

Episode Recap:

Escape [1x06]

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Sydney Bloom runs for her life down a darkened corridor, chased by men dressed as hospital orderlies. Her path takes her through a brighter corridor, up some stairs, a laundry room, a door to the outside. She scales a fence, pauses to look at a lighthouse, is dragged back into captivity.



Sydney screams as she jolts awake; it is night and she is on a bed in a locked room. A wire fence covers the window. Her computers sit on tables and trolleys. She tries unsuccessfully to turn them on and discovers to her frustration that there are no power sockets in the room.

Her next instinct to get away, Sydney smashes a monitor and recovers a suitable implement to loosen a fence panel, which she rips away from the wall and then uses to break the window. Her tracksuit top, placed on the window sill, protects her from the glass shards as she drops to the ground and painfully limps away into the darkness.

There is no music in this segment except for an intermittent foghorn-like synthesizer two-note.

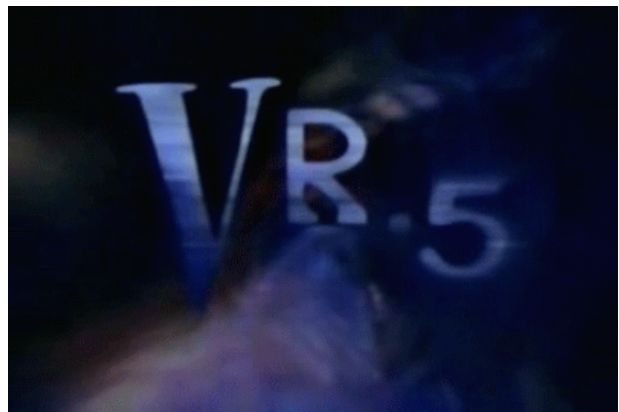
Sydney exits the stairwell and crosses the rooftop of her apartment block, stopping briefly to examine a Walkman which is lying on the floor. It is playing a Spanish language instruction tape.

She looks into her home. "They took everything".

Duncan is sorting through a suitcase full of books. At the sound of Sydney's voice he suggests that as it is library night and also the rainy season he should move some of the first editions into the apartment, as long as she doesn't mind.

She calls him again; he turns and finds her slumped over the top of the ladder, too exhausted to go any further.

"I've got to get away."



He helps her to a wall and leans her against it. He asks her what happened and suggests they get her to a hospital. Sydney vehemently rejects this idea.

"They got me."
"What are you talking about? Who got you?"

Flashback. Sydney enters her apartment, listening to her Spanish lesson. She is kidnapped by two men who put a hood over her head and drag her away as she struggles and shouts for help.

Blinding light. Sydney is lying on the floor, still hooded.

"Hello Sydney." says a silky voice.

Sydney struggles furiously out of the sack and finds herself in a featureless room.

"Who are are you? Where am I?"
"Do you think you're ready to know that?"
"Why did you kidnap me?"
"Is that what you think happened?"
"Are you going to kill me?"
"Would that bother you?"
"Yeah!"
"Then I hope it won't happen."



"Please stand."
"Why?"
"Because I said please." She complies. "Good. Now take off your shirt."
"No." The lights go off. "Hey!"
"I can keep you in darkness for the rest of your life, Sydney. Take it off because I've told you to take it off."

The lights come on again; Sydney's shirt is on the floor. The

room is no longer empty; Oliver Sampson, first seen in silhouette, is leaning casually against a chair.

“Thank you. It’s always best to be polite.”
 “You’re with the Committee.”
 “You know I am.”
 “I’m already helping you, what else do you want?”
 “We just want to know how you do it.”
 “I don’t know how I do it!”
 “Then we’ll find out together, won’t we?”

Sampson takes a black case out of his jacket pocket.

“Do you smoke?”
 “No.”
 “Neither do I. But then it’s not allowed in here anyway.”



He extracts a syringe from the case and stalks her; she backs away. As she turns to run, he grabs her arm and injects her with the syringe. Everything stops.

Sights and sounds of equipment being moved around. As her vision clears, Sydney sees Sampson holding something in his hand. He attaches an electrode.



