

'Freak the Mighty'

A Play In Two Acts

by

Rodman Philbrick

FREAK THE MIGHTY

TWO ACT VERSION

By Rodman Philbrick

CHARACTERS:

MAX, 13, very large for his age. Must be big enough and strong enough to hoist a small, under-sized boy onto his shoulders.

KEVIN, small, handicapped.

GRAM, Max's grandmother.

GRIM, Max's grandfather.

GWEN, Kevin's mother.

BLADE, Kid Gang leader

MRS. DONELLI, a teacher.

MS. ADDISON, vice principal

IGGY, a bad news biker.

LORETTA, Iggy's girlfriend.

KILLER KANE, Max's father

DR. SPIVAK, a specialist in Kevin's disorder.

THE GANG OF NINE will play various characters. The taunting children in the opening scene, the gang in the fireworks scene, the kids in the school scene, background in the hospital scenes. In addition, the Gang Kids will help effect scene changes, which must be accomplished quickly and efficiently. Gender unimportant - could easily be half girls, half boys, or even all girls.

SETTINGS: The Down Under, The Back Yard, The Street, The Fireworks, The Class Room, Iggy's Pad, The Hospital.

SCENERY: None. To indicate scenes, rely on lighting and props.

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PROPS, Kevin's crutches, wheelchair, inexpensive toy ornithopter [available at many toy and hobby shops, or through Schylling, Inc. P.O.Box 513, Rowley, Mass 01969] 'American Flyer' style wagon, lawn mower, bike, Bible, pyramid-shaped box, small metal trash can, free-standing picket fence, charcoal grill, three lawn chairs, Super Soaker, simple table and chairs, birthday cake with candles.

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

BLACK OUT. In the darkness, coming from back stage, we hear the angry voice of a very dangerous adult male.

ANGRY MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Come back here, woman! [ SLAP!] There! Think you can walk out on me? Is that what you think? Try that again and I'll kill you. Swear on a Bible. I...will...kill...you.

After a beat, a Kid Voice calls out from the back of the theatre, chanting and names as if taunting someone on a darkened playground.

VOICE (O.S.)

Killer Kane, Killer Kane, had a kid who got no brain!

The first Voice is joined by another voice from another part of the audience.

2ND VOICE

Killer Kane, Killer Kane, had a kid who got no brain!

Then another voice and another, until all of the Gang Kids are chanting in unison as they work their way through the audience and approach the stage, dressed in black.

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CONTINUED:

LIGHTS COME UP SLIGHTLY, very dim, so that we can just barely see the Gang Kids looking like wraiths in black, doing their taunting dance, arms waving, chanting in the nah-nah-nah-nah-nah rhythm familiar to all school yards

VOICES

Killer Kane, Killer Kane, had a kid who got no brain!  
Killer Kane, Killer Kane, had a kid who got no brain!

DIM LIGHTS UP on the Down Under. Simple bed, that's it.

GRAM (O.S.)

Maxwell! Maxwell! Are you down there?

GRAM knocks, ENTERS. Sits down on edge of bed and sighs. It's obvious she knows Max is under the bed.

GRAM (CONT'D)

Maxwell? I do wish you'd go outside. It's not healthy, spending all your time down here. If you don't get some fresh air you'll turn into a giant mushroom. Max? It's hard enough to look after a giant boy. How would I cope with a giant mushroom? Stick your head out the door, and see what's going on in the world. Help your grandfather mow the lawn. Something. Just for me, Maxwell? Please?

Gram sighs, leaves.

After a beat, Max slides out from under the bed, wearing a Walkman. He stands up, jams a cap on his head, turns to go - then turns back and deliberately confronts the audience.

MAX

(addressing audience)

What? You got something to say to me? Listen, you don't know nothing about me. Not yet you don't. So pay attention. Maybe you'll learn something. Maybe you won't. Your choice.

He turns to go.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BLACKOUT.

SCENE TWO

Grim trying to start a lawn mower.  
Spits on his hands, grips starting  
rope.

GRIM

Come on baby. Start for papa.

Yanks cord. No luck. He kicks it.

GRIM (CONT'D)

You miserable piece of-

Max enters, headphones in place.

GRIM (CONT'D)

Hey Max! Come to give your grandpa a hand? Did your  
grandmother talk to you? Max?

No reaction from Max. Grim lifts Max's  
headphones.

GRIM (CONT'D)

You in there, boy?

MAX

Leave me alone.

GRIM

(trying to get through to him)

Okay, okay. Have it your way. But if you don't want to help  
me mow the lawn, maybe you can check out the house next  
door. Somebody just moved in.

MAX

Why?

GRIM

Somebody just moved in.

MAX

So?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GRIM  
(gives up, exasperated)

So this conversation is ended. Do what you like.

LIGHTS DIM ON GRIM as Max crosses. Enter BLADE, showing off on a mountain bike or stunt bike. Veers bike at Max, misses him - very pleased with himself.

BLADE

Hey Maxi-Pad! Nice shoes - not! Man, you are a piece of work, you know that? Nyuk, nyuk!

MAX

Go away.

BLADE

Your old man still in jail? Hey, that's cool. I wish my old man would kill my old lady. Then I'd be free as a bird. Are you free as a bird, Maxi-Pad?

Max raises his fist. Blade howls in laughter and zooms off on the bike. Shouting over his shoulder.

BLADE (CONT'D)

Later, Maxi-Pad!

BLACK OUT.

SCENE THREE

Back yard divided by suggestion of a fence. Yard on right has a tree, or rather a tree branch with leaves.

Kevin stands under the branch, trying to get something down - a plastic ornithopter stuck on a branch. He pokes at it with his crutch, can't quite get it.

Max watches from the side, unseen by Kevin.

He pounds the crutch on the ground.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KEVIN

Rats!

Kevin gets an idea. He exits and returns pulling an red American Flyer wagon. He positions it under the tree, climbs into the wagon, and resumes poking his crutch at the tree. He still can't quite reach.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Double rats!

Kevin spots Max, points crutch at him.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Who goes there? Identify yourself, earthling! Hey! What's a matter, can't you talk?

Max advances toward the tree, and Kevin.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

What are you looking at, huh? Hey, get back! This crutch is loaded! I'll blast you into hyper-space! Die, earthling die! [Makes firing noises]

Max walks past Kevin, pulls branch down, takes removes ornithopter, hands it to Kevin.

MAX

Here.

KEVIN

Oh, it talks. Hey, thanks. It must be cool being as tall as a tree.

MAX

What is it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

KEVIN

This? This is an ornithopter, first invented by this old dude called Leonardo Da Vinci, and recently perfected by yours truly.

MAX

Yeah, but what is it?

KEVIN

You want a more specific definition, is that it? Fine, I can do that. Ornithopter, an experimental device propelled by flapping wings. Or you could say an ornithopter is just a big word for mechanical bird. Observe and be amazed, earthling.

(Lets it fly)

Cool, huh!

MAX

Yeah.

KEVIN

So. You live around here?

Max points.

MAX

Over there. In the down under.

KEVIN

The down under? What's that?

MAX

I'll show you.

Max pulls Kevin away in the wagon.  
Cross stage. Lights up on Max's bed.  
Max and Kevin enter.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (3)

Kevin hobbles into the room, leaning on his crutch, looking around with great curiosity and interest.

KEVIN

Excellent. You get to stay down here all by yourself?  
It's like Merlin's Cave!

MAX

Who?

Kevin pokes at the bed with his crutch. He makes a seat for himself, puffing a little - Kevin often seems to have TROUBLE BREATHING.

KEVIN

Merlin. The great magician. He worked for King Arthur.  
(sees that Max doesn't get it)  
The Knights of the Round Table?

Max stares blankly - he hasn't got a clue.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

It's from a book.

MAX

Books suck.

KEVIN

Really? You never heard of King Arthur?

MAX

No.

