



Anything Is Possible

Anything Is Possible.

I've always thought that. There are too many people in the world who want to say no. People who want to stop you doing the things you dream about. People who tell you that you can't be successful if you don't talk posh, or that you'll never



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get anywhere if you're no good at school.
Or that you'll never reach your dreams
however hard you try.

I have always believed that anything
is possible, no matter how hard things
are. I have also always believed in real
magic, making the impossible possible!
I've seen things and done things that are
unbelievable.

In many ways I'm just an ordinary
kid, with an ordinary life, in an ordinary
world. But there is something special about
me too. Something different. Something
extraordinary. And if you read on, I'll tell
you about it. About how it all started, and
how it all ended up.



Let's start at the beginning. I'm Max,
Max Mullers. Sometimes people call me
Max Magic. One day I hope they'll call
me Max the Magnificent, but I'm not quite
there yet. I live with
my mum, my dad,
my brothers Chris
and Vinny and my
sister Susie in a
little terraced
house on a
busy square in
East London. It's
crowded and noisy
and full of life,
and I love it.



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The Mullers like to talk. In fact we never shut up. Dad works a toy stall in the market, and he keeps up his patter twenty-four hours a day. He's a proper Cockney geezer. He wears a waistcoat and looks like a cross between Bradley Walsh and Harry Redknapp.

Mum likes a chat too. She works on the phones at the local hospital and knows everyone in the neighbourhood. She's always there with a bit of advice and a word of support.

Vinny loves his football, our family and Major Drumstick's fried chicken. In that order. And he'll talk your ear off about all three if you'll let him. Chris is



the mechanic of the family. He's always pulling things apart and putting them back together again and he'll give you a running commentary while he's doing it, even though it's all gobbledegook to the rest of us. As for my sister, well, the only time Susie isn't talking on her phone is when she's asleep. And sometimes she even talks in her sleep. Susie is well into beauty treatments and gives great massages. She works in a salon and keeps up the chatting there 24/7.

Even my dog Lucky likes to get involved in the nattering. He's old and doesn't bark a lot, but he's always yowling and whining and ruffing and grumbling. I often think



he's genuinely trying to talk to me. I'd love to know what he is saying. Probably 'Feed me!'

And me? Well, I'm not too bad at the old rabbiting myself. My teacher used to give me detentions because I was always talking in class, but after a while she gave up and told me it's just background noise to her now. Like traffic, or birds. Well, you've got to be able to talk a bit, don't you? If you're going to be in showbiz?

And I **am** going to be in showbiz. One day, when I'm Max the Magnificent, I'll invent a magic trick so extraordinary that they'll put it in the Museum of Magic in Paris, just next to the enormous statue of



me. That's the plan anyway. Dunno what the trick is going to be yet. But it will be **unbelievable!**

The most important thing to know about me is that I have always **loved** magic. It runs in our family – Gran and Grandpa were stage magicians back in the day. I'll tell you more about them later. The point is, Gran taught Dad loads of tricks when he was little. She says he always had a real gift for magic and that he could have been one of the greats. But for some reason he didn't follow in her footsteps. He never went onstage at all – I guess he was more interested in selling stuff. He was still pretty good and he'd always get out his



tricks at parties or Christmas and often used his skills to help him sell toys on the stall. And when I was old enough, Dad started teaching me. The first trick he showed me was how to palm a coin. Now, a magician isn't supposed to reveal the trick behind the magic, but you seem pretty trustworthy, so I'll tell you how to do it, if you promise to keep it to yourself.* It works best with a biggish coin, like a two-pound piece. You press it into the palm of your hand and squeeze your thumb in so the fleshy part of your palm holds the coin in place. You can then turn your hand palm down without the coin dropping out. Next you pretend to throw it into the other hand, quickly closing

* Turn to the back of the book to learn this trick!

it into a fist. The audience is surprised when you open the fist and it's empty. Then you pass the hand with the coin above it and drop the coin, closing it into a fist again. When you reopen your hand, this time the coin is there!

'Show me another trick,' I said, once I thought I had it.

But Dad shook his head. 'Practise that one first,' he said. 'Once you have it perfect, then we'll move on to the next.'

So I did. Every day after school I'd go up to my bedroom in our little terraced house in Coronation Square and I'd practise and practise and practise. It never felt like work. I loved it, especially when



I knew I was getting better.

And then one day, when I was sure I really had it, I showed Dad and I got it just perfect.

He nodded and took out a packet of cards from his inside pocket. 'Let me show you the Floating Card Trick,' he said.

