From it ERIC emerges. He's thirties, dark hair slicked back. He wears an old style smart suit. Blood covers his hands and face.

He stumbles out, attempts to balance himself. He fails. Falls hard onto the concrete floor. His eyes roll back. For a second his eyelids flicker then close. Blood pools on the floor from his fingertips.

The computer monitors switch off. The lights flicker then die. Darkness.

LATER

The sound of a door creaking open. Footsteps on stairs. The lights switch on. ANNIE blinks as she surveys the room. She's late thirties, long blonde hair tied up, in a dressing gown and barefoot. She rushes to the prone and unconscious Eric.

In her haste she steps into a pool of blood, retracts her foot with a sharp intake of breath. She kneels down beside him, grabs him by his shoulders to shake him.

ANNIE

Eric? Eric, wake up. Oh, Christ.

He remains unconscious. With a struggle she puts him on his side.

ANNIE

You bloody fool. I told you not...

She places two fingers on his throat for a pulse. Anxiously she shifts her fingers. Her expression darkens.

With her sleeve she wipes blood from his lips. Takes a deep breath then blows air into his mouth. She repeats it, tries again for a pulse.

Her eyes light up as he coughs. His eyes open slowly. Fear fills them. Annie cradles him in her lap, runs her fingers through his hair.

ANNIE

It's okay. It's okay. You're back now. Everything's okay.

ERIC

Is he back?

Annie shakes her head.

INT. LANDELL HOUSE - SPARE BEDROOM - LATER

Boxes and dusty gym equipment. The wallpaper features children's cartoon characters.

Eric lies shirtless on his back on an exercise bench. The blood has gone. His hair is clean and damp. Small cuts mark his chest and arms. Plasters and dressings cover others.

Annie threads a needle with gloved hands. He watches her with a rueful look on his face.

ERIC

We should change that wallpaper.

ANNIE

Most of that blood wasn't yours.

Eric shakes his head then yelps as Annie sews up a wound on his side.

ANNIE

Hold still or it'll hurt more. So whose blood was it?

Eric bites his lip. Sighs.

ERIC

I dunno. Nobody. Nobody important.
Not the right guy, obviously.

She glances at him as she finishes the stitching. Puts a dressing over it.

ANNIE

You told me nobody was going to get hurt.

He's about to speak but thinks better of it.

Annie takes off her gloves.

ANNIE

You're done. Those other cuts will heal themselves.

ERIC

It doesn't work the way I thought it would. The timings aren't precise enough to -

ANNIE

You should go the hospital. Get a tetanus booster. Just in case.

ERIC

Can't you get one for me? They'll ask too many questions.

ANNIE

I'm not ste... I'm not taking stuff from work for you. I nearly got caught the last time. There isn't going to be a next time.

She heads for the door.

ERIC

Aren't you going to ask me?

ANNIE

I don't need to. He's not here, never will... You're right, you should change the wallpaper.

She leaves.

Eric bows his head. He winces as he struggles to get up.

INT. LANDELL HOUSE - MAIN BEDROOM - NIGHT

Dark and quiet. Annie lies asleep on her side.

Eric cuddles her. She stirs.

ERIC

I love you.

ANNIE

If you do you'd stop.

INT. LANDELL HOUSE - DINING ROOM - DAY

Plain but functional. A painting of HG Wells hangs on a wall.

Eric, in a dressing gown, sits at the table eating cereal in a bowl. He looks tired but content. His hair needs combing.

Opposite him Annie sips coffee and flicks through a newspaper. She's in a business suit and looking good.

ERIC

What time are you going?

She keeps her eyes on the paper when she answers -

ANNIE

Soon. Why?

ERIC

You know why. I just -

ANNIE

I've got to go to work, Eric. I know you're hungry and desperate to tell me all about it. You can cook your own breakfast and tell the dog all about it.

In a basket in the corner SYBIL, a well-fed black labrador, cocks an ear.

ANNIE

Someone's got to be the adult around here.

Annie drains her coffee and stands. Raises an eyebrow at Eric's puppy dog expression.

ERIC

What I'm doing is... I remember
when you used to be nice to me.

ANNIE

Vice versa. Walk the dog. And for
God's sake, be here when I get
back. Should be about nine. If not,
I'll ring. Okay?

ERIC

Okay, Annie.

