**The Escape Artist**

**Episode One**

BILLINGS:

Talented junior barrister, Will Burton, specialises in spiriting people out of tight legal corners, hence his nickname – The Escape Artist. But when Will’s talents acquit his latest client of a brutal and high profile murder, the consequences are chilling.

SHORT SYNOPSIS:

Will Burton, a talented junior barrister of peerless intellect and winning charm, specialises in spiriting people out of tight legal corners, hence his nickname – The Escape Artist. Much to the aggravation of his courtroom rival, Maggie Gardner, Will is in high demand, as he has never lost a case.

But when Will’s talents acquit Liam Foyle, who is standing trial for an horrific and high-profile murder, that courtroom brilliance comes back to bite him. Foyle walks free, but he is a serial killer. His next victim is only a matter of time. And, sure enough, he kills again

LONG SYNOPSIS

Will Burton is a junior criminal defence barrister who specialises in spiriting people out of tight legal corners, hence his nickname – The Escape Artist. Will is in high demand, as he has never lost a case, putting the nose of many QCs out of joint.

The episode opens with Will explaining to a classroom of children, including his young son Jamie, exactly what a barrister does. One of Jamie’s classmates innocently questions the moral ambiguities of the criminal justice system and these words resonate throughout the episode.

At the Old Bailey, Will brilliantly and successfully argues for the acquittal of his client, much to the chagrin of his courtroom nemesis, Maggie Gardner. Maggie is a top barrister but continually loses to Will. Not one to be beaten at anything, Maggie’s resentment toward Will only increases when he is named the top criminal barrister under 40 in the industry magazine.

Despite his innumerable victories, Will has been putting off applying for ‘silk’. He’s never been able to stand the politics involved in becoming a QC. He works by the simple mantra that everyone deserves a defence, allowing his genius to blossom without being impeded by conscience. Before leaving for a short break in the country with his family, Danny, the chief clerk in Will’s chambers, hands Will a brief. Will politely declines; he wants to spend some quality time with his family, but Danny is insistent, Will has been asked for personally.

Will’s wife, Kate, is keen for him to switch off from work, for Will to reboot that big brain of his. He’s forgetful and fairly useless with life’s everyday tasks, if it wasn’t for Kate, he wouldn’t last five minutes. She even hides fruit about his person to ensure he gets his five a day. They arrive at their country cottage and while Kate sleeps, Will looks through the brief. The case is a murder of a young woman and Will is horrified by the brutality of the crime.

When back in London Will meets the defendant’s solicitor, Peter Simkins, who is desperate for Will to take the case. Will’s asks ‘why him?’ Simkins says it’s simple – ‘because you win.’ Will agrees to take the case but clearly, the murder plays on his mind.

Will meets the defendant in his prison cell with Simkins present. Liam Foyle cuts a sinister figure as his psychological invasiveness is matched by an imposing physicality. Foyle is riled, thinking that Simkins doesn’t believe his innocence. Will’s good nature appeals to Foyle and Will is shaken by Foyle’s intimacy and friendliness toward him.

The first day of the trial, Will’s defence argument is more than a little shaky and the judge refuses his request for an adjournment giving him more time to examine some key evidence. There’s a palpable atmosphere of tension and aggression coming from the public gallery, it’s a lynch mob and they want Foyle to go down.

Foyle and Will have a crisis meeting. Foyle is worried that Will isn’t exactly inspiring confidence but Will assures him he knows what he’s doing, Foyle just needs to trust him.

When a lead prosecution witness, an expert in forensic data analysis, claims that Liam Foyle’s credit card was used to pay for violent pornography, Will seizes the moment and cross-examines him, establishing that there was no evidence that any of the pornographic sites in question had actually been visited by Liam Foyle. With that in mind, Will successfully argues that Foyle is most likely the victim of identity fraud and his character has been tarnished by these baseless accusations, making a fair trial impossible.

The judge halts proceedings and calls both sides into his room; he is forced to acquit Foyle on this technicality. Will has managed, once again, to spirit his client out of trouble through his mastery of the vagaries of the criminal justice system.

As Will leaves the courtroom, Foyle thanks him and reaches out his hand, Will refuses to shake it. Will is tortured by what he’s just done; there’s a significant part of him that feels Foyle was guilty.

