

## MAX UNDERSTOOD

By Nancy Carlin and Michael Rasbury

### CHARACTERS:

Max, a boy with autism, 7 years old

Mom, his mom, 30ish

Dad, his dad, 30ish

Homunculus "Munc" Jones, a gardener, a philosopher, a spirit-guide

Fin, a girl, a little older than Max.  
Bossy, powerful

Albert, a boy, 12-14. Book-ish, awkward

Peg, a girl, 12-14. Heavy-set, into clothes

### PLACE:

An apartment complex. The interior of Max's apartment and various exterior locations immediately surrounding it.

SCENE 1 - HOME

We find a boy standing by himself surrounded by darkness. He stands still but there is a noticeable inner fire burning brightly and ready to surge out of every area of his body. This is Max. His eyes are gleaming and wide open and far away and he wears a very large smile.

SONG 1: NOISE SYMPHONY

\*

Loud sound of a leaf blower breaks the mood. It underscores the following sounds.

Somewhere in the darkness a telephone rings. Max doesn't notice.

Then a microwave begins beeping from the opposite side of the stage. Again, Max is far away.

Other household and neighborhood sounds begin to randomly make noise.

Max still doesn't seem to notice, but he appears distracted. Although his eyes remain full and his smile bright, he begins shifting his hands in uncomfortable ways.

From the darkness around him, the cacophony of sounds begins to overlap and grow.

He starts making an ever growing and anxious sounding vocalization.

MAX

Noisy!

Max flaps his hands harder and faster, and his vocalization sounds even more anxious. But he still smiles and seems far away. The anxious sound is really pleasing for him to make.

The symphony of noise culminates in a clattering and electronic sounding crescendo. Max stops shaking. In a brief second, and as the reverberations of the noise symphony fade, we see Max's happy smile and distant eyes.

Max always looks happy while he replays stories in his mind.

Max grabs his president machine. The tinny, digital sound of a talking toy giving facts about presidents brings focus to the present space.

**SONG 2: MEET MAX AND THE MACHINE**

\*

PRESIDENT MACHINE

Welcome to an interactive visit with the U.S. Presidents.  
Press any button to begin.  
Pr...Pr...Pr...Pr...Pr...Pr...Pr...Pr...Pr...Pr...Press a button.  
Pr...Pr...Pr...President. Pr...Pr...Pr...President.  
Pr...Pr...Pr...President. Pr...Pr...Pr...President. Press a  
button.

He rapidly presses the buttons preventing the machine from completing its sentences.

Mom appears. She holds a box of toaster waffles.

MOM

Max!

There is no response to this, as Max continues with his toy.

Dad appears in a separate space

DAD

Max?

He holds a toaster.

MOM/DAD  
WHY CAN'T WE BE NORMAL  
WHY CAN'T WE BE NORMAL

PRESIDENT MACHINE  
Pr...Pr...Pr...President Millard Fillmore. Fillmore served as  
the thirteenth president of the United States from 1850-1853.  
Fillmore is a member of the Whig Party.

MOM  
Breakfast!

Sound of toaster ejecting toast.

SCENE 2 – HOME

Max sits on the floor eating waffles  
and stimming (hands flapping, etc.)  
Television light illuminates his face.  
Sound of Ray Bolger in The Wizard of Oz  
saying, "...but some people without  
brains do an awful lot of talking..." Max  
has some of his favorite toys with him.  
Of particular interest is a little  
white Pegasus. He often uses it as a  
character to reenact stories in his  
mind.

With the remote control, Max  
continually repeats a sequence.

Note: Max does not make eye contact

TV  
"... but how can you talk if you haven't got a brain? I don't  
know, but some people without brains do an awful lot of  
talking, don't they?"

Dad and Mom enter with coffee.

MOM  
That incessant leaf blower|woke me up again

DAD  
Max, you wake up way too|early in the morning

MAX  
I watch Wizard.

MOM  
And go to bed too late. Did you|get any sleep?

MAX  
Wizard!

DAD  
I slept with Max. But he kept me|up most of the night

MOM  
I'll do it tonight.

MAX  
(with the TV, for the umpteenth  
time)  
"..but some people without brains do an awful lot of  
talking!"

DAD  
I sure wish he could get some sleep without one of us there.

MOM  
Can't that guy just take a break from relocating the leaves?  
This is the noisiest|apartment I have ever lived in

DAD  
You can't watch this over|and over and over

MOM  
One of us is always alone --

MAX  
Why?

DAD  
You know he needs someone to|sleep with him

MAX  
Why?

DAD  
(gently, to Max)  
Because it's just too much.

MAX  
Why?

DAD  
Because you have this memorized.

MAX  
Why?

DAD  
Because you have this memorized.

MAX  
Why?

DAD  
Because you have this memorized.

MOM  
Any chance of getting off this track, Boys? -- \*

MAX  
WHY?

DAD  
BECAUSE I CAN'T --

MAX  
Why?

MOM  
Whaddya think? \*

DAD  
BECAUSE I CAN'T --

MAX  
Why?

MOM  
Well? \*

DAD  
BECAUSE I CAN'T --

MAX  
Why?

MOM  
Well? \*

DAD  
BECAUSE I CAN'T --

MAX  
Why?

Well? MOM \*

I can't watch this one more time! DAD

WHY!? MAX

I CAN'T DO THIS! (to self) You're okay. You're okay. DAD

Dad turns off the TV. Max's eyes roll up in his head and stay fixated on an imaginary TV screen. He flaps.

Mom and Dad pause to look at him.

I'll be late again if I don't|get going right now DAD

I watch! MAX

I can't be late|today DAD

I watch! MAX

I can't be late|today DAD

I watch Wizard. MAX

You have to get up earlier when he does MOM \*

I watch Brian Williams! MAX

He's not on any more Honey. He'll be back. MOM \*

Watch Brian Williams! MAX \*

MOM  
(to Dad. About getting up  
earlier)

\*  
\*  
\*

That's what I have to do.

MAX  
Brian Williams!

DAD  
I WAS UP EVERY HOUR|WITH HIM UNTIL HE

\*

MAX  
Be happy!

DAD  
No more TV, Max!

MAX  
Need to!

DAD  
NO MORE!

MAX  
Need to, need to, need to!

Descends into a fit.

DAD  
OK stop, OK. We'll turn it back on. But just as long as it  
takes until you get dressed. Then we're turning it off.

\*  
\*

MAX  
Need to watch!

DAD  
We'll watch while you're getting dressed.

He reaches for the TV. Mom stops him.

MOM  
We can't just keep letting him|get his way with the TV

\*

MAX  
(sharply)  
Who was Millard Fillmore?



DAD  
What else should we be doing? It occupies him. You have to  
pick your|battles

MAX  
WHO WAS MILLARD FILLMORE? WHO WAS MILLARD FILLMORE?

MOM  
Yes, but you should stick to your-- You know, Max.

MAX  
You know.

MOM  
YOU know.

MAX  
You know.

MOM  
YOU know.

MAX  
You know.

MOM  
YOU know.

MAX  
You know.

MOM  
YOU know.

MAX  
You know.

MOM  
YOU know.

MAX  
You know.

DAD  
But when you're through getting dressed, we're turning it  
off. (looks to Mom)

MAX  
Maybe later I watch?

MOM  
I could have slept with him |it really doesn't matter

\*

DAD  
What?

MOM  
I don't sleep anyway.

MAX  
Maybe tomorrow I watch?

MOM  
I don't sleep anyway.

DAD  
OK...But no more Wizard. Your favorite commercial is on this channel.

He turns it on to a morning news show.

MOM  
Just for a little while. But when you're dressed --

MAX  
Maybe later?

MOM  
We'll watch again later.

Max starts arranging Dad's hair.

MAX  
Maybe tomorrow I watch?

DAD  
OK, Max.

More hair organizing. Dad tries to ignore.

Mom stares pointedly at Dad.

MAX  
Like Brian Williams!

DAD  
(to Mom)  
What?

MAX  
Brian Williams!|Brian Williams!

MOM  
(naming it)  
We're stuck

\*

DAD  
We're doing the|best we can

MAX  
Makes you look like Brian Williams! Like Good Squid! Good Squid!

MOM  
(Getting clothes for Max)  
You know, we have no friends. Surprise, surprise.

\*

DAD  
The people in this town|drive me nuts

MOM  
Who'd last five minutes with us?

DAD  
I mean all they care about is their leaf-blown sidewalks.

MAX  
Good Squid!

MOM  
Same leaves. New location.

MAX  
Like Brian Williams!

DAD  
Be good to have friends.

MOM  
You think?

DAD  
He needs friends.

MAX  
Good Day, and Good Squid.

MOM  
(to Dad)  
What?!

DAD  
Brian Williams. When he was on Sesame Street. He said, "Good Day and Good Squid."

They pause a moment. They almost smile.

MAX  
(in an echoalic way, some words  
sound incorrect)  
"President Millard Fillmore. Fillmore served as the  
'firthteenth' president of the United States from 1850-1853."

DAD  
That's great!...Hold on Max, just a sec.

Gets his work stuff together

DAD  
We really should get him out more. \*

MAX  
(begging a response)  
Cornish Pixies...

DAD  
He needs the fresh air. |Outside Time \*

MAX  
(more insistent)  
Cornish Pixies...

DAD  
You know?

MAX  
Cornish Pixies...

DAD  
You know?

MAX  
Cornish Pixies...

DAD  
Hey, you know?

MAX  
 Cornish Pixies...

DAD  
 (to Max, responding by rote)  
 "FRESHLY PLUCKED."

Max presses his toe on a little Casio  
 keyboard. It plays a melody.

DAD  
 You should go do things with him.