“You seemed a little tense, Sydney. So I gave you something to relax. It’ll assist your memory.” She tries to get up but he stops her. “Lie still, please. You’ll answer all my questions truthfully. Do you understand?”

She passes out. Sampson revives her with a pungent chemical.

“There are so many unpleasant ways of making you answer my questions. Let’s try this first, shall we? What’s your name?”
 “Sydney.”
 “Full name, louder.”

“Sydney Bloom.”
 “When were you born?”
 “July 18th 1966.”
 “Are you married?”
 “No.”
 “Were you have sexual relations with Dr. Frank Morgan?”
 Sydney glares. “Is that a yes?”
 “No.”
 “Where do you work?”
 “TelCal.”
 “In what capacity?”



“I work on the lines.”
 “Did your father ever take you into VR.5?”
 “What do you know about my father?”
 “Answer the question.”
 “I want to know what this has to do with my father!”
 “So do we. Answer the question!”
 “No.”
 “I think you’re lying.”
 “I don’t care.”
 “I was wrong. I don’t think relaxing is helping you.”

Somewhere else. Sydney is pinned against the wall and soaked with a fire hose. She struggles and begs them to stop.

The white room again. Sydney is huddled in a corner, wet and shivering.

“Hello Sydney. They really should do something about the air-conditioning in here. There’s a hot bath waiting for you, a change of clothes, something warm to eat. We just need to have this little chat first. Did your father ever experiment on you? On your sister? Did your father kill your sister? Did he try to kill you too?”

Sydney attacks him and receives a heavy blow across the face for her trouble.

“I have a better idea. I took the liberty of preprogramming a landscape for you. I hope you don’t mind.”

She is seated at a desk. On the computer screen in front of her is BRIDGE - FAMILY CAR As Sampson receives an incoming call on his cellphone and turns away to answer it, Sydney takes the opportunity to slip out of the room...

“Duncan, you’ve got to get me out of there. I didn’t know who else to come to”.
 “You made it. You’re safe now.”
 “Help me. You gotta come, and you’ve gotta get me, okay?”
 “Where are you?”

“Just help me.”

Sydney puts hand to Duncan’s face. He reaches up and his fingers touch the ID bracelet.

Duncan stands in the phonebooth holding the handset, listening to the dialtone. “Syd? Is that you?”

“What the hell are you doing?!” rages Sampson as he tears off Sydney’s VR visor.

“I first heard Personville called Poisonville by a red-haired mucker named Hickey Dewey in the Big Ship in Butte. A few years later I went to Personville and learned better.”.

Duncan closes the book, wanders to the kitchen, closes the tap and raids the fridge for an apple. A Post-It note reads: “D. Gone for the weekend. Feed Steed and Mrs Peel.” He does so and walks past the staircase, finding the Walkman which is still running. He puts on the headset, flashes on the kidnapping scene, takes it off again.

Sydney appears briefly on the rooftop by the big clock, reaching out to him. “Duncan!”

Duncan seats himself in front of the computer, looking at the marine aquarium screensaver. “Are you in there?” After some hesitation, he dons the gloves and visor and places the phone handset in the cradle. Nothing happens. Then he remembers he has to make a connection first, dials the local pizza parlour and suddenly finds himself fighting to keep his balance on a pizza flying through space. A sliced mushroom narrowly misses his head. He addresses the pizza guy standing beside him.



“Unbelievable! I can smell the garlic!”

“Seven herbs and spices.”

“It’s all so real!”

“Are you ordering or just playing around with this all night?”

A huge Sydney looms up behind the pizza. “Duncan! Quit hacking around. Come get me!”

Duncan selects DETECTIVE AGENCY - MISSING PERSONS. “Dashiell Hammet? Raymond Chandler? Who do I call? Can’t call Syd. Who else do I know? Nobody. I know! I could call *me*. I could call me, being me, at Syd’s!”

Animated show titles: *Dialing Mr. “D”*.



