

MAX: THE TERROR BEGINS

CHAPTER ONE: The Creation of Max

One hot afternoon, Simone took her car to a car wash. She had washed her car and started to vacuum the interior when a man who looked like Pierce Brosnan caught her eye. Simone was walking over to him when the hem of her skirt was sucked into the vacuum hose.

“What on earth? Release me!” she said. The hose claimed her entire skirt. She jumped into her car with the hose attached and waited for the time on the meter to run out.

“Let go of me, you impertinent snake of a cleaning utensil.” The vacuum started to suck up her blouse when two fingers came out of the drain cover only a foot away from her car door. A pale man climbed out of the drain.

“Free! I’m free at last from those weirdoes who wanted me to play poker for all eternity,” he said. Simone mistook him to be a zombie. She took off her tennis shoe and threw it at him.

“Victor, is it safe to come out yet?” asked a voice from below.

“Seems safe,” said Victor Lightfoot. “Let me take a one look around and we’re home.” Bam! The shoe struck Victor. “Sorry, Oliver, we have to go back into the tunnel. Giant sneakers are trying to take over the world.”

“I’m not going back, man.”

Oliver Lightfoot jumped out of the drain and weaseled his way past his brother. “There are no giant sneakers, just a crazy lady.”

“Hit the deck,” said Victor. Another shoe almost hit them. “Woman, what is your problem?”

“There won’t be any zombies on my watch,” said Simone. “As soon as my money runs out on this vacuum, I’m coming after you.”

“What did I do, Victor?”

“Be cool, Oliver. I have this under control. Give me your quarters.”

“No way. You made me give up all my money at the poker game.”

“This is an emergency.”

“Fine. This is my last quarter. Before we part, can I have one last moment with it?”

“Okay.”

“George, this is goodbye. I’ll cherish every last moment we had together.” Oliver gazed at his quarter sadly.

“Times up,” said Victor. The meter on the vacuum showed five, four, three, and two. Before the meter could say “one,” Victor leaped into the air and dropped the quarter into the slot.

“Curse you, pale man,” said Simone.

“I get to live. I can dance. I wonder if I can even...”

Victor hit the concrete like a bomb. He looked at the meter.

“This is not a quarter,” said the meter. “This is a nickel, but since I like you I’m going to give you twenty seconds to run.”

“Oliver, I said to give me a quarter.”

“I’ll never sacrifice George. We’ve been through a lot together, it is my first allowance.

“That was yesterday. What could you do in one day?”

“It goes like this.” Oliver told the story of his first allowance. The quarter had made him proud. He was about to spend it on a soda, but then he looked deep into George Washington’s eye and decided to make its last day of being unspent the best day of the coin’s inanimate life. They went to the theme park and rode the roller coaster, and then he took the quarter mountain biking. They went swimming until Oliver remembered George wasn’t the best swimmer.

“Lifeguard, we’ve got a drowning man!”

The lifeguard paid no attention to the drowning quarter. Oliver pulled George out of the pool himself and gave him CPR. “He lived.”

He talked with the quarter later that evening. “George, it’s nothing personal, but I think it’s time I started seeing other money. This is really more about me. You are starting to grow on me and money isn’t supposed to grow on me, it’s supposed to grow on trees. Do you mind?” The quarter did not say no. “That’s what I like about you, George, you’re so understanding. Let me hold you in my hand one last time.”

Unfortunately, Oliver dropped the coin. “George, are you in pain?” The quarter declined to say no. “Will you hate me for the rest of your life?” The quarter refused to say no. “I see what’s happening. I drop you a couple of times and you’ll hold it against me forever. You’re not going to say no. Are you being passive aggressive? Fine. You know the whole thing about you starting to grow on me? I want some space. When I go to buy a soda, you are there. When I go mountain biking, you are there. When I put you in my pocket, you are there. You think I’m overreacting? Am I George? AM I!? That does it. We’re through.”