MOM  
 Yes! And that's so easy to do! \*

DAD  
 I'm not sure he even wants to. \*

MOM  
 We'll go to a ball game!  
 (not) \*

DAD  
 Hey, Max, you want to go outside? \*

MAX  
 Mmm-hmmm.

MOM  
 Hey Max, are you a monkey wrench?

MAX  
 Mmm-hmmm.

DAD  
 (point taken)  
 Ok...

MOM  
 If he was just a little more aware of his body...

DAD  
 People will just have to deal.

MOM  
 And I can't shake the six o'clock news story image of him  
 disappearing on me. \*

Mom turns the Casio off. \*

Dad goes off to another room.

Mom takes a deep breath. She prepares to get Max dressed. These are the same clothes he is fixated on and must wear every day.

MOM

Max, you've got to always stay close to Mom.

Max turns Casio on

Remember, if you do want to go outside, we'll go together. (trying to catch his eye) Where are you Max? Let me see your pretty eyes. You know, there are bad people in...If you left without me, some bad person...You have to pay attention outside.(calling to Dad) GET ME A WET WASHCLOTH!

She turns Casio off

MAX

That wasn't in the job description!

Max turns Casio back on. Melody again.

MOM

They drive way too fast out front. The drainage ditch is wide open. No fence.

DAD

You worry too much.

Trying to turn Casio off

No, Max.

MAX

Sponge Bob...ummm...ummm...ummmmm....

MOM

He's not...capable.

\*

DAD

Where's the stop button on this thing?

Casio off

MAX

(he struggles with some of the words)

Sponge Bob and Debbie Ryan and, and, and Pegasus and Princess  
and, and, and Ben Stein and ummmm, ummmm, ummm, Pee Wee can  
come to my house and have triple chocolate power line cake  
with a red candle and a green, no, no, no, blue candle and  
red candle. OK?

\*

DAD

Well, OK Max, but I'm not sure that can really|happen

MAX

Why?

Dad doesn't know how to respond.

Why?

DAD

Because --

MAX

Why?

DAD

Because --

MAX

Why?

DAD

Because --

MAX

Why?

DAD

Because you --

MAX

Why? (beat) Why?

MOM

He smacked right into someone at Safeway yesterday. The guy  
looked at me like I was such a bad par -- hold still Max!

\*

Running away to do Dad's hair.

DAD

(grabbing his hand firmly)

Leave my hair alone.

MOM  
They expect him to act different at his age.

DAD  
I asked you to leave my hair alone.

MOM  
People don't understand.

DAD  
WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO MY HAIR?

MAX  
Brian Williams!

DAD  
Pay attention!

MAX  
Brian Williams! Brian Williams!

Turning his face to catch his eyes and  
repeating the oft heard phrase

DAD  
Where are you Max? Over here, handsome.

MOM  
Here, I'll do it.

Giving Mom the wet washcloth which she  
proceeds to use to wipe Max's hair.

MOM  
What's the plan? When we're not around for him anymore? \*

DAD  
What do you mean?

MOM  
He'll be a teenager|before you know it

MAX  
(vocalizing his anxious sounds  
and flapping)  
Because I'm...dirty! Because he doesn't know!

MOM  
When he's old? What's the matter Max?



Noisy! MAX  
This gentle washing feels like bricks on his skin. He lashes out and hits Mom.

Ouch! MOM

Easy. DAD  
Max's hand gets caught in Mom's locket chain, almost choking her

Let go! MOM  
Dad undoes the necklace

Why'd you do that, Max? Try to be more careful. Pay attention! DAD

Can I rip that? Can I hurt that? MAX

That was not a good choice. DAD

Be happy! MAX

I know you didn't want to hurt Mom. DAD

Be happy! MAX

I'm all right, Sweetie. MOM \*

Ahhh...mmmmmmmm...ahhhh (shaking) MAX

How are we ever going to get that kid in a bathtub? I've never seen water freak someone out so much. DAD \*

One step at a-- MOM

Ahhhhhngggg! MAX

Max is overcome by agitated remorse,  
moaning and shaking. Tears.

All done! "Noisy" all done. DAD

The tantrum subsides

We love you.

A dressing ritual/game. Max follows  
directions in order to dress. Mom and  
Dad take a deep breath. Dad turns casio  
on.

"Two steps to the left." MOM

"Peek round the bend." You're a very special boy. DAD

"Under the hedge." MOM

"Over the top." Other people don't understand you like we do. DAD

"Half step again." MOM

"One to the right." DAD

"A step at a time..." MOM

"And your day will be bright." DAD

That's right! MOM

They dare to believe they've  
accomplished something.

Max suddenly starts to pull his shirt off. He doesn't like how it feels.

MOM/DAD

Noooooo!!

They try unsuccessfully to put his shirt back on.

Be still!

MAX

(making fashion model poses)

Like Abercrombie! Like Abercrombie! With your camera!

DAD

Not right now, Max.

MAX

Maybe later we play Abercrombie? Maybe later we play Abercrombie?

DAD

Maybe later. (to Mom) I have to go! I'm really behind.

He starts off, but gets caught back up

MAX

(like Pee Wee)

Oh, hi! Today's secret word is fun! Now, you know what to do when anyone says the secret word, right?

MOM/DAD

(not fully committed, but trying. Fake smiles)

Scream?

MAX

That's right! Let's try it! Are you, um, fit...no, fat?

MOM

No, I'm fun.

MAX

Ahhhhh!

MOM/DAD

(joining in for a good tension-releasing scream)

Ahhhhh.

MOM  
(turning casio off)  
I don't know how I'm going to accomplish even one  
little|thing today

MAX  
Powerful power lines.

DAD  
You always seem to manage.

MAX  
Powerful power lines.

MOM  
Barely.

MAX  
Powerful power lines are like dogs!

TV sounds suddenly louder.

TV NEWS  
The problem is really societal.

Dad goes to watch.

TV NEWS  
We've been engaging in a mythology for a long time. A thing  
called "See and Avoid".

MAX  
Theodore?...Simon?...Alvin and the Chipmunks?...

TV NEWS  
...and we really don't have that much visual range and it's  
very easy to approach each other and neither of them see  
anything...

MAX  
Richard Nixon and the Presidents?  
(in the same intonation as Dave  
would yell to his chipmunk,  
"Al-vin!!!!")  
Nix-on!!!

Commercial comes on, intro

DAD  
Max, it's the commercial!

Max turns excitedly toward the TV. Mom and Dad know they have 30 seconds to get something done.

**SONG 3: NEGATIVITY**

\*

TV

With Nutri-scheme you can lose weight while you eat. Tanya lost 30 pounds while eating. TANYA: I'm 47 years old and haven't looked this good since high school. My husband calls me his trophy wife!

They watch Max watch the commercial

MOM

Fixations are truly weird.

\*

DAD

What, don't all kids talk about power lines all day?

MOM

(to the TV)

Lose weight while you eat?

Max engages happily, as trio for Mom, Dad, and TV begins.

MOM

THIS IS REAL  
THAT IS NOT  
DON'T COMPARE  
I AM STUCK

STUCK IN THIS  
IT'S FOR LIFE  
THEY CAN'T KNOW  
STUCK, STUCK, STUCK

DAD

LOOK AT US  
I'LL ADMIT  
I'VE CHECKED OUT  
JUST TO COPE

PARALYZED  
MY MIND'S FRIED

MOM

STUCK, STUCK, STUCK  
STUCK, STUCK, STUCK

TV

THE PROBLEM IS REALLY SOCIETAL

MOM

Here you go, Sweetie Pie

TV

A THING CALLED SEE AND AVOID

DAD

Let's put this shirt on

TV

THE PROBLEM IS THERE ARE BLIND SPOTS

MOM

There ya go.

TV

AND NEITHER OF THEM SEE ANYTHING

MOM

We'll do Abercrombie later.

TV

THEY DON'T DEAL IN BLAME  
BLAME, BLAME, BLAME, BLAME

DAD

WISH I COULD  
MAKE IT GOOD  
GONE SO WRONG  
CAN'T REPAIR

PARALYZED  
MY MIND'S FRIED

FRIED, FRIED, FRIED

MOM

STUCK, STUCK, STUCK

DAD

FRIED

MOM

STUCK

TV

BLAME

DAD

FRIED

MOM

STUCK

TV

BLAME

DAD

FRIED

MOM

STUCK

TV

BLAME

DAD

FRIED

MOM

STUCK

TV

BLAME

DAD

FRIED

MOM

STUCK

TV

BLAME

DAD

FRIED

MOM

STUCK

TV

BLAME

FRIED DAD

STUCK MOM

BLAME TV

FRIED DAD

STUCK MOM

BLAME TV

Everything stops. Dad exits for work.  
Mom shuts her eyes and exhales.

MOM  
Max, sit here and play with your Presidents. I'll go sort the  
laundry. Max, you and Pegasus want to fold laundry with me?

Max? She gets no response

It'll be "fun"... No response

Ahhhhh! MAX

MOM  
You don't want to fold laundry?

No response

If you change your mind, I'm right over here.

She goes over to the adjacent laundry  
area.

On her way she nearly steps on an  
elaborate set-up of toys. She picks up  
a small plastic moose.



I should probably leave this set up. You'll be mad if I move it, huh?

Takes a load out of the dryer.

**WHY CAN'T I BE NORMAL UNDERSCORE**

Why are you so obsessed with a store? Why Abercrombie? Is it the symmetry of the layout, or..? The topless male models? Not my taste, but. You download the images. Take your shirt off and make model poses. Something else other people can't understand. Try to explain that...

Admiring Max's work on the floor

You set that up so particularly. Like a kid with a doll house. But different.

She steps on something else...

Ouch!

...a talking toy. "Everybody Sing!"

Mine field! Something ready to go off any minute.

Mom kicks the toy aside. Rethinks. Puts it back in its place. The washer kicks in to a different cycle.