Duncan Diamond is in his convertible, driving along a highway. “It was that kind of day in Hollywood. Beautiful smog, beautiful women. And it was my job to find them. This time, a woman named Sydney Bloom. In a hurry.” He picks up the phone.

A phone operator sits at a switchboard, her face hidden in shadow. “HiFi answering service. Oh, Mr D! Is that you?”



A classic car pulls up and a man wearing a bowler hat and a red carnation in his buttonhole steps out. We are now watching *The Imposters*, starring Duncan.

“It was that kind of day in the county. Beautiful smog, beautiful women. And it was my job to find them. This time, a woman named Sydney Bloom. In a hurry.”

Duncan wanders around a jungle-animal-themed topiary. Animal noises abound: screaming chimpanzees, trumpeting elephants. He is attacked from behind by a black-leather-clad woman. They spar, she wins. He looks up at her.

“Ah, good morning, Mrs Peel.”

“Steel!”

“I told you I’d find you.”

“Are you all right? Do you need a doctor?” She retrieves his umbrella from a bush and offers it to him.

“I’m really perfectly all right. Are you?” He is distracted by the elephant’s call, and when he turns back she has vanished. “Mrs Steel? Mrs Steel?”



The offices of Slade and Archer.

“It was that kind of day in San Francisco. Beautiful smog, beautiful women. And it was my job to find them. This time, a woman named Sydney Bloom. In a hurry.”

The door opens. A woman looks in seductively and makes a kissy sound.

“Sam.”

“What is it, angel?”

“We’ve got a case.”

The telephone operator chuckles throatily: “Where are you? This ain’t no run in my stocking.”

Spade and Archer again.



“Sam. What’s the first rule of detecting?”

“What?”

“Observation. Listen.” She draws his head to her chest.

“What? Your heart.”

“No, something else.”

“Your breast.”

“No.”

“Damn, the ocean!”

“Yes. Look, there I am.” They look through a set of blinds into a room where a woman lies on a bed.

“...This attitude, Sydney!” shouts Oliver as he hits Sydney hard enough to move the bed a few inches.

(Operator: “When are you coming? When?”)

Duncan is roused from a drunken stupor by the plainclothes cop walking into his bedroom and raising the blinds.



“Got yourself quite a night, Diamond.”

“...doesn’t make me feel any better.”

“Getting careless, leaving your front door open.”

“Yes, I am. Careless. Go away. I didn’t know I had a front door.”

“You don’t. Lt Descant want to see you downtown.”

“You tell Pete he can wait.”

“He won’t.” The cop thrusts a photo in front of Duncan’s face. “You know her?”

(Operator: “When? When are you coming?”)

“You know I can never remember.”

“Her name is Sydney Bloom.”

“Doesn’t mean anything to me.”

“It should. Looks like you murdered her.”

“What are you talking about?”

“You didn’t go after her. You didn’t save her.”

The cop waves the photo again in his face. It becomes a sheet of paper with a drawing of stick-men on it.

“But what does it all mean?” Duncan Holmes puffs meditatively on his pipe, an oddly feminine-looking Watson standing beside him.

“Hmm. Exactly.” Watson sounds feminine too.

“Oh, my dear Watson, you astound me. The solution is easy enough.”

Duncan Holmes deduces that the symbols on the paper represent letters and spell out the message “come here at once”.



(ID bracelet.
 “Do you need a doctor?”
 “Damn, the ocean!”
 Lighthouse.)

Holmes draws the curtain open to reveal a monochrome lighthouse. Foghorn. “Strange.” An ambulance siren sounds. “An ambulance, Watson.”
 “Perhaps it’s the phone.”
 “The phone?”
 “Hello?”

(Steed: “Hello?”)

(Operator: “Hurry.”)



Duncan Steed stands on a giant desk, trying unsuccessfully to dial a giant phone which is producing an engaged tone. He gives up and encounters Mrs Steel’s lifeless body on the floor.

“Mrs Steel!” He checks for a pulse. “Oh dear. I’m too late”.

He examines the ID bracelet on her wrist:

Dowling Hospital
 Sydney Bloom
 146

and touches it.

Duncan takes off the visor and whoops triumphantly. “I know where she is”.