Oliver gave the coin a good hard toss out his bedroom window. The next day he and his brother fell down a tunnel and found people who were doomed to play poker without any chips for eternity. They had to stay until they paid a certain sum of money. Victor and Oliver held onto a few dollars until one of the players conned them into playing and they lost their money. Before they were told they had to stay forever, a quarter flew past their heads and hit Oliver’s hand. “George, you came back.”

Victor and Oliver made it back into the upper world through the car wash drain hole.

“You went through all that in one day?” said Victor.

“It wasn’t just me. It was me and George.”

Simone held a metal tennis racquet. “Now you must die.”

“Let’s talk this over,” said Victor. “We’re not zombies.” He started to crawl. “You won’t take me alive.” He had not crawled so fast since he was twelve months old. “Made it,” he said as he joined Oliver. “Victor, look up.”

Above him was a beautiful young woman with a tennis racquet. “Wait,” said Victor. “Will you marry me?”

“Sure thing. Right after I destroy you.”

“I’m not a zombie. I just suffer from lack of melanin. I can’t tan.”

“It doesn’t matter,” said Simone. “I just don’t like you.”

Five years later, Victor forgot the battering and married Simone. They had two children. One was Malcolm, a sweet but odd boy.

The second child was devious and scheming, the star of this story. Give a round of applause for....

CHAPTER TWO: The One, the Only, the Classic MAX

Victor and Simone Lightfoot’s second son was named Max. The Lightfoot family lived in a large town, not too big and not too small. They had a blue painted house with a green roof.

Max always changed his hairstyle. This particular day he shaped it like the evil Peter Parker in *Spider-Man III*. Max lounged on the couch and Simone came in with a huge bundle of laundry. “Max, could you help me with this laundry?”

He ignored her.

“Max.”

“Yes,” he said, and turned his attention away from the television.

“Help me with this laundry.”

“What do you mean?”

“Help your mother.”

Max took out a book, *Max’s Dictionary*. “Hmmm. ‘Helping mother.’ Sorry ma’am, that’s not in my vocabulary.”

“Help me anyway, even if it isn’t in your vocabulary.”

“Seeing how it’s you and that it will make your life easier, no. If you will excuse me, I have an appointment with my associates, Spongebob and Patrick.”

“You’re going to help me whether you like it or not.” She shoved the load into his arms. “March to the laundry room.”

“Fine,” said Max. As he walked to the laundry room, he saw his older brother staring at the wall, watching the paint dry. “Malcolm, why are you watching the paint dry?”

“Mom and Dad won’t let me watch TV anymore since that regrettable Pace incident. Your friend, Toby, told me that another form of entertainment is watching paint dry.”

“Whoops, not interested in what you have to say. I have something for you.” He put the load into Malcolm’s arms. “Happy birthday.”

“Thanks, Max. You remembered my birthday. Wait a minute, it’s not my birthday.”

Max walked out the door and across the street to visit his two friends, Toby and Calvin.

“Hi, guys. How are you doing?”

“Toby’s dad repainted their house,” said Calvin. “He’s watching the paint dry.”

“Shhh,” said Toby. “This is the best part. The skin is forming on the wood. It is a masterpiece worthy of Akira Kurosawa.”

The three friends walked to the park for the swings. They stood on the wooden plank seats.

“Calvin,” asked Max, “How much allowance do your parents give you?”

“A penny: to wash the dog, keep Toby out of the lobster tank, brush the horses, and make sure my science project doesn’t explode.” Calvin went on with his list of hard chores. When he was done, he asked Toby the same question.

“A whole lot of nothing,” he said.

“Toby, pull your pants up,” said Max. “Your Wonder Woman underpants are showing.”

“I do a lot for my parents,” said Toby. “I sit on the couch and watch TV and eat potato chips. I raid the fridge and take a nap. After all that hard work they say, ‘Toby, that’s not real work.’”

“Pull up your pants, man. Your pants.”

“I tell them, ‘Watching TV isn’t as easy as it looks.’ Sometimes Public Television is on, and if I lose the remote I have to walk to the TV to change the channels.”

“That’s hard,” said Max. “I do the same quite often and still don’t sweat after such hard work. Come to think of it, what did my brother do with that laundry? You know what I do to get an allowance? I protest.” Max told Toby everything he knew about protesting.

