

<- BEFORWARDS ->

by

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Episode 1

TV comedy-drama pilot

NB: Scene headings marked (NOW) are set in the present.
Those marked (THEN) are set two years in the past.

The title "Beforwards" is a mash-up of before and afterwards.

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INT. FLAT - HALLWAY - EVENING (NOW)

The front door bursts open. 20-something ALICE stumbles in, sobbing, devastated, draped in a wedding dress, white lace stained by blotches of blood.

CAPTION: "NOW."

She slams the door shut. Turns around. Props her back against the wood. Black lipstick. "Stitches" transfers on both cheeks. Oh, thank God, this is a Halloween costume.

EXT. PEDESTRIANISED STREET - AFTERNOON (THEN)

A happy-go-lucky ALICE in a care assistant's uniform sails through herds of shoppers. Her hair is different. Shorter.

CAPTION: "THEN."

Argh, from nowhere, KYLE leaps in front of her, clipboard in hand, a 20-something CHARITY MUGGER.

KYLE

Helloooooooooo!! Spare me a minute
of your time?

ALICE yelps, recoiling. Then she sees the funny side.

ALICE

Your intro needs serious work.

KYLE

Yeah, sorry, my bad. First day on
the job. Bit clueless. So I'm
following advice from my flatmate
Cam. "No hesitation, leap straight
into action."

ALICE

I... think he meant figuratively.

KYLE

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

ALICE

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

INT. FLAT - KITCHEN - MORNING (THEN)

Earlier. KYLE listens to CAM, same age, suit and tie, "sharp salesman" written all over him.

CAM
Engage with your lead. Introduce yourself.

EXT. PEDESTRIANISED STREET - AFTERNOON (THEN)

KYLE
By the way... the name's Kyle.

ALICE
Alice.

INT. FLAT - KITCHEN - MORNING (THEN)

CAM
Get straight in there with your sales pitch.

EXT. 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?

KYLE
Yeah, course. Word for word.

EXT. PEDESTRIANISED STREET - AFTERNOON (THEN)

KYLE
Rainforests... palm oil... stuff.

ALICE
Oh, Kyle, you have to be the worst charity mugger ever. Good luck.

KYLE, dismayed to find ALICE walking away.

INT. FLAT - KITCHEN - MORNING (THEN)

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

EXT. PEDESTRIANISED STREET - AFTERNOON (THEN)

KYLE

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

ALICE

Like what?

INT. FLAT - KITCHEN - MORNING (THEN)

CAM

Be bold. Be brave. Take that risk.

EXT. PEDESTRIANISED STREET - AFTERNOON (THEN)

KYLE

Your phone number? So we can maybe, you know, 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

True. But it would be so ungentlemanly of me to bludgeon you to death on the first date.

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 lays in bed, tired, irritated, on her mobile.

ALICE

It's 3AM in the morning and you are hopelessly bladdered. I don't care how horny you're feeling, you are not coming over.

Goggle-eyed, she sits bolt upright.

ALICE

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

EXT. PEDESTRIANISED STREET - AFTERNOON (THEN)

KYLE

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. Profound. The kind
of speech you'd find in a movie.

EXT. PEDESTRIANISED STREET - AFTERNOON (THEN)

KYLE

Alice. I am not a 3AM hopelessly
bladdered, totally naked front
garden type of guy. Take a chance
on me. What's the worst that could
happen?

INT. FLAT - HALLWAY - EVENING (NOW)

ALICE. Still wedding-dressed, still upset. In one hand, a
fob of keys. In the other, a packed suitcase. She loses the
keys to a side table. She'll no longer be needing them.

CAPTION: "NOW."

A final tearful farewell glance. And then she leaves.

OPENING CREDITS.

INT. PUB - EVENING (THEN)

KYLE in a super-loud Hawaiian shirt watches as CAM feeds
coinage to an ever-hungry fruit machine.

CAPTION: "THEN."

CAM

I can't believe you asked her out.
In 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
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. It's perfect for a shy guy like you. Goodbye face-to-face awkwardness. Farewell poorly executed chat-up lines. Instead, win over endless girls with impeccably composed text messages.

KYLE

Endless girls? I only want one.

CAM

Kyle. Listen to me. If God meant for us guys to settle for a monogamous relationship, why give us two testicles?

KYLE

That... doesn't even make sense. Besides, I don't need an app. I already have a date tonight.

CAM

Not if she sees you first. Whatever possessed you to wear something so vomit-inducing?

KYLE

This is my favourite shirt.

CAM

Yeah? Well, it won't be hers.

KYLE.

Shit, I never thought of that. Oh, Cam, I don't have time to go home and change.