She kisses him on the cheek then leaves. Eric listens for her
car to drive away then hurries out of the room to -

BASEMENT

The pools of blood stop him in his tracks. He skirts around
them to a cupboard to rummage inside. He takes out a brick
sized metal box with a cable trailing from it. Reaches back
in, pulls out an old leatherbound book.

On his way back to the stairs his fingers run over the
surface of the large metal machine.

ERIC

Later.

LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

He unplugs the internet cable from a desktop computer then
plugs the metal box into it. He connects the internet cable
to the box.

He flicks through the book. Handwritten notes and diagrams
fill its pages. On the computer monitor a log-in page for a
government research facility. Lights on the brick sized box
flash. On screen a message - 'Welcome, Professor Conroy'.

Eric raises an eyebrow and smirks as he flicks through
articles and schematics. In her basket the dog cocks her head
again then whimpers. He turns to her.

ERIC

In a mo, Sybil.

EXT. JOSEPH STREET - DAY

Eric ambles by shops and cafes with Sybil on a lead.

He wears jeans and a jacket. Up ahead he spots BRANDON, twenty, tattoos, piercings, skinny. Before Eric can cross the street to avoid him -

BRANDON

Yo, Eric!

Eric plasters a fake smile on his face as Brandon approaches then gets a bit too close for Eric's comfort.

BRANDON

So, you got anything for me?

Eric glances around to ensure no-one's close enough to hear.

ERIC

Er no, nothing at the moment,
Brandon. Just out walking the dog.
Maybe next week.

Brandon shrugs. Offers his fist for Eric to bump, which he does with awkwardness. Brandon guffaws and moves off, much to Eric's relief. He strolls on with the dog.

They reach a corner and stop for a break in traffic. Eric eyes a Workman adding the final touches to a new billboard poster across the way.

It features a huge image of the grinning face and perfect teeth of a well groomed middle-aged man. Eric silently mouths the tagline of 'Abe Randolph for Senate. Unity, leadership and prosperity for all.'

ERIC

Of all the...

Eric and Sybil wander on with speed. An ambulance roars past them, siren on and lights flashing.

EXT. LANDELL HOUSE - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

SUPER: Ten Years Earlier

A long-haired and tearful Eric watches an ambulance speed away, siren blaring.

Nearby Abe Randolph, in leather pants, stands in front of a shiny sports car talking with two Policemen. Blood, dents and a smashed headlight mar the front of the car.

Eric sees Abe grin and shrug. The Policemen giggle. Rage fills Eric's face as he lunges for Abe.

The Policemen hold him back. Even so he manages to kick Abe in the crotch. Abe doubles over with pain.

ABE

Because your son's going to hospital, I'll let that go.

INT. LANDELL HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

The TV is old style and off, the walls are stripped and ready for paint. Eric and Annie, both pale and drawn, sit on an old sofa. Opposite them sits a bald PRIEST in his sixties. He flicks through a diary.

PRIEST

We could have it on Friday. Would Friday morning be alright with you for the funeral? I'll pencil it in.

He does so.

END FLASHBACK

INT. LANDELL HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Eric sits on the sofa staring at a muted plasma TV as he flicks through channels with a remote. A clock on the mantelpiece reads 9:20.

He tuts, picks up the landline. Dials. It rings. Goes to voicemail.

ANNIE (V.O.)

Hi, this is Dr. Anne Landell.
Please leave a message.

With a bigger tut he dials another number. Rings. Connects.

ERIC

Oh hi. Is Dr. Landell there? I'm her husband... Oh. Any idea when she'll be out of surgery?... I see... No, tell her to call me.
Thanks.

He ends the call. Flicks to a news channel. Images of war in desert countries flash silently on the screen.

A picture of a smiling Abe Randolph replaces them - a campaign ad. Eric eyes it with menace. He changes channel. Showbiz news. Then the Randolph ad again.

ERIC

Your whole bloody family is a bunch
of redneck, bible bashing, war
mongering theives. And liars.
Always have been. Always bloody
will be. Bloody murderers too.

He flicks channels - the same ad. He changes again - showbiz.

Eric shakes his head.

ERIC

Shit on a glitter stick.

His eyes drift to the door to the basement.

ERIC

Whole family...

Eric gets back on the computer. He flicks through articles on
Abe Randolph. Stops on one on the Randolph family tree.

Sybil the dog wanders in to lie at his feet. He pets her.

ERIC

If I got it right, for once, she
need never know. I could be back
before...