It was then that I decided that one day I was going to be a magician, a real magician, and I was going to perform in front of huge audiences just like Gran and Grandpa had. And my tricks were going to be so good that no one would ever be able to tell how they were done.

Over the next couple of years I learned trick after trick. Some I perfected in a few



days; others took me weeks. The Mongolian Rope Trick took me three months! But I kept going. Practise, practise, practise!

Now, every Sunday Gran comes over for dinner, and before pudding I'll show everyone my latest trick. I'll pull a string of colourful napkins from Susie's handbag, I'll whip an egg from behind Chris's ear, I'll read Vinny's mind and tell him what card he was thinking of, I'll pour water from an empty jug (and sometimes this trick will even work and I **won't** soak Mum's new trousers). I love the look of astonishment on people's faces when the trick goes well, and I've learned how to make a joke out of it when it goes wrong.



Gran says I'm a born performer. Dad says I'm a born clown. But a good magician needs to be a little bit of both.

Last Sunday was a particularly memorable one. After we'd finished eating I got everyone to push their chairs back a bit from the table.

'I have a new magic trick!' I announced.

'Very nice, dear,' Gran said, beaming at me.

Some of the other members of the family were a little less enthusiastic. Dad peered at me suspiciously over his glasses. He always dresses properly for dinner, in his Sunday suit.

'Don't make a mess, will you?' Mum



called. She was fussing about with the dessert spoons next door in the little kitchen.

‘Do you want to see the trick or not?’ I asked her. ‘Cos you’re going to need to come in here.’

‘Will I end up with wet legs?’ she asked as she came into the dining room a bit reluctantly. ‘These are new trousers.’

‘That only happened once,’ I said, arranging dessert bowls around the table. ‘The jug slipped.’

‘Will you break a window?’ Vinny asked without looking up. He was reading a football magazine, which he technically wasn’t allowed to do during Sunday lunch.



‘That wasn’t my fault,’ I pointed out, glancing at the cracked pane in the sitting-room window.

‘You’re not going to knock the clock off the wall again, are you?’ Chris asked. ‘It took me an hour to fix it last time. At least I think it was an hour. Hard to tell when the clock’s broken.’

‘I’m not going anywhere near the clock,’ I said impatiently. ‘The dresser fell over.’ It was a painful memory. I had to go to A & E cos I got bashed on the bonce when I tried to stop it.

I set out fresh glasses for me, Mum, Dad, Gran, Chris, Vinny and Susie, who was chatting to someone on her phone, which



she technically wasn't allowed to do during Sunday lunch.

'Will you break my watch again?' Dad asked with a pained frown. Sometimes I wonder if he regrets starting me off on magic in the first place.

'No, no hammers involved in this trick,' I said, filling the glasses with water.

'And that watch was slow anyway. I was doing you a favour.' I put the jug right in the middle of the table, then added a vase of flowers from the windowsill as an afterthought.

'Look, stop talking, everyone,' I said. 'Susie, stop chatting for two secs. Chris, pay attention for two secs. Vinny, stop



reading for two secs. Mum, sit down for two secs. Dad, stop frowning. Honestly, this trick will definitely work and nothing will get smashed. You lot are unbelievable!’

Finally everyone settled down, stopped what they were doing and watched me.

‘Right,’ I said. I grinned and seized two corners of the tablecloth. ‘It’s all in the wrist,’ I explained with a wink. **‘DOOSH!’**

I whipped the cloth away in a blur, leaving everything still standing neatly on the table.

Or at least . . . that was what was supposed to happen. Instead, the cutlery flew off in all directions, sending Chris



and Vinny ducking for cover. Lucky yelped and shot out the door in a mad panic, Susie squealed as the dessert bowls shot across the room, smashing into the dresser and knocking the clock off the wall. And seven glasses of water spun towards Mum, drenching her from head to toe.

There was silence as everyone glared at me. Everyone except Gran, who was cackling away in delight.

‘I think I know what went wrong,’ I said, after a moment. ‘Let me try that again. It’s all in the **other** wrist.’





I like to show off my magic tricks at school too. I just love it when a crowd of pupils gathers round, watching me make coins disappear or read people's minds. Sometimes I wish I could really read people's minds. Because then I could read my friend Sophie's mind during maths tests. Sophie's really smart.

Me? Maybe not so much.

Most things in my life are great, fantastic, fabulous. MAGIC!

But some things aren't quite so good. Like school, and schoolwork, schoolteachers and school bullies. Yeah, it's mostly school-related things I'm not too keen on. I'm not sure I'll ever actually learn anything



at school – I’m too busy chatting. But you never know. Anything is possible!