CAM

Relax. I doubt the girl will even turn up. Twenty notes says she seriously blows you out.

KYLE

You're on.

They shake hands. Then CAM pulls out his phone.

CAM
Check out my latest. So fit.

A floating animation for our benefit shows us he's selecting a photo of a GIRL we will soon know as MEGAN.

KYLE
What happened to Danielle?

CAM
Deleted.

KYLE
Why? She was lovely. That stupid app has frozen your heart.

CAM
Mate. Danielle spoke about baby names. On the second date! Red flag or what? 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, asleep on top of a double bed. In his arms is a BABY BOY, gooing, gurgling. A half-consumed bottle of formula milk lays redundant beside them.

CAPTION: "NOW."

INT. HOUSE - HALLWAY - EVENING (NOW)

MEGAN arrives home, early 20s, the GIRL in the photo on CAM'S phone in the past timeline, but now with a different hairstyle. She peels off her trenchcoat to reveal a strip-ogram 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 smirks 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, realising where he is, who he's supposed to be feeding. He grabs the bottle, the teat shoved into his own mouth, oops, clumsy correction, into the BABY'S mouth.

CAM
Wasn't asleep, resting my eyes.

MEGAN grins a "yeah, right," then plonks her bum on the bed and sets about peeling off her shoes.

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 beating.

CAM. Stunned. Her? He's just about to comment when the doorbell bing-bongs. Employing child-like delight, 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 one hand, CAM opens the front door to find --

-- oh, it's ALICE, wedding dress, suitcase, all cried out.

ALICE
I've left him.

INT. PUB - EVENING (THEN)

KYLE at the bar, two drinks freshly purchased, a pint of lager and a vodka and coke. CAM wanders over, frowning at the second tipple.

CAM

I didn't know you were a vodka and coke type of guy.

CAPTION: "THEN."

KYLE

This is for Alice.

CAM

Errrr, hello? The girl hasn't turned up yet.

KYLE

So?

CAM

Oh, mate, you will look such a gloop when she does the ghosting thing and you end up having to drink it yourself.

KYLE scrunches a "whatever" face. CAM's phone chirps an incoming message notification. He checks the device.

CAM

Ooh. My date's almost here. I'll be back in two shakes of a donkey's saveloy.

EXT. PUB ENTRANCE/CAR PARK - EVENING (THEN)

CAM steps out into the car park, eagerly awaiting his new date. ALICE walks past him into the pub.

INT. PUB - EVENING (THEN)

ALICE smiles upon spotting a nervous KYLE at the bar, supping his pint. She creeps over to him and shouts --

ALICE

Helloooooooooo!! Spare me a minute of your time?

KYLE jumps out of his skin, spilling lager on his shirt. ALICE giggles. KYLE'S pleased/relieved to see her.

KYLE

Bloody hell, Alice, I almost shit myself. -- Oh, bought you a drink.

KYLE passes ALICE the vodka and coke.

ALICE

Aw, thank you. Nice shirt.

KYLE

You like it?

ALICE

It's hideous.

KYLE'S face drops. Again, ALICE giggles.

ALICE

Hah, your face.

KYLE

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

ALICE

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

KYLE

Oh. Cool. Uh, which part exactly?

ALICE makes a face as they both head for a vacant table.

ALICE

Taking a chance on you. -- 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 spends to see me through for a week or so. And I own my flat outright, so zero worries there.

They sit down at the table.

ALICE

Don't take this the wrong way, Kyle, but you, a homeowner?

KYLE

My parents bought it for me.

ALICE

Wow. Generous.

KYLE

It was their way of saying sorry for giving me up as a baby.

ALICE

Oh, my God, you were adopted?

KYLE

It's okay, I had a happy childhood. But then I decided to track down my biological parents. Heh, biological. Always makes me laugh. Turns my folks into washing powder. Anyway, once 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)

-- a few weeks ago. KYLE on his mobile, looking distressed, holding a rotary washing line upright by its pole.

KYLE

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

INT. PUB - EVENING (THEN)

KYLE

Yeah. Lucky me.

Then he shrugs off his grimace.

KYLE

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

ALICE

I don't want to talk about them.

KYLE

Spill. Give me all the gory details.

She stiffens -- well, he asked for it -- then shoots through a rapid monologue, 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 from KYLE. Until --

KYLE

Do you... fancy a packet of crisps?

CAM and MEGAN swagger over to the table, arm in arm.

ALICE and MEGAN'S mutual recognition goes unnoticed.

CAM

Bugger, you must be Alice. Wager lost, twenty notes poorer. -- Oh, by the way, this 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.

Pleasantly surprised, KYLE and CAM display matching gawps.

The sisters, however, share narrowed-eyed indifference.