Kate & Jamie are staying at the country cottage while Will attends a university reunion. Kate is in the bath when, for a second, she catches sight of a shadowy figure at the window. Will rushes home and calls the police, but they find no trace of anyone.

Back at Will’s chambers, senior partners, Mayfield and De Souza, inform Will that Foyle has made an official complaint about Will’s conduct while he was defending him. They decide that Will’s silk application will have to wait. Will calls Kate to tell her he’ll be late arriving at the cottage, leaving a message on her phone.

Kate discovers that she is pregnant and, with Jamie, heads up to the cottage ahead of Will.

Will arrives to see Kate’s car parked at the gate with the doors open. Will runs into the cottage to discover Kate has been murdered. He catches sight of Foyle through the kitchen window, looking on, gloating. Before Will can attempt to catch Foyle, he hears his son’s voice – Jamie has hidden in a cupboard.

Will is utterly destroyed. The legal process begins. Foyle is arrested on the strength of Will’s eyewitness statement. Jamie clams up; it’s not clear whether he saw anything.

Will discovers that Maggie will be defending Foyle. Enraged, he confronts her and she counters by throwing back Will’s own mantra - “Everyone deserves a defence.”

**Episode Two**

BILLING:

Liam Foyle is back in the dock, and Will’s courtroom nemesis, Maggie Gardner, is defending him. Will’s central moral tenant that “everyone deserves a defence” has come back to haunt him.

SHORT:

Liam Foyle is back in the dock and Will Burton’s courtroom nemesis, Maggie Gardner, is leading his defence. After years in Will’s shadow, Maggie is out to prove a point and will stop at nothing to win.

With no meaningful physical evidence, Will’s chambers need all the help they can get to guarantee Foyle’s prosecution. But their most brilliant legal brain is unable to help, as Will is the key witness in the trial.

Will must find a way to bolster the prosecution’s case without jeopardising the veracity of the trial, as Foyle continues to terrorise those close to Will.

LONG:

Will and Jamie mourn the loss of Kate and try to manage life without her. Suffering from paralysing nightmares, Jamie frequently watches his parents’ wedding video, while Will continues to dial Kate’s answerphone to listen to her voice. They try to establish a routine, but the lack of Kate’s presence is felt deeply by both of them.

Maggie interviews Foyle. She tells him it’s critical that his alibi is watertight. Foyle reminds her that there is no physical evidence linking him to cottage and that the eyewitness identification was made in the dark, when it was raining. Jamie has still made no witness statement so it all hinges on what Will claims he saw. Maggie is clearly uneasy in Foyle’s presence and tries to hide it behind her cool, professional exterior.

Will meets up with Danny who tells Will that Mayfield is leading the prosecution team. But Danny has to admit that the unimpressive Trevor Harris has been assigned to the case as junior; all the other barristers were busy. Will asks Danny who Foyle’s alibi is – Danny tells him it’s a woman named Eileen Morris. This sparks something in Will and he begins to do his own digging.

The case against Foyle is relatively weak and Maggie is quick off the mark in applying for bail, which is duly granted.

Meanwhile, Will wants to help with the case against Foyle but Mayfield warns him off. As the lead witness, Will is not allowed anywhere near the trial preparation and if discovered to be involved, could risk a mistrial. Will ask Mayfield where Foyle has been remanded, assuming bail was denied, Mayfield has to admit the truth.

As soon as Will discovers that Foyle is out on bail, his immediate thoughts are for the safety of Jamie. Panic-stricken, he calls Jamie’s school to discover that he has already left for the day. We see Foyle following Jamie home, hoping to learn whether Jamie recognises him from the night he killed Kate. He leans in dangerously close on the bus, but Jamie doesn’t appear to recognise him. For an agonising moment we don’t know what Foyle will do, but Jamie returns safely to Will and his grandmother, Mary.

Foyle uses his bail as an opportunity to cement his alibi. He visits his close friend Eileen Morris. It is evident that the meek and pliable Eileen is blindly devoted to Foyle and will do anything to save him. Foyle questions her about the dinner they had on the night he was supposedly killing Kate Burton.