**SONG 4: RIBBON**

\*

Another blasted noise maker!

MOM

IF I COULD HOLD  
BEAUTIFUL BOY  
NEED TO CONNECT

IF THIS PERSISTS  
INTO BEYOND  
I'M FEELING WEAK

ONLY TO BE  
ANSWERED IN EYES  
HELD IN HIS ARMS

ALL MY DESIRES

\*

DROPPED ON A SHELF  
WHERE IS MY TIME?

IF I COULD CUT  
THE RIBBON THAT HOLDS  
MY HELIUM DOWN

IF I COULD FLY  
FURIOUSLY  
UNTIL THIS LIFE

WAS JUST A DOT  
WHO WOULD LOOK UP?

[She's just over there. She'll be alright.] [cut?]

\*

Loud buzz of cycle ending

I have to finish *something!*

We are now aware of competing sounds:  
the TV and a radio from O.S. room.

DAD (O.S.)

(as Plankton)

"...That's it Mister! You just lost your brain privileges!..."

MOM

Max?

Dad enters from outside

DAD

I'm back. Forgot my bag.

MOM

Better pick up some more waffles today. That was the last one.

DAD

Make him pancakes.

MOM

(for the umpteenth time)

He'll only eat those frozen waffles. And two other things.

DAD

I know. Sounds simple.

MOM  
You're telling me. You were supposed to get some yesterday.

DAD  
I was?

MOM  
With the spinach and turkey bacon? Don't forget the school testing.

DAD  
When is that?

MOM  
Wednesday. Why didn't you get waffles?

DAD  
I got pancake mix. I thought he might try|them

MOM  
Dream on. I didn't even know you'd left.

DAD  
Well I did.

MOM  
Forget it. I'll get some later.

DAD  
No, I'll stop on my way home.

MOM  
Forget about it.

DAD  
You don't think I'm capable?

The TV and radio sounds and their voices have escalated. Max looks around to make sure no one is watching, grabs his backpack and helmet and gives a little wave good-bye to his parents who are completely self involved. He heads for the door leading outside and slips out as his parents voices fade in the distance.

MOM  
(mockingly)  
"Well, you know God gives special children to special people."

DAD  
Don't go there. You don't buy into that anyway.

MOM  
Forget it. I'll get some later.

DAD  
No, I'll stop on my way home.

MOM  
Forget about it.

DAD  
I thought he might try pancakes.

MOM  
Forget about it.

DAD  
You don't think I'm capable?

MOM  
Forget about it.

DAD  
You don't think I'm capable?

### SCENE 3 - OUTSIDE

Max scoots to a particular spot near the street and at the edge of the apartment complex. The sound of a busy street. Sound of a leaf blower is heard. This makes Max retreat and begin to make his noises. He takes out toy figurines from his backpack. He arranges his Pegasus, an Einstein action figure, and a mermaid.

MAX  
(mermaid)  
Why didn't you get waffles?  
(Pegasus)

Cornish Pixies!  
(Einstein)  
You don't think I'm capable?  
(Pegasus)  
Cornish Pixies!  
(mermaid)  
Over here, handsome

A neighbor girl enters during this.  
Self-possessed, bossy, a bit older than  
Max. She stares at him.

MAX  
(nervously, not looking at her.  
as Pee Wee)

Oh, hi!!

FIN  
You live here right?

MAX  
Billy Mays here for Oxi-Clean, the stain specialist, powered  
by the air you breathe

FIN  
What??

Max doesn't answer  
Right? You ride the little school bus don't you?

Max smiles but doesn't answer.

Don't you? I've seen you get on that little school bus. Those  
kids are all kind of weird, huh? Hel-lo. Anyone home?

A heavy-set preppily dressed teenaged  
girl and a stringy-haired boy of a  
similar age, wearing a shirt with  
"E=mc2", enter together.

FIN  
Knock-knock.

ALBERT  
I doubt that.

FIN  
Don't you? Ride it?

PEG  
So what? It's true. It cost \$300.

ALBERT  
That's a waste.

PEG  
How would you know? You wear the same thing every day.

FIN  
(interjecting)  
You're right he doesn't know anything! Anything useful!  
Egghead!

PEG  
He knows more than you, fish face!

FIN  
Can it, Blub! (to Albert) Yeah, you sit at home and edit  
Wikipedia all day. And read smelly old dictionaries cover to  
cover. What a nerd!

PEG  
Not true!

Nearly tripping over Max  
Hey...oops!

ALBERT  
(still to Peg)  
Why spend that kind of money on stupid clothes? 'Specially  
when|you could

FIN  
...she looks like a giant rhinoceros? No wonder your clothes  
are so expensive. It takes a lot of fabric to cover your big--

Leaf blower heard, off. Sound of car  
honking

PEG  
(retreating)  
Hey!

ALBERT  
That's not exactly what I was getting at -

PEG  
(to Fin)  
Go jump in the drainage ditch!

FIN  
Shut up! Or I'll throw you into the traffic.

ALBERT  
Hey!

FIN  
(to Albert)  
Don't you have a Harry Potter [Comic-Con?] convention to get to? \*

MAX  
Cornish Pixies?

ALBERT  
Keep talking, maybe you'll say something intelligent.

FIN  
(threatening him)  
What did you say???

MAX  
Cornish Pixies?

FIN  
(shoving Max away while staring  
down Albert)  
Shut. Up.

ALBERT  
Nothing.

PEG  
(to Albert)  
Just ignore her. (to Max) Aren't you the kid who's always  
with your parents?

MAX  
Oxi-Clean, the stain specialist

FIN  
The kid's a freak!

PEG  
Isn't he the boy who's always with his parents?

FIN  
Why don't you answer her? Are you retarded?

PEG  
 You ride the little school bus, don't you?

ALBERT  
 Don't you?

FIN  
 Why don't you answer?

PEG  
 Hey!

FIN  
 Are you deaf or just dumb?

ALBERT  
 Don't you? Ride it?

FIN  
 Answer me!

PEG  
 Don't you?

ALBERT  
 Don't you?

**SONG 5: KIDS AND CARS** \*

FIN		KIDS	*
DON'T YOU?		DON'T YOU, DON'T YOU, ETC.	*

FIN  
 YOU RIDE THE LITTLE SCHOOL BUS?

Max jumps anxiously

WHY DO YOU JUMP UP AND DOWN LIKE THAT?

PEG		KIDS	*
WHY DON'T YOU ANSWER HER?		ANSWER, ANSWER, ETC.	*

PEG  
 WHY DON'T YOU LOOK AT ME?

ALBERT  
 WHAT'S YOUR NAME?  
 DON'T YOU TALK?



The leaf blowing man observes the situation.

FIN  
WHY ARE YOU HUMMING?

KIDS  
HUMMING, HUMMING, ETC.

\*  
\*

FIN  
WHY DO YOU SHAKE LIKE THAT?

PEG  
CAN'T HE ACT NORMAL LIKE US?

ALBERT  
HE RIDES THE LITTLE SCHOOL BUS

PEG  
WHERE ARE YOU LITTLE BOY?

\*

FIN AND ALBERT  
LITTLE BOY (with Peg)  
WHERE ARE YOU?

\*  
\*

The leaf blowing man comes closer, his blower adding to the rising noise level and tension

PEG  
WHY DON'T YOU ANSWER ME?

ALL THREE  
WHY DON'T YOU LOOK AT ME?  
ARE YOU THERE?  
ARE YOU, ARE YOU, ARE YOU  
ARE YOU THERE?  
WHERE ARE YOU?  
LOOK AT ME  
LOOK AT ME!

\*

Max nervously kicks. His red croc flings off his foot into the street. Oblivious to danger he lunges into the street to retrieve his shoe. The kids watch in horror. Everything slows down. The man has blown leaves into a massive swirl in space, that elegantly form a shape.

Max looks up and runs towards this vision just as the sound of car screeching is heard. It echoes into silence.

MAN

Hey kid. It's an INTERSECTION. Look. Both. Ways. First one way. Then the other.

The other children are no longer there. Though deceptively back to normal, there is a distinct change now in the quality of light and setting.

MAN

**SONG 6: SHAPE YOUR WORLD**

\*

IT'S ALL THERE,  
LOOK BOTH WAYS BUT NOT TOO LONG  
YOU ARE WHERE  
YOU SHOULD BE THERE'S NOTHING WRONG  
REALIZE  
YOU SHAPE THE WORLD THAT YOU SEE  
CLOSE YOUR EYES  
AND SHAPE THE WORLD THAT WILL BE

CLEAR YOUR MIND AND FLOAT AWAY  
MAKE THE WORLD YOU NEED TODAY  
SWIM THE STREAMS OF YOUR DREAMS  
YOUR BRIGHT EYES WILL FIND THE WAY  
REVELATION'S NEAR TODAY!  
MAKE A FRIEND  
AND YOU'LL FLY SO HIGH  
TOUCH THE SKY, SO HIGH

LIFE CAN BE  
A MURKY MESS TO WADE THROUGH  
IT'S ALRIGHT  
ALONG THE WAY YOU'LL KNOW  
LOOK AROUND  
YOU SHAPE THE WORLD THAT YOU SEE  
LOOK AROUND

LEAD THE WAY  
LET US SEE  
IN THIS WORLD  
WHAT WILL BE

Man retrieves shoe for Max. The Man happens to be wearing the same shoes.

MAN

Nice shoes, little man.

MAX

Nice shoes, little man.

MAN

Reaching out to shake his hand

Homunculus Jones. You can call me Munc.

MAX

Doesn't take his hand, he rapidly shakes or flaps his own hands while jumping up and down

Nice shoes, little man.

MUNC

Does the same as Max, flapping his hands and jumping

Nice to meet you too.

They hop awhile together.