As he arrives at the hospital he recognizes the nearby lighthouse. A ship’s siren sounds.

The nurse tells Duncan that the hospital has been trying to contact a family member or anyone other than Sydney’s employer without success. He asks for directions to Sydney’s room and brushes off a suggestion that he talk to Sydney’s doctor.

Dr. Clark meets him in the hallway and introduces himself.

“Excuse me, you’re here to see Ms Bloom? How do you do, I’m Dr Clark. Could we talk for a minute before you-”

“No, not right now Doc, all right? I really just want to see Syd. I mean, I know she was beaten up but I’m more concerned about the drugs and possible hypothermia.”

“You’re saying she was on drugs when this happened?”

“It’s obvious they shot her up for information. Probably sodium pentothal but who knows with these goons.”

“There was no trace of drugs and certainly no indication of hypothermia when she was admitted. She was hit by a car earlier this morning.”

“What?!”

“Her friend said they were crossing to their car when she was hit by the other car.”

“Her friend?”

“The man who brought her in. She hasn’t regained consciousness since the accident.”

Sampson turns from the windows to face them. “I’m Oliver Sampson. You must be Duncan.”

“How do you know?”

“She mentioned your name a few times before she lost consciousness.”

An enraged Duncan attacks Sampson and is dragged away by Dr. Clark and an orderly. Sampson defuses the situation and asks the medical staff to leave.

“Are you all right?” An answer is not forthcoming, and Sampson sits down. “What can I say? I keep wondering what I could have done. She was only a step ahead of me. You know the driver didn’t stop? I didn’t know who you were, otherwise I would have called.”

“Hey. Save the Oscar Meyer for a picnic. I know who you are. She told me everything. I saw everything.”

“Then you know why she went away with me for the weekend?”

“I know you’re part of the Committee, whatever that is.”

“Yes I am. Look, I am not going to lie to you, Duncan. Obviously Sydney trusts you a great deal, and I don’t expect you to trust me but I’m here for the same reason as you.”

“You don’t even know her.”

“No, not in the same way you do, but I’m trying to look after her.”

“Well you can walk, ‘cause that’s what she’s got me for.”

“Then I’m glad for her”.

“So why are you saying she was with you again?”

“Training. After Morgan was killed I wanted to make sure she could take care of herself, handle a gun. I wanted her to be prepared.”

“The night shift’s mine.”



“Of course we’ll take care of all her expenses. She can stay here for as long as it takes her to get well. I’ll get Dr. Clark to have a cot sent up here for you.” Sampson looks at Sydney for a long moment. She’s quite remarkable”. He leaves.



Duncan sits on the bed and takes Sydney’s hand. “Hey. I know you’re in there. You helped me find you. But I need your help again. What’s real, Syd? And how do I know?” There is no response. “Yeah.”

Duncan rings the hospital, where he has arranged for the nurse to be at Sydney’s bedside. He assures the nurse that the voice of Scruffy the dog will bring Sydney out of her coma, makes the requisite noises and...

Duncan walks into the darkened room. It is raining: rivulets of water on the glass being reflected on the wall.

“Syd? Hey, can you hear me? Syd? You know, you’re supposed to be OK in here. You’ve got to talk.”

A ghostly figure sits up and looks at him.

“Great. Sydney’s ghost.”
“Not yet.”

Duncan leans in to hug her, but his hands pass through her body.



“Sorry. My body needs to rest. How did you find me?”
“I just took myself back into VR, found the clues you kept leaving behind.”
“How did you take yourself in?”
“A good conversation to have, after we get you out of here. Oliver says you got in a car accident.”
“He’s lying.”
“And the creepy doctor?”
“He works for them. They all do. They’re studying me, Duncan. Like a science experiment. Come here, I’ll show you.”



“If they do find out what it is, I hope they tell me.” They pass slowly down the corridor, stopping briefly at each door to look at scenes of medical experimentation: Scanner. Scanner. Sydney wincing in pain. “I tried to resist. Then they started on my brain.”