Kevin bounces around on Max's bed, full of energy as he tells the tale. Max sitting with his back against the wall. Scenes flash up behind them, illustrating Kevin's imagination. And in Kevin's imagination he's King Arthur.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

KEVIN

You're missing out, man. This is a really cool story.[MQ3] It's about the first king of England, way back when there were still dragons and monsters in the world, okay? Arthur was this wimpy little kid, an orphan, and there was this magic sword stuck in a big stone, okay? The old king had died and whoever could pull the sword out of the stone proved he was the next king. All the big strong dudes tried to pull out the sword and they couldn't budge it. Finally the only one left who hadn't tried is this orphan, this nobody, right? This kid who might as well be invisible because nobody bothers to notice him. So this wimpy little dude does it, he pulls out the sword! And that's how they knew he was special! That's how they knew he was king!

MAX

What happened next?

KEVIN

King Arthur, all his friends were knights, see, and he'd send them out on secret missions, which in the old days they called 'quests'. Anyhow, he'd say like, "Go forth and bring me the tongue of a wicked dragon," which no regular human could do without getting creamed. So King Arthur, he thought up a way to exceed the design limitations of the human body. He put the knights in these tin cans - armor - kind of like medieval robots.

MAX

Right.

KEVIN

Arthur gave all his knights cool names like Lancelot and Homer the Brave, and they all ate dinner around this huge round table.

MAX

What did they eat?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

KEVIN

Hot dogs. Ground hogs. Deep fried squirrels. Whatever.

MAX

This really happened?

KEVIN

More or less. This was way back, when there were still monsters and stuff. And they had all these adventures and everybody lived happily ever after.

(thinks it over)

Well, not everybody lived happily ever after. But they tried, and that's why they got written down.

GWEN

(calling out from Off Stage)

Kev-in! Kev-in!

KEVIN

(to Max)

Uh oh. The Fair Guinevere.

GWEN ENTERS, looks around, focused at first on Kevin.

GWEN

Kevin? What are you doing down here?

Max stands up, startling her. It's obvious that she's scared of Max, and wants to hustle her son out of the Down Under. Great tension.

GWEN (CONT'D)

Oh!

KEVIN

Hi Mom. This is Max. We've been discussing the Arthurian legends.

GWEN

That's nice. Come along Kevin.  
(she takes his hand)

Quickly. Quickly!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

KEVIN  
(to Max)

Later, dude!

LIGHTS DIM, leaving Max in silhouette, hanging his head. Forlorn, alone - he doesn't believe there will be a 'later'.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE FOUR

Kevin's back yard. Gwen cooks hotdogs. Cheap charcoal grill. Lawn chairs. Lighting indicates sunset.

KEVIN  
Smells good. Considering what they put in those things.

GWEN  
Please don't list the ingredients.

KEVIN  
Eyeballs and noses and tails and-

GWEN  
Kevin!

KEVIN  
Okay, okay.

Max enters, very tentatively. Tension all around.

GWEN  
Hello, Max. Your grandmother told you I called, huh?

Max nods.

GWEN (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry we got off on the wrong foot. I just never, you know...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KEVIN

What she's trying to say is, you're a spitting image of your bad old Dad. That's why the Fair Gwen almost wet her pants!

GWEN

Kevin, please.

(to Max)

Max, I think you should know something. I knew your mother. We were both pregnant at the same time, and going to the same clinic, and we got to be friends. You know how it is. Or maybe you don't. But I just wanted to tell you what a wonderful person she was. Really smart and funny, and very beautiful, too. She was so looking forward to having you. Anyhow, that's what I remember. Then Kevin came along and we had to move away for a while and Annie - your mom and I - we lost touch. So, there it is. Your father, I assume your father is still...confined?

MAX

Yeah. He's in prison.

KEVIN

(after an awkward pause)

Okay, that's over. Let's eat!

Gwen hands Max a plate. He handles it like a live grenade.

GWEN

Here you go, Max. Enjoy.

Max sits down, takes a bite of the hot dog.

MAX

Real good, Mrs. Avery.

Kevin wolfs down a hot dog.

GWEN

Kevin, slow down, don't eat so fast.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

But Kevin is wired, acting out. Now he's pretending to be a robot.

KEVIN

Rrrrr. Eep-eep-eep! That's robot-speak for 'robot hungry, give me a pot-ate-oh chip'.

He snags a chip from Max's plate, swallows it quickly, and STARTS TO CHOKE.

Gwen leaps up, very concerned, but Kevin shakes his head, clearing his throat. HE'S OKAY.

KEVIN (CONT'D)  
(getting his breath back)

False alarm, Earthlings. Consume your tube steaks. Consume your dextrose, your sodium erythorbate, your sodium nitrate, your oleoresin, your beef by-products, your-

GWEN  
(interrupting)

Kevin, please, we're trying to eat.

KEVIN

Your all-beef eyeballs and all-beef rectums.

GWEN

Pay no attention, Max. My son is brilliant but insane.

KEVIN

Mom!

GWEN

Eat your hot dog, genius.

Kevin shrugs, takes a bite, grins at Max, showing the stuff in his teeth.

Max smiles - we get the idea it's his first smile in a while.

GWEN (CONT'D)

This is great. I feel like we're getting a fresh start. All of us.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BLACK OUT.SCENE SIX

Night sky on the back screen.  
Suggestion of a crowd wearing BIG HATS  
and LONG COATS.

Kevin is there, trying to see, but  
blocked by the much-taller crowd.

Max joins Kevin.

PUBLIC ADDRESS (O.S.)  
(faintly)

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to our celebration of the  
nation's birthday! Happy Fourth of July!

The first small rocket arcs up and POPS  
[sound effect, light effect]

KEVIN

What, did everybody take a growth hormone? All I can see  
are feet and knees! Feet and knees and smelly butts! What's  
it like up there?

Max shrugs, then picks up Kevin, puts  
him on his shoulders so he can see over  
the crowd.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Hey, cool! I can see! Oh look!  
(womp of fireworks)

Aw right!

(Naming chemicals and elements  
as fireworks explode on the  
back screen)

See that sparkle? That's magnesium! And there's potassium  
chlorate! Potassium nitrate! Wow! Look at that sulphur!  
That's aluminum! And there's copper! Copper powder  
combusting with oxygen - wow! See that blue? That's good  
old strontium nitrate! Hurray for chemistry! Yay!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Fireworks fade. Crowd slowly disperses.

Max starts to plod along with Kevin  
still on his shoulders.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

That was the best ever.

MAX

You really know all the stuff they put in fireworks?

KEVIN

I know all the stuff they put in everything.  
(shading his eyes to look into  
the distance)

Uh oh. They spotted us.

MAX

Who?

KEVIN

I think we're about to have a close encounter of the turd  
kind.

MAX

Huh?

Blade enters swaggering and cocksure,  
leading his Kid Gang.

BLADE

Hey you, Frankenstein and Igor!

KEVIN

What'd you say?

BLADE

You heard me, midget man. What is this, a geek show? Little  
freak on the big retard?

The Gang Kids laugh and echo. 'Ah  
right, Blade!' 'You dissed him,  
dawg!' etc.- they think Blade is  
hysterically funny.

KEVIN

Come on, Max. He's a cretin.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (2)

BLADE

Say what, you little mutant?

KEVIN

Cretin. C-R-E-T-I-N. Defined as one who suffers from mental deficiency.

BLADE

That's it. Now you're dead meat.

He advances, threatening.

MAX

Um, Kevin?

KEVIN

I'm thinking.

BLADE

Get 'em guys!

Blade makes a move, Max spins away and the chase is on. Kevin trying to direct Max as they struggle to get away.

KEVIN

Left! Go Left!

BLADE

Hey moron! Hey midget! Come back here!

KEVIN

Right! No that way! That way!

Kevin swings his crutch. A Gang kid ducks.

BLADE

Freak show time!

MAX

Kevin! What do I do?

KEVIN

I've got it! Go for the H2O!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MAX

What?

KEVIN

Into the pond! Run into the pond Max! Trust me, it's the only way! You're taller than they are! They won't be able to catch us!

Max hesitates, then with the Gang Kids grabbing at him, he bolts, runs to front edge of the stage. Lights and sound effects should suggest water as Max struggles into the pond. Blade and his gang stop at the rear of stage.

BLADE

Too deep! That's okay, we go 'em surrounded! Get some rocks. We'll nail 'em.

They scurry around, searching for rocks on the shore. Taking aim, getting ready to throw.

MAX

What do we do now?