MAX

(sounding remarkably like the Scarecrow in "Wizard of Oz")

But some people without brains do an awful lot of talking.

MUNC

stops jumping

Talking much about oneself can also be a means to conceal oneself. Fortune cookie. Um...well...I got some work to do.

Munc starts up the leaf blower. He works an area not far from Max. Max gets noticeably agitated in response to the sound. After a few moments, Munc notices this. He turns it off. Max seems instantly better. Munc turns it back on, Max reacts.

Off and on and off, Munc can play him like a conductor. He's fascinated.

MAX

I'll eat that

MUNC

What do you mean?

MAX

That.

MUNC

That what?

MAX

That noisy...

MUNC

The leaf blower?

MAX

I'll eat that leaf blower.

MUNC

What do you mean?

MAX

Need to do it

MUNC

Oh. OK. It won't taste very good. Kind of oily...but go ahead.

Max "eats" handfuls of air.

What's your name?

Max doesn't respond.

MUNC

Well, I can't keep calling you "little man" can I? This is a mystery. Can I call you Mystery? How about "M" for short.

Max begins to pack up his backpack

You gotta go or somethin'? Well, okay but do yourself a favor M, remember, look both ways. Know what I'm saying? But then jump in. Sometimes it's the scary stuff that makes you even bigger.

\*  
\*

Max pulls on his own skin, rather vigorously

MUNC

Hey, hey, what're doing there, Mystery?

MAX

Need to do it! (then in Munc's voice) "Makes you even bigger."

MUNC

I see. But, ah, keep your skin on there. That stuff'll stretch with ya.

Max looks quizzically at Munc for a long beat, then shrugs as if in character. Max puts on his backpack and helmet and wobbles off, as clumsily and slowly as ever on his scooter. Unnoticed, Munc rights the scooter before it tips, and sends Max in a particular direction. He hesitates, then with concern follows watchfully.

SCENE 4 - HOME

As before. TV sounds, and O.S. Radio.

MOM

Forget about it.

DAD

You don't think I'm capable?

MOM

Dream on. I didn't even know you'd left.

DAD

Well I did.

MOM

I didn't know you'd left.

DAD

But I did.

MOM

Forget it. I'll get some later.

DAD  
No, I'll stop on my way home.

MOM  
He'll only eat those three things

DAD  
I know!

MOM  
He'll only eat those frozen waffles

DAD  
I'll get some!

MOM  
Forget about it.

DAD  
No! I'll stop on my way home.

MOM  
Forget it! I'll get some later.

DAD  
I'll stop on my way home.

MOM  
Forget it!

She turns off the radio (O.S.?)

DAD  
You don't think I'm capable?

MOM  
Forget it. Really. I'll get some later.

DAD  
No, I'll stop on my way home. I thought he might try  
pancakes.

MOM  
Where's Max?

DAD  
I'll stop on my way home.

MOM  
Where's Max?

DAD  
You don't think I'm capable?

Low thrum of TV

You don't think I'm capable?

TV blather

MOM  
Where's Max?

She turns off the TV. Deafening  
silence.

MOM  
Where is he?

Frozen. Ice.

DAD  
Oh no.

They run around in different directions  
looking for Max.

DAD  
Check the linen closet, he likes to sit in there.

MOM  
I need you here more!  
(from OS?)  
What if he left? What if he falls in the drainage ditch? They  
still haven't covered it. What about the broken glass near  
the dumpster?

DAD  
He can't be too far. Damn it! (calling out) MAX?!

#### SCENE 5 - OUTSIDE BEHIND THE APARTMENTS

Max enters on his scooter. In one hand  
he clutches his Pegasus toy. He stops  
to sit and plays with his toy.

DAD  
(from off at a distance, but  
with urgency)  
Max! Max? Max!! Where are you?

Max pays no attention to the calls.  
Munc, who has been keeping an eye on  
Max out sight, appears.

MUNC  
Someone's lost? They sound worried.

Max doesn't reply.

Well, worry's not the thing, exactly. Worry's in a hurry to  
get nowhere. You know? Why are you here?

Max doesn't reply.

Oh, yeah. Mystery.

MAX  
Why you here.

MUNC  
Why I'm here? Cause this is my...um...reality.

MAX  
Un-reality?

MUNC  
(chuckles)  
Kind of. But I like it out here. Fresh air. Air is just water  
with holes in it, ya know. Bottle cap.

No response

Just...water...with...? Well. Don't be afraid to jump in and  
get your hair wet.

We hear other voices from off:

PEG'S MOM (O.S.)  
Peg, will you get those wet things up on the line right now??

PEG (O.S.)  
I'm on the phone, Mom



PEG'S MOM (O.S.)  
Well get off and do it!!

PEG (O.S.)  
No!

PEG'S MOM (O.S.)  
Peg!!!!!!

PEG (O.S.)  
Mo-o-om!

Peg, the teen girl, enters, stomps angrily across the stage and disappears pulling a clothesline. Munc and Max observe. Munc picks up the Pegasus toy.

DAD (O.S.)  
(with still more urgency)  
Max? Max!!

Max is still oblivious to the call for him, while almost simultaneously, a winged Peg reappears from the original side of the stage carrying the other end of the clothesline, complete with sheets, towels, underwear, etc. Music. She floats up, attaches the line, and swings up to standing on the clothesline.

PEG  
Hey, look up! Come on up!

MAX  
Pegasus!

PEG  
Help me out. Follow me!

**SONG 7: DREAM**

\*

IF YOU WANT TO PLAY WITH ME  
YOU HAD BETTER GROW SOME WINGS  
FORGET ABOUT THE HEAVY THINGS  
LIKE A DREAM  
IN A DREAM  
I WILL FIND THE THING I NEED  
CHANGE INTO A KIND OF ME

FLOAT AWAY SO ALL CAN SEE  
I CAN FLY  
YOU CAN FLY?

MAX  
Go up there! With Pegasus!

PEG  
Take my arm!

She dangles a sweatshirt for him to grab the "arm". He sees how high she is and gets nervous.

EMPTY ARMS WILL WAVE HELLO  
EMPTY FEET WILL DANCE BELOW  
NIGHTIES SWAY AND TOWELS PLAY  
IN THE WORLD WE MAKE TODAY  
IN OUR DREAM

\*  
\*

MAX  
No, don't want to!

PEG  
Well then grab more of that line in the basket, will ya?

He doesn't know how to respond.

GRAB THE LINE COME PLAY WITH ME  
FEEL YOUR SENSES SOAR WITH ME  
IN A WORLD OF CLARITY  
I CAN FLY

\*

Here, I'll get that.

She swoops down and grabs some clothesline, which she flies up with to attach up high making a diagonal line.

You can start on the ground, see?

She attaches a number of clotheslines to criss-cross the stage.

You can climb it like a ladder. That's it, hold on.

MAX  
(grinning)  
Be careful Max!

He squeals, happily, and climbs up a few wobbly rungs.

PEG

Hey, my name's not Max...oh...you're Max?

MAX

I fly!

In his elation he misses a footing, flips over a string or two and lands with a thud on the ground.

PEG

Whoops! Watch out, Max!

MAX

I crack my butt!

PEG

(laughing)

Ha, ha! Not possible! You're like a baby giraffe you know that?

MAX

(whimpering)

Be careful Max!

PEG

You need some wings too.

WE CAN GLIDE ON FEATHERED WINGS  
LEAVE ALL THE MASS OF EARTHLY THINGS  
IN OUR DREAMS

She shakes out a fluffy set of wings from the laundry basket and puts them on him.

Here, you try. It'll be fun!

MAX

(she said the secret word. Max screams)

Ahhhhhh!

PEG

What's the matter?

Secret word. MAX

Oh, right! PEG

Now let go! She climbs, he follows in step.

Music becomes airier. Pretty soon they are flying to higher rungs, spinning, dancing, hanging laundry every which way.

KIDS AND MUNC	PEG	*
EMPTY ARMS WILL WAVE HELLO	THEY DON'T KNOW	*
EMPTY FEET WILL DANCE BELOW	I CAN FLY	*
NIGHTIES SWAY AND TOWELS PLAY	THEY CAN'T SEE.	*
THE WORLD WE KNOW SO FAR AWAY	THEY WON'T TRY	*
WE CAN GLIDE ON FEATHERED	THERE'S NO LIMITS	*
WINGS	HERE'S A CLUE	*
LEAVE ALL THE MASS OF EARTHLY	I'LL BE ME	*
THINGS	YOU BE YOU	*
REAL IS NOT REALITY		*
IT'S ANYTHING YOU WANT TO BE		
IN YOUR DREAM		

PEG

IF YOU WANT TO PLAY WITH ME  
YOU HAD BETTER GROW SOME WINGS  
OR ANYTHING YOU NEED TO BRING

As the song and dance end, the lines of laundry detach and sprong off, suddenly clearing the space. \*

PEG'S MOM (OS)

C'mon Peg, your appointment's in fifteen minutes, we've got to go now!

PEG

Mo-om!!...coming! You know, Max, you can do anything. They make fun of *me* because I'm heavy. (lights up) I can fly!

What's your secret?

By the way, I'm no Pegasus (sassily) I'm a gazelle with wings!

She runs off.

MAX

(thinking about how to respond,  
then echoing that ad)

I'm 47 years old and haven't looked this good since high school. My husband calls me his trophy wife!

Munc emerges from the laundry.

MUNC

Hey, Max-man! You let go! Cool, huh?

Max gets his gear, and begins to ride off on his scooter, but this time he's quite a bit swifter.

MUNC

Book-it, my friend.

SCENE 6 - OUTSIDE

**SONG 8: REACHING**

\*

Dad runs on, out of breath. Music.

This is going to be OK. I know I'll find him. He's playing somewhere. Close.