They’re in an operating theatre. A wildly struggling Sydney is forcibly sedated and a site on her neck prepped for an invasive procedure. “They did everything they could think of. They just wanted to know.”

Duncan looks up at the observation window and registers the presence of four shadowy figures.

Sydney’s ghost begins to merge into the figure on the bed. “I’ve got to get out of here. Help me. Please. Help.” She holds her hand out to him and disappears.



Duncan crouches besides Sydney as her eyes slowly flutter shut. He touches the ID bracelet...

“I’m coming Syd. I’m gonna get you out of there.”

Duncan disconnects Sydney from the medical equipment and carries her out of the room. As he passes through the reception area Dr Clark sees them and raises the alarm. An orderly snatches Sydney from Duncan’s arms as the nurse fells him with a karate chop and holds him in an arm lock. Dr. Clark demands to know what he thinks he is doing.

“Saving her life.”

Sampson squats next to Duncan. “That’s what we’re trying to do too.” He dismisses the nurse and Duncan rises to his feet.

“This ain’t no hospital. Where are all the other patients? Why is she a black belt? What the hell is going on here?”

Sampson instructs the medical staff to take Sydney back to her room.

“Hey you hang in there, Syd. I’ll be back and next time I’ll bring help.”

“Then we’ll be forced to move her to another location. Perhaps permanently.”

“So that’s it. The committee just swallows her up and nobody can do anything about it. And I suppose I’ll have to choke on a bottlecap but hey, who’ll miss me either, right?”

“We are not the enemy.”

“You expect me to believe that?”

“You’ll have to trust me.”

“Those are the two most untrustworthy words in the English language.”

“That’s only a matter of opinion. There’s no more to say.” Sampson turns and leaves.

“Yes there is.”

Back at Sydney’s apartment, Duncan dons the gear and dials the phone. “Oliver Sampson please.”

The nurse hands the handset to Sampson. “Call for you, Mr. Sampson.”

“Hello?”



The white room. “Hello Oliver.”

Sampson sits up. “Who’re you? Where am I?”

“It’s time to answer my questions.”

“I see.”

“I want to know the truth”

“About what?”

“About you.”

“There is no truth.”

“There is now.” Duncan extracts a syringe from his pocket, moves up from behind and injects Sampson in the shoulder.



Polygraph.

“What is the committee?”

“It’s a secret.”

“Do they want to help Sydney?”

“Yes.” Lie.

“Do they want to hurt her?”

“Yes.” Another lie.

“I want to know the truth.”

“There is no truth.”

Fire hose. Duncan forces Sampson into a walk-in refrigerator.

“What is your job?”

“I’m here to protect Sydney.”

“Then why did you hurt her?”

“I didn’t hurt her.”

“You tortured her, I saw it.”
 “That was them, not me.”
 “What are you talking about?”
 “Take me to the hospital and I’ll show you.”



They are back at the hospital. “The Committee is a very old organization, and as with any power base that’s been around for a long time there are internal struggles. Definitions of good and evil become transposed. Things aren’t always what they seem.” They pause at a door and look inside. “You see? Her captors’ faces were hidden. Sydney knew they were from Committee and she gave them the only face she’d ever seen. Mine.”

“But if they’re from The Committee then you must know who they are.”

“Yes, I do. They’re the enemy. There are no answers about the Committee. You open a door, there’s another one right behind it. The more you peel the onion, the more it will sting your eyes.”

Sampson stops transfixed at another doorway, where he sees himself in attendance at the bedside of an unconscious woman. Other-Sampson kisses her hand and strokes her face.

“Who’s that?”

“It doesn’t matter any more.” Sampson abruptly changes the subject. “There is no truth, so stop looking. What matters is Sydney, and keeping her from the wrong people - keeping her alive.”

Mechanical noises pervade the scene. Sampson turns and runs, Duncan following.



They burst into the operating room. White-gowned, masked people turn to face them.

“Enough! Get away from her!” Sampson opens fire at the observation window and the shadowy figures behind it.

The room is suddenly empty except for the three of them. Sampson crosses over to the bed, releases Sydney’s left arm from its restraint and cradles it in his hands.