KEVIN

We pray for a miracle.

Blade and gang mimic throwing rocks. Max and Kevin weave and duck, but they can;t really move much.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Is that the best you can do?

MAX

Kevin, shut up okay?

KEVIN

You throw like a girl!

Suddenly BLUE LIGHTS FLASH.

BLADE

Cops! Beat it!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Blade and his Gang exit. Max wades to shore. When he gets there, the blue lights fade or stop.

Max puts Kevin down.

KEVIN

Wow! That was great, huh? Wasn't that cool? Us against wicked Blade and his gang. And we won!

MAX

Yeah, great. Can we go home now?

Lights dim, except for spotlight on Max, who addresses the audience.

MAX (CONT'D)

That's how it started, when I first put him up on my shoulders. Kevin as the brains and me as the brawn. Frankenstein and Igor. The little freak and the big retard. We had another name, a better name, but we didn't know it yet.

Max walks upstage into the shadows.

## SCENE SIX

Lights come as Gram enters sorting through her mail. One envelope disturbs her.

GRAM

Oh!

Gram puts aside the other envelopes, fumbles through her purse, finds a lighter. She drops the burning envelope in a trash can.

Grim enters.

GRIM

Him again? I don't know why they let him write from prison. There ought to be a law. Hasn't he done enough harm?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GRAM

You know what Arthur? Maxwell has a friend. He's never had a friend before, and I won't let his summer be ruined. I won't! I'll burn every letter. I'll disconnect the phone. Whatever it takes.

Grim hugs her as she weeps.

GRIM

I know, dear. I know.

BLACK OUT.

SCENE SEVEN

Daylight. Max enters walking along with Kevin on his shoulders - they're quite comfortable with each other now.

KEVIN

I propose a quest on this fine summer day! We shall journey to the East, rescuing maidens and slaying dragons. On, my noble steed!

MAX

What's a steed?

KEVIN

Like a horse.

MAX

I'm not a horse.

KEVIN

Are you sure? Because things aren't always what they seem. Like this sidewalk for instance. If you use your imagination, it's not just a sidewalk, it's a swaying bridge made of vines. We have to cross it to get to the other side. No, don't look down!

(He covers Max's eyes)

Don't look down or we'll fall! One step at a time.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KEVIN (CONT'D)  
(Max teeters)

Easy, easy. You're doing good. Whew! We made it!  
(he points)

There, that's the Castle of Avarice.

MAX

You mean that big fancy house?

KEVIN

Use your imagination. Things are always more interesting if you use your imagination. For instance, yonder lies the Bloated Moat.

MAX

You mean that swimming pool?

KEVIN

Max!

MAX

Okay, it's a bloated moat. Whatever that is.

[Sound effect of a powerful car]

KEVIN

I fear we have entered The Land of Gas Guzzling Dinosaurs. Onward, noble steed.

MAX

Have we got to yonder yet?

KEVIN

We're almost there. Turn at the end of the block. Onward! Onward to the Fortress! There it is, Max! Behold!

Several of the Gang kids mill around as if entering a leaving a medical facility. They're dressed as doctors and nurses.

MAX

That's a hospital.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

KEVIN

More precisely it is a medical research facility. The source of secret medical experiments. You want to know what kind of secret medical experiments?

MAX

Yeah.

KEVIN

You need to swear. Put your hand on your heart.  
(Max complies)

Now swear on your heart that the data you are about to receive will be divulged to no one.

MAX

I swear.

KEVIN

Okay. Inside that building is a secret laboratory called the Experimental Bionics Unit. Their mission is to develop a new form of bionic robot for human modification.

MAX

What's that?

KEVIN

Sssh. Speak of this to no one, but at some future time as yet undetermined, I will enter the lab and become the first bionically improved human. They're building me a whole new body, like the one I've got, only bigger and better and longer lasting.

MAX

Won't it hurt?

KEVIN

Probably. But pain is just a state of mind. You can think your way out of anything, even pain.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MAX

Isn't it dangerous, getting a new body?

KEVIN

Life is dangerous.

(Kicks his feet into Max's  
sides.)

Home, mighty steed.

LIGHTS DOWN.

Max puts Kevin down and he exits.

Spotlight finds Max and he addresses  
the audience.

MAX

Yeah, I know. Only a major doofus would believe that stuff  
about getting a bionic body. But it should be pretty clear  
by now that if you looked up doofus in the dictionary,  
you'd find my picture. And Kevin, well, they say it's good  
to have a healthy imagination. Only Kevin's imagination was  
mostly about being healthy, or being a hero, or both.  
Remember that, it gets important later. Are we clear? Good.

BLACK OUT.

SCENE EIGHT

Lights up on Max lying on the floor,  
listening to a Walkman. Kevin enters,  
sneaks up, pokes him with his crutch.

KEVIN

Wake up!

MAX

Quit poking me, I wasn't asleep.

KEVIN

Never mind, we've got another quest. Actually, more a  
treasure hunt than a quest.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX

Real treasure?

KEVIN

Treasure that has been hidden in a storm drain.

MAX

Yeah, sure.

KEVIN

Swear on my oath. It has been confirmed by visual observation. I saw it with my own eyes.

MAX

Huh? What?

KEVIN

Villains stole a purse from a fair maiden, and when the cops chased them, they tossed it in the drain.

MAX

The sewer.

KEVIN

Picky, picky. We shall recover the treasure from the drain, at great peril to our lives, and return it to the fair maiden.

MAX

Oh yeah? Why?

KEVIN

Why? You dare to ask why? Because we are knights of the realm.

(grandly, seeing it all in his  
imagination)

Because we battle the forces of evil and protect the weak!  
That is the truth, the unvanguished truth!

MAX

Are we going to get in trouble?

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (2)

KEVIN

Only if we're lucky.

BLACK OUT.

SCENE NINE

Iggy's Pad. Biker chic. Iggy sits on a ratty old sofa, sucking on a beer, watching the tube (indicated by cold light). DOORBELL BONGS. Iggy doesn't move. It BONGS again.

IGGY

Loretta! Door!

Loretta enters, hair a mess.

LORETTA

Door, huh? Really? I mean are you sure it's not the window? Would you answer the window, if the window bell rang? Hmm?  
[BONG-BONG]

IGGY

Hey, I'm watching here. Answer the door or make it stop ringing, your choice.

Loretta sighs and opens the door. She looks surprised, then interested.

LORETTA

Hey Iggy! Get a load of this. Is the circus in town or what?

Loretta snakes a hand off stage, drags Kevin into the room - Kevin is clutching the purse. Max follows him in.

KEVIN

Oops. Our mistake.

LORETTA

I seen the big one around. Don't he look familiar, Iggy?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KEVIN

Excuse us please, we must have the wrong address. We were looking for a fair maiden.

IGGY

You hear that Loretta?

KEVIN

We found your purse. Here. Gotta go.

LORETTA

Why thank you. See that, Iggy, they're gentlemen.

Kevin and Max try to leave.

IGGY

Hang on, shorty.

(He blocks their retreat)

You better come inside. You and King Kong. Now sit down.

The boys sit down.

LORETTA

Don't be making Iggy nervous. Last dude made him nervous got his-

IGGY

Shut up, Loretta. I'm thinking here. You're right, the big one does look familiar.

(to Max)

What's your name, kid?

KEVIN

We're sorry to disturb you, but we've got to go home now.

IGGY

I ask a question you better answer. What are your names?

KEVIN

I'm Kevin Avery. He's Maxwell Kane.

LORETTA

That's it! That's why he looks familiar, Iggy! He's Kenny Kane's kid!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

IGGY

Right, right. Chip off the old block. Dead ringer.

KEVIN

We really have to go.

Kevin wants to get up, but Iggy keeps him down with one finger.

IGGY

Hang on now. Let me look at you. My my, Killer Kane's little boy, all grewed up. You ever visit your old man in prison, kid? Huh? If you do, tell him Iggy says hello.

LORETTA

He don't know nothing. Looks like he's some kind of retard. I bet he don't even know why his dad's locked up.

IGGY

Shut up, Loretta.

LORETTA

(to Max)

You remember what happened? What he did to your poor mommy? Why he got sent away to prison?

