

Max Williams Backstory

Species: Human

Sex: ♂

Orientation: Asexual

Age: 31

Birthday: 31st of March 1988

Height: 6ft 0in

Weight: 198lbs

Siblings: None

Profession: Logical security auditor

Skills: Competitive ballroom dancer

Max is an original character who appears in the story *Indicators of Compromise*. He is extrovert and cultured with a curious and fun spirit. This can convince others that he is flirtatious but it's purely an expression of his inquisitive and gregarious personality.

Trust & Confidence

(newborn)

Max's pregnancy was unplanned and something of a surprise to his mother. He was the result of a one night stand. Although the pregnancy was a surprise she knew that she would want a baby sooner or later so decided to keep it.

Financially, she was easily able to take the pregnancy in stride as she had put away generous savings. She also had a supportive and extensive family who supported her emotionally and physically through her first pregnancy and birth.

She was inevitably an inexperienced mother so having her first baby had its own challenges, however the support she got was enough and she had the fortitude to be a good mother.

Despite her inexperience, Max had a good experience of infancy. He felt safe and, precisely because he had never experienced what it was like to feel unsafe, he took that sense of safety for granted and simply enjoyed being in symbiosis with his mother. She actively enjoyed having a baby, and he soaked up that sense of pleasure in him!

Freedom & Self-Determination

(toddlerhood)

Max's mother was well aware that having male and female people around would be better for her child's development. Given that Max's father was not around to fulfil the male role she asked her father whether he would be prepared to step in, and visit her house often enough that Max would be able to observe him and learn what masculinity meant.

Her father obliged, and he visited often to help around the house, have lunch, or just to chat.

A side effect of this was that the first man in Max's life, the one from whom he got his first ever template on how to demonstrate his own masculinity, was culturally a little bit older than his mother. Max's granddad had a gentlemanly air and a certain interest in the finer things in life. Max internalised this and became a gentle-spirited, unaggressive toddler.

As Max developed the awareness to notice the world that existed beyond his mother, he became enthusiastic to experience more of life. He explored whatever room he and his mother were in with great interest to see what he could find. With his mother being such a central part of his world he came to her whenever he found something new and exciting, and she delighted in this.

Despite this closeness, inevitably there were times when Max felt a need to be a separate person from his mother. It was important for his self-development that he did so, but that didn't prevent it from being a trial at times for both mother and son. Max's father would step in and take a firm yet diplomatic lead in the situation whenever he felt it to be appropriate, and this too had an impact on Max's attitude towards what it meant to be male: that masculinity meant leadership conferred with gentleness. Of course, he didn't learn the skills for this instantaneously, but young Max never forgot the gravitas of his granddad's conflict-resolution skills, and how safe and heard he felt at those times.

Ambition

(young childhood)

Max became all the more energetic and extrovert as he graduated from toddlerhood. His mother took him for his first day of pre-school and he absolutely loved it! He settled in quickly and was enthusiastic to tell her that he loved being there, so before long she also started to think about additional outlets for his physical, and creative energies.

She tried him with dance classes. At Max's young age the available classes were focused more on encouraging exercise, self-expression, and trying new things than about technique, so the class could be extremely varied: jazz, contemporary, hip-hop, ballet, tap, ballroom, and so many more.

Overall Max was a highly optimistic and energetic little boy. He experimented with great enthusiasm with his place in the world and made plenty of friends and developed a good relationship with his teachers (who loved his interest in his lessons).

Productivity

(older childhood)

Max took a particular liking to ballroom, especially the fast-paced quickstep and tango, which let him release his seemingly boundless energy. He was used to having one special 'other' to interact with - his mother - so the fact that ballroom gave him a partner to dance with, and much more consistently so than any other style of dance - appealed to him greatly. This was especially true given that as a growing boy he was interested in getting to know more people, and having a series of dancing partners allowed him that one-to-one contact that appealed to him so much.

In addition to this, for all his energy Max was not a rough child. With his finer, more gentle spirit, Max appreciated ballroom for the opportunity it presented to improve his musicality

and to dress in fine clothes. As time progressed his teacher informed to his mother that he was capable enough to dance competitively if he so wished. His mother discussed this with him and he loved the idea!

Meanwhile, off the dance floor, Max found that his extrovert personality and the mutual respect he had learned at his family's collective knee and in having a succession of dance partners with whom he continued to learn the value of honest, tactful, and open communication.

Despite his competitive success his mother made sure to encourage Max at school. She had seen enough stage-mums at the studio to know that this was not what she wanted for Max. As a result of this, Max maintained a great balance between his passion for dancing, and his academic studies.