DAD

HE'S EASILY DISTRACTED  
A STUCK, OBSESSIVE MIND  
WON'T STOP UNTIL I FIND HIM  
HOW COULD I BE SO BLIND

COULDN'T SEE THE BLESSING  
TIL IT WAS SWEEP AWAY  
THOUGHT I NEEDED QUIET  
QUIET'S TOO MUCH PAIN

Music plays out under next dialogue

SOMEWHERE ELSE, AT THE DUMPSTER

MOM (OS)

Max! Come on home honey! Max!! Where are you?

Without noticing this he gets out his Einstein action figure and plays with it.

Stringy haired boy from scene three stands precariously on top of dumpster spouting facts to an imaginary audience. Old books and magazines spill out.

ALBERT

...Did you know that when writing systems were invented in ancient civilizations, they used nearly everything that could be written on to write on, like stone, clay, and tree bark? Alphabetic writing began in Egypt around 1800 BC. At first the words were not separated from each other and there was no punctuation texts were written from right to left and left to right and even had alternate lines read in opposite directions the same way a farmer drives an ox to plough his fields!

MAX

(having noticed his T-shirt:  
"e=mc2")

Relativity!

Music again

DAD

I'LL REPEAT THE PRESIDENTS  
PLAY ALL HIS FUNNY GAMES  
LIFE'S A LOOP ALREADY  
I WILL NOT COMPLAIN

Suspension

IF I COULD CUT  
THE RIBBON THAT HOLDS  
MY HELIUM DOWN

IF I COULD FLY  
FURIOUSLY  
UNTIL THIS LIFE  
WAS JUST A DOT

ALBERT

Hey! Look at all these books that people just throw away. Did you know that every three seconds, a book just gets trashed? That's twenty books a minute. That's twenty-eight thousand eight hundred perfectly good books a day. I read that somewhere. Let me see.

He shuffles through his books

DAD

(Music starts up again as he sings)

COULD I ESCAPE?  
WOULD I BE SANE?

MOM

SCREAMING AS I'M DREAMING  
THEY CAN'T HEAR ME CALL  
PRACTICE REPETITION  
BREATHE IN, BREATHE OUT, THAT'S ALL

ALBERT

Oh, this one's a beaut. Found it just the other day. "The Elegant Universe". He says string theory unravels the central Gordian knot of contemporary theoretical physics.

MAX

String theory!

ALBERT

From one principle, string theory provides a single explanatory framework capable of encompassing all forces and all matter. Einstein's theory of general relativity led the way.

MAX

Your one stop solution for all your office needs!

Music starts up again

MOM

I'LL TAKE HIM TO THE EDGES  
RACE HIM DOWN THE STREET  
WE'LL DANCE UP ON THE HIGH WIRE  
NO SAFETY NET BENEATH

Suspension

MOM/DAD

IF I COULD CUT

THE RIBBON THAT HOLDS  
MY HELIUM DOWN

ALBERT

Wait, wait, wait. Check out this one. It's a gigantic book about the Presidents of the United States. It only goes up to Eisenhower, but it has excellent descriptions, and here, look at these drawings! Oh, oh, hang on there a second, I've got this book on drawing that is guaranteed to get you to draw better than you ever thought possible. I read once that people have the most amazing, limitless creativity in them that just is waiting to be unlocked...or unleashed I think the author said. Some people never get theirs let out, but some have their gardens watered and so the energy in that capsule, seed, just explodes. Blooms. Most people don't seem to have any idea what I'm talking about most of the time, which is ridiculous because I know exactly what I mean. Why don't people just listen, you know? My parents tell me I talk too much, so I just quit talking around them. Hey, was that your mother calling for you?

MAX

I like the presidents, Millard Fillmore...

ALBERT

Did you know that Millard Fillmore's wife was so shocked to find out that the White House had no library that she asked the president to get Congress to pay for one and picked out the books herself?

MAX

13th president, 1850-1853.

ALBERT

That's right!

MAX

Mount Rushmore!

ALBERT

LOVE it! 4 of them on there. Washington, Jefferson, Roosevelt, Lincoln. 36 miles West of Rapid City. Covers 1,278 acres and is 5,725 feet above sea level. 2 million visitors annually.



MAX

Sure! We can talk about Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, Adams, Jackson, Van Buren, Harrison, Tyler, Polk, Taylor, Fillmore, Pierce, Buchanan, Lincoln, Johnson, Grant, Hayes, Garfield, Arthur, Cleveland, Harrison, Cleveland, McKinley, Roosevelt, Taft, Wilson, Harding, Coolidge, Hoover, Roosevelt, Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Ford, Carter, Reagan, Bush, Clinton, Bush, and Obama, if you want to.

This impeccable list from the small child blows Albert's mind and literally blows him backwards into the dumpster

MAX

Einstein?

Max pulls the president toy (from the first scene) out of his backpack. He presses a button or two. Same music with the facts. Just then the lights change. A hand reaches around from behind the dumpster to place a crappy old boom box. The hand re-emerges, pops in a cassette and hits "play". A throbbing beat. Rising up out of the dumpster, the first thing we see is the top of some Don King-like Einsteinian puffed up hair, revealing a new Gangsta Albert, his T-shirt now reading: "MC Squared."

At the end of each verse, Max will "jam" by "playing" his Presidents machine.

**SONG 9: RUSHED UP**

\*

ALBERT

JUST A LITTLE SOUTHWEST OF RAPID CITY, SOUTH DAKOTA  
THERE'S A NATIONAL MEMORIAL SOMEBODY PROBABLY TOLD YA  
THAT IT'S ON THE MOUNTAIN...SIDE  
WAY UP IN THE...SKY  
FOUR FACES CHISELED, EACH 60 FEET...HIGH  
THEY REPRESENT 4 GREAT PRESIDENTS:  
WE GOT WASHINGTON, LINCOLN, TEDDY ROOSEVELT, AND  
JEFFERSON  
IT COST US MILLIONS JUST TO CARVE THEIR GRILLS

I GUESS THAT'S WHY THREE OF FOUR GOT THEIR FACES ON OUR  
DOLLARS BILLS

EVERYBODY GET YOUR RUSH UP  
AND GET RUSHED UP  
AND IF YOU LOVE SOUTH DAKOTA GET YOUR HANDS UP  
GET RUSHED UP  
AND IF YOU LOVE ALL THE PRESIDENTS SAY- HEY

A fashion-show runway appears and as each president is described, a model dressed recognizably like that president struts on down, back, and out. Max's obsession with Abercrombie models informing this fusion of images. These models are played by the rest of the cast, also informed by Max's need to "cast" those around him into his fantasies.

WASHINGTON WAS THE FIRST ONE TO LEAD US FROM THE CURSE  
OF  
THE KING OF ENGLAND TAKING MONEY FROM OUR PURSE  
BUT THEY DIDN'T WANT TO LET US GO  
UNTIL WE WON THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR WITH GEORGE AS THE  
GENERAL  
THEN HE BECAME THE FIRST PRESIDENT  
AND SAID NEUTRALITY WITH EUROPE WAS IMPORTANT OVER  
EVERYTHING  
HISTORY CONFIRMS HE WAS A SMARTY...

Max presses buttons

PRESIDENT MACHINE

Washington was a member of the Federalist's party.

ALBERT

YEAH, THE 16TH PRESIDENT  
KNOWN FOR HIS RHETORIC  
ABRAHAM LINCOLN YEAH HE BEAT THE CONFEDERATES  
LEADING THE UNION THROUGH THE CIVIL WAR  
AS THE VERY FOUNDATION OF OUR NATION ALMOST HIT THE  
FLOOR  
HE WANTED EVERYONE TO STOP ENSLAVING  
TOLD US SO IN THE EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION. UH  
HIS LEADERSHIP KEPT THE NATION HARDY...

Max presses buttons

PRESIDENT MACHINE

Lincoln was a member of the Republican Party.

EVERYBODY GET RUSHED UP  
AND GET RUSHED UP  
AND IF YOU LOVE SOUTH DAKOTA GET YOUR HANDS UP  
GET RUSHED UP  
AND IF YOU'VE BEEN TO MOUNT RUSHMORE, SAY- HEY

MR. TJ, WAS A FARMER FROM VA  
AN INTELLECTUAL IF YOU COULD ASK THEN HE'D SAY  
HIS FAVORITE FOOD WAS FOR THOUGHT  
HE LOVED MUSIC AND ART  
CHURCH AND STATE, HE WISHED THE TWO WERE APART  
HE SENT LEWIS AND CLARK TO GO DISCOVER THE  
LAND WEST OF THE MISSISSIPPI BOUGHT FROM THE FRENCH  
GOVERNMENT  
HIS ARCHITECTURE SHOWS US HE WAS ARTY

Max presses buttons, but also joyously  
speaks with the machine.

PRESIDENT MACHINE AND MAX

Jefferson was a member of the Democratic-Republican  
party.

ALBERT

Max decides he can do this himself the  
next time around. He slides the machine  
aside and prepares to do so.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT WAS ALWAYS KNOWN AS A TOUGH GUY  
HE LEAD THE ROUGH RIDERS AND NEVER WAS GUN SHY  
HE ALSO FOUGHT TO REFORM OUR NATION  
SO HE SHUT DOWN 40 GREEDY CORPORATIONS  
HE GOT THE PANAMA CANAL AND HE WAS SO WELL LIKED  
HE WAS THE FIRST AMERICAN TO WIN THE NOBEL PRIZE  
JUST IN TIME NOT A SECOND TARDY

MAX

Roosevelt was a member of the Republican party.

Max is overwhelmed by his own  
accomplishment. His excitement turns to  
high anxiety as he begins to contort  
his body, rocking and flapping.

