

Sample of

Escape To Cadrius

Life and Philosophy in a Distant Future

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This is a sample of
Paperback: ISBN 979-8-218-29468-7
Kindle ebook: ASIN B0CFMLTYBW

Table of Contents

Chapter 1 Escape.....	1
Chapter 2 Crossing Over.....	13
Chapter 3 Arrival.....	17
Chapter 4 Courage.....	24
Chapter 5 Elevation.....	34
Chapter 6 Thoreauvius.....	45
Chapter 7 Equality.....	52
Chapter 8 Justice.....	60
Chapter 9 Accuracy.....	76
Chapter 10 Future.....	88
Chapter 11 Resolve.....	100
Chapter 12 Return.....	103
Glossary.....	i
Characters.....	ii

Chapters 2 to 12 are not included in this sample.

Chapter 1

Escape

2092 CE

Savannah is in the market selecting meat for the meal she will prepare later.

A market worker, noticing the dull gray outfit with a black stripe down the side, asks her, “Who do you belong to?”

She hesitates, suppressing the emotions triggered by the question. Destiny is a short distance away selecting a sugar coated pastry. She stands tall, her head held high. Frowning, Savannah looks toward Destiny and says, “I belong to her.”

Later, Destiny and her mother are sitting in the dining room drinking tea. Destiny is a young woman of about eighteen, with an air of wealth and entitlement, like her mother. She has rich, brown skin and a head full of tight, coily black hair that falls to her mid-back in thick, voluminous waves, often styled in an elaborate manner. Destiny is dressed to the nines, in luxurious designer clothes and expensive jewelry.

Destiny says, “Mom, I saw a video about poverty and violence in the slums. Why doesn’t Zilnik do anything about it?”

“Zilnik is not at fault. Those people created their own situation. And he has people at the Isendul University studying the problem.”

“Haven’t they been studying the problem for years? Why don’t they ever find a solution? Or at least try *something*.”

“Dear, you shouldn’t be worrying about it. That is only in the slums, it doesn’t affect us here in the Golden zone.”

Later, Savannah is working in the kitchen. Savannah is a servant girl about nineteen, the same age as Destiny. Savannah is a petite young woman with striking brown eyes that stand out against her creamy white complexion. She has long, wavy blonde hair that cascades down her back in gentle waves. Her features are delicate and ethereal, with a small nose. Destiny’s family bought her when she was only a child, to be a playmate for Destiny. She hated the gray uniform she had to wear, it didn’t go well with her white skin. She dreamed of being able to wear a beautiful dress. When they were younger, sometimes Destiny would dress up Savannah in Destiny’s clothes, like she was dressing a toy doll. It stopped when Savannah began to look better in the clothes than Destiny.

The family treated her well, physically, but never having freedom to choose what one wears, where one goes, and never being able to say what you feel for fear of punishment; it was a kind of abuse. But Zondus society didn’t recognize it as abuse if it happened to a slave.

Suddenly, Savannah hears a commotion in the dining room, she goes to see what is happening. Destiny’s father says, “I’m sorry, I was just talking to my colleague. I thought the robot was far enough down the hall, I didn’t think it could hear me.”

Destiny's mother says, "You didn't think a robot could hear you? You thought you could just tell a co-worker that Zilnik is a tyrant and should be replaced? And you thought nothing would happen? What will we do? The police will arrest you!"

Destiny comes from another room. She says to her parents, "What's wrong? Why are you yelling?"

Destiny's mother says, "Your father discovered Zilnik has been lying about Cadrius." Her mother looks at him, "He thought it would be a good idea to tell a coworker that he thinks Zilnik is a tyrant."

Destiny gasps. Her mother continues, almost in tears, "I'm afraid the police are going to take him!"

Just then two cleaning robots stop their work and reboot. Destiny's father says to her, "They are going to take us. Here is my crypto drive." He places it on a string around her neck. He says, "They will probably make you leave the house. Listen to me, Cadrius is safe, Zilnik has been lying about it. Try to escape."

"No, you may have time to escape with me!"

The robot's front display changes, it says they are now operating for the police.

The robots quickly move and grab Destiny's parents by the arms. They both scream, "No!"

Destiny's father yells, "Why are you taking my wife?"

The robot says, "She is assumed to be a collaborator."

Just then, the front door opens and two larger police robots enter. They have special arms for immobilizing people. They take both of Destiny's parents, screaming.

Destiny yells, "Mother!" Her mother looks back as they take her away.

Destiny stands in shock. She turns to one of the cleaning robots that is still under police control and ask, "What will you do with me?"

The robot replies, "We don't have orders for you. But the house has been seized by the government. You have ten minutes to gather belongings and get out. You will have to leave the Golden zone, you are no longer in a favored family."

Savannah says, "What will we do?"

Destiny, breathing heavy with fear, almost crying, says, "I don't know." She thinks for a few seconds, "It's dangerous outside the Golden zone. Go to the kitchen and put some food in a bag. We're going to try to escape the city, Hurry! Get enough for at least two days."