However, despite his seemingly limitless confidence, Max did have a sore spot: his illegitimacy. When left to his own devices this didn't bother him. Occasionally a classmate would ask why - or mock the fact that - he didn't seem to have a father, and he would find himself bristling at this. It didn't take him long to spot his own pattern with this, and he became resilient to these efforts to rattle him.

Max did well at - and enjoyed Information Technology and history. True to his culturally rich self, it was social history that interested him the most, with war being something he took less of an interest in. One element he particularly liked about history was the amount of detail that there was to know. Despite being an extrovert, he appreciated immersion into a subject. For him, it gave him more to talk about when he re-emerged into a more social world.

Child to Adult Transition *(adolescence)*

Adolescence introduced the prospect of dating, and this, along with his lack of a father, unsettled Max. From the first time he first envisioned himself dating he suspected that he wasn't heterosexual. At first he wondered whether he was gay instead; he lived in a city where homosexuality was demonised so in a sense, homosexuality was seen as 'the' counterpart to heterosexuality. However, he found that he didn't feel attracted to other boys either, and this left him at something of a loose end for a while.

Sex education classes arrived on the agenda one school year, and Max sat through these just like the majority of the rest of his class. He hoped for some answers from this portion of his education but didn't get what he was looking for. Throughout this class he (and his classmates) were assured that having a sex drive was normal and natural, and that being attracted to the opposite sex was healthy.

Next to nothing was said about homosexuality, certainly nothing that gave Max any answers, and nothing was said about a lack of sex drive. The messages in those classes about the idea that the teenagers' developing sexual feelings were healthy and normal were well-intentioned, but for Max they missed the mark entirely and left him feeling very much the odd one out.

In the wake of the classes, discussion of sex among his classmates exploded. The classes had been difficult enough for Max to hear, but at least he could remain passive on those.

Passivity in the social arena was much harder and even his silence (which in itself was uncharacteristic for Max) was taken as an attempt to communicate something to the others.

As yet, neither Max nor his classmates had a clear understanding of the difference between lust and romance. Max's lack of sexual aggression and his generally romantic nature made him look like an appealing potential date for several of his classmates who favoured a less lustful approach to dating. Max did not like being approached for any kind of dating at all, and as good as he generally was at managing conflict, this situation took him far enough out of his comfort zone that he occasionally came across as unduly reticent, judgemental, or harsh to others - usually by withholding answers to their invitations, questions, or comments.

Max regretted this in itself, so his overall experience of dating during adolescence was painful enough that he wished he could forget it, even years later.

All of this had an impact on his general closeness with other boys and girls in his year. Max was naturally gregarious as part of his extrovert nature but as everybody around him became seemingly obsessed with dating, he began to make an effort to keep some of his exuberance to himself. That became an uncomfortable experience.

At times when he couldn't keep it to himself, his larger-than-life personality was sometimes labelled 'gay', often flippantly, by his classmates. This went about as well as a reader of this profile might expect.

Max reverted to focusing more on his schoolwork (which he did quite successfully without his grades dropping enough to attract concern) and his out-of-school life, including his dancing, family, and the friends he had made through his dancing. Most of them were a little bit older - he found that these people had matured enough to not treat him as a potential boyfriend, and just as a friend. This was far more comfortable for him, and had a secondary effect of reinforcing Max's granddad's cultural teachings: Max re-learned what it meant to act older than his years.

Closeness in Relationships *(young adulthood)*

Max developed a particular interest in networks, including computer networks, so the course of his early professional life generally involved a lot of IT work.

He was still confused about the difference between romance and sexuality, and tried dating for a while. This did not work out well: his partners generally were deeply interested in sex and, as much as Max tried to be what his partners wanted, he inevitably felt very uncomfortable. With some partners sex felt downright filthy, and that actively repulsed him from sex for a while. He was capable of finding people sexually attractive but this did not translate to him wanting to get into bed with them. He actively avoided being in any sexual relationships for a long time and instead, experimented occasionally to test his feelings and beliefs about them.

He found a job at AVS, and his first day happened to be on his 26th birthday. His knowledge of networks meant that he was soon channelled into a specialist path as a logical security auditor. Within five months he was happily settled in this role.

This was when Kay Seeker started working there. He and Max instantly got along well and the two talked often and in quite some depth. Over time Kay revealed to Max that he often experienced anxiety, and this appealed to Max's protective side. As someone who had wanted to be better protected than he had been during his adolescence, when he saw how much Kay wanted to feel safe, he responded to that.