Loyal chief clerk, Danny, feeds Will information on the progress of the case. On the advice of Will, Danny approaches Harris – he has some new ideas and investigative angles to explore, which evidently have come from Will.

Harris is at first resolutely against the idea of discussing the case with Will. Danny convinces him to meet in a busy shopping centre, Harris is very nervous, especially when Will appears, but Will and Danny pass on some useful information.

When Harris agrees to Will’s help, Will tells them that he once worked on a similar case where there was apparently no DNA evidence. He tells Harris that any additional evidence could take the pressure off Will’s ID. He suggests that they start with Foyle’s old storage unit, which is now being paid for by a certain Eileen Morris.

Foyle requests an emergency meeting with Maggie and Simkins late at night. Maggie goes to the meeting but Foyle doesn’t turn up. On her journey back home she is stopped by Will – he now knows that Foyle was guilty, he warns her to stay away from him, he’s a dangerous man. When she gets to her front door her neighbour asks if her ‘friend’ found her? He kindly put her rubbish out for her. Despite her brave face, she becomes increasingly anxious and suspicious of Foyle.

Harris presents his new leads to the chambers to the astonishment of smart and ambitious junior barrister, Tara. She cannot believe that Harris has made this intellectual leap and, with De Souza’s approval, she follows Danny and Harris to the shopping centre where she discovers them meeting with Will. Danny spots Tara and they all disperse, but it’s too late, she’s spotted them. They cannot risk any more meetings. Harris is going to have to go it alone.

Meanwhile, Eileen Morris’ storage unit is searched. At first the police find nothing incriminating, but Eileen asks if they would like to search her other unit. They find a pair of size 12 work boots, covered in mud. There were size 12 prints discovered at Will and Kate’s country cottage – a strong link between Foyle and the cottage.

The trial begins. Will visits Kate’s grave, desperate for someone to talk to.

Will and Jamie go back to the country cottage for the first time since Kate’s death to clear it out in preparation for selling it. It’s an emotional and cathartic experience. While clearing up their belongings, Will finds Kate’s positive pregnancy test. Jamie tells him that his mum swore him to secrecy – it was supposed to be a nice surprise. Will calls Mayfield demanding to know why no one had told him. Jamie is frightened by his father’s outburst. Will apologises. Jamie opens up about the night his mother was killed -- he should have tried harder to fight off the killer. Shocked, Will asks Jamie what he means. Jamie says that he scratched the man and then hid. This new information presents Will with the missing DNA the prosecution so badly needs.

Foyle is apoplectic when he hears his DNA has been discovered at the Burton’s cottage. It’s only Maggie that can talk him down. She assures him that there are no absolute truths in court and she can be very persuasive.

Will takes to the stand to give his eyewitness testimony. He knows he’s going to get a rough ride from Maggie, but she is a woman possessed, clinically and systematically dismantling his testimony.

**Episode Three**

BILLING:

The case against Foyle is crumbling. The profession that has sustained Will Burton all his life is no longer supporting him. Can Will find another way for justice to be served?

SHORT:

Maggie & Will go to even greater lengths to win the case, finding themselves ever closer to the dangerous and cunning Liam Foyle. Will is faced with the sickening prospect that Foyle may walk free.

The bloody and thrilling conclusion to The Escape Artist asks the question what happens when law has been practiced but no justice served? We see Will reject the profession that has sustained him all his adult life and seek the ultimate justice. But can he get away with it?

LONG:

Liam Foyle’s trial continues, Will a constant presence in court. The defence, led by Maggie Gardner, aggressively and convincingly argues that there is a great deal of human-error in DNA testing. The lab in which Foyle’s DNA sample was processed had recently been deep cleaned, suggesting that they had been having problems with cross contamination. She argues that the DNA sample should be inadmissible.

When the prosecution call Eileen Morris to the stand to discuss the size 12 boots they found in her storage facility, Maggie picks up on the fact that the boots were discovered in the ‘other unit’ constituting an illegal search as the police warrant was for one unit and one unit alone. Echoing Will’s ability to have cases dismissed on technicalities, the boots are disqualified as evidence and Foyle walks free, gloating.