Toby ran home, got on a tricycle he had when he was younger, and found a megaphone. He pedaled to his mom in the kitchen. “Two, four, six, eight, give me an allowance.”

“Toby, what are you doing?”

“I’m protesting the fact that even with the hard work I do, I am without pay.”

“Of course you’re without pay. You don’t do anything.”

“Sure I do.” He repeated everything he had told Max and Calvin. “After all that, I don’t know how I’m able to stand up.” He wiped his forehead with the back of his hand.

“Sorry to burst your bubble, young man, but you are going to have to work harder for an allowance.”

“If you don’t give me an allowance I will never eat again. No, wait, I mean blink.”

His mother rolled her eyes. “We’ll see about that.”

Toby sat down on floor and crawled to her ankle. “Give me an allowance.”

“It’s only been two seconds.”

“Lights getting dark. Must not blink. Darn it. This isn’t the end of this.” Toby ran back to the park where his friends waited.

“Max, the protest thing didn’t work. What else can I do?”

“There’s always blackmail, my friend. You need to dig up some dirt on your parents.”

“I know where the shovel is.”

“Not that kind of dirt.”

“Then I’ll use the dirt in my mind.”

“I don’t mean that kind of ‘dirt,’” said Max with concern.

“What kind do you mean?”

“He means threaten to expose your parents’ deepest, darkest secret unless they pay you an allowance,” said Calvin.

Max pulled a glow stick out of his pocket. He cracked it and lit it up, and put it over Toby’s head. Toby stopped looking dumbfounded as the light dawned.

“Oh, that kind of dirt. What should I be looking for?”

“Things that your parents don’t want anyone to know.”

“Okay.” Toby sprinted back to his house.

He paused at the back door to look at the drying paint. “I missed my second favorite part, but after I get my allowance, it will be worth it.”

Toby returned to his mother. “If you don’t give me an allowance, I will dig up dirt on you and Dad. Well, mainly you because Dad isn’t here. Right after I find my shovel. Wait, I don’t need a shovel. Mom, if you don’t give me an allowance, I’m going to tell everyone that you cheat on your diet.”

“That diet isn’t working for me anyway.”

“Fine, then I’ll tell everyone that you dropped me on my head when I was a baby.”

“I think they already guessed that.”

“Let me think about this some more. What am I doing here and who are you? I know what’s going on. I’ve been abducted by aliens and they want to suck out my brains so they can have my pure geniusness.”

“Is that even a word?” She wondered how this seven-year-old half baked potato with eyes might be when he was grown.

“I got it. I’ll tell everyone that Dad is afraid of clowns.”

“He already told us.”

“Quiet, old man. I’m thinking.”

“I’m your mom, as in a woman.”

“Yes, Gramps. We all think that some days.”

His mother thought to herself, I wonder what happened to that psychic at the circus after she read Toby’s mind last summer. I hope she’s okay but something happened there. She got a restraining order to stop us from returning.

“You’ve won this time, she-demon, but I will get an allowance and then I shall rule the world.”

Toby went to his room and carried his boom box downstairs. He played the Beatles’ song, “Help!” at full volume to his mother. Toby often was seen with his boom box and played it to people when Max told him, or felt it was an appropriate way to show his feelings.

Toby’s father came home and talked to his wife. He sat Toby down. “My boy, we talked about your allowance. I guess it’s time you learned the value of money.”

He put two quarters into his son’s hands and Toby broke into a dance. “I’m rich, I’m rich. I can buy anything I want with these coins. I can rule the world.”

“I blew it again, dear,” said Toby’s father.

Max returned home from the park to find Malcolm smirking. “Because I did the laundry, Mom says I can watch TV and you can’t.”

“I’m happy for you. Have a bottle of soda.” Malcolm took the bottle and walked over to the couch and took a big slug. His mouth was on fire.

“What on earth is this?” He read the label, “Steaming Death Hot Sauce, the most dangerous hot sauce known to man.” Malcolm walked to the fireplace and poured the sauce over the coals. A small fireball erupted and singed his hair and eyebrows.