Max won't respond.

LORETTA (CONT'D)

(to Iggy)

What do you think old Killer Kane would think, his boy dropping in on us? Huh Iggy?

IGGY

We're not going to say a word about this. Is that clear, Loretta.

LORETTA

But Iggy-

IGGY

I said shut up. You two, out. Get out! Now!

Max and Kevin hastily get up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

LORETTA

But Iggy, we was just starting to have some fun.

IGGY

Out!

KEVIN

(as the exit)

Great visit! Thanks!

LIGHTS DOWN on Iggy's Pad.

Spotlight comes up on Max and Kevin as they cross the stage.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Well, that was interesting.

MAX

Are you cracked? We almost got killed.

KEVIN

Almost doesn't count, not for knights of the realm.

MAX

You know what? Sometimes I think you're the one who's retarded.

KEVIN

You want to tell me about your father? Or what he really did to your mother?

MAX

No.

KEVIN

Did I ever tell you about my father?

MAX

No.

KEVIN

My father was a magician.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

MAX

Really?

KEVIN

Yeah. As soon as he heard I was born with a birth defect, he made himself disappear.

BLACK OUT.

SCENE TEN

Class room. Max sits in the back. Kevin's desk is behind him. The Kid Gang, dressed as school kids, are whispering and giggling and making fun of both Kevin and Max as Mrs. Donelli enters, holding a clipboard.

MRS. DONELLI

Class! Come to order please! That's better. I see we have some new students in our class. Let's all get to know them, shall we?

(consults her clipboard)

Maxwell Kane? Yes, there you are. Maxwell, would you please stand up and tell us something about your summer?

Max won't move. Taunting resumes, but much louder. As before the lines are divided among the Kid Gang.

KID GANG LINES

Forget it, Mrs. Donelli, his brain is in his tail! Yeah! Ask him to count, he can paw the ground! Maxi pad! Maxi pad! Ask him quick about his dad! Killer Kane! Killer Kane! Had a kid who got no brain!

MRS. DONELLI

Class! Come to order!

Kevin stands up on top of his desk.

KEVIN

Come to order! Order in the court! Let justice be heard!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The kids are surprised by this outburst, and lapse into silence.

MRS. DONELLI

You must be Kevin Avery, is that right?

KEVIN

Sometimes I am.

MRS. DONELLI

Sometimes? What does that mean?

KEVIN

It means sometimes I'm more than Kevin.

MRS. DONELLI

I'm not sure I understand. Can you give us an example?

KEVIN

Sometimes I'm more than Kevin, and Max is more than Max.

Kevin climbs on Max's shoulders. Max stands up.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Sometimes we're nine feet tall!

Kevin directs Max to march around the room as he delivers his speech

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Sometimes we slay dragons and walk high above the world! We aren't the little freak and the big dummy. Because with my big smart brain and his big, brave heart we make one mighty knight! The bravest, mightiest knight of all! We're Freak...the Mighty! Freak the Mighty! Freak the Mighty!

By the end of the speech, the kids are standing on their chairs and shouting right along, with Max marching place, right in the center, as if leading them all.

KID GANG

Freak The Mighty! Freak the Mighty! Freak The Mighty!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

There's a moment of silence, and then Mrs. Donelli suddenly starts clapping, all by herself.

BLACK OUT.

SCENE ELEVEN

Max's in his back yard, wearing his Walkman headphone. He's changing a spark plug on the lawn mower.

Grim enters.

GRIM  
(very stern)

Take off those headphones, boy. It's time we had a talk.

Max slips off headphones, steels himself for the worst.

GRIM (CONT'D)

It's about your report card. You know what I'm talking about, boy? Huh? Do you?

Max shrugs.

GRIM (CONT'D)

I'm talking about a report card like I've never seen before. Never! Listen to this. 'Maxwell shows real improvement in reading and comprehension. He has begun to participate in normal classroom activity'. What do you say to that, boy?

Max shrugs.

GRIM (CONT'D)

You say, 'I did good.' Go on, say it.

MAX

I did good.

GRIM

Music to my ears, boy. Music to my ears.

Grim exits.

Max addresses audience.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX

Don't look so smug. You thought I was stupid, too. Everybody did. If he looks dumb, he must be dumb, right? Admit it. Hey, I thought I was stupid, too, until Kevin came along and let me borrow his brain for a while. Anyhow, things were going pretty good until the crap hit the fan. That's the other thing I learned that year. Sooner or later, the crap always hits the fan.

BLACK OUT.

SCENE TWELVE

School cafeteria suggested by table with chairs, kids with trays of food. In the background Blade, wearing a chef's hat, ladles out food as the kids line up,

Max is already seated, eating. Kevin sits down beside him.

KEVIN

Mmmmm, fossilized dino dung, my favorite. Care for a side of pond scum, Maxwell?

MAX

(pointing at a suspect dessert)

What's this supposed to be?

KEVIN

Apple surprise. Surprise! There's no apple!

MAX

(takes a bite)

It's okay.

KEVIN

I bet you could eat a tree. A whole tree.

MAX

What's that supposed to mean.

KEVIN

Him got jumbo appetite.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

MAX

That's stupid, I'd never eat a tree. Not a whole one anyway.

KEVIN

Hey, did you see that cool experiment Mr. Fetters ran in Earth Science?

MAX

Yeah cool. He lit his pants on fire.

KEVIN

That part was an accident. I think.

Kevin starts to wolf down his burger. He stops in mid-bite, his eyes get round

MAX

Kevin?

Kevin chokes, slips out of his seat, quivers on the floor, unable to breath.

MAX

Nurse! Get the nurse! Call 911! Somebody do something!

LIGHTS DOWN.

A spot remains on Max, follows him to the side of the stage, where he waits anxiously.

Spot widens and Gwen enters with Dr. Spivak.

GWEN

Max? You're still here. Good. Maxwell, I'd like you to meet Dr. Spivak. She's Kevin's doctor.

DR. SPIVAK

Hello, Maxwell. I've heard a lot about you. Thanks, Gwen, I'll take it from here.

Gwen exits.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MAX

Is he going to be okay?

DR. SPIVAK

He'll be fine. Kevin's a fighter. He's been fighting to survive since the day he was born. The short-term prognosis is actually quite good - no further damage to his lungs - and he'll be back to school in a week or so.

MAX

But he's okay.

DR. SPIVAK

For now, sure.

MAX

For now?

DR. SPIVAK

You understand that Kevin has a serious illness?

MAX

I know he hurts sometimes. But you said he'd be okay.

DR. SPIVAK

For now, I said. None of us knows what the future may hold. Okay then. Excuse me, please, I have to get back. Nice to have met you, Max.

Dr. Spivak exits.

Gwen enters, pushing Kevin in a wheelchair.

KEVIN

(hoarse)

Max! Cool wheels, huh?

GWEN

Hush now.

(to Max)

He's not supposed to talk for twenty-four hours. Talk about asking for a miracle! Can you give me a hand, Max? Thanks.

Max pushes the wheelchair.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MAX

From now on you eat real slow, okay?

KEVIN

Yes, Mom.

Max and Gwen shakes their heads and laugh as they move out of the spotlight.

SCENE THIRTEEN

Lights up on an empty stage. Bell rings, stage fills with noisy students, including Max, Kevin, and the vice principal, Ms. Addison.

MS. ADDISON

(claps her hands)

Quiet now! If you can't behave like ladies and gentlemen, try pretending you're ladies and gentlemen.

(spots Max)

Max? Can I see you for a minute, please?

Max reluctantly follows her. Lights up on desk and two chairs.

MS. ADDISON (CONT'D)

Have a seat, Max.

They both sit. Max fidgets while Ms. Addison consults a file folder, as if uncertain of how to proceed.

MAX

(blurts out)

You're putting me back in L.D., right?

MS ADDISON

No, no. Nothing like that.

MAX

Because if I have to go back in the L.D. class, I won't. I just won't.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MS, ADDISON  
(sighs - this is tough)

Maxwell, this isn't about school, or the learning disabled class. This is about your father.

Max freezes. The word 'father' is a knife in his heart.

MS, ADDISON (CONT'D)

A request has been forwarded from the parole board.