Even school has its good points. That’s where I met my best friends, like Sophie and Stretch and Daisy. And school is where I like to test out my magic tricks on unsuspecting fellow pupils.

Being able to do magic is useful, as well as fun. Magic can get you out of a sticky spot.

The thing is, my school is a little bit . . . well, rough. There are fights in the playground most days, and that’s just the teachers. I’ve got some great friends there, but my school has more than its fair share of bullies too. Sometimes at school



it seems as though the bullies outnumber the nice kids and might run out of people to bully and have to bully each other. That's not a bad idea actually. Can we just get the bullies to bully each other and leave the rest of us alone? Something to think about.

Anyway, most people have their own way of dealing with bullies. Some hide away in the library, some fight back, some people join the bullies and do a bit of bullying themselves, some people hand over their lunch money and shrug.

Me? I use magic.

Before school, at break time, at lunchtime and after school, I'm somewhere



in the playground doing tricks, finding eggs behind people's ears, palming coins, flipping cards, practising my patter. Even the bullies stop bullying for a while and watch me.

At least most of them do.

All except one.

George Bottley.

The worst bully of them all. Some bullies are clever and sly. Some bullies are angry and stupid. Bottley is just mean. Big and mean. Not particularly stupid, not particularly sly. Just mean.

The other day he picked me up off the ground with one hand. My little legs were kicking away at thin air.





‘Why are you always picking on me?’ I managed to squeak.

‘You wanna know why I give you a hard time, Mullers?’

I nodded.

Maybe he was having trouble at home, I thought. Or he was being bullied by someone even bigger. The Hulk, maybe?



Perhaps if we could just talk about his problem, we could break the cycle of anger.

He leaned in close and grinned. 'It's because I like it!'

So much for breaking the cycle of anger. The only things likely to get broken were my legs.

Bottley is built like a big ape. A gorilla, or a baboon, or one of those ones with the red face and the blue bum. Or is it the other way around? Anyway, he has long arms and huge hairy hands. He has hair growing out of his nose, hair growing out of his ears, hair growing out of his neck. He probably has hair growing on his big blue bum too, but I don't want to find out.



Do you want to know what Bottley's special bullying tactic is?

Worms.

He is **obsessed** with worms. His dad is a keen fisherman and gets George to help him dig up worms to use as bait. George likes to take some of these worms and put them in the pockets of this big old yellow coat he always wears. And if you're unlucky enough to be caught by George Bottley, then he'll hold you down, and he won't let you up until you close your eyes, open your mouth . . .

And then he'll drop a worm right in. I told you he was horrible, didn't I? Bottley is immune to magic. He just



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doesn't care. Imagine being the sort of person who has no curiosity, no wonder, no need to find out how that trick was done. Or to ask where did that card go? Or can I have my coin back? Or why did you pour water on my trousers?

A person like that has no soul. Nothing inside but emptiness.

It's not as if I haven't tried. After weeks of Bottley shoving my head down the toilet, and chewing on worms (and me a fussy eater!), or being on the receiving end of a double-atomic wedgie in front of my friends, I had turned, in desperation, to magic.

Remember that the first trick Dad ever



taught me was palming a coin? When Bottley cornered me behind the bike racks one time, out of sight of the teachers, I thrust my hands into my pockets and found a pound. I palmed it and pulled my hands out.

‘Wait, wait,’ I said as Bottley advanced, lifting his hairy knuckles off the ground just long enough to crack them. ‘Let me show you something.’

Bottley stopped and eyed me suspiciously. I reached behind his filthy ear and pulled out a shiny pound coin. The bully’s eyes widened.

‘Thanks,’ he grunted, and snatched the coin out of my fingers. ‘You can do that again tomorrow.’



Bottley, of course, wasn't interested in the magic. He just wanted the coin, and I couldn't afford to buy my freedom with a pound coin every day. So I tried to avoid him as much as I could. Every day was like filming one of those nature documentaries where they're trying to track down some big gorilla in the rainforest. I had to learn about the gorilla's routine, his patterns of behaviour, what time he ate and what time he went to the loo. Lots of details I didn't really want to know, if I'm honest. But unlike in a nature documentary, I was trying to **avoid** the gorilla.

Yeah, Bottley was a problem.

But when I think back to when this all



started, and to the day my life changed forever, I can see, in a funny way, that it was Bottley who set everything off. Bottley who started the trouble. And Bottley who helped me find the solution. The magic. You'd never think of Bottley as someone who could make something good happen. Someone who could make magic happen.

But hey, anything is possible, right?