Max was startled. “That was just the mild. Are you all right? Are you hurt?”

“Just my pride. I will take revenge for my eyebrows.”

CHAPTER THREE: Maxbeth

Max and his friends are in the drama program at school. They perform in a production of William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Max plays Macbeth, Malcolm plays Macbeth's friend, Bankwell. Toby plays MacDuff, and Calvin plays Duncan. Their drama teacher, Mr. Crisps, has thinning hair and a thickening mustache.

"Children, be careful during our premiere performance," said Mr. Crisps. "Know the rules: do not say 'good luck' or the name of the Scottish play."

"What's that, *Macbeth*?" said Max.

A rope from the curtain wraps around Mr. Crisps' leg and bounces him like a basketball.

"*Macbeth. Macbeth*," said Max. The rope pulls Mr. Crisps around the backstage.

"Quit saying *Macbeth*," said Malcolm.

"You just said *Macbeth*," said Max.

"For goodness sake, stop," said Mr. Crisps. "Just go on stage."

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ACT ONE: The part where King Duncan is in his chambers and talks to someone (whose name has been lost and may never return until the author re-reads Shakespeare's great works). We skip ahead to the witches, also played by Toby, Calvin, and Malcolm. The three witches play poker on an upturned caldron.

"Okay," says Toby as witch number one. "I'll raise 500 frankincense."

"I have to fold. All I have with me is myrrh," says Malcolm as witch number two.

"I have the upper hand," says Calvin as witch number three. "I see your frankincense and call."

"I have double, double, toil and trouble, fire burn and caldron bubble," says Toby.

Calvin grins as he reads his cards. "I believe that eye of newt and toe of frog beats a little bubble and fire."

"Darn," says Toby. "This doesn't bode well for the people in this play."

"Something wicked this way comes," says Calvin. "When shall we three meet again?"

"When my wife lets me have more money," says Toby. "And when Macbeth comes."

Max walked on to the stage. "All hail Macbeth," says Toby. "All hail Duke of whatever it was in the original play."

"All hail whatever he just said," says Malcolm.

Toby discards his robe and slips into his armor costume and walks over to Max. "If you can tell me what day rice will grow, then tell me—what does the future hold for me?" Toby runs to his original position and trades his armor for the witch's robes. "Macbeth will become Thane of Corridor and then he shall be king. Then Bankwell, your son will become king. Now we have no purpose here, so we are going out for pizza and maybe rent a DVD. We'll get back to you. If you have anything to ask us, we'll be right here or call our business number at 666-6666."

End of Act One.

ACT TWO: Max as Macbeth sends a letter with these predictions to his wife, Lady Macbeth, played by Simone. She reads the letter and plans to speed the process of him becoming king so she can be queen. Max walks over to his mother. "Hello, darling."

Victor shouts from the audience, "Keep away from my woman, MacBoy."

Simone takes off her sneaker and flings it at Victor's head. "Dear husband, did you pick up the groceries after the war?"

"They didn't have any decent bread, although they did have some good pork. The clerk was a rip off artist, however, and I left without the pork. Did you get the letter I sent?"

"Yes, darling. I have a delicious plan."

"Like the casserole you served last week?" Macbeth asked. "That thing tasted like Dad's old gym socks."

"My gym socks are scrumptious," says Victor from the audience.

Simone chucks her other sneaker at him. Victor ducks but the shoe comes back and hits him in the back of the head, thrown by the man behind him whom the shoe had actually hit.

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On with the play: Lady Macbeth invites King Duncan to the new castle she got when Macbeth was crowned Thane of Corridor, bought at a discount because it was haunted. (Refer to *Hamlet* for further information.) After the King and Queen go to bed, Lady Macbeth tells her husband to fill the water bottle. As he goes off to find the bottle, he sees something floating in mid-air.

“Is this a water bottle I see before me? Either way, it’s convenient and I’m thirsty.”