MAX

No.

MS. ADDISON

I'm afraid so. Your father wants to know if-

MAX  
(interrupting)

No. No.

Max clamps his hands over his ears, shaking his head violently. He's regressing right before our eyes.

MAX (CONT'D)

Don't want to hear! Don't! No! Don't! No! Don't! Don't!

He knocks over his chair, falls to then curls into a fetal position on the floor, covering his head with his arms.

MRS. ADDISON

It's okay, Max. Can you hear me?

MAX  
(very quiet, very young)

Don't hurt her, Daddy. Please don't hurt her. Please. Please.

MRS. ADDISON

Easy. Easy now. It's okay.

Max comes out of it.

MAX

Did I hurt you? Did I hurt somebody?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Mrs. Addison hugs Max.

MS. ADDISON

Forget about it, okay? Forget I said it. You don't have to do anything you don't want to do. I'll make sure. I swear on my honor, he can't make you do anything you don't want to do. I'm going to make that very clear to the parole board. Very clear.

BLACK OUT

SCENE FOURTEEN

Max lying on his back, listening to his Walkman. He remains dimly lit throughout, but we can see he overhears Grim and Gram arguing.

GRAM (O.S.)

Not in my house!

GRIM (O.S.)

A man has a right to protect his family!

Spotlight to one side finds Grim and Gram. Grim has an old shotgun, Gram tries to take it away, but Grim holds on.

GRAM

I won't have guns in this house! I won't bring violence into this house! Not ever again!

GRIM

You think Kenny Kane cares about what the parole board says? He's out now, free in the world to kill again. You know him! You know what he did to our Annie! You know what he did to that boy! He comes around here I'm going to shoot him myself!

GRAM

Arthur, no. He'd take it away and shoot you, that's what he'd do. Give me the gun.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He lets her take the shotgun. She hides it.

GRIM

What'll we do if he shows up?

GRAM

We'll call the police. If he shows his face around here we'll call the police and they'll put him back in jail. That's what civilized people do, Arthur. We can;t be like him, even if we wanted.

GRIM

You're right. You're right. It's just...I'm afraid what he'll do.

Gram hugs him.

GRAM

I know, Arthur, I know.

Spotlight down, leaving us with the dim light in Max crouched at center stage. That light fades to black and we hear taunting voices.

GANG KIDS (O.S.)

Killer Kane, Killer Kane, had a kid who got no brain.

The taunting voices laugh, then fade away.

BLACK OUT.

SCENE FIFTEEN

Christmas Eve at Max's house. Gram is bustling around, fixing things, making sure the tree is right. Dinner waits on a table.

Grim enters with an armful of wrapped gifts, wearing a Santa Claus hat, Gram helps him place the gifts under a tree.

GRAM

There. We're not going to let him spoil our Christmas, are we?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GRIM

No way.

(he holds up package)

I got Max some books, do you think he'll mind?

GRAM

(touched)

No, he won't mind.

GRIM

I was thinking about that first Christmas, when our Annie brought him home. He was such a happy baby.

GRAM

Yes, he was.

Doorbell chimes.

GRAM (CONT'D)

Max, can you get that, please?

Max lumbers in, opens the door. Gwen and Kevin enter, bearing presents.

GRIM

Come on in, folks! Good to see ya! Merry Christmas and bah humbug!

GWEN

Merry Christmas. Thanks for inviting us.

KEVIN

Hey, Max.

MAX

Hey.

Grim switches on the stereo and sings along with a 'Chipmunks Christmas' song for a few bars. He takes Gwen's hands, leads her in a comic dance. He's hamming it up and having a great time until Gram turns off the stereo.

GRAM

That's enough Arthur. You mustn't get over excited.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

GRIM

Over excited! Me?

(pauses to catch his breath)

Whew! Not bad for an old chipmunk, eh? Okay, let's eat.  
Grab a pew everybody.

Grim and Gram herd guide their guests  
to seats at the table.

KEVIN

Your grandfather is kinda cool, in a weird sort of way.

MAX

I guess so.

KEVIN

(very serious)

You're okay, right?

MAX

I'm fine. Really.

KEVIN

Because I thought maybe-

MAX

(sharply)

I said I'm fine.

Grim hands a carving knife to Max.

GRIM

You take the baton, maestro.

He slumps melodramatically into his  
seat as Max carves.

GRIM (CONT'D)

When I was a boy-

GRAM

(interrupting)

They didn't have boys when you were a boy. They had  
dinosaurs.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (3)

GRIM

No fancy computer games in my day. We got lumps of coal in our stockings. If we were really, really lucky, we got an apple core.

GRAM

You never got a lump of coal in your life.

GRIM

You're right. We never even got a lump of coal. My father couldn't afford it, so he'd just write 'coal' on a piece of paper and put it in our stockings and we'd pretend.

GRAM

Is the food okay?

GWEN

It's delicious.

GRIM

I've got a question for you, Kevin. Why do they say 'eat up' when your food goes down?

KEVIN

I don't know.

GWEN

Amazing. I don't think I've ever heard Kevin say 'I don't know'.

GRIM

You hear that? I stumped the young genius. How about that?

Kevin is fussing and pestering Gwen about something. She shushes him.

KEVIN

Mom, please.

GWEN

All right, all right. I've got a request from a very impatient individual. Could the boys exchange their presents now?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

GRIM

I don't see why not.

Max beats Kevin to the punch by handing him a small box. Kevin tears it open.

MAX

(worried)

You probably already have one.

KEVIN

(holding up the present)

Cool. It's like a jackknife, only it has all these little tools! Screw drivers and wrenches and stuff!

MAX

There's a magnifying glass and this little telescope thing. I'll bet you can invent stuff with it.

KEVIN

(to Max)

Okay, my turn. Close your eyes and count to three million.

MAX

(closes his eyes, starts to count dutifully)

One, two, three-

KEVIN

(interrupting)

Million!

From beneath the table Kevin produces a small pyramid shaped box.

Max stares at it amazed.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Go ahead, you won't break it.

Max pulls the ribbon and the sides of the pyramid fall open. He finds a small book inside and holds it up for all to see.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

KEVIN (CONT'D)

What I did was take all my favorite words and put them in alphabetical order.

MAX  
(reading)

'Aardvark: a silly looking creature that eats ants.

KEVIN

Read the next.

MAX  
(reading)

'Arrggh: what the aardvark says when it eats ants.'  
(he cracks up laughing)

KEVIN  
(excited, pointing to a page)

Here's a good one.

MAX  
(reading)

Ichthyology: the study of icky foods, for instance fish.  
Jitterbug: a nervous cockroach. Neanderthals: what we all  
were before plumbing was invented. Vamoose: what you say to  
a moose when you want it to leave'  
(he closes book)

I want to save some for later.

GRIM

I'd say this is shaping up into a pretty good holiday.  
Everybody got room for desert? My lovely wife has again  
defied the laws of physics. She has baked a one ton pound  
cake.

GRAM

Arthur!

GRIM

A toast!

(he raises a glass of milk)

To Max and Kevin, and all the good children of the world!  
And to 'Freak the Mighty', whatever that is!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

They raise their glasses. Fade to  
BLACK OUT.

SCENE SIXTEEN

Out of the darkness we hear one, faint chorus of 'Killer Kane Killer Kane, had a kid who got no brain.'

Dim light comes up in the doorway of the Down Under. KILLER KANE stands there in silhouette. Highly dramatic.

He moves to the bed where Max is sleeping, and puts his hand over the boy's mouth.

Max sits up, flailing, but Killer Kane overpowers him without apparent effort.

Lights brighten.

KANE

I come back for you, son, like I promised.

BLACK OUT

End Act One

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE

Spotlight on Killer Kane towering over Max, who remains on his knees, shivering.

KANE

Well, well, ain't you got big? At least them old geezers fed you, huh? Probably fed you like they'd feed a rabid dog. I bet they're scared of you like they were scared of me.

Kane pulls Max to his feet, keeps a secure hold of him

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KANE (CONT'D)

Come along, boy, it's time I got to know my own son, who had his mind poisoned against me.

Kane leads Max across the stage. Light follows.

