

"ESCAPEMENT"

By

James De Jesus

Based on:

A short story by J.G. Ballard

James De Jesus
ph: 0423 290 966
email: jamesdejesus7@gmail.com

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

The front lock on the apartment door clicks. The door is pushed opened and a man walks into the apartment. It is a modern apartment. He slowly walks into the lounge where there are two sofas and a plasma TV, with a coffee table centred in the middle with a newspaper and pen. The apartment has muffled sounds of cars driving by. On the middle sofa to the right sits a young lady with a book. She peers up and looks towards the man who has just entered the apartment.

CECELIA POWELL

(joyous)

Oh...Hello darling, how was work today?

Cecelia is the man's wife.

He gazes at her and forces a small smile, he does not answer her.

She stares at his face trying to understand his thinking, but from past experiences she has taught herself not to bother. She turns her head back down to the book.

The man sways slightly as Cecelia turns back to her book. He begins to turn to stare at a frame that is hung up on the wall. It seems to be a degree from a university. He stares at it.

Bachelor in Advanced Science.

Forbis Powell

Forbis stands looking at the degree for a few seconds then turns to make his way to the sofa that Cecelia is sitting on. As he reaches the sofa and sits down the minute hand on the clock just above the TV moves to 12 making the time 4 o'clock...tick.

Forbis leans forward and picks up the remote. He presses the red button, the TV makes a little hiss and it projects a scene of a game show. The TV game show reveals a contestant and a host sitting in two red chairs with computer screens in front of each other. The host, a handsome older man, begins to speak to the contestant about unusual past experiences, laughter sounds through the speakers. The host then peers at the screen and begins to explain that he is about to reveal the next question.

The tone of the TV game show turns slightly serious as the question is revealed, music sounds throughout the studio. Forbis looks intently at the TV as the four possible answers appear at the bottom of the screen.

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The contestant, a young student stumbles upon her words as she tries to figure out the question. She locks in D. The answer is correct. Forbis places the remote back on the coffee table, picks up the newspaper and pen and begins to continue the crossword puzzle that he left from yesterday.

He turns his attention to the clue 14 DOWN

'a mechanism inside antique clocks'

As Forbis thinks he looks back up to the game show. He reads the next question on the screen, as he examines the answers his eyes widen slightly.

FORBIS POWELL
why are they showing the same
question?

Cecelia looks up at the TV screen then looks over at Forbis. She smiles but does not understand what Forbis is talking about.

FORBIS POWELL
It's the same question from when I
turned on the TV.

Cecelia looks at Forbis and smiles.

Forbis quickly glances at Cecelia and gives her a frown. He turns back to his crossword. Back to 14 DOWN, as he reads the clue again, he realises that he knows the answer. However, he can't recall how he came up with it. He writes it down in the little boxes in bold block letters. He looks back up to the TV and again they repeat the same question. Forbis frowns and his mouth drops open as the contestant answers the question again. The answer is D.

Forbis chucks the newspaper and pen onto the coffee table, the paper and pen create a small sound of destruction, he gets up. As he stands he has a quick glance at the clock and it reads 7 past 4...tick. Cecelia again looks up, looks at him then she goes back to reading her book.

Forbis walks over to the kitchen which is situated behind the sofas. The kitchen is simple and modern. Forbis goes straight to the stainless steel fridge, its motor giving off a continuous hum. He opens the top half of it which reveals white gridded shelves stuffed with frozen foods. The frozen air drifts out and clouds the face of Forbis, the humming increases. Forbis takes the ice cube tray from the door self and slams the freezer door with considerable force, the sound of the slapping of the freezer seals are loud. He walks back over to the sink and opens the ice cube tray

making a few ice cubes fall out, while the game shows conspicuous music plays. He turns around and opens the upper cupboard door. Inside are an assortment of glasses, he chooses a scotch glass. He turns back to the sink and chooses a few ice cubes, which he chucks into the glass.

Forbis moves around to the other side of the bench to where there is a little wine stacker. He chooses the Black Label Scotch and makes his way back around to the glass.

He pours himself a decent amount of scotch and takes a quick swig. He looks down at the liquid in the glass then takes another sip. He begins to calm down. He starts to make his way back to the sofa. When he reaches the coffee table he places the glass upon the table and sits back down. Cecelia puts her book down and moves closer to Forbis. She gets close and puts her arm around his shoulders. Forbis turns his head and looks into Cecelia's eyes.

FORBIS POWELL

(irritated)

I just don't understand why the program keeps repeating the same question?