Savannah, with a frown, goes to get the food. Destiny goes to her room and gets a bag with some things to do her hair and makeup.

They go out the front door past police robots. Destiny turns around and looks at the house. She whispers to herself, "I wonder if I will ever see the house again."

Savannah lugs two heavy bags.

They start walking to the gate of the Golden Zone. The neighbors across the street are staring at them. Destiny is embarrassed, the neighbors know what has happened. She knows not to expect any help from them. They will probably laugh about the plight of the traitors when they have dinner with their family. They will say they deserve what they get, and good riddance to those who don't support Zilnik.

Savannah asks, "Where will we go?"

Destiny says, "We'll go to Cadrius."

"What? There is no way we can make it there."

“Shut up! It’s only forty kilometers.”

Magnus is age twenty. He is tall, broad-shouldered with a commanding presence. He has a rich, dark complexion, brown hair, chiseled features and expressive brown eyes.

Magnus is with his family in the slums. They are in their shack made from scavenged boards with a roof made of old sheet metal. Scraps of foam insulate the roof and walls. Magnus’ father yells at him, “It’s time for you to get out! There is not enough food for all of us! Get out!”

“But where will I go?”

“I don’t care, you will find something!”

Magnus’ mother says, “Please don’t make him go!”

Magnus puts his belongings in a bag and leaves.

Magnus, on the street, calls his cousin Lennon, “Hey, my dad kicked me out. He said there’s not enough food for us all.”

Lennon, on the phone, says, “I can’t help you, I’m not in Zondus.”

“What do you mean? Where are you?”

“I’m in Cadrius.”

“What? Are you okay? Did they kidnap you?”

“No, it’s not like that. The Cadrians are good people. They are treating me well and there is plenty to eat here. Zilnik has been lying to us, Cadrians are not evil.”

“What? But I’ve heard my whole life how evil they are. It’s not true? It’s safe there and there is food?”

“Yes. You should come if you have been kicked out. It’s only two days walk across Tarphit.”

Magnus thinks. He says, “Okay, I will try to come.”

He ends the call and starts walking. After a few blocks, he sees his friend Vincent, also about age twenty, lying on the side of the street.

Vincent has a deep, caramel complexion and closely cropped, curly black hair. His features are sharp and angular, with a strong jawline and piercing brown eyes.

Magnus says to Vincent, “Are you okay? Why are you out here?”

Vincent says, “I left home, there is not enough food.”

“I’m going to Cadrius. My cousin Lennon says there is food there and Zilnik has been lying to us about it. Come with me.”

“Okay, I will go with you. If I stay here I’ll die.”

Alissa and River, both age twenty five, are talking outside the gate of Glendor, a small city at the edge of Isendul.

Alissa is a slight, pale young woman, somewhat shorter than average. She has piercing blue eyes that seem to see straight through you and straight, jet-black hair that falls in a straight line to her mid-back. Her features are delicate and precise, with high, defined cheekbones. Alissa always dresses in simple, tailored clothing that emphasizes her intellect.

River is shorter than average with a slender, willowy build. River has a clear, luminous complexion and striking eyes that are an enigmatic shade of gray. River’s gender is difficult to distinguish and they have hair that is long, wavy, and a bright, shining silver that seems to change colors in different light.

River says, “The Glendor AI says the waiting list is too long. The fastest way is to go to Cadrius and take their training.”

“Cadrius? The spirit of my great grandmother foretold that I would go to Cadrius. But my family attends the Church of Zilnik, contact with Cadrians is against their teachings. If they discover I have gone to Cadrius, they will disown me.”

“I think you should be done with them; they are not good for you.”

Alissa thinks. She says, “I will admit Glendor has a better way of life. They are honest, they have always treated us well. It’s a better place to live.”

“Come with me. I love you and I need you with me.”

“Alright, I will go with you.”

Destiny and Savannah walk down the street. The homes in the Golden Zone are nice but gaudy, meant to impress with size. The street is clean and well landscaped. They pass a park for children to play in. There is a nearby shopping mall with an ice cream shop. A perfect place to live. Destiny and Savannah walk past these things for the last time.

They walk out of the Golden Zone, the gated area for the elite members of Isendul, the capital of Zondus. Outside of the Golden Zone, it is all slums.

The slums are dirty, trash everywhere, overcrowded, buildings falling apart. The slums are dangerous, gangs are in control. Destiny looks around, feeling unsafe. The gangs have setup checkpoints and require a fee to pass. They walk up. Destiny pays and they keep walking.

A stranger says to them, “You look like you are from the Golden zone. We don’t see many people from there.”

Destiny says nothing, walks faster, Savannah follows.

An older man with a long beard sitting on the ground yells at them, “Hey, what you got in those bags?” He gets up and runs after them. Destiny and Savannah run. They are able to escape because the man is older and out of shape. When they are safe they stop to catch their breath. Destiny is shaking with fear.