ALBERT

EVERYBODY GET YOUR RUSH UP  
AND GET RUSHED UP  
AND IF YOU LOVE SOUTH DAKOTA GET YOUR HANDS UP  
GET RUSHED UP  
AND IF YOU LOVE ALL THE PRESIDENTS, SAY- HEY

EVERYBODY GET YOUR RUSH UP  
AND GET RUSHED UP  
AND LET THE SIXTY FOOT FACES GET YOU AMPED UP  
GET RUSHED UP  
AND IF YOU LOVE SOUTH DAKOTA SAY- YEA

MAX

(Alvin-y)Nix-on!!! (more angrily)Nix-on!!!!

He does the classic Nixon impersonation  
over and over again, shaking and  
vocalizing with increasing energy.

ALBERT

Easy! Easy! C'mon, easy does it.

Max begins throwing books and things  
around, decking Albert on the head with  
a copy of the Norton Anthology of  
Poetry.

ALBERT

Hey, hey, chill out!

MAX

No, I warm. Too hot!

ALBERT

No, I mean take a chill pill.

MAX

No pill, no pill.

ALBERT

We were cooking there, Max.

MAX

Hungry!

ALBERT

No, I mean you know a lot of information for a little guy.  
You know all that by heart?

MAX

Heart pumps 30 quarts of blood per minute.

ALBERT

Yeah, I know crazy stuff like that too. No, I mean by heart, like you don't need the book anymore to tell you.

MAX

Presidents Book talks.

ALBERT

Yes, but that's not really talking like we are doing now. Like friends do.

ALBERT'S MOM (O.S.)

Al-bert!! Get on home!

ALBERT

Well, gotta turn tail and --

MAX

Tail?

ALBERT

I have to get after it. Could you clean up a bit? I hate a messy dumpster.

He hands Max the anthology.

Here. You dropped this on my head like some kamikaze Newton apple. You should check out some of this poetry. It might calm you down.

Albert leaves

MAX

Friend?

He turns around in a few circles checking to see if he has a tail.

He looks at the book in his hands and shrugs and "cleans up a bit" by placing it on top of a pile of dumpster books.

SCENE 7

Fin is fuming

Max is there.

MAX

It's Mother Nature approved and it's safe on your colored fabrics.

FIN

What the freak? Go away!

MAX

Powered by the air you breathe.

FIN

I mean it. Get out of here.

MAX

Quiet, I'm brainstorming.

**SONG 10: SHUT UP**

\*

DON'T JUST GET IT CLEAN GET IT OXY-CLEAN  
DON'T JUST GET IT CLEAN GET IT OXY-CLEAN

FIN

THIS IS ONE DUMB FANTASY

MAX

DON'T JUST GET IT CLEAN GET IT OXY-CLEAN  
DON'T JUST GET IT CLEAN GET IT OXY-CLEAN

FIN

EVERYONE GETS CHANGED BUT ME

MAX

DON'T JUST GET IT CLEAN GET IT OXY-CLEAN  
DON'T JUST GET IT CLEAN GET IT OXY-CLEAN

FIN

WHO KNOWS WHAT IS HAPPENING?

QUIT BEING SUCH  
A PEST YOU MAKE  
ME WANT TO SCREAM  
WILL YOU SHUT UP!!?

FIN

Currently hating life.

MAX

Powered by the air you breathe.

MAX

DON'T JUST GET IT CLEAN GET IT OXY-CLEAN  
DON'T JUST GET IT CLEAN GET IT OXY-CLEAN

FIN  
PEOPLE ARE BIG IDIOTS

MAX  
DON'T JUST GET IT CLEAN GET IT OXY-CLEAN  
DON'T JUST GET IT CLEAN GET IT OXY-CLEAN

FIN  
LAME THINGS MAKE ME FURIOUS

MAX  
DON'T JUST GET IT CLEAN GET IT OXY-CLEAN  
DON'T JUST GET IT CLEAN GET IT OXY-CLEAN

FIN  
THIS TWERP IS UP IN MY FACE

LOSING MY MIND  
PLEASE MAKE HIM STOP  
FREAKING ME OUT  
WILL YOU SHUT UP!

Face...Palm!

She smacks her forehead with the palm  
of her hand

MAX  
BUT DID YOU HEAR ME? BUT DID YOU HEAR ME?  
BUT DID YOU HEAR ME? BUT DID YOU HEAR ME?

FIN  
NOW I NEED SOME HELLA SPACE

MAX  
BUT DID YOU HEAR ME? BUT DID YOU HEAR ME?  
BUT DID YOU HEAR ME? BUT DID YOU HEAR ME?

FIN  
I CAN'T TAKE THIS MESSED UP PLACE

MAX  
BUT DID YOU HEAR ME? BUT DID YOU HEAR ME?  
BUT DID YOU HEAR ME? BUT DID YOU HEAR ME?

FIN  
I MIGHT HAVE TO PUNCH HIS FACE

YES I HEARD YOU  
JUST SHUT YOUR TRAP

She opens her mouth and Billie May's voice comes out of it at full volume. She lip synchs. It's as if she's possessed. This is disturbing. Out of her control.

DON'T JUST GET IT CLEAN GET IT OXY-CLEAN  
DON'T JUST GET IT CLEAN GET IT OXY-CLEAN  
DON'T JUST GET IT CLEAN GET IT OXY-CLEAN  
DON'T JUST GET IT CLEAN GET IT OXY-CLEAN  
DON'T JUST GET IT CLEAN GET IT OXY-CLEAN  
DON'T JUST GET IT CLEAN GET IT OXY-CLEAN  
DON'T JUST GET IT CLEAN GET IT OXY-CLEAN  
DON'T JUST GET IT CLEAN GET IT OXY-CLEAN  
DON'T JUST GET IT CLEAN GET IT OXY-CLEAN

MAX  
WILL YOU SHUT UP?

All quiet. They stare at each other. Who is this kid? What the heck was that??

FIN  
(sarcasm. help me heaven.)  
It hurts. It physically hurts.

MAX  
Pony.

FIN  
What??

MAX  
Pony.

FIN  
What?

MAX  
Pony.

FIN  
What?



Pony. MAX

What? FIN

Did you hear me? MAX

What? FIN

Did you hear me? MAX

Yes! FIN

Did you hear me? MAX

Yes I heard you. FIN

Then Pony. Hair out. MAX

He reaches towards her and she lets him take her hair out of her very tight pony-tail

Max wants to say something to her, but can't

Fin shakes out her hair, a beginning of a smile? and leaves.

Max cradles a mermaid doll.

#### SCENE 8 DAD

He is trying to stay calm.

DAD

If I were Max...where...If I were Max....?  
Keep it together...

(as if counting to five)

Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Madison...

**SONG 11: HIS NAME IS MAX**

\*  
\*

DAD  
HIS NAME IS MAX...  
WE NAMED HIM MAX, AND HE IS A GOOD BOY

Max scooters on and stops near Dad. He parks his scooter and sets up toys from his pack. Dad unaware of M's presence.

\*

HE LIKES PIZZA  
AND PIZZA CHEESE  
AND PEGASUS  
HE LIKES EINSTEIN  
AND STRING THEORY  
AND THE PRESIDENTS  
AND HE'S DIFFERENT

\*

MOM  
WHY CAN'T WE BE NORMAL

\*  
\*

DAD  
HIS NAME IS MAX AND HE IS A GOOD BOY

\*

MOM  
WHY CAN'T WE BE NORMAL

DAD  
HIS NAME IS MAX AND HE IS A GOOD BOY

MUNC AND PEG  
THIS IS NORMAL

Dad starts hearing things

DAD  
HE LIKES PIZ--

PRESIDENT MACHINE  
President George Washington

DAD  
AND PIZ--

PRESIDENT MACHINE  
President Abraham Lincoln

DAD  
AND PEG--

PRESIDENT MACHINE  
President Thomas Jefferson

DAD  
HE LIKES EIN--

PRESIDENT MACHINE  
Was a member of the...was a member of the...

DAD  
AND STRING--

PRESIDENT MACHINE  
Press, press, press, press, press, press a button.

DAD  
AND THE PRESIDENTS  
THIS IS DIFFERENT

WHY CAN'T WE BE NORMAL?

Max?

PRESIDENTS MACHINE  
Ser-ser-ser-served as the sixty-first president of the United  
States from 2045-2049.

DAD  
How is that --?

PRESIDENT MACHINE  
Party. Party. Party, etc.

DAD  
Stop that!

PRESIDENT MACHINE  
No!

It stops. He regroups. Breathes.

DAD  
There's something wrong with --

PRESIDENT MACHINE  
No! No! No! No!, etc.

**SONG 12: PRESS A BUTTON**

\*

DAD

Please don't do that! Would you PLEASE STOP! (quoting a symptom) "They lack empathy!"

PRESIDENT MACHINE

Press a button. Press a button. Press a button. Press a button.

DAD

(regurgitating)

They engage in repetitive movements, in 1856 accepted the nomination for President of the Know Nothing, such as rocking and twirling, twirling and rocking, self-abusive behavior, biting, head banging without any progress toward settling the major issues. They don't know how to play interactively. Religion: Unitarian. He emphasized nonintervention in foreign disputes with little regard for the interests of the person to whom they are speaking. There is no cure. Stereotyped, repetitive, typed repetitive, typed repetitive, or unusual use of language. No one to call. Was a member of. Was a member of. Was a member of. No help. Attended one-room schools, and fell in love with the redheaded teacher. Only characteristics. Preoccupation with occupation with occupation with occupation with certain objects or subjects. Object. Subject. Object. Subject. Object, subject, object, subjective, objective, subjective, subjective, subjective...

PRESIDENT MACHINE

Press a button. Press a button. Press a button. Press a button.

Dad rocks repetitively.

VOICES

YOU'RE OK. YOU'RE OK. YOU'RE OK, etc.

DAD

(threatening the machine)

GIVE ME MORE! GIVE ME MORE! I WANT MORE!