KANE (CONT'D)

First thing we got to get straight, all that stuff the geezers told you about me, it's all a big lie. I never killed anybody and that's the truth, so help me God.

(after a beat, he says,  
sweetly)

Say 'yes sir'.

MAX

Yes sir.

KANE

We're gonna have us a fine adventure, boy.

Blue Lights flash. Kane grabs Max and they both crouch down until the lights fade away.

KANE (CONT'D)

We best keep out of sight. Your typical cop ain't smart enough to appreciate we got a family situation here. Ain't that right, boy?

MAX

Yes, sir.

KANE

That's fine then. That's real, real nice. Okay, let's see if my old buddy is home.

Rudimentary door. Killer Kane shoves it open, entering Iggy's pad.

Lights come up, revealing Loretta, sipping from a drink, looking startled.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LORETTA

Ooh! Don't bother knocking, why don't ya? Iggy! Come look what the cat dragged in.

Iggy enters, holding can of beer. He and Loretta have been expecting Kane. They're both nervous and uneasy in his presence.

IGGY

Mission accomplished, huh Kenny? I knew you could do it, if anybody could.

KANE

Say hello to my boy. He's a real chip off the old block.

LORETTA  
(giggly drunk)

Oh, he's a big strong boy, he is, just like his big strong Daddy.

IGGY

Watch your mouth, Loretta.

KANE

I thought I made myself clear. No alcohol.

IGGY

What the hey, it's Christmas Eve.

Kane takes Iggy's beer, pours it out on the floor. Loretta gulps her drink before he takes the glass.

LORETTA  
(backing away)

Oh right. I forgot. Preacher Kane turned over a new leaf. He makes the rules now.

Kane moves menacingly at Loretta. Iggy hurriedly gets between them.

IGGY  
(appealing)

Kenny? Remember we said to make yourself at home? Come on, man. Me and Loretta, we're going to stay next door.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

IGGY (CONT'D)

You and the boy can have this place to yourselves for as long as you need it. Okay? Everything cool? Come on, Loretta, let's give these guys a little time alone.

Iggy takes Loretta's hand, slips her around Killer Kane, heads for the door.

IGGY (CONT'D)

Anything you want, all you got to do is ask. We'll be right down the hall.

Iggy and Loretta exit.

Killer Kane picks up the beer can, crushes it viciously. His mood suddenly changes - for a moment you can almost believe he's a warm caring father.

KANE

Over here, son. Come on, sit down, take a load off.

Max sits on a chair. Kane stands behind him, massaging his neck and shoulders.

KANE (CONT'D)

You wouldn't light out on me now, would you, son?

Max shakes his head.

KANE (CONT'D)

Say it.

MAX

Yes, sir. I mean, no, sir.

KANE

We got to get a few things straight between us, that's all. People say you're nothing but a dysfunctional retard, but no kin of mine is a retard and that's a fact. First thing, you've got to start acting smart. Use your head. We've got a situation here, boy, so the way to handle it, you do exactly what I say, no matter what. Understood?

(Max nods)

Say it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

MAX

Yes, sir.

Kane tousles Max's hair.

KANE

That's good. That's real good. Now you sit here, real quiet.

Kane leaves the room. Max looks around, but he's afraid to leave the chair.

We hear the BANGING OF A CUPBOARD DOOR, things being SHOVED AROUND.

Kane returns and droops a length of rope over Max.

KANE (CONT'D)

A boy who doesn't know his own father might be dumb enough to run away. We can't have that, can we?

MAX

No, sir.

KANE

Might want to go on back to the old geezers? Is that what you want, boy?

MAX

No, sir.

KANE

'Cause we could both go on back there, pay a visit.

MAX

No.

KANE  
(teasing)

Go on back, see what happens.

MAX

No!

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (5)

KANE

What?

Kane lifts Max's chin, forces the boy to look at him.

KANE (CONT'D)

What's this? You don't want to go back?

Max shakes his head violently.

KANE (CONT'D)

Now why is that? What are you afraid of, boy?

MAX

You leave them alone.

KANE  
(teasing, softly)

Oh? You telling me what to do? You giving the orders now?

MAX  
(exploding)

Leave them alone! I'll do anything you want, just leave them alone!

KANE

Or what? What'll you do?

MAX

I'll do something! I will! I will!

Kane studies his son.

KANE

You'll do something.

(He settles back on his haunches, thinking it over.)

That's good. I like that.

Lights down on Iggy's place. Spotlight illuminates a small section near the front of the stage. Gram enters the spotlight, wearing nightgown. She's fearful, calling out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

GRAM

Maxwell? Max?

Grim enters the spotlight, wearing bathrobe.

GRIM

What is it? Where is he?

GRAM

Oh Arthur! He's gone! Our Max is gone!

Lights down on Gram and Grim. Lights back up on Iggy's place.

Light from a television flickers - no sound. Max and Killer Kane seem to be asleep. Max tied hands and feet to the chair, Kane on the floor behind him.

Max stirs Suddenly Killer Kane jerks on the rope, exerting control.

KANE

Wake up, sleepyhead. I better tell my own son a thing or two he needs to know about his own father. First thing, like I already said, I never killed anybody. I'm big like you're big, so folks assume things they shouldn't. You understand what I'm saying?

Kane tugs at the rope, expecting a response.

MAX

Yes, sir, I do.

KANE

I knew you would. Next thing, these geezers you been living with all these years, I bet they never gave you all the presents I sent you, did they?

(Max shakes his head)

That's a crime, not giving a boy presents sent by his father. A crime against humanity, that's what that is. See, they hated me from the first sight.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

KANE (CONT'D)

On account of my appearance, and because I wasn't good enough for their precious daughter. As if a man can be blamed for how fearsome and cruel he looks, when in fact he is a truly loving person inside. Which I am. Why, I can hardly see a sad movie without crying, and I'm not afraid to say so.

Kane wipes away a non-existent tear.

KANE (CONT'D)

They locked me up like an animal! Every single night I cried myself to sleep, and that's a fact. 'Killer Kane', that's just an unkind name they hung on me. You know how kids can be mean in school, mean as animals? Only these weren't kids, they were adults that should have known better, except they're so ignorant and hateful they believe the worst. They blame me for all the bad things in the world, those people. By which I mean her folks that always hated me, and of course the police who failed to see the truth of the situation. You're too young to remember, but it was her people went against me, and had me arrested.

(pause, as he studies Max)

You weren't but four years old.

MAX

Yes.

KANE

Yes?

(thinks about that)

Maybe you do remember a thing or two. Hey, boy?

MAX

No.

KANE

No what?

MAX

I don't remember. Whatever happened, I don't remember.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (8)

KANE

(musing)

That a fact? You know what this is, boy?

He holds up a Bible

MAX

The Bible.

KANE

I'm putting my one hand down on this Bible, see? And my other hand is on my heart, can you see that?

MAX

Yes, sir, I can.

KANE

That's good, that's fine. Now listen: I, Kenneth David Kane, do swear by all that's holy that I did not murder this boy's mother.

(beat)

Satisfied?

(Max remains silent)

Answer me, boy.

MAX

(robotic, wooden)

Yes, sir. I'm satisfied.

LORETTA (V.O.)

Boys?

Loretta enters, holding a BOX OF PIZZA. She pretends she doesn't notice how Max is roped up.

LORETTA (CONT'D)

Merry Christmas.

KANE

That's the best you can do, cold pizza?

LORETTA

Nothing wrong with pizza. It's got vitamins and stuff. Ask anybody.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (9)

KANE

I want to see Iggy. We got business.

LORETTA

Sure, business.

(sly, to Max)

So, you doing okay, kid?

KANE

He's doing fine.

(lunging)

Now get!

Loretta backs hurriedly out of the room.

Kane chews slowly on a slice of pizza.

KANE (CONT'D)

This is what they call a temporary situation. I know a way we can live like kings, if we play our cards right.

We'll be heading for warmer weather, that agreeable with you, boy?

MAX

Yes, sir, it is.

Blue lights flash. Kane drops to the floor and crawls to the window.

KANE

What do you know? Could be lookin' for anybody, a place like this. Still, we can't be too careful, can we?

Iggy enters. Kane slams him up against the wall.