Lady Macbeth puts the guards to sleep with her home videos while Macbeth does something awful to the King and Queen. I assure you it is deliciously evil, like the Max we all know and love has been his whole short life. This is the reason this role suits him so well.

Soldiers arrive at the castle and check on the guards. “You two have gone to sleep on duty. Come, we must check on our King and Queen.” The soldiers storm into their bedroom. “My goodness, such a horrible thing.”

The King, played by Calvin, wakes up. “I’m awake.”

“Your majesty,” says the captain. “I never knew you were a bedwetter. I am disgusted.”

“I’m not a bedwetter.”

“Then explain that.” The soldier points to a wet spot on the sheet. “We need a new king, one who does not soil his sheets. Macbeth, you are the new king.”

Once Macbeth is king, he remembers what the three witches told him about his closest friend, Bankwell, about how his son would be king. He has his guards played by Calvin and Malcolm assault the friend and his son with hot sauce. This makes them leave the kingdom.

Macbeth revisits the witches. They show him a photo album of kings that are covered with many kinds of hot sauce: mild, medium, spicy, after spicy, and flaming death spicy. After seeing this, he looks for MacDuff played by Toby. He has guards do the awful thing they had done to Bankwell to scare off MacDuff’s family. MacDuff finds out and orders a rebellion against Macbeth. On their way, they find Burnham Garden and every man picks a basket of tomatoes as big as himself to use as a weapon.

Meanwhile, back at the castle, Macbeth receives reports about ten thousand men coming to overthrow him. He won’t listen because the witches told him that no one of weak stomach could harm him. He is dressed in his armor and struts with impatience. A boy comes out, played by Victor’s brother, Oliver, accompanied by his quarter.

“There are ten thousand, my lord.”

“Ten thousand geese?” says Macbeth.

“Ten thousand men.”

“Ten thousand this, ten thousand that, when will it end? I can tell you where to take that ten thousand.” He grabs Oliver’s quarter and flings it into the audience.

“George,” says Oliver. “Keep away from him, you vultures.” He dives into the audience and is not seen again.

Lady Macbeth has a stain on her best dress and walks around saying “Out, out darn spot” and acts rather crazy. She is too ashamed to be seen in public as the only queen who cannot clean a spot from her queenly robes, and re-enacts with great guilt her part in the ending of King Duncan’s reign.

“I knew it!” says Duncan, who sells Macbeth merchandise down in the village. When his life as a king had ended, he disguised himself as a peddler. “Come on people, we have it all here. We have a Macfridge, Macbed, and MacBath. Make your home fit for a king.” It was very degrading.

Lady Macbeth quits being royalty and decides to become a drama queen. She is unsurprisingly good. She leaves our story.

We go back to Macbeth. A man played by Calvin says, “My lord, I’ve seen something I don’t know how to explain. Burnham Garden just unearthed itself and is heading this way.”

This does not surprise Macbeth, because when he looked at the photo album and finished laughing, the witches were in Miami and the first witch was sunburned like a lobster. The witches had told him to be wary of MacDuff, and Burnham Gardens would bring his castle down.

Macbeth looks outside the window. His castle is pelted with tomatoes. “This castle is getting its nutrition.”

A boy played by Malcolm says, “En garde, Macbeth.” He pulls out a water pistol.

Macbeth pulls out an even bigger water pistol, filled with hot sauce. “No one of weak stomach can harm me.”

“I have a strong stomach.”

Macbeth shot the sauce into his open mouth. He screamed and dropped his gun.

“There is nothing left for me to do here. I’m going home.”

“That went better than expected.”

“Prepare to perish, Macbeth,” says MacDuff who entered as the panting boy left the stage.

“Like I said before, no one of weak stomach can beat me.”

“As a boy I was fed a handful of chili peppers each day, and I drank every type of spicy food and drink known to man or vegetable.”

Max pulls out a second water pistol. The play becomes an action movie. Max and Calvin bounce off walls and shoot their water pistols filled with hot sauce at each other. Toby comes out of the castle with a letter that says Macbeth is no longer king.

Macbeth ends his days selling merchandise representing the new king of Scotland whoever that may be.

Read on, MacDuff.