MORE! MORE! MORE!

AGAIN AND AGAIN

AND AGAIN AND AGAIN

AND OVER AND OVER

AND OVER AND OVER

(back to dad's inner thoughts)

AND NO TRANSFORMATION

AND NO SHIFT

NO FUTURE TO PLAN

NO PAST TO GRASP

NO FUTURE TO PLAN

\*

NO PAST TO GRASP  
AND NOTHING BUT  
(ALL) NOW. NOW. NOW. NOW. NOW. NOW.  
DISAPPEAR, DISSIPATE,  
DIMINISH, DECLINE  
DEVOLVE, DISSOLVE  
DEVOLVE, DISSOLVE  
DEVOLVE, DISSOLVE  
DISSOLVE, DISSOLVE, DISSOLVE, etc.

\*

PRESIDENT MACHINE  
PRESS A BUTTON....PRESS A BUTTON...  
NO! NO! NO! NO! NO!, NO! NO! NO! etc.

Static noise drowns out everything

SCENE 9 - OUTSIDE AT THE DUMPSTER

Max and Munc organize the dumpster books and things into some kind of structure. Max sits on it, humming the Casio melody, and puzzling over the book Albert left him with. Munc helps.

MUNC  
Sittin' on the tree of knowledge?

MAX  
Ant hill. Newton Ant Hology.

MUNC  
Newton who?

Checking out the book

Let me see here....That's a book of poetry. Oh! Norton Anthology. I wandered lonely as a cloud.

MAX  
Cloud?

MUNC  
That's a simile. Then we can move on to metaphor.

MAX  
Meta-five? Meta-six? Met a friend.

True friend?  
MUNC

I don't lie.  
MAX

You don't lie.  
MUNC

I standing up!  
MAX

I'm standing up for you.  
MUNC

Beat.

Let's sit down.  
MAX

Simile. Something is like something. It's nice to tell a friend they're pretty like something.  
MUNC

You are pretty like Abraham Lincoln.  
MAX

Abe was good lookin' but that's not quite what I mean. What is something you like about Abe?  
MUNC

His beard?  
MAX

What's a beard made of?  
MUNC

Hair?  
MAX

Right! Now say you have hair as lustrous as Lincoln's beard.  
MUNC

Luscious as Lincoln.  
MAX

Maybe just, "you have pretty hair."  
MUNC

MAX  
You have pretty hair.

MUNC  
Why, thank you.

He looks back into the book.

MUNC  
(relishing the name)  
Mr. Words Worth.

**SONG 13: CLOUD**

\*

MUNC  
I WANDERED LONELY AS A CLOUD  
THAT FLOATS ON HIGH O'ER  
VALES AND HILLS,  
WHEN ALL AT ONCE I SAW A  
CROWD,  
A HOST, OF GOLDEN DAFFODILS  
BESIDE THE LAKE, BENEATH THE  
TREES  
FLUTTERING AND DANCING IN THE  
BREEZE

PEG/ALBERT/FIN  
LONELY. FLOATING. YOU ARE.  
BESIDE THE LAKE, BENEATH THE  
TREES,  
FLUTTERING AND DANCING IN THE  
BREEZE

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

MUNC

Munc dances around like a daffodil

This "crowd", this sea of daffodils, rippling with the  
breeze. Wave after wave. Everything flowing together.

MAX  
Wave after wave!

He waves like he's waving "hi" over and  
over.

MUNC  
Wave after wave.

Munc waves like water. Max' wave  
evolves.

PEG/FIN  
BESIDE THE LAKE, BENEATH THE TREES  
BESIDE THE LAKE, BENEATH THE TREES

MUNC

I am...We...are ALL these things.  
You are that cloud.  
You are the lake.  
You are the breeze.

PEG/FIN

BESIDE THE LAKE, BENEATH THE TREES  
BESIDE THE LAKE, BENEATH THE TREES

MUNC

You are in the flow. The current. You are...

MAX

You are.

MUNC

You are.

MAX

You are.

MUNC

You are.

MAX

You are.

MUNC

You are.

MUNC

(pointing at Max)

YOU ARE

MAX

(gesturing with his whole hand  
towards Munc)

YOU ARE

MUNC

(pointing again)

YOU ARE

MAX

(now with his pointer finger,  
looks Munc in the eye, for the  
first time)

You are kinder than kindergarten!



MUNC

Whoa.

SCENE 10 - MOM

Mom enters

MOM

Max!

Max?

Max?

She sees

Oh! You scared me. What are you doing there? I've been searching everywhere. Every inch of everywhere. I KNEW you couldn't be far! But what if you were? What if I never found you? What if you'd gone too far? (I need to lie down.) What if I never? No! But, no! There you are! There you are! There you are!

Why don't you answer me?

Where you are?

There are you?

Who you are?

MOM

Who -

**SONG 14: POWERFUL POWER LINES**

\*

MOM

ARE YOU?

VOICES

ARE YOU, ARE YOU, ETC

MOM

YOU'RE NOT MY BOY WHO ARE YOU?

WHAT'S HAPPENING, I CAN'T MOVE. I'M STUCK

I AM SO FROZEN IN-

VOICES  
FROZEN, FROZEN, ETC.

MOM  
FEAR, IT'S SO HARD  
THIS SHELL

WHAT'S YOUR NAME?  
DON'T YOU TALK?  
WHY DON'T YOU ANSWER

VOICES  
ANSWER, ANSWER, ETC

MOM  
I CAN'T FEEL ANYTHING  
LADYBUG, DRAGONFLY  
FLY AWAY HOME RIGHT NOW

HOUSE ON FIRE!  
CHILD WILL --!

VOICES  
BURN

MOM

You don't scare me!

WHY DON'T YOU ANSWER ME?  
WHY DON'T YOU LOOK AT ME?  
ARE YOU THERE?

VOICES  
ARE YOU, ARE YOU, ETC.

MOM  
ARE YOU THERE?  
WHERE ARE YOU?  
LOOK AT ME  
I AM --

A bell and then silence.

MOM  
Powerful power lines are like dogs!

SCENE 11

Dad enters. Oddly detached, blissed.  
When they speak the following  
"echoalic" lines, they should sound  
like Max would, or did, say these  
phrases as these characters.

DAD  
(Pee Wee. Without making eye  
contact.)  
"Oh, hi."

MOM  
(Dorothy) \*  
"I don't like the forest! It's dark and creepy!" \*

DAD  
(Scarecrow?) \*  
"Of course, I don't know, but I think it'll get darker before  
it gets lighter."

MOM  
(Dorothy) \*  
"Oh." \*

Beat. Breathing. \*

DAD  
(Plankton. Loud and gruff.)  
"But really, why don't you go ahead and make us a patty!"

MOM  
(Sponge Bob)  
"Ahhhhh....Nahh...I don't feel like it!"

DAD  
(Plankton)  
"Don't back sass me."

MOM  
(Sponge Bob.sassily: 'don't  
back sass me") \*  
"mleh mleh mleh mleh" \*

Beat. \*

(Dorothy) \*  
 "Do - do you suppose we'll meet any wild animals?" \*

DAD \*  
 (Scarecrow?) \*  
 "Mmmm...we might." \*

Mom looks Dad in the eye. The bliss \*  
 fades. She is overcome with emotion.

DAD \*  
 (as Mom) \*  
 "Are you a monkey wrench?" \*

MOM \*  
 I can't...I can't do this...

DAD \*  
 (as another kind of husband) \*  
 "What's the matter?" \*

MOM \*  
 (as herself) \*  
 I see you but you're not there.

DAD \*  
 (as himself) \*  
 OK, NOW you're a downer. (as Max) "President Millard  
 Fillmore. Fillmore served as the thirteenth--"

Max has entered. They don't see him.

MOM \*  
 (trying to get back the bliss)  
 "Cornish Pixies...!"

DAD \*  
 "As the thirteenth--"

MOM \*  
 "Cornish Pixies...!"

DAD \*  
 "As the thirteenth--"

MOM \*  
 "Cornish Pixies...!"

MAX \*  
 Freshly plucked!

DAD

"Need to do it! Need to, need to, need to."

MOM

"That wasn't in the job description!"

DAD AND MOM

(King of Cartoons. slow and sustained)

"Let the cartoons....."

\*

\*

**SONG 15: GET CLEAR**

\*

MUNC

YOU CAN FIND HIM. YOU'VE ARRIVED HERE.  
YOU SHOULD FIND HIM. NOW THAT YOU'RE HERE.  
UH-OH, UH-OH, UH-OH. UH-OH, UH-OH, UH-OH  
UH-OH, UH-OH, UH-OH. UH-OH UH-OH, UH-OH  
UH-OH

YOU ARE SINKING, AREN'T YOU?.  
YOU'RE NOT THINKING, ARE YOU?  
YOU ARE SINKING, AREN'T YOU?  
YOU'RE NOT THINKING, ARE YOU?

YOU HAVE CHOICES DON'T YOU?  
YOU HAVE CHOICES DON'T YOU?

YOU ARE SINKING, AREN'T YOU?.  
YOU'RE NOT THINKING, ARE YOU?  
YOU ARE SINKING, AREN'T YOU?  
YOU'RE NOT THINKING, ARE YOU?

YOU HAVE CHOICES DON'T YOU?  
YOU HAVE CHOICES DON'T YOU?