At the age of 30 Max developed a minor heart condition, and in a sense this brought the pair of them closer. Max learned the hard way that he could no longer ingest caffeine without his heart protesting. Kay was well aware that Max felt protective towards him and up until this point, Max had seemed invincible. Kay, with his tendency towards anxiety, became very watchful over Max and his health.

Both men found this difficult at first. Max found the role of protected victim a strange and unfamiliar one, and at times found it unpleasant. Rationally, he understood that he had a genuine need to be gentle with himself and that even if he did, his heart could still act up, so having a companion to watch over him provided him with much-needed help if he blacked out without warning. On the other, Kay's desire to watch over him and keep him safe sometimes veered beyond what was rational (Kay was a naturally anxious person after all, so sometimes his efforts were more about alleviating his own anxiety than about protecting Max to a level that he was safe but free to act autonomously). As a result of this Max would feel overprotected and resist or reject Kay's attention, and at times would rebel and put himself at greater risk of a heart-related episode in an act of backlash, which inevitably prompted Kay to greater anxiety.

The two argued about this occasionally, especially during the earlier days of their friendship. However, both had the emotional intelligence to recognise what was happening and, along with some well-placed advice and reassurance from Kay's counsellor, the pair developed a healthier system: Max became more comfortable with being protected, and Kay learned to better tolerate his own anxiety so that he no longer tried to overly control Max.

Max and Kay's manager, Carl, often put them together to work as a team, on account of their excellent communication, and on one occasion they were sent to a tech business, KilTech, to perform an audit. While they were there Max was served coffee that he incorrectly assumed was decaffeinated, collapsed, and had to sit the majority of the audit out in hospital and at his and Kay's hotel.

Kay kept vigil over him as much as he could throughout this time and Max found himself accepting this display of concern. Furthermore it led him to wonder if he had feelings for Kay. He spent much of his time thinking about it as he recovered (some might say that he had too much time to think about this as much as he did), and the situation came to a head on the final day of the audit.

Max, who may have managed his feelings with more equilibrium if he hadn't had a lot of time to think over those past few days, admitted to himself that he did indeed have feelings for Kay and broke down, broken-hearted that his friendship with Kay might be ruined or tainted by the expectation to become sexually involved with him. Kay entered the room at exactly this time and saw him crying. Kay rushed to his side to ask what was wrong, and this triggered an in-depth and very honest discussion between them.

During this conversation Kay opened up about his uncertainty and feelings of oppression

over his sexuality. They explored this, however Max still found sexual exploration uncomfortable. The pair became romantic partners with sexuality only occasionally entering their relationship. Both sides had to be patient with the other regarding their sex life.

Because of this, Kay had a side relationship with an individual named Daniel, whom he had met during the KilTech audit. Daniel had a far more robust sex drive than Max, so Kay kept contact with him to hook up with him on occasion. With Kay and Max's relationship being founded so securely on honesty Kay informed Max of this as soon as he felt it was appropriate. This happened a few weeks after their KilTech audit ended. Max found this painful at first but understood that Kay needed this in his life, so took the time to allow himself to accept it. In the longer term it became a background fact of life for him.

Since then, Max has considered the possibility of he and Kay adopting children (or arranging a surrogate), however he ultimately decided against it. He would not want to pass his heart condition on to his child, and he believes that Kay is already anxious enough without the presence of a child, not to mention the fact that anxiety can trigger an episode with his heart. He has not mentioned the anxiety aspect of his concerns with Kay, however.

Despite Max's overall success as an auditor, he has never been ambitious about his career so spent his career working steadily in the same, or similar roles, never feeling driven to climb the corporate ladder. For him, strong connections with others - or more specifically, one special other - was his main aim in life, and Kay fulfilled that beautifully for him.

Passing on Responsibilities

(older adulthood)

Max believes that he will likely need to take early retirement due to his heart condition. He fully expects to still be with Kay by then, which will mean that Kay will probably continue to work after he has retired.

With this being the case, Max puts away more money than Kay does so that he can continue to support himself in a similar lifestyle to Kay. He even contributes into a separate bank account purely for this reason.

End of Life

(old age)

Throughout his life Max has considered himself a protector and has aimed to be a good friend. This leads him to wonder whether his heart condition will result in his early death, and what impact this might have on Kay. On a personal level he feels daunted by the prospect of death, but the majority of his concern is about the people he will leave behind, and whether they will suffer for it.

Credits

Based on theory by:

Erikson, E., (1951) 'Childhood and Society', W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. chapter 7.

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~Hayley, The Character Consultancy