His gaze drifts into space. The dog watches him with boredom.

Eric jumps to his feet and dashes to the basement door.

BASEMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Lights on and computers fired up, Eric types and clicks
furiously with a keyboard and mouse. He flicks through
program menus and alters settings. Old newspapers cover the
blood on the floor.

Behind him the huge metal machine hums into life. Tools on
the wall rattle and shake.

Eric bends down to open a cupboard. Inside is a safe. He
turns the combination lock. It gives a satisfying click.

Eric pulls the door open, reaches in. Pulls out a handgun, a
box of bullets and a silencer. He loads it, checks the
safety. He screws on the silencer.

He puts it into the waist of the back of his pants, adjusts
himself, thinks better of it. Pockets it in his suit jacket.

He checks the details on a monitor then clicks the mouse on an icon labeled 'Initiate'. The humming increases. The door to the large machine clicks open.

Eric glances back around the room, puts his hand in his pocket to feel for the gun then steps into the machine.

The door clicks shut. The humming gets louder...

INT. MACHINE

Cables, wires and pipes almost cover the ceiling and walls.

In the centre of the machine is a black coffin shaped object. Eric gets into it. As the lid closes a siren blares three times. The machine fills with a blinding blue light.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

A flash of white light amongst the bushes and trees. The black coffin appears. It slides a few feet on the uneven ground until a large bush stops it.

Eric climbs out, breathes in deep. Glances around. He gathers branches to cover the coffin.

ERIC

I should have brought a saw.

EXT. JOSEPH STREET - LATER

It's getting dark. Eric stops at the street sign. It's old style. He gazes along at the buildings - all wooden. The road is now just a muddy track. Men lead horses and carts along it. He's a long way from home.

A derby-hatted young MAN heads towards him carrying a newspaper. Eric admires his huge sideburns and elaborate moustache.

ERIC

May I see your newspaper for a moment, sir?

The Man eyes Eric's clothes and shoes. Proffers the paper with an almost fearful expression.

Eric checks the date - January 12th, 1899. He hands the paper back and hurries away. The man watches him with puzzlement.

Eric passes an ironmonger store. The sign declares 'Randolph and Sons'. Eric peers through the grimy windows. Inside he sees an old Man putting objects on shelves near the back. This is JOSHUA RANDOLPH. He's bald with a snow white beard.

Eric enters the store. A bell rings.

INT. RANDOLPH AND SONS'S IRONMONGER'S EMPORIUM

At the back of the store Joshua glances at Eric as he approaches.

JOSHUA

We're about to close for the day.

ERIC

Are you Joshua? Joshua Randolph?

Joshua turns to him.

JOSHUA

I am. Are we acquainted? I can't say I -

ERIC

Your sons are James and William.
Your wife is Mary. Formerly Cooper.

JOSHUA

All that is so, all upstairs
waiting for me. You seem to know an
awful lot about me, sir. But who
are you?

Eric pulls the gun from his pocket, knocks off the safety.

Alarm fills Joshua's eyes as Eric points the gun at him. He raises his hands but he stares at the gun with curiosity.

JOSHUA

There's not a lot in takings today.
You can take it. Never seen a
weapon like that before. Is it a
Colt?

ERIC

I'm not here for your takings.

JOSHUA

Then what are you here for?

EXT. RANDOLPH AND SONS'S IRONMONGER'S EMPORIUM - NIGHT

Eric rushes from the store. Glances either way - no one around. He runs.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Dark and foreboding. Eric rushes through. Branches scratch his face and hands. He stops, his eyes scan his surroundings. Under his breath he mutters...

ERIC

Where the fuck did I leave it?

He sets off in one direction. Stops, scans around then goes back. He swears under his breath.

LATER

Eric wanders through with plodding steps, a forlorn expression on his face.

ERIC

Oh come on.

He trips, lands hands first in a bush with a scream. He gets up, squints to see what he tripped over - his black coffin.

He lets go of a whoop then glances around with embarrassment. He uncovers it and gets in. A bright flash of white light and it's gone.

INT. LANDELL HOUSE - BASEMENT - NIGHT

The hatch of the machine squeaks as Eric pushes it open. He puts the gun back into the safe with shaking hands.

SPARE ROOM - LATER

Eric runs his fingers along the children's wallpaper on the wall.

ERIC

I don't get it. You should be back.

