



JEREMY WILLIAMS

*nosy
crow*



For all students and staff at Wenlock Junior School.
We are all Team Wenlock.

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When people hear that my name is Max and that I counted to a million, they always say "Maximillian! How appropriate!" I've heard SO MANY adults say that. All of them said it as if they were the first to think of it. But my name isn't Maximillian, or Maximus, or Maxwell, or any other random thing that you could shorten to Max.

It's just Max.

That is what it says on my birth certificate.

I've seen my birth certificate. My mum showed it to me once when she was looking for something. It's an important



- piece of paper that the government writes when you're born. It's to say that you officially exist. My name also appears on other things, like the sign on my bedroom door or written on the inside of my coat. Those are not official and have nothing to do with the government.

On my birth certificate it says that my name is Max Cromwell and that I was born in 2011. I was eight years old when I started counting to a million, and nine when I finished, and that's why I got the world record for being the youngest person to do it.

You might have just shouted "spoiler alert!" in your head. But the book is called *Max Counts to a Million*, so it's a bit late for that.

Not many people have counted to a million in real life. I have, and so I can tell you it's not easy. It took me weeks. I'm quite proud of it, though there are bits of my story that I'm not so proud of. I've decided I'm going to put those bits in too, so that it's all true.

All of this happened in 2020. As you probably know, that was a very strange year. It's when the coronavirus came along and everything went very weird. We weren't even allowed to leave our houses, and that's why I started counting. But that's jumping ahead.

Let me start at the beginning.



It was an ordinary day. Let's say it was a Tuesday.

Tuesdays are usually the worst day of the week. That's a fact. I know people say Mondays are the worst, but at least it's the start of a new week. You're fresh out of a weekend and ready to go. Wednesdays are the middle of the week, and on Wednesdays I like to look at the clock at midday and see the week go past halfway. Thursdays are OK because the next day is Friday, and then Friday is Friday. So Tuesday is definitely the most boring and ordinary day.

For that reason, it was a Tuesday.

I was at school – an ordinary school. This



isn't going to be one of those stories set in a boarding school or a wizarding school or anything. It was a normal day, with lessons and lunch and more lessons and the usual stuff. Mum picked me up in the afternoon, and that's when it started to get less ordinary.

She was worried about something. I could tell. She waved to me across the playground and said hello, and asked how my day had gone and gave me a sort of side-hug. But I knew two things straightaway. One: she was worried. Two: she didn't want me to know she was worried.

You might be wondering how I knew this, when I was only eight and not even a detective. There were a few reasons. One was the side-hug. That's not something mums do. Side-hugs are for uncles who don't have children of their own yet and don't know how to hug a person who is smaller than they are. Mums always hug properly, and so I knew something was up.

I also knew something was wrong because when Mum asked what I had for lunch, I said "fish finger pie", and she said, "OK, that's nice." Fish finger pie is not a thing and it must never be allowed to exist. Something was clearly on her mind.

"Have you had a good day, Mum?" I asked, and she made a sort of "hmm" noise that wasn't even an answer. It was as if she hadn't heard me. I decided I'd better hold her hand on the walk home, in case she wandered into a road.