CECELIA POWELL

How bout you don't worry about the TV? Nothing is repeating itself, maybe you need to go for a walk, do you want to go?

Forbis slowly tilts his head and makes a slight nod. Cecelia kisses his cheek lightly and jumps up. She walks pass him towards the hallway.

CECELIA POWELL

Hang on dear, I'll just grab a jacket. Oh that's right, i forgot! How was your appointment with Dr. Preston?

As Cecelia says this, Forbis' face suddenly turns sad, he looks down at the floor. Cecelia comes back with a big fur coat, she looks tired but also has a slight glimmer of beauty lingering in her face. She looks into Forbis' face realising that her question has made him upset. She makes her way to Forbis and places a soft hand upon his lap, whilst the TV blurts out advertisements.

CECELIA POWELL

(sympathetic)

I know darling that it is hard for you to go see the psychiatrist, but you know it is the judges orders.

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Forbis stares straight back at Cecelia, his face now is contorted with melancholia. He remembers his meeting with Dr. Preston, a man who has considerable respect within the community, and how he made him reveal some of his deepest darkest secrets. Forbis' mind drifts off and he loses sight of Cecelia. She turns into a blur as the memory of a past, horrific event is superimposed over the screen...

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

He begins to think about the answer to 14 DOWN. As the re-emerging memory that was repressed in his mind begins to surface once again like it did in Dr. Preston's office, his conscience subtly switches his thought to the answer of 14 DOWN. He looks down at the crossword and 14 DOWN is filled in with the answer.

He quickly jerks his head up and peers at the TV, again the contestant locks in the answer D. Forbis' mind begins to race. He turns to look at Cecelia to see if there is a change in her demeanor, but it is the same as it always was. She is immersed within her book not paying any attention to her surroundings.

He looks back to the coffee table, and he sees that his glass of scotch is gone. Panic begins to swell within Forbis but he breathes deeply, the sound of his breath is heard. He remembers the breathing techniques that Dr. Preston taught him.

Forbis gets up and walks over to the breakfast bench, knocking the coffee table creating a small bang, it does not disturb Cecelia from her book. A pack of cigarettes are sitting there, he grabs them and walks over to the big, glass sliding doors, which gives access to the balcony. He unlatches the lock then pulls the sliding doors ajar and steps out onto the balcony. Just as he steps out he looks back at the clock just above the TV, it reads 10 past 4...tick.

EXT. APARTMENT BALCONY - DAY

The balcony is spacious allowing room for an eight seated glass table. The noise of the cars driving are intensified, birds are whistling, the trees rustling in the wind. Forbis strolls to the edge of the railing and places his arms on the railing as he leans on it. The panic subsides only a tiny bit as he peers out at the horizon. It is a beautiful scene of tree canopies with skysrise infrastructure booming out of it. As Forbis opens the cigarette packet, he realises there is something wrong with the clock. He quickly takes a

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step back to the sliding doors and looks at the clock, it says 11 past 4...tick.

A confused look clouds Forbis' face. He turns back to the view then decides to pull a chair out. The chair crashes against the table producing a clank. He sits down and throws his cigarette pack onto the table. He leans back into his chair, grabs the lighter from his pocket. He lits the cigarette and takes a deep drag from it. The realisation of the clock not working has agitated Forbis, he does not know what to do.

Forbis thinks. After a few moments he decides to see if any of the other clocks are not working. He pulls his iPhone out from his pocket. He presses the button, it reads 12 past 4...tick. He looks intently at the time, his iPhone is not broken. He swipes his finger across the touch screen and the distinct click is heard from the phone. Forbis serches his contacts and finds the person he is looking for Dr. Preston, maby his psychatrist can help him understand why the clocks keep turning back.

Forbis touches Dr. Preston's name and pulls the phone up to his ear and waits patiently for him to pick up, the phone rings. He begins to get irritated as the ringing continues. Then the phone cuts out.

He places the phone down, still agitated. He takes another drag of his cigarette, the slight noise of burning paper is heard as the cigarette's lighted end burns brightly. The noise of the door opening startles Forbis, he turns to look up at his wife.

She is beautiful, she looks tired but she still produces a smile

CECELIA POWELL

Darling? would you like to go for a walk?

Forbis looks deep into her eyes. He can not believe that she does not know the clocks are not working. He gets up, turning his head towards the view. The cigarette is held firmly between his fingers. He walks towards Cecelia and looks past her. He begins to get frustrated with his situation.

FORBIS POWELL

(frustrated)

Cecelia! have you seen the clock?
it is stuck between 4 and 4.20. How
can you not notice this?