HOLD ON TO BOTH SIDES

YOU CAN CHOOSE TO BE HERE,  
AND BE THERE AS WELL.  
LIVE IN BOTH WORLDS.  
JUST NEED TO GET CLEAR  
SO YOU CAN SEE HIM STANDING HERE  
IN HIS WORLD SO BLISSFULLY CLEAR  
HE NEEDS YOU HERE AND THERE.  
JUST NEED TO GET CLEAR  
SO YOU CAN SEE HIM STANDING HERE  
IN HIS WORLD SO BLISSFULLY CLEAR

MOM  
AN EASY FEELING.  
I AM FLOATING, FLOATING  
THE SCHOOL BUS LEAVES AT  
EIGHT  
WHAT IS THIS LOVELY STATE?  
A BLISS. A BLISS. A BLISS. A  
BLISS.  
HAPPY. HAPPY. HAPPY. HAPPY.  
HAPPY.  
ADRIFT, SET FREE, TO BE, JUST  
BE  
SOARING THROUGH OPEN SPACE.  
BUY WAFFLES AGAIN  
NO LOVE WITHOUT HIM  
YOU CAN CHOOSE TO BE HERE  
AND BE THERE AS WELL  
LIVE IN BOTH WORLDS  
FEEL LIGHT. DRIFT BLISSFUL.  
DRIFT BLISSFUL  
UH-OH, UH-OH, UH-OH,  
UH-OH, UH-OH, UH-OH  
I WANT TO STAY  
I WANT TO STAY WANT TO STAY

DAD  
SLIPPING INTO A  
FUNNY FEELING BUT  
THRILLING OUT OF SIGHT  
THRILLING OUT OF SIGHT  
MUST TAKE CARE OF HIM  
FOR THE REST OF HIS LIFE  
JUST TAKE CARE OF ME  
FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE  
A PRECIPICE. A PRECIPICE  
I WANT TO JUMP. BUT NOT TO  
LAND  
I WANT TO JUMP. BUT NOT TO  
LAND  
I WANT TO JUMP  
SWIRLING SO RECKLESSLY  
SWIRLING SO RECKLESSLY  
BUY WAFFLES AGAIN  
NO LOVE WITHOUT HIM  
YOU CAN CHOOSE TO BE HERE  
AND BE THERE AS WELL  
LIVE IN BOTH WORLDS  
I FEEL ADRIFT  
CUT LOOSE, SEE ME  
I WANT TO STAY WANT TO STAY

(beat)

DAD  
Here.

MOM  
I don't know how.

MAX  
Press any button to begin.

Max presses his small casio keyboard  
into Dad's hand.

MOM  
I don't know how. It's been so long.

DAD  
A lifetime.

He hands her the keyboard  
Press the button.

It's been so long. MOM

Mom looks at it. She presses a key.  
Music plays.

MOM  
(she listens. comfortably  
familiar.)  
Imagine. A future.

\*  
\*

MAX  
holds his chin like Abe Lincoln  
Hmm. It's a classic two birds one stone scenario...I know!  
using the dressing ritual he prepares  
Mom and Dad for a dance

Two steps to the left--

He brings Dad to Mom  
Peek round the bend--

He puts Mom's hand on Dad's shoulder  
Under the hedge--

He puts Dad's hand on Mom's waist  
Half step again.

He moves them a little closer  
Over the top--

He rest Mom's head on Dad's shoulder  
One to the right--

He removes himself, taking a big step

MOM  
A step at a time.

DAD  
(really looking at her)  
A step at a time.

MOM  
(really seen)  
And another.

And another.

DAD

Mom and Dad dance to the music.

MAX

Free!

He does his own little dance.

MUNC

"And then my heart with pleasure fills  
And dances with the daffodils."

(after Mom and Dad)

Don't lose him.

Final couplet.

SCENE 12 - OUTSIDE AT THE DRAINAGE DITCH

Max comes up to the drainage ditch, the water having collected into a pool before the stopped up cement block passage. On the far side of this sits a beautiful mermaid, formerly known as Fin.

MAX

(in awe)

A waterfall! Sparkling like Mount Rushmore in the dazzling sunshine.

MERMAID

Hungry?

MAX

Who said that?

MERMAID

Over here!

MAX

Oh, yes. Hello there!

MERMAID

Hello!



Hi. MAX

Hi. MERMAID

Hi. Are you a mermaid? MAX

Are you a merman? FIN

Maybe so. MAX

Maybe so. FIN

How did you get there? MAX

How did you get there? FIN

Are you copying me? MAX

Are you copying me? FIN

Are you copying me? MAX

Maybe so. FIN

Beat.

MAX  
(composing this poem for her)  
Wish I could sit close to you  
Like a couple o'sardines in a tin  
Even if we had no view  
I could hold your fin.

MERMAID  
(laughs)  
You're funny!

MAX  
You're pretty like Abraham Linc-- I mean, cake frosting.

MERMAID  
You're dashing.

MAX  
You're nice.

MERMAID  
Thank you. Will you be my friend?

**SONG 16: POETRY**

\*

(this is from the melody that  
the Casio keyboard has been  
playing throughout. Max has  
composed the words to it)

MAX  
YOU ARE MORE POETIC THAN POETRY  
MORE VISUAL THAN VISION  
WARMER THAN WOOL  
YOU ARE MORE DELICIOUS THAN DOUGHNUTS  
TASTIER THAN TRUFFLES  
SWEETER THAN CINNAMON SWIRLS  
YOU ARE KINDER THAN KINDERGARTEN  
MORE HONEST THAN HONESTY  
FREER THAN FREEDOM  
YOU FLOW THROUGH ME LIKE AIR

Mom and Dad have entered. They choose  
not to intervene. They watch. The water  
sounds begin to sound like ocean waves.

MAX  
YOU ARE

MERMAID  
AM I?

MAX  
MORE POETIC THAN POETRY

MERMAID  
YOU SEE

MAX  
MORE VISUAL THAN VISION

SEE ME  
WARMER THAN WOOL.  
YOU ARE  
AM I?  
MORE DELICIOUS THAN DOUGHNUTS  
KNOW YOU  
TASTIER THAN TRUFFLES  
KNOW ME  
SWEETER THAN CINNAMON SWIRLS  
YOU  
AM I WHAT  
ARE KINDER THAN KINDERGARTEN  
YOU THINK I AM?  
MORE  
YOU MAKE ME  
HONEST THAN HONESTY  
FEEL PRETTY. UNDERSTAND  
FREER THAN FREEDOM

MERMAID

MAX

MERMAID

MAX

MERMAID

MAX

MERMAID

MAX

MERMAID

MAX

MERMAID

MAX

MERMAID

MAX

MERMAID

MAX

MERMAID

HOW I FEEL.

MAX AND MERMAID

YOU FLOW THROUGH ME LIKE AIR

MERMAID

I AM HERE, THIS IS REAL

MAX AND MERMAID

FILLING MY HEART WITH POETRY  
SHOWING ME A DEEPER LAYER

MERMAID

(with MOM and DAD echoing in  
one voice)

I was so lonely. I have found you.

MERMAID

Swim over here. Come to me.

The sound of the waves becomes more  
dramatic and threatening.

Max? Max? Max? Max? Max? Max?

MOM

(overlapping Mermaid)

Max? Max? Max? Max? Max? Max?

As she calls his name, her voice takes  
on first a mysterious siren call, then  
cross-fades into his mother's call.  
This time he is alert to her voice. Max  
jumps into the water to join  
Mermaid/Mom. There is a splash.

He falls under the water. He begins to  
sink. Heartbeat, then underwater sound  
perspective. More and more he quits  
fighting the waters and just lets go.  
He floats down and down back into his  
bed. The water drains leaving a fetal  
heartbeat, and then the sound of a  
ticking clock.

SCENE 13 - HOME

Max is slowly stirring. He is damp. His parents hover over the bed. The neighborhood kids are there as well.

Max? MOM

Max? DAD

Max? Is he OK? PEG

Hey, Max? ALBERT

Max? FIN

**SONG 17: THIS IS NORMAL**

\*

MAX  
(seeing his parents standing  
over him)  
You and I are gonna be presidents and Mom can be first lady  
and we can sleep in the white house and in the morning we can  
get in the president's car and drive to the mall and go to  
Abercrombie and get pine cones and pipe cleaners and then  
Gramma can make up pancakes like Sponge Bob - in the morning  
and she can call for Gary Snail and she says, "Miss Tuftsie!"  
and for dinner we can have holographic meatloaf like  
Plankton...

Max is... DAD

Max is... MOM

We love you, Max. MOM/DAD

MAX  
(now noticing the other kids)  
Pegasus! Einstein! Fish-face!

He flaps his hands, excitedly,  
autistically.

PEG

Is he better?

DAD

Mm-hmmm.

MOM

THIS IS NORMAL.

MOM

Max is perfect.

DAD

Max is Max.

MAX

Max is.

MOM/DAD

Max is. Max.

MAX

Is.

MOM/DAD

THIS IS NORMAL.

Munc enters carefully.

MUNC

Excuse me, but I found this outside by the street. I believe  
it belongs to you?

He hands Max the President Machine.

You are?

MAX

I am.

He looks to his parents and friends.

We are.

ALL

THIS IS NORMAL.

Munc nods and slips away.

MAX

I turn it off.

Max presses the off button.

PRESIDENT MACHINE

Good night, and God bless America.

MAX UNDERSTOOD - SONG LIST

SONG 1:	NOISE SYMPHONY	*
SONG 2:	MEET MAX AND THE MACHINE	*
SONG 3:	NEGATIVITY	*
SONG 4:	RIBBON	*
SONG 5:	KIDS AND CARS	*
SONG 6:	SHAPE YOUR WORLD	*
SONG 7:	DREAM	*
SONG 8:	REACHING	*
SONG 9:	RUSHED UP	*
SONG 10:	SHUT UP	*
SONG 11:	HIS NAME IS MAX	*
SONG 12:	PRESS A BUTTON	*
SONG 13:	CLOUD	*
SONG 14:	POWERFUL POWER LINES	*
SONG 15:	GET CLEAR	*
SONG 16:	POETRY	*
SONG 17:	THIS IS NORMAL	*