He stops. The wallpaper is slightly different. The characters have different faces and clothes. Eric blinks. Rubs his forehead. Shakes his head.

LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Eric enters. Glances around. Sybil the dog peers at him as he passes her. He looks at the clock on the mantelpiece - 9:21.

ERIC

Christ, it actually worked. She'll never know if I can...

He lifts his hands - they still shake.

Eric goes into the kitchen. Returns with a full bottle of vodka and a glass. He pours a sizeable measure. Downs it.

Pours another then sits on the sofa. Flicks through TV channels with the remote... showbiz news.

LATER

Eric dozes on the sofa. The vodka bottle is half empty and lies at his feet. The TV shows an in depth interview with Adam Sandler. Eric awakens.

Sees the TV and switches it off with a sneer. He sees 2:45 on the clock. He jumps up with alarm.

ERIC

Annie?

BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Eric peers in - nobody here.

LIVING ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Eric enters scratching his head. He yawns, rubs his eyes.

ERIC

Where the hell are you, Annie?

His words are slightly slurred. He goes back to the sofa and picks up the landline. Dials. A recorded message plays -

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)

The number you have dialled has not been recognised. Please check the number and redial.

ERIC
Oh, for fuck's sake.

He dials another number. Rings. Connects.

ERIC
Oh hi. It's Mr. Landell. Can I
speak to my wife ple... Her name's
Dr. Landell... I don't... What?...
What department's this?... Are you
fucking stupid or wha... And why
the fuck shouldn't I use that type
of lang...

Disconnect tone. Eric stares at the handset. Drops it then
drops himself on the sofa. His foot taps the vodka bottle on
the floor. He bends over to investigate.

ERIC
Oh, hello.

INT. LANDELL HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Eric lies face down and almost fully dressed on the bed on
top of the sheets. He's shirtless and still wearing one shoe.

Sybil the dog sniffs then licks his other bare foot. Eric
awakes slowly.

ERIC
Oh, that's kinda nice, Annie.

He looks down his foot and the dog then jumps up with alarm.

His eyes squint and his hair sticks up on his head. Sybil
whines. Whips around with excitement.

ERIC
You wanna go out, huh?

Sybil jumps with anticipation.

ERIC
Alright. Just let me demolish some
aspirin.

BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Eric peers in the mirror at his bloodshot eyes. Splashes
water on his face. Turns around.

ERIC

Annie.

LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Eric dashes down the stairs with Sybil in hot pursuit. Glances around. Spots 10:04 on the clock on the mantelpiece.

ERIC

Christ, must have missed her.

The dog whines again. Eric puts on his other shoe.

EXT. JOSEPH STREET - DAY

Eric, looking a little healthier and presentable, ambles along with Sybil.

He spots Brandon approaching. Eric stops and puzzles at Brandon's smart clothes and neat hairstyle. The piercings and tattoos are absent. Brandon wanders straight past him.

ERIC

Hey Brandon.

Brandon turns.

BRANDON

Do I know you?

Eric shakes his head. Brandon strolls on. Eric glances back as he and Sybil approach the corner. A Workman has almost finished plastering a new ad to the billboard across the way.

It features a middle-aged man with a huge toothy grin. The tagline reads 'Archie Adamson for Senate. Leadership, unity and liberty. The right choice.'

Eric stares at it then at the Workman. He's bald and in his sixties and bares an uncanny resemblance to the priest. Eric wanders on with a rattled expression. He mutters to himself.

INT. LANDELL HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Eric picks up the phone and dials. It connects.

ERIC

Can I speak to Dr. Landell please... This is -

He stops mid-sentence as he hears a key turn in the front door lock. The door opens. A tall, dark-haired and smartly dressed WOMAN in her forties enters. She carries shopping bags and flashes a smile at Eric as she heads to the kitchen.

Eric drops the phone and follows the woman.

KITCHEN

Eric stands in the doorway. He watches the woman putting groceries in the cupboards.

ERIC
What are you doing?

She glances at him but carries on.

WOMAN
Putting the shopping away, silly.
There's more in the car. Would you
get it for me?

Eric watches her with disbelief on his face.

ERIC
Where's Annie?

WOMAN
Who's Annie?

Eric grabs her arm. The Woman looks at him with alarm.

WOMAN
What are you doing, Eric? Stop
gripping my arm.

ERIC
I'm asking you where the hell my
wife is.

WOMAN
I'm your wife, you fool.

FADE OUT.