

Probable Events is the Situation in Tense 'No Escape'

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Rating: **4.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – In a very unstable world, and in a sense that these problems are international, we all can be stuck in war at any time – there is no way to get away from it. “No Escape” takes this notion to the extreme, with an American family – led by Owen Wilson – caught in a war zone.

How the situation relates to us all is the film’s strength, with more tense moments than the most improbable action film. The circumstance of foreign business intervention in a fictional Asian country’s water supply spurs the population to rise up against the prime minister and foreigners, which includes a mid level engineer portrayed by Wilson. It includes Pierce Brosnan taking a role as a mysterious British operative – sound familiar? – and the veteran actor makes the most of it with a rollicking and almost mocking persona. The pulse pounding action never lets up, and reminds us that forces within our soul, especially when protecting children and loved ones, can bring out survival instincts long buried in modern life. What would you do if your back was against the proverbial wall?

Jack (Owen Wilson) is a failed businessman getting a second chance to manage a water purification project in a far off Asian country for an American corporation. He brings his wife Annie (Lake Bell) and children (Sterling Jerins and Claire Geare). When unusual events start happening in their luxury hotel, it turns out they are in the middle of a coup d’etat against the government, and the country falls into a street war.



Jack (Owen Wilson) and Annie (Lake Bell) Protect Their Family in 'No Escape'

Photo credit: The Weinstein Company

Using the philosophy of “ten steps ahead,” the family uses their wit and guile to avoid being killed. They are aided by a British expatriate named Hammond (Pierce Brosnan), who they met on the plane, and he becomes very important to them. As the forces of the conflict close around them, there are many things that the family thought they would never do, nor ever experience.

What grounds a situation like this is its sheer probability, in the sense that it could happen to anyone in such a scenario at any time. The film is written by brothers John Erick and Drew Dowdle (“As Above, So Below”), and they connect the circumstance to the current business environment of the corporate takeover for virtually every resource, in this case water. All the geopolitical reasoning behind the coup is properly laid out, including the forces that land the family in the middle of it.

The casting of who represents the family, especially Owen Wilson, seems to be a nod toward the cream cheesiness of American isolationism within the world's problems. This is a family that is comfortable as neighbors in any upper middle class environment – beautiful, optimistic and Christmas Card viable. They are in extreme danger, and in that danger reacts strategically and instinctively. None of the barriers that get in their way seem possible to overcome, yet they try, and make decisions and do things that get them through to the next event. It is relatable, which becomes food for thought regarding most of this country's unwillingness to regard the difficult aspects of other countries, and our own instincts in survival.

Pierce Brosnan is especially having a ball in his performance, and his second act (or is it his third act considering “Remington Steele”) as a character actor is paying dividends in the risks he's taking. Think of “The Matador,” “Mamma Mia!,” “The Ghost Writer” and “Love is All You Need” in the pantheon of his roles since James Bond, and you'll see a Brosnan that is flexing his potential as an actor. His mysterious Hammond is no exception, he plays it to the hilt and turns it on its ear. Brosnan is a well-done contrast to the family, and has a nice representational monologue regarding everything that is happening around them.



Hammond (Pierce Brosnan) Encounters Jack Before the Fall in 'No Escape'

Photo credit: The Weinstein Company

Are there unbelievable turns of events? Yes. Does the family seem a bit too lucky? Yes again. But the whole premise of dumping the typical American privileged family sensibility into a wild and rough war zone is so outrageous, that many of the “action movie” moments can be forgiven, for a wider discussion of could-it-happen-to-me. I figure there were similar acts of improbability during the morning of September 11th, 2001.

Seriously, Brosnan is so wild as Hammond that it almost calls for an entire movie just of his character. It's a more real movie risk taker, jumping from international city to international city, seemingly begging for the comeuppance this privileged representation of the western economy represents.

"No Escape" opens everywhere on August 26th. Featuring Owen Wilson, Pierce Brosnan, Lake Bell, Shajak Boonthanakit, Sterling Jerinns and Claire Geare. Written by John Erick Dowdle and Drew Dowdle. Directed by John Erick Dowdle. Rated "R"



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