They walk through the slums until they reach the edge of Isendul. Before them is the wasteland of Tarphit, a plain of dry orange and white clay with occasional gullies that feed into small canyons. They embark across Tarphit.

Destiny’s phone says, “You have no reason to enter Tarphit, there is nothing there. Only Cadrius is ahead, and there is nothing for you there. Cadrians will kill you.”

Destiny throws down the phone. Then she takes the tracking device off Savannah’s ankle and throws it down.

Savannah says, “What are you doing? It’s illegal to be without those devices.”

Destiny says, “Shut up. Let’s go.”

After about four hours of walking, they stop to eat and rest. Destiny looks back toward Isendul, “Look, someone is coming this way.” There are two people about a hundred meters away.

Destiny says, “It looks like some poor commoners.”

The strangers approach. It is two men, one says, “Are you going to Cadrius too?”

“Yes” says Destiny.

“May we walk with you? I’m Magnus and this is Vincent.”

“Hello.” says Vincent.

“I’m Destiny.”

Magnus and Vincent are aware of the gray uniform Savannah wears. Magnus asks her, “What is your name?”

Destiny says, “Don’t talk to her. Her name is Savannah, she’s my indentured servant. She was found in the slums, her family was deeply in debt. My family purchased her from a dealer and rescued her.”

Savannah looks ashamed to be talked about this way with strangers.

Magnus says, “She doesn’t look like she’s been rescued.” Magnus smiles at Savannah. She smiles but quickly looks down.

Vincent looks at the food, “I haven’t eaten in two days.”

Destiny somewhat reluctantly hands him a food package. She is thinking the supplies are limited and they belong to her.

“Thank you. Thank you.” Vincent says. He sits down, opens it and eats ravenously. He says, “I’m leaving Zondus because there’s not enough to eat.”

He takes another bite. He says, “I can see from the way you’re dressed you’re from an elite family. Why are you going to Cadrius? It can’t be because you are running out of food.”

Destiny says, “My father learned Zilnik has been telling lies about Cadrius. My parents were arrested for treason. They seized our house.”

Later, Savannah asks Destiny, “What do you think will happen when we get to Cadrius? Will they let us stay? Zilnik says Cadrians are evil. I’m afraid.”

Destiny says, “Father discovered Zilnik is lying, that’s why the police took him away. They were afraid he would talk.”

“What if your father was wrong? Will you trade me to the Cadrians to save yourself?”

“Be quiet.”

Savannah looks like she will cry.

Magnus stares at Savannah, looking so vulnerable and afraid, but also beautiful. Magnus says, “I have a cousin that went to Cadrius two weeks ago. I talked to him by phone and he said that he was welcomed and there is plenty of food.”

Savannah says, “Really? It is safe?”

“Yes.” says Magnus.

Savannah looks relieved. She looks at him with big eyes and says, “Thank you.” He looks into her eyes, she smiles shyly and looks away.

Destiny says, “I have heard people in Cadrius talk strangely, they don’t say ‘he’ or ‘she’, they say something else.”

Magnus says, “They say ‘e’ instead of those. I have seen videos, they sound strange, but you can understand them.”

When they are done, Destiny says to Savannah, “Pack up the supplies, we are going.”

Savannah packs the bag.

Magnus says, “Let me carry that for you.”

Destiny says, “It’s her job, she wants to do it.”

Savannah says nothing, standing frozen.

Magnus shakes his head and says, "That's what you tell yourself to make yourself feel better about how you treat her."

Destiny gives him a look, then walks away muttering profanities.

Magnus reaches out and takes the bag from Savannah. She whispers, "Thank you."

They all begin walking to Cadrius again. The sky is clear and the sun is hot. There is no shade anywhere. They come to a gully about eight meters deep. The sides are steep enough they have to go down carefully to avoid a fall. Going up the other side is even more difficult.

Later, the sun is going down. They stop for the night. Vincent has a lantern, he sets it up as it gets dark and everyone sits in a circle around it, their faces aglow from its light.

Soon they are all tired and ready for sleep.

The next morning, as the sky begins to glow, they eat the last of the food. Destiny says to Savannah, "I wonder if it was a mistake to share our food. Those guys eat a lot."

Vincent looks around as though someone could attack at any moment. He says, "I think we should get going." They start walking.

They pass by some metal equipment and some wood that looks like it could have once been a house. Vincent says, "My grandfather told me Tarphit was once productive farm land. He used to live here."

Destiny says, "How can that be? There is nothing here now."

"The land was overworked and the topsoil eroded away. It was because of short sighted instructions from the government. They wanted to maximize yield in the short

Escape To Cadrius

term, they didn't care about the future. The farmers wouldn't make enough money to live unless they produced their quota."

Destiny feels the weight of losing her parents, her home, the unknown of what is to come. She looks out solemnly across the landscape, the blue sky, the orange ground, beautiful and desolate.

End of the sample of Escape To Cadrius.

In chapter 2, they arrive at the border of Cadrius.

Escape To Cadrius will be released November 8, 2023.

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