KANE (CONT'D)

(softly)

Don't be sneaking up on us.

IGGY

There's cops around.

KANE

That a fact.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (10)

IGGY

It was that little cripple kid, he must have told 'em.  
Ask your boy, they was friends. So I told 'em I ain't seen  
Kenny Kane in years.

KANE

They believe you?

IGGY

Who knows with cops?

KANE

(cunning)

You turn on me, did you?

IGGY

(fearful)

No, no! I wouldn't do that. It was the cripple kid sent  
'em, you gotta believe me!

KANE

I need two things. A firearm and transportation.

IGGY

I dunno.

KANE

You get me a gun and a car. Now. No questions, just do it.

Iggy leaves. Kane pauses to study Max.

KANE (CONT'D)

Never trust a cripple. You know that, don't you?

Max won't respond. Kane jerks the rope.

MAX

Yes, sir.

KANE

Let that be a lesson.

He slips a gag into Max's mouth, then  
pats Max on the cheek.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (11)

KANE (CONT'D)

You sit tight. I have to see a man about a gun.

Before exiting, Kane kills the lights.

After a few beats we hear footsteps - high heels. Loretta enters, carrying flashlight. She finds Max with the flashlight, bound, gagged, and terrified.

Loretta turns on the lights.

LORETTA

Oh my! It ain't right, a man tying up his own son.

She pulls the gag loose. Max wheezes and gasps - he can't speak.

Loretta starts working on the rope - the knot around his hands.

LORETTA (CONT'D)

The plan is, Iggy keeps him busy while I get you loose, now isn't that a good plan?

(fraying the rope)

I seen this in a movie once. I forget what movie.

The rope around his hands comes loose.

LORETTA (CONT'D)

There. Next thing is this piece around your ankles.

(she frees the rope around his ankles)

You think you can walk? I sure can't carry you, big as you are.

MAX

(finds his voice)

Yes, ma'am.

LORETTA

(helps him)

One step at a time, that's what they say.

Killer Kane lunges from the darkness, knocks over Max, and grabs Loretta by the throat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (12)

Max tries to stop him from strangling Loretta. But it's as if he's four years old again, weak and powerless to stop his father from killing his mother.

MAX

(his voice much younger)

Stop it, Daddy! Please please stop! Daddy, you're killing her!

He's banging ineffectually on Kane's back. Kane is not bothered in the slightest.

MAX (CONT'D)

I saw you do it, Daddy! I saw you kill Mom! I saw you and I'll never forget! Never, never!

KANE

(calm, dreamy voice)

I'll be right with you, son.

Max, stronger now, slowly begins to pry Kane away from Loretta as he gives his speech.

MAX

You were wearing your brown corduroy trousers and the black T-shirt with no sleeves. You carried me back to my room and put me to bed and told me I was just dreaming. But I told them, Daddy, I told the policeman! I told them!

Kane drops the semi-conscious Loretta and places his hands around Max's neck.

KANE

(calm, he's being reasonable)

I really wish you hadn't, boy. It cost me years.  
(musing to himself, as he squeezes)

Step one. Clean up this mess, get on the road.  
(Max resists, but he's not quite strong enough to break free)

The road is my salvation and I shall fear no evil.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (13)

A door creaks open. Patter of small, hesitant footsteps.

Killer Kane reacts by letting go of Max looking around.

KANE (CONT'D)

Who's there!  
(cunning)

That you, Iggy?

Kane can't see, he's feeling his way along.

KANE (CONT'D)

Iggy?

Kevin steps into the spotlight, brandishing a Supersoaker squirt gun.

KEVIN

Stay where you are!

Kane can't believe his eyes.

KANE

(to Max)

Son? Is this your freaky little friend? Why he ain't nothing but a midget and a cripple!

KANE (CONT'D)

(to Kevin)

Playtime is over, kid.

Kevin, standing as tall as he can, raises the Supersoaker and takes aim.

KEVIN

Guess what I got for Christmas, Mr. Kane? Guess right, because your life depends on it!

(beat)

This squirt gun - and a chemistry set.  
(shakes gun)

Sulfuric acid, H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>. It'll melt your ugly face.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (14)

KANE

You're lying, kid. I know a liar. All you got in there is tap water.

KEVIN

Try me.

A long, tense beat as Kane calculates the odds - can this weird little kid possibly be telling the truth about the sulfuric acid?

KANE

I'm calling your bluff.

He lunges. Kevin pumps the trigger.

Kane screams in fear and rage as a liquid blinds his eyes.

Blue lights flash.

Max helps Loretta to her feet. She stumbles away, holding her throat.

Max helps Kevin away as four or five uniformed police officers swarm in and handcuff Killer Kane.

KANE (CONT'D)

Help me! That miserable little freak, he squirted me with acid! I'm blind! I'm blind!

One of the Policewomen picks up the Supersoaker, squirts some in her hand, lifts it to her nose.

POLICEWOMAN

Smells like vinegar and soap to me. You'll live.

Max and Kevin, downstage.

KEVIN

You okay?

MAX

Yeah. Was it you called the cops?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (15)

KEVIN

It was Freak the Mighty. On his handy cell phone.

Fade lights on scene with Killer Kane and cops and follow Max and Kevin exiting.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Were you scared?

MAX

Yeah.

KEVIN

Me, too. But it was pretty cool anyhow. You know what we did? We rescued a fair maiden, just like real knights in days of old.

MAX

I guess.

KEVIN

My mom is going to be so pissed.

BLACK OUT.

SCENE TWO

Several of the Gang Kids enter and circle the stage, dressed like newsboys. They're holding up newspapers as if selling them.

KID ONE

Kids Save Biker Babe. More Inside!

KID TWO

Killer Back In Jail! Exclusive story!

KID THREE

Imagination Wins! Read all about it!

Max at front of stage, in spotlight, addressing audience. As he speaks, subjects of his speech are caught in tight spotlights.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX

So, sometimes things work out, sort of. We got to be famous for about fifteen seconds. Loretta got to wear a neck brace [Loretta hurries by in neck brace] My father got to go back to jail [spotlight on Killer Kane, holding his hands up as if gripping bars]. I got to see a counselor for a while, until she finally believed it when I said I was okay. [Woman counselor throws up her hands and shakes her head as if to say, 'I give up!'] Anyhow, I figured the worst was finally over, and the crap had stopped hitting the fan. Wrong. Kevin tried to tell me, but it was a long time before I figured it out for myself.

BLACK OUT.

SCENE THREE

The back yard, night sky. Max sitting on stage, looking up at the stars. Kevin sets up a telescope, checks the focus. Kevin seems to be having more trouble getting around.

KEVIN

I know there's a binary star at this coordinate. A red giant in orbit with a brown dwarf. Mmmm. There! Go on, take a look.

Max looks through the scope.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Can you see it?

MAX

Yeah. It's beautiful.

Max looks up from the telescope, taking in the whole sky.

KEVIN

Yeah, they're all beautiful. And you know what the coolest thing is?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KEVIN (CONT'D)

The coolest thing is, the sky is like a time machine. The starlight you see is a million years old, maybe older. Pick a star. See that one, right there? That star might not even be alive now. A star doesn't last forever, but the light it made still shines. The starlight travels across the universe forever and ever, long after the star burns out.

MAX

Cool.

KEVIN

Yeah. It is.

BLACK OUT.

SCENE FOUR

Kevin's house. Kevin and Max are sitting at the table, waiting.

KEVIN

I've got a new word. 'Furfuraceous'.

MAX

What does it mean?

KEVIN

It means 'covered in dandruff'.

Max hastily checks his shoulders.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Gotcha!

MAX

I think 'furfuraceous' should mean 'covered in fur', or 'hairy face' or something.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KEVIN

Look it up if you don't believe me. While you're at it check out 'lacrimation'.

MAX

How do you spell it?

KEVIN

L-A-C-R

They're interrupted by Gwen, Grim, and Gram entering with a birthday cake, singing 'Happy Birthday'. Grim wears a party hat and accompanies the song on kazoo.

They set the blazing cake down in front of Kevin.

GWEN

Make a wish, honey!

Kevin closes his eyes and smiles.

GRAM

Ready? One, two, three!