Duncan joins him. “Is she safe now?”

“I hope so.”

“Did they do anything to her?”

“I don’t think so.”

“Then you don’t know for sure.”

“I know they’re not going to let her alone.”

“Why? It’s not her body. I can go into VR - it’s something else.”

Sampson reaches behind his back, produces a red-covered book and hands it to Duncan. “Perhaps this will help us.”

Duncan wanders aimlessly around the apartment, pushing a copy of Chandler’s *The Big Sleep* back into its appointed place in the bookshelf. He stares at a Bloom family photo.

“His book. His book!” He programs the VR landscape. “Okay Syd, it’s time to come home.”

Rooftop. Sydney sits on the parapet, looking pensively into the distance. Duncan joins her.



“Hey. You can't hide forever. Coma's over.”
“I like it up here.”
“Yeah, I know. But look.” He points at the lower level where other-Duncan eagerly sets a table and bows at his invisible guest.
“I miss you, Syd.”



She turns to him. “I miss you too. We can meet up here.”

“Oliver has your father's journal. That little brown book that he used to carry around all the time? I saw it.”

“He had it with him. It's at the bottom of the river. It's just not possible.”

“Well, there's only one way to find out.” He rises and holds out his hand invitingly. She takes it and he helps her to her feet. “Together.” He drapes her arm around his shoulder.

“I almost escaped, Dunc.”

“It's not time for that yet. Let's go.”

They step off the parapet. As they fall in slow-mo, Sydney's face glows with renewed optimism and hope.



“Dunc...” Sydney's eyes open and she looks nervously around the room. “Oh. What's this?”

Sampson rises from his window seat and sits on the bed. “Hi. Welcome back.”



“You.” Sydney tries to back away from him, without much success.

“Shhh.” Soothingly. “It's all right. I'm not here to hurt you. I'm here to bring you closer in.”

“Committee.”

“Mm-hmm.”

“You. Something... something of father's.”

Sampson picks up the book up from the chair and offers it to her. “Is this what you mean?”

“...don't understand. It's.. river. What is it?”

Sampson slowly opens the book. Sydney's fingers brush over the inscription.



“Let's find out together, shall we?”

Sydney looks at the book for a long moment, then transfers her uncomprehending gaze to him.

THE END.

Spot the reference:

1. The "I first heard Personville called Poisonville" quote is from the opening paragraph of Dashiell Hammett's *Red Harvest*.
 2. In the "Spade and Archer" scenes there is a bird-like figurine on the desk. The obvious reference here is Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon*.
 3. *The Imposters* are really *The Avengers* (Emma Peel era).
 4. "Mr. D/Diamond" and the faceless telephone operator hail from the TV series *Richard Diamond, Private Detective* (1957-1960).
 5. The secret stick-figure language is featured in Conan Doyle's short story *The Dancing Men*, collected in *The Return Of Sherlock Holmes*.
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Creative Team

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Director of Photography:	Brian Hebb
Music:	John Frizzell
Series Creators:	Adam Cherry Geoffrey Hemwall Michael Katleman Jeannine Renshaw Thania St. John
Executive Producer:	John Sacret Young

Cast

Sydney Bloom:	Lori Singer
Duncan:	Michael Easton
Oliver Sampson:	Anthony Stewart Head
David Selburg:	Dr. Clark
Aileen Fitzpatrick:	Nurse

Random Notes:

This is my first attempt at a VR.5 recap. In hindsight, starting at this point was perhaps overambitious because of the episode's strangeness, complexity and visual impact. For this reason the recap is very image-heavy.

Escape was my one and only encounter with VR.5 pre-2005. I saw the last seven minutes of this episode while waiting for something else to start, thought it overly weird and never bothered to find out what it was about. The sequence must have made quite an impression, given that it must have been about ten years ago, because I recognized it as soon as I saw it again.

The screenshots used in this and other recaps were captured from a low-resolution source.

Comments on this article are welcome and will be considered for publication here. All contributions will be acknowledged. Contact details are located at

<http://www.dismal-light.net/vr5/> .

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