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In his frustration, Forbis peers into his wife's eyes. As he stares, he realises if he answers no to his wife, he may be able to see the time go past 4.20.

FORBIS POWELL

Sorry! Um...I don't feel like going for a walk. How bout we give it a miss?

Cecelia is taken aback by his tone. She just nods her head and closes the sliding doors, the door shuts with a soft bang. Forbis turns back out to the horizon. He places the cigarette...

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

In a non-existent force, Forbis is sitting back on the sofa inside his apartment. The jump did not give him any physical or mental effects, it was just...normal. Forbis again feels panic rising in him. He looks down and sees that he is holding the crossword and pen again. He looks up at the clock, it reads 5 past 4...tick.

He looks over towards Cecelia and again she is sitting there, she turns the page. The sound of the game show can be heard. *The answer is D.* Forbis quickly glances at the TV and sees the repetition of the same question once again.

Forbis chucks the pen and paper down and gets up. He doesn't know how to control the situation. Forbis' breathing becomes deep, a wheezing sound can be heard. He places his hand in his pocket and takes out his iPhone, he unlocks it the click sound rings through the air. Forbis notes the time 13 past 4...tick. He finds the name Dr. Preston, he touches the name. The ringing sounds.

Again nothing. He quickly walks into the kitchen and looks down at the oven clock. It reads 15 past 4...tick. He stands up straight and makes his way over to the dining table. Cecelia turns from her book and stares at Forbis. As she sees what he is doing she gets up.

Forbis fumbles around with newspapers, looking for something. He finds it, it's a wrist watch. He looks at the time it says 18 past 4...tick. Forbis' movements become faster. Cecelia edges closer, she is walking slowly towards him. Forbis throws the wrist watch down, he looks up.

As he sees Cecelia coming towards him, he rushes to the kitchen. Above the fridge there are two small cupboard doors, he opens them and quickly grabs the prescription bottle. He slams the cupboard doors shut and turns around in

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one motion to search for Cecelia. He finds her. He looks down at the bottle and it reads *Donormyl 25mg*, which is a strong sleeping drug. If he takes these, the clocks might go back to normal and this insane jumping of time will stop.

As Cecelia comes closer he looks back at her. He stares for a second then throws the prescription bottle at her. It flies past her head. Cecelia quickens her pace to get to him.

As he sees Cecelia quickening her pace, his movements are rash and quick. He runs out of the kitchen and crash tackles Cecelia to the ground. They fall onto the carpet, Cecelia cries out in pain. Forbis grips her in a tight hug. They lay together on the floor for a few seconds then a soft sobbing is heard...

Everything goes black. No sound...nothing.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

In a non-existent force, Forbis is sitting back on the sofa inside his apartment. The jump did not give him any physical or mental effects, it was just...normal. Forbis again feels panic rising in him. He looks down and sees that he is holding the crossword and pen again. He looks up at the clock, it reads 5 past 4...tick.

He looks over towards Cecelia and again she is sitting there, she turns the page. The sound of the game show can be heard. *The answer is D*. Forbis quickly glances at the TV and sees the repetition of the same question once again.

Forbis chucks the pen and paper down and gets up. He doesn't know how to control the situation. Forbis' breathing becomes deep, a wheezing sound can be heard. He places his hand in his pocket and takes out his iPhone, he unlocks it the click sound rings through the air. Forbis notes the time 13 past 4...tick. He finds the name Dr. Preston, he touches the name...

Everything goes black. No sound...nothing.

Forbis slowly opens his eyes, he blinks a few times to adjust his eyesight to the light. He is sitting back in the chair. Cecelia is over him fanning him, the air breezes upon Forbis' face creating a cool feeling. Cecelia has a puzzled look on her face but turns into relief as she sees he is alright.

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CECELIA POWELL

You ok dear, I think you had a
little black out.

Cecelia places the paper she was fanning with down, the overt sounds of the game show still playing. Remembering what is happening Forbis quickly looks at the clock. It reads 25 past 4...tick.

Cecelia goes back and sits onto the sofa, she does not pick up her book, instead she looks at the TV in disbelief.

CECELIA POWELL

Why are they repeating the same
question?

Forbis quickly sits up straight, he does not remember this question. He peers over at Cecelia, her face is clouded with confusion. The sounds of the muffled engines of cars drifts in the apartment. Forbis realises the same situation of the time lapse is happening to his wife. He leans over and places a soft hand into her lap.

FORBIS POWELL

Darling, Hang on. This is the
merry-go-round. And your the
driver.

THE END