They all BLOW OUT THE CANDLES for Kevin.

KEVIN

Hurray for me.

They all sit around the table and divide the cake.

GRIM

Thirteen. That means from this moment on you're an obnoxious teen instead of an obnoxious pre-teen.

GRAM

Arthur!

GRIM

It's a fact of life.  
 (takes a bite of cake)  
 (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

GRIM (CONT'D)

Mmmm, this is good.

You know, we didn't have birthday cakes when I was a boy.

GRAM

Oh, please!

GRIM

If we were lucky, we'd get a small, chocolate-colored rock.  
Couldn't eat it, of course.

GWEN  
(concerned)

Your not eating your cake, Kevin.

KEVIN

I'll eat it later.

GWEN

Okay, here we go.  
(hands him a present)

I couldn't manage to arrange that space shuttle ride you  
requested, so I hope this will do.

Gwen helps him open the package.

MAX

Cool! A lap top!

Kevin opens his mouth as if to speak,  
but nothing comes out. He gasps a few  
times and then faints dead away.

Grim is instantly dialing 911 in the  
background.

GWEN

Kevin! Oh my God! Not on his birthday! Please, somebody do  
something!

GRIM

This is an emergency. We need an ambulance for a small boy.

BLACK OUT.

SCENE FIVE

Spotlight on Max. He addresses audience.

MAX

They wouldn't let me ride in the ambulance. So I ran to the hospital.

(he jogs in place, facing the audience)

I ran and I ran. I ran past the dangling bridge where Kevin covered my eyes so I wouldn't look down. I ran past the Castle of Avarice and the Bloated Moat and the Land of the Gas Guzzling Dinosaurs, and all the other places we went when we were rescuing maidens and slaying dragons and stuff. I ran faster than Lancelot. I ran faster than starlight. [He slows down] but when I got to the hospital, they still wouldn't let me see him. So I waited and waited, and that was harder than running. Finally Dr. Spivak came out.

Dr. Spivak enters.

DR. SPIVAK

Sorry you had to wait so long. Kevin has been in a crisis situation, we had to stabilize him. But he wants to see you now. I said he could, but just for a few minutes, okay?

MAX

Okay.

LIGHTS UP on Kevin in hospital bed. If possible the bed should be surrounded by curtains. The curtains can then be drawn back by the Nurses attending to Kevin.

KEVIN

Max.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

MAX

Hey. What's wrong with your neck?

KEVIN

This? Oh, no big deal. It's called a tracheotomy. T-R-A-C-H-E-O-T-O-M-Y. Standard medical procedure to facilitate breathing.

MAX

Does it hurt?

KEVIN

Nah. Listen to this. I can make it whistle. [He demonstrates]

MAX

When do you come home?

KEVIN

I'm not coming home. Not in my present manifestation.

MAX

What?

KEVIN

(confiding)

The Bionic Unit is on red alert. Later tonight they'll take me down there for my special operation, the one that gives me a new body. The next time you see me I'll be new and improved.

MAX

I'm scared.

KEVIN

Don't be a moron. You're not the one getting your body replaced. I'll be fine, don't worry.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Telemetry starts to BEEP. Dr. Spivak rushes in, goes to Kevin's bed.

DR. SPIVAK

You'll have to wait outside! Kevin! Kevin, look at me!

Fade out scene, but hold spotlight on Max.

MAX

They wouldn't let me stay in his room, so I hung out in the lobby all night.

Cinematic staging effect indicates the passage of time: Max sits alone in one of three chairs, staring at the floor. Lights go down and when they come up, a woman sits next to him, holding a child in her lap. Lights down, when they come up, another person occupies the chair to his left, and so on.

After the night has passed, Max stands up.

MAX (CONT'D)

I'm thinking the doctors are almost as smart as Kevin, so he'll be okay. They'll take him to the Bionic Unit and give him his special operation and he'll get his new and improved body. So I waited all night and then when the sun came up I couldn't wait any longer and I went back to his room.

Lights up on an empty hospital bed. The sheets and pillows have been stripped of linen.

Max is in the scene now, feeling what he felt that day. He scrambles around, frantic, pulling at the empty bed as if looking for Kevin. The he gets it.

MAX

No. No. He can't be dead. He can't! He can't!

Gram, Grim, and Gwen come in, trying to comfort Max as he flails around.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Dr. Spivak enters, but stays back until the family get Max to calm down.

GWEN

Max! Please! Listen to me Max! There's nothing you can do!  
There's nothing anybody can do!

Max goes still.

SPIVAK

You can let him up now. He's just a little confused. There.

Gram and grim now comfort Gwen, who weeps quietly.

Dr. Spivak crouches beside Max.

DR. SPIVAK

Max? Max, listen to me. Kevin knew from a very young age he wasn't going to have a very long life. He knew it was just a matter of time.

MAX

He believed you. You told him he was getting a new robot body, and he believed you.

DR. SPIVAK

Robot body? What are you talking about?

MAX

The Bionics Unit. Kevin thought he was getting a new body. New and improved.

DR. SPIVAK

I'm sorry, Max. There's no such thing as the 'Bionics Unit'. No such thing as getting a new body.

MAX

So Kevin was lying?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

DR. SPIVAK

I don't think it was a lie, Maxwell, do you? I think Kevin needed something to hope for, and so he invented this rather remarkable fantasy you describe. He shared it with you, and you helped him believe it. I'm curious, Max, who was this Freak the Mighty he kept referring to? Was that another fantasy?

MAX

It was nothing. It was stupid. It was just a big, stupid lie! Stupid, stupid stupid!

Max is hitting himself in the head with his fists.

BLACK OUT.

SCENE SIX

Max lying on the floor addressing the audience.

MAX

I stayed in the down under for days and days. Feeling sorry for myself, you know? Like what did it matter what cool adventures you had if you died in the end? [Gram comes into a spotlight, looks at Max without speaking] Gram came down and tried to tell me stuff and make me feel better, but I didn't want to feel better. [Spotlight fades on Gram. She exits] When somebody dies you're supposed to feel rotten and miserable, right? Nobody could make me stop feeling miserable. I was going to be angry and miserable until the end of the world and I hated it when somebody tried to cheer me up.

Max gets up, walks down stage.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX (CONT'D)

Then one day I'm down by the mill pond, kind of moping around where they shoot off the fireworks.

Max sits on the end of the stage, if possible.

MAX (CONT'D)

Except it isn't the Fourth of July and there aren't any fireworks, so what am I doing here?

Enter Loretta, wearing neck brace. She's strolling along, spots Max.

LORETTA

Maxwell! Remember me?  
(she sits beside him)

Listen I heard what happened. That's tough. I'm sorry.

MAX

Yeah.

They sit in awkward silence for a few beats.

LORETTA

Yeah, really tough. So what are you doing these days?

MAX

Nothing.

Loretta gives him a long look, sussing out the problem.

LORETTA

'Nothing' is a drag, kid. Think about it.

BLACK OUT.

SCENE SEVEN

Max sits at a desk, facing the audience.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Books and other studious items on the desk, including the ornithopter.

MAX

So I went back to the Down Under and thought about what Loretta said. About how doing nothing was a drag. And I thought about how nobody really knew about Freak The Mighty but me and Kevin, and Kevin was gone, so there was only me. And I decided to write it down, so I wouldn't forget.

(He puts on glasses and starts to write.)

And once I wrote down the name I had to explain what happened. How I never had a brain until Kevin came along.

(Keeps writing. )

So I wrote that down.

(Flipping pages, writing. )

And I kept on writing until I wrote down all the adventures we had, all the things we imagined when we were walking high above the world, slaying dragons and fools, and saving fair maidens, and seeking the truth, the unvanquished truth, the truth that travels like starlight across the universe, forever and ever, long after the star is gone.

Max stands up, holding the Ornithopter, walks down stage.

MAX (CONT'D)

Remember this? This was how it started. Pay attention now. This is an ornithopter. O-R-N-I-T-H-O-P-T-E-R. An ornithopter is defined as an experimental device propelled by flapping wings. Or you could say an ornithopter is just a big word for mechanical bird. Observe and be amazed, earthlings!

(Max lets it fly over the audience )

Cool, huh?

Lights down. THE END