Triumphant in her victory, Maggie arrives home to find a beautifully wrapped gift of her favourite tea – a personal detail Foyle had picked up on in a previous meeting -- inside her apartment. Scared and upset, Maggie realises that she has no one to turn to for support.

Will and Jamie have escaped the city and Danny finds them at a seaside cottage. Over a dinner of mussels and whelks, Danny asks Will what he’s going to do next? Will doesn’t know. Danny has been fired from Will’s chambers for feeding Will information on the Foyle case. Danny cannot believe that Will is going to let Foyle get away with it, Will refuses to appeal the verdict or pursue a civil suit.

Danny drives Will to a train station on the Scottish borders and takes Jamie to his grandmother’s in Edinburgh. Will goes for a job interview in Carlisle. The head of chambers, flattered that Will would even consider working for them, recommends he hire a car and looks around the area. Will stops at a country pub, and, to his amazement, sees Liam Foyle in the toilet. Will slips away without Foyle seeing him.

Will follows Foyle to an isolated cabin. Will confronts Foyle and tries to draw a confession from him. Foyle attacks Will who slashes back, cutting Foyle with his penknife. Foyle begins to cough uncontrollably and goes into anaphylactic shock. Will calls an ambulance and they talk him through administering Foyle’s EpiPen, which contains an anti-allergen.

In their struggle, Foyle knocked over a paraffin lantern, which has caused the cabin to catch on fire. In an act of salvation, Will carries Foyle out of the burning building. In the ambulance, the paramedics try to revive Foyle, who is now convulsing unbearably, struggling to breathe. Will watches on.

Foyle is declared dead. Will is questioned by the police; the police suspect him of having prior knowledge of Foyle’s condition and knowingly stabbing Foyle with a contaminated knife. As Foyle died over the Scottish border the Scottish authorities lead on Foyle’s death. Will is charged with the murder of Liam Foyle.

Will’s close friend, Jenny, a lawyer in Edinburgh, offers her help and brings him a plea bargain offer from the fiscal – if he pleads guilty they will reduce his sentence significantly. Will appreciates her concern but is going to take his chances with a jury; he’s not prepared to miss one second of his son’s life. He’s going to represent himself in Scottish court. Jenny cannot believe this – Will knows nothing of Scottish law, there are different pleas and different regulations, this is madness.

Will arrives at the criminal court in Edinburgh to the attention of the press. Harris, Danny, Jamie and Mary are all there to support him. The court listens to a recording of Will’s 999 call. The prosecution accuses him of being unusually calm. They argue that he was pleased to see Liam Foyle die, a man he believed responsible for the death of his wife. Will says he did all he could to save Foyle’s life and showed, in his opinion, an incredible degree of restraint. But yes, he was pleased to see him die.

The prosecution question Will, asking if he had access to Foyle’s medical files in the course of defending him, hoping to prove that Will had prior knowledge of Foyle’s condition. Will says he never requested to see Foyle’s medical files and he can prove this – all requests for clients’ information in his chambers are made electronically. There is no record on the chambers’ server of Will ever accessing that information – he never saw the medical records.

While the jury deliberate, Maggie travels to Edinburgh where she confronts Will and claims that, using his knowledge of criminal law, he planned and executed the perfect crime. She suggests that he found a way to access Foyle’s medical records, not through his chambers, but through his wide web of criminal contacts.

She claims that, knowing the dose of allergen on the knife wouldn’t be enough to kill Foyle, he swapped Foyle’s Epi-pen for another pen loaded with extra allergen. Then he had the emergency services talk him through delivering the poison pen. He would have then discharged Foyle’s actual anti-allergen pen into something inanimate to make it look like he did exactly what he was supposed to do.

Maggie points out one weak point in this plan – a further examination of the body would reveal that, at the site of the Epi-pen injection, there would be extra swelling from Will’s poison dose. Will says that it sounds like a pretty fanciful theory, and even if it were true, Foyle’s body has been cremated, removing any possibility of a further autopsy.

Maggie realises that, once again, she is one step behind Will’s incredible brain.

Against the odds, the jury gives a unanimous verdict of not proven. Will exonerates himself enough to be freed -- with the cloud of suspicion hanging over him. If we believe Will to be guilty, he’s just pulled off his most audacious escape ever.

Will walks free, to spend